

Fascism on Screen: Fascist Italy's Film Diplomacy Campaigns in the United States

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University of Pittsburgh, 2023

In the ten years before the outbreak of World War Two interrupted United States-Italy diplomatic relations, the Italian Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini sought to influence Americans' opinion of Fascism by distributing Italian films in America. However, these campaigns have never been considered in their totality in scholarship on Fascist propaganda. This project seeks to provide a more complete examination of the Fascist regime's efforts to use film as a propaganda tool in America by reviewing the exhibition and circulation work of Italian diplomats, Italian American organizations operating on behalf of the regime, and commercial distributors who signed agreements with the regime in the 1930s and early 1940s. By examining past scholarship in Fascist cinema studies, intragovernmental communications on different film distribution initiatives, and deliberations between regime officials and their implementing partners in America, I conclude that despite the best efforts of many agents of the regime to offer a positive vision of Fascism and Fascist Italy to Italian and non-Italian Americans through the cinema, Fascist film diplomacy initiatives in America were consistently limited in their ineffectiveness thanks to inadequate organizational, administrative, and economic support from the Italian government.

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Preface

This thesis is the culmination of years of cross-disciplinary study in history, sociology, film, international relations, and economics, and the flexibility I was granted both in and out of the classroom toward this work is something for which I am immensely appreciative. I came to the University of Pittsburgh four years ago with many disparate interests and without the slightest clue of what to do with any of them, but I found myself immediately embraced into communities where I was encouraged to follow these passions wherever they led me.

In one way or another, many of them converged in this project, which I proposed in a very basic form to Dr. Alberto Iozzia in the fall of 2021. I kicked off my work that next spring, taking my first-ever transatlantic trip to conduct a week of archival research in Italy in May, and from there my research began to take shape. Additional background reading and archival work in Pittsburgh and New York in the fall of 2022 reinforced the potential of this project to bring to light a largely unexplored facet of history with major implications for scholarship in transatlantic relations and Fascist-era Italian cinema. By the time I submitted the first draft of this thesis to my defense committee in March 2023, its scope was multitudes larger than I had initially envisioned, and yet I still had (and have) much more to say. At some point, I hope to be able to return to this work and answer many of the questions I have left lingering here. This project has involved more time and effort than any past undertaking of mine, and even a year and a half after deciding to tackle it, I am still just as excited to discuss it with others. My appreciation for the role that art plays in shaping our understanding of the world and our relationships with one another has only grown in the process of preparing this research, and I look forward to seeing where else this conviction leads me.

I did not expect for Italian studies to be the uniting thread of my academic experience when I enrolled at Pitt, but I could not be happier that it turned out to be so. Having loved my Italian courses in high school, I decided on a whim to cross off some general education requirements with two classes in the Italian program during my first semester at Pitt and instantly found intellectual clarity and personal fulfillment in this dimension of my coursework. Italy is a gateway to the world, and I have found studying its cultural history to raise compelling parallels to America's own sociopolitical complications. Even setting that aside, the Department of French and Italian has been so welcoming and supportive of me that I could not imagine having followed any other route. The emphasis on intellectual discovery for its own sake that I have found in all of the departments I have engaged with at Pitt has allowed me to become more perceptive, inquisitive, confident, and compassionate in all aspects of my personal and academic life, ultimately pushing me to take my learning into my own hands through this project.

I would like to dedicate some space here to expressing my sincere appreciation for everyone who supported me through this process. It is impossible to fully convey my gratitude to all who have played a role in seeing me to this point, but I hope it is enough to acknowledge that no aspect of this project would have been possible without such caring, intelligent, and inspiring people around me.

Thank you to first and foremost to Dr. Alberto Iozzia for serving as my thesis advisor and the chair of my defense committee. Since my very first semester at Pitt, Dr. Iozzia has pushed me to dig deeper in all aspects of my work, and the genuine passion that he exhibits in his teaching and scholarship has been a constant source of inspiration to me. I am tremendously proud to have had such an incredible mentor at my side throughout my time here and am very thankful that he chose to undertake this project with me.

Thank you also to Dr. Jae-Jae Spoon, Dr. Emily West, and Dr. Piero Garofalo, who served on my defense committee and provided invaluable feedback on my writing. Their insight encouraged me to think harder about the broader implications of my findings and allowed me to fine-tune this thesis into something much more cogent and accessible.

Thank you to the staffs of the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, the Cineteca di Bologna, the Luigi Chiarini Library at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, the John D. Calandra Institute at Queens College, the Center for Migration Studies, the Heinz History Center, and Archives & Special Collections at the University of Pittsburgh for offering such helpful guidance during my first archival project. My research could not have come to fruition were it not for their preservation efforts.

Thank you to the David C. Frederick Honors College for its remarkable stewardship of independent undergraduate research and its belief in my work. Thank you especially to Dr. Brett Say for cultivating such vibrant research communities through the Frederick Honors College's fellowship programs and to Dr. Aidan Beatty for offering his advice on countless applications and proposals of mine. It is hard to imagine that I would have had so many opportunities to direct my own learning—and earn the funding to do so—anywhere else.

Thank you to the staff of the University Center for International Studies for being such generous patrons of my scholarship, including by providing funding to support my field research and Italian study. Thank you especially to Stephen Lund, my European Studies Center advisor, who connected me to numerous incredible opportunities to take my academic and extracurricular work to the next level.

Thank you to Dr. Lina Insana for advising my prior research project on the utilization of music as an organizing tool by Italian neofascists. She helped me learn how to manage large-

scale independent projects, and the work I conducted under her guidance served as a direct precursor to this thesis.

Thank you to Dr. Andrew Lotz for overseeing my first independent research project at Pitt in the fall of 2020 and for all of his advising support over the past four years. His suggestions allowed me to channel my thoughts more productively and become a more deliberate and thoughtful researcher in the process.

Thank you to the staff and faculty of Pitt's Italian program, including those already mentioned, for actively looping me into such a warm and friendly community. Every class I have taken in Italian has opened up new avenues for me to follow intellectually and motivated me to engage with the world around me more completely. Many of my best memories at Pitt have resulted directly from my Italian study, and I am very lucky to have spent so much time with some of Pitt's brightest and most dynamic students and staff.

Thank you to the staff of the United States Department of State's Office of American Spaces—especially my supervisors, Fred Boll, Kit Bartels, Lynne Scheib, and Barbara Silberstein—for providing me a glimpse into the world of cultural diplomacy as their intern in the summer of 2022. I am grateful to have been welcomed to the office with open arms and will always remember fondly the short time I was able to work alongside these considerate and forward-thinking leaders.

Thank you to Maddalena Amero, under whom I began my study of the Italian language and developed a strong interest in learning about Italian culture and history. Without taking that first step, I do not know what I would be doing today.

Thank you to all of my friends in Pittsburgh and beyond for their constant curiosity and encouragement. They kept me grounded and motivated during this long and intense process, and

their camaraderie reinforced to me the importance of work like this that interrogates political interactions on a more intimate level. I could not ask for a better group of people with whom to share my time, and it is not lost on me how lucky I am to have found such kindhearted and inspiring companions.

Finally, thank you to my family for their lifelong encouragement of my studies. They have helped me to find confidence in myself and my work and have always encouraged me to follow my passions without inhibition. Everything I have accomplished owes entirely to their love and care.

1.0 Introduction

Figure 1. Apparato scenografico, con gigantografia di Mussolini e scritta propagandistica "La cinematografia è l'arma più forte", allestito per la cerimonia di fondazione della nuova sede dell'Istituto Nazionale Luce (1937).



Note. This image, taken by the LUCE Institute at a 1937 inaugural ceremony for its new headquarters, depicts Benito Mussolini above a quote that translates to “Cinematography is the most powerful arm.”

In October 1922, thousands of supporters of the Fascist Party launched their revolutionary March on Rome, with party leader Benito Mussolini taking the reins of the Italian government within weeks (Carsten, 1982, pp. 61–65). Mussolini’s ascension, and the twenty-year reign of his Fascist Party that followed, represented a profound shift in global politics, fundamentally reshaping Italy and its interactions with the rest of the world. This *ventennio* (literally, “twenty-year period”) marks one of modern history’s most disruptive authoritarian regimes, offering a unique glimpse into the efforts of far-right governments to present themselves both domestically and internationally.

Italian Fascism was only a few years old as a sociopolitical movement by the time it subsumed the Italian political system, and the ways in which it developed and reinterpreted itself over the course of the *ventennio* still sustain a great deal of reflection by scholars. Fascism was a dynamic amalgamation of individual philosophies and approaches with groundings in diametrically opposed schools of thought, thus manifesting itself in sometimes conflicting ways throughout the interwar period (Diggins, 1972, p. 98). Its non-fixity as an ideological framework and a political project has lent itself to decades of debate and scrutiny over its praxis and the degree to which its practitioners were able to communicate a cohesive image of its feats and ambitions among one another and the Italian populace (Vezzani, 2017, p. 69).¹

One of the most important means that the regime had to define itself and instill a common public perception of Italy under Fascism was the cinema. The beginning of Mussolini’s reign

¹ A brief explanation of Italian Fascism’s evolution during the regime is given in Chapter 3, but others have more elaborately considered this aspect of the *ventennio*. For more specific examinations of this topic, see *The Fascism Reader*, edited by Aristotle Kallis (2003); *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*, written by Ruth Ben-Ghiat (2004); and *The Rise of Fascism*, written by Francis Ludwig Carsten (1982).

coincided with a period of great difficulty for the Italian film industry, and the government soon came to lend substantial support to the project of revitalizing Italian cinema (Hay, 1987, p. 68). By centralizing the industry and expanding government intervention in film financing and production, Mussolini was able to push back against international competition in Italian film markets and ensure that Italian films painted a generous picture of the regime and its ideals. Therefore, film allowed the government to quite literally project the works of the Fascist government in a more positive, engaging, and intimate fashion both within and beyond Italy (Hay, 1987, p. 70; Reich, 2002, pp. 10–11).²

Furthermore, the rapport between Fascist Italy and the United States is particularly critical for understanding the presentation of Fascism abroad. Mussolini saw positive relations

² More detailed explanations of certain Fascist-era Italian films follow, but I also recommend a select few films for a primer on the broader trends in Italian filmmaking of the time. *Condottieri (Giovanni de Medici: The Leader)*, a 1937 film by Luis Trenker, exemplifies the ornate presentation in Italian films of important moments in Italian history that provide parallels to Mussolini's strongman persona. *Darò un milione (I'd Give a Million)*, a 1935 film by Mario Camerini, reinforces socioeconomic stability and humility through an absurd, Hollywoodian screwball story about a rich bachelor in search of true love, an example of the escapist model of many Italian genre films. *Vecchia guardia (The Old Guard)*, a 1935 film by Alessandro Blasetti, is among the more explicitly propagandistic Italian feature films of the era, reimagining through thrilling documentary-like camerawork the Fascists' 1922 March on Rome. *La nave bianca (The White Ship)*, a 1942 film by Roberto Rossellini, while not receiving distribution in the United States, matches many of the stylistic and narrative elements of contemporary Italian films and demonstrates the openness of Italian filmmaking under the regime, explicitly referencing Soviet montage techniques through a story that showcases the human costs of combat but that still generally aligns itself with Fascist ideals. All receive more elaborate treatments in Peter Bondanella and Federico Pacchioni's 2017 *A History of Italian Cinema*, which is cited throughout this thesis.

with America as a necessary component of his foreign policy, given the latter's rapidly increasing economic power and, even accounting for its transient isolationist tendencies in the early 1920s, its steadily increasing leadership in the post-World War One international community (Vezzani, 2017, pp. 64–68). Just as importantly, the United States was home to the largest Italian population outside of Italy during the *ventennio*, and Fascist leaders sought to project a positive picture of the regime among Italian Americans to forge closer bonds with them and to elevate the general American public's support for the regime (Gabaccia, 2000, p. 5; Diggins, 1972, pp. 94–95).

Though diplomatic interactions in general between Fascist Italy and the United States (and the discontinuation thereof in the lead-up to the Second World War) have been thoroughly studied, the actual mechanisms, practices, and philosophies undergirding the Fascist regime's propaganda efforts in America have not received as much attention from scholars, especially with regard to film. In part, that is by necessity; as I will demonstrate, the dissemination of Fascist propaganda at times proved itself to be disjointed and decentralized. Also, the study of propaganda distribution by Fascist Italy is complicated by the fact that in contrast to other authoritarian governments of the same time period, Fascist Italy did not take as much of a concerted, hardline approach to its oversight of Italian culture, preferring to guide rather than control the message, and what has been established by researchers of its utilization of the cinema as a propaganda tool abroad corroborates this idea (Reich, 2002, pp. 3–7; Vezzani, 2017, pp. 98–99).

Still, only a handful of dissertations, articles, and book chapters approach any dimension of Fascist film diplomacy in a meaningful way. Italy's film propaganda work in America, one of the nations whose cooperation with the regime was considered most essential, is no exception; to

my knowledge, only two scholars across three separate publications have substantially addressed Fascist Italy's film diplomacy campaigns in the United States, but none of these three projects focus their efforts on writing about Fascist film diplomacy in its totality. Even after findings by Vezzani (2017; 2018) that Italian feature films were circulated in America into the late 1930s and early 1940s, years after they were thought to have been fully banned, researchers have yet to take up this challenge.

To begin to amend this, my thesis provides a more comprehensive view of how the regime managed its film diplomacy work in the United States. With this project, I seek to establish a more complete understanding of the extent of the Fascist regime's reach into American spaces, the strategies with which it approached propaganda dissemination in America, and the effects of its efforts. By synthesizing and building upon past research on Fascist-era Italian cinema and incorporating new evidence from communications among Italian government officials, as well as dealings between these officials and their partners in the United States, I demonstrate a more pronounced disconnect between the regime's ambitions to use film to promote Fascist Italy among Italian Americans, American economic and political elites, and the general American public alike and the unsatisfactory resources devoted toward this goal.

My research suggests a film diplomacy campaign that, while it was relatively thought-out and repeatedly deemed crucial for the regime from an ideological perspective, consistently proved itself to be disorganized, shoddily managed, and slow to respond to deficiencies, especially as a result of the lack of ample finances. I also observe a lack of deliberate curation in the distribution of films for different audiences in America. With regard to both the circulation of Italian documentary newsreels through consular networks and Italian American organizations and the commercial distribution of Italian feature films by oftentimes poorly vetted Italian

American businessmen, I present further evidence of a decentralized and hasty but occasionally inspired and creative propaganda apparatus that was generally impeded by insufficient attention and support from Rome.

For these reasons, and especially considering the regime's stated aims with regard to film propaganda and the lack of any indication that they were met, I conclude that the regime's film diplomacy activity was ultimately relatively ineffective. Though my work slots comfortably into the select few other studies evaluating the failures of Fascist film propaganda in America, this close a look has not been extended to many of the government's internal deliberations concerning film propaganda or its negotiations with implementing partners in America, nor have these past findings been interpreted together to understand film diplomacy under Fascist Italy as a whole. My analyses of these documents permit a more in-depth examination of the specific strategies and philosophies guiding both governmental and nongovernmental practitioners of film diplomacy and the administrative and economic factors which arrested their work.

This project lends itself to broader examinations of the mechanisms and strategies supporting more nontraditional diplomatic activities, including those involving extra-governmental parties, which have gained more appreciation as subjects of scholarly inquiry in recent years. Public and cultural diplomacy are still fairly young topics in academic research around which reliable disciplinary structures have yet to take shape, so much so that definitions of the two—if there is a distinction to be made at all—are constantly in flux (Cull, 2008, p. 33).

Per Cull (2008), “public diplomacy” as a named concept has existed since 1965 and has gained popularity as a topic of study only in the last three decades (p. 31). He describes it as “the process by which international actors seek to accomplish the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics” (p. 31). In general, many of the current academic frameworks for

public diplomacy research and practitionership extend from Nye (2008), who wrote of it in relation to governments' employment of "soft power" tactics to influence foreign actors' opinions:

In international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others. Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than [*sic*] merely their governments. Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth. (p. 95)

Public diplomacy, then, is the practice of communicating about a state's culture and values with foreign publics for political aims and is often achieved through the deployment of various media, something which Mussolini's regime sought to practice in America through the distribution of Italian films.

Cull (2008) considers cultural diplomacy as a subset of public diplomacy, one in which a state "attempt[s] to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad," especially through "the export of examples of its culture" (p. 33). Given the shared application of these definitions to refer to the use of culture by a government to convey some political message to foreign publics, the ideas I seek to convey about the Fascist regime's propaganda efforts fit comfortably enough within this umbrella that I use the two terms interchangeably. Also, since my exclusive focus here is on film distribution, I use "film diplomacy" and "film propaganda" to

refer to the same concepts as they apply to the deliberate government-mediated dissemination of films for political purposes.

Snow and Cull (2020) write of public diplomacy as a “vast and moving target” in academic research, asserting that “[t]he subject is too big for any single theory, too variable in its practice for any single geographical model and too diverse in its applications to be adequately understood through the study of any one instrument” (p. xi). As such, the field requires many cross-disciplinary, localized studies in order to approach a fuller conception of the various aspects of such campaigns. Public diplomacy—or propaganda—programs can be as loose and flexible as the conception of public diplomacy itself is, so a similar degree of adaptability must accompany historical analyses of these initiatives.

I seek to reflect that dynamism in my project, which considers Fascist Italy’s use of film as a political communication tool in the United States from multiple angles and using numerous points of reference. Such campaigns cannot be divorced from the historical context in which they take place, and thus I strive to deeply situate my study within a broader landscape of research on Fascist ideology, interwar Italian cinema, and United States-Italy relations to more capably and completely transmit an image of the multifaceted realities of this film diplomacy project.

As a result, I hope to allow a better understanding of how governments have historically utilized public diplomacy to garner public support—or at least tolerance—for their political aims. As I explain throughout this thesis, the fairly open approach that Fascist leaders took to building a national culture around Fascism resulted in a large corpus of indirect film propaganda that itself could be applied abroad in ways that distinguished Fascist culture from the Fascist government while also gently earning acceptance of the latter all the same. Fascist diplomats accomplished this by working through nondiplomatic channels, especially by leveraging their

connections with sympathetic Americans, Italian diaspora members, and commercial parties. While I argue that the regime, for reasons both administrative and logistical, was relatively unsuccessful in its mission to connect with Americans through the cinema, the strategies and philosophies that guided this campaign are very helpful for understanding how extremist governments can manipulate public diplomacy to generate public support abroad.

This thesis focuses in large part on some of the difficulties that governments face in implementing public and cultural diplomacy campaigns. It offers an understudied example of a decade-long project to elevate the public opinion of a foreign government outside of traditional diplomatic channels, making evident the administrative, logistical, and ideological hurdles that must be confronted in trying to connect with foreign populations in these ways. Fascist Italy's attempts at film diplomacy demonstrate that the provision of information by foreign governments alone is not enough to effectively connect with foreign publics. The campaign its leaders undertook exemplifies the importance of commercial and other nongovernmental partners as intermediaries between diplomats and foreign publics and showcases how a lack of strategic deliberateness and institutional support can hinder propaganda and cultural diplomacy efforts, providing direction for other analyses of similar programs by public diplomacy researchers.

In a wider sense, this project also provides a glimpse into the methods that extremist governments have historically used to advertise themselves abroad. This aspect of the Fascist regime's international presence is greatly under-discussed, and this thesis thus seeks to provide insight into how one of twentieth-century Europe's longest-lasting and most powerful far-right regimes positioned itself in the wider international community. Mussolini's government understood very well how to propagandize in America in indirect ways, relying upon its

connections with sympathetic Americans to propagate Italian media across the country without provoking more ardently anti-Fascist American leaders.

Plus, understanding how Fascist Italy maintained ties with one of its most important allies, even in the face of severe political contention, is highly valuable for creating a more complete picture of diplomacy in the transatlantic sphere before World War Two. The Fascist regime, I explain, was well aware of the contentiousness of its political project and thus sought to reach the American public to strengthen United States-Italy commercial and diplomatic ties. This approach speaks to the fundamentality of cultural and public diplomacy in maintaining diplomatic normalcy between foreign powers and merits further exploration.

Furthermore, as I discuss later in this paper, Fascist leaders were explicit in their interest in activating the Italian American community as a pro-Fascist electoral bloc. Although I demonstrate that America's unenthusiastic allyship with Mussolini throughout most of the *ventennio* was largely an outcome of American political and business leaders' economic and political interests, this aspect of the Fascist regime's foreign policy in America raises questions about the potential for public diplomacy to influence political and legislative outcomes more broadly in target countries.

In general, Fascist internationalism (or the promulgation of Fascism abroad by the regime) is still not adequately understood despite considerable evidence of the regime's interest in promoting Fascist ideology outside of Italy. As Herren (2016) writes, "[o]nly recently have attempts begun to investigate the structural character of [F]ascist transnational strategies as internationalism and [F]ascist internationalism as a state-driven strategy of global governance" (p. 196). Before a complete overview of Fascist internationalism can be approached, though, more grounded studies of various manifestations of Fascist diplomacy are necessary. This

examination of the self-presentation of the regime in the United States through film can help to remedy that, providing thorough scrutiny of the actions and ideas exchanged among Fascist diplomats, bureaucrats, and sympathizers in their attempts to inspire support for Fascism among Americans of all stripes.

In Chapter 2, I briefly outline the academic foundation upon which my research rests and describe the archival work that I conducted to supplement existing scholarship in this field. In Chapter 3, I provide a quick summation of the political underpinnings and propagandistic outgrowths of the Fascist regime, devoting considerable attention to the government's intervention in the Italian film industry and the unique qualities of the film propaganda that resulted therefrom. In Chapter 4, I explain the presence of Fascism in the United States, first reviewing the establishment of Italian communities in America and the diplomatic relationship between the two countries before summarizing the realities of Fascist activism in America. In Chapter 5, I begin my analysis of Fascist Italy's film diplomacy programs in America, reviewing the documentary screenings which took place directly under Italian diplomats in America and examining the strategies with which they approached their work. In Chapter 6, I evaluate the work of three Italian American organizations which undertook documentary screening and distribution campaigns on behalf of the government. In Chapter 7, I list and break down the commercial distribution agreements that the regime entered into with American companies and individuals. Finally, in Chapter 8, I bring together my findings to discuss the failures of these activities and offer suggestions for avenues for future research.

2.0 Methodology

My research derives in equal measure from past scholarly projects on Italy's cultural-political presence in interwar America and archival work I conducted throughout 2022. As such, it rests upon the groundwork laid by the few detailed studies of Fascist film diplomacy in America, as well as other academic work on Fascist culture and United States-Italy relations, and combines them to interpret holistically how the Fascist regime used film as a propaganda tool in America.

As mentioned, Vezzani's 2017 PhD dissertation "Reframing Italianness: Circulation of Italian Fiction Films in the United States During the 1930s" and 2018 publication "Fascist Indirect Propaganda in 1930s America: The Distribution and Exhibition of Italian Fiction Films" provide the most important precedents for this study, offering the most complete accounts to date of which films were screened in Italian American communities, how they were received, and what role the Fascist government played in their distribution. These two works approach Fascist film diplomacy by focusing primarily on the presence of Italian fiction films in the United States, proving especially helpful for helping me to understand the regime's entrance into American commercial film markets.

Furthermore, Stefano Luconi and Guido Tintori's 2004 book *L'ombra lunga del fascio: canali della propaganda fascista degli italoamericani* (*The long shadow of the fascio: channels of Fascist propaganda of the Italian Americans*) lays out very thorough accounts of multiple dimensions of Fascist film propaganda in America. For this project, I pull from the book's introduction and first two chapters, all penned by Tintori, to piece together some of the nuances of the regime's activity in the United States in the commercial sphere, its partnerships with

Italian American organizations, and the results of its direct diplomatic actions with regard to film distribution.

All three of these publications lend invaluable context, direction, and evidence to my own findings and thus are cited heavily throughout. My research seeks not to simply retrace their findings, however, and instead breaks new ground by considering them in tandem and giving equal weight to all of the different film propaganda activities the regime undertook in America, thereby offering a fresh examination of the campaign in its totality.

Beyond Vezzani's and Tintori's seminal studies, I am fortunate to be able to rely upon a strong body of existing research on Fascist cultural diplomacy, the Italian film industry under Fascism, and Fascism's presence in the United States for this project, all of which appear throughout the following chapters. This project seeks to provide further context and evidence for the findings put forward in these works and thus necessarily relies upon their frameworks to understand film as an extension of the Fascist regime and a connecting point between the regime and the Italian diaspora in the United States, and their juxtaposition alongside both one another and my archival evidence results in a much more robust analysis.

As discussed, I also undertook archival studies to uncover and reconsider different interactions between the regime and its agents in America. Firstly, in May of 2022, I visited three archives in Italy to better understand the Fascist propaganda apparatus from the perspective of the Italian diplomats governing it and their collaborators overseas and also to acquire a better concept for myself of Italian cinema in this time period. At the Cineteca di Bologna, I was able to view a select few poorly distributed films from the Fascist era. At the Cineteca di Bologna (Cinematheque of Bologna) and the Luigi Chiarini Library at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Cinematography Center) in Rome, I also accessed to many

academic texts on Fascist film history which are cited throughout this thesis. Finally, I spent several days at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, where I investigated communications among Fascist diplomats and bureaucrats and between these government officials and third-party collaborators in America. In December 2022, I also traveled to New York, New York to visit the Center for Migration Studies and Queens College's John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, where I gained additional context on the regime's activity in Italian American communities.

Of course, my archival studies only touched on a small sample of all of the material pertaining to the relationship between the Fascist regime and the Italian American diaspora, and the limited time and resources available to me necessarily imposed geographic and thematic restrictions upon my work. However, many of the documents I located for this study have never been given attention in scholarship on United States-Italy relations between the World Wars—and those that have often receive a closer look here—and the evidence they provide for understanding how the Fascist propaganda apparatus operated in practice is just as novel. Thus, by pulling together evidence from past research and archival findings, I have been able to construct a more complete account of the theoretical underpinnings, day-to-day dynamics, and overall results of Fascist Italy's utilization of film as a propaganda tool in the United States.

3.0 Italian Fascism in Theory and Practice

Before examining how the Fascist regime sought to use film to reach Americans and make them more favorable toward Fascism, it is important to establish some groundwork both for how Fascism manifested itself politically and how Italian cinema served as an extension of the regime. In this chapter, I thus first summarize the Fascist political project as it developed in Italy to make its sociopolitical ambitions clearer. I then consider the role that film played under the regime, reviewing the rebirth of Italian cinema under Mussolini and explaining his government's role in overseeing the development of a strong, ideologically consistent national film culture.

3.1 Fascism as a Political Project

By the time the Fascist government began to consider the cinema's propagandistic potential in the United States, it had already been in power for years. Therefore, to understand the cultural interplay among Italian Americans, Fascist diplomats, and other Fascist sympathizers in the United States, it is first necessary to consider what exactly Italian Fascism was in the eyes of Mussolini and his representatives. How regime officials conceptualized their political philosophy and their international mission, and how both ideas evolved over time, make Italian Fascism an especially complex subject of inquiry.

The Fascist Party led its March on Rome in October 1922, with Mussolini securing leadership of the national government that same month (Carsten, 1982, pp. 61–65). Over the next twenty years, Mussolini would use his post to fundamentally transform Italian society by attempting to create an all-encompassing state capable of uniting the citizenry against the forces which he felt had plagued Italy.

As unitary and authoritarian as Fascism presented itself to be, it did not exactly manifest itself monolithically. As Vezzani (2017) writes, “Fascist intellectuals sought to mediate between modernity and tradition in order to embrace in an ethical way the technological and infrastructural progress of the time” (p. 69). As such, Fascist philosophy was always in flux. Thought leaders and government officials had to consistently negotiate for themselves how the regime’s transformative, forward-looking ambitions could synergize with the traditionalist iconography that they used to rally support for the regime among everyday Italians (Lazzaro & Crum, 2005, p. 16).

Given this multidimensionality, any simple political categorization for the ideology is difficult to accept. Though undeniably a right-wing nationalist movement as a whole, the party’s policies variably took on characteristics of capitalism and socialism, social conservatism and progressivism, and other diametrically contradictory positions:

Fascism as an ideology emerged as a grand historical synthesis transcending the stale categories of traditional politics. Neither a simple dictatorship nor a cumbersome democracy, neither a capitalist order nor a socialist state, Fascism was based on the ideals of class collaboration and social justice, on the spirit of egalitarianism and the practice of elitism. It was a government of the people, by the leaders, for the nation. (Diggins, 1972, p. 98)

For instance, the regime's corporatist economic system was presented as a third way between capitalism and communism, where corporations and employees were brought together into associations that worked alongside the state to determine national economic policies, even if the government ultimately retained control over the economy's operation (Vincent, 2009, p. 160).

Even then, Mussolini's totalitarian tendencies presented themselves quite strongly in his reclamation of the idea of a formerly powerful and united Italy, which was reinforced through the use of ancient Roman iconography. The fasces that gives Fascism its name was a Roman symbol of unified authority and was presented among other Roman imagery to instill in the Italian people a sense of a common past that must lead to a more prosperous future (Lazzaro & Crum, 2005, p. 16). At the same time, this staunch nationalism was intended to counter poor perceptions of Italy abroad (Vezzani, 2017, p. 77). As Vezzani (2017) writes, Mussolini's social and economic policies in general were envisioned to "both preserve Italy's notable traditions—its great artistic heritage, the myth of the Roman Empire, and the Catholic religion—and as such adequately embrace modernity, namely the technological, architectural and infrastructural progress" (p. 77).

Importantly, this project eventually promoted a racist view of the path toward a new Italy (Vincent, 2009, p. 160). As Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany became closer diplomatically, Mussolini's government passed oppressive policies that sought to establish racial-cultural purity in Italy, including the 1938 racial laws, which limited the rights of Jews in Italy and forbade them from marrying ethnic Italians (Rodogno, 2006, p. 65). Italy—and *italianità* ("Italianness")—were thereby what Mussolini declared them to be. Mussolini "aimed to assure

the equivalence between Italy and Fascism, so that it could label as non-Italian any person of Italian origin that professed anti-Fascism” (Vezzani, 2017, pp. 77–78).

In pursuance of this goal, Mussolini’s purpose as the Fascist head of state was “to serve as a symbolic embodiment of the myth which shape[d] the historical destiny of his people” (O’Sullivan, 1983/2003, p. 160). Thus, Mussolini himself was to be taken as the human embodiment of Fascism: the leader who could rally the Italian people toward Fascist totality and, eventually, spread Fascism abroad through imperialism (p. 160).

Building upon this conception, the nation under Fascism was “a ‘higher’ racial, historical, spiritual or organic reality which embrace[d] all the members of the ethical community who belong[ed] to it” (Griffin, 1993/2003, p. 178). The state came before all else, its proliferation being intended to allow Italy to advance itself in the world as a cohesive unit. Thus, even though the party’s ideology was not completely precise, what mattered more was the establishment of a sense of national unity by means of ensuring the presence of the state in all aspects of politics, the economy, and social life in Italy.

Take, for instance, Figure 2, which depicts Mussolini’s face in front of a banner in the Palazzo Braschi in Rome reading *sì* (“yes”) repeatedly in anticipation of the 1934 Italian general election (“Mussolini’s ‘Campaign,’ 1934). The photograph exemplifies the regime’s attempts to make Fascism all-encompassing, with Mussolini’s ginormous visage hanging over passersby as the text behind it commands them to vote in favor of the party, as if there was any genuine opposition to consider. The state and its ideology were intended to be ever-present under Fascism, with the Italian people serving as functionaries of a larger political project to which they were subservient. Mussolini, it is implied here, knew what was best for Italians, and their cooperation with his ambitions would allow the continuation and enhancement of the regime.

Figure 2. Photograph of Fascist Poster in the Palazzo Braschi (1934).



Despite its contradictions and theoretical turbulence, Fascism was still communicable as a political project that used the image of a once-glorious nation, especially after the humiliation the country faced in the aftermath of World War One, to justify sweeping transformations to Italian society. As I discuss throughout this thesis, the art produced under the eye of the regime served to both reflect those changes and promote them to domestic and international audiences,

thereby seeking to create a broader public acceptance of the political goals of Fascism and the activities of the regime.

3.2 Italian Cinema Under Fascism

Before proceeding to discuss the role that Italian cinema played as a propaganda tool in the United States, a good bit of context on Italy's national film culture is necessary, as the Fascist era saw a great period of change for the Italian film industry. In the following sections, I provide a quick overview of the layout of the Italian film industry during Mussolini's reign and discuss the ways in which Fascist ideology manifested itself in the Italian films of the age. I also consider interwar Italian cinema in relation to the American film industry, which dwarfed the much weaker domestic production and distribution undertaken by Italian filmmakers in the early years of the regime, before Mussolini's government made a more active effort to revitalize Italian filmmaking and center Italian films in the culture. The Fascist regime's multifaceted response to the dominance of American films offers crucial insight into the discussions of Fascist Italy's film distribution work in America that follow.

I also devote considerable attention to government-run newsreel production, which had tremendous political and cultural importance both within Italy and abroad, and my review of publicly driven film production and distribution serves as a crucial preface to the thorough breakdown in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the dissemination of Italian newsreels in the United States, one of the core components of this thesis. The relationship between Italian Fascism and film is very distinct from that of other contemporary authoritarian regimes, and the more indirect

approach that Mussolini took to nurturing Italian filmmaking to promote the regime is important for understanding how Italian films were circulated and presented in America.

3.2.1 The Rebuilding of a Crumbling Industry

Firstly, it is important to establish the dire straits under which the Italian film industry existed at the beginning of the *ventennio*, of which Hay (1987) provides a very thorough analysis. Though it was one of the most advanced, productive, and well-regarded national film markets before World War One, the industry quickly declined in the early 1920s, with the domestic production and reputation of films both falling (p. 68). In fact, between 1925 and 1926, only four films were made in Italy (p. 68).³

Unsurprisingly, international competition played a major role in the decline of Italian cinema. Most prominently, throughout the *ventennio*, Hollywood films dominated international cinema markets, and Italy was no exception; from 1925 to 1930, 80% of the films seen in Italy were American (p. 60). The weakness of the Italian film industry in the first fifteen years of the Fascist regime was not only a consequence of the massive—and growing—popularity of American movies but also of a heavily financed expansion of American film distribution, an overreliance in Italy on American film stock and technology, and the cheapness of American film tickets in Italy due to their abundant profits in the United States (p. 67). The tremendous success of American films in Italy is also attributable to a number of moves by American film financiers and producers in the 1910s and 1920s to invest in international co-productions, buy

³ See Peter Bondanella and Federico Pacchioni's (2017) *A History of Italian Cinema* for more on the rise and fall of Italian filmmaking in this period.

out Italian production houses, and secure arrangements for American film distribution and advertisement across Italy (p. 68).

In response, the Fascist government supported a number of semi-private initiatives to fund domestic film production and distribution. In the mid-to-late-1920s, it worked extensively with Stefano Pittaluga, who gained ownership of about 2,000 theaters in a 1926 purchase, to finance a greater proliferation of Italian films, founding the Ente Nazionale per la Cinematografia (National Institution for Cinematography) at his urging in an ultimately failed effort to secure international production and distribution deals (pp. 69–70). In 1927, in the first true direct private-public partnership the regime undertook in the film sphere, Pittaluga's company earned distribution rights to government-produced documentaries (Bondanella & Pacchioni, 2017, p. 24). Pittaluga also acquired Cines, at one point a leading Italian studio, in 1929 and reopened it in 1930, producing the first Italian sound film, Gennaro Righelli's *La canzone dell'amore* (*The Song of Love*), in the latter year (Reich, 2002, p. 8). Though Cines saw great success under Pittaluga, after his death in 1931, it nearly completely dissolved once again, much of its film circulation being absorbed by the government, and the studio burned down in 1936 (Hay, 1987, p. 204).

Over the following few years, the regime would turn to the model of its biggest competitor in the film industry to further rejuvenate Italian film culture, more actively involving itself in Italian filmmaking in the process. In 1933, an Italian journalist by the name of Luigi Freddi traveled to Hollywood and spent two months observing and writing about how the industry operated in relation to Italy's failing system (Reich, 2002, p. 9). Mussolini, upon reading these critiques, offered Freddi the chance to design a plan for a new Italian film industry, which the latter accepted (p. 9).

Freddi's scheme relied on a much more involved and active role for the government in film production and distribution, envisioning a national cinema backed by private and public funds that would communicate an enticing and powerful picture of the regime (p. 9). In 1934, the government took its first steps toward these goals by placing Freddi in charge of the Direzione Generale per la Cinematografia (General Directorate for Cinematography) under the auspices of the Ministero per la Stampa e la Propaganda (Ministry for the Press and Propaganda), itself guided by Galeazzo Ciano (p. 10). The Ministero, which passed to Dino Alfieri in 1936, supervised all of the regime's propaganda outlets, and its greater emphasis on film after 1934 was a major boon to the industry (p. 10). In 1937, the office was transformed into the Ministero della Cultura Popolare (Ministry of Popular Culture), more commonly known as Minculpop, which would more fervently guide and promote Italian culture, including through film (p. 10).

Under both systems, Freddi used his office to finance and oversee Italian filmmaking and to promote a more vibrant and cogent national film culture. For instance, he helped create Italy's leading film school, the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Center for Cinematography) and guided its *Bianco & Nero* (*Black and White*) film periodical (p. 11). He also supported the growth of another film journal called *Cinema* (p. 11). Moreover, under both ministries, his administration regulated the content of Italian films, ascertaining both an ideological and linguistic standardization of their content (pp. 11–14).

In 1937, Freddi's ultimate achievement was realized with the creation of Cinecittà (roughly, "Cinema City"), a privately owned, publicly funded production lot modeled heavily on (and thus designed as a counter to) leading Hollywood studios (p. 11). The government assumed full control over the company in 1939, and it worked prolifically up until and even after the outbreak of World War Two (p. 11). Replete with cutting-edge facilities for all aspects of

production, Cinecittà lent its hand in one way or another to the production of about 300 feature films between April 1937 and July 1943, leaving its mark on more than two-thirds of all films made in Italy in that period (p. 11). Though Freddi resigned from his post in 1939 over dissatisfaction with Minculpop's focus on churning out as many films as possible, his influence on Italian cinema long outlasted him through initiatives like Cinecittà (p. 11).

Beyond its direct funding and organizational support, Mussolini's government also enacted a number of regulatory policies to complement other public initiatives, bolster Italian filmmaking, and provide a market opening for industry leaders. For example, in 1927, a law was passed to mandate that 10% of all films shown in Italian theaters must be made in Italy, the stipulations for qualifying as such being that its screenplay was written by an Italian, that the majority of workers on the film were Italians, and that all scenes were shot in Italy (Reich, 2002, p. 8; "Sommario," 1927, p. 2909). In 1933, the law was updated to raise the portion of Italian films shown in Italian theaters to at least 25%, and a foreign film tax was levied the same year (Reich, 2002, p. 8; Hay, 1987, p. 70). In 1935, the state also established the Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche (National Film Industries Institution), or ENIC, as a centralized body to encourage Italian film production and ascertain robust and successful distribution of those films domestically (Reich, 2002, p. 12). By 1941, ENIC owned 95 film theaters in Italy to support its efforts, though it only distributed about 16% to 18% of films in the domestic market overall (p. 12).

As Reich (2002) more exhaustively chronicles, other government initiatives more directly targeted American films to make way for Italian pictures. For instance, the government enacted in 1935 a market quota that allowed only 250 American films to reach Italian cinemas (p. 12). In 1938, ENIC was given monopoly powers over foreign film imports by the Alfieri Law; ENIC

immediately took aggressive action against American distributors, leading America's "Big Four" film studios (MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, and Warner Brothers) to leave the Italian market (p. 12). Where Italy had imported 187 Hollywood films in 1938, the number shrunk to eight by 1942, and a total of only 127 foreign films reached Italy in the latter year (p. 12).

The regime's revitalization efforts undeniably paid off. Between the mid-1920s and late 1930s, film production in Italy grew by seven times (Hay, 1987, p. 70). The industry expanded even more rapidly under the infrastructure Freddi put in place, with the number of feature films released in Italy increasing from 40 in 1937 to 117 in 1942 (Reich, 2002, pp. 10–11). Cinecittà especially was a point of pride for the regime, giving the national film industry a focal point for frequently released, high-quality, ideologically consistent productions backed by top-of-the-line technology and craftsmanship in all aspects of filmmaking (p. 11).

3.2.2 Italian Commercial Films as Propaganda

As I have established, the cultivation of Italian filmmaking served a clear political purpose in pushing back against the primacy of Hollywood films in Italian markets, but the thematic content of Italian films also played a role in the Fascist propaganda project, with commercial films effectively emerging as indirect textual extensions of the regime. Mussolini and his government saw the reconstruction of the Italian film industry as a very important way to increase national pride and build a national Fascist culture, and the growth of the industry in the 1930s allowed the regime to use the cinema to create and promote a more concerted public image of the regime.

The potential of film as a vessel for propaganda and its recognition as such by the Fascist government are both well established, and the regime's twenty-year campaign to revive Italian cinema speaks to the importance that Mussolini placed in the art form beyond merely using it to restore an aspect of national pride and bolster the economy. As Hay (1987) writes, "cinema was the culture industry at the center of Italy's desire to assert and defend through cultural policy, especially with respect to foreign culture industries, Italian ideals of the day" (p. 10). Italian leaders very clearly understood that if they could control the medium, then they could control the message, and the liberty they gave to Freddi to centralize filmmaking (and thus national culture) confirms this goal. Hay summarizes the ambitions of the regime to find a cultural core in Italy through the consolidation of the film industry as follows:

Centralization, however, does not in this case refer to a homogenous social structure but rather the need felt by the producers of culture (and here I would include audiences as well as film producers or parastate agencies) to discover a common language in order to maintain a vital link with their cultural heritage while asserting themselves (culturally, economically, and politically) on an increasingly international stage. (p. 10)

The unique experiential dimensions of film also factored into its uptake as a propaganda tool by Mussolini's government. Hay states that the cinema gave its viewers "something which theater nor radio could offer: bigger-than-life images whose mere presence suggested transcendence and inspired awe while at the same time entertaining" (p. 12). In other words, the cinema was a place where one could more actively experience and participate in Fascist culture. Plus, for the most part, cinema's consumption does not assume literacy for speakers of the film's language, making it an even more generalizable medium. The relative immersion and the collective experience that the medium offered facilitated a more efficient and emotional

communication of political ideas, helping to unify the public conception of Fascism, at least to the extent that the depiction of Fascism itself was consistent among filmmakers and distributors.

Furthermore, Mussolini's government never sought to exert total control over Italian filmmaking, instead fostering the cultivation of the industry with only enough supervision over the content of domestically produced films to ensure their congruence with the stabilization of a culture of national pride (Reich, 2002, pp. 6–7; Vezzani, 2017, pp. 98–99). Film under Fascism was a way to entertainingly reach the Italian populace and shape its relationship to the regime, not to mandate adherence to a rigid vision thereof.

Still, Italian films were made to hew generally to the party line by passing through government censors. In part because films would have to be approved in pre-production to receive funding, most of the censors' changes were unsubstantial, including removing joking critiques that could be taken as anti-Fascist, and censorship became even laxer under a post-Freddi censor board as the government tried to plug the market gap created by import restrictions (Hay, 1987, p. 13). As a result of the censor process, though, Italian filmmakers learned to practice self-censorship, diluting any overt political messaging in their films to streamline the production and release of their movies (p. 13). In fact, only one film out of the approximately 700 that were evaluated by censors between 1930 and 1944 was not released, and only a few were posthumously removed from the market (p. 13).

Indeed, most of the popular films produced during the Fascist era were more or less escapist projects, their political messages lying somewhat below the surface. Reich (2002) explains the goal of commercial filmmaking in Italy to center entertainment over ideology as such:

Italian commercial cinema focused on cinema's capacity to delight and enthrall.... The

film industry's reliance on cinema's entertainment value formed the basis for a cultural politics of evasion. What the industry wanted were not feature films that functioned as overt, dogmatic political mouthpieces. The task of the directors, scriptwriters, and performers involved was not to make the spectator think, but rather to induce him or her to forget. (p. 3)

The fictional films approved and distributed under the regime rarely had an explicit propagandistic angle guiding their narratives, instead serving to excite and entertain audiences and more indirectly comment on Italian culture. As Landy (2000) writes, "the bottom line for a lot of commercial production was to make the films profitable at home and, if possible, abroad" (p. 15). More so than outright political gesturing, Italian leaders were more interested in satisfying audiences through spectacular genre exercises; escapism was the overarching priority.

The regime had its share of more overtly propagandistic pictures, but genre pictures were more common (Bondanella & Pacchioni, 2017, pp. 29–31). Italian filmmakers knowingly imitated modes and motifs made popular by Hollywood films but did so in subtle service of the regime's political project through conservatively tinged, inoffensive, and often simple narratives. As Bondanella and Pacchioni (2017) state:

Only rarely were commercial films expected to reflect the regime's ideology, and most Fascists in the movie industry were pragmatists, not ideologues. Most preferred to produce popular entertainment, not indoctrination, and if there were a model abroad to imitate, Mussolini's would-be totalitarian regime preferred Hollywood's, not the rigidly controlled popular culture of Soviet Russia or Nazi Germany. (p. 27)

The Nazi government held a much firmer grasp on German filmmaking than did the Fascist regime on its national industry, with Adolf Hitler involving himself directly in the Nazi Party's information campaigns by employing filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl to make his government's most important propaganda films, always in line with his vision (Gunston, 1960, pp. 13–17). Where Mussolini did not have a Leni Riefenstahl-like figure at his disposal to offer a singularized, dogmatic view of Fascist modernity, his regime did encourage filmmakers to leave their own artistic mark in their films while fitting within loose ideological guidelines. Certain commercial directors and, as is covered in the next section, government newsreels no doubt helped to tinge the Italian cinema with a nationalistic bent, but never under the regime did there emerge any genuine effort to achieve true aesthetic or thematic unity in filmmaking.

Italian cinema under Fascism was far more concerned with market viability than immediate ideological utility, although this is not to say that the fostering of a healthy commercial industry did not have its own political motivations. Mussolini recognized the potential for the domestic and international Fascist project of creating a more open culture of artistry, at least compared to contemporary national film cultures in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, in that it would help cultivate a cadre of skilled and visionary artists and technicians and more engagingly reach Italian audiences.

In its own way, this mode of filmmaking carried a very important political purpose. Freddi himself appreciated the potential that escapist movies had as less overt purveyors of the social aspects of Fascist ideology and, in the latter part of the 1930s, used his office to make sure that such messages were clear in these films (Vezzani, 2017, p. 98). What resulted was a corpus of films that “to a large extent tried to convey indirect propaganda and to educate individuals through core Fascist values, such as the prominence of moral principles over materialism, thus

exploiting fiction films to fortify the regime's hegemony over all Italian classes" (p. 98). These movies, building on popular Hollywood tropes and genres, sought to appeal to audience sensibilities rather than force spectators to rotely confront a straightforward transmission of Fascist doctrine. Though their narratives tended to reinforce the ideals of the regime, such films were intended as pieces of art more than they were political tools, which regime propagandists hoped would make them more potent as stabilizers of a national culture.⁴

For instance, light romantic comedies in the style of those from Hollywood were quite popular under the regime. Director Mario Camerini made many such pictures, communicating "an ironic and critical review of the polite society of middle-class Italy" (Bondanella & Pacchioni, 2017, p. 43). For one, in his 1932 film *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!* (*What Rascals Men Are!*), he presents actor and future filmmaker Vittorio De Sica as a sort of "Italian Cary Grant," making use of his tender but boisterous comic persona to help position him within a cadre of budding Italian film stars in the style of Hollywood stardom (pp. 43–44). Camerini's on-location camerawork in the industrial center of Milan suggests "Fascist Italy's economic strength and desire for industrial modernization," providing a compelling backdrop for De Sica's chauffeur/mechanic Bruno as he attempts to rise above his station by impersonating a rich man to win over the shopgirl Mariuccia (p. 44). The film ends with Bruno, having abandoned his facade, making up with Mariuccia, reinforcing "the populist values of self-sufficiency, class solidarity, and social stability (not social mobility) in the process" (p. 44).

⁴ Peter Bondanella and Federico Pacchioni's (2017) *A History of Italian Cinema* is a helpful source on the narrative messages behind many of the most important Italian genre films of the age.

Though implicitly political genre pictures like *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!* were more prevalent, it is still important to describe the presence of more propaganda-heavy feature films in the Italian market. Landy (2000) writes that, in the vein of other interwar film cultures, Italian cinema “ransacked earlier historical moments—the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, the Risorgimento, and World War I—to create a pastiche of elements drawn from popular folklore, literature, theater, opera, and current events” (p. 52). Though the incorporation of such elements of Italian culture pervaded most films of the era, they were emphasized especially heavily in films with a stronger political bent, most notably in historical films (p. 52). By calling back to moments of Italian pride throughout history—including military victories, national revolutions, and artistic achievements—such movies offered overt parallels to Mussolini’s leadership and his interest in restoring a sense of fervent national unity. These films offered models for how Fascist Italy could be, whether through glorious spectacle or a more fantastic sense of nostalgia (p. 52). The filmmakers behind such projects, says Landy, used a style “marked by a straining toward sublimity, religiosity, and sensuality” to provoke reflection and convey “an elegiac, nostalgic locus of cultural aspirations and anxieties” (p. 54).

Mussolini-like strongmen were at the center of many of these films, such as Carmine Gallone’s 1937 grand epic *Scipione l’africano* (*Scipione Africanus: The Defeat of Hannibal*), which Landy (2000) says “deploys every aspect of melodramatic representation and technological expertise to provide a monumental and spectacular treatment of the past” (p. 55). The film very explicitly references Mussolini’s 1935 invasion of Africa by pulling from one of Ancient Rome’s strongest military feats (also in Africa, no less), analogizing the Fascist leader with the powerful and ultimately victorious Scipio and underlining not-so-implicitly “the importance of agricultural as well as weapons production to support the war effort” (pp. 55–58).

The film exemplifies the complicated Fascist project of using images of the past to push for the modern progress of the regime, aligning with “the eclecticism and ambivalent historicizing characteristic of the era’s cinema” (p. 58).

Those in charge of the regime’s film initiatives noted Hollywood’s commercial success and actively imitated it, choosing to build a cadre of stars, technicians, and auteur directors to make Italian cinema optimally palatable for the moviegoing public (pp. 27–28). More explicit propaganda came primarily in the form of government-produced newsreels, which were played during the intermissions of commercial films (p. 27).⁵

3.2.3 Italian Documentary and Newsreel Production: The Istituto Nazionale LUCE

Though the Italian government’s hold over the popular cinema was rather loose, the regime did make a strong effort to centrally produce and disseminate documentary films throughout the *ventennio*, and it was in this domain that Fascist-era cinema was the most explicitly and aggressively Fascist, per se. The vast majority of Fascist Italy’s nonfiction film production was mediated through L’Unione Cinematografica Educativa (The Educational Cinematography Union), more commonly known as the Istituto Nazionale LUCE (National LUCE Institute). LUCE, abbreviated as such in a knowing reference to the Italian word for “light,” was founded under the auspices of Mussolini himself in 1924 and became fully absorbed

⁵ For more in-depth explanations of the manifestations of Fascist ideology and iconography in Italian commercial films produced during the regime, multiple works by Marcia Landy provide strong filmic analyses and ample historical context. I recommend her *The folklore of consensus: theatricality in the Italian cinema, 1930–1943* (1993), *Italian Film* (2000), and *Fascism in Film: The Italian Commercial Cinema, 1931–1943* (1986).

by the state by 1925, becoming the Italian government's official in-house documentary production unit (Ercole, 2014, p. 494). Its documentaries offered some of the most directly propagandistic filmic interpretations of the regime, serving as a key component of Fascist propaganda both domestically and abroad; according to Hay (1987), LUCE was "frequently given to making Italian popular culture appear historic," seeking to develop "a national spirit through popular myth" (p. 207).

Between 1926 and 1927, LUCE established a series of film libraries to accompany its existing Cinemateca Agricola Nazionale (National Agriculture Cinematheque), creating the Cinemateca Industriale di Propaganda e di Istruzione (Cinematheque for Industrial Propaganda and Education), the Cinemateca Propaganda e Cultura all'Estero (Cinematheque for Culture and Propaganda Abroad), the Cinemateca di Cultura Nazionale (Cinematheque for National Culture), the Cinemateca Igienica e di Prevenzione Sociale (Cinematheque for Social Hygiene and Prevention), the Cinemateca Turistica e di Propaganda Marinara (Cinematheque for Touristic and Maritime Propaganda), the Cinemateca per l'Arte e l'Istruzione Religiosa (Cinematheque for Art and Religious Education), and the Cinemateca Militare d'Istruzione e Propaganda (Cinematheque for Military Education and Propaganda), which together provide a clear picture of the subjects that emerged as primary foci of the regime in terms of what its leaders thought would inspire their intended public perception of Fascist Italy (Laura, 2000, p. 34; Ercole, 2014, pp. 494–508). All told, LUCE produced over 3,700 documentaries, shorts, and newsreels from its foundation until the end of the war in 1945 (Ercole, 2014, p. 494).

From 1926 until the end of the regime, the screening of LUCE films was mandatory in all Italian movie theaters, ascertaining the faith that Mussolini's government put in LUCE to capably communicate the regime's conception of Italian history, culture, and values to the Italian

citizenry (Ercole, 2014, p. 494). LUCE documentaries were also envisioned as having an important educational purpose and were frequently projected in Italian schools (Hay, 1987, p. 205). Finally, as I cover in more detail throughout this thesis, these films were distributed abroad by the Italian government to be viewed by foreign publics.

Over the course of Mussolini's reign, LUCE's propaganda efforts expanded beyond just the production and dissemination of propaganda. For instance, more than ten years before the Alfieri and Monopoly Laws of 1938, LUCE pushed to limit the number of foreign films that were projected in Italian theaters, though this campaign was largely unsuccessful given the inability of the domestic film industry to plug the gap that blocking these films would leave and recover the revenue that foreign films brought to Italian cinemas (Hay, 1987, p. 69). In the same period, it worked to earn funding for commercial film production through private banks and investors (p. 69). Once the national film industry had the capacity to produce enough films to warrant strict import restrictions, ENIC, which had been born from LUCE, capably managed those efforts (Vezzani, 2018, p. 49; Reich, 2002, p. 12). The agency also briefly published its own journal in the 1930s, which covered its activities and its approach to propaganda as a tool to influence Italians' understanding of their national history (Hay, 1987, p. 207).

4.0 Fascism and Italians in America Before World War Two

With a firmer conception of Italian Fascism, its ideological footing, its cultural manifestations, and its bureaucratic extensions in place, I now proceed to discuss the American populace's complicated relationship with Fascist Italy and how Mussolini's government sought to influence this relationship by exporting Fascism to the United States (and particularly to Italian Americans). Both currents factor equally into discussions of the United States-Italy relationship during the pre-war portion of the *ventennio*; in promoting Fascism abroad, the regime sought to instill a broadly positive view of itself among the general American public to encourage closer political and economic collaboration between the United States and Italy but also strove to establish a closer rapport with (and inspire pride in Fascist Italy among) Italian Americans. While Americans had their own conceptions of Fascism, the regime found many ideological allies in America as a number of Italian American advocacy groups and American *Fasci* cropped up around the country, and it directed diplomatic resources toward fostering their organization.

4.1 Italians in the United States

By the time Fascism had taken hold in Italy, there were already millions of Italians living in the United States. From about 1880 to 1930, over 17 million Italians left their home country, facing poor economic conditions and minimal labor opportunities domestically (Piccoli, 2014, pp. 8–11). More than four million of these emigrants arrived in America—the most popular

destination for Italians—between 1880 and 1920, the majority of them young, unskilled, and undereducated jobseekers from the southern regions of the country (Gilkey, 1967, pp. 24–25; Piccoli, 2014, pp. 13–14). Many intended to return to Italy after finding success in America, and a large portion would move back and forth between the two countries, but most remained and eventually settled into communities across the country (Gilkey, 1967, p. 25; Piccoli, 2014, p. 21). Of the many immigrant groups who arrived in America at the turn of the century, Italians were the largest, representing 24.3% of registered migrants in the first decade of the 1900s and 19.3% in the 1910s (Tintori, 2004a, p. 9).

Italian immigrants dispersed across the United States, usually working in low-paying industries and often being relegated to seasonal jobs (Gabaccia, 2000, pp. 77–78). Many seasonal employees would work in infrastructure construction during the spring and summer and return to Italy in the winter, bringing back money to support their families. Many found work in agriculture or fishing around the West Coast, especially in the wine-producing regions of California, which they helped develop, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Most settled in the Northeast, closer to their main arrival point of Ellis Island, New York. In addition to seasonal employment, Italians were prevalent in manufacturing, mining, artisanship, food service, and shoe repair in and around major urban centers along the East Coast and in the Great Lakes region. In general, the abundance of labor that they provided led to their exploitation by American businessmen, who suppressed their wages and pitted them against other laborers (Tintori, 2004a, pp. 11–12).

Even outside of the difficulties of finding stable and viable employment, Italians typically faced hardship in acclimating to American society upon their arrival. Alongside other migrant groups coming from Southern Europe, they were immediately othered; for Italians, their distinct

language and highly common practice of Catholicism made them appear as “new immigrants,” observably different from the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who had migrated to and established themselves in America over the previous century (Tintori, 2004a, pp. 10–11).

In the face of such adversity, coupled with the foreignness of the society in which they found themselves, Italian migrants’ social groupings began to take on a more ethnonational character. After all, Italy as a unified nation had only existed since 1861, and the uptake of any cohesive, cross-regional sense of Italianness was not immediate (Moe, 2002, pp. 165–166). Salvemini (1977) argues that the conditions Italians faced together across the United States inspired in them a proud national identity that they had not conceptualized while in Italy:

In such straits they realized that they belonged to a national group different from all others. They had never felt themselves to be Italians as long as they had been living in the old country, among people who spoke their same dialect, who had their same habits, and who were laboring under their same poverty. National consciousness awoke in them when they came in touch (which often meant to blows) with groups of different national origins in America. Italy now seemed to them no longer a land from which they had been forced to leave in search of a less distressing life. Italy became in their minds a land from which they felt exile, of whose past glories they felt proud, and for whose present fortunes or misfortunes they felt glad or miserable. (p. 4)

The birth of national consciousness among many Italian Americans not only had political ramifications but it was also reflected in the physical proximity within which these populations existed. A number of “Little Italies” cropped up in American cities during and after the mass migration waves, especially in more run-down neighborhoods (Piccoli, 2014, p. 23). Their residents lived in squalor, often sharing tenements with friends, extended family, and boarders

(p. 23). Thus, Italian Americans retained—and sometimes possibly even strengthened—their connection to their homeland, a trait that was reinforced by their community building practices and that was, as I will cover, exploited by the Fascist government.

4.2 Fascism in the United States

Throughout the *ventennio*, the Fascist government placed great importance on its relationship with the United States. Not only had America emerged as one of the most politically powerful and economically advanced nations in the aftermath of World War One, but it had also received the largest influx of Italians of any country (Gabaccia, 2000, p. 5). Thus, Italy saw a promising opportunity to strengthen its ties to America by seeking to connect more closely with the Italian diaspora there. At the same time, the regime sought to curry favor with American political elites through efforts that catered to the non-Italian public in America.

4.2.1 America's Relationship with Fascist Italy

Despite their political dissimilarities, the United States and Italy maintained a fairly close diplomatic relationship up until the mid-1930s, when Mussolini's imperial ambitions made many Americans somewhat warier to support the regime. Even in the years leading up to World War Two, a shared interest in commercial collaboration and in containing Communist tendencies in Europe kept both countries eager to maintain friendly relations (Vezzani, 2017, p. 64). The assistance of American financiers through loans and war debt payments helped Mussolini to restabilize the Italian economy in the mid-1920s and also provided American investors with

easier access to Italian—and thus European—markets (pp. 65–66). Despite some early hiccups—including most notably a series of American immigration restrictions passed in the early 1920s that cut off a large portion of remittances to Italy and made relieving its overabundance of laborers more difficult—United States-Italy relations were relatively stable for over a decade (Tintori, 2004a, pp. 11–12).

For many Americans, Mussolini's ascension was exciting; it signaled a more tightly managed path forward for Italy that contrasted the image they held of a country whose progress was limited by an unintelligent, unsophisticated populace (Diggins, 1972, pp. 7–57). This is not to say that most Americans were enthusiastically or even mildly supportive of the regime—in fact, there was a strong and vocal anti-Fascist contingent among the American public throughout the *ventennio*—but rather that Fascism was not generally taken as an overly extreme, otherworldly phenomenon, instead being at least tolerated by American political and economic leaders (Salvemini, 1977, pp. xxvii–xxxviii). Support for the regime seemingly even grew in the early 1930s, when the Fascist corporatist system demonstrated a relative social and economic resilience to the Great Depression that many Americans admired (Vezzani, 2017, p. 72).

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was taken rather unfavorably in America, but United States-Italy diplomatic relations remained strong (p. 74). In addition to the clear commercial benefits of maintaining close ties with Italy, President Roosevelt's administration saw Mussolini as a counterbalance to Adolf Hitler's aggressive behavior in Europe and worried that isolating Italy would draw it closer to Germany or, by making Mussolini's war in Africa prohibitively costly, provoke him to launch a new military campaign in Europe (p. 74). Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany would become allies regardless, the former's entrance into the war in

support of Hitler in June 1940 marking a point of no return for the United States, which itself would declare war on Italy in December 1941.

4.2.2 Italian Americans' Conception of Fascism

While Fascist propaganda naturally made its way to Americans of all ethnic and racial backgrounds as Mussolini sought to promote a more positive perception of his government among the general public, Fascist diplomats demonstrably worked to focus much of their activity on Italian Americans. After all, Mussolini considered the Italian diaspora in the United States to be of great importance to the diffusion of Fascist ideology in America and hoped to use them as a regime-friendly voting bloc in America while at the same time building relations with powerful Americans regardless of their heritage (p. 68).

As I have covered, Italian Americans maintained a uniquely close relationship with their homeland, even if that connection tended to weaken over the decades. For one, the American immigration restriction laws targeting Italians (among others) led to the acquisition of citizenship for many Italians already living in America, which helped to activate their political consciousness (Tintori, 2004a, pp. 11–13). Also, the cutoff of new arrivals under these laws practically fixed the borders of Italian American communities, further adding to their ethnopolitical cohesion in a way that would generally prove useful to the regime (p. 13).

Moreover, the arrival of Fascism had both attractive and repulsive effects on Italian Americans in terms of their perception of Italy, with some experiencing a renewed national pride and others finding themselves alienated by their home country's new direction. Vezzani (2017) delineates four separate groups of Italian Americans based on their relationship to the Fascist government, and though they represent necessarily broad and somewhat overlapping

generalizations of Italian American political thought, they prove very helpful for understanding how Italian Americans understood and interacted with the regime. Firstly, the regime had its pro-Fascist sympathizers within Italian American communities, whose exploits as propagandists and organizers are detailed throughout this thesis (p. 165). On the other hand, there were large anti-Fascist circles across the United States, their leaders attacking the regime's undemocratic behaviors, usually from a leftist or anarchist perspective (p. 166). There was also a "Southernist" faction that mostly supported the regime for the pride it brought to Italy and the traditionalist aesthetics—attributes important to their "vernacular culture"—associated therewith it but that did not engage with Fascism much beyond these conceptions (p. 166). Finally, some Italian Americans sought not to engage with Italy or their Italianness in any capacity; this was especially common among second-generation Italian Americans, who sought to undermine their ethnic identity and assimilate into American culture (p. 167). As such, Italian Americans were certainly not a unified political bloc, but their varying association with Fascism adds helpful context to the development of Fascist thought in America.

4.2.3 The *Fasci* and Other Italian American Organizations

As Italian Americans found a common baseline identity in America and became more politically active, many formed organizations in support of Fascism. In fact, even before the Fascist Party took control of Italy, there were many organizations that helped bring together Italian Americans. For example, the Dante Alighieri Society, founded in Italy in 1889, worked to found schools for Italian communities abroad (Salvemini, 1977, p. 7). There was also the Order of the Sons of Italy, an American organization that set up lodges across the country to celebrate Italian heritage; the Sons of Italy was recognized as the official representative body for Italians

in America by the Italian government in 1920, and by 1924 it boasted 160,000 members across 1,110 lodges (pp. 5–9).

The arrival of the Fascist government was quickly followed by the birth of *Fasci* in major American cities like New York, Boston, San Francisco, and Philadelphia (Diggins, 1972, p. 89). Giovanni Di Silvestro, the leader of the Sons of Italy, declared his organization's allegiance to Mussolini, but this caused a coalition led by prominent Italian American politicians to break off (Salvemini, 1977, pp. 11–13; Diggins, 1972, pp. 89–95). A short-lived Fascist Central Council soon gave way to a more robust organizing body for American Fascists: the Fascist League of North America (FLNA), which was founded as early as 1921 but came to prominence in 1925 (Salvemini, 1977, pp. 14–15; Diggins, 1972, p. 90). Under the urging of Fascist diplomats, the FLNA established at least 80 branches with around 12,500 total members across America (Diggins, 1972, pp. 91–93).

Increased attention to the FLNA and its government-affiliated propaganda efforts in the press led to its dissolution by the United States government in 1929, but by then the network of *Fasci* was strong enough that its work was quickly and easily taken up by other Fascist leaders in America, including the Dante Alighieri Society and the Sons of Italy, who were reliable disseminators of propaganda (pp. 94–95). Under such heavy scrutiny from suspicious American leaders, Fascist officials undertook more indirect propaganda activities, funneling art and media through their consulates and affiliate organizations and downplaying any explicit ideological angle in their presentation. The regime was supported in this goal by a number of information centers like the Italian Historical Society, the Italy America Society, and the Italian Library of Information, but a lengthier discussion of those groups and the key roles that they played in Fascist film diplomacy campaigns is saved for Chapter 6. By the 1930s, then, a sturdy and

flexible infrastructure providing for the collaboration between the Fascist government and American sympathizers had been stabilized, allowing a deeper penetration of the regime into American life through lectures, educational materials, radio, and film.⁶

⁶ For more complete examinations of the presence of Fascist thought and propaganda in America, see Gaetano Salvemini's (1977) aforementioned *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, John Patrick Diggins' (1972) aforementioned *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America*, Philip Cannistraro's (1999) *Blackshirts in Little Italy. Italian-Americans and Fascism 1921-1929*, and Matteo Pretelli's (2012) *La via fascista alla democrazia americana: cultura e propaganda nelle comunità italo-americane*.

5.0 Fascist Italy's Film Diplomacy in the United States

Having sufficiently explained the conception and practice of Fascism in Italy, the evolving state of the Italian film industry under the regime, and the relationship between Fascist Italy and America, I now proceed to the central topic of this thesis: the distribution of Italian films in the United States by the Fascist government. In this chapter, I begin by discussing the regime's overall approach to film diplomacy, especially under Ambassador Augusto Rosso, whose thoughts on the matter are the most thoroughly documented and under whom a genuine coordinated effort to weaponize the cinema for propaganda purposes emerged, and elaborate on how its diplomats organized film screenings through its consular network, a process which was met with administrative overload and many logistical conundra. The following two chapters discuss how these diplomats and their colleagues in Rome sought to ease the burden that film distribution and exhibition left upon the consulates by partnering with Italian American institutions (Chapter 6) and private distributors (Chapter 7).

These three chapters make evident the unconquerable difficulties the regime faced in finding and following a cohesive strategy to disseminate Italian films among the American populace. Though regime officials seem to have been rather united in their conceptualization of the cinema as an important conduit for propaganda, their approaches were mired with financial and administrative hurdles, ultimately resulting in a series of short-lived or poorly managed programs that suggest a lack of sufficient top-down coordination or guidance.

5.1 Ambassador Rosso and the Emergence of a New Fascist Film Diplomacy

Despite the pronounced decentralization that characterized Italy's approach to film propaganda in America, Augusto Rosso, the Ambassador to the United States from Italy between 1933 and 1936, played a significant leading role in guiding the regime's overarching approach to film diplomacy during his tenure, with a much more considered and thorough propaganda campaign emerging under his leadership (Vezzani, 2017, p. 67).⁷ During his ambassadorship, Rosso sought to instill a positive vision of Fascism among the American public in order to, as he shared in a 1933 speech in New York, "preserve the spiritual strength of the peaceful relationship between Italy and America" ("Augusto Rosso," 1964). Judging from his communications with the Italian consulates in America and many of Mussolini's government ministers in Rome, it is clear that Rosso held a firm belief in the importance of film as a communicative vessel for the regime and actively sought to optimize his diplomatic corps' film distribution programs both in terms of bureaucratic efficiency and audience impact, even if enduring administrative issues and resource limitations ultimately hindered his progress.

Though it was just one of many tools that Mussolini's government employed to market Fascism to international audiences, Rosso's communications with Fascist bureaucrats in Rome and with his diplomats across the United States make it clear that the cinema was a noteworthy fixation of the Italian diplomatic mission in America. In a message dated September 9th, 1933, Rosso thanks the Ministro degli Affari Esteri "for the numerous mailings of films intended to be

⁷ There were five Italian Ambassadors to the United States during the *ventennio*. Gelasio Caetani was Ambassador from 1922 to 1925, Giacomo De Martino from 1925 to 1935, Augusto Rosso from 1933 to 1936, Fulvio Suvich from 1936 to 1938, and Ascanio Colonna from 1939 to 1941.

projected among the Italian and Italian American communities in the United States,” which to that point had “properly served to form or to complement interesting programs at numerous meetings,” the first direct indication that I could find that Italian Americans were often the primary intended audience for the embassy’s film propaganda efforts and also the first hint at a shift toward a more deliberate film propaganda strategy (Rosso, 1933, p. 1).⁸ I could not locate any reports from the embassy or consulates detailing what exactly these events Rosso mentions were, though Rosso makes reference to “brief reports given by this Embassy on the use of the films” that at least proves that, even in the early 1930s, there was at least some level of intention and interest behind film propaganda and its effects (p. 1).

Rosso goes on to assert that “the system followed until now for the circulation of films does not fully meet the needs” of the embassy. He continues, “for various reasons, among which not only that of the economy, this Embassy and its dependent Royal Offices must limit community meetings to circumstances of a certain importance or to patriotic anniversaries” (p. 1). At that point, according to Rosso, films were distributed through the diplomatic circuit to the consulates on a case-by-case basis and for very limited periods of time, and almost always for special events, a strategy that had proven to be inefficient both in terms of cost and the maximization of their reach and effect (p. 1).

As a remedy, Rosso suggests that the *Ministro degli Affari Esteri* create a “permanent fund” for the embassy to be able to send out films as necessary at any moment, offering that

⁸ This translation and all others of government communications that follow are mine. I note when a message sent to Fascist officials is presented in its original English text, so all other government documents cited herein can be assumed to be translated from Italian. I seek to retain as many of the grammatical idiosyncrasies I can from these texts but sometimes take the liberty in my translations of modernizing the language to make it more scrutable.

films could be renewed every six months unless officials in Rome needed them back sooner (p. 2). Rosso's dissatisfaction with his inability to help facilitate more film screenings and his direct request to be granted more resources for film distribution—and thus control and flexibility over the process—demonstrates a strong interest and belief in the importance of film for fulfilling the regime's propagandistic aims, though his letter by itself does not make clear whether his superiors in Rome or his diplomatic subordinates shared his ambitions. Indeed, his call for a permanent fund soon gave way to other strategies, as I cover in the next section, but it still represents a much more intentional evaluation of the regime's potential to better circulate Italian films in America.

Rosso also offers his ideas on what sort of thematic content is best suited to the regime's aims, writing that “the subjects must imitate the salient events of Italian life and the principal works of Fascism, with special regard to those of a social nature, such as schools, after-work activity, national stadiums, health establishments, hospitals, etc” (p. 2). Rosso's focus on the quotidian aspects of life under Fascism suggests a desire to reconfigure the American conception of Fascism by creating an image of comfort and progress in Mussolini's Italy. On the other hand, he also places emphasis on showcasing the Fascist military, as “the high educational value of the military discipline even among young men... does not justify the trivial remarks that are sometimes made abroad on ‘Fascism militarism’” (p. 2). Whether by displaying daily life or the military, Rosso appears to have viewed the cinema as an ideological and historical corrective for Americans (and especially Italian Americans), allowing the regime a chance to reclaim the narrative around the Fascist project.

Rosso adds that films about “general culture” would work well in America as “family-time entertainment” in the mode of the *Dopolavoro* (After-work) program, which provided

public leisure-time programming for workers and families under the regime (Rosso, 1933, p. 2; Abse, 1996/2003, p. 395). However, he concedes that there does not exist a similar level of structure and uniformity in American leisure time, with Americans instead only gathering en masse on holidays, but still speculates that these festivities can be exploited to screen films for larger Italian American audiences (Rosso, 1933, p. 2).

Additionally, Rosso expresses concern that “the artistic sense is not developed among the masses... [who] will not see films that illustrate some traditional and picturesque forms of artisanship or antique Italian industries (for example, the extraction of sulfur)” (p. 3). He worries that Italian Americans have become “more or less assimilated to the American taste,” being more likely “to better appreciate that which is new and grandiose, with some benign exceptions for famous monuments” (p. 3). From these thoughts, it is evident that Rosso approached the task of film diplomacy with a level of contemplation not documented under previous ambassadorships, and his musings on how to best reach target audiences in America would inspire his propaganda dissemination initiatives in the coming months, although the exact shifts in content that resulted—if any—are not evident.

5.2 The First Consular Film Circuits

In a June 1934 message to the Ministero degli Esteri, Rosso walked back his idea of establishing a permanent fund for films, realizing the difficulty of adequately coordinating with and quickly and cheaply sending films to consulates that were prohibitively far from Washington, ascertaining that the idea was not realized in the meantime (Rosso, 1934a).

In October 1934, he introduced a more systematized approach to the distribution of LUCE pictures by his consular network, writing about his interest in 31 LUCE films that were paid for by the government to join two others at an exhibition in Chicago, Illinois, assumedly the Century of Progress World's Fair, based on a contemporary report that listed 33 LUCE films to be shown at that event with English subtitles (Rosso, 1934b; "Elenco," n.d.). In another letter from the same day, he stated that (assumedly) these 33 LUCE films would be divided into eleven groups of three films each and distributed by Washington to one of eleven posts: New York, Newark, Boston, Canada, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Cleveland (Rosso, 1934c). "Canada" is listed as such likely to delineate it from the other listed locations—all being American cities—and likely stands in for the Italian Embassy in Ottawa or the Italian Consulate in Toronto, but the Italian Consulate in Denver is missing from this list.

I could not find any record of why exactly these 33 films were selected for exhibition in Chicago to begin with, whether they were decided upon by Rosso or another party in Rome or the United States, or why and which two of the films had already been present in Chicago, but they represent a strong mix of different subject matter that reflects Rosso's interest in presenting various avenues of Italian life under Fascism.⁹

Rosso planned for each batch of three films to be circulated by its host consulate in the field for the next month before being transported to the next location in the lineup, with a five-day travel buffer in which films could not be screened (Rosso, 1934c). The consulates were to manage for themselves the delivery and receipt of each batch of films over the course of eleven

⁹ The 33 films are listed in the Appendix.

monthly cycles before returning them all to the Consulate in New York for a two-month series of screenings at local partner organizations like the Casa Italiana at Columbia University (Rosso, 1934c).

The plan represented a notable—if incomplete—evolution of the Italian Embassy’s approach to film propaganda in prior years. LUCE had been an active component of Mussolini’s domestic and international propaganda project at the time of Rosso’s telegram, and yet no strategy as coordinated as this had arisen to streamline the exhibition of LUCE *cinegiornali* in the United States in that decade (Ercole, 2014, p. 494). The ad hoc approach that the embassy took in procuring and distributing LUCE films for use among the consulates—and its positioning as a central repository for the consulates and other organizations to call upon—came to create too much administrative strain for the embassy and consulates to capably handle, but systematizing the distribution scheme in this way could alleviate that and allow for a more robust propaganda campaign.

Under this new *modus operandi*, the embassy could still maintain a library of LUCE reels but delegate most of the work involving those they deemed most important to the consulates. Plus, by introducing a cycle for the film to follow, both the embassy and bureaucrats in Rome could more easily track where these films were at any given point and better analyze different approaches and results among the consulates. Importantly, this scheme ensured a steady flow of high-quality newsreels for each consulate to employ while keeping consular officials aware of when they would receive their next batch of films, preventing them from having to wait until officials in Rome, other consulates, or affiliate organizations made them available. Finally, Rosso could make certain that these important films penetrated each consulate’s domain more completely.

On November 13th, 1934, Giacomo Paulucci di Calboli, the President of LUCE, sent a telegram affirming that all of LUCE's films could be distributed in the major urban centers of the United States and Canada, effectively giving Rosso the go-ahead for his plan and granting Fascist diplomats much more flexibility over their film propaganda efforts in the process (Paulucci di Calboli Barone, 1934). I could not find any write-ups on the regime's evaluation of the program, but the next section covers evidence from a similar program enacted the next year that provides some insight into the troubles associated with consular film screenings in general.

One year later, Rosso wrote to the Ministero per la Stampa e Propaganda envisioning a "double circuit," where LUCE films would continue to be shipped to the embassy through a diplomatic pouch to avoid customs and then passed along to the twelve main consulates in America and Canada—now including Denver (Rosso, 1935). Rosso planned for a shipment of 24 films, twelve to be moved through the circuit from both coasts to keep each consulate from going more than fifteen days without films to show in their respective territories (Rosso, 1935; Tintori, 2004c, p. 66). What compelled Rosso to move away from the model enacted over the course of the previous year is unclear.

5.3 Issues with the Consular Circuits and Solutions Thereto

The double circuit quickly proved itself to be difficult to capably manage. As Tintori (2004c) writes, "the projections assumed an aura of excessive officiality, anchored as they were to the patronage of the various consulates, arousing the suspicions and discomfort of the American authorities" by evidently belonging to a propaganda mission of a foreign government

(p. 66).¹⁰ Moreover, there remained the same logistical issues that I show to have constantly plagued Italian propaganda efforts; films almost always arrived behind schedule, their delivery being impeded in part by demanding paperwork (p. 66). Plus, even when films arrived on time, they often did not see as much use as they should have, the consulates being greatly limited in the screenings they could organize by the costs of theater rental, projection machines, and accompanying gala provisions (p. 67). As such, while these new distribution schemes showed potential in helping the regime to better disseminate Italian films, they were not backed by enough funding or administrative support to allow them to operate optimally.

In February of 1936, Rosso sent a message to Consul Renzetti of San Francisco in response to a letter of concern from the consulate that I could not locate on enduring problems with the American mission's film propaganda scheme. He reiterates that "the diffusion of Italian films in the United States... [is] one of the most important aspects of our propaganda in this country" but adds that the problems that belie film distribution in America "can only be resolved with commercial and speculative criteria" (Rosso, 1936, pp. 1–2). Here, Rosso seems to suggest that a more business-oriented approach to distribution was necessary for the regime to keep up with the currents of the film industry in America and to streamline and expand his diplomatic corps' work toward this venture.

Rosso goes on to vaguely laud the impact of the monthly distribution cycles, writing that "[t]he experiences of the first circuit carried out by the Royal Embassy were excellent in every regard, judging by what the Royal Consuls' employees reported; and this despite the fact that the films that were available then were greatly inferior to those that form the current second circuit"

¹⁰ All quotes from Tintori (2004a; 2004b; 2004c) are my translations.

(p. 3). As noted previously, almost all of the first-circuit LUCE films that made the rounds in 1935 were originally distributed for exhibition at the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago and thereby can be assumed to have been deemed strong showcases of the country (whether by the embassy or officials in Rome), making this comment somewhat confusing. Rosso gives no indication of what sets the second-circuit films apart from those of the first circuit, indicating a lack of curatorial effort.

Rosso also provides some insight into the non-universality of his positive evaluation of the distribution scheme, quoting Consul Renzetti's assessment that, in San Francisco, "the presentation of films done in the space of a month across two or three meetings of co-nationals gave only poor results" (p. 4). Rosso, however, counters that "if our monthly programs are viewed in San Francisco across two or three meetings of co-nationals that gather seven or eight hundred people each, the results are already satisfying, given the means you have." From this, it seems evident that Rosso's primary criterion for the success of these LUCE film screenings was the number of people that they brought out. Even then, he does not invoke audience numbers as a gauge to justify his claims throughout the rest of the letter, and his worries about the content of the films and the ways in which they are presented, which are detailed below, suggest a deeper level of analysis on the nuances of film propaganda under his ambassadorship. Despite the supposed success of the monthly distribution program, Rosso expresses concern that it has not proven to be strong or comprehensive enough to meet the regime's aims. He writes that the current system of circulating "a small number of films divided into monthly programs, which already gave satisfactory results last year, is only a stopgap adopted until an adequate organization is ready to cover every aspect of the entire problem" (p. 2). Without commenting directly on the ideological impact of the LUCE films or the dynamics of programs at which

screenings thereof take place, Rosso asserts that they are by nature noncommercial, which complicates their diffusion, especially in America:

These few films with purely Italian subjects, spoken in Italian, cannot in fact by their own characteristics be destined for the Italian community and for that very restricted number of Americans who live in close contact with the Italian American element, giving us at the same time the measure of reception that the films themselves could receive. (p. 2)

Thus, in America, there exists the additional problem that these films arguably have even less immediate pertinence to the populace than they do in Italy, providing a relatively undramatized vision of a distinct world communicated in a language that not even all Italian Americans would have still practiced at this time, let alone the rest of the United States. In other words, even with Italian American diasporas as their primary target, there was not much of an enthusiastic audience for these films in the United States, nor was there a clear path toward audience expansion.

Rosso adds that “precisely because they are limited and without any commercial character, the Royal Consulates have until now been able to handle” the circulation of the LUCE films, “as they would have done for the organization of any assembly of a colonial or propagandistic nature” (p. 2). Therefore, Rosso’s issues with the current film propaganda system stem from the fact that these films exist as more or less traditional objects of propaganda that lack the sort of commercial viability or artistic distinction that would set them apart, limiting what the consulates could do to reach American audiences.

At the same time, Rosso expresses some discomfort with “the meddling of the Royal Offices in matters which involve commercial responsibility,” a task beyond the typical duties of

the propaganda sections of the consulates, and fears that “our penetration would be seriously impeded by the impression of official propaganda that the Royal Authorities would not fail to provide, devaluing also the economic value of every undertaking” (p. 2). Rosso does not elaborate further on this point to explain how exactly other items of propaganda would interfere economically with the distribution of LUCE pictures. It is possible that he viewed such propaganda as subsuming the role that these films could play in communicating to Americans about the regime, in effect rendering those films less useful and desirable to audiences. Additionally, in line with his comments about the possibly blunt propagandistic qualities of the distribution scheme, he may have seen this other propaganda as a component of that issue—with film then existing as just another indistinct tool to be employed by the regime—that thereby limited the diplomatic corps’ trust and reach among the American citizenry.

Rosso then turns to address the series of concerns raised by the Consulate in San Francisco, providing some of the most detailed insight into the mechanics of film propaganda distribution under the regime in the process. He outlines the financial realities underlying the process and the complications which they created for the regime, writing first that Italian films—excluding LUCE pictures, which were sent to America duty-free to be projected without admission costs—were not excluded from the payment of customs, contextualizing the regime’s concern over the revenue-generating potential of non-institutional exhibitions (p. 3). Rosso also hints at a highly involved relationship between Fascist diplomats and film producers in Italy, mentioning “contractual commitments assumed by our production houses” that allow for government-led screenings and defending an agreement wherein producers receive 50% of the net revenues from the regime’s film distribution work (pp. 3–4).

Importantly, Rosso adds that these producers decided not to allow free, public screenings of their films abroad by the regime, which necessarily limited the opportunities that the diplomatic corps in America had to reach American audiences and necessitated a bifurcated approach to distribution (p. 3). In this way, the Fascist government's film propaganda project was not only designed to influence Americans' opinions of the regime but also to help buoy the struggling domestic film industry in Italy.

Thus, Italian films had to compete against all other participants in the American box office in one way or another, and with the Italian film industry already being sidelined to Hollywood in Italy, the American front was even more of a challenge for Rosso and his diplomats. After all, as Rosso acknowledged, Italian films already faced an uphill battle in a market in which Italian was not widely spoken and subjects of Italian interest were not as pertinent, and without many opportunities for free exhibitions, most Americans without a preexisting interest in Italy would have been hard-pressed to spend their time and money on films without the same level of accessibility and entertainment value that American pictures provided them.

Therefore, it is likely that most of those who attended showings of Italian films—whether private or public—already had some emotional, ideological, or ancestral attachment to Fascist Italy and thus would have been among those least affected by these films. Unfortunately, Rosso does not make explicit here whether his interest in recruiting more Americans sympathetic to the Fascist cause or solidifying and strengthening ties with Italian Americans and other allegiants was more pressing, and I could not locate any evidence of government assessments of audience breakdowns or detailed reactions to films to point toward one audience sector being targeted over any other.

But, as established earlier in this letter and in the other communications Rosso provided on his film propaganda initiatives, if indeed Fascist diplomats viewed film as an important means of providing Americans with information about the regime in a compelling and non-aggressive way, then being unable to cater to those without a strong prior interest in Italy would have greatly restricted the effectiveness of Rosso's propaganda campaigns. Those least likely or susceptible to having their opinions changed by these films—and those least likely to need to learn about modern Italy through them—were also those that were most likely to attend projections thereof, while non-Italian American audiences and other Americans without a prior allegiance to the regime could not be reached nearly as easily.

Even then, and with only anecdotal justification, Rosso does not seem to fear the impact of ticket fees on his film campaign, relaying that this system has already given “good results; for example in Baltimore, four shows were organized this month with over 3,000 co-nationals, and the voluntary donations superseded the costs, and thus it will be possible to set aside a small sum” (p. 4). However, Rosso still evidently recognized the economic realities of the propaganda scheme and the content which it rewarded, writing the following:

[F]or the effects of our propaganda, the exclusive sending of films of a cultural, touristic and patriotic character—a practice already followed by this Ministry—is absolutely to be avoided. Above all, for our communities, the periodic exhibition of one of these films is undoubtedly recommendable, indeed indispensable, but you must keep in mind that the best means to reach the public is to amuse them: any film, as long as it is attractive, will contribute effectively to our propaganda work, even if it concerns the most indifferent of subjects and even non-Italian subjects. (p. 5)

Here, Rosso admits that the regime must better curate its films to draw in audiences, whether they already have some connection to Fascist Italy or not. His distinction between the cinema and other forms of propaganda emerges once again, as he emphasizes the entertainment value of film over any explicit information transmission. He then further justifies this approach:

The fact that a good film is branded as Italian and that aspects of human life are presented in it under Italian lights or from an Italian point of view already accomplishes that subtle form of propaganda, largely implemented by the English, all the more convincing the less it is perceived by the spectator. (p. 5)

Rosso stresses the importance of having a clear artistic streak in the films destined for American audiences instead of churning them out as simple information delivery machines, as this more personal and emotional perspective would do far more to communicate about the realities of life in Fascist Italy, even if indirectly so, and audiences would more openly accept the ideas contained in these films if they do not feel they are being explicitly propagandized. He then elaborates on how this can be achieved:

The general public in America still sincerely believes in an Italian life that movies from the splendors of a more or less imaginary court to the slums of Naples, which the fantasy of American directors shows to them with insistent monotony. Any Italian film will instead be able to show the quiet industriousness of our farmers, the clean and light-filled houses of our workers, the taste and discreet comfort that surrounds the existence of the Italian professional. The hygiene of our hospitals, the value of our doctors, the organization of our industries, the modernity of our means of communication, the sporting life of the young and even the spiritual achievements of the Regime, can be

illustrated in any film, through a frame that appears on the screen for an instant. It is up to the public—and the American one will do it—to coordinate these impressions and draw the consequences. (pp. 5–6)

While criticizing the more ardent propagandistic approach that Italian films had assumed, Rosso wishes for Italian cinema to continue to showcase the pleasures of life in modern Italy and counter what he sees as harmful, outmoded stereotypes of the country promoted by Hollywood films. He claims that any indication of affluence, even as just a suggestion or backdrop within any scene, will make it clear to American audiences that Italy under Fascism is progressing rapidly. Plus, despite his obvious wariness about their filmgoing preferences, Rosso expresses confidence that better serving Americans' interests will produce the intended results, writing that "[i]n principle, the public here receives foreign films well, as long as their taste is taken into account, it being quite particular, but on the other hand unrefined and very uniform, not to say standardized" (p. 6).

Rosso then writes that in order for this strategic shift to take full effect, producers must also address the "language problem" (p. 6). He concedes that producing separate versions of films with English audio would prove very cumbersome for LUCE and thus offers that the Italian versions can instead be circulated in America with occasional English-language summary captions. Still, with regard to both language and content, I found no evidence of further attempts at heavily considered film curation through diplomatic channels or in the regime's dealings with external partners.

Finally, Rosso turns his attention toward the need to reconsider the distribution system that the embassy had employed up until that point. In the consulates' place, Rosso posits that "a serious commercial organization that can give the results that everything suggests would be

satisfactory from now on” with regard to the dissemination of LUCE films especially but does not offer any more information on what such an organization would look like, how it would be established, or where it would operate within the government (p. 6).

Rosso characterizes the current work of the consulates as “provisional,” asserting that their work in film propaganda “would logically become superfluous” once a new commercial system emerges (p. 7). He claims that they have reached their maximum bandwidth and that their role in the distribution scheme must be pared down to “circulating some films of a particular character and in predetermined cases” (pp. 6–7). He elaborates that the consulates’ new responsibilities would consist of “facilitating the distribution of films of a cultural character, as well as to Italian institutes and to American universities, high schools, and clubs, a task currently entrusted only to the Italy America Society of New York” (p. 7). Once a commercial organization was set in place, the consulates’ primary role in the film propaganda scheme would be “to encourage the signing of contracts, keeping Italian companies informed of opportunities that the market offers and providing American ones with all information and suggestions” (p. 6).

However, Rosso’s plans never bore themselves out. The Italy America Society that he mentions (and which is covered in more detail in Chapter 6) continued to serve as the embassy’s distributor of LUCE films through the end of 1938, at which point the Italian Library of Information in New York City (also the subject of a more detailed examination in Chapter 6) took up its mantle. It is not evident whether Rosso’s concerns were ever seriously considered by his superiors in the Ministero degli Affari Esteri or the Ministero della Cultura Popolare, but, whether for convenience, cost, or a combination of both, the partnership with Italian American organizations endured as the preferred way to disseminate LUCE films. A souring of relations between the United States and Italy up through 1941 also likely made it more difficult for the

embassy and consulates to directly penetrate into American spaces, and nongovernmental entities like the Italy America Society and Italian Library of Information appeared at least somewhat distinct from the regime in the eyes of the American public, making their work more generally palatable.

5.4 Film as a Penetrative Medium: An Example from Boston

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, the Italian consulates sought to employ LUCE films in any context they could, so long as their technical craft and the Italian origins behind them were made clear. After all, LUCE did not make films exclusively to serve as showcases of the regime to foreigners; they were produced primarily in a domestic context, providing not only outwardly propagandistic content but also information about other notable subjects, whether they concerned Italian politics or not, and regime diplomats employed LUCE films of all types to develop more intimate relationships between Americans (and powerful American institutions) and Fascist Italy.

In a July 1936 message to an unspecified Minister, Consul Guido Segre of the Italian Consulate in Boston wrote of the success that a collection of LUCE films experienced at Harvard University's Institute of Geographical Exploration for the Harvard Summer School earlier that month. He states that the films—*Casta Diva (Chaste Goddess)*, a 1935 musical drama directed by Carmine Gallone, and *Pompei*, a 1934 LUCE short featuring a montage of scenes from the city of ancient Pompeii —“were very well liked, both for their chosen subjects and for the artistic perfection of the works” (*Pompei*, n.d.; Segre, 1936). The letter he attaches from Harvard's James R. Brewster bears this assessment out, thanking Segre “for the splendid

cooperation of... the italian [*sic*] Government” (Brewster, 1936).¹¹ Brewster writes that “[i]t is a shame that they had to be returned at once in Italy so that other groups in the country can not see them” and gives an informal invitation for the Italian government to project more films at Harvard:

Since this showing was so successful, I feel that possibly the italian [*sic*] Department will be interested in showing italian [*sic*] films here in the same way that French films have been shown for a number of years, in which case we should hope for a similar cooperation from you. (1936)

In his message to Rome, Segre eagerly speculates on the potential of this offer as an opportunity for the regime to promote Fascism among the Harvard community. He offers the following assessment of how to approach the regime’s future with Harvard:

Naturally, I would be of the opinion to not drop the suggestion, both, in the first place, to keep the cultured American element informed of the perfection reached by Italian cinematographic production, and also to have an effective means to penetrate the environment of Harvard University, which, as has been noted, is a very closed environment and, if not downright hostile, certainly very cold in regard to Italy and Fascism. (1936)

Of course, the Institute of Geographical Exploration and the Harvard Summer School were not necessarily at the top of the regime’s list of contacts to strengthen, but, in Segre’s eyes,

¹¹ In English.

they could potentially provide an entryway into American intellectual circles. After all, this was nearly a year after the deeply unpopular—at least in America—invasion of Ethiopia, which made selling the Fascist project much more difficult for Italian diplomats, so any chance the regime had to connect with Americans devoid of political contention was crucial. Harvard's gracious reception of these two films, then, surely reiterated the unique potential of cinema as an indirect vessel for propaganda, keeping Italy in close contact with even some of the most Fascism-wary Americans. Segre, recognizing this, continues from his previous point about Harvard's hostility toward Fascism:

For this last consideration precisely, where Your Excellency would adhere to the idea of subsequently sending other films, I would allow myself to suggest a special caution in the selection of subjects, at least in the early days, so as to avoid that they could even remotely air as films of political propaganda. (1936)

Segre, having perhaps a more immediate rapport with the American populace than his colleagues at the embassy in Washington, gives a strong warning about the sensitivity of his work, seeking to normalize Fascism's presence in America slowly and steadily. Any identifiably propagandistic media the regime would distribute in the United States could cause an immediate rejection of the regime's work by American thought leaders, but a more benign exchange of art and educational materials through the cinema could work to minimize Fascism's less popular aspects and make the regime appear more cultured and advanced to Americans. Entertainment, evidently, is retained as part of that balancing act, with *Casta Diva* matching Rosso's aforementioned strategy to entertain Americans without having to resort to traditionally propagandistic subjects and modes of narrative.

Setting aside *Casta Diva* for the moment, as Italian fiction films are covered more thoroughly in Chapters 3 and 7, the decision to project *Pompei* is notable in this context. Even its pairing with *Casta Diva*, a film of a very different scope and one whose content has little to do with Pompeii or archeology, is striking, though it is not stated whether either film comes directly or indirectly at the request of Harvard. *Pompei* is hardly an ideological project—it demonstrates some technical mastery in presenting the ruined city, but it is ultimately a slideshow of images of archeological interest that is far more akin to LUCE’s educational newsreels than its more propagandistic undertakings.

Though I did not come across any other detailed write-ups on more-or-less apolitical films being envisioned for political purposes, the distribution of such pictures through the consular network—and regime officials’ firm belief in their ideological importance and, at times, filmic bravado—has been thoroughly established in this thesis, and this example reiterates the enthusiasm with which many diplomats approached their film propaganda work. Film, above all, was a connective tool for the regime: a way to directly transmit information from the regime (whether expressly political or not) to other parties and, in doing so, familiarize the regime to those outside the government. As expertly shot as they may have been, archeological footage and similar LUCE projects could not exactly create new adherents to Fascism on their own, but they were able to provide a point of entry for the regime into the American consciousness. Such films offered a recognizable cinematic language to spectators, be they Italian or not, bridging the divide between the regime and the targets of its propaganda by using relatively uncontroversial subject matter. Of course, regime officials made considerable use of more expressly political content as well, but the unique potentiality of this apolitical content should not be understated.

6.0 Partnerships with Italian American Organizations

To support their film propaganda campaigns, the Fascist diplomatic contingent in America took advantage of its proximity to a number of Italian American organizations, not only using their spaces to host official screenings but also increasingly outsourcing the consulates' work to them over the course of the *ventennio*. Such groups, beyond simply providing more resources and manpower to bolster the regime's propaganda efforts, also proved themselves to be invaluable as intermediaries between the Italian government and the American populace, providing the regime with opportunities to practice propaganda without making their presence overwhelmingly felt and also offering more localized expertise on and connections with Italian American communities.

Even then, the partnerships the regime established with such institutions were often quite shaky. Ideological differences, disagreements on strategy, and competition among the various organizations sometimes stalled collaborative projects, as was the case with the Italian Historical Society, to my knowledge the first Italian American institution to vie for exclusive distribution rights to LUCE films. Perhaps more damaging, though, was the lack of resources that the regime had to capably oversee and guide these partnerships, an issue that would persist (and exacerbate) until the severing of diplomatic ties between Italy and America.

From the mid-1930s until the early 1940s, Italian diplomats would come to rely heavily on the assistance of two New York City-based cultural institutions: the Italy America Society and the Italian Library of Information, who allowed the government to shift toward a more sophisticated and decentralized distribution scheme than had been present in the early 1930s. For several years each, both organizations—first the Italy America Society, then the Italian Library

of Information—managed a considerable portion of the distribution of LUCE films from the government to various American and Italian American societies, as well as American schools, universities, and other institutions. Their propaganda work on behalf of the government represented some of the most deliberate and well-structured information campaigns of the regime in general, and the dynamics of their coordination with the Italian government give a much more concrete idea of the financial, logistical, and ideological hurdles that the regime faced in disseminating its propaganda in the United States.

This chapter breaks down in more detail the roles that these organizations played in executing the regime's film propaganda campaigns in America, illuminating the dynamic interplay between bureaucrats in Rome and their diplomatic counterparts on the one hand and between these officials and Italian American cultural leaders on the other. It first looks at the less structured collaborations that characterized LUCE film distribution in the early 1930s, especially through the lens of the regime's partnership with the Italian Historical Society, before proceeding to cover the more robust agreements that the regime made with the Italy America Society and the Italian Library of Information.

By examining these three institutions, the coordination problems and logistical difficulties that hampered Italy's film propaganda project become more evident. As I explain in the following sections, all three groups demonstrated considerable initiative in their efforts to distribute and exhibit Italian films—and indeed succeeded in allowing the regime to considerably expand its reach among the American public—but were routinely met with organizational complications and insufficient resources, often being forced to manage a smaller number of screenings than they wished for and usually only with outdated and degraded films on display.

6.1 The Italian Historical Society

By the early 1930s, after LUCE had firmly established itself as one of the most important communicative outgrowths of the Fascist government, Italian diplomats had begun to exploit LUCE films for propagandistic purposes abroad. LUCE's abundant *cinegiornali* provided quick, well-made, and often entertaining insights into Italian culture under Fascism (among other scattered subject matter) in a more direct, digestible, and immersive way than other forms of propaganda could.

Still, there remained the issue of having places to project these films. As established, the embassy and consulates did not have ample resources to set up consistent exhibitions all on their own due to the prohibitive costs associated with projection. Thus, they turned to their allies in America, who could help diffuse these costs and allow the regime to reach more spectators. Per Tintori (2004c), some of the earliest structured pushes by the Italian government to provide Italian American organizations with LUCE films came in 1932, when the Ministero degli Affari Esteri sent out a series of celebratory films to be exhibited by a number of bodies across the United States, including many Dante Alighieri societies and the aforementioned New York City-based Italian Historical Society (p. 63). The results of this specific push were inconsequential, as it was launched without much deliberate organization or strategy, but it demonstrated a growing push by the regime to partner with Italian American organizations to undertake more film diplomacy programming (p. 63).

However, early collaborations were still largely unstructured. The regime's rapport with the Italian Historical Society is especially indicative of the disorganized nature of these early initiatives. In a June 1932 letter from Harold Lord Varney, Manager of the Italian Historical Society, to Ambassador Giacomo de Martino, the former asks the regime to establish "a definite

policy... governing the exhibition of the L.U.C.E. films in this country” (p. 1).¹² The society, from what I can glean from Varney, was in possession of at least two LUCE documentaries: *Anno VII* (1929) and *Anno VIII* (1930)—in English, *Year VII* and *Year VIII*, though Varney uses Arabic numerals to refer to the films—which showcased the achievements of the regime in the seventh (1929) and eighth (1930) years of the *ventennio* (Varney, 1932, p. 1; Hay, 1987, p. 210). Varney mentions no other LUCE films as being in his possession in this letter but does detail his efforts to display *Anno VII* and *Anno VIII*.

The Italian Historical Society, says Varney, “undertook, two years ago, to make the exhibition of these pictures a regular part of... [its] educational work,” and he adds that “[a]t that time, no other organization was showing these pictures or displaying any interest in doing so,” marking the Italian Historical Society as likely the first Italian American organization to initiate regular screenings of Italian films (p. 1). Indeed, Varney claims to have been very active in disseminating certain LUCE pictures through the society in those two years:

Since that time, we exhibited the *Anno 7* and the *Anno 8* pictures at more than 30 largely attended public meetings throughout the United States. I have exhibited them as supplements to my lectures before numerous American clubs. They have been rented out, on a few occasions, to prominent societies. (p. 1)¹³

In a follow-up letter from Varney to de Martino dated July 6th, 1932, Varney presents an assumedly comprehensive “list of the exhibitions of the L.U.C.E. films which have been

¹² In English. Varney formats LUCE as “L.U.C.E.”

¹³ Italics mine.

arranged by this Society” between 1931 and 1932 (1932b, p. 1).¹⁴ Varney claims all events to have made “an excellent impression upon the audience,” save for “two or three inevitable exceptions where the local committees mishandled the arrangements” (1932b, p. 1). However, the only data relating to spectators that is included in the report is the audience size, so more in-depth evaluations are not possible.

Over the course of 32 events, the Italian Historical Society claims to have reached about 15,575 spectators, averaging almost 500 people per event (1932b, p. 2). The screenings took place in 29 cities across eleven states, mostly covering the Northeast and Great Lakes regions but also reaching Houston, Texas and St. Louis, Missouri on one occasion each. Beyond catering to a number of Italian organizations, the society was able to reach many groups without explicit Italian ties, including the Adult Education Association (Cleveland, Ohio), the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; St. Louis, Missouri; and New Rochelle, New York), the Kew Gardens Men’s Club (Kew Gardens, New York), the Harvard Club (Boston, Massachusetts), the Young Men’s Christian Association (Oil City, Pennsylvania), the Rotary Club (Quincy, Illinois and Mansfield, Ohio), the Foreign Trade Club (Houston, Texas), and a town hall lecture series in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

I could not locate any evidence of interest in the society’s efforts among regime officials, but this distribution scheme is much more deliberate than any other contemporary non-governmental initiatives that existing scholarship on Italian Fascist film in the United States has covered. Even if it only circulated these two films, the Italian Historical Society’s initiative in arranging LUCE screenings on behalf of the regime anticipated by years the approach that the

¹⁴ In English.

regime would utilize more rigidly in its dealings with other Italian American organizations. At this point, the society seems to have been operating essentially as another Italian consulate in its ad hoc exhibition of LUCE pictures, and Varney's supposed access to certain "American clubs" hints at a more pronounced penetration into non-Italian American circles than has been previously established for many such groups (1932a, p. 1).

Varney also comments on the financial viability of this strategy, with his organization having found opportunities to use the screenings to generate revenue, though it is not stated whether the institution paid the Italian government for its films:

We have endeavored to make this work self-supporting by charging a small fee from each local organization which has arranged the meeting. These, in turn, have defrayed expenses by charging small admission fees to the public, which the public have willingly paid. In this way, the films have been of a small financial help to the Society, in addition to their moral effect. (1932a, p. 1)

The society's institution of licensing fees and paid tickets demonstrates cinema's potential for the regime's aims beyond simple information transmission, even if this approach risked limiting audience sizes to some extent, but the duty-free exportation of films by the regime would render this approach impossible for other Italian American organizations going forward.

Indeed, the financialization of the society's film distribution campaign created serious strife for Varney and his associates. The impetus of the June 1932 letter was the loaning of *Anno IX* (1931) to the Dante Alighieri Society in New York, an offer that Varney says had first been extended to the Italian Historical Society (p. 1). Varney had declined the invitation to screen *Anno IX* to instead plan a major exhibition in New York City of *Anno VIII*, which had "never

been exhibited” there, during the fall of 1932 “for the purpose of raising some money to help defray the expenses of our work” (p. 1). The Dante Alighieri Society’s upcoming showing of *Anno IX*, laments Varney, “would kill the value of our picture... and ruin the possibility of our arranging the exhibition” (p. 1). He explains the issue as such:

Your Excellency will understand that, if local Italian societies know that they can source a L.U.C.E. film from the Embassy without any charge, they will not be willing to pay us the small fees which we find it necessary to charge, in order to do the work systematically. (p. 1)

As such, with the financial incentive for their screenings in jeopardy, Varney offers an ultimatum for Ambassador de Martino: either the Italian Historical Society would “be officially designated as the sole distributor of” LUCE pictures, or they would stop screening them entirely (pp. 1–2). This conundrum again makes evident the disunified nature of the regime’s distribution in the years before it entered into more formalized arrangements.

That the Italian Historical Society had not arranged a screening of *Anno VIII* in New York City, the largest Italian American hub in the country, makes both the society’s and the regime’s film distribution work in America appear rather haphazard. If indeed *Anno VIII*—a straightforward highlight reel of the most important developments in Fascist Italy in that year—had not been screened in New York City at all up until that point, including by the local Italian consulate, as Varney implies, then that raises strong concerns for the status of film diplomacy in the United States in the early 1930s. The fact that this tour de force of the regime did not reach arguably its most important diaspora indicates a great lack of commitment to capitalizing on the potential of film propaganda at this point in time, as well as the absence of any strong top-down coordination.

Varney also provides a compelling defense for his desire to still screen *Anno VIII* after *Anno IX* had already been produced and distributed to the United States, pointing much of the blame for the discombobulation of the distribution scheme at the Italian government. In his July 1932 letter, he describes a severe delay in the sending of *Anno VIII* and *Anno IX* to his organization:

In explanation, we would like to state that the number of meetings would have been much larger had we received the *Anno 8* film early enough to have been able to use it during the season, last Fall. As Your excellency perhaps recalls, we requested L.U.C.E. to send us this film as early as June, 1931, in order that we might have the whole summer in which to issue advertising matter and circularize clubs for Fall bookings. Unfortunately, L.U.C.E. did not send us the films until December, 1931, and it was then too late to secure more than a few bookings for the 1931-32 season. We find ourselves again in the same situation in regard to the film, *Anno 9*. We have not received it, although this is the time when all American clubs are making up their lecture schedules for the Fall and Winter season. If we are to get the maximum use from these films each year, it will be necessary that L.U.C.E. send us the films at a regular time, each year, preferably, in the month of June. (1932b, p. 1)¹⁵

Though the Italian Historical Society still chose not to project *Anno VIII* in New York City right away once they finally received the film, the lack of urgency on the part of regime officials in Rome is striking, especially considering the work that the society had completed on

¹⁵ Italics mine. All other grammatical idiosyncrasies are retained from the original letter.

their behalf. Varney's decision to follow up on his initial request with a summary of the society's film distribution activity makes it probable that the regime was not up to speed on—and perhaps somewhat unconcerned with—this work, reinforcing the disconnect between Rome and its allies in America with regard to film propaganda. At this stage, the partnership between the regime and its American supporters was still very disorganized, and it would take years before a noticeable shift occurred.

In a message from the Ministero degli Affari Esteri to Ambassador de Martino dated August 20th, 1932—nearly two months after Varney's letters, another piece of evidence of the regime's slowness to consider matters of film diplomacy at this time—it was decided that “despite the merits acquired by it,” the Italian Historical Society's request for exclusive LUCE distribution rights could not be granted (“Pellicole cinematografiche,” 1932). Ambassador de Martino, writing to the Ministero that October, appreciated the benefits of having a loyal American intermediary to coordinate with the Italian consulates, but the Italian Historical Society was not to be the one, as LUCE, per the Ministero, was already in negotiations with other American companies regardless (de Martino, 1932; “Pellicole cinematografiche,” 1932).

The Ministero was skeptical of the society's ability to effectively coordinate across the entire United States, especially when an established consular network already existed. Furthermore, Varney's model, which operated on an “essentially businesslike basis” by charging spectators for admission, would have continued to harm the “purity” of the regime's propaganda if it were propagated, becoming too similar to the standard commercial outlets through which the consulates could not openly push their propaganda (Ministero degli Esteri, 1932). This model, states the Ministero, would also violate American trade agreements, which mandated free

screenings by excluding Italian films distributed through the government from facing customs payments (Ministero degli Esteri, 1932).

I could not find any evidence of a continuing relationship between the Italian Historical Society and the regime after this response, likely indicating that the society did indeed cease its circulation of Italian films after failing to receive exclusive distribution rights. Though the regime would eventually approach its film distribution work with a more commercial bent, its concerns in 1932 over the purity of the presentation of its films are notable. Even with such an eager partner as the Italian Historical Society beside it—and knowing that it was to blame for the limitations of that body’s work—the government evidently felt that keeping its options open would allow it to direct a more effective campaign.

6.2 The Italy America Society

By the time another Italian American organization took up the mantle of distributing Italian films on the government’s behalf, the regime’s approach to film diplomacy had matured considerably. With more robust consular circuits and, as I will soon cover, some commercial distribution schemes taking shape, the regime’s interest in utilizing film as a propaganda tool was much clearer. This extended too to its relations with Italian American organizations, which became much more structured during the distribution partnership it undertook with the Italy America Society.

As Rosso referenced in his aforementioned February 1936 message to the Italian Consulate in San Francisco, the Italy America Society served as an important intermediary between the embassy and a number of cultural and educational institutions in the United States,

with film comprising only one aspect of the organization's broader work in showcasing the regime in America (Rosso, 1936, p. 7). In a 1939 message from Ugo Veniero d'Annunzio of the Italian Library of Information (which by then had assumed the primary noncommercial responsibility for the distribution of LUCE films in the United States outside of the consulates) to Ministro Andrea Geisser Celesia di Vegliasco, Director General of Propaganda at Minculpop, d'Annunzio provides the most detailed picture of the Italy America Society, introducing the organization as such:

The Italy America Society was founded in 1918 by a group of American financiers with the aim of creating and maintaining a friendship based on a mutual comprehension of national ideals and of the contribution given by the two nations to the progress of science, art and literature. It is today in New York the only society founded by Americans and provided with American capital that takes action in favor of Italy. The importance of the society is given to it especially by the names of its Directors, who occupy a very high place in finance, industry, and American social and political life. (1939a, p. 1)

The society, then, was rather important in strengthening relations between Italy and America, allowing the regime access to influential Americans who could help the Fascist government—once it arose four years after the society's foundation—to penetrate further into American cultural and economic channels. Charles Evans Hughes, who had already served as the Governor of New York and a federal Supreme Court Justice and who would soon go on to be the United States Secretary of State and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, is cited as the society's first president, speaking to its remarkable initial reach and clout (p. 1). To make even more evident its enduring influence throughout the 1920s and 1930s, d'Annunzio lists among the

society's past and present directors two former Ambassadors of the United States to Italy, multiple reputable (says d'Annunzio) New York-area lawyers, and the presidents and partners of many major banks and industrial companies. (p. 1). D'Annunzio writes also that the institute established "regular sections" in Washington, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New Orleans and that it had a representative in Rome to receive American guests, but I could not find any information on activities carried out by affiliates beyond the New York office (pp. 2–3).

The institute took advantage of its unique level of access to American sociopolitics through a wide-ranging series of initiatives in information dissemination and political favor-carrying. For one, it maintained a sizable scholarship budget—reported by d'Annunzio to total \$71,000 in 1939—by raising funds from Americans to allow Italian students to study in the United States (pp. 1–2). Additionally, per d'Annunzio, the body was "the only American society that... [took] the initiative to celebrate Italian national anniversaries and to honor illustrious Italian visitors... or Americans who... made themselves particularly deserving for their work in favor of Italy" (p. 1). The society even organized the first official banquets in New York for the American Ambassadors to Italy and the Italian Ambassadors to America (p. 1). Otherwise, they published a quarterly review on Italian culture, held regular conferences on the same, organized language classes and art shows, and developed and maintained archives on Italian American history (p. 2).

Beyond these efforts, though, the exhibition of Italian films by the Italy America Society emerged as a major operational fixture whose importance was noted by other Italian American institutions, Italian diplomats and bureaucrats, and the organization itself. D'Annunzio writes:

The society has distributed for three years, on behalf of the Royal Embassy of Italy in Washington, the documentary films and propaganda of the Istituto Nazionale LUCE.

This is maybe the most important work of the society which, due to its character as an American institution, can penetrate in environments in which the carrying out of propaganda by concerned states is particularly difficult. The films are all distributed free of charge in an average of 200 a month. (p. 2)

Doctor Alberto Garabelli, the Executive Secretary of the Italy America Society and later the overseer of all LUCE distribution programs at the d'Annunzio-led Italian Library of Information, reports a more conservative figure but maintains that the society had until that point managed the bulk of non-governmental exhibitions of LUCE pictures in America, writing that since building its film library between July and September of 1935, it averaged 50 to 100 screenings monthly up through 1939 (Garabelli, 1940a, p. 3; Garabelli, 1939; van Kessel, 2011, p. 86).

However, d'Annunzio also hints at the Italy America Society's fairly weak rapport with the Italian government, raising questions about the latter's investment in the former, especially given that Minculpop was the recipient of this letter. He shares that the society would only report on their activity to Minculpop every six months through the embassy, despite it being its leading noncommercial film propaganda partner at the time (1939a, p. 2).

It appears that the regime's involvement with the society's work was mostly limited to providing funding for more or less independent activity rather than strict oversight. The center operated with the support of an annual contribution of \$6,000 from the Italian government from 1929 until 1938, at which point its directors decided to "restore to the society its old purely cultural character" and waive the government stipend, cutting down their budget to focus mainly on scholarships and internal operations (p. 3). The reasons for the Italy America Society's decision to cut its ties to the Fascist government's propaganda efforts are not explicitly given, but

the escalation of the regime's imperial project and its growing proximity to Nazi Germany had begun to drastically sour relations between Italy and the United States by the late 1930s, so it is likely that the political and economic leaders behind the society sought to distance themselves from the increasingly unpopular specter of Fascism (Vezzani, 2017, pp. 72–74).

D'Annunzio raises strongly worded concerns regarding the Italy America Society's operational shift, conveying the deep importance that its propaganda work was thought to carry in America. He writes that the renunciation of government funds would cause the society's support in propagandizing Fascism in the United States, "the value of which was demonstrated over the years," to be "irreparably compromised" (1939a, p. 3). He continues:

This would not fail to create an unfavorable impression in New York, where Italy America is really known as a center of Italianness and where it is known that well-known and powerful Americans are among its partners and directors. Furthermore, for some of its functions, Italy America is, one can say, unsubstitutable. As is said above, all of the most important cultural events of a social character were always entrusted to or organized on the initiative of the society. Only a society of a purely American character can unite illustrious American personalities around a visitor whom it wants to honor, and it is for this reason, for example, that the first large banquet offered in New York to the newly appointed Italian Ambassador was always organized by Italy America, which has the possibility to immediately put him in contact with the most prominent personalities of the Metropolis. (p. 3)

This excerpt reinforces how important connecting with powerful Americans and Italian American communities was for Fascist propagandists, both groups being viewed as instrumental in instilling a more positive image of Fascism among the American public.

Notably, beyond fearing the effects of losing the chief organizer of such high-profile events that were deemed important for promoting Fascism in America, d'Annunzio proceeds to single out film propaganda as the other most damaging loss to be caused by the Italy America Society's operational shift:

Also, the distribution of LUCE films, whose utility has proven enormous in favor of the Italian cause in the United States certainly could not be entrusted to a society of Italian character; it is principally because the films are offered for viewing by an American society that they are accepted by American institutions. The same can be said in regard to many other activities, like conferences, art shows, etc. (p. 3)

Again, the context in which films were presented emerges as a concern of the leading figures in Italian propaganda campaigns in America, with d'Annunzio sharing Ambassador Rosso's view that the explicit involvement of the Italian government would undercut the reach and effectiveness of the films. Though the minutiae of its work are not well documented, it is clear that the Italy America Society's work was weighted with great significance (at least by other propaganda partners in America), and the termination of its propaganda campaigns would have severely undercut the regime's overall film diplomacy activity had another institution not been ready to take over its work.

6.3 The Italian Library of Information

Upon the cessation of the Italy America Society's propaganda efforts, d'Annunzio's Italian Library of Information actively positioned itself to take up its mantle as the Fascist

regime's primary extra-governmental propaganda partner. In the three years before America's entrance into World War Two, the Italian Library of Information served as the Italian government's most ardent and active purveyor of film propaganda in the United States, continuing the Italy America Society's campaign to disseminate LUCE films across the country.

As covered earlier in this thesis, Mussolini's colonial campaign raised a profound obstacle for Fascist propagandists, including in the United States. Italian propaganda needed to not only reframe the invasion and occupation of Ethiopia in a positive light but also present it in a way that did not appear as a deliberate corrective on the part of the government. As Tintori (2004b) writes:

To this end, the Ministero della Stampa e propaganda would have to give life to a Fascist propaganda center that did not appear dependent on men, structures or funds from the offices of official Italian representatives, and carried out the task of coordinating all activities for North America. (p. 38)

A proto-organization of this sort was already present in the form of the Unione Italiana d'America (Italian Union of America) in New York City, founded in 1935 by d'Annunzio himself in order to help coordinate Italian and Italian American advocacy in the United States, especially in the face of the escalation of Italian aggression in Ethiopia (pp. 38–39). The organization, however, suffered from a lack of planning and resources and was not able to operate effectively as an organizing force or an information center (p. 39).

Seeking a more substantial and well-structured alternative, Minculpop tapped d'Annunzio—an engineer who had lived in America since 1917 and had in that time developed connections with New York political elites like newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, Democratic Party leader James Farley, and Office of Strategic Services director William J.

Donovan—to lead a new Italian Information Office based on similar British and French institutions in New York, which d’Annunzio had noted for their apparently indirect (to outside eyes) approach to propaganda (pp. 40–41). In a 1937 message to Minculpop, d’Annunzio describes this model as such:

[It is] an optimal form of propaganda because it creates rapports of all types, rectifies preconceived or unfounded ideas, supplies sources and references favorable to the point of view of the represented Nation and, bit by bit, as is the case for the two institutions mentioned above [the British Library of Information and the French Information Center], becomes a center to which journalists, professors, students, writers, public and university libraries, Clubs and Associations naturally turn.

(1937)

The Italian Library of Information was finally inaugurated in July of 1938 after years of back-and-forth deliberations among d’Annunzio, Minculpop, the Consulate in New York, and newly appointed Ambassador to the United States Fulvio Suvich, with budgeting issues serving as the leading impediment to the project (Tintori, 2004b, pp. 43–45). Ambassador Suvich, recognizing the creation of a new information center “as an indispensable goal of our activity in America,” raised a proposal for an annual 340,000-lira expenditure to fund the space (Suvich, 1937). Dino Alfieri, head of Minculpop, wished for a budget of 1,000,000 lire but ultimately offered Suvich’s plan directly to Mussolini in January of 1938 to provide as quickly as possible for “a systematic and coordinated work of Italian information and penetration in the United States to combat the very active anti-Italian and anti-Fascist propaganda that has taken place for years in that Country by governments and organizations hostile to us” (Alfieri, 1938).

In his negotiations with Director General of Propaganda at Minculpop Andrea Geisser Celesia di Vegliasco, d'Annunzio provided for the direct transfer of most of the Italy America Society's propaganda holdings and functions to the Italian Library of Information, including by placing the society's Executive Secretary, Doctor Alberto Garabelli, in charge of a new Educational Film Division, which would manage the film distribution programs (and thus all dealings with LUCE) undertaken by the institution (d'Annunzio, 1939b, pp. 1–2; Garabelli, 1939). According to a February 1940 report that the center gave on its work, the Educational Film Division seems to have been fully operational from the beginning of 1939 (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 1).

In the same report, it is written that the library received an annual sum of \$3,200 from Minculpop, which was sent in two semi-annual installments (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 1). \$2,000 of this stipend was destined for the “salary of the director... and for the salary of an employee,” with \$500 per year being provided for “the conservation and shipping of films and for shipping costs, telegraphs, and printing” (p. 1). The report states that with very few exceptions, the library asked that parties who requested films pay for their transportation, resulting in only \$41.60 in shipping costs being charged to the library for all of 1939 (p. 1). A breakdown of the rest of the budget is not given.

In the previously invoked February 1940 report on the library's film distribution activity, Garabelli states that the Italian Library of Information directly took over the Italy America Society's distribution of Italian films after the latter ceased its campaign in 1938 (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 1). According to d'Annunzio's (1939) aforementioned letter to Minculpop, the vast majority of the library's film collection was absorbed from the society, but it also received shipments from the Ambassador and the Consulate in New York, which contained films in better

condition but covering more dated subjects; given their presentation, those older films saw more use while the library awaited new films from Minculpop (p. 3). Many of the Italy America Society's films saw such significant projection that a good portion of them had become "unusable," even after multiple costly repairs (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 4). Some of them were already out of fashion while in the hands of the Italy America Society, representing outdated topics and less advanced filmmaking (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 4).

It is telling that the government-owned film stores were not as current as those circulated and screened by the Italy America Society, the latter's poor upkeep also suggesting much more frequent use by these partners and adding more evidence to the relative robustness of nongovernmental screening initiatives. Furthermore, the government's failure to capably anticipate these issues and provide the library—perhaps its single most important partner institution in terms of propaganda dissemination potential—the resources it needed to comfortably step into its new role reiterates the profundity of the disconnect between the government and its associates in the field.

Even without this support, according to Tintori (2004b), "[t]here is no doubt that d'Annunzio's activity appears to be the most effective among all those undertaken by Minculpop in the United States," as he managed to create and maintain through the library a sizable network of contacts with clergymen, political scientists, writers, journalists, politicians, and students while also effectively serving as a central organizing point and leading propaganda disseminator for Italian American institutions nationwide (pp. 45–46). Indeed, the library maintained such an impressive collection of materials that Italian consulates internationally would call upon its stores, and the fact that borrowing parties only had to incur some postage costs to use the library's materials also made it an attractive body to rely upon (p. 46). The institution made

almost 500 external contacts each month without advertisements, keeping pace with the French Information Center (p. 47).

In general, Minculpop seemed to place great trust in the Italian Library of Information, even if its propagandistic partnership therewith was marred by disorganization and mismanagement. Minculpop evidently saw the library as a lucrative gateway into American society beyond the Italian diaspora, signing a contract with Hamilton Wright, an American news company, to distribute propaganda material from both government officials and the Italian Library of Information itself (p. 48). The library would also organize lectures featuring experts on Italian American affairs to which Minculpop, seeing the events as being helpful for influencing public opinion, often sent Italian speakers (p. 48).

With regard to film distribution, Garabelli seemed to take pride in the library's quick recognition as a source of films for other institutions to rely upon:

Our office is now listed in various publications that list organizations in different countries that freely distribute noncommercial cinematographic films and many requests come to us directly through this channel. Many requests reach us also through the [R]oyal Embassy in Washington, the various Consulates and the Italian Library of Information.... The films are sent by us principally to schools, colleges, universities, libraries, private schools, clubs of various types, associations, churches, hospitals, CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps, Sections of the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], etc. We try as much as possible to conduct our activity principally in the American environment while looking to satisfy also the requests that we receive from co-nationals. (1940b, p. 2)

Garabelli's description of the free distribution of the institution's films likely refers to admissions fees, not transportation costs, which I have established that the office often expected from its partners. In a prior letter on the library's activity in the last four months of 1939, Garabelli notably adds prisons to the list of receiving organizations and estimates that 60% of the films distributed by the library were shown in American middle schools (Garabelli, 1940a, p. 1).

The library's almost immediate reputability among educational, cultural, and occupational organizations makes evident the continued success—at least relatively—of its film distribution work after that of its predecessors; even as an agent of the Fascist government (and as one which was not as eager to distance itself from Fascism as the Italy America Society had been), the library was able to strike up and maintain relationships with a wide variety of institutions almost as soon as it took over for the Italy America Society, although the responses of spectators who came to see Italian films through these channels are not documented. Garabelli's established reputation through his prior position surely helped, even as Fascism became more controversial across America. Furthermore, the library's focus on catering to non-Italian American audiences is telling of the regime's broader effort to normalize Fascism and promote friendliness toward the regime among Americans in the final years before World War Two.

The library's film dissemination work seems to have been quite prolific, though not as much so as the Italy America Society's. Garabelli reports a total of 522 screenings throughout 1939, attributing dips in frequency in March, November, and the summer months to school closures. He also adds that the library would, "when it is requested and within the limits of our possibilities, also provide lecturers to illustrate cinematographic films that are particularly suitable to us," a more intimate and involved approach to film diplomacy than had been

expressed in most of the other extensions of the regime's campaign (1940b, p. 3). Between September and December of 1939, the library screened films at four conferences: one each at Vassar College and Hunter College and two at the Italy America Society, Garabelli himself serving as the lecturer at the prior two (Garabelli, 1940a, p. 2). Reiterating this increased level of involvement, Garabelli mentions that the library also provided "information regarding Italian films and the development of cinematography in Italy" in addition to arranging screenings (1940b, p. 3).

Garabelli writes too that the Vice Consulate of Buffalo loaned twenty films from the library, perhaps seeing it as a more efficient or helpful distribution partner than any of the other diplomatic outposts in the United States or even LUCE itself, though geographic proximity and the library's absorption of the Italy America Society's film library probably factored into this decision as well (1940b, p. 3).

Additionally, Garabelli notes a close relationship with the Consulate in New York, with whom it was then in the process of arranging some uniquely structured film screenings slated to begin in March of 1940, again indicating the craftiness which characterized the organization's work:

[W]e are now organizing with the cooperation of the Consulate General of New York some special projections of films accompanied by conferences, in the Theater of the New York Genealogical Society, in the same building where our office is located, to which we intend to invite American personalities and members of New York society in the likeness of similar events organized here by other nations and especially by France. (1940b, p. 3)

Among the Italian Library of Information's most striking activities, though, was its exhibition of films in Civilian Conservation Corps camps. The CCC, a program of the Roosevelt administration's New Deal, provided manual labor jobs in conservation to 2.5 million young American men between 1933 and 1942 (Speakman, 2006). Whether or not distribution to CCC camps originated with the library, it is clear that Garabelli saw the opportunity that the camps offered to reach a new subset of the American populace, both geographically and demographically speaking:

The cinematographic presentations organized by us for the "Civilian Conservation Corp" [*sic*] in the Fourth Area are especially noteworthy. In 1939 a large number of films were projected in various camps in the States of Missouri [*sic*], Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana and North Carolina. The advantage of these shows is especially in the fact that the films sent by us are rotated among the different camps directly by the CCC Commando in a way that with a single shipment a very large number of spectators is reached. From the reports that were sent to me I judge in fact that no less than 2,000 spectators a month see our films, all young men from 18 to 25 years of age and belonging to a social class that could otherwise be hard to reach by sound propaganda. (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 3)

By catering to individuals from markedly different backgrounds than those who received the bulk of Italian propaganda, the library's work in these camps allowed Italian cinema to reach far beyond its American epicenter in New York City, representing an innovative and potentially more impactful form of film diplomacy, but I could not find any records explaining these screenings in more depth.

Regardless of its ingenuity, the library's work on behalf of the government was severely hampered by enduring economic limitations, explaining at least in part the slowness and

scattered attention that characterized its relationship with Minculpop. Garabelli writes that despite the library's wide reach, it failed to satisfy the demand it received for Italian films:

[G]iven the scarcity of films available to us, as will be explained later, we were unable... to process just under 50% of the requests we received. Furthermore, the majority of requests are for 16mm films which in America are those most used for exhibitions of an educational and cultural character. We have an absolute lack of 16mm films. (1940b, p. 2)

Garabelli laments his office's inability to effectively cater to its audiences without the proper funding and film stores, seeing an unfulfilled potential to further acclimate Americans to the regime in already-receptive spaces:

The average of the films given for viewing could become greatly increased if we had more of them and if we had new subjects. Given that the most difficult work, that is that of penetration in American environments, has already been done, it would not be difficult to provoke requests in many different ways. This year, we did not even believe it opportune to print a new circular with the list of our films given that we do not have any new titles to add and that the printing costs would have been significant.... There are always many requests for lecturers, but it is difficult to start on these requests given the difficulty of finding people willing to do this for free and also our lack of funds with which we would be able to reimburse expenses ourselves. (pp. 2-3)

He goes on to make a firm request for at least fifty new films, especially representing the subjects that are "principally requested," those being touristic and historical films and films

featuring Italian holidays, arts, artisanship, youth education, and new achievements of the regime (p. 4). Finally, he restates the need for a supply of 16mm films:

16mm films... constitute the strongest endowment of offices similar to ours that distribute films, in the United States, for other nations. In fact, the vast majority of American schools and various other institutions are today exclusively furnished with sound projectors but for films with a small pitch, both due to the lower cost of the films and of the equipment and due to the greater simplicity in operating them and especially for fear of fires using flammable 35mm films. The sending to us of the greatest possible number of 16mm films would thus be the thing of greatest importance to us. (p. 6)

Meanwhile, Minculpop was unable to provide much to help the library's cause. For one, not long after the library's establishment, Italy's escalating involvement in the conflict brewing across Europe led to the government devoting more public funds to arming the military, cutting directly into Minculpop's operating capabilities (Tintori, 2004b, p. 51). As a result, Minculpop could not even make many of its monthly payments to the library, often preventing its staff from receiving their wages on time (p. 51).

For the regime's primary partner nongovernmental partner in its film propaganda campaign to not have received a single new film from Rome for the entirety of 1939, despite, as Garabelli mentions, contacting the government about this issue multiple times, is an indication of the severe level of disorganization which characterized these efforts (Garabelli, 1940b, p. 4). While I could not locate any definitive evidence as to whether the request for 16mm films was at least partially fulfilled or even considered, it is clear that the library's lack of sufficient support from Minculpop was chronic.

The library's operational difficulties were not exclusively a result of poor planning or resource availability either on its own part or on the part of Minculpop, though; indeed, as tensions continued to intensify in Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the United States government took an increasingly antagonistic stance against Fascist Italy and its ideological allies in America. Any associations affiliated with Axis nations were increasingly intensely targeted by the Roosevelt administration, especially financially; by blocking access to bank accounts, the American government sought to cut off the funding streams of organizations benefiting these foreign powers (Tintori, 2004b, p. 53). The Italian Library of Information befell this fate in June 1941, the month before the Italian consulates in America were forced to close (p. 53). Though Ambassador Ascanio Colonna was able to subsequently provide d'Annunzio access to funds to pay his debts, and though Minculpop made some last-ditch efforts to funnel cash into the library, the Italian Library of Information's activity was effectively terminated by the United States government before any of its logistical issues could be resolved (p. 53).

7.0 Government Relations with Private Producers

Though Italian diplomats had managed to project LUCE documentaries around the United States through the consulates and a select few implementing partners, they noted these efforts to be insufficient, given the limited reach and public attractiveness of institutionally driven screenings. To ameliorate this, LUCE and Minculpop maintained contracts for the circulation of Italian films with a number of commercial production and distribution companies and individual citizens in America throughout the 1930s and nearly up until America's entrance into World War Two. These agreements provided the regime another entry point to get Italian films in front of American audiences, adding a layer of distance between Fascism and the spectator that government officials hoped would weaken the association between the regime and Italian cinema and bolster the latter internationally at the same time.

Before the outbreak of World War Two, some American newsreel production houses owned by non-Italian Americans earned licenses to exhibit LUCE pictures, but the regime still favored arranging deals with diaspora members when it could, as Fascist leaders saw outsiders as being less trustworthy and more hostile to the involvement of their diplomats in managing film distribution (Tintori, 2004c, p. 69). Generally, then, the regime tended to prefer to sign distribution contracts with Italian Americans, who they felt they could better rely upon to satisfy their propagandistic aims. Italian Americans were posited to be more subservient to the interests of the regime; not only did they hold a demonstrated faith in Italy and, by extension, the Fascist project—so thought these bureaucrats, at least—but they also lacked the industry know-how to seek deals that were outside of the preferences of the regime. What resulted throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s was a handful of deals being arranged with both individual Italian

Americans and companies owned and operated by Italian Americans where these private parties practically became propaganda outlets for the government.

In practice, however, these agreements would not play out so straightforwardly. For one, the lack of a solid footing in the industry as well as the increasing difficulty of finding market success with such a salient connection between these distributors and the Fascist government translated to ever-present financial struggles. As a consequence, the bulk of the attention devoted to film licensing projects would eventually go toward (always unsuccessfully) preventing bankruptcy. Otherwise, many of the individuals entrusted with distribution contracts would operate with their own financial interests first in mind. Many distributors-to-be would approach the government under false identities, and even in circumstances where Fascist bureaucrats already knew of their fraud, they would sometimes still sign agreements or uphold existing ones with them, seeking to gain more exposure for Italian films however possible.

Private distribution allowed both LUCE newsreels and popular Italian fiction films to reach a wider audience in America. All told, Vezzani (2018) identifies over 120 Italian fiction films that were distributed to the United States between 1931 and 1941. In general, Vezzani (2018) finds that a much smaller number of Italian feature films reached America from 1931 to 1935 (less than 20) than in the six years afterward (about 100), when a stronger central infrastructure for film production and distribution allowed for a more aggressive push of such films into American cinemas (pp. 157–163). With some exceptions, as covered later in this chapter, most of these films were genre fare with only subtle political messaging (p. 161). Notably, he finds that these films continued to circulate in America long after the Italian Legge sul monopolio (Monopoly Law) of September 1938, which drastically reduced the release of American films in Italy and was previously thought to have coincided with the end of the

distribution of Italian films in America (Vezzani, 2017, p. 23). Vezzani's work ascertains that throughout the latter part of the *ventennio*, the exportation of fictional feature films from Italy to America was primarily driven by the Italian government rather than private production companies in Italy, clarifying the desire of the regime to take full advantage of the growing Italian film industry to connect with American audiences as well.

In New York City, these films played mostly at theaters owned by (and catering to) Italian Americans, sometimes being shown with English subtitles in order to better serve the general public (Vezzani, 2018, p. 163). They were typically accompanied by at least one LUCE newsreel or documentary and oftentimes by plays or concerts by Italian American community members (Vezzani, 2018, p. 163; Vezzani, 2017, p. 184).

While everyday filmgoers' accounts of viewing Italian films are scarce, Vezzani (2017) provides a very helpful survey of the broader trends that emerged in journalists' reception of these movies, especially in New York. Generally, he writes, non-Italian American critics in the United States were not very incisive in their uptake of Italian films, especially before the shift toward a more overtly political filmmaking culture in the mid-to-late 1930s (pp. 147–148). They generally expressed appreciation of these films for their aesthetic representation of a more picturesque Italy but failed to understand the tensions between tradition and modernity underlying their plots (pp. 148–152). The consolidation of the Italian film industry under Freddi and the imperial campaigns undertaken by Mussolini brought about a shift in the type of films American critics saw and in how they responded thereto; critics noted but passed on commenting on the overt political messages in films like *Scipione l'africano* (Gallone, 1937) and *Sotto la croce del sud* (Brignone, 1938), focusing instead on their narrative effectiveness and melodramatic qualities (pp. 152–155).

Meanwhile, pro-Fascist Italian American periodicals offered more involved reviews of Italian films and the messages behind them, whereas their anti-Fascist counterparts did little to comment on these movies (pp. 184–189). In publications like *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and the *Corriere d’America*, whose writers visited cinemas like the Cine Roma, Italian feature films were taken as exemplars of technical and artistic progress under the regime (pp. 184–185). Moreover, these writers tended to laudatorily focus on the ideological messages underlying these films, reinforcing the visions of Fascist modernity that they sought to communicate (p. 185). However, a more on-the-ground perspective among Italian Americans on such films is still missing.

This chapter explores in greater depth the relationships that brought these films into American cinemas, considering the internal deliberations that colored the regime’s behavior toward its private distributors and detailing the activity said distributors undertook as indirect representatives of the Italian government. The inevitable breakdown of the commercial agreements enumerated in the following sections again reiterates the fundamental logistical and operational hurdles that befell all of the regime’s film propaganda campaigns, demonstrating that even when Fascist officials were working at their most creative, internal disorganization, a lack of resources, and a growing public distaste for Fascism impeded their efforts.

7.1 Hearst Metrotone News, Pathé News, and Paramount

In joining Italian feature films in American theaters, LUCE newsreels had a strong presence in commercial cinema markets in America. LUCE signed contracts with a number of private distributors in America in the second half of the *ventennio* to project its newsreels

alongside Italian feature films in American cinemas and sometimes also bring foreign newsreels to Italian cinemas.

In an unsigned 1940 report that appears to have originated at LUCE—the organization is referred to as *questo Istituto*, or “this Institute,” throughout—the multilinear nature of LUCE’s private distribution work in the United States is laid bare; per the letter, LUCE had active distribution agreements with four American production houses—Hearst Metrotone News, Universal News, Fox Movietone, and Pathé News, all of which were based out of New York City—as well a failed arrangement with Nuovo Mondo (“New World”) Pictures and ongoing dealings with the Italian American-owned Esperia Film Distributing and one Pio Sterbini, all based in New York City (“Rapporti tra l’Istituto,” 1940; pp. 1–2). Finally, Paramount, also of New York, is stated to have just terminated a contract with LUCE (p. 1). For distributors whose exploits are further detailed in this report or are otherwise documented, I provide additional information in the following sections.

The report opens by describing LUCE’s contract with Metrotone, under which “Metrotone undertakes to send to LUCE 300 meters weekly of news of various nature against 150 meters weekly of LUCE news, which are selected by the representative of the house itself in Rome” (p. 1). That LUCE had control over which films it would distribute through Metrotone signifies that the institute could, to some extent, more directly influence the regime’s perception by American audiences, even when the films’ presentation was not in the hands of Italians, although Metrotone was markedly more favorable toward Fascism than the other non-Italian American distributors (Vezzani, 2017, p. 57). Unsurprisingly, then, the same degree of control did not exist in LUCE’s dealings with the other four American production companies; the report states that representatives of those production houses chose “from time to time the events that

interest them for insertion in their journals,” though no breakdown of the frequency with which this privilege was invoked or toward which events preference fell on either end is given (“Rapporti tra l’Istituto,” 1940, p. 1).

The letter then elaborates on the nature of the canceled Paramount contract:

Until last September 1st a contract was also in force with Paramount for which the house supplied to LUCE 400 meters weekly of news of its edition (of which 200 meters were American, 100 meters English and 100 meters French) for which LUCE paid an annual fee of 72,800 lire, for copies, plus 12.50 lire for every meter published in its journals, with a minimum of 7,000 meters amounting to 87,500 lire. This contract was however canceled by the house. (p. 1)

The Paramount contract was suspended by the Italian government itself in September 1940, seemingly because the former began to more aggressively edit LUCE newsreels to make them more critical of Fascism after Italy’s entrance into the war (Vezzani, 2017, p. 57; Tintori, 2004c, p. 76). The same fate met the aforementioned Pathé News, for whom Alfieri’s successor at Minculpop, Alessandro Pavolini, had expressed distrust (Vezzani, 2017, p. 57; Tintori, 2004c, p. 76). The Metrotone contract survived the anti-Fascist interference of Metrotone’s distributor, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), since William Randolph Hearst, the head of the former, was an adherent to Fascism (Vezzani, 2017, p. 57).

This rundown provides the most detailed insight I could find into the reverse side of the film exchange between Italy and America, and LUCE’s position as an arbiter of at least some of Italy’s film importation in a post-foreign film embargo world speaks to the trust which Fascist higher-ups placed in LUCE and the multilinear distribution channels which characterized documentary film exchanges conducted by the regime.

7.2 Vincenzo Melocchi and the de Giorgio Brothers

Though LUCE maintained circulation agreements with some large American newsreel producers, the Fascist government also sought to establish business relationships with Italian American distributors, who were considered to be more reliable and productive given their connection to the regime and who were thus presumed to be easier to control. As Tintori (2004c) writes:

The Italians of America, instead, appeared as the ideal commercial partners: not being present in the [film] sector, they would have gladly accepted non-market conditions, to take advantage of the occasion to set foot in a profitable industry; at the same time, they would not have been – or could not have shown themselves to be – insensitive to the calls of the representatives of the motherland, by virtue of that “sense of Italianness” indelibly etched in their souls. (p. 69)

As the regime began to more actively engage with Italian American businessmen in the mid-to-late 1930s, though, many of these partnerships proved not to be as uncomplicated as had been assumed. Instead, the government hastily entered into agreements with a few self-interested actors who sought to mismanage government resources and, in doing so, somewhat disrupted the regime’s propagandistic aims.

Tintori (2004c) goes on to describe the earliest collaboration of the regime with Italian American businessmen for film distribution of which I am aware, that being its dealings with Guido and Louis de Giorgio and Vincenzo Melocchi. In 1934, the de Giorgio brothers were able to receive exclusive five-year distribution rights in America and Canada for *Camicia nera* (*Black Shirt*), one of the regime’s most important and well-regarded propaganda films (p. 69). *Camicia*

Nera, LUCE's first fictional feature and perhaps its most outwardly propagandistic project, was conceived as a celebration of ten years of Fascist rule and received script suggestions from Mussolini himself; unsurprisingly, then, the regime worked tirelessly to screen the film in high-profile settings abroad, with Nazi leader Adolf Hitler himself set to attend the German premiere but Joseph Goebbels joining in his place (Ercole, 2014, p. 500; Gazarelli, 2003, pp. 147–161). With this in mind, the de Giorgio brothers' acquisition of the film is quite surprising and speaks to the desperation of the regime to disseminate its film propaganda however possible.

The de Giorgio brothers partnered with an Italian American named Vincenzo Melocchi, who joined Luigi in meeting with Ambassador Rosso in March 1934 to receive support in finding an American distributor (Tintori, 2004c, p. 69). However, the Consulate in Philadelphia found that Melocchi had committed embezzlement on multiple occasions and launched complaints against him, but the government's interest in distributing the film as quickly as possible meant that the deal remained intact (p. 69). Melocchi and the de Giorgio brothers were able to sell *Camicia nera* to Eureka Production in New York, who edited the film and retitled it *Man of Courage*, receiving the approval of the embassy in the process (p. 70).

7.3 Umberto Finestauri

The most productive and controversial of the individuals with whom the regime organized commercial film distribution schemes was Umberto Finestauri, an advertising agent at the *Grido della Stirpe* (*Cry of the Lineage*) newspaper who sought to turn a profit by acquiring LUCE films from the government (thereby avoiding shipping costs) and illegally projecting them in cinemas (Tintori, 2004c, p. 70; Vezzani, 2017, pp. 35–36). In late 1934, Finestauri contacted

the government multiple times in hopes of acquiring LUCE distribution rights, variably pretending to be the *Grido della Stirpe*'s director and a founding member of a fake organization called Cinema Productions – Motion Picture Producers and Distributors di New York (Tintori, 2004c, p. 70). The government, eager to get more LUCE films out to American audiences, offered him the documentary *Mussolini in terra di Puglie* (*Mussolini in the land of Puglia*), upon which Finestauri presented himself to Consul Grossardi of New York under another false title—“Grand’Ufficiale e Luogotenente Generale per l’America del Nord del Celeste Reale Militare ordine di nostra Signora della Mercede” (Grand Official and Lieutenant General for North America of the Celestial Royal Military Order of Our Lady of Mercy)—to receive support for the arranging of screenings (p. 70). Grossardi saw through his fraud and contacted Ambassador Ciano, but he was left to his devices (pp. 70–71).

In March 1935, Finestauri put together a few screenings of *Mussolini in terra di Puglie* and was able to acquire more LUCE films, which he edited together into *Fiamme di Guerra in Abissinia* (*Flames of War in Abyssinia*) and illegally screened in commercial theaters, an outcome he openly admitted to the government to be his intent (Vezzani, 2017, pp. 36–37; Finestauri, 1935). Though Finestauri had his detractors within the government, others saw his work as useful, as long as it increased Americans’ exposure to Fascist culture, and the regime turned a blind eye to his work for a few months (Tintori, 2004c, p. 71). By the beginning of 1936, though, enough of the regime’s propaganda actors had become wary of Finestauri’s volatility that they began the process of cutting ties with him, weathering his resistance and soon signing a deal with Nuovo Mondo Pictures in his place (pp. 71–72).

7.4 Nuovo Mondo Pictures

After the headaches that Finestauri had caused Italian propagandists, they started to search for more reliable and financially viable institutional partners. In March 1936, they struck up a deal with Nuovo Mondo Pictures, a New York-based distribution company staffed by Italian Americans and led by Joe Brandt, a longtime fixture in industrial circles in Hollywood, providing for the distribution of both Italian feature films and LUCE newsreels (Vezzani, 2017, p. 41; Tintori, 2004c, pp. 72–73). Nuovo Mondo oversaw a cadre of 220 theaters—apparently across the United States, Canada, and Central America—at the time the agreement was put into effect and was thus able to take up the task of exhibiting films from Italy very quickly (Tintori, 2004c, p. 72).

In a telegram dated May 2nd, 1936, LUCE President Giacomo Paulucci di Calboli Barone informed the Ministero per la Stampa e la Propaganda that Nuovo Mondo Pictures was granted exclusive private distribution rights of LUCE pictures in North and Central America, running concurrently to institutional circulation (Paulucci di Calboli Barone, 1936). LUCE's willingness to entrust so much of its private distribution of government-produced films across the continent to a single independent American distributor indicates a high degree of trust in Nuovo Mondo and a strong emphasis on the partnership between Fascist bureaucrats and their allies in the United States, especially given the eventual illegal commercial screenings of LUCE films that this entailed. Plus, the fact that LUCE was empowered to make this decision itself rather than through the Ministero per la Stampa e la Propaganda speaks to the flexibility and ad hoc nature of the overall film propaganda program of the Fascist government.

The Nuovo Mondo deal allowed the regime to practice a more holistic and accessible approach to film propaganda, displacing some of the weight burdening noncommercial

implementing partners and making Italian cinema a more accessible aspect of American moviegoing. Through Nuovo Mondo, Italian films saw great success in theaters like the Broadway Cine Roma, a New York cinema catering mostly to Italian American audiences (Vezzani, 2017, p. 44). Francesco Cottafavi (1936), who managed the Nuovo Mondo portfolio for the government's Direzione Generale Servizi della Propaganda (General Directorate for Propaganda Services), or DGSP, reported that the Cine Roma welcomed as many as 200,000 visitors in three months. Importantly, the association of the screenings with the regime was also less salient under this scheme, which may have helped provide for a more accessible and less politically charged filmgoing culture. For these reasons, Minculpop head Dino Alfieri even suggested that Nuovo Mondo should take over entirely for the distribution of Italian films in America (Alfieri, 1936).

Expectedly, Alfieri's ambitions would not come to pass, with Nuovo Mondo being plagued by the same financial and administrative restrictions that had interrupted most of the regime's other distribution agreements. While Nuovo Mondo alleviated the pressure placed on diplomatic officials to organize frequent film screenings, government-led and commercial projection impeded one another, the former offering free admission but the latter providing more up-to-date and exciting films with a more elegant presentation and without the sometimes off-putting presence of the regime behind them. Ambassador Suvich thus planned to cut down on consular film distribution activity, but Nuovo Mondo was not prepared to satisfy this elevated level of responsibility (Tintori, 2004c, p. 74). For instance, in its nearly two years of operation, it had only projected two films in Cleveland, a major hub for Italian Americans and the site of an Italian consulate (p. 75).

The regime attempted to step in to solve Nuovo Mondo's impending insolvency, but it could not act quickly or decisively enough to prevent its collapse. Vice Consul Vecchiotti of New York, in a plan backed by Brandt and Cottafavi, suggested to Ambassador Suvich that Nuovo Mondo's responsibilities be reduced to distribution only, leaving the Cine Rome and other theaters to operate under the supervision of a new planned organization called Cine-Lux (Vezzani, 2017, pp. 47–48). Cine-Lux was envisioned to open a number of Cine Roma theaters around the country, but the planning committees organized to kickstart it never produced any results, and without any direct financial intervention from the regime, Nuovo Mondo went bankrupt in August 1937 (pp. 47–48).

7.5 Pio Sterbini

Following Nuovo Mondo's bankruptcy, the Italian government seemed to briefly return to a more scattershot approach to distribution in order to circulate as many Italian films as it could, and it once again found itself in conflict with certain partners. One of the more contentious relationships that the regime held with a commercial distributor was that with the aforementioned Pio Sterbini. Sterbini, on whom I could not find any credentials or other personal information beyond the few small details presented below, entered into his contract with LUCE shortly after Nuovo Mondo's collapse:

On January 21st, 1939, and for the duration of two years, a contract was stipulated for the supply of LUCE documentaries for the territory of the United States with

Commander Pio Sterbini, an Italian resident in New York. For this contract he undertook to collect a minimum annual amount of documentaries for a total of 3000 meters, for which he would pay 6.50 lire a meter for the first copy (including rights of use) and 1.75 lire a meter for any supplementary copies. (“Rapporti tra l’Istituto” 1940, p. 1)

The Sterbini contract proved to cause more hassle for LUCE than expected. Per the report, Sterbini only “ordered 8 documentaries in total” before raising “unjustified complaints for the supposed noncompliance on the part of this Institute toward the stipulated agreements, refusing to withdraw some documentaries and asking for compensation for the alleged damages he suffered” (p. 1). Thus, LUCE decided to cut off the supply of films to Sterbini and terminate the contract upon its expiration in January while a new deal was negotiated with Esperia Film Distributing of New York, with whom LUCE already had other distribution agreements in place (p. 1). Esperia’s role in Italian film distribution is expanded upon in the next section.

The case of Sterbini serves as a reminder of the regime’s inability to effectively oversee its private distribution partners. Though the exact details of Sterbini’s plight are not clear, the government’s relative lack of resources kept it from being able to anticipate the issues its distributors raised and made it difficult to set them up for success in American markets. That LUCE chose to let the contract with Sterbini expire rather than work toward a solution that would put these films back in theaters—which was the regime’s ultimate goal—is telling of the overwhelming burden of its responsibilities in America and its limited administrative bandwidth to satisfy them.

That no other contracts with independent individuals in the United States are mentioned in this report suggests that, with Esperia seeing the regime’s film diplomacy campaign to its end, Sterbini could have been the last of the individual distributors with whom the regime worked.

Indeed, I could not find evidence of any other active arrangements in the final months of pre-World War Two United States-Italy diplomatic relations, and other scholars have not made mention of any lone partners either. This likely also indicates that, even if they were the only options for furnishing commercial screenings after the failure of the Nuovo Mondo deal, the hassle of implementing and managing these smaller agreements—especially considering their minimal results, the larger scale and greater stability of the corporate contracts, and the potential the regime had to expand the scope of its work with a friendly Italian company—was eventually not worth expending so many resources.

7.6 Esperia Film Distributing and the End of Fascist Film Distribution

In the last three years of the regime's presence in America before the war, Esperia Film Distributing emerged as the most prominent commercial film distributor for the Fascist government (Vezzani, 2017, p. 48). Esperia was led by Francesco Macaluso, an Italian American lawyer and newspaper publisher who worked out of New York City (pp. 48–49). A transplant from Boston, where he had directed the newspaper *Giovinezza*, Macaluso eventually relocated to New York, where he directed a separate paper under the same name and involved himself more heavily in Fascist circles (p. 49). He reached out to the DGSP in 1939 falsely claiming to be “the only and legitimate distributor” of LUCE and ENIC films in America, an assertion that the regime knew to be false but that led to Esperia's acceptance as a circulator of LUCE pictures and Italian fiction films in America by March 1939 anyway (pp. 49–50). After the collapse of the Nuovo Mondo project, Italy's willingness to so liberally conduct business with less trustworthy actors (even considering Macaluso's history of Fascist advocacy) signals its desperation to do

whatever it could to project Italian films in America. Still, Macaluso was a safer bet than Finestauri and other individual actors had been, as Esperia managed over 150 Italian American cinemas prior to the deal (Tintori, 2004c, p. 76).

LUCE's rapport with Esperia, to whom it "should supply fortnightly journals of 400–500 meters" under proper circumstances, is included in the previously invoked report on LUCE's dealings with American production companies ("Rapporti tra l'Istituto," 1940, p. 2). Judging by the report, LUCE seemed to place great faith in Esperia despite Macaluso's lies:

Esperia Film Distributing, whose owner, Attorney Macaluso, has always shown himself animated by his desire to provide the greatest possible diffusion of Italian material in the States, is waiting for this Institute to free itself from its previous commitments with Commander Sterbini to also purchase documentaries which could not be furnished up until now. (p. 2)

Again, LUCE appears to have emphasized relationships with prominent Italian Americans, even after the problems that Sterbini caused for them, suggesting a more personal and collaborative approach to private distribution. Where American studios refused to distribute Italian feature films with more explicit propaganda angles, Esperia was a more eager partner in this regard, notably acquiring exclusive distribution rights to *Scipione l'africano* (Gallone, 1937) and other historical pictures (Vezzani, 2017, pp. 49–56). Additionally, while other American production companies had begun to edit LUCE newsreels and saw their contracts subsequently suspended, Esperia could be trusted not to alter the films (p. 57).

However, Esperia's work with LUCE would not be realized in any successful way, as the ongoing obligations of the Sterbini contract ultimately prevented the company from undertaking any meaningful newsreel distribution activity (Tintori, 2004c, p. 78). Due to shipping problems

and the ongoing situation with Sterbini, the report describes distribution to Esperia as “sporadic,” adding that it is not even known whether they received certain war films “sent on two or three occasions” and thus hinting at a high degree of discombobulation in Italy’s relationship with stateside distributors that mirrors the impediments present in the embassy’s contemporaneous distribution schemes (“Rapporti tra l’Istituto,” 1940, p. 2).

At the same time, LUCE was met with its most difficult shipping challenges yet. After Italy entered into the war, the United Kingdom began to block the regime’s naval shipments, forcing LUCE to completely shut down its exporting of films from December 1940 until March 1941, when it devised multiple failed plans to send LUCE documentaries across the Atlantic Ocean by air (Tintori, 2004c, pp. 77–78). The suggested passageways, designed to avoid British interference, involved stops in Portugal and South America, but disagreement over the best route and incessant shipping issues with each attempt arrested the plans entirely (pp. 78–79). By the time a suggestion to send the films to Macaluso’s own home had gained traction, diplomatic ties between Italy and the United States had already been severed, and Fascist Italy’s film propaganda work in America had come to a close (p. 79).

8.0 Conclusions

Having now analyzed all dimensions of the Fascist regime's film diplomacy work and the political context under which the government distributed—and Americans received—Italian films in the 1930s and early 1940s, I proceed to offer a brief summation of the regime's film propaganda campaign and of my findings' place in existing scholarship on Fascist cinema.

Firstly, I wish to reiterate the broader applicability of these findings in the field of public and cultural diplomacy. Researchers are only now beginning to fully appreciate the employment of art by governments as a tool to shape public opinion in international contexts and how such initiatives complement more traditional diplomatic activities and influence their success. The bulk of public diplomacy scholarship skews heavily toward practitionership, and most researchers in the field are concerned chiefly with studying and strategizing public diplomacy in the American context.

Therefore, my research encourages more involved analyses of large-scale public diplomacy programs undertaken by foreign powers. Mussolini's film distribution campaign blurred the lines between outright propaganda and cultural diplomacy, seeking to completely transform the perception that Americans held of Fascist Italy and curry political favor through an indirect approach. My project thus reinforces the perceived importance among powerful governments of using art and culture to more intimately reach foreign publics and shape their perception of their respective countries. At the same time, it serves as a reminder of the lack of adequate and broadly applicable frameworks that have been developed to evaluate public and cultural diplomacy campaigns.

Though a few researchers have endeavored to conduct studies focusing on select aspects of Fascist film diplomacy in America—including the presence of Italian fiction films in interwar America and the work of American commercial distributors of Italian films—there has not been any attempt to consider Fascist film diplomacy in its totality by thoroughly studying and giving equal weight to institutional, partner-driven, and commercial screenings of Italian films as mediated by the Fascist regime. By synthesizing existing research and drawing in evidence from communications among Fascist officials and between these officials and their partners in America, I have begun to satisfy the need for a more complete picture of the Fascist regime's film diplomacy campaign in the United States.

I started by examining the Fascist movement as it manifested during Mussolini's reign, explaining how the regime projected a picture of a country whose rapid transformation called back to a prouder and more prosperous past and offered a path toward a stronger future, even if the political ideology of Fascism was not always so consistent. I then summarized how Mussolini's revitalization of the Italian film industry, and the centralization and relative thematic standardization of Italian filmmaking that it entailed, reflected his political aims and allowed him to both push back against the dominance of American films in Italian cinemas and accessibly communicate Fascist ideals domestically and abroad.

Next, I discussed how mass migration from Italy to America resulted in the creation of an expansive Italian diaspora whose members eventually found ethnopolitical cohesion within their communities. I detailed how common commercial and political interests allowed the United States and Italy to maintain close diplomatic ties, even after the Fascist government began its imperial project, and how this rapport allowed for the cultivation of Fascist organizations across America that could collaborate with the Italian government.

I then scrutinized the work of Fascist diplomats to reach Americans through LUCE newsreels, breaking down the cycles that these films followed through the consulates and how their overtly propagandistic character, the administrative overexertion of the consulates, and the prohibitive costliness of running free screenings impeded these programs. I focused particularly on Ambassador Augusto Rosso's opinions on and guidance of film propaganda initiatives, including his interest in impressing Italian Americans through LUCE pictures and his insistence on distributing less directly doctrinal films and instead entertaining American audiences. I also reviewed Rosso's interest in establishing a more robust commercial distribution scheme to ease the burden on the consulates, an idea that apparently gained no traction among Fascist diplomats. I concluded this section by offering an example of a successful penetration of Italian films into non-Italian American circles by the Italian Consulate in Boston to demonstrate the ad hoc nature of film distribution under this system and the initiative with which many agents of the regime approached film diplomacy, despite their logistical limitations.

In the next chapter, I turned to the work of three Italian American organizations in organizing LUCE film exhibitions across the United States. I first introduced new evidence on the failed attempts of the Italian Historical Society to acquire exclusive noncommercial distribution rights to LUCE films in 1932, a request it made in response to complications caused by LUCE's slowness to send films to the organization. I then turned to the Italy America Society, which in the mid-1930s entered into a more structured partnership with the Fascist government to screen LUCE pictures across the country before the Italian Library of Information took up its mantle in 1939. Despite both organizations' deliberate approach to propaganda dissemination, and especially the latter's innovative efforts to more actively engage American audiences, I showed that a lack of funds and films from Fascist bureaucrats severely undercut their work.

Finally, I explored the regime's partnerships with private film producers and distributors in America. I discussed the manipulation by American production houses of LUCE films and the hasty arrangements regime officials made with oftentimes untrustworthy Italian American businessmen in response. I also covered the more robust contracts the government signed with Italian American distribution companies whose successes were interrupted by ever-present financial difficulties and complications in the shipment of films, which carried the Fascist film diplomacy campaign to its end.

In bringing together these three different extensions of the regime's film distribution work and incorporating context on Fascism's presence in Italian cinema and the United States, I provide a more thorough review of Fascist Italy's overall approach to film propaganda in the United States. I stress the regime's interest in reaching both Italian and non-Italian Americans through the cinema to create a more sympathetic public image of Fascism but conclude that each outgrowth of its campaign was stymied by a lack of top-down coordination and resource provision.

My research seems to suggest a relative lack of deliberate curation in the sending of Italian films to America. With respect to LUCE newsreels, Ambassador Rosso offered only vague descriptions of the kinds of films he thought would best entice American audiences, hoping to excite viewers with depictions of various aspects of Italian society and daily life under Fascism, but how this differed from the purpose LUCE pictures already served in America is unclear. Moreover, I found no evidence that Fascist diplomats and their implementing partners carried out any serious evaluations of audience reactions to different films or that they changed their strategies in response to what they saw in the field, suggesting a very one-sided approach to

film diplomacy in general. Even Mussolini's imperial campaigns in Africa, as unpopular as they were in America, did not seem to compel any serious operational or conceptual shift.

Instead, in institutional circles, Italian films were employed whenever and wherever possible. Largely, this was surely by necessity, as consular officials and Italian American organization propagandists struggled to even receive films from Italy, but there is still no indication that they gave much thought to how to manage their film stocks. There is also no clear evidence of a genuine strategy in the exportation of commercial films, other than in ensuring the circulation and screening of as many as possible. Italian film distribution was deemed important only insofar as the films had identifiable Italian origins and could thus offer a glimpse into Fascist life and thought.

As much as there was a belief in the power of film, there was not an accompanying unified strategy to see to the Fascist film diplomacy campaign's effectiveness. Regime agents approached the task of film propaganda as they saw fit, working without much of a framework to organize or evaluate their activity beyond the simple idea that Italian films should reach Americans—whether elites or everyday people, Italian or non-Italian—however possible. While there was cooperation among all actors in the Fascist propaganda apparatus, those on the ground did not receive much structured guidance or oversight, either from the Embassy in Washington or the ministries in Rome.

Even as many agents of the regime recognized and sought to find solutions to the limitations they faced in the field, they were arrested in their attempts to more effectively reach American audiences by an underfunded, disorganized bureaucracy that could not prevent constant distributional mishaps or financial difficulties among partner organizations. By reexamining past research on Fascist film propaganda and historical evidence of the interactions

governing these campaigns, I present a clearer picture of the disconnect between the ambitions of the regime's propagandists in America and the significant but underwhelming results that came of them.

8.1 Future Directions for Research

I am very fortunate to have been able to rely upon a strong foundation of research in Italian cinema, Italy-United States relations, Italian American culture, and Fascist culture and propaganda for this project, and I am especially grateful for the frameworks that Vezzani and Tintori's studies provided in helping me to ground my research and search for knowledge gaps to fill. However, there is still a great deal to discover about Fascist film diplomacy in the United States, and I hope that this thesis can serve as a bridge between existing and future work on the subject.

In my research, I rely on a necessarily patchwork body of evidence. Again, Tintori and Vezzani's work gave immensely beneficial direction to mine—especially in terms of where to look for information on the topic—but in each of our studies, the difficulty of piecing together a timeline of Fascist-era film diplomacy quickly becomes evident. My analysis is the product of an assemblage of various sources, none of which provide a clear picture of the day-to-day realities of Fascist film propaganda in America on their own. Even together, they reveal sizable holes in our understanding of the activities of the Fascist government and their outcomes. Oftentimes, proposals for events or contracts have been preserved but without their accompanying results, for

example, and certain major developments only reveal themselves through second-hand references.

This presents a considerable challenge for scholars of Fascist activity in the United States, but it is one likely to yield compelling results if approached with enough ingenuity. There is still much more to uncover in this field, and future researchers will have to be creative in seeking out new sources of information, especially by looking beyond already-scoured institutions in New York City and Rome. I try to make explicit throughout this thesis, when appropriate, where my research met dead ends, and I hope that this will serve helpful for others looking to establish a more complete understanding of the minutiae of these film propaganda programs and their place in United States-Italy relations as a whole.

Otherwise, there are many broader questions within this domain that should be addressed. First of all, the overall effect of the regime's film propaganda campaigns is still something of a blind spot in the scholarship on Fascist film diplomacy. Existing studies have pulled together some evidence of reactions to certain films by journalists—Vezzani's (2017) work is especially helpful in this subtopic—and vague analyses by Italian diplomats and their collaborators of audiences' reception of others, but very little beyond these anecdotes has emerged. Since it has been firmly established that films were targeted not just at the political and cultural elites whose opinions were more thoroughly recorded, the relative absence in the scholarship of historical evidence concerning how everyday Americans—and especially Italian Americans—processed Italian films leaves much to be discovered. The experience of LUCE film screenings at Civilian Conservation Corps camps as organized by the Italian Library of Information, which is explained above, is especially worth investigating in more depth given the unique qualities of the locales in which—and audiences for which—these screenings took place. Future studies should thus look

to add a more grounded, quotidian point of view to conversations on Fascist film diplomacy by tackling the topic from these more elusive angles.

Moreover, it is important that future studies investigate to what extent Americans, especially those outside of the Italian American diaspora, drove the sending of Italian films to America and how they managed their work at each subsequent step. To this point, the vast majority of scholarship on Fascist film diplomacy, including this thesis, considers the circulation of Italian films primarily through the perspective of the Fascist government. This framing makes sense, of course, given the regime's aim to use cinema as an indirect propaganda tool and the strong preservation of government documents on the matter, but the corpus of research in this space has also revealed that circulation efforts were not one-sided affairs. Fascist film diplomacy was a collaborative project involving Fascist sympathizers, American businesspeople, and Italian American community leaders, and their day-to-day work merits being examined in greater detail to allow a more on-the-ground angle through which to study this question.

Beyond the Italian American organizations and salesmen whose work on behalf of the Fascist government is thoroughly expounded upon in this thesis and in other works cited herein, not much has been written on the strategies and philosophies guiding nongovernmental distributors to work with the regime or on the results of their efforts. An analysis of the interactions between these individuals and institutions and both the Fascist government and American filmgoers could provide even more insight into the non-uniform uptake of Fascist propaganda in the United States. Exciting new research in United States-Italy relations in the interwar period, such as Katy Hull's 2021 book *The Machine Has a Soul: American Sympathy with Italian Fascism*, which offers a fresh look at Americans' comprehension of Fascism in

theory and practice, could provide a helpful starting point for deeper examinations of some of these questions.

Additionally, ever since Vezzani disrupted the assumption that Italian films were outright banned in the United States from the mid-1930s until World War Two in his 2017 dissertation, other scholars have yet to take advantage of the research opportunities that this opening has created. Only Vezzani (2018) himself has truly peered into this new subfield. My research takes Vezzani's findings into consideration to help set up future work in this area, but my focus is not exclusively on feature film distribution, so that pathway still must be explored.

Future research should also seek to establish a more complete understanding of how distribution schemes and interactions between the Italian government and American citizens varied on a regional basis. Naturally, the bulk of evidence in this space centers on New York City: the largest Italian American hub in the country, the headquarters for most prominent Italian American organizations, and the operating base for most of the regime's other partners in its film diplomacy initiatives. However, my research has proven Fascist Italy's deliberate interest in running a nationwide film propaganda campaign, offering evidence of screenings and distribution programs that spanned the United States. Fascist diplomats noted the difficulty that many of their consulates in the Western United States had in capably operating across the vast territories they oversaw, so further scrutiny of the cross-regional dynamics and effectiveness of the regime's film diplomacy programs is a crucial next step.

Relatedly, it is worth exploring whether Vice Consuls and their staffs approached their film distribution work with different intentions than their Ambassadors (if each Ambassador diverged significantly in strategy from the last at all), officials in Rome, or one another. I discuss above the disagreements that the Consulate in San Francisco had with Ambassador Rosso and

also touch on the close relationship between the Italian Embassy in Washington and the Consulate in New York, but little has been delineated on each consulate's individual character with regard to their propaganda activity. The embassy-consulate communications I include in this thesis seem to suggest a pretty uniform subordination to the Ambassador's goals—even the Consulate in San Francisco did not break from Rosso's line while questioning it, as far as I can tell—but none of the consular reports on propaganda that I examined at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato offered much original commentary or other evidence of individuality, so further scrutiny is merited. Moreover, not much is known about the Italy America Society's offices outside of New York, which are worth investigating to see whether and how their staffs supported the society's film diplomacy efforts.

Similarly, there still exists great potential for scholarship on Italy's film propaganda work outside of America. For one, Canada was included as one of the stops for LUCE films in Ambassador Rosso's inter-consular cycles in the mid-1930s, but I did not come across any sources during my archival trips on the realities of Fascist film propaganda in that country or on how Fascist diplomats in Canada and the United States worked together to manage these programs. More broadly, any insight into how Fascist bureaucrats weighed the importance of their film propaganda work in the United States against the same in any other country—including Italy itself—would be invaluable in establishing a clearer picture of the regime's relationship with the cinema and its interpretations of Fascism. Pierluigi Ercole offers an excellent companion piece to the scholarship on Fascist films diplomacy in America in his 2014 article "Screening Fascism in the Free State: Italian Propaganda Films and Diplomacy in Ireland, 1934–1940," which I cite in this thesis, but his project is one of just a very few detailed surveys of national film diplomacy campaigns undertaken by Fascist Italy.

Along these lines, scholarship on Fascist film propaganda still suffers from a lack of analyses comparing how the regime approached this task differently from country to country. Benedetta Gazarelli's 2003 article "Cinema e propaganda all'estero nel regime fascista: le proiezioni di *Camicia nera* a Parigi, Berlino e Londra" ("Cinema and propaganda abroad in the Fascist regime: the projections of *Camicia nera* in Paris, Berlin and London"), referenced briefly above, gives the first in-depth comparative examination of any aspect of Fascist film diplomacy, but its mission has yet to be applied through a more comprehensive country-to-country analysis of the topic.

As far-right movements continue to proliferate and promote their ideologies internationally, understanding how such groups have operated in the past will only become more important. Plus, with recent publications opening up new questions in Fascist film studies, the opportunities that exist to build upon what scholars have already deduced are plentiful, something which I hope this project reaffirms. There are many potential avenues for future work in this domain, and I look forward to many intrepid and imaginative scholars taking up this task.

Appendix A LUCE Films Included in the First Consular Circuit

As discussed in Chapter 5.2, Ambassador August Rosso tapped 33 LUCE films that were sent to the 1934 Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois to be cycled through eleven Italian consulates. The list of those films and any accompanying parenthetical text follow, with those films designated in the report as having the greatest success marked with an asterisk:¹⁶

1. *Carnevale di Viareggio*
2. *Dall'Acquitrino alle giornate di Littoria**
3. *Inaugurazione del Foro Mussolini*
4. *Vertigine* (Acrobazie aeronautiche)¹⁷
5. *Brioni*
6. *Ceramiche viventi* (Quadri plastici bambini)¹⁸
7. *Venezia: Burano*
8. *Venezia: Artigianato* (Ferro battuto, vetri, merletti)*¹⁹
9. *Venezia: Luce ed ombre**
10. *Venezia: Camini*
11. *Grotte di Postumia*
12. *Scalatori delle Dolomiti* (Esercitazioni)²⁰
13. *Manovre terrestri 1933* in Due parti*²¹
14. *Santa Margherita Ligure*
15. *Olimpiadi universitarie a Torino* (2 parti)
16. *Gare motonautiche a Gardone**
17. *Grandi manovre navale 1933* (due parti)*
18. *Merano: Canti e danze*
19. *Un giorno a Madera*
20. *Raduno dei centauri a Roma*
21. *Scuola di ceramiche a Faenza*

¹⁶ Grammatical inaccuracies and formatting discrepancies retained from the original text.

¹⁷ "Aeronautical acrobatics."

¹⁸ "Still portraits of children."

¹⁹ "Wrought iron, glass, lace."

²⁰ "Exercises."

²¹ "In Two [*sic*] parts."

22. *Industria dei vini spumanti*
23. *Pesca del tonno alle isole Egadi*
24. *Sicilia folkloristica: Canti e danze*
25. *Canti dell'Abruzzo - Songs of Abruzzo**
26. *Carosello storico dei carabinieri a Roma**
27. *Ascensione sul Monte Rosa*
28. *Protezione della stirpe (Opera naz. maternità inf.)*
29. *Caserta: Scuola di polizia scientifica*
30. *Giornale LUCE n.355*
31. *Nell'agro pontino redento*
32. *Vedette della patria**
33. *Sentinelle sul mare (Marina da guerra)**

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²² Grammatical inaccuracies retained.

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