

University of Bristol

Department of Historical Studies

Best undergraduate dissertations of
2025

Rory Conboy

TIMES NEW ROMAN

**How the Italian Fascist stylisation of time can be
understood using film propaganda of
archaeological digs.**



University of
BRISTOL

The Department of Historical Studies at the University of Bristol is committed to the advancement of historical knowledge and understanding, and to research of the highest order. Our undergraduates are part of that endeavour.

Since 2009, the Department has published the best of the annual dissertations produced by our final year undergraduates in recognition of the excellent research work being undertaken by our students.

This was one of the best of this year's final year undergraduate dissertations.

Please note: this dissertation is published in the state it was submitted for examination. Thus the author has not been able to correct errors and/or departures from departmental guidelines for the presentation of dissertations (e.g. in the formatting of its footnotes and bibliography).

© The author, 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the prior permission in writing of the author, or as expressly permitted by law.

All citations of this work must be properly acknowledged.

TIMES NEW ROMAN

How the Italian Fascist stylisation of time can be understood using film
propaganda of archaeological digs.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	8
Chapter One: Themes of Time	14
Chapter Two: Aesthetics of Excavation	20
Chapter Three: The Libyan <i>Lacuna</i>	28
Conclusion	35
Bibliography	37

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I must thank my supervisor Dr. Amy King, not just for her help and encouragement throughout this year, but for introducing me to this topic in her brilliant module last year, too. I must also thank Dr. Gianmarco Mancosu for sending me a copy of his great essay '*Unburying an Empire*' when my University did not have access to it.

I hope they dig it.

He'll found a city, giving its people a name he derives from his own name, the Romans. I am imposing no bounds on his realm, no temporal limits. Empire without an end is my gift.

- Jupiter in Virgil's *Aeneid* ¹

It is said that, on his deathbed, Virgil wanted his manuscript of *The Aeneid* to be destroyed as he had not been able to finish it before succumbing to fever. Emperor Augustus, however, ensured that it was published shortly after the poet's death in 19 AD, no doubt because it directly linked him to Rome's founder, Aeneas, and promised a 'golden age' under his rule.² Just over 2000 years later, that same poem was being used by another Roman ruler, another despot seeking divine, timeless provenance from Virgil's work. Benito Mussolini used ancient Rome and *romanità* (*Roman-ness*) to promote Italian nationhood and enthuse the population with adoration for him and the life that fascism promised. He sought to blend ancient and modern Rome not just figuratively, through poems, but also physically - by excavating ancient ruins and fundamentally altering Rome's landscape.³ Mussolini equated Italy's topography with the mindset of Italians, claiming that fascism had 'to make the physical and spiritual face of the fatherland unrecognisable'.⁴ Thus, during the *Ventennio Fascista* (the term used by scholars to define Fascist rule, 1922-1943) Rome underwent open heart surgery to change the minds of the people.⁵ Huge swathes of existing structures were destroyed to create a city that synthesised ancient and modern. Vast excavations of the Roman Forum were conducted, and the *Via Dell'Impero* was built to run through it, physically drawing a straight line between the

¹ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Frederick Ahl, (Oxford University Press 2007), 1.275-8, p.12

² *Ibid*, 6.793-6, p.154; William Sellar and Terrot Glover, 'Virgil' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 28.11, ed. Hugh Chisholm, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911) pp.111-116 (p.112).

³ Joshua Arthurs, 'The Excavatory Intervention: Archaeology and the Chronopolitics of Roman Antiquity in Fascist Italy', *Journal of Modern European History*, 13.1, (2015) pp.44-58 (pp.47-8).

⁴ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, ed. Eduardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, La Fenice, 1951) p.246, cited in Fernando Esposito, 'Era Fascista Italian Fascism's New Beginning and Its Roman Past Future' in *Beyond the Fascist Century*, eds. Constantin Iordachi, Aristotle Kallis, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) pp.195-212 (p.202).

⁵ Hereafter when I refer to fascism I speak only of Italian Fascism within this period, unless stated otherwise. It is capitalised when I refer to Mussolini's Regime.

Colloaseum and Mussolini's palace on *Piazza Venezia*. Elsewhere in Rome, ancient monuments like the Mausoleum of Augustus were "liberated" from surrounding structures including homes and shops. What emerged from the rubble and dust was a city in which time collapsed into one 'simultaneous experience of Roman past and Fascist present (and future)'.⁶ Fascism, therefore, had constructed its own view of time in which it was omniscient and omnipotent – selecting what would be remembered and destroying what fell short of *romanità*.

Fascist temporality has been, therefore, thought of as paradoxical – seeking revolution through tradition. It is, however, ultimately presentist. At its core lies the power of fascism to act with historic agency in the present. This is Claudio Fogu's argument. Fogu recognises that this temporality follows that of the philosopher and Fascist Giovanni Gentile, who co-wrote *Doctrines of Fascism* with Mussolini in 1932 and served as Minister for Public Education from 1922 to 1924⁷. Fogu claims that, like Gentile,:

Fascism did not seek legitimacy from History (i.e. the transcendental whole of human affairs) by inserting itself into a progressive narrative line that connected the fascist present to an Italian past and future. It was the past that received trans-temporal presence and meaning in fascist historic action – whether at the level of representation, discourse, or policy.⁸

Fascism, therefore, espoused a distinct chronopolitical argument.⁹ It presented itself as dragging Italy back to a glorious past, but, crucially, had to be shown doing so 'for the first time' - through 'historic action'.¹⁰ History was shown as being 'proactively "made" through the exertion of effort, vision, and will-power, and not just reconstructed post hoc in the university library'.¹¹ Excavations fell neatly into this narrative; although they were nothing new, Fascists could present digs as historic acts, by focusing on the speed and strength with which they were uncovering Italy's past and future.

⁶ Arthurs, 'Intervention', p.48.

⁷ Benito Mussolini, Giovanni Gentile, 'Doctrines of Fascism' in *Readings on Fascism and National Socialism*, ed. Ann Swallow (Project Gutenberg, 2004, [1932]) pp.3-20.

⁸ Claudio Fogu, 'The Fascist Stylisation of Time', *Journal of Modern European History*, 13.1, (2015) pp.98-114 (p.108).

⁹ By 'chronopolitical', I refer to the representation of time through a political lens, thus the politicisation of time. See Fernando Esposito and Tobias Becker, 'The Time of Politics, the Politics of Time, and Politicized Time: an introduction to chronopolitics', *History and Theory*, 62.4 (2023) pp.3-23.

¹⁰ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant Garde* (London, Verso, 1995) p.164.

¹¹ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.194.

Filming excavations offered a unique opportunity for Mussolini; the present actualisation of Rome could be captured as a spectacle, then re-presented to the masses around the country. This dissertation looks at the propaganda films that Fascism made to document excavations of Roman ruins, and analyses how they stylistically focused on the power of the present, in accordance with the chronopolitical argument outlined by Fogu.

Like many other emerging technologies, film was a particular point of interest for Mussolini's movement and the Fascist film propaganda arm *Institutio Luce* – hereafter referred to as *Luce* – was established in 1924. By the late 1920s films produced by *Luce* were being projected into urban piazzas and rural fields throughout Italy.¹² In a country where a considerable minority of people were illiterate, visual propaganda was essential for fascism to spread its message – film was indeed labelled the regime's most powerful weapon by *Il Duce* himself.¹³ Accordingly, the number of cinemas in Italy rose from 2,450 in 1930 to 2,700 in 1938 to 2,876 in 1942, and films were also shown in state funded centres such as after-work centres and mothers' clinics.¹⁴ The films, therefore, had to be finely crafted to convey the right ideological message whilst being both accessible and entertaining. This applies particularly to visual narratives, as audio narration was generally not included in reels until the mid-1930s.

The films are all available online on the *Archivio Luce*, through which I have conducted my research.¹⁵ It should be noted that the website is written and organised in Italian – a language I do not speak. I have, therefore, not included the audio content of narrated films in my research. I collated the reels by searching *Archivio Luce* for key words like *scavi* (excavations) and *demolizione* (demolitions), as well as Italianised place names (such as *Roma*, *Tripolitania*, and *Libia*). To give a sense of scale, searching '*scavi Roma*' in the Archive produces 152 *Cinegiornale* (Newsreels), ranging from twenty seconds to fifteen minutes long, and 68 *Documentari* (Documentaries), ranging from ten minutes to two hours long. Despite filtering by location, some of the reels that the Archive's search engine produces are from different archaeological sites across Europe and Africa. It should also be noted that *Luce* appears to have lost the audio for some films, and most Libyan films (and some Roman) are

¹² Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*, (California, University of California Press, 2001) pp.70-71.

¹³ Jennifer L. Nehrt 'The model of masculinity: Youth, gender, and education in Fascist Italy, 1922-1939' (Doctoral Thesis, James Maddison University 2015) p.32; Ben-Ghiat, *Modernities*, p.71.

¹⁴ Diana Garvin, 'Constructing race through commercial space: Merkato Ketema under fascist urban planning', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 25:2, (2020) pp.118-148, (p.127).

¹⁵ Archivio Luce, <https://www.archivioluce.com/> [Accessed 20/4/2025]. Videos from *Luce* are footnoted with their film code, and the URL links for each video are in the bibliography.

without a credited director. That being said, it has become a crucial resource for those studying Fascism and, I argue, the chronopolitical arguments which Fascism sought to make.¹⁶

Before the 1990s, scholars were more cynical towards *romanità*, generally agreeing that it ‘was considered by the *Duce* as a means [...] to control, influence, and govern the crowds; to unite them and drug them, offering to them a facile and gratifying model of identification’.¹⁷ This was challenged when the likes of Roger Griffin and Emilio Gentile began ‘conceptualising fascist temporalities’, with the latter considering *romanità* as the ‘essence of fascism’.¹⁸ Since then, research has considered both the propagandistic use of *romanità* as well as its position within fascist ideology. Hence, more focus has been placed on what Joshua Arthurs labelled Fascism’s ‘excavatory intervention’: the reestablishment of ancient monuments in the physical skyline of Rome, as well as the changing ontological experience of its citizens, witnessing a figurative and literal a rupture in time.¹⁹ Whilst different lines of analysis have emerged regarding the impetus to dig for *romanità*, scholars maintain that the core impact of excavations was felt in the immediate present as formative, ideological world building.²⁰ Thus, I posit that Fogu’s characterisation of fascist temporality as Gentilian is the most accurate broad outlook on *romanità*.

Recently, *Luce* films have featured more prominently within this discourse. Last year Gianmarco Mancosu published an article affirming that archaeological films were ‘fully embedded in the regime’s attempt to materialise the myth of the continuity between ancient and new Roman empire, by reclaiming it by the debris of other ancient historical experiences’.²¹ Mancosu’s work emphasises the scale of *Luce*’s coverage in Rome and Libya – and introduced other excavations such as the recovery of Nero’s Nemi ships into the discourse.²² *Luce* has also been used as a source for recognising the racial propaganda of fascism in its African colonies.²³ There is much merit to incorporating Fascist colonial films into the discourse, as they tend to differ in style, length, and composition to those from Italy. As such, I have devoted the third chapter to *Luce* reels of Libyan excavations to investigate

¹⁶ Gianmarco Mancosu, ‘Unburying an Empire: Ruins and Archaeological Discoveries in Italian Fascism’s Film Propaganda’, *Anabases*, 40.1 (2024) pp.91-109 (p.92-3).

¹⁷ Marcoda Tamassia, *Il piccone del regime* (Rome, Armando Curcio, 1985) pp.79-80, cited in Paul Baxa, *Roads and Ruins*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010) p.4.

¹⁸ Esposito, ‘Era Fascista’, p.195, Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra* (Bari, Laterza, 2007), p.vi, cited in Paul Baxa, *Roads and Ruins*, (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 2010), p.4.

¹⁹ Arthurs, ‘Intervention’, p.48.

²⁰ Baxa, *Roads*, p.6; Mancosu, ‘Unburying’, p.93.

²¹ Mancosu, ‘Unburying’, p.106.

²² *Ibid*, p.102.

²³ Garvin, ‘Constructing’, pp.140-144.

how racial dynamics impacted fascist chronopolitics. *Archivio Luce*, therefore, serves as a bountiful source to decode various strands of fascist ideology and world building. Whilst Fogu found that fascist temporality was made visible through exhibitions, monuments and celebrations, this dissertation seeks to establish how this temporality manifested in *Luce* films of excavations, and locate different approaches made by Fascist filmmakers in Rome and in Libya.

Chapter one, therefore, has a theoretical focus to ground Fogu's analysis and Gentile's ideology within Roman *Luce* films, and understand the ideological arguments which they were making. I recognise the themes and broad devices that were employed in films to show excavations as historic, and fascism as making history. This chapter also considers film as a method that transcends time, and allows for fascist chronopolitics to be relived at will.

Chapter two, then, looks closely at specific films to see how *Luce* made its chronopolitical argument engaging and visually pleasing. I consider *Luce*'s aesthetic focus on destruction and digging, analysing how the cinematography of the films served to accentuate these themes. I also discuss how film was able to capture fascist temporality in a way which still images could not.

Chapter three I have devoted solely to the excavation films shot in Libya – or, more specifically, the lack of excavation films shot in Libya. Libya was not a colony established by Fascism, but had been occupied by Italy since 1912. It had also been part of the ancient Roman Empire, from 146 BC until the mid-to-late 7th century AD. Fascism's colonial temporal argument hence featured explicit references to 'returning' that were absent from home chronopolitics. I explore how this colonial temporality manifests in *Luce*'s reel as the focus switches from excavations to ruins and explore how this reinforced the racial denigration of the indigenous population. *Luce*'s ability to fundamentally alter its focus reveals the power of film to manufacture narratives, as well as the incongruity of Fascist chronopolitics with reality.

In their belated manifesto '*The Doctrines of Fascism*', Mussolini and Gentile declared that 'Fascism is thought and action. It is action with an inherent doctrine'.²⁴ The role of *Luce* was to capture the action, and insert it into a narrative which revealed the doctrine. Understanding fascist chronopolitics, therefore, and their need to be constantly making history, decodes the *Luce* reels and makes legible their focus on Roman destruction and Libyan

²⁴ Mussolini and Gentile, 'Doctrines of Fascism', p.3.

isolation. Film, as a moment of presence, bottled and available on request, supplements the Fascist temporality. Like Virgil last century, *Luce* is seeing a resurgence in far-right culture, boosting the ‘ongoing fascination that fascist “retrotopias” exert on a - regrettably once again growing - segment of the populace.’²⁵ To understand the resurgence of far-right movements today, and how footage from the past is being repurposed to support this, it is important first to understand how fascism portrays time and how this temporality revives itself as groups seek to make a historic return to fascism.²⁶

²⁵ Esposito, ‘Era Fascista’, p.206.

²⁶ YouTube channels such as Capitano Golinelli use *Luce* footage, accompanied with Fascist era songs, to represent the Fascist aesthetic, see *Saluto al Duce.*, YouTube, 11 December 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cs6UdBezI5w> [Accessed 18/4/2025].

Chapter One

Themes of Time

Before diving into a deeper, frame by frame analysis of the films, it is necessary to further discuss the broader themes of *Luce*'s excavation filmography, and trace how they reinforce Fogu's analysis of fascism's Gentilian temporality. The films generally feature three constants; firstly, they show the scale of excavations, and how disruptive they were to Roman life – to show historic change in Rome. Secondly, they have a significant focus on the process of digging and destruction, on the immediate actualisation of *romanità*. This accentuates the agency and dynamism of the Regime and the fascist way of life. Thirdly, they usually show some sort of result; a modicum of marble once the dust has settled. *Romanità* and the physical results of excavations were, as Arthurs points out, mutually constitutive: 'fascism's revolutionary, anti-historicist conception of history would be articulated in spatial terms, and leave a permanent imprint on the city, which helped reinforce and further elaborate *romanità* as a central tenet of Fascist ideology'.²⁷ In film, the effect is similar: the ruins shown were the byproduct of fascist action and fundamentally reinforced the historic power of digging and *romanità* in the present. Thus, what the ruins actually were was not so important - the fact that fascism could and was retrieving them from the heart of a bustling city is the core message of *Luce* films.

The narratives of these *Luce* films, therefore, align with Fogu's interpretation of fascist temporality as they serve to show fascism making history. They focus primarily on the action of digging, and present this as a historic act, rupturing the physical and temporal landscape of Rome.

Historic through comparisons

Many of the films evidently seek to establish the size of the works and make clear that the excavations were digging up areas integral to Roman life. This emphasised the scale of change Rome was presently undergoing and presented it as historic. The vast majority of reels feature wide shots taken from a raised position, on a nearby building, and pan from notable monuments to excavation sites. At the Roman Forum this is almost always centred on the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II. The Monument was built in the late 19th and early 20th century to combine 'Imperial Rome with the city of the popes and the modern spirit of the

²⁷ Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2012) p.51.

Risorgimento'.²⁸ As a symbol of bourgeois 19th century Italy, the films effectively contrast the monolithic, grand building with the historic dynamism and destructive might of fascism. For Italians living elsewhere in Italy, these shots make the scale of excavation works legible, making them more impressive and the fascist state seem more powerful.



Vittorio Emanuele II and the Colloseum in the background of films.²⁹

These shots reaffirm how heavily the excavations impacted the lived realities for Roman people.³⁰ This cinematographic choice is repeated in most reels shot at the Forum, indicating that the regime wanted to impress viewers with the task they were undertaking and the sheer level of destruction it was causing the capital. Indeed, this contrast is a core message of the films – presenting ‘competing visions for the future [that] clashed for spatial-visual and symbolic dominance.’³¹ The Fascists, however, transcended this; their dominance was destructive, tearing up the ground in a historic act captured as immediately present in the *Luce* films.

The focus on digging

Indeed, footage of digging and destruction is featured in the majority of the films. The shots are generally high in number, showing a few seconds of different workers and passing from one to the other in quick succession with little context needed – the viewer has already situated them in the giant scars beneath the Vittorio Emanuele. These shots, short and numerous, have multiple effects. Primarily, they convey the historic strength of fascism. Workers are moulding the plane with their own hands through sheer willpower. Additionally, they convey the speed of fascist action, something that is made explicit in the title cards of

²⁸ Aristotle Kallis, ‘The “Third Rome” of Fascism: Demolitions and the Search for a New Urban Syntax’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 84.1 (2012) pp.40-79 (p.50).

²⁹ Istituto Luce: *Vei dei Fori Imperiali*, (1932), A091101; *I lavori per la sistemazione delle strade attorno al Vittoriano*, (1932), A101801; *Nuovi lavori di demolizione sulla Via dell'Impero daranno una più chiara e completa veduta dei Fori*, (1933), B021803.

³⁰ Arthurs, ‘Intervention’, p.50.

³¹ Kallis, ‘Third Rome’, p.43.

some reels. One reel features a title card declaring that shots of digging ‘*passano in rapide visioni ad attestare oggi*’ – ‘pass in rapid vision to attest to today’.³² This creates a sense of new time - in which the present takes precedence, and action and destruction become the common ontology of everyday life. This was denoted by contemporary commentators who spoke of ‘the sense of things thrusting upwards from below’ and being ‘almost oblivious to the immense transformations which are occurring in front of our eyes ... like watching a speeded-up film which does not allow one to grasp the fleeting image.’³³ Luckily for them, the role of *Luce* was to realise this simile: to capture the acute sense of historic action, and re-present it to Italians across the country. This required a focus on the process of excavation.



Close-up shots of workers discovering ruins, one with a pickaxe.³⁴

The shots also portray the strength in numbers that Fascism has working in tandem. Each worker is generally doing the same thing – striking the ground with a pickaxe – and passing by many of these workers in quick succession intensifies the speed and guile with which the regime is working. Whilst I further discuss the aesthetics of creative destruction in chapter two, it is important here to draw parallels between Gentile’s Actualist philosophy, and the Fascist use of manual labour and physical strength to uncover ruins. Grounding his philosophy and defending accusations of mysticism, Gentile posited that Italians immanently actualise the nation through a series of willed collective moral choices.³⁵ Fascism also sought a permanent, mass mobilisation of Italians albeit to create a static social order constantly reproducing itself.³⁶ *Luce* makes sure to emphasise the work of groups as well as individuals,

³² Institutio Luce, *Nuovi rinvenimenti* (1931), M007004.

³³ G.K. Chersterton, *The resurrection of Rome* (New York, Dodd, Mead & Co, 1930) p.15; Gustavo Giovannoni, *Lineamenti fondamentale del Piano Regolatore di Roma Imperiale* (Rome: Istituto di Studi Romani, 1939), p.4, cited in Baxa, *Roads*, p.156.

³⁴ Institutio Luce: *I nuovi scavi al Foro Traiano* (1932), B004306; *Via Dei Fori Imperiali* (1932), A091101.

³⁵ A. James Gregor, *Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher of Fascism*, (New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 2004) pp.29-33.

³⁶ Esposito, ‘Era Fascista’, p.202.

implying that the masses are actualising *romanità* through collective historic action. Strength through numbers is a consistent motif of *Luce* excavations, as it was in Gentile's philosophy as a defence against accusations of mysticism. Even when Mussolini joined in with the destruction, which I discuss in depth in chapter two, he was portrayed as the first among a collective of workers – a *princeps* if you will. Excavation is, then, presented as a typically fascist, physical adaptation of Gentile's concept of nation building.



A group of workers simultaneously wielding pickaxes, and a shot of workers pulling down a wall.³⁷

It is also important to note the scarcity of machinery in the Rome films. The vast majority of excavation on film is done physically by men with pickaxes and wheelbarrows, not electric drills or trucks. In Pompeii reels, horses are seen transporting rubble and equipment, not trucks or cars.³⁸ Even when demolishing structures above the sites, the films show men using ropes to pull walls down, not machinery. This somewhat questions Baxa's conclusions that:

The newsreels were content to convey the sounds of jackhammers, trucks, crumbling bricks, and shouted orders. The impression was that of a war zone where sound and fury combined [...] one of noise and clamour that would have made the Futurists proud.³⁹

Whilst the noise is reminiscent of a military organisation, there is, in fact, very little machinery at use. What's more, the filmmakers did not attempt to film the same jackhammer or drill being used on different occasions to give the impression that there were multiple in use. Instead, the regime saw it fit to emphasise the physicality of destruction – and focuses on pickaxes. These became totems of fascist temporality as they were the tools used in the present to actualise ruins

³⁷ Institutio Luce: *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (1932), A091101; *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (1932), A091201.

³⁸ Institutio Luce, *Ercolano e Pompei nuovi rinvenimenti* (1931), M007004.

³⁹ Baxa, *Ruins*, p.59.

and *romanità*. According to the Fascist architect Armando Brasini, the pickaxe was ‘the best architect of our time’, and at excavation sites the first strike of the pickaxe became ritualised and a spectacle for *Luce* to record.⁴⁰ In some cases, *Il Duce* struck this first blow, and the image of Mussolini wielding Fascism’s greatest architect became iconic – something I return to in Chapter Two.⁴¹

Destruction segments of films have a tangible focus on pickaxes. Clips vary from close-ups of a pickaxe scraping around emerging ruins to wider shots of men plunging them into the ground. Whilst I expand on these shots in chapter two, it is important to recognise the chronopolitical point behind this style. Firstly, digging around ruins creates a sense of expectation in the present. Charles Burdett took a Derridean lens to describe a similar phenomenon in Fascist Libya, as the expectation of rebuilding an empire abroad was felt distinctively in the present. This analysis follows Derrida’s recognition that hope and expectation of a utopia or Messianic return is fundamentally experienced in the present through ‘imagination, projection, and anticipation’, despite seeming to belong to the future.⁴² I contend that the impact of the films is similar. By showing the hard, physical work of many to uncover past glories hidden beneath the earth, *Luce* invites the viewer to imagine and anticipate what ruins they might find. Additionally, I contend that the focus on digging illustrated the work and energy required by individual Italians, working as a collective, to actualise the *romanità* in a similar fashion to Gentile’s claims that Italians must consciously act in a certain way to immanently actualise the nation.

Lack of ruins

Ruins, however, do not receive as much attention and stylisation. When the ruins are shown, they are inseparable from digging and action. *Il Duce* himself maintained that Fascism was creating ‘not a Rome of illustrious stones but of living spirits; it is not a nostalgic contemplation of the past but a rough preparation of the future.’⁴³ As in this message, the ruins of the films are not important in and of themselves, but are indicative of fascist life and time.

⁴⁰ Kallis, ‘Third Rome’, p.41.

⁴¹ Armando Brasini to Mussolini, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Sedretaria Particolare del Duce, n.d., 174.330 cited in Kallis, ‘Third Rome’, p.64.

⁴² Charles Burdett, ‘Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya’ *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11:1 (2010) pp.3-25 (p.14).

⁴³ Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*. Vol. 18, eds. Eduardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, La Fenice, 1958) pp.160–161.



Ruins lie scattered on soil.⁴⁴

When shown through the medium of film, ruins lose their place in historical, linear time. Each ruin loses *aura*, to use Walter Benjamin's term: 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.'⁴⁵ When uprooted from the earth, the ruins are simultaneously uprooted from linear time and placed firmly in fascist time and given meaning through fascist action. Through *Luce* films, therefore, viewers do not interact with the images of ruins in terms of the past, but through the lens of present action being done by Fascism. When shown, they often lie dismembered and scattered from their structures and context – sometimes they appear as though they have been discarded by the workers, as though they are not important. Indeed, there was certainly no effort to display them as whole or structurally competent. The labour and historic act of exhuming the ruins comes first, as a practice of *romanità* and fascism. Therefore it did not matter whether the result of digs were shown to be particularly impressive in *Luce* films, only that they were being uncovered.

Luce structured the excavations films meticulously to present a chronopolitical narrative of Gentilian origin. They take care to situate excavations within the broader Roman landscape, providing context which makes them all the more impressive. They also ensure that the process of this action is clear to see and, in fact dominates the footage. Such is the dominance of this temporal framework that the ruins themselves are not actually the focus of the films - they become simply a product of and prophecy for the fascist will to make historic action. The pickaxe takes centre stage, and within the films themselves, the cinematographic and aesthetic focus is much the same – lingering on objects of destruction and action.

⁴⁴ Institutio Luce: *Il volto glorioso di Roma* (1933), B022204; *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (1932), A091101.

⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, eds. Hannah Arendt (New York, Schocken Books, 1969), pp.1-26 (p.3).

Chapter Two

Aesthetics of Excavation

Having established the main themes of *Luce* excavation videos, and highlighted the chronopolitical arguments that underlined them, this chapter delves deeper into the aesthetics of *Luce* films. The core goal of *Luce* was to make the fascist chronopolitical argument engaging, and their main method of doing so was to aestheticise destruction and digging. That being said, some of the excavations necessitated the demolition of the homes and workplaces of Roman citizens. *Luce* thus had to present these acts as positive, despite their destructive nature.

To achieve this, the Regime hired professional cinematographers and directors, not party officials, to shoot excavations with a twist of spectacle. For instance, deep-focus shots, later staples of Hollywood films, were first used by *Luce*.⁴⁶ The most prolific director of excavation films was Arnaldo Ricotti, who was cinematographer for several fictional film from 1918 to 1927, but his work for *Luce* far exceeds this portfolio as he worked there from its inception up until the fall of Rome in 1942.⁴⁷ By hiring experts (Fascist or not) to film and edit excavation reels, the Regime prioritised aesthetics. Furthermore, as an emerging technology, film offered a second, meta way to present excavations as historic acts, as not only was the content historic but so too was the way in which it was captured and disseminated. Indeed, *Luce* used cutting edge filming techniques at excavation sites to present the works through an even more historic lens (quite literally). Film, therefore, played to the fascist advantage. Additionally, *Luce* indulged in the greatest fascist symbol of all – Benito Mussolini. *Il Duce* was often captured by *Luce* inspecting excavation sites and occasionally joining in.⁴⁸ In this chapter, I briefly compare photographs to films of Mussolini's presence to reinforce how the latter better presented fascist chronopolitics.

This chapter, therefore, looks at how mundane excavations were made a spectacle through films, and how this heightened their representation as historic. First, I look at demolitions, and how *Luce* combatted sentiments of loss by aestheticising the destruction of

⁴⁶ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1993), p.196.

⁴⁷ 'Arnaldo Ricotti', IMBD, n.d, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1137838/> [Accessed 20/4/2025]; Massimo Leone 'Silence Propaganda: A Semiotic Inquiry into the Ideologies of Taciturnity', *Signs and Society*, 5.1 (2017) pp.154-182 (p.162).

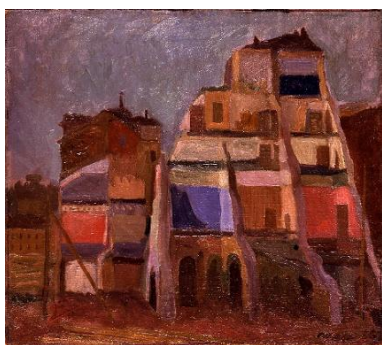
⁴⁸ Institutio Luce: *Lavori pubblica a Roma* (1929), A046206; *Il prodigioso sviluppo dell'Urbe mussoliniana* (1933), B033405.

homes and workplaces. Secondly, I turn to shots of digging, and point to how the pickaxe was glorified in *Luce* as the bringer of the new Fascist present.

Creative destruction: demolitions

Demolitions were the first step to excavation and an integral part of Fascist urban planning. Swathes of buildings (domestic, commercial and otherwise) had to be torn down as they were considered both unworthy or un-Roman and stood over the ruins that Fascism sought to reveal.⁴⁹ This had a very real impact for many Romans as their homes and livelihoods were destroyed for the Regime to actualise *romanità*. Some scholars estimate that approximately 100,000 people were displaced and relocated to *Borgate* (shanty towns around Greater Rome).⁵⁰ Fascism celebrated this mass displacement, as ‘demolition was seamlessly incorporated into a powerful symbolic liturgy of creation’, and likewise seamlessly incorporated into *Luce* films.⁵¹ They were given a pretence of cleansing and sanitising Rome – this was described by Fascists as ‘liberating’ ancient monuments.⁵² Destructive action was thus able to be presented as historic creation and celebrated as such in *Luce* films.

One way in which *Luce* celebrated destruction was by comparing it to the supposed obstinance of the existing landscape. Reels would record the sites without workers then cut to shots of workers demolishing buildings to accentuate the action of fascism. This comparison was actually used to criticise demolitions by Roman painter Mario Mafai, who highlighted what was being lost – he had even lost his home and studio to the excavations.⁵³ Mafai painted demolition sites at dusk or dawn, when the work had ceased, to evoke feelings of loss and emptiness – contradicting the Fascist view of action and creation.



⁴⁹ Kallis, ‘Third Rome’ p.45

⁵⁰ Baxa, *Roads*, p.xiii.

⁵¹ Kallis, ‘Third Rome’, p.41.

⁵² Jan Nellis ‘Constructing Fascist Identity’, *The Classical World*, 100.4 (2007), pp.391-415 (p.395).

⁵³ Baxa, *Roads*, p.54.

Two of Mafai's demolition Paintings.⁵⁴

Mafai's paintings emphasise the colour and life being demolished from Rome, presenting the excavation sites themselves as desolate and grey. On the other hand, *Luce* contrasts shots similar to Mafai's landscapes with shots of destruction. Thus, whilst Mafai lingers on demolition sites with sadness, *Luce* sees them as an imperfection which requires fascist action. Only through the medium of film could fascism make such an argument, as they can seamlessly cut from stillness to action. This highlights the contrasting temporalities of fascism and liberalism. Mafai uses the teleological accumulation of the past to imply culture and hence show that Rome was losing its culture. For him, history did indeed belong to the past, and after Fascist destruction 'there is nothing to lean on. We are without a past. Our house is a ruin.'⁵⁵ For Fascists and *Luce*, however, history belonged to the present. The significance of the buildings in the films is that they are being demolished by fascist action, not that they housed people for decades. *Luce* uses destruction to celebrate the immediate present as fascism is literally destroying history and historicism. The films are thus celebratory. They portray demolition as something to be proud of, to get behind, and to consume in the immediate present.



Similar shots from *Luce*.⁵⁶

One film takes this celebration of destruction even further. Shot in 1932 and one of a few titled simply '*Via dei Fori Imperiali*' ('Imperial Forum Way'), it features first a segment of excavation – focusing on men digging and brushing dirt from ruins – then moves to the creation of a new road by the works. Forty-three seconds of men wrenching down walls with ropes ensues. During this, a succession of quick shots change from wide views of the wall and

⁵⁴ Mario Mafai: *Demolizione dei Borghi*, 1939, oil on canvas; *Demolizioni di via Giulia*, 1936, oil on canvas.

⁵⁵ 'Artisti Mario Mafai' *Scuola Romana*, n.d., <https://www.scuolaromana.it/opere/opel01.htm> cited in Baxa, *Roads*, p.55.

⁵⁶ Institutio Luce: *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (1932), A091101; *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (1932) A091201.

workers to close-ups of workers pulling on the ropes. The steady rhythm of the men is somewhat hypnotic, and symbolised Italy coming together to act under Fascism. Then, a minute and seventeen seconds in, a title card declares '*dopo la demolizione... la ricostruzione... cinematografica!*', which translates directly to: 'after demolition... reconstruction... cinematographically!' What follows is thirty seconds of demolition footage played in reverse. The first shots are intentionally obscure, a man is shown standing in a cloud of dust as though the footage has not been altered. But, when the dust rushes towards a collapsed wall which arises from the ground, it is clear what the editors have achieved. It is designed to be surprising and awe-inspiring. The reversed footage creates its own temporal field in which time is contorted to be consumed for aesthetic pleasure, and boasts about doing so. Not only is the act historic, but the framing of the act is presented as historic. Thus, fascism's virility and historic agency is displayed two-fold. This reel makes explicit the aesthetics of destruction that dominate demolition footage.

It should be noted that this is the only reel to feature reverse footage. This may be because it was not particularly new; the first use of reverse motion was the short film 'Demolition of a Wall' by Louis Lumière in 1896.⁵⁷ Whether or not that is the case, the film is indicative of a playfulness that fascism took to destruction, and its drive to constantly make a spectacle out of harmful action in order to present it as historic.

Digging

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the actual process of digging is the main focus of many *Luce* reels, as the act conveys power and invites the viewer to internalise a glorious future, in the present. Various cinematographic techniques were used to aestheticise digging, including the historic deep-focus shot, which allowed for the foreground and background to both appear in focus. A framing which came to be widely used in Hollywood and around the world, the deep-focus shot was first used in Italy by *Luce*, and was thus part of the Regime's historic filmography.⁵⁸ The Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II is the most common subject of deep-focus digging. Other landmarks are used too, such as the nearby Church of Saint Rita. The Vittorio, as I mentioned in chapter one, features heavily in reels to situate excavations and contextualise the size of the sites, thus emphasising the agency of Fascism.

⁵⁷ 'Démolition d'un mur' dir. by Louis Lumière (France, 1896).

⁵⁸ Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, p.196.



Vittorio and Saint Rita in deep-focus digging.⁵⁹

These shots are visually striking and carry significance with regards to the temporal messaging of the films. One of the more obvious observations to make is that the monuments of contemporary Rome are watching over the excavations – taking pride or ownership over the work. However, this framing is necessary in order to capture a deep-focus shot of digging and monuments, as the camera could only capture both from a lower position. Indeed, I argue that the shots rather invoke the impression that excavations are digging into Rome, uncovering a purer *romanità*. Excavations are gradually unveiling the true wonders of Rome in these shots, which, therefore, places the focus and agency on Fascism and the workers rather than the monuments themselves. In other words, the primary focus is on the pickaxe striking the existing structures, to symbolise fascism's historic hunt for *romanità*.

The pickaxe was *Luce's* primary expression of fascist historic action, as I denoted in chapter one. But, the image of workers simultaneously striking the earth, or carefully revealing marble ruins, was superseded by one other – of Mussolini himself dealing the blow. This image anchored fascism's historic agency firmly in the virility of its leader and contributed to the idea that this new Rome was *Roma Mussolineana*.⁶⁰ Comparing different portrayals of Mussolini digging reveals the benefits of film for capturing his supposed virility and strength.

Photographs of Mussolini's '*primo colpo di piccone*' (first blow of the pickaxe) are not as impactful as films, and typically needed captions to describe the scene. For instance, these two photos captured by *Luce* at a dig in central Rome which are captioned '*Mussolini è colto nello sforzo di portare il piccone dietro le spalle per dare slancio al colpo*' (Mussolini is captured in the act of bringing the pickaxe above his shoulders to give impetus to the blow).

⁵⁹ Institutio Luce: Roma, *I nuovi scavi al Foro Traiano* (1932), B004306.

⁶⁰ See Arthurs, 'Intervention', p.51, and Institutio Luce: *Il prodigioso sviluppo dell'Urbe mussoliniana* (1933) B033405; *Il capo del Governo inaugura le nuove opere della Roma mussoliniana* (1933) B035603.



Mussolini digging.⁶¹

The visual and nominative focus is placed on movement and strength, and captures two different ways to portray digging. In the first, the coming down of the pickaxe is anticipated by the spectator, who projects onto the image their internal actualisation of the event and the expected power of the swing. This style is the most common depiction of *Il Duce* digging. In a newspaper front page, an illustration captures the same movement, with a deep-focus on the Vittorio, similar to many *Luce* reels. The second photograph style is less common, capturing the swing of the pickaxe. This is more akin to Futurist art of the period, in which an object ‘becomes a vortex: a site not of being but of becoming’.⁶² Although arguably a more evocative method of portraying Mussolini’s strike, this latter composition was certainly more difficult to capture at the time and in this instance makes it hard to tell what is going on. Here again lies the benefit of film to the Regime. Through film, Mussolini’s first strikes were captured in totality and were able to become present to the viewer with clarity.

Speaking from a Roman rooftop in 1934, pickaxe in hand, *Il Duce* declared the isolation of the Mausoleum of Augustus from ‘inferior’ works, claiming it had ‘a triple usefulness: that of history and beauty, that of traffic, and that of hygiene [...] Now I yield the word to the pickaxe!’⁶³ Mussolini’s isolation work was captured by *Luce* in a film, directed by Arnaldo Ricotti, which makes for an apt summary of fascist temporality.⁶⁴ First, it shoots the complicated nexus of streets and buildings which have engulfed the mausoleum over time. This is accompanied by an ominous and slight orchestral piece which, as the film cuts to the first

⁶¹ Institutio Luce: *Mussolini ripreso in uno scavo nell'atto di dare un colpo di piccone*, (1937), A00070688 and A00070687; Achille Beltrame, ‘Il Duce strikes the first blow’, Illustration, *La Domenica del Corriere*, 3 March 1935.

⁶² AH Merjian, ‘Fascist revolution, futurist spin: Renato Bertelli’s continuous profile of Mussolini and the face of fascist time’, *Oxford Art Journal*, 42.3 (2019) pp.307-333 (p.320).

⁶³ Susan Fugate-Brangers, ‘The Mausoleum of Augustus in the Fascist Era’, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3.16 (2013) pp.125-135, (p127).

⁶⁴ Institutio Luce, *Inizio delle demolizioni per l'isolamento del Mausoleo di Augusto*, (1934) B056205.

glimpse of the Mausoleum, becomes more upbeat and lively – building excitement. Cue *Il Duce*, who marches along the rooftops, surrounded by saluting Blackshirts and workers, before taking his pickaxe and striking a roof for just over a minute. During this, the music becomes less tripping and more triumphant, booming as Mussolini takes off his coat and soothing as the camera cuts between him and workers chipping away at rooftops. The dramatic composition embodies the fascist chronopolitical narrative; first showing the cramped palimpsest of recent history, then the arrival of fascism and *Il Duce* taking historic action by destroying old structures. Indeed, emphasis is placed on Mussolini's ability for destruction, as well as his position as comrade – showing the viewer that together Italians are actualising greatness. Mussolini himself hinted towards this, celebrating the 'three years of work for countless workers of every kind' that the isolation would bring.⁶⁵ The message is that the Italian people are actualising *romanità* together - through destruction, through the fall of the pickaxe, through historic action in the present. This message is the undercurrent of deep-focus shots of digging, as well as the more general digging shots, and of course the footage of *Il Duce* leading the excavations.



⁶⁵ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, ed. Eduardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, La Fenice, 1951) p.368 cited in Arthurs, 'Intervention', p.51.

Isolating the Mausoleum of Augustus, which is itself partially visible in the far left of the first picture.⁶⁶

Like Mafai's paintings, *Luce's* still shots of Mussolini serve as a reminder of how integral film was as a method of capturing fascist temporality. The still, sullen landscapes captured by Mafai feature nothing of the bustle of *Luce's* reels, and the transformative effect of Fascist excavations. Meanwhile, the attempt to photograph Mussolini wielding a pickaxe loses the action and impetus of the strike. The very fact that there are so many films of excavation shows that the Regime was aware of this fact, and their contrasting of still shots with excavation shots shows a particular awareness of how their works could be misinterpreted. Evidently, *Luce* went to great lengths to incorporate innovative ways to shoot excavations, be it through deep-focus shots, reversed footage, compelling visual narratives, or stirring soundtracks. Only through *Luce* films of excavations, therefore, does one get a sense of what Fascism was trying to present itself as – as a historic agent in the present.

⁶⁶ Institutio Luce, *Inizio delle demolizioni per l'isolamento del Mausoleo di Augusto*, (1934) B056205.

Chapter Three

The Libyan *Lacuna*

In Libya, *Luce* presented Roman ruins in a very different way as they adjusted to a modified chronopolitical argument. This led to a very noticeable omission of excavation footage and more of a focus on the results on ruins themselves. This focus is the inverse of *Luce*'s strategy in Rome, which, as I have shown, emphasised digging as an historic act. In this chapter, I explain the fascist colonial temporal vision, explore where scholars have recognised this in *Luce* films, and posit a possible reason for the lack of excavation footage which has not been the focus of research to this date.

Fascist chronopolitics deviated in Libya with the addition of a racial 'Other'. African colonies were portrayed 'as at once extensions of the homeland and as margins of it that retained their irremediable otherness.'⁶⁷ Ruins thus acted as a shibboleth of Roman civilisation, making 'an exotic colonial environment "legible" to Western eyes'.⁶⁸ This proximity was made explicit in the title of some *Luce* reels, such as '*Tripoli Figlia d'Italia*', 'Tripoli Daughter of Italy'.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, ruins also allowed the Regime to present the indigenous population as 'irredeemably other', as they lay desolate and devoid of the virility of fascism.⁷⁰

Fascism thus portrayed itself as bringing meaning to these ruins that had been left desolate by the indigenous population, who were presented as 'immobilised under the weight of [their] dogmas'.⁷¹ *Luce*, however, did not present this through the excavation of ruins despite the fact that many took place. Indeed, humans are almost entirely absent from *Luce*'s shots of ruins in Libya.⁷² Instead, *Luce* focused on the technologies that Italy brought over to the colony, and contrasted these scenes with 'sunbaked wastes' of Libya.⁷³ In some ways, ruins in Libya thus took the position of Mafai's landscapes, presenting an obstacle to be attacked by fascist action. Whilst academics have noted this difference, few have sought to explain why the Libyan reels are without the focus on manual excavation that saturates Roman reels. In an attempt to

⁶⁷ David Forgacs *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.82.

⁶⁸ Arthurs, 'Intervention', p.55.

⁶⁹ Istituto Luce, *Tripoli figlia d'Italia*, (1926) M006503.

⁷⁰ Burdett, *Eschatology*, p.13.

⁷¹ Bruno Francolini, *Africa bianca: Panorami fra mediterraneo e Sahara*, (Florence: Vallecchi, 1932) pp.215-217 cited in Burdett, 'Eschatology', p.12.

⁷² Troilo, 'Visions', p.620.

⁷³ Mancosu, 'Unburying', p.105; Istituto Luce and Fox Films, *The Desert Patrol*, (1933) D049401; Istituto Luce, *L'opera di valorizzazione agricola della Libia potenziata dal regime fascista* (1936), B085706.

justify this, I argue that *Luce* was hesitant to show African workers digging on excavation sites as it would contradict the portrayal of Islam as obstinate and immobile.

Chronopolitics and ruins in Libya

Fascist propaganda spoke of indigenous Africans as timeless people, creating a clear dichotomy between the temporalities of Italy and Libya. Fascism was presented as bringing presence and action to Libya through acts like excavation. Therefore, should Libyans have been presented as doing the excavations, this core Fascist argument would crumble. Italian commentators spoke of Libya as a timeless place, as a ‘community that was in the grip of a belief system that promoted immobility over progress, acceptance of the world as it was over the desire for change.’⁷⁴ This manifested in most descriptions of Libya from their neglect of ruins to their neglect of agriculture.⁷⁵ Indeed, the Fascist presence Africa was accompanied by an incomparable propaganda campaign of photos, postcards and documentaries, with Burdett noting that these were all in some way concerned with time.⁷⁶

Luce footage of ruins is also preoccupied with time’s passage. For the most part, scenes of ruins did not warrant their own films like in Rome, but were inserted in the broader documentations of the colony. These used ruins as a foil for Fascist action elsewhere thus embedding them into the colonial temporal narrative. The desolation of ruins was contrasted with crowds greeting *Il Duce* or the King, and other spectacles like car races (*‘Rombo di Motori’*) and flyovers.⁷⁷ With regards to the latter, some *Luce* films were shot from planes looking down on the colony, engaging in what David Forgacs described as the ‘power of an unreciprocable look’:

It is the power of a person who is able to see and survey, or to see and bomb, from above, confident in the knowledge that this way of seeing and those actions cannot be reciprocated by those on the ground below.⁷⁸

These technological focuses were the weapons which Fascism and *Luce* used to illustrate themselves as acting historically in Libya. They presented themselves as doing what had not

⁷⁴ Burdett, ‘Eschatology’, p.11.

⁷⁵ Forgacs, *Margins*, p.86.

⁷⁶ Markus Wurzer’s ‘The social lives of mass produced images of the 1935-41 Italo-Ethiopian War’. *Modern Italy*, 27.4: Visual and material legacies of fascist colonialism, (2022) pp.351–373 (p.353); Mancosu, ‘Unburying’, p.103; Burdett, ‘Eschatology’, p.10.

⁷⁷ *Instituito Luce: Il Duce sbarca in Libia* (1937), B105908; *il Re e la Regina in Tripolitania* (1928), M020303; *Ritorno di Roma* (1926), M014309.

⁷⁸ Forgacs, *Margins*, p.119.

been done before and viewing Libya from a perspective that the indigenous population could never achieve. Within this narrative, the ruins themselves took on a more important role as signifiers of an immobile place.



Overhead images.⁷⁹

One way in which this is shown is through the imagery of sand dunes. Sand dunes acted as a high-water mark, indicating how time and Islamic immobility had hidden Rome's presence, and became a clear antagonist of fascist action in the Regime's propaganda.⁸⁰ By removing sand, Fascism was defeating time.⁸¹ In multiple films, wide shots of ruins half swamped in sand dominate segments. Both the films *Vestigia di Roma Imperiale* (1925) and *Ritorno di Roma* (1926) feature the same footage of a person in what looks to be traditional Libyan dress (*Jarid*) walking aimlessly along rolling sand dunes and through ruins. The only marker of their presence is the footprints they leave on the sand, which will soon fade away and be submerged - like the ruins. *Ritorno di Roma* includes another, similar shot, showing a man in the same dress walking along the top of a crumbled wall. The scene, like the last, is obviously manufactured – the man even casts two quick glances to the camera as if looking for direction and reassurance.

⁷⁹ Institutio Luce, *Ritorno di Roma*, (1926), M014903; *Tripolitania I tre periodi della rinascita*. (1929), M023201.

⁸⁰ Troilo, 'Visions', p.627.

⁸¹ Mancosu, 'Unburying', p.105.



Walking through ruins.⁸²

These choreographed shots attempt to present indigenous people as oblivious to not only the structures around them, but to the fact that these structures could be unearthed and return grandeur to the setting. These shots are, therefore, intended to evoke the impression that one is watching ‘the people of several centuries ago’, to quote one Italian travel writer.⁸³ Indeed, *Ritorno di Roma* even begins with footage of ‘centurions’ arriving in Libya, as though the film is actually from ancient times.⁸⁴

Luce also contributed to a popular pedagogical discourse concerning the size of these sites. In other publications, images and commentary about Libyan ruins were accompanied by figures and statistics denoting the size of sites and details about what had been uncovered and what was being uncovered.⁸⁵ This was no doubt an attempt to contrast indigenous peoples with Italian fascists, emphasising how vast ruins had not been touched until the arrival of fascism. By filming wide shots of ruins covered in sand, *Luce* strives for the same impact.



Sand dunes covering ruins.⁸⁶

⁸² Institutio Luce, *Vestigia di Roma*, (1925), M011402.

⁸³ Francolini, *Africa bianca*, pp.215-217.

⁸⁴ Institutio Luce, *Ritorno di Roma*, 1926, M014903.

⁸⁵ Troilo, ‘Visions’, p.626.

⁸⁶ Institutio Luce: *Ritorno di Roma*, (1926), M014903; *Vestigia di Roma*, (1925), M011402.

In Libyan films, therefore, ruins were used as a foil for the Fascist arrival. Their isolated and submerged state presented the indigenous population as careless and immobile whilst creating anticipation for fascist excavations. When the excavations took place, however, *Luce* rarely filmed the process as it did in Rome. This deviation from the Roman strategy is in need of justification. I argue that *Luce* was reluctant to film excavations due to the racial stereotype it created through its colonial temporal projections.

Digging for excavations

Libyan excavations were publicised in other media outlets, suggesting that there was an impetus for recording excavations, which *Luce* could have capitalised on. In 1925, an archaeological conference was held at Tripoli to discuss what lay beneath the dunes, what had been recovered, and what the Fascists were and could recover.⁸⁷ There was evidently an excitement among officials for upcoming work. Three years later, in the popular Fascist periodical *Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* ('Illustrated magazine for the Italian People') one archaeologist wrote of the need to 'attack the unmoving mass of sand' and the dunes of Libya which were 'still untouched by the pickaxe'.⁸⁸ The irony of course is that it would not be much use to take a pickaxe to a sand dune, but this reiterates how strong the pickaxe had become as a symbol for fascist action. This drive to attack Libyan time with a pickaxe is mirrored in a stamp which entered Italian circulation in 1932 to celebrate the pacification of Libya. Printed with the phrase 'Returning to where we once were', the stamp pictured a Fascist worker digging the Libyan soil with a pickaxe, flanked by two *fasces*.⁸⁹ For Mancosu, 'this image epitomises the significance of the archaeological remains in visual imperial propaganda'⁹⁰ This begs the question of why *Luce* would not embrace this enthusiasm and capture digging in Libya as it did in Rome.

To answer this, I turn to the few reels which did capture excavations in Libya. The most succinct example – and the only Libyan film dedicated purely to excavation – is *Vestigia di Roma* from 1925, which runs for thirteen minutes. The film covers several sites during what it proclaims was '*I grandi scavi nella primavera 1925*', 'The great excavation in spring of 1925'.⁹¹ A few other films show short scenes of excavations, like *Tripoli Figlia d'Italia* (1926),

⁸⁷ Troilo, 'Visions' p.620.

⁸⁸ Renato Bartoccini, "La città che risorge dalla sabbia," *Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, 8 (1928): 23–27, cited in Troilo, 'Visions', p.627.

⁸⁹ Mancosu, 'Unburying', p.102.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.103.

⁹¹ Institutio Luce, *Vestigia di Roma*, (1925), M011402.

and *Tripoli*. *Gli scavi nella città romana di Sabrata* ('The excavation of the Roman city Sabrata', 1934). In each of these films, the framing of workers is more distant and sporadic.



Digging with officers⁹²

Workers at the excavation sites are all indigenous. Given the ten year gap between the first and the last film, we can assume that very few, if any, Italians were brought to Libya to conduct excavations. This racial difference manifests in the cinematography, as the camera maintains its distance from the workers, not intimately filming their digging, like reels in Rome. They are often shot with an Italian officer lurking over them armed with a rifle, or with an Italian archaeologist commanding them. Italian power and domination is ever-present. The camera also assumes the vantage point of the colonial officer, as it watches over indigenous workers, keeping its distance, and gets several glances from the camera-conscious workers. This reinforces the colonial gaze, showing not just who was in control but how they were in control, and puts the Italian in the seat of power, commanding and directing indigenous workers. *Luce* also refrains from showing any actual recovery of ruins as if afraid to represent *romanità* as being actualised by Africans. The film only shoots ancient treasures after they have been recovered and cleaned – a process which was filmed in Roman reels. One sequence in *Vestigia di Roma* shows a statue – exhumed and already perfectly cleaned – laying on the soil underneath an Italian. The man signals for others to join him, and the camera cuts to another suited Italian inspecting the statue. One can assume that the statue was actually discovered by the indigenous workers, but *Luce* does not record this, instead manufacturing a sequence where white Italians inspect it. This has a much less powerful impact than the films in Rome, where the camera intimately captures strikes of the pickaxe. Indeed, in the Libyan excavation films

⁹² Ibid; Institutio Luce, *Tripoli figlia d'Italia*, (1926) M006503.

only one shot, lasting no more than three seconds, frames a worker striking the ground with a pickaxe compared to hundreds of the like from Roman reels.



The staged statue recovery⁹³

The lack of such intimate shots, and the inclusion of manufactured scenes of discoveries made by the minority white Italian presence, suggests that the Regime was hesitant to portray indigenous workers as actualising *romanità*. Had they included such scenes, it would contradict the whole Fascist argument that they were defeating Islamic immobility in Africa and giving life and presence to ruins. Instead, *Luce* used the static, empty shots of ruins to criticise the indigenous population as immobile and careless, contrasting them with the action of Fascism.

The evident contrast between Roman and Libyan *Luce* films illustrates the adaptability of Fascism, and how it used *romanità* in different settings to suit its needs. It also highlights the flexibility of film as a propagandistic tool. Whilst the regime could produce stamps depicting Italians digging in Libya, *Luce* could not as there was no real basis for this image. Therefore, *Luce* changed the narrative and embedded shots of empty, sand-ridden ruins in longer films of Fascist arrival and technological set pieces in Libya. Excavations, I argue, were sacrificed in order to preserve the Fascist colonial temporal view that only they could provide meaning to the present and enact historic deeds, like revealing the ancient cities of Rome or Leptis Magna. In the eyes of fascists, the timeless people of Libya could not possibly make history, so in the films of *Luce*, they do not dig.

⁹³ Institutio Luce, *Vestigia di Roma*, (1925), M011402.

Conclusion

Luce covered so much of Fascist Italy that their reels of excavations might not seem the most important. Indeed, at first viewing, the *Luce* excavation reels may come across as mundane or of little use to historians, particularly those trying to gain a better understanding of fascism as a socio-political phenomenon. But they are, as recent historiography has shown, heavily imbued with fascist tendencies, aesthetics, and outlooks. They glorify violence and destruction, all through an aesthetically pleasing and self-congratulatory medium. Furthermore, when seen through Fogu's lens of fascist temporality, the reasoning for this becomes clear; *Luce* was recording in the fascist stylisation of time insofar as it presented fascism as actualising *romanità* in the immediate present through historic action. *Romanità* and Fascism thus were able to blend into one belief in action in the present – *Luce*'s role, in Rome at least, was to capture and celebrate this present. The ongoing advancement technology allowed for the films to gain a nationwide audience in theatres, State funded centres, and even Piazzas. The present moment of historic action, captured in Rome, was able to be bottled and made present once again for anyone who found themselves within view. For this reason, *Il Duce* declared film his greatest weapon. Through the medium of film, Rome truly had no spatial bounds and no temporal limits.

Luce fought for Mussolini by glorifying fascist acts of *romanità*, constantly comparing Fascist excavations with the passage of time. In Rome, the physicality and destructive capability of digging contrasted the grand monuments and palimpsestic landscape of old. The city became Fascism's canvas and acted as a reference point with which one could assess and observe fascist action. The scale of change and destruction was therefore heightened. *Luce* made sure to constantly show excavations in the landscape and intimately show destruction to reinforce this. Destruction, indeed, became a particular fetish of *Luce*. Demolitions and digs were subject to various state-of-the-art portrayals to capture audiences and educate them on the beauty and creative power of destruction. Hence, the pickaxe became a totem of fascist action and strength second only to *Il Duce* himself.

Where Fascism went, so did *Luce* – physically and ideologically. Regarding Libya, Fascism underwent a propaganda campaign of racial denigration. *Luce* adapted thus, refraining after 1925 to giving coverage to any excavations made by the hand of indigenous workers, and instead making ruins the foil to the fascist action. Like the landscape of Rome, Libyan ruins became a measurement of time's passage. Their desolate state was used by *Luce*

not only to grant legitimacy to Italian rule, but also glorify the speed and destruction of fascism. Only through the medium of film could fascism make such comparisons visible to the Italian populace, and maintain such a restless self-representation.

Given their obsession with cinematography and aesthetics, it is no surprise that *Luce* films are used today for fascist nostalgia. But *Archivio Luce* not only provides a reservoir of fascist aesthetics, but also of fascist temporality as films insisted on capturing “historic” action. To understand how and why these films are used to garner nostalgia for fascism, it is imperative to analyse the ideological undercurrents and impacts of them. With an understanding of fascist chronopolitics, the repurposing of these films is revealed to be more than an aesthetic choice, but an attempt to make a return to a time in which history was being made, and to make history again. Fascism will continue to feed off of *Luce* films as they make historic deeds present – as they continue to bypass spatial bounds and temporal limits.

Bibliography

Archivio Luce

Archivio Luce, <https://www.archivioluca.com/> [All Accessed 26/4/2025];

A00070688, *Mussolini ripreso in uno scavo nell'atto di dare un colpo di piccone* (1937), <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL0010032821/12/>

A045805, *Scavi archeologici a Roma* (1929), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000021448/2/scavi-archeologici-roma.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%20roma%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000021448/2/scavi-archeologici-roma.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%20roma%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

A046206, *Lavori pubblica a Roma* (1929), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000025459/2/lavori-pubblici-roma-1.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%20roma%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000025459/2/lavori-pubblici-roma-1.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%20roma%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

A091101, *Vei dei Fori Imperiali*, (1932), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000031911/2/via-fori-imperiali.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000031911/2/via-fori-imperiali.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

A091201, *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (1932), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000031934/2/via-fori-imperiali-1.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000031934/2/via-fori-imperiali-1.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

A101801, *I lavori per la sistemazione delle strade attorno al Vittoriano*, (1932), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000046801/2/i-lavori-sistemazione-strade-attorno-al-vittoriano.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%20roma%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000046801/2/i-lavori-sistemazione-strade-attorno-al-vittoriano.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%20roma%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

B004101 *Ercolano. I lavori dei nuovi scavi nuovo scavi* (1932), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010573/2/-1366.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%20roma%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010573/2/-1366.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%20roma%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

B004306, *I nuovi scavi al Foro Traiano* (1932), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010665/2/-1386.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010665/2/-1386.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

B021803, *Nuovi lavori di demolizione sulla Via dell'Impero daranno una più chiara e completa veduta dei Fori*, (1933), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000008893/2/-2432.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%20roma%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000008893/2/-2432.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%20roma%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

B022204, *Il volto glorioso di Roma* (1933), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000008983/2/-2459.html?startPage=20&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22scavi%20roma%22%5d,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d

B033405, *Il prodigioso sviluppo dell'Urbe mussoliniana* (1933), <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010434/2/-3110.html?startPage=20>

B035603, *Il capo del Governo inaugura le nuove opere della Roma mussoliniana* (1933), <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010831/2/-3249.html?startPage=20>

B038506, *Strade romane verso il Fezzan* (1933), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000012416/2/-3462.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22libia%22,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20,%22archiveName_string%22:%22luceFondoCinegiornali%22%22%7d%7d

B042807, *Pompei* (1934), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000011603/2/pompei.html?startPage=20&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22scavi%20roma%22%5d,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d

B056205, *Inizio delle demolizioni per l'isolamento del Mausoleo di Augusto*, (1934), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000015446/2/inizio-demolizioni-l-isolamento-del-mausoleo-augusto.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22mausoleo%20augusto%22,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d

B085706, *L'opera di valorizzazione agricola della Libia potenziata dal regime fascista* (1936), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000022078/2/l-opera-valorizzazione-agricola-della-libia-potenziata-dal-regime-fascista-l-irrigazione-campi-coltivati-grazie-agli-impianti.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22libia%22,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20,%22archiveName_string%22:%22luceFondoCinegiornali%22%22%7d%7d

B105006, *Visita all'oasi di Cufra* (1937), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000026829/2/visita-al-oasi-cufra.html?startPage=20&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22libia%22,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d

B105908, *Il Duce sbarca in Libia* (1937), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000027022/2/il-duce-sbarca-libia.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22DUCE%20libia%22,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d

B136207, *Immagini della Cirenaica e delle nuove coltivazioni di grano* (1938), https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000028275/2/immagini-della-cirenaica-e-delle-nuove-coltivazioni-di-grano.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22libia%22,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d

[cirenaica-e-nuove-coltivazioni-grano.html?startPage=20&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22libia%22,%22*:%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20,%22archiveName_string%22:\[%22\%22luceFondoCinegiornali\%22%22\]}&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22libia%22,%22*:%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20,%22archiveName_string%22:\[%22\%22luceFondoCinegiornali\%22%22\]}}}](#)

D049401, *The Desert Patrol* (1933) [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000091065/1/-3148.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22libia%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000091065/1/-3148.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22libia%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

M006503, *Tripoli figlia d'Italia* (1926), [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000051430/1/-3.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22tripoli%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000051430/1/-3.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22tripoli%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

M007004, *Ercolano e Pompei nuovi rinvenimenti* (1931) [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000051456/1/scavi-ercolano-e-pompei-nuovi-rinvenimenti.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22scavi%20roma%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000051456/1/scavi-ercolano-e-pompei-nuovi-rinvenimenti.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22scavi%20roma%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

M014309, *Ritorno di Roma* (1926) [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000052275/1/-1638.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22tripoli%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000052275/1/-1638.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22tripoli%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

M011402, *Vestigia di Roma*, (1925) <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000051966/1/leptis-magna-patria-settimio-severo-i-grandi-scavi-nella-primavera-1925.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=>

M020303, *il Re e la Regina in Tripolitania* (1928) [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000083652/1/viaggio-l-l-m-m-re-e-regina-tripolitania-nelle-oasi.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22Emanuele%20libia%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000083652/1/viaggio-l-l-m-m-re-e-regina-tripolitania-nelle-oasi.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22Emanuele%20libia%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}})

M023201, *TripolitaniaI tre periodi della rinascita* (1929), <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000052554/1/i-tre-periodi-della-rinascita.html?startPage=0>

Primary Sources

‘Arnaldo Ricotti’ IMBD <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1137838/> [Accessed 20/4/2025]

‘Artisti Mario Mafai’ *Scuola Romana*, n.d., <https://www.scuolaromana.it/opere/ope101.htm> [Accessed 25/4/25]

- Bartoccini, Renato “La città che risorge dalla sabbia,” *Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d’Italia*, 8 (1928)
- Beltrame, Achille, ‘Il Duce strikes the first blow’, Illustration, *La Domenica del Corriere*, 3 March 1935
- Brasini, Armando to Mussolini, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, Sedretaria Particolare del Duce, n.d., 174.330
- Capitano Golinelli, *Saluto al Duce.*, YouTube, 11 December 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cs6UdBezI5w> [Accessed 18/4/2025]
- Chersteron, G.K. *The resurrection of Rome* (New York, Dodd, Mead & Co, 1930)
- Giovannoni, Gustavo, *Lineamenti fondamentale del Piano Regolatore di Roma Imperiale* (Rome: Istituto di Studi Romani, 1939)
- Lumière, Louis, dir. *Démolition d'un mur* (France, 1896)
- Mussolini, Benito, *Opera omnia*, vol. 22, ed. Eduardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, La Fenice, 1951)
- *Opera Omnia*. vol. 18, eds. Eduardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, La Fenice, 1958)
- *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, ed. Eduardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, La Fenice, 1951)
- and Giovanni Gentile, ‘Doctrines of Fascism’ in *Readings on Fascism and National Socialism*, ed. Ann Swallow (Project Gutenberg, 2004, [1932]) pp.3-20
- Mafai, Mario, *Demolizione dei Borghi*, 1939, oil on canvas
- *Demolizioni di via Giulia*, 1936, oil on canvas
- Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Frederick Ahl, (Oxford University Press 2007)

Secondary Sources

- Arthurs, Joshua, ‘The Excavatory Intervention: Archaeology and the Chronopolitics of Roman Antiquity in Fascist Italy’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 13.1, (2015) pp.44-58
- *Excavating Modernity*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2012)
- Baxa, Paul, *Roads and Ruins*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010)
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*, (California, University of California Press, 2001)
- Benjamin, Walter, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in *Illuminations*, eds. Hannah Arendt (New York, Schocken Books, 1969), pp.1-26

- Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993)
- Burdett, Charles, 'Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya' *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11:1 (2010) pp.3-25
- Caprotti, Federico, 'Destructive Creation: Fascist Urban Planning, Architecture, and New Towns in the Pontine Marshes', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33.3 (2007) pp.651–79
- Esposito, Fernando 'Era Fascista Italian Fascism's New Beginning and Its Roman Past Future' in *Beyond the Fascist Century*, eds. Constantin Iordachi, Aristotle Kallis, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) pp.195-212
- and Tobias Becker, 'The Time of Politics, the Politics of Time, and Politicized Time: an introduction to chronopolitics', *History and Theory*, 62.4 (2023) pp.3-23
- Fogu, Claudio, 'The Fascist Stylisation of Time', *Journal of Modern European History*, 13.1, (2015) pp.98-114
- 'Actualism and the Fascist Historic Imaginary', *History and Theory*, 42.2 (2003), pp.196-221
- Forgacs, David. *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016),
- Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowicz, 'Of Other Spaces' *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986) pp.22-27
- Fugate-Brangers, Susan 'The Mausoleum of Augustus in the Fascist Era', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3.16 (2013) pp.125-135
- Garvin, Diana 'Constructing race through commercial space: Merkato Ketema under fascist urban planning', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 25:2, (2020) pp.118-148
- Gentile, Emilio, *Fascismo di Pietra* (Bari, Laterza, 2007)
- Gregor, A. James, *Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher of Fascism*, (New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 2004)
- Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- 'Revolution from the Right: Fascism' in *Revolutions and the Revolutionary Tradition in the West*, ed. David Parker (London, Routledge, 2000)
- Kallis, Aristotle, 'The "Third Rome" of Fascism: Demolitions and the Search for a New Urban Syntax', *The Journal of Modern History*, 84.1 (2012) pp.40-79
- Leone, Massimo, 'Silence Propaganda: A Semiotic Inquiry into the Ideologies of Taciturnity', *Signs and Society*, 5.1 (2017) pp.154-182
- Mancosu, Gianmarco, 'Unburying an Empire: Ruins and Archaeological Discoveries in Italian Fascism's Film Propaganda', *Anabases*, 40.1 (2024) pp.91-109
- Merjian, AH, 'Fascist revolution, futurist spin: Renato Bertelli's continuous profile of Mussolini and the face of fascist time', *Oxford Art Journal*, 42.3 (2019) pp.307-333

- Nehrt, Jennifer L., 'The model of masculinity: Youth, gender, and education in Fascist Italy, 1922-1939' (Doctoral Thesis, James Maddison University 2015)
- Nellis, Jan, 'Constructing Fascist Identity', *The Classical World*, 100.4 (2007), pp.391-415
- Osborne, Peter *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant Garde* (London, Verso, 1995)
- Seller, William and Terrot Glover, 'Virgil' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 28.11, ed. Hugh Chisholm, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911) pp.111–116
- Tamassia, Marcoda, *Il piccone del regime* (Rome, Armando Curcio, 1985)
- Wurzer's, Markus, 'The social lives of mass produced images of the 1935-41 Italo-Ethiopian War'. *Modern Italy*, 27.4: Visual and material legacies of fascist colonialism pp.351-373