Old and New Fascism: Race, Citizenship, and the Historical and Intellectual Context of CasaPound Italia

by

Caitlin Hewitt-White

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Social Justice Education
University of Toronto

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Masters of Arts
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2015

Abstract

CasaPound Italia is a contemporary fascist movement in Italy. An anti-capitalist movement, CasaPound has emerged under neoliberal conditions of youth unemployment and privatization of education. Although CasaPound uses tactics not typically associated with the extreme right, it shares several features with traditional Italian fascism. Like past fascist movements, CasaPound claims to offer an alternative to capitalism, communism, and the limits of a corrupt political spectrum. It also shares with past fascist movements a populist opportunism that feeds on the middle class's real frustrations, and rearticulates these in anti-immigrant racism. Despite these similarities, CasaPound denies that it is racist. This thesis argues that CasaPound's conscious inheritance of the legacies of Ezra Pound, Giovanni Gentile, and Julius Evola undermines its claims to be non-racist. Its activism further undermines these claims. This thesis also argues that CasaPound's emergence has been made possible by exclusionary and racialized citizenship practices central to hegemonic liberal democracy.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to the administrative staff at OISE for helping me navigate the institution's various policies, forms, and deadlines. Thank you to my classmates and instructors at OISE for feedback on earlier versions of chapters of this thesis, and for lively discussions we had in class. My supervisor Dr. Abigail Bakan provided me with invaluable guidance, encouragement, and knowledge throughout this project. Her commitment to me as a student, and to the academic growth of students in general, is exceptional. Dr. John Portelli provided me with the initial inspiration to explore the relationship between exclusion, democratic education, and neoliberalism. Dr. Portelli graciously acted as a second reader of this thesis. The students and faculty of the 2012 Verona project, convened by Dr. Portelli and Dr. Agostino Portera, helped shape my initial ideas about barriers to democratic education in Italy. Thanks to them.

Carolyn Shapiro provided me with extensive feedback on a version of this thesis. Informal discussions with my friends in Turin and Rome helped me understand the contemporary context of CasaPound Italia, and pointed me to key movement resources in Italian. An email conversation with Dr. Kristian Bjørkelo rounded out my understanding of CasaPound and its links to other variants of European far-right ideology. Dr. Sam Gindin read a version of chapter 5 and provided feedback that forced me to consider larger questions of socialist strategy in response to fascism and racism. Christina Rousseau provided me with careful and thoughtful English translations of Italian material. I thank my friends Graeme, Alison, Christy, Greg, and Rhiannon for listening to my ideas and for offering academic and other advice. Thank you to Mary and Tim for last minute technical support. Thanks to my friend Marc, and my parents Pauline and Doug, for their many different types of support during this project. Thank you to Odessa for her help with final copy-editing and for providing me with encouragement, friendship, and fun.
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<tr>
<td>AN</td>
<td><em>Alleanza Nazionale</em>, National Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td><em>Alternativa Sociale</em>, Social Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BO</td>
<td><em>Ordine Nero</em>, Black Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td><em>Blocco Studentesco</em>, Student Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAU-N</td>
<td><em>Collettivo Autorganizzato Universitario Napoli</em>, Self-Organized Collective, University of Naples</td>
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<tr>
<td>CdL</td>
<td><em>Casa delle Libertà</em>, House of Liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td><em>CasaPound Italia</em>, House of Pound Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td><em>Democrazia Cristiana</em>, Christian Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td><em>Destra Sociale</em>, Social Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td><em>Forza Italia</em>, Forward Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td><em>Lega Nord</em>, Northern League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSI</td>
<td><em>Movimento Sociale Italiano</em>, Italian Social Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSI-AN</td>
<td><em>Movimento Sociale Italiano-Alleanza Nazionale</em>, Italian Social Movement-National Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSI-DN</td>
<td><em>Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale</em>, Italian Social Movement-National Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSI-FT</td>
<td><em>Movimento Sociale Italiano-Fiamma Tricolore</em>, Italian Social Movement-Tricolour Flame</td>
</tr>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAR</td>
<td><em>Nuclei Armati Revoluzionari</em>, Armed Revolutionary Nucleus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td><em>Nouvelle Droite</em>, New Right (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td><em>Nuova Destra</em>, New Right (Italy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td><em>Ordine Nuovo</em>, New Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Propaganda 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI</td>
<td><em>Partito Communista Italiano</em>, Italian Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td><em>Partito Democratico</em>, Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PdL</td>
<td><em>Il Popolo della Libertà</em>, People of Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNF</td>
<td><em>Partito Nazionale Fascista</em>, National Fascist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td><em>Partito Socialista Italiano</em>, Italian Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td><em>Terza Posizione</em>, Third Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>UQ</td>
<td><em>Front dell’Uomo Qualunque</em>, Common Man’s Front</td>
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1. Chapter 1

Introduction

Two news stories, both regarding events in Italy from December 2011, draw attention to both the appeal and the threat of the openly fascist organization CasaPound Italia (House of Pound Italy, CPI): a shooting death, and a student council election. Regarding the former, on December 13, 50 year old Gianluca Casseri of Florence shot five Senegalese vendors in a crowded market square, two of whom died, before turning the gun on himself. It was revealed to the public over the next few days that Casseri was a supporter of CasaPound Italia (Gattinara, Froio, Albanese 13; Kington). In a television interview aired shortly thereafter, CPI leader Gianluca Iannone insisted that Casseri was not a member of the organization. Further, he insisted that CPI could not control the actions of those who support them, and, rather than being a racist and xenophobic organization, CasaPound is merely a voluntary association that organizes sporting and cultural events (“Lucia Annunziata vs. Gianluca...”). We can understand the murder as an example of the violence to which CPI's ideology and practise gives rise – this is the threat that it poses. We can understand Iannone's disavowal of Casseri's actions as an example of how CasaPound distances itself from violence associated with traditional fascism, and of how it tries to realign itself with normal activities such as volunteerism, culture, and sports. This was an attempt to minimize people's perception of how threatening CPI is, and an attempt to position CPI within a realm of solidaristic, community-oriented, social welfare activities dear to most liberals.

Much less reported was the second event - the election of candidates from the CPI youth wing, Blocco Studentesco, to the student council of a vocational high school in the Emilia Romagna town of San Secondo Parmense. One of the slate's policies was to advocate for the exclusion of non-citizens from the school, a position that opens the door to racism through an appeal to nationalism. This position, was apparently paradoxical, as one of the elected councillors from the slate was black (“Neo-fascist political movement”). This example demonstrates CPI's appeal to youth, including (at least in some instances) racialized youth, as well its successful
involvement in a democratic processes. That CPI's student organization can successfully run candidates in a student council election in a traditionally left-wing region speaks to its ability to appear to be part of the normal liberal political landscape, rather than as part of the pre-modern and violent landscape traditionally associated with fascism.

These two examples are idiomatic of CasaPound's Janus-like nature: they present to the world a modern, democratic face, but to their supporters and potential recruits, they present a violent, anti-democratic face moulded by the Mussolinian fascism of the past. CasaPound can be described as a social fascist organization, part of the lineage of “left-wing fascism” that characterized the early Italian fascist movement, the politics of the Republic of Salò, and the wing of the post-war Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement, MSI) led by Pino Rauti that became known as MSI-Fiamma Tricolore (Tricolour Flame, MSI-FT). A 2014 study of CPI by Caterina Froio, and Pietro Castelli Gattinara, based on interviews with CPI activists, indicates that the movement has no more than 5000 members nationwide (Gattinara and Froio 7). Despite this relatively small base, CPI successfully draws attention to itself: Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese's group found that from 2004-2012, no fewer than 300 stories about CPI appeared in the news (Gattinara, Froio, Albanese 237).

Although CPI's politics are not new or unique in Italy, their tactics are idiosyncratic. Compared to extreme-right organizations in Italy and across Europe, CPI has been described by scholars as “unconventional” and “ambiguous” because it uses traditionally leftist tactics (Bartlett, Birdwell, Froio 14, 22, 27), such as handing out food to the poor and occupying unused buildings to draw attention to Italy's housing crisis (Gattinara, Froio, Albanese 249). CPI's most well-known squat, for example, does double-duty as national headquarters and as housing unit for several low-income Italian families; its other squatted and legally-acquired spaces primarily provide a social and cultural space for young people on the right. CasaPound has also volunteered in Italian communities damaged by earthquakes in order to assist victims and to rebuild homes (Bjørkelo 27 Jan. 2015). These social functions complement CPI's more institutional work of running candidates in elections and pushing policy proposals. CPI also participates in street marches
convened for purposes not traditionally associated with the extreme right. Examples include a demonstration against neoliberal cuts to education in Rome's Piazza Navona in 2008 – which involved one of the very few reported public displays of violence by CPI members, when they beat anti-fascists with batons (CAU-N; di Nicola)– and, more recently, a demonstration in Naples in October 2013 against an incineration plant (“Napoli in Corteo...”). One observer writes: “CasaPound seeks to incorporate change into its brand of the ideology [of Italian fascism]” (Bjørkelo 27 Jan. 2015).

In fact, the apparent idiosyncrasy of some of their tactics is not, within the context of historical fascism, unusual. CasaPound Italia operates much like other fascist movements have, by using available space, tools, and ideology. It is an opportunistic and chameleon-like movement whose leaders, in public, emphasize the movement's more liberal and socialist dimensions and insists that it is not racist, even as it calls itself fascist. CPI takes up anti-capitalist and social welfare demands that have not been successfully taken up by the grassroots left or instituted by the government, and recasts these as issues of nation instead of issues of class. Where and when socio-economic needs are not addressed by the state or by leftist movements, space opens up for fascists to mobilize. In addition to using available space, CPI uses available tools that have been made popular, especially in the anti-globalization movement of the early 2000s, within the young counter culture of the left – specifically, squatting and demonstrations.

In the following discussion, it will be argued that CPI uses such ideological constructs of citizenship and nation to mobilize economically frustrated Italians, and to steer this frustration towards racist, violent political aims. Similar to the early strain of Italian fascism that was found in the country's northern cities, CPI's anti-capitalism is a nationalist recasting of the anti-capitalist impulses of the middle class and, to a lesser extent, of the working class. CPI models its politics on early Italian fascism and the Republic of Salò1, which are understood as models of

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1 The Republic of Salò, or the Italian Social Republic, was a small state centred around the town of Salò on Lake Garda in German-occupied Northern Italy, governed by Mussolini and his closest allies from his Republican Fascist Party. The state existed from September 1943 (two months after Mussolini had been overthrown by the King and the Grand Fascist Council) until liberation in April 1945.
“left-wing” fascism, while incorporating European fascist and far-right symbols, tactics, and ideas from the post-war period. At the same time, CPI attempts to adapt fascism to modern proclivities such as non-racism and an interest in democratic participation. Specifically, CPI's solution to the current economic crisis is a stronger nation-state that excludes non-citizens and deprives them of rights to public goods, such as housing and education. For CPI, the solution to the problem of capitalism is institutionalized racism under the guise of a strong welfare state in the service of a citizenry that is non-porous, exclusionary, and effectively white. In this way, CPI’s appeal can only be explained if the notions of “citizen” and “white subject” are fundamentally linked. This linkage occurs in both contemporary hegemonic liberalism and fascism. The present study aims to contribute to the limited literature regarding CasaPound Italy some ideas about how it shares a deeply racist view of citizenship and nation with the modern Italian state. This is a study, then, not so much into what CPI does, but what CPI says it does, wants, and believes.

CPI uses available ideology, as have past fascist movements, to justify its ends. Historian Robert O. Paxton distinguishes between intellectual and cultural “preparation” and causation: “fascists do not invent the myths and symbols that compose the rhetoric of their movements but select those that suit their purposes from within the national cultural repertoire. Most of these have no inherent or necessary link to fascism” (39). We could see CasaPound's offer of sporting and charitable activities as a cynical and desperate attempt to deny that fascism has a purely illiberal core – to “trick” the public into thinking it is less fascist than it is. To an important extent, this is what is going on, but this only partially explains the appeal of CPI. CasaPound is also attempting to genuinely remake fascism as a political alternative that is friendly to liberal values like non-racism, while keeping its illiberal core more or less intact. CasaPound, arguably, is trying to reconcile particular liberal values with traditional fascism. For instance, they are trying to reconcile fascist ultra-nationalism with liberal non-racism through the ostensibly less racist “ethnopluralist” worldview. The ethnopluralist position maintains that, contra to the white supremacist position, races are not unequal, but rather tied to the land from which they come. Global capitalism drives people from their homes, creating destabilizing migrant flows into
Europe. The solution to the exploitation of migrants and the problems migrants bring to host countries, CasaPound's argument goes, is an end to global capitalism – but not without immediate deportation of non-Europeans from European nations first.

Although material crises foster fascism by destabilizing people's lives and driving them to look for meaning and security not on offer by the dominant social order, this does not happen in a vacuum of ideas, without reliance upon and in relationship to ideology. The ideological construct that CasaPound uses serves as both a cynical way to seduce the public into thinking it is a reasonable, tolerable, and normal organization, but also as a way to genuinely reconcile traditional fascism with contemporary values, is that of citizenship.

1.1. Relevance

This project is particularly relevant in terms of extant literature and implications for educational research and for research into right-wing responses to neoliberalism. Commentators have observed that the far right is on the rise in mainstream European political institutions – nationally and as part of the European Parliament (“Eurosceptic”; “The Guardian view...”). The case of CasaPound Italia is especially disturbing because, while it is not new that fascist parties rebrand themselves as respectable parliamentarians, what is relatively new (post-WWII period) is that a fascist party participates in mainstream politics and simultaneously takes up tactics and narratives from leftist social movements. This approach is, to many audiences, not only new but also unexpected. The current literature offers scant material that can help explain the appeal of far-right movements that take up demands and tactics from both centre (liberalism) and the left (socialism) --- contributions that are specific to our current neoliberal context. The field of academic study on CasaPound Italia is so far very small. It is dominated by a characterization of CPI as “ambiguous” (Bartlett, Birdwell, Froio 22) and unique from other parties and movements on the right (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 237). One reason for this characterization is its unconventional repertoire of tactics: in contrast to openly white supremacist far right extra-parliamentary organizations, CPI is aboveground and prides itself on being a transparent, normal organization. In contrast to far-right parliamentary parties, CPI engages in grassroots social
protest and welfare provision activities. Additionally, CPI claims to be offering a “third way” between capitalism and communism, and beyond left and right, while retaining strong articulated links with Mussolinian fascism. This study is different from this small body of literature in that it concludes that CPI is actually not ambiguous, different, or new relative to fascist movements from the past. Its combination of parliamentary participation, street protest, and welfare provision is not different from the activities of the early Italian Fascist Party which ran in elections, held demonstrations and parades, and, once in power, developed a complex welfare state. The present study can hopefully contribute to the limited literature about CasaPound Italy by offering some ideas about how it shares a deeply racist view of citizenship and nation with the modern Italian state and with liberalism in general.

Given that nation-states worldwide are instituting increased control of borders and of people marked as “outsiders”, and count on popular intolerance and scapegoating to support these moves, research into contemporary organized intolerance is timely. The normative stance of this thesis is that as a society we should be alert to contemporary conditions that give rise to nationalism, racism, and varying degrees of fascist ideology and activism, with a view to changing these conditions and to responding in anti-racist ways. In other words, this study aims to help show those of us with social justice agendas what it is we need to do in order to anticipate and preempt fascism and its bedfellows.

At stake in the case of CPI are people's basic rights to life and freedom from harm. Violence against Roma and non-citizens in Italy is already serious; it can only be exacerbated by the normalization of fascism via its liberal persona. For example, in 2004, the European Roma Rights Centre reported on the police practise of picking up Romani beggars from Italian city centres and driving them miles outside of town to dump them (ERRC). In 2011, Human Rights Watch, reported on violence against non-white non-citizen street vendors and business owners in Italy (HRW). And of course, in the past two years (2013 and 2014), nearly two hundred thousand migrants from North Africa have made the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean to Europe; most have arrived in Italy to enter into detention centres where they
are held indefinitely or deported; and hundreds have died on the journey (“Mapping Mediterranean Migration”).

The response of the Italian public and state to this crisis is open to incitement from far-right parties such as CPI. Educational events and direct actions convened by CPI influence people's perspectives on immigration and whether the Italian state should deal with the crisis by increasing border control, or by facilitating a safer journey for refugees and ameliorating their living conditions upon arrival. In an era when migrants, racialized people, and Roma are still facing violence, precarity, and human rights violations, it is essential to understand and document CPI's specific role.

Education is specifically relevant to this case study in multiple ways. Like any political movement, CPI uses educational methods to recruit and retain members, and to make its message known to the public. These educational methods include social media and the visual culture of banners, posters, and graffiti. In these ways we can think of CPI as using education as a set of tools. Furthermore, CPI has several policy positions that uphold the value of public, as opposed to private, education, as well as the value of student representation within the state's decision-making bodies that concern education (CasaPound Italia, 2011). CPI advocates for these positions through direct action, petitions, and bill proposals. Also, the movement refers to philosophers whose work on education articulates fascist perspectives on the relation between the self and others and the state and the individual. The educational theories of Gentile, for instance, shed light on CPI's attention to the role of “organicism” in education – the fusing of individual and state will, and in the context of school, the fusing of student and teacher will. We can think of this dimension of the relationship between CPI and education in terms of education as a philosophy. Further, CasaPound organizes in high schools and on university campuses through its youth wing, Blocco Studentesco (Student Block, BS). A movement regenerates itself through its youth. Although education is not limited to youth, youth have a propensity for “becoming educated”, and in this way hold unique promise for becoming convinced of a movement's aims and becoming active in that movement. In this sense we can think of
educational institutions -- specifically, high schools and universities -- as a milieu where CPI is active. Although this project is not devoted to CPI's relationship to education, each of the aspects of this relationship to education -- as a set of tools, as a philosophy, and as a milieu -- will be threaded through the argument that CasaPound's rearticulation of fascism through liberal constructs is new and dangerous.

1.2. Argument

CPI publicly denies that it is racist and goes to great lengths to keep any terminology about “race” out of their public discourse, using instead “nation” and “citizenship” as the central organizing categories in its arguments. In terms of CPI's political philosophy, their central concepts of nation and citizen might appear to put CPI into close association with liberalism, because these concepts are central to the political philosophy of classical liberalism, and are used in the process of normatively describing a democratic space in which “everyone” has rights and belongs. However, an analysis of the laws in place that regulate “nation” and “citizenship” shows these constructs, in theory and in practice, actually limit rights and belonging to a racially circumscribed population. The “everyone” implied by talking about the rights of citizens within a nation are actually, and for the most part, white Italian citizens. Their claim to non-racism, is also belied by its practices. CPI holds public demonstrations against Roma people and African migrants, and some of its members and supporters have been accused of acts of violence against Africans, Roma, and anti-fascists. Further, its racism is revealed in its reliance on the ideas developed by intellectuals that CPI publicly claims as part of their intellectual and cultural heritage, such as Giovanni Gentile, Ezra Pound, and Julius Evola. CPI publicly relies on ideas developed by intellectuals by the fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile, the racist and anti-semitic Ezra Pound, and the “spiritual” racist Julius Evola. The ideas of these thinkers consciously inherited by CPI form a moral universe in which the will of the individual submits to the will of the state, and humanity is organized into inferior and superior races.

That CPI takes up tactics and discourses traditionally understood as liberal or social democratic in that they emphasize rights and equality (albeit for citizens only), is the problematic that
provides the starting point for this analysis. Both hegemonic liberalism, with its emphasis on representative democracy, rights, and alleged non-racism, and twenty-first century fascist philosophy, have contributed to CasaPound's philosophy of selective rights limited by national and racialized citizenship. CPI therefore is fundamentally hypocritical, in that its external persona, as a non-racist rights-based solidaristic organization, differs from its internal body of ideas, which is at its core a racism that views non-Italian, non-citizen, non-white bodies as undeserving of rights and solidarity. But it is more than this. CPI is able to opportunistically use liberalism to mask an illiberal internal body of ideas because at heart, liberalism and illiberalism have a deep, structural white supremacist politics in common. CPI and the liberal Italian state both rely on the nation-state as the basis for guaranteeing rights, rather than to advance a human rights framework – this conditions rights on Italian citizenship, which is highly racialized.

Although CPI's hierarchical and racist moral universe is not immediately visible in their activities as reported in the media, it is visible, in the harder to find and less visible (under-reported in the mainstream media) spaces of “exception”, following Agamben (1998), where CPI uses violence and coercion. In these spaces, CPI activists, members, and supporters engage in the sort of violence for which fascists have been historically known. CasaPound activists regularly hold anti-Roma protests in towns and cities across the country; they descended on the Calabrian town of Rosarno to support violent anti-migrant residents (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori). In a major student protest in Rome's Piazza Navona in October 2008, CasaPound members attacked anti-fascists with batons (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori). More recently, members brutally beat up a group of anti-fascists, putting one into a coma (Struggles in Italy, 25 Nov. 2014). In these moments of violence the interior racist logic of CPI becomes clear. These moments parallel the exceptional violence unleashed on colonized people in Libya, Eritrea, and Somalia by fascists in the 1920s and 1930s. The violence is “exceptional” in the Agambenian (Agamben 1998) sense insofar as it is not generally experienced by those inside of the political space of the nation, by those who benefit from “citizenship”. However, this violence is fundamental to keeping good order within the nation – it can serve to boost a form of nationalist morale, to
centre activism around an immediate crisis, and to exemplify to dissidents the consequences of resistance.

There are several aspects of CPI's platform and its associated campaigns that might appear idiosyncratically democratic for a far right organization, such as the call for increased student power in the governance of educational institutions, or the call for stronger police oversight and prison reform. Certainly to North American observers who have come to associate conservative parties and grassroots right-wing movements with free market economics and less state intervention, CPI's economic proposals that call for a stronger welfare state and increased regulation of capitalism seem liberal or even leftist. It is to this audience that this study is directed and as such, it will focus on how and why demands and concepts that are dear to liberals and leftists are taken up by CPI. The conclusion I come to is that fascism and liberalism share an illiberal racism that privileges the white citizen as the political subject who is entitled to rights. Both fascism and liberalism hold true to political visions that are deeply and structurally exclusionary. There are, however, several divergences between the two, such as the conception of the relationship between the state and the individual, and the degree of value placed on democracy.

As Guérin (1939) has argued, fascists will use liberal-democratic language to mobilize people into action. CPI does use liberalism in this way, as a mask for its harder illiberal core. But CPI simultaneously is trying to reconcile fascism with contemporary liberalism. It tries to incorporate demands for greater democracy, up to a particular limit. In this sense, they are populists and have registered the fact that the “masses” have come to accept and expect particularly contemporary liberal behaviour from even right-wing political movements. Claims to a biological basis for racism, though it definitely persists in all sorts of institutional and everyday ways, has become taboo, as has support for ethnic cleansing and the Holocaust. Rule by dictatorship or emergency powers have negative connotations – though of course, they are still tolerated and even celebrated, especially when used against people of colour and Muslim people. CPI satisfies both these standards – the non-biologically-racist standard and the
democratic standard. It does this ideologically, on the one hand because this prevents them from being stigmatized as anti-democratic white supremacists, but also on the other hand because these are sincerely important political principles for them. Such sincerity, however, does not trump the internal incoherence of CPI's political philosophy. As we will see in the literature review, like the populism of the Italian Fascist Party it venerates, CPI's populism clashes with their elitist view of the all-encompassing state.

1.3. Methodological orientation

To date, three scholarly studies exclusively about CasaPound exist (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Froio 2012; Gattinara, Froio, Albanese 2013; Gattinara and Froio 2014), and one other study about the action repertoires of twenty far right organizations in Italy and Spain included an interview with a CasaPound leader (Caiani and Borri 2013). This study differs from others about CasaPound in terms of its discipline and data sources. It does not rely on interviews or surveys, but rather on analysis of a limited number of web-based texts produced by CPI, specifically on the issues of education and immigration. Additionally, this study is political-philosophical instead of sociological. It aims to examine the ideological relationship between, on the one hand, the type of “social” or “left-wing” fascism that CPI expresses, and on the other, the type of liberalism that shapes common sense ideas about what kinds of political demands are tolerable in the public sphere – for instance, demands to restrict services to citizens are more tolerable than the demand to restrict services to white people. The content of this thesis is therefore a combination of thematic analysis and political exegesis.

Material to support this argument is based on primary and secondary research into textual -- and some visual -- data sources, as well as on political and historical accounts of fascism. The lens that I initially brought to the primary and secondary data is informed by a political position I became committed to before doing the research for this project; yet the data and the theory that I encountered in this project has shaped my conclusions and my prior theoretical position.
My initial approach to this project consisted of a Marxist, political-economy, constructionist framework for research. By Marxist political economy approach that is constructionist, I mean that I came to this research project with an already formed assumption that social and political phenomena cannot be separated from their economic context, which in itself is formed through conflict between and within social-economic classes. I began this research with the position that neoliberal capitalism, and specifically austerity, have created material crises like unemployment, increased cost of living and reduced public spending. Social movements of different types across the globe respond to these crises by engaging in varying degrees and types of struggle. CasaPound Italia is one of these movements. Specifically in terms of fascism, I started with the assumption that, both in the 1920s and now, fascism is a response to economic crisis. This assumption has in large part guided my selection of data sources, information within those sources, my research questions, and my conclusions. For instance, I have been drawn to historical studies written by Marxist and Marxism-friendly authors, such as Paul Ginsborg (2001, 2003, 2004), whose two volumes on the socio-political history of Italy acted as the foundation for my exploration of Italian fascism. My initial reading of sources such as these focused on information about income disparity, employment, and labour struggles and how these have precluded or prefaced peaks in fascist activities and far-right politics more generally.

While a political economy “lens” is appropriate because the movement under study responds to economic crises with explicitly stated economic alternatives, I came to this project knowing that a more complete and accurate view of social phenomena is possible by simultaneously using the lens of race. CPI's apparent anti-capitalism invites a class, as well as a race, analysis because of its simultaneous disavowal of the rights of non-citizens and people of colour in Italy. In Italy these populations are disproportionately affected by the same poverty, employment precarity, defunding of education, and housing crises against which CPI agitates. The anti-racist historical materialist work of British political thinker Ambalavaner Sivanandan (1976) and U.S.-based radical J. Sakai (1989) in exposing the racial exclusion at work in historical and contemporary

\[ \text{For more on constructionist history, see Munslow 44-51.} \]
working-class and anti-capitalist movements has helped shape the particular race and class lenses I have brought to my research.

Sivanandan's work has focused on how the British state has constructed and reconstructed over time different categories of “immigrants”, “settlers” and “migrants” in such a way as to satisfy capital's need for cheap labour on the one hand, and to pacify Black and Asian militancy and anti-Black and Asian racisms on the other (Sivanandan 1976). Similarly, Sakai's work has reconstructed a history of American capitalism rooted in slavery, colonization of indigenous people and lands in America, and an imperialist foreign policy (Sakai 1989). Both Sivanandan and Sakai see capitalism as a creature fed by the unfree labour and land of people of colour, and upheld by a justificatory ideology of white supremacy. This ideology sustains capitalism because it divides the working class such that white workers direct their frustrations toward underpaid foreign – essentially non-white – workers who are perceived as unfair labour market competition. The data I have collected and analyzed about CasaPound Italia certainly proves that this organization actively promotes this type of divisive racist ideology. But the more salient point is that CPI is working to promote the same ideology that the Italian state does, when seen in a broad context, when the state enacts nationality laws that construct foreigners as entitled to a smaller scope of rights than citizens. Similarly to what we can conclude about Italy today, Sivanandan surmised that in Britain, “Contract labour and nationality laws” fulfill the function of “prevent[ing] the integration of immigrant labour into the indigenous proletariat and thereby mediat[ing] class conflict” (Sivanandan 351). The working class is thus divided into proletariat and sub-proletariat. Sivanandan dubs the former the “trade union aristocracy” insofar as it has benefited the most from the state's experiments in building post-war Keynesian labour peace. Likewise, Sakai refers to the “labour aristocracy” as those privileged parts of the working class that benefit from labour law protections while migrant labour remains excluded and hyper-exploited. This basic anti-racist Marxist understanding of how racist ideology scapegoats foreign and workers of colour for the purpose of profit became translated, in my mind, into a hypothesis about the relationship between class and fascism: that it has provided, historically and
contemporarily, a way for capital to divide the working class, preempt unified working class resistance, and therefore continue with profit accumulation.

As I will explore in the literature review, this way of understanding fascism was also par for the course on the European left in the 1920s. But as my research into both primary sources about CasaPound and secondary sources about historical fascism progressed, I learned that the case of CPI's fascism is a particular combination of anti-immigrant racism that would coincidently end up benefitting capital, along with distinctly anti-capitalist economic proposals. The former dimension allies CPI's fascism with liberal parliamentary democracies that effectively limit labour rights to citizens only and make the process of becoming a citizen nearly impossible for non-wealthy people of colour, leaving them vulnerable to the worst forms of labour exploitation. The latter dimension, if taken at face value, allies CPI's fascism with other anti-capitalist, anti-austerity movements.

While I selected my initial research questions and sources based on a prioritization of fascism's use of economic crisis for the purpose of perpetuating capitalist profit-making, this transformed over the course of doing research. As I learned that the left does not have a monopoly over anti-capitalism, this opened up my methodological orientation to become more sensitive to the differences between fascist and non-fascist ways of thinking about democracy. Whereas I started the research process with a set of questions that sought to uncover the material crises to which CasaPound responds, such as hard facts about education funding cuts and increased immigration controls, I altered my approach so that it retained class and race lenses but took on the lens of democracy.

While reading the literature about fascism, I decided on new research questions and thematic criteria that represented the terms that Marxist and non-Marxist historians and political commentators generally use to distinguish liberalism from fascism, such as rights, the scope of belonging (e.g. individual, communal, national, universal), and political values (e.g. equality versus dignity). Because I had better access to CasaPound's platforms and manifestos than I did to hard evidence about the political economy of Italy, I relied on discursive artifacts rather than
economic facts. In sum, my methodological orientation went from a Marxist political economy approach that I believed could reconstruct an empirically-grounded account of CasaPound's emergence, to a Marxism-informed discursive approach that looked at the ways in which CasaPound represents itself to the world and what this tells us about its political philosophy. In looking at how it presented itself to the world I became attentive to the ideological and cultural promises it makes: its promise to regenerate the Italian nation, for instance, or its promise to achieve democratic power for students. The workings of racialized economic crisis are visible in such promises and demands, but in this study what became more salient for me were CasaPound's anti-individualist, hyper-nationalist, racist, and anti-democratic ideas of power and belonging.

While the research I did into the contemporary history of Italy, Italian fascism, and general fascism studies started out as a deductive process, my theoretical position and my specific research questions redeveloped as I learned new things about fascism. I gradually moved from a deductive process in which I was looking for information that matched my ideas, to an inductive process while reading primary sources. In contrast to my deductive reading of historical accounts of fascism, while reading primary sources I allowed myself to identify new themes and lines of questioning, prompted by my literature review and by the content of the sources, some of which did not fit in with my original hypothesis or my original research questions.

1.4. Data collection and analysis

Gattinara, Froio and Albanese (2013) and Bartlett, Birdwell, Froio (2014), have identified the effects of neoliberalism, such as the rising cost of living and employment precarity, as the conditions of CPI's emergence. Prompted by this work, I first examined secondary sources on the last forty years of Italian history, as this is the period during which neoliberalism became the defining economic regime in Italy and across the globe. Early research included secondary sources about economic and social inequality, the welfare state, social movements, immigration and racism - looking through a race, class, and gender lens. This was a deductive process, seeking information that fit in with the hypothesis that lack of economic equality of the sort
brought about by neoliberal policies feeds into fascist movements. The work of historian Paul Ginsborg's post-WWII history of Italy, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*, as well as its sequel, *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, State, 1980-2001* were addressed with these research questions in mind: What were the major changes to education, and immigration in this time period? To what extent are these changes linked to neoliberalism? What was the response to these changes from the left, and from the right? Why are fascist parties and movements still tolerated within the Italian political landscape?

Also addressed were historically-grounded studies about the nature of fascism. In this process, a new set of categories were identified that had more to do with the political philosophy of fascism than with its economic basis. Some of these categories were used as criteria during the next stage of research, which focused on primary sources. The written texts analyzed for prevalent themes came from CPI's various websites and those of their branches like Blocco Studentesco. They included publicly-available organizational documents, policy statements, and press releases. Also analyzed were available texts of media interviews with CPI members published in English, and news articles in English featuring quotations from the leaders.

**1.5. Structure of the thesis**

This introductory chapter has introduced the basic paradox that CasaPound Italia presents: that of an organization linked to fascism and racist violence, yet which has nominally liberal-democratic and economically socialist demands. This chapter has characterized CPI as an extreme-right organization that, similar to other fascist groups, makes use of available spaces, tools and ideas. The overall project argues that CPI makes use of “citizenship” - a particular aspect of liberalism that is already racialized and exclusionary. The methodology section of this introduction has outlined my methodological framework, and primary and secondary research methods.

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3 See Braun and Clarke for a description of thematic analysis, the method I roughly used, in simplified form, which involved coding data, organizing into broader themes, and then creating a thematic map which is then compared to a rereading of the data.
Chapter 2, “Historical and Intellectual Context of CasaPound” lays out a brief history of the mainstreaming and splintering of the post-war fascist movement in Italy to contextualize the fact that present-day CasaPound Italia organizes openly, despite its explicit self-identification as a fascist group. It also overviews CPI's namesake, Ezra Pound, and his racist and fascist legacy. Chapter 3, “Literature Review”, briefly surveys the limited extant literature on CPI, and then focuses on non-economistic Marxist accounts of fascism, and the more mainstream historical work of Paxton and Griffin. Chapter 4, “The Core Philosophy of CasaPound”, looks at the work of Giovanni Gentile, an Italian philosopher and educator, cited by CasaPound as foundational to their philosophy, and whose work directly opposes liberal notions of rights and individualism. That chapter will help show that CasaPound's use of liberal constructs like representative democracy and rights is not entirely genuine or internally consistent. Chapter 5, “CasaPound and Education” elaborates on CasaPound's inconsistency and opportunistic use of liberalism by looking at how CasaPound and its student wing, Blocco Studentesco, mount demands that are, in many ways, at odds with past Italian fascist education models from which they claim inspiration. Chapter 6 makes the argument that CasaPound is racist insofar as it draws from the explicitly white supremacist intellectual work of Julius Evola and the racist, colonial legacy of Mussolini, and insofar as it engages in sometimes violent anti-immigration activism. The latter activism uses a citizenship-based nationalist populism already present within the Italian constitution and Italian law. The last chapter will offer some insights into the historical relevance of CasaPound, areas for future research, and the importance of troubling the category of citizenship as part of the larger struggle to respond to and to pre-empt fascism. It is the insistence that citizenship be the basis of rights that fascism and liberalism have in common, and that helps fascism thrive.
2. Chapter 2

Historical and Intellectual Context of CasaPound Italia

CasaPound Italia has emerged in a context characterized by social inequality and public mistrust of the state, fostered over the long term by successive governments' failures at economic and institutional reform. Its roots can be traced back to Mussolini's Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party, PNF), whose mission the Movimento Social Italiano had taken up after the war, and later by Pino Rauti’s terrorist Ordine Nuovo (and by association, Ordine Nero) in the 1970s. CasaPound's interesting features are actually not that new: its “third millenialism” is a contemporary variant of the traditional fascist claim to surpass the left-right political spectrum altogether through populist appeals to the nation. Its ethnopluralism, similarly, is a contemporary anti-immigrant type of non-biological racism. Its apparent commitment to the arts, social activities, welfare provision, and physical activity are reenactments of Mussolini's totalitarian vision of a society transformed in all its dimensions by fascism. CPI grounds its activities in the intellectual tradition of Ezra Pound, whose politics are likewise totalitarian. Other socio-economic and cultural factors have contributed to a climate in which CPI and other far-right groups have proliferated. This chapter addresses these elements in overviewing how CPI emerged out of the mainstreaming of post-war fascism.

2.1. The mainstreaming of the far right: an overview of CPI and its historical context

In the present day, a range of far-right groups are tolerated in Italy. These form part of Italy’s socio-political fabric, and oftentimes are part of Italy's governing coalitions. This range includes groups that do not call themselves fascist but that have links to antecedent fascist organizations, such as the Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance, AN), a descendent of the MSI. The MSI was Italy's primary fascist party that emerged after World War Two, with PNF members and former Fascist officials in its ranks. The range of far-right groups tolerated in Italy also includes groups that explicitly call themselves fascist, such as CasaPound, and the MSI before it. Some
observers may find baffling the fact that fascists can openly organize without legal ramifications, given that a number of Italian laws prohibit and punish incitement and commission of violent crimes “on racial, ethnic, and religious grounds” or organizations that do so (“Italy: Hate Crimes”). In addition, the Italian Constitution forbids the reorganization of, “under any form whatever, the dissolved fascist party” (Constitution, Transitory and Final Provisions, Disposition XII). Despite this, CasaPound and its antecedents have organized openly, and have run in elections, and CasaPound is categorized as an “Association for Social Promotion”, which technically enables it to receive state funding.

CasaPound is purported to have been founded in 2003 when the organization established its first squat in the lower-income, predominantly immigrant neighbourhood of Esquilano in Rome (Gattinara 7). However, the creation of the band ZetaZeroAlfa in the late 1990s is also cited as the starting point of CasaPound; the band's singer, Gianluca Iannone, has been the group's leader since it appeared (Gattinara 7). From 2003 until 2008, CPI functioned as a primarily youth-driven faction within the far-right MSI-Fiamma (Italian Social Movement-Tricolour Flame, MSI-FT). Their status as a faction was formalized in 2006 (Albanese, Froio, Gattinara 12). However, CasaPound soon left MSI-FT when Iannone was expelled in 2008 over demands for greater organizational “flexibility” as opposed to “rigid party structures” (Bartlett, Birdwell, Froio 21).

Like most of the neo-fascist and far-right parties in Italy today, MSI-FT itself originated from the 1995 dissolution of the MSI. The MSI directly links contemporary far-right and fascist parties to Mussolini's PNF. Upon King Emmanuel's revocation of Mussolini's title as head of state in July 1943, the PNF retreated to a territory in northern Italy where Mussolini established a short-lived, corporatist Republic of Salò in keeping with the fascist party's early “social fascist”, or “leftist fascist” politics. Many MSI members had been part of the fascist party in Salò and earlier. The MSI's history can shed light on the history of post-war fascism, and also on the history of the Italian state's tolerance of fascism in the post-war period.

To understand how present-day tolerance of fascist groups in Italian society came about, we need to look back to the transition of fascism's status from ruling party to defeated pariah, in the years
1943-1945, and also into the early years of Italy's post-war reconstruction. Upon Italy's liberation from German occupation and fascist rule, the Allies insisted that anti-fascist and communist partisans be allowed little role in post-war Italian governments. The Allies supported *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democracy, DC) in becoming the hegemonic power in post-war Italy. The DC's ideology of "brotherhood" and "forgiveness" across classes and political orientation, contributed to the popular understanding that fascists and anti-fascists equally suffered during the civil war and should be forgiven (Ginsborg 2003, 49). With such limits to anti-fascist power in government, no effective purging of fascists from the state apparatus and few convictions of fascist leaders occurred in Italy as they did in Germany and France. This helped shape Italy's subsequent tolerance for fascism: former fascists were readily forgiven and continued to work in the judiciary, the civil service, and the police. Aside from the ideology of forgiveness, the DC's hegemony also had economic impacts that were to shape Italy's susceptibility to continued fascism. The DC in government for forty-nine years relied on cooperation with capitalists and a disavowal of economic reforms. There was little alternative to this arrangement: the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI) under Togliatti, in the post-war period up until 1964, used a strategy of collaboration with DC (Ginsborg 2003). While scholars of fascism agree that fascism cannot be blamed on economic crisis alone, it is also generally recognized that where social and economic reforms are lacking and where the left is weak, the right has tended to flourish. This context can help to explain the continuity of Italian fascism to the present day.

In his account of this period, historian Paul Ginsborg (2003) locates the roots of post-war problems with housing, unemployment, and education traceable to this problematic positioning of the PCI (51). The failure of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to advocate for economic reform when they had the opportunity to do so kept intact the sort of material conditions and broad social inequality that many observers have credited with fomenting the social unrest and

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4 Marxist scholars of fascism who have developed this viewpoint include Gramsci (1966, 1971) and Poulantzas (1979). Non-Marxist scholars of fascism who share this view include Mosse (1964), Payne (1980), Griffin (1993), and Paxton (2004).
immiseration on which fascists prey. PCI's coalition with DC, and engagement with the state apparatus in general, emboldened a negative popular association of the left with traditional parties that are part of the corrupt and ineffective state (Ginsborg 2003; Ginsborg 2001, 180-193). This further opened up the space for fascism in that it offered a collectivist alternative to an untrustworthy state. Historian Robert O. Paxton has also observed that, historically, fascism has taken root where collectivist traditions of communism and Catholicism are weak (Paxton 50). Leftist weakness, and collectivist weakness in general, has made Italian society vulnerable to the alternative collectivity offered by fascism.

While Italian society was generally purged of a viable left alternative at the very same time that the state was purged of anti-fascists, fascist leaders and the rank-and-file were free to regroup. Fascist recomposition in the post-war years took the shape first in the Qualunque movement, and then in the Movimento Sociale Italiano. The Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque (the Common Man's Front, UQ) won 30 seats in the June 1946 Constituent Assembly elections (Ginsborg 2003, 99) out of 556 (Walston 186). Its platform sought to restrict powers of anti-fascists and Allies, railed against the (albeit limited) purges of fascists from government, and channelled popular opposition to centralized government. Its supporters came from the south and its financing came from capitalists and landowners: “ex-Fascists who had been refused admission to the Liberal Party” (Ginsborg 2003, 99-100). The UQ dissolved in 1949 after a poor showing in the 1948 elections (Bosworth 540) and amidst widespread perceptions that the party represented shallow apolitical anger and cynicism (Ginsborg 2003, 100).

The Movimento Sociale Italiano picked up where UQ left off and became the main neo-fascist party in Italy until its dissolution in 1995. It drew its members from the former PNF and UQ, capitalists, landowners, “southern students, urban poor and lower middle classes” (Ginsborg 2003, 145). The party's leaders had been second-ranking officials from the Republic of Salò and long-term PNF members (Ginsborg 2003, 144). It enjoyed an alliance with the church on the basis of shared anti-communism (Bosworth 540), which culminated in “Operation Sturzo”-- the church's attempt to put together an independent electoral ticket that included the DC, neo-
fascists, and a Popular Party leader (Spotts 22). Although the DC thwarted this scheme when it withdrew from the ticket, the MSI's electoral gains were nonetheless significant: it won 5.8% of the overall vote in 1953 (Ginsborg 2003, 143).

At the time of the 1953 general election, one of the MSI's main issues was Italian territorial rights to the city of Trieste. Before WWI, this Adriatic city had been part of the Austrian Empire. It was annexed to Italy after WWI, and local fascists terrorized the ethnic Slovenian majority in a campaign of forced Italianization. Italy lost Trieste to Yugoslavia after WWII, along with the surrounding area of Istria (Ferraresi 25; Bosworth 537). At the time, young nationalists incited protests and riots, demanding continued Italian control of Trieste and Istria. To this day, Italian far right activists regularly commemorate these and related nationalist irredentist actions (Dechezelles 368). The MSI also represented popular anger over losing Italian colonies in Africa as a result of the war (Ginsborg 2003, 144). In these ways, according to Franco Ferraresi, MSI used national issues of territory “to bypass the fascism/antifascism discrimination and to place itself alongside 'regular' parties putting forth a claim that no self-respecting Italian could reject” (Ferraresi 25). The MSI's popularity reached its height in the early 1970s once it had successfully presented itself as an authoritarian alternative to the weak state under the DC, which had proven itself unable to deal with “leftist terrorism”. Significantly, many cases of “leftist terrorism” were traceable to the MSI itself, as part of its “strategy of tension”, explored below. Throughout its history, the MSI was characterized by its anti-communism, nationalism, irredentism, and its “strong sense of the state” that it equated with the nation rather than with “existing institutions” (Spotts 96). These features are shared by CPI today.

Popular support for lingering fascist elements in Italian society has ebbed and flowed over the decades. The 1960s began with what became known as the “Tambroni affair”-- a significant blow to popular support for the MSI from which it did not recover for the next twelve years. Buoyed by President Tambroni's reliance on the MSI for votes of confidence, and seeking to establish itself as a credible party, the MSI attempted to hold its annual congress in the
historically anti-fascist city of Genoa. Anti-fascist riots started, and spread throughout the country. The President gave the go-ahead to police to use lethal force; the resulting police killings of demonstrators soured the public's perception of Tambroni. He resigned, and this “established clearly one of the constants in the political history of the Republic: namely that anti-fascism, especially in northern and central Italy, had become part of the dominant ideology” (Ginsborg 2003, 257). The MSI pitch for respectability had failed, and the party remained unpopular throughout the 1960s. The MSI had to devise another way of making itself useful to the general public and indispensable to those in power.

2.1.1. The 1970s: the Strategy of Tension, and the birth of anti-establishment ethnopluralism

The depth and power of the leftist student-worker revolts of 1969's “Hot Autumn” so alarmed Italy's right that opaque networks of fascists, armed forces, Italian secret service, CIA, and NATO organized a “strategy of tension” in response. The strategy of tension involved several planned acts of violence designed to push the public into accepting an authoritarian response in the form of a right-wing coup. This included the December 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing, which the Ministry of the Interior blamed on anarchists and used as a pretext for rounding up leftists, kicking off cycles of retaliatory killings by fascists and leftists that ended only in 1984. This violent and tumultuous decade became known as the “Years of Lead” and created a legacy of soured public opinion against both far-left communists and fascists.

Behind many of these attacks was the underground fascist organization Ordine Nuovo (New Order, ON) (Beck et al. 27), led by prominent fascist Pino Rauti. Deeply influenced by Julius

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5 An underground network of extreme right activists and military officials actually attempted a coup in December 1970, unknown to most Italians until years later.

6 The Years of Lead occurred from the late 1960s to the early 1980s when fascists, anti-fascists, and police engaged in various forms of targeted political violence. See Ginsborg (2003), Beck et al (1986), and Moss (2000). Moss specifically identifies the Years of Lead as 1975 to 1980, when political violence was dominated by the left.

7 These far-left communist groups organized outside of the PCI and traditional trade unions, and were composed of university students and factory workers. This included the spontaneist Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle), the workerist Potere Operaio (Workers' Power), and the armed organization Brigate Rossi (Red Brigades) (Beck et al, 27-33). In addition, several “independent armed collectives” took violent action starting in 1971, modeled after BR (Beck et al, 49).
Evola, Pino Rauti went on to lead the 1990s split in the MSI from which CasaPound was formed. When ON was banned in 1973 because it broke the constitutional law that forbade the reestablishment of the Fascist Party, it regrouped as *Ordine Nero* (Black Order, BO), and continued bombings and assassinations.

The strategy of tension worked over the short term: in the 1972 general elections, the MSI\(^9\) won 8.7% of the vote, up from 4.4 in 1968 (Ginsborg 2003, 336). Wanting to appeal to the public's revived right-wing leanings, the ruling DC party thus formed a centre-right coalition government with the right wing Liberal party, and started “wooing MSI's electorate” (336). This coalition, however, was short-lived: worker uprisings in 1973 pushed the DC to the “left” which meant embracing the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (Italian Socialist Party, PSI, a social democratic party). The MSI's share of the popular vote went down to 6.1% of the vote in the 1976 general elections, compared to the 1972 general elections. This decline in support was undoubtedly influenced by continued neo-fascist violence, such as the killing of a young Communist by MSI members. Also influential was the work of magistrates and journalists in uncovering illegal collusion between fascists and sectors of the state apparatus (374-75).

Despite the decline of popular support for the MSI, the 1970s ended with significant defeats for the left, such as the mass “anti-terrorist” firings at Fiat in retaliation for worker militancy (403). The PCI had not fulfilled its goal of increasing working-class hegemony through its strategy of “making sacrifices” for the economy and supporting a law and order agenda (379). The cost of the PCI's “historic compromise” in attempting to participate in 1970s austerity was the neglect of social movements, the failure to effectively press for reform in areas like housing, anti-corruption, and agriculture. The “historic compromise” ultimately discredited the PCI as a

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\(^8\) Rome's former mayor, Gianni Alemanno, appears to be a further link between Pino Rauti, far-right organizations of the 1970s, and CasaPound Italia. In the 1970s, Alemanno belonged to *Fronte della gioventù*, the MSI youth organisation. His wife, Isabella Rauti, is Pino Rauti's daughter. Together they have a son, Manfredi, who is a prominent CasaPound activist (Struggles in Italy, 25 Nov. 2014).

\(^9\) Towards the elections, the MSI absorbed the now-dissolved Monarchist party and renamed itself to include the suffix *Destra Nationale* (National Right), thereby becoming *Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nationale* (MSI-DN).
substantial or viable alternative to the DC. By the end of the 1980s, it became clear that the failure of the parliamentary left to distance itself from the problems of the state and its ruling parties--the DC and the PSI--had gradually opened up legitimate anti-government, anti-corruption space for the right to occupy.

Importantly, there are links between far right movements from the 1970s--beyond the MSI--and CasaPound Italia's ideology. For instance, Terza Posizione (Third Position, TP), founded in Rome in 1979, rejected both capitalism and socialism (Ferraresi 167). A similar orientation is clear from CasaPound's platform (explored in Chapter 4) and in their public rhetoric: Berteni and colleagues observe that at a major student protest in 2008, CasaPound used the slogan “‘neither red nor black, only free thought', a slogan which contains an ideological legacy from Terza Posizione” (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori). Terza Posizione had contacts with the outlawed neo-fascist organization Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard, NV), which had participated in an attempted coup in 1970 (Ferraresi 167). TP leaders Roberto Fiore and Massimo Marsello were accused of collaborating with Nuclei Armati Revoluzioni (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, NAR) in the 1980 bombing of the Bologna train station which killed 80 civilians.\textsuperscript{10} Scholars have also noted CasaPound's connection with Destra Sociale (Social Right, DS), and Nuova Destra (New Right, NR). Gattinara, Froio and Albanese observe that DS was “a cultural tendency which connected directly with the experience of the Italian Social Republic” (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 240). Pino Rauti, a key figure in this tendency, has had an unrivalled impact on the Italian far right and on CasaPound, as explored below. While the DS emphasized the historically-grounded socialist aspects of a fascist Italian state, NR was closely...

\textsuperscript{10} In the early 1980s, Fiore and Marsello fled Italy to Britain where they collaborated with Nick Griffin (leader of the British National Party) in the launching of the International Third Position. Fiore has since returned to Italy and is now the leader of the far-right Forza Nuova (New Force, NF), which was part of Alessandra Mussolini's (Benito's granddaughter) coalition Alternativa Sociale (Social Alternative, AS), which in turn was part of Silvio Berlusconi's coalition in the 2006 general elections (Ruzza and Fella 119). The links between CasaPound and NF appear to be historical and ideological. In the present day CasaPound differentiates itself from NF and other parties of the far right by claiming that while CPI is a broad movement, other parties are “dead ends” because of their traditional way of doing party politics (Bjørkelo 10 July 2015).
aligned with France's intellectually innovative movement *Nouvelle Droite*\(^{11}\) (New Right, ND). NR and ND both added to traditional far right politics “an ethnic-identitarian vision, communitarianism, anti-imperialism, and Europeanism” (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 241). These elements today inform much of CasaPound's anti-NATO, anti-EU, and anti-immigration politics (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 241). These are some examples of the various neo-fascist organizations that proliferated in the 1970s and that engaged with a new, wider experiment in reinventing far-right politics in the 1970s and 1980s. By the time both the Italian left-- and later, the centre-- had become discredited in the public's eye, the far right was well-prepared to move into available political space. The new ideological context of anti-establishment ethnopluralist populism had unfolded across Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s and would later influence CasaPound Italia as well as several other prominent Western European parties.\(^{12}\)

Anti-establishment ethnopluralist populism emerged in the 1970s as a new “master frame” through which extreme right wing parties have been able to regain legitimacy in the post-WWII, liberal era. After the defeat of fascist forces in World War II, the European extreme right had to find a way to not only survive, but to regenerate itself. In political scientist Jens Rydgren's words, the European extreme right had to find a new “master frame”. It did just this, by combining the non-biologically, culturally racist “ethnopluralism” with anti-political-establishment populism (Rydgren 413).

What is qualitatively new about the master frame used by the ERP [Extreme Right-Wing Populist] parties is the shift from 'biological racism' to 'cultural racism', which has permitted ERP parties to mobilize xenophobic and racist public opinions without being stigmatized as being racists, and the incorporation of the populist anti-establishment strategy, which has permitted ERP parties to pose serious critiques on contemporary democratic systems without being stigmatized as anti-democrats. (Rydgren 428)

\(^{11}\) The *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right, ND) was a far-right intellectual movement that emerged in the 1970s, mostly centred around the work of Alain de Benoiste and Louis Pauwels (Bar-on, 2001).

\(^{12}\) Bjørkelo (27 Jan. 2015) notes that CasaPound also has ideological links with extreme right politics to the east of Europe – specifically with the Nouvelle Droite-inspired Fourth Political Theory and New Eurasianism.
While multiculturalism (at least in theory) accepts “cultural” differences by allowing for different groups of people to live together within the same polity without needing to give up their differences first, ethnopluralism accepts differences but believes they can be preserved only if different groups of people are kept apart (Rydgren 427). Unlike the type of biological racism at the heart of ethnic cleansing, in theory, “ethnopluralism is not hierarchical: different ethnicities are not necessary superior or inferior, only different and incompatible” (Rydgren 427). This ideology lends itself easily not only to anti-immigration but also anti-miscenegation positions which assert that “races” should not “mix” through intermarriage. Additionally, in practice, members of extreme right parties that subscribe to the ethnopluralist doctrine do not necessarily behave as though all ethnicities are equal (Rydgren 427). This type of contradiction also exists between CPI's ostensibly race-free platform and their acts of violence and incitement against Roma, migrants, and anti-fascists.

Just as it is unpopular and stigmatizing to adopt openly biologically racist positions, so too is it unpopular and stigmatizing to adopt openly anti-democratic positions. Like other inter-war European fascist parties, Mussolini's National Fascist Party embodied contempt for parliamentary democracy, and advocated instead for uniform state and society led by the Fascist Party. Press censorship, outlawing non-fascist parties and associations, criminalization of political opponents, and appointing fascist worker “representatives” to replace trade union leaders are some examples of Mussolini's anti-democratic theory in action (De Grand 1995). Fascism and its anti-democratic character arguably lost legitimacy after WWII (Chiarini 20). The new master frame of the European far-right has capitalized on popular dissatisfaction with politics and politicians, but in the name of democracy and parliamentarianism, so as to not appear fascist.

The usage of the ethnopluralist, anti-establishment master frame reached its first peak in 1984 when the Front National, who have their roots in ND, won 11% of the vote, equalling 10 seats in parliament (DeClair 62). Western European Extreme Right-Wing Populist parties other than the
National Front in France that embrace the ethnopluralist doctrine include the Danish People's Party, the Freedom Party of Austria, and the Dutch Party for Freedom.

CasaPound shares features with the Western European Extreme Right-Wing Populist parties described by Rydgren. In keeping with the politics of *Terza Posizione, Nouva Destra*, and *Nouvelle Droite*, CasaPound proclaims that parties of both the left and the right are equally corrupt and unworthy of public confidence. As will be explored below, Italy especially has generated many cases of public corruption and illegality that have reduced public trust in government. But while CPI critiques actually existing democratic parties and institutions, it tactfully continues to participate in democracy by running candidates in general, regional, and school elections. The overall persona it projects is one of an organization that is critical of actually existing democracy but that still participates in representative democratic processes. All of this runs counter to the anti-democratic theories and practices that CPI relies on, from its embrace of Giovanni Gentile's philosophy of the totalitarian fascist state\(^{13}\), to its public harassment of Roma school children\(^{14}\). But their repertoire of action is broad enough to include a variety of tactics that can distract observers from CPI's less flattering and less democratic activities.

Overall, CasaPound tries to avoid the stigma normally suffered by racist and anti-democratic groups, by presenting itself as non-racist, via ethnopluralism, and democratic, via its populist anti-establishmentarian demands. This is entirely in keeping with the Western European Extreme Right-Wing Populist parties described by Rydgren. However, in other important aspects, CPI diverges from these parties. Its corporatist approach to state control of industry and finance, and its approach to police and prisons, is more reminiscent of Pino Rauti's “social fascist” *Destra Sociale* than of the “neither right nor left” of *Nuova Destra, Terza Posizione*, and *Nouvelle Droite*. CasaPound straddles both the economic leftism of social fascism, and the anti-politics of anti-establishment ethnopluralist populism. Beyond the new dominant far-right

\(^{13}\) Explored in chapter 4.

\(^{14}\) Explored in chapter 5.
ideology, the 1980s marked other significant shifts in economy and politics that would influence CasaPound's later emergence.

2.1.2. The 1980s: Propaganda 2, neoliberalism, and far-right mainstreaming

Major changes to Italy's political economy in the 1980s set the groundwork for the 1990s--key formative years for contemporary fascist movements including CPI. Many of these changes were part of a global neoliberal trend. Italy's workforce became increasingly differentiated between those protected by unions and those doing casual, part-time, non-unionized work (Ginsborg 2003, 410). The elderly, youth, and immigrants were most vulnerable to an intensified poverty (412). Italy ceased exporting labour and became more of an importer of labour. As immigration went up, so too did more overt expressions of racism, made visible through acts of violence against people of colour (412) and through extreme labour exploitation (416). Although income overall increased in the 1980s, this was not accompanied by social reforms that would have redistributed that income for the benefit of the vulnerable. Social movements, claims Ginsborg, had ceased to be powerful, and without their pressure on the state for reform, socialist politicians in power like President Bettino Craxi (1983 to 1987) did not put the nation's overall material gains to work.

In addition to the widening gap between the rich and the poor, in the 1980s the public learned of more scandals that would diminish trust in the state. Over time this worked in the favour of the MSI, which had been largely isolated from the state (Baldini 2). In 1981, journalists and magistrates discovered and revealed to the public a masonic lodge called Propaganda 2 (P2), which included a network of leaders from the armed forces, business, and political parties across the spectrum (Ginsborg 2003, 423). The aim of the ideologically anti-communist P2 was to collude illegally for private profit (423). Many members of all major political parties were involved with P2, compared to only three members from the MSI (423).

The MSI had not been entirely on the fringes of Italian politics in the 1980s, however. It was a decade that saw the MSI attempt to rebrand itself as a respectable mainstream political party, and
this was helped by overtures from DC and PSI politicians (Bosworth 558). In 1983, PSI Prime Minister Bettino Craxi included the MSI in talks concerning the appointment of the Council of Ministers-- the first time the MSI had been formally involved in high-level decisions of this sort (Baldini 2). The exacerbation of income inequality in the 1980s, the exposés of state corruption, and the marked increase in immigration were taken up by fascists as rallying points. Their articulation of these issues were better received by the public than previously, facilitated by the fact that the MSI had started to be welcomed back into the fold of mainstream Italian politics while remaining relatively distant from political scandals.

The ease with which neo-fascists could take up the political orientation of anti-corruption continued into the 1990s. In the early 1990s the Clean Hands commission\textsuperscript{15}, explored below, shook the Italian political party system to its core, yet left the MSI untouched. The MSI's general isolation since the end of the war from mainstream politics had entailed an isolation from opportunities to collude with corrupt mainstream politicians (Baldini 1). This continued to be of great benefit into and beyond the 1990s.

2.1.3. The 1990s: Clean Hands, Berlusconi, and the dissolution of MSI

The 1990s were a key decade for the reorganization of contemporary fascist parties and movements in Italy. Following the lead of MSI leader Gianfranco Fini, some distanced themselves from fascism and succeeded at appearing respectable and mainstream, while others rejected rebranding and opted for a return to more activist and “leftist” fascist roots. Kicking off this process was the renaming of the MSI as the MSI-AN (Movimento Italiano Sociale-Alleanza Nationale, Italian Social Movement-National Alliance) in mid-1993 (Baldini 2), a symbolic attempt to move away from fascism and towards conservatism. The following year, the MSI-AN entered into a coalition with Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right Forza Italia (Forward Italy, FI)\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} In Italian, the commission was known as Mani Pulite, and also known as Tangentopoli – or “bribesville”.
\textsuperscript{16} Formed in 1993 and in power from 1994 to 1995 and from 2001 to 2006, businessman Silvio Berlusconi's FI was centre-right, pro-business, and populist (Ginsborg 2004). After winning the majority in the general election, again
and Umberto Bossi's secessionist and anti-immigration *Lega Nord* (Northern League, LN)\(^{17}\) (Baldini 2).

Both of these two relatively new parties had stepped into the vacuum left by the collapse of the main parties of the First Republic through the Clean Hands commission. In 1992 and 1993 anti-corruption magistrates and judges sought to prosecute a wide swathe of politicians from across party lines for corruption, clientelism, and illegality, usually in the form of kickbacks from public contracts. This purging of shamed, corrupt politicians from the state primarily affected the PSI and DC (Ginsborg 60) – the parties rapidly dissolved. In contrast, the scandal barely touched the traditionally isolated MSI (Baldini 2). Both FI and AN were new enough that, at least in the early years of the commission, they were not implicated in corruption and bribery charges.\(^{18}\) The 1994 electoral coalition that won the general elections was made up of AN, LN and FI. Fascist and far right respectability was finally secured in these years.

As far right and fascist parties went mainstream, they also became more centrist politically, relative to their antecedents. The MSI underwent an ideological transformation in the early 1990s, from a party with strong social fascist elements unafraid to display loyalty to the fascist tradition, to an authoritarian conservative party focused on building alliances to get into power, and downplaying controversial historical loyalties to fascism in order to do so (Baldini 2). In January 1995 at a party congress in Fiuggi, the MSI's change in ideological disposition became official (Baldini 2). However, Pino Rauti's more activist social fascist faction opposed the changes, and so split off to form the MSI-FT (*Fiamma Tricolore*, Tricolour Flame) (Baldini 3). It is this new, activist, social fascist, “fascism-as-movement” as opposed to “fascism-as-

\(^{17}\) Formed in 1989, the LN focused on secession of the North of Italy (specifically, Lombardy,) from the rest of the country, and anti-immigration.

\(^{18}\) Silvio Berlusconi did come under investigation for corruption starting on November 22, 1994. He was found guilty in 1998 of corruption and obstruction of justice and sentenced to prison time. In Italy, sentences are not enforced until the verdict is re-examined by two higher courts of appeal. In 2000, the appeal court reaffirmed his guilt but stated that the statute of limitations had come into force; in 2001, after Berlusconi had been re-elected Prime Minister, the highest court found him not guilty (Ginsborg 2004, 79).
party from which CasaPound would later emerge. Pino Rauti and his intellectual forerunner, the spiritual racist Julius Evola, remain today two important intellectual fascist forebears of the CPI movement. A research study conducted by Gattinara, Froio and Albanese (2013) reveals that CPI is not entirely public about its loyalty to the Rauti and Evola traditions:

Following Evola’s doctrine, the group developed a strong cultural commitment but also a sense of militancy where particular importance was given to violent actions against opponents. Over the last decades, many among its militants have been accused of terrorist activities, for which it is very difficult for CasaPound to show open support for this tradition. Nevertheless, during the interviews the militants made explicit references to notions close to this experience, using a vocabulary connected to tradition, the “inner sense” of history, spiritual racism, and revolution. (Gattinara, Froio, Albanese 10)

The details of Evola's philosophy and its implications on assessing CPI's politics will be explored more in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

In 1998, the AN demonstrated its motivation to ideologically depart from fascism. At a party congress in Verona, where Fini condemned “some of the acts of the fascist regime” (Baldini 3). He thereby left “the old political location of the MSI to the MSI-FT, to the small extraparliamentary movements and, to some extent, to the Northern League” (Baldini 3). Now that the far right party had split, so too did the far-right vote. Political scientist Gianfranco Baldini writes about the ensuing electoral competition: "The presence of an extreme right competitor has forced AN and the other parties of the centre-right to look for cooperation, especially after the votes obtained by the MSI-FT candidates in the 1996 legislative elections proved to be decisive in bringing about the centre-right’s defeat in many constituencies" (Baldini 3). Their success attracted the attention of the centre-right coalition Casa Delle Liberta (House of Freedoms, CdL), convened by Berlusconi and his FI party and which again included LN. The coalition dominated the 2000 regional elections and won the 2001 general election. The AN may have publicly unburdened itself of its fascist past, but it became comfortably part of the

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19 The terms “fascism-as-movement” and “fascism-as-regime” were coined by historian of Italian fascism Renzo De Felice to represent the more philosophically pure activist left wing of fascism and the conservative, state-centric, alliance-building right wing of fascism (see De Felice 1977).
mainstream— not in spite of, but because of, its populist, nationalist, conservative positions on the economy, immigration, and political corruption.

2.1.4. 2000s and beyond: racism, social fragmentation, and CasaPound

Upon winning the 2001 general election, Umberto Bossi of Lega Nord became Minister for Institutional Reforms and Devolution, and Gianfranco Fini of AN became Deputy Prime Minister. Together they introduced Law 189 of 2002, known as the Bossi-Fini law, which effectively sentenced migrants in Italy without papers, and without connections to an employer, to indefinite detention or a precarious life underground (Zanfrini 9). The MSI split can be understood as fundamental to the mainstreaming of far right and fascist politics in Italy: it fragmented the far right into smaller individual parties like AN each with significant enough electoral pull to be courted, and ultimately placed into positions of power, by the centre-right.

While CasaPound remains a primarily extra-parliamentary movement that has only recently been publicly acknowledged as useful to a parliamentary party, the mainstreaming of parliamentary parties with fascist roots is part of the answer to the question “How is it possible that an openly fascist organization like CasaPound exists in Italy?” By the time CPI had emerged, politicians with explicitly fascist histories, like Fini, had already become part of the political mainstream. Other right-wing politicians without clear fascist backgrounds made public quips that, in effect, normalized admiration for Mussolini and fascism. In 1994, LN Speaker of the House of Deputies, Irene Pivetti, had commented on “how well women had been treated under Fascism” (Ginsborg 154). Berlusconi claimed that “Mussolini did not murder anyone” that his rule was “a benign dictatorship”, and that political criminals were sent “on holiday” and not prison or camps (Ginsborg 154).

In addition to this whitewashing of fascism during the 1990s, anti-immigrant racism, which had expanded in the 1980s context of increased economic inequality and immigration, became a

20 In February 2015, CasaPound and Lega Nord made their ambitions for electoral alliance known to the public. This is explored in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.
particular type of racism in far-right politics. When the far right gained parliamentary power, this anti-immigrant racism was channelled into laws that further restricted immigration. Although racism, ultra-nationalism, and xenophobia are normal features of fascism, contemporary fascists have had available to them a particularly contemporary popular anti-immigrant racism.

Other socio-economic and cultural factors have contributed to a climate in which far-right groups have proliferated. Paul Ginsborg's work on the recent history of Italian society and the family shows that traditional non-fascist associationism such as Catholicism, communism, and trade union culture has declined, especially since the late 1970s. This interacts with increasing consumerism and under-regulated mass media, with their effects of fragmentation of non-familial social bonds, individualization, and atomization. Television and shopping have, to a large extent, replaced church and community in Italian life. Generations of clientelism, corruption, and underdevelopment – especially in historically neglected southern regions of the country-- have fuelled persistent distrust of the state and of allegedly democratic institutions. Given these factors, as well as dramatic increases in income disparity and labour precarity starting in the neoliberal 1980s, Ginsborg paints a picture of Italian life as strongly centred around the family unit, yet otherwise collectively weak.

In this context, the social activities, sense of collective meaning and history, and the promise of an alternative offered by organizations like CPI are understandably attractive, especially to youth. Textbook prices are high – so CPI proposes strict regulation of the textbook publishing industry. Lower-income families struggle to buy school supplies – so CPI raises money to buy pencils, pens and notebooks to distribute to the poor for free. Families default on loan payments, cannot pay rent-- so CPI houses them in their squatted building while proposing a national rent-to-own “social mortgage” scheme. These political actions occur within a vibrant cultural milieu of concerts, lectures, sports, hiking excursions, and martial arts training. These are the types of activities CPI emphasizes in the media when questioned about their connection to violence and racism.
For instance, CasaPound Italia's vice president, Stefane Di Simone, told a reporter in 2011 that although Mussolini is a “point of reference” for the group, his racial laws were “a mistake” (Kington). CPI president Gianluca Iannone stated in televised interview after the murders of two Senegalese street vendors by a CPI supporter, that the murders were “unexpected” because “we do not promote any racial hatred” and because CasaPound has “disowned... violence and racism” (“Lucia Annunziata vs. Gianluca Iannone di Casapound” )21. Further, he denied that CPI is even a far-right organization, much less an organization that engages in illegal activity: “CasaPound also does voluntary work, cultural events, brings forward new bills, and more. Everything is done in daylight, certainly not in dark basements planning murders or massacres... We're not far-right... My opinion is that it's dangerous to fan the flames of racism” (“Lucia Annunziata vs. Gianluca Iannone di Casapound.” ). However, there is also evidence that CasaPound engages in violence and incitement against people of colour and anti-fascists.

This incitement can be rhetorical, and for some it might be easy to miss because CPI squarely positions itself in the realm of legality, claims it is driven for and by “citizens”, and positively refers to the Italian constitution in its platform -- something that few of its antecedents have done. CPI agitates for rights for Italian citizens only and against immigration, conceptualized as a degradation of an otherwise legal, civilized, white space. CasaPound has directly used the word “degradation” in its posters advertising demonstrations (“symbolic occupations”) against Roma markets. One such poster states: “Basta Degrado! Basta Mercanti Rom!”, which translates into: “Enough Degradation! Enough Roma Merchants!” (CasaPound Italia, 12 Nov. 2013).

21 Kristian Bjørkelo recounts a visit to the CasaPound pub in Rome, Cutty Sark, and CasaPound members’ accounts of incidents they use as evidence that they are not racist: “...the members proudly recount how Gianluca Iannone once was attacked at a neighbouring pizza restaurant run by immigrants. The fascists not only fought off the aggressors, but returned the next day to repair and rebuild the restaurant. They also like to point out that Via Napoleone III is in an area populated by immigrants, mostly from Asia, and that CasaPound is respected for keeping peace in the neighbourhood. They often refer to a YouTube-video made by anti-fascists in which local immigrants were interviewed in an attempt to find dirt on CasaPound. Yet those interviewed apparently had nothing to say but praise. The makers of the video concluded it by suggesting the local immigrants were too afraid of CasaPound to tell the truth. For CasaPound members, however, the video is used as evidence that they are not a racist movement” (Bjørkelo 27 Jan. 2015).
CasaPound routinely denounces the global neoliberal economic order that simultaneously creates and disavows migrant cross-border movement (CasaPound 2011, 4). Many migrants and Roma cross into Italy to escape pernicious underdevelopment, war, and human rights abuses in their home countries. Once in Italy, many waste away in informal camps, or formal state-contracted Centres for Identification and Expulsion (Zanfrini 9), without access to health care or education, and frequently without basic infrastructure like hot water (Italian Council for Refugees). CasaPound claims that this system hurts both immigrants and citizens of “host” countries, and demands the cessation of immigration to Italy. In keeping with this demand, CPI members travelled to the community of Rosarno in Calabria in January 2010 to support locals who had beaten up migrant workers. The locals had been reacting to a migrant riot that had exploded when locals had shot two migrant workers. Explain Berteni, Giordano, Sartori: “The reaction to the events has been a generic condemnation of all ‘violence’, where the shots fired at the migrants and the riots were made equivalent” (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori), thus reinforcing spatial location of migrants as outside of the space of citizenship and the law, such that the illegality of acts committed against them are negated while the illegality of the migrants’ acts are overemphasized.

Moreover, CasaPound Italia also violently targets anti-fascists. A left-wing activist blog from Italy reports that on January 28, 2015, in Cremona, a group of fifty fascists, “mostly from CasaPound”, attacked a group of activists associated with the Dordoni social centre. A young man named Emilio was “beaten with a bar and then kicked in the face and head as he was lying on the ground”, resulting in a coma (Struggles in Italy, 25 Nov. 2014).

In addition to these concrete examples of racism, violence, and incitement, the work of the individuals that CPI explicitly claims as part of their heritage undermines their claim that it is not racist or xenophobic. The core philosophy of CasaPound Italia can be discerned through research into both what CPI actually does and what it says and thinks it does. The two are not necessarily identical and one should not be taken for the other. Examples of the former include its public commemorations of the deaths of fascists, and its public protests. Examples of the
latter include its platform and press releases about its actions. These particular aspects of CasaPound's core philosophy draw from the work of intellectuals it claims to admire: the relationship between the self and the world as imagined by CPI's oft-quoted philosopher Giovanni Gentile, Gentile's ideas on education, Julius Evola's racial theory, and the art and politics of CPI's namesake, Ezra Pound. An examination of these intellectuals reveals that CPI self-consciously locates itself in an ideological tradition whose ideas about individual, society, and state are essentially anti-egalitarian, anti-individualist, authoritarian, and totalitarian. This fact contradicts CPI's rhetorical claims that it is not racist, and undermines CPI's demands that bear semblance to liberalism through the use of concepts like “rights” and “citizenship”. To begin, we can look at the poet Ezra Pound and his fascist, populist, totalitarian and economically left-wing politics, who has inspired the name of CPI, to get a sense of the illiberalism at the heart of CasaPound.

2.2. CasaPound and Ezra Pound

The very name “CasaPound” literally means “House of Pound”-- “Pound” denoting the fascist poet Ezra Pound, whose nationalist-socialist politics included the idea that rent is usury, and that the home is a “safe” and “holy” place (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 243, 247). The organization's loyalty to Pound makes it imaginable that they, as their fascist predecessors did, would share Pound's aesthetic proclivities. Pound's interest in decisive artistic forms with sharp edges and movement is certainly reflected in CPI's imagery on posters and websites. However there are other substantial and conscious ways in which CPI models itself after the poet. In this section I examine the implication of CasaPound's intentional association with Pound, by looking first at his politics, and then at the chronology of his involvement with fascism in Italy and organized white supremacist activities later in the United States. This chapter concludes with some observations about the body as a site for fascist aesthetics and its totalitarian reach – a reach that CPI would insist characterizes their movement as uniquely “metapolitical”.

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22 Chapters 4, 5 and 6 look at the latter - what CPI says it believes it does – by using its platform, and some of its press releases, as sources of insight into CPI's core philosophy of the self and state, education, and race.
Populist, totalitarian, racist, economically left-wing: these words describe Pound's politics, as expressed in his writing, radio broadcasts, and personal correspondence. His anti-capitalism was specifically anti-Semitic: in his opposition to capitalism, he singled out usury as the greatest of its harms. Along with war and social inequality, he blamed usury on Jews (Nadel 5). Pound's fascination with the fascist state has been attributed by some to his desire for the arts to be publicly supported by a patron state (Nadel 3). He believed the inverse relationship between arts and the state to hold as well: literature owes a duty to the state (Nadel 4). Alec Marsh has discussed how Ezra Pound called himself a “left-wing fascist”, was a supporter of Confucius-style “totalitarianism”, and rooted his politics in Jeffersonian populism (Marsh 96).

Pound advocated “Social Credit”, or underconsumptionist economics, the thrust of which is that we cannot (though we normatively should be able to) afford to purchase what we produce (Surette 106). War, exports, and debt are the primary ways in which industrial economies ensure that products are still consumed despite the populace's low purchasing power (Surette 107). War got rid of surplus goods; exporting sold them to foreign markets; and debt allowed consumers at home to buy them (Surette 108). Surette sees Pound's passion for Social Credit economics as evidence of “his public-spirited wish for general prosperity” but this is balanced out by his other motive which was to “place the arts on a sound economic footing” (Surette 108). In 1935 he published “Jefferson and/or Mussolini” and “Social Credit: An Impact” (Nadel xxiii-xxiv). Significantly, Pound had a private meeting with Mussolini in 1933 and tried to have one with Roosevelt in 1939, both times in order to press his economic views and fully expecting that his ideas would have an impact. Pound's influence on CPI can be detected in their rent-to-own national housing proposal, their call for regulation and transparency of the finance industry, their nationalist and protectionist economic proposals, and the section of their platform concerning the arts. Their proposals about the arts call for a number of state interventions in arts and culture, including state investment in films that are “inspired by the ancestral cultural heritage of the peoples of Europe” (CasaPound 2011, 12).
Beginning in 1940, Pound wrote scripts performed by others on Rome Radio, critical of America (Nadel xxiv), supportive of Mussolini’s regime, and attacking Jews (Friedlander 118). In December 1941, as his scripts become explicitly anti-Semitic, he began performing them himself; the last of these was broadcast in February 1943. He conceived of his broadcasts as “pedagogical” in that he wanted to “inform his listeners about the root causes of war, expose the conspiracy of profiteers whose interests were served by war and to advocate for the solutions proposed by fascism, including the eugenic solution to the racial character of the conspiracy” (Friedlander 118). In these broadcasts and in his writings, he endorsed Hitler's politics, specifically his “race law”, “autarchy”, and “the uncovering of hidden plots”, showing that his politics went beyond support for Mussolini's economic policies as had been the case earlier on (Friedlander 121).

When asked about their namesake's anti-Semitism, CPI vice president Simone di Stefano replied "at the time it was very common throughout the world" (Kington). It is unknown if he would provide the same answer if asked about Pound's admiration for Hitler, racial cleansing, and overt white supremacist views and activism. CPI has defined itself as part of a fascist tradition that they see as having “unfortunately” converged with Nazism during Italy's involvement in World War II, but that for the most part is unique from Nazism especially in that Mussolinian fascism was allegedly not exceptionally or harmfully racist. Even if we were to share the view that Mussolini's fascism was somehow less racist than Hitler's Nazism, we would still be compelled to interpret CPI's naming of their movement after Pound as nothing less than an open endorsement of his politics, which they probably do know included an open admiration for Hitler, Nazism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy, and ethnic cleansing. One observer notes:

...while the organization as a whole refrains from overt anti-Semitic rhetoric, the terms “globalists” and “international bankers” are often used in coded anti-Semitism, and Pound’s use of the word “usurer” was often associated with Jews. Such language is indicative of the rhetorical and political tradition CasaPound grew out of, regardless of its official stance. Indeed, racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric is used by individual members of the organization in social media. (Bjorkelo 27 Jan. 2015)
In July 1943, an American grand jury indicted Pound with treason *in absentia* (Nadel xxiv). In May 1945, he was arrested by partisans and turned over to the American army for detention north of Pisa where he had a “mental breakdown” (Nadel xxv). Deported to the States, Pound was subsequently arraigned on treason charges. His trial was postponed, and then in December of that year he was found unfit to stand trial. He was committed to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for the Criminally Insane (Nadel xxv). Throughout the last decades of his life he was dogged by accusations of anti-Semitism and fascism.

That Pound was unrepentant about his anti-Semitic and pro-fascist wartime activities is evident in his post-war relationship with right-wing racist John Kasper, who became Pound's de facto spokesman when Pound was in St. Elizabeth's. In his correspondence with Kasper, Pound identified miscegenation and the mixing of races as the basis for his anti-integrationist views (Marsh 102). During the time of their relationship, Kasper opened a bookshop in New York, formed an organization called the Seaboard White Citizens' Council which actively campaigned in the south against desegregation, and helped found the openly white supremacist and pro-segregation National States' Rights Party (Marsh 102). Pound even contributed to a SWCC pamphlet called “Virginians on Guard” (Marsh 103). When urged by friends to publicly distance himself from Kasper, Pound refused (Marsh 104).

Pound used a deliberate strategy, after the war and during his time at St. Elizabeth's, of engaging with racist activism through his private correspondence with and advice to John Kasper, while refraining from making public comments about race, Jews, or fascism. At least from the 1930s onwards, Pound consistently attacked “racial mixing” with Jews, and held that integration in the United States was in fact a “Jewish plot” (Houen 398). Kasper instigated an impressive list of violent acts during the same time he was in regular correspondence with Pound, including race riots, appearances at Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rallies, and the bombing of a school in 1957 (Houen 398-399). “Pound always refused to denounce him publicly” (Houen 399) and, based on Kasper's letters to Pound, it is clear that Pound was actively directing and advising him (Houen 400). Pound's letters to Kasper have not yet been recovered.
Since the 1970s scholars have sought to show that Pound's politics cannot be separated from his poetry, and that his version of fascism was central to his aesthetic project. For instance, Benjamin Friedlander, in an essay about Pound's radio broadcasts, states that “there can be no coherent account of Pound's thoughts as a whole... so long as the radio talks remain compartmentalized” (Friedlander 123). Additionally, critic Michael Coyle has argued that race, the “other” and the “exotic” were structurally fundamental to Pound's work, even when it did not explicitly portray people of colour. He interprets Pound's celebration of ancient Chinese culture and American Africanism as “modernist primitivism” that is compatible with his view that races should not mix (Coyle 415). These views trouble the old consensus that his interest in fascism was primarily economic in nature.

What were Pound's aesthetics? The aesthetics of his writing matched the new fascist aesthetics: poetry, he said, should be “as much like granite as it can be... austere, direct, free from emotional slither” (Literary Essays, 12, qtd in Nadel 6). Pound's aesthetics emphasized “the outstanding personality” embodied by Renaissance artist and soldier Sigismondo Malatesta, as well as Mussolini (Zanotti 376). Pound interpreted “political order as beauty” and “the ruler as artist”, which one author believes is an example of fascism's “aestheticization of politics” identified by Walter Benjamin (Zanotti 383). Pound and Wyndham Lewis in 1914 founded an aesthetic movement called “Vorticism”, represented by the periodical Blast. Similar to Italian futurism, it celebrated aggression and dynamism through “sharp angles, jagged shapes, and severe diagonals” and a “valorization of powerful artifice over weak nature” including the body (Hickman 289). Vorticism drew its commitment to singular and compact metaphorical forms from imagism, but rejected the latter's “effeminacy” and association with “democracy” (290). Although Vorticism did not survive WWI, Pound was still committed to its aesthetics in the 1930s as he witnessed Italian fascism's visual culture develop along similar lines:

the bold, sans-serif, enormous lettering of “DUCE” on the exhibition's walls [the 1932 Esposizione del Decennio], the whirling, dynamic, masculine heroic action suggested by its collage and montage effects, and the multimedia extravaganza the the exhibition displayed, provided Pound with ample evidence that the vorticist ideal was being realized in a new form. (Hickman 294)
CasaPound shares with Pound an anti-capitalist orientation whose solution is racism. Specifically, one of CPI's primary solutions to economic problems in Italy is the end of multiculturalism and immigration: “Immigrants come willingly to accept starvation wages that Italians can no longer accept... Against multiracial society, we propose the removal of the causes of immigration” (CasaPound 2011, 3). In contrast to Pound's anti-Semitic anti-capitalism, there is no evidence that CPI understands capitalism as a Jewish plot, and there is no direct evidence that CPI espouses anti-Semitism – beyond the evidence that lies in their chosen association with Pound. Although there is no publicly-available evidence that CasaPound publicly promotes a crude racist view of human nature in which whites are superior to people of colour, Pound's view (and Evola's, as we will see later) that races should not mix, seems to be only a more crass anachronistic version of CPI's ethnopluralist position that people should not stray from their nations of origin.

### 2.3. CasaPound's “metapolitics” and aesthetics

CasaPound has gone as far as naming itself after an unrepentant racist, anti-Semitic fascist with a totalitarian aesthetics and politics. It seems as though part of the reason for this choice was to emphasize the organization's artistic, cultural, even sophisticated interests as a way to counter negative connotations of fascism. Knowledge of Pound's actual politics, however, defeats the purpose. Nothing about his record redeems CasaPound as anything other than what observers would suspect them of being: fascist, racist, anti-Semitic, and so forth. If their point is that fascism is more than just economics and politics, but also art and culture, this does not reduce the basic totalitarian and racist structure of the art and culture they promote. Furthermore, the fascist aim of dissolving the boundaries between self and other, private and public, and individual and collective, finds its expression in CasaPound's aesthetic practices.

CasaPound and Mussolinian fascism also share the body as the main site of their respective aesthetic rituals that attempt to subsume the individual into a collective project. In her essay “Fascism and Aesthetics”, Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi (2008) argues that the body, under Mussolini, was “the main conveyor of fascism's totalitarian will”, if unevenly so (148).
Gattinara and his colleagues, as a result of their ethnographic research into the role of violence in the CasaPound movement, have observed that the body in the CasaPound movement is a main site of their fascist project.

Falasca-Zamponi shows how the body was the target in Mussolini's anti-materialist, anti-individualist, collective, spiritual project. Fascism rejected materialism's equation of well-being (e.g. being fed) with happiness. Unlike “liberalism, Bolshevism, and Catholicism”, fascism does not guarantee happiness: any such guarantee would “undermine the individual's vitality and spirituality” (354). Fascism rejected individualism and attempted to transform individual desires into public and political desires (355). However, the state recognized that individualism still had its merits vis-à-vis corporatism and capitalism, so it “condemned... bourgeois consumption” in the context of a maintained market economy that drew from the bourgeoisie's power (355). “If spirit is the other of matter,” she explains, “then it should not be surprising that at the heart of the matter we find the body” as the “material site of desires, the sense, happiness, as the principal expression of one's right to satisfy personal needs” (353). To disassociate desires, senses, and happiness from the individual body, and to re-associate them with the body as a thing that is subsumed under the nation, people's bodies were subjected to a series of new social expectations.

Falasca-Zamponi identifies this “de-sensitized body politic”, fearful of the “natural body”, with Mussolini's introduction of new laws for the reform of customs (360). The reforms emphasized a trim and active physical body, and introduced stylized and formal rituals in private and public life, such as replacing the bourgeois handshake with the Roman salute. She concludes:

Mussolini was convinced that new rituals working through the body would immediately imprint a person with fascist values... His belief in the passive character of the masses, which he conceived as sense-deprived objects, that is, disembodied subjects, led him to discount the power of the body while assailing it. (362)

Gattinara and Froio (2014) have analysed CasaPound's aesthetics, using music, videos, and propaganda as sources, and have identified some predictable continuities with Mussolinian aesthetics:
Images traditionally associated with Italian Fascism, such as warriors, soldiers, etc., are also part of CasaPound’s visual communication (Mosse 1996). These symbols are, however, far less visible than they were in prewar Fascist propaganda. Instead, the movement makes recurrent use of other typical features of Fascist iconography, such as fists and masculine limbs, statue-like bodies, weapons, and references to classic antiquity (Mosse 1996). (Gattinara and Froio 10)

The researchers also concluded that in the CasaPound movement, the body's ritualistic performance of violence is part of the process of collective identity-shaping. Combat sports are a consistent feature: the Circle of Fighters for CasaPound is an arm's-length organization devoted to martial arts, combat training workshops are provided at national CPI meetings, and new CPI militants are recruited from local gyms (Gattinara and Froio 13).

Additionally, CPI militants unofficially engage in cinghiamattanza, which the organization has attempted to simultaneously downplay and defend it as a form of consensual play (CasaPound Italia, 10 Oct. 2013). Cinghiamattanza, which directly translates as “massacre of the belts”, consists of young male members of CPI hitting each other with their belts, often during rock concerts featuring fascist bands. It usually occurs between consenting members or supporters regardless of the stage of their involvement in CPI. It celebrates a fascist aesthetic of youthful and active masculinity, strong and ready to march into the future. The purpose seems to be to celebrate not only the strength that comes with hitting, but also the endurance that comes with being hit. The act of fighting with one another, whether through martial arts or cinghiamattanza, symbolically breaks down the atomized individual and integrates it into the overall movement: “The medium through which networks of solidarity are built within the community is the (male) body, through practices of physical contact where the body of the militant is symbolically blended with the collective body of the community” (Gattinara 12). Shared physical pain “represents a collective, vital, reaction against a dominant cultural model that has reduced the human body to a commodity” (Gattinara 12).

CasaPound's commitment to a consciously crafted aesthetic is not bound by an instrumentalized conception of art for the purpose of publicity: CPI prides itself on being “metapolitical” and embracing as wide a range of human activity as possible, including areas normally neglected by
conventional political parties. In a 2011 email interview with American right-wing writer Colin
Liddell, CasaPound's president Gianluca Iannone paints a picture of CPI as active in a range of
realms beyond the merely political: “CPI works on everything that concerns the life of our
nation: from sport to solidarity, culture and of course politics” (Liddell). On a first reading it
may seem that Iannone is being quite specific, because, directly after this statement, he then lists,
in prose, no less than thirty two examples of CPI's activities, such as “book presentations” and
“free advises [sic] on legal and tax issues” (Liddell). He concludes the list by saying “Speaking
about CPI is never easy because all these things are CASAPOUND. All of these represent our
challenges and projects for now and the millennium” (Liddell). Iannone further states:

First of all, linking CasaPound to the right wing is a bit restrictive. CasaPound Italia is a
political movement organized as an association for social promotion. It starts from the
right and goes through the entire political panorama. Right or left are two old visions of
politics, we need to give birth to a new synthesis. (Liddell)

This confirms what writers have called CasaPound's “third millenialism”-- a political
orientation that appears simply neo-fascist to its observers but that its adherents see as a term that
“underlin[es] their continuity with the past and their desire to resurrect fascist ideas and apply
them to current social problems” (Bartlett, Birdwell and Froio 23).

This third millenialism includes the “metapolitical” dimensions of CPI, as described in this
thesis, in order to establish that there are few areas of life that CasaPound would not consider
addressing, including art, culture, and, therefore, the body – so often the site of aesthetic projects.
This aligns their project with the totalitarian scope of fascism, as it is identified, for one, in
Giovanni Gentile's political philosophy of fascism, explored in chapter 4, and as it is further
supported by Pound's views on politics and art. Before this line of argument is pursued,
however, chapter 3 offers a review of relevant historical literature about fascism.
3. Chapter 3

Literature Review

This literature review addresses the field of studies regarding CasaPound Italy, and then proceeds to overview dominant frameworks for understanding the more general study about fascism. It then focuses in on Marxist interpretations of fascism that diverged from official interpretations offered by the Third Communist International (Comintern), and then rounds this out with synopses of two particularly relevant studies of fascism by Roger Griffin and Robert O. Paxton. The focus on Marxist interpretations of fascism effectively reveals different positions on the question of what constitutes the best socialist strategy for fighting fascism. I have selected this focus because of its relevance to social justice movements and social justice education, which is generally on the left of the political spectrum. My secondary research priorities have been influenced by my personal investment in questions of how to effectively “fight the right”. Particular themes emerged from this reading of selected literature and became the initial criteria that were used when reading and analysing documents produced by CasaPound Italia. Salient themes include the cross-class character of fascist movements, the responsibility of the left in fighting fascism throughout its stages as movement and then as a regime, and the contradiction between fascism's populist rhetoric about democracy and their elitist practices and philosophy.

3.1. The field

To date, three scholarly studies exclusively consider CasaPound (Bartlett, Birdwell, Froio 2012; Gattinara, Froio, Albanese 2013; Gattinara, Froio 2015), and one other study (Caiani and Borri 2013) considers the action repertoires of twenty far right organizations in Italy and Spain and includes an interview with a CasaPound leader. All three of the focused studies emphasize the neoliberal crises that CPI attempts to solve. Bartlett's study focuses on demographic and opinion data gathered from CPI's online supporters, whereas Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese's study relies on participant observation and interviews with CPI leaders.
The most recent study by Gattinara and Froio uses the framework of Donatella della Porta (2013) to look at CasaPound as a case of political violence mediated by collective identity. The data on which they draw consists of in-depth life-history interviews with CasaPound militants, ethnographic participant observation, and visual and textual artifacts. Their research found that “violence represents a fundamental tool to strengthen solidarity and camaraderie. In particular, aesthetic and symbolic choices seem to be oriented towards the reconstruction of an emotional link with the Fascist past” and further that “violent practices play a central role for group formation within CasaPound, because they substantiate the ideological tendency of the group towards action” (14). Gattinara and Froio's work is of particular importance to understanding the role of violence in CasaPound, which unmasks the illiberal core of CPI's politics.

This literature review will overview broad categories of fascism scholarship, with a focus, first, on non-economistic, cross-disciplinary Marxist interpretations, and second, on the non-Marxist historical work of Roger Griffin and Robert O. Paxton. Non-economistic Marxist interpretations, most of which were written in the 1920s and 1930s, illuminate the blindspots in economist Marxist theory and practice that left fascism under-challenged in Italy and Germany, and place special emphasis on the role of the middle class in the development of fascism. The latter observations, however, are no longer unique to Marxist interpretations of fascism and have become part of the consensus represented by Paxton and Griffin's work. Paxton and Griffin's historical accounts reconstruct Italian and German fascism using a comparative method and offer particular insight into the malleability of fascist ideology, contingent on opportunities for achieving state power. Overall, the historically-grounded accounts of Italian fascism help contextualize the CasaPound movement so we can better identify some of their ideological constructs and practices as genuinely unique for a far-right group, and others as studied replicas of historical Italian fascism.
3.2. Frameworks for understanding historical interpretations of fascism

There is a plethora of historically-grounded interpretations of fascism from across the disciplines, and a range of typographies of these interpretations. Studies of fascism include country-specific studies of Italy and Nazi Germany, many published inside these countries in their respective languages, and to a lesser extent, of far-right movements and regimes outside of these two countries. In this particular literature review I build on the literature typographies from three different scholars: De Felice (1977), Blinkhorn (1994), and Bernhard (2014).

Renzo De Felice's *Interpretations of Fascism* categorizes the classic literature on fascism into three broad groups that roughly correspond with political orientations: Liberal, “Radical” (though he does not specify what he means by this term), and Marxist. The purpose of this volume is to overview pre-existing literature on fascism as a means to preface his own interpretation, presented in the last chapter of the book (and considered later on in this chapter). De Felice's three broad groups roughly correspond with Blinkhorn's typology of literature on fascism, with an important difference. Blinkhorn's typology accounts for De Felice's work itself, which marked a significant departure from previous interpretations in that it claimed that fascism was a revolution of a rising middle class. The impact of De Felice's work was so significant that, in Bernhard's temporally-organized typology of literature on Italian fascism, it earned its own category: that of “revisionist” history of Italian fascism.

Bernhard's typology focuses on historians' ideological orientation to fascism more than on the conclusions they draw about the causes and characteristics of fascism: he writes about the anti-fascist bent of literature during and immediately following the war, followed by De Felice's “revisionism” that had been accused of sympathy with the fascist regime, followed by an anti-revisionist trend in history-writing that “works to overturn [De Felice's] history of consensus” (Bernhard 152). Presently, many scholars have attempted to abandon the debate over whether or not De Felice's work was sympathetic to fascism, and have engaged in more cultural analysis of the fascist regime. What follows
is a sketch of the major strains in interpretations of fascism, using the categories put forth by De Felice, Blinkhorn, and Bernhard.

De Felice's category of “Liberal” interpretations of fascism centres around the work of Benedetto Croce, and, similarly, Blinkhorn puts Croce's work into the category of literature that views “fascism as a symptom of moral decay” (Blinkhorn 54). Croce, writing in Italy before, during, and after fascist rule, sees fascism as an anomalous episode in an otherwise steady trajectory of progress from the Enlightenment period onwards. Croce's work is considered liberal in political orientation, in the sense that the work normatively accepts parliamentary democracy, the doctrine of rights, and a capitalist economic system. Additionally, he does not emphasize the economic imperatives of collaboration between fascists and capitalists as do Marxist accounts. Instead, he emphasizes the failures of early twentieth century liberalism that had given rise to fascist reaction. Liberalism, according to Croce, had failed to get it right, and the result was that “Fascism was... an interruption in Italy's achievement of ever greater 'freedom', a short-term moral infection from which Italy, by rededicating herself to the ideal of freedom, could just as quickly recover” (Blinkhorn 55). In this analysis, liberalism is the antithesis to fascism and did not give rise to it, though liberalism's failures did. In Bernhard's typology, Croce's work would be seen as anti-fascist, an umbrella grouping that houses liberals and Marxists alike despite their disparate conclusions about the causes and nature of fascism.

De Felice's category of “Radical” classic interpretations of fascism is, he claims, the most popular in both intellectual and lay circles since the end of WWII (De Felice 24), and pinpoints the origins of fascism in problems with the development of industrialization, parliamentarism, and national unity in Italy and Germany (De Felice 24). In Blinkhorn's terms, these interpretations see “fascism as an agent of 'modernization’” (Blinkhorn 58): fascism was a response to the failure of the Italian nation-state to catch up to more developed Western powers. This historical understanding of the economic and political origins of fascism overlaps quite a bit with the economic dimensions of Marxist analyses of fascism, such as Gramsci’s early interpretations (Adamson 620) and those of Arthur Rosenberg (De Felice 33). Scholars have identified several problems with this
interpretation: first, it reduces fascism to a logical, inevitable, but nonetheless painful, stage of historical development (De Felice 27); it includes studies that attempt to link any and all aspects of Italy and Germany's history and culture with the rise of fascism (De Felice 24); and it produces no easy or cohesive conclusions about whether or not fascism did actually successfully modernize Italy and Germany (Blinkhorn 58). This literature would generally fall within Bernhard's category of “anti-fascist” history, though some scholars in this category have been faulted for praising fascism's “contributions” to Italy's economic and political development (Blinkhorn 58).

The Marxist category of literature in De Felice's typology is one that is taken up in more detail below. It corresponds with Blinkhorn's category of literature that sees “fascism as the agent of capitalism” (Blinkhorn 56) as well as his category of “fascism as a product of 'mass' society” -- which includes the Marxist psychologist Wilhelm Reich (Blinkhorn 55). Marxist interpretations of fascism arose from two closely linked, entangled, and warring camps: first, the official interpretations of fascism spelled out by the Communist International (Comintern), seen as the organizational leadership of the international left, and second, those of leftists inside the Comintern, as well as those expelled from it, or writing after its dissolution in 1943. While both camps agreed fascism comes from a capitalist crisis and is not anti-capitalist as it claimed in its early stages, they disagreed on the role of the middle class and of social democratic parties in creating, maintaining, or resisting fascism, and on the inevitability of revolution in a fascist context. The basic Marxist interpretations of fascism were written during fascism's rise and rule. Since these were interpretations of events that were current at the time rather than a retrospective reconstruction or explanation of events, they cannot technically fall under Bernhard's category of “anti-fascist” history, even though they were certainly anti-fascist in orientation. In the post-WWII period, the impact of Marxist interpretations of fascism can be understood in three basic ways: first, the Frankfurt School's interest in the effects of capitalism on human freedom set the stage for explorations into the cultural and ideological dimensions of authoritarianism, prompted by a Marxist orientation against growing fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. Second, the economic work of scholars like Paul Sweezy on monopoly capitalism, or the political work of Nikos Poulantzas, has
grappled with the question of fascism and authoritarianism. Third, many non-Marxist historians such as R.J.B. Bosworth and Alexander J. De Grand have undertaken detailed reconstructions of fascist and Nazi movement and rule that bear out the conclusions of Marxists writing in the 1920s and 1930s.

Lastly, De Felice has grouped together under the title “Other Interpretations” the work of Catholics like Augusto del Noce, totalitarianism theorists like Hannah Arendt, and those like Ernst Nolte who theorized fascism as a metapolitical phenomenon. I would include here the works that Blinkhorn considers as a category unto itself: works that put forward the thesis that Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union were totalitarian regimes. Hannah Arendt's comparison of totalitarianism in Germany and the Soviet Union, along with the works of like-minded authors, reached the height of its popularity in 1950s Cold War America (Blinkhorn 57).

It is worth describing general changes in the field of fascism scholarship since then, and Roger Griffin does this in his 1993 The Nature of Fascism as does David A. Roberts in his 2007 historiographical essay. The 1960s marked a new era in writing the history of fascism. Mainstream scholarly accounts of fascism became increasingly interested in questions of ideology and culture. George Mosse's 1964 work The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich looks at the influence of pre-existing intellectual and cultural ideas of nationalism, race, and sexuality on Nazi ideology. His approach is generally seen as a “culturalist” (Roberts 2). In 1963, the release of Ernst Nolte's work The Three Faces of Fascism used a comparative phenomenological analysis to conclude that fascism as expressed in France, Italy, and Germany, were essentially anti-modern movements. This work set out the terrain for a debate about whether the fascist phenomenon was modern, anti-modern, or, as Roger Griffin later put it, an “alternative modernity” (Griffin 2008, 12). In the 1970s, historical work by Zeev Sternhell, David A. Roberts, and A. James Gregor became prominent in the field; at the centre of their investigations was the link between pre-war left-wing syndicalism and fascism. With the publication of De Felice's Interpretations of Fascism in 1977, explored in more depth below, the historiographical debate became focused on defending or critiquing De Felice's claims. Published in 1980, Stanley Payne's influential work
Fascism: A Comparison and Definition set out a typology by which fascist movements can be assessed and compared, and put forward an “ideal type” of fascism, a task which Griffin replicated in The Nature of Fascism (Griffin 7). Although Payne's typology was meant as a tool for categorizing a range of right-wing movements and parties as fascist or non-fascist, there is still no consensus definition of fascism, with some scholars insisting it was strictly an interwar phenomenon in Italy and Germany (Weber cited in Griffin 6), and others seeing it as a global phenomenon with “neo” variants (Griffin 6).

Recently, some historical work about Italian fascism in particular has shifted away from the De Felice debate in that it rejects both the thesis that Italians generally resisted fascism and the thesis that they generally supported it. While not attempting to claim neutrality as De Felice and his school did, these authors attempt to depart from some stubborn historiographical dualisms: between fascist histories of fascism and anti-fascist histories of fascism, between the fascism-as-interruption-of-enlightenment versus fascism-as-project-of-enlightenment. Some of these new histories have been influenced by the “cultural turn”: “Among other things, postmodernism has helped to foster a new culturalist approach that takes seriously certain dimensions of fascism – style, ritual, spectacle, myth, rhetoric – that were long viewed as merely superficial or readily reducible” (Roberts 1). The work of Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, for example, looks at cultural constructions of the fascist narrative of victimhood. Christopher Duggan (2012) has written a cultural history of fascism, reminiscent of work from the 1960s, to assert fascism made use of pre-existing cultural attitudes including ideas of "colonial expansionism, militarism and the regeneration of national character" (159).

From this range of scholarly work on fascism, the focus of this literature review now turns specifically to Marxist accounts of fascism, and then more at length on Paxton's and Griffin's comparative studies of fascism. Non-economic Marxist interpretations from the interwar period address themselves to the errors of Comintern theory and policy on fascism. These accounts place special emphasis on the role of the middle class and on culture in the development of fascism. The latter observations, however, are no longer unique to Marxist interpretations of fascism and have become part of the consensus, represented by Paxton and Griffin's work. The latter accounts compare Italian and
German fascisms and present them overall as populist, racist, nationalist movements that are opportunistic and ideologically malleable in the search for power and stability.

3.3. The Communist International and fascism in Germany

The Communist International (Comintern) was an organization of communist and worker parties, started in 1864, through which the parties coordinated their efforts. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, Russia came to be seen as an example of and promise for communist revolutions elsewhere, and the Comintern and the Soviet experiment became gradually enmeshed. The Third International was held in Moscow in 1919, the same year that Mussolini launched his Fascio Italiano di Combattimento (Italian Combat Groups) in Milan. The question of how communists and workers should confront growing fascism in Germany and Italy dominated much of the discussion at subsequent Third International congresses. The international communist movement was especially looking at the successes and failures of communist experiments and movements in Germany. The story of the failure to stop fascism in Germany is tied up with the story of the Comintern's vacillations in policy about the fight against fascism. The Comintern at first endorsed the collaborative “united front” strategy from 1921 until 1928. Then the Comintern embraced a policy that labeled any non-revolutionary party as “social fascist” (Mandel 3). Later, they switched to a popular front strategy that permitted communist parties to ally with liberal, centrist parties in a move against fascism.

The united front strategy stipulated that communist organizations, as long as they are not in a “majority” in their respective countries, must pursue a “united front” with social democratic parties and trade unions in order to win the working class over to revolutionary communism. The united front strategy was also understood as a weapon against fascism. The Comintern's official line was that fascism, then gaining considerable strength in Northern Italy, was a bourgeois, or capitalist, movement representing capitalism in its final stage before its inevitable dissolution. The first premise in this formulation is not entirely controversial in that there is general agreement, at the time as well as today, that fascism was a strategy for dealing with capitalist crisis.
However, the extent to which the Comintern assigned the characteristic of “capitalist” to the movement begged nuance. The second premise in this formulation was one that the Comintern preserved in the coming decades and generated the most controversy: whereas the Comintern saw fascism, like capitalism, as producing the very forces that would eventually bring about its demise via revolution, others saw fascism's destructive forces as more total and dangerous, and did not see revolution as an inevitable consequence. An overestimation of communist strength and underestimation of fascist strength resulted in local mistakes in seizing opportunities for mass mobilization along socialist lines.

For example, the Communist party in Germany, the KPD, had failed to seize the revolutionary opportunity created when the French occupied the Ruhr in 1923. The KPD did not take advantage of the consequent economic crisis or of heightened activity on both the left and the right (Mandel 49). Under Stalin's direction, the KPD “bungled” and “vacillated” even as proletarianization and strikes spread (Mandel 49). The reluctance of the KPD, under Comintern direction, to take decisive action, was the beginning of a long pattern of defeat that only helped usher the Nazis into power, and was intrinsically linked with the Comintern's underestimation of the power of the right.

At the Sixth Congress in 1928, the Comintern abandoned the united front strategy – which had encouraged communist parties to collaborate with social democratic parties in opposing rising fascism – and initiated their position that Social Democratic parties are “social fascist”, or collaborators with fascists (De Felice 43). This led to the odd situation of “the Nazis and the KPD both campaigning and voting for removal of an SPD-led government” in 1930 (Mandel 90). While the KPD's popularity at the polls and its membership increased after 1928, its focus was on fighting Nazis while attacking, instead of collaborating with, the SPD, the party with the most members and electoral pull. However, the SPD was at fault too. That the SPD leadership's loyalty to respectability and legality allowed for Nazism to thrive is clear from the events in 1932, beginning with the SPD's decision to support right-wing Hindenburg as the “lesser evil” in the presidential elections. Hindenburg won, but the Nazis' support had nearly doubled. Hindenburg dismissed Bruening as Chancellor and replaced him with von Papen, who
helped the Nazis unleash political terror on their adversaries, and who put the decisive coup in motion (Mandel 260). The SPD did not take action other than promising they would “appeal von Papen's coup to the courts”; the unpopular KPD, refusing to work with the “social fascist” SPD, called a strike in July, to which nobody responded. Trotsky's criticism of both parties is that had they joined forces, the SPD could have been convinced of a more militant and extra-parliamentary strategy, and any strike call could have generated more widespread action.

In this context of leftist disunity and far-right machinations, the July 31, 1932 elections took place and the Nazis won the most seats in the Reichstag. On January 30, 1933, when Hindenburg appointed Hitler as chancellor, the SPD insisted that this was constitutional and therefore “forbade any actions that might be construed by the Nazis as provocations” (Mandel 336), while KPD leaders were driven into hiding. Hitler's next moves were to break up all SPD and KPD activity. On February 27, 1933, the Nazis blamed the communists for a fire in the Reichstag. The state proceeded to arrest KPD and SPD officials, making the March elections called by Hitler an easy win for the Nazis (they won 43.9%) (Mandel 371). By the end of March, the Reichstag had given Hitler dictatorial powers. The SPD officials who remained in parliament cooperated with Hitler even as he dismantled any remaining vestiges of the labour movement, and as usual, the KPD's call for a general strike went unanswered (Mandel 372). Only on March 5, 1933, did the Comintern end its “social fascism” line and call for a united front with Social Democrats (Mandel 372), and it continued to predict the imminent proletarian revolution in response to Hitler's rise to power. However, this was effectively too late: the SPD was formally banned in the summer of 1933.

Tied up with the dissension over strategy, the role of classes in various stages of fascism was controversial amongst leftists. At the 1923 Fourth Congress, both Amadeo Bordiga of the Italian Communist Party and Karl Radek of the KPD maintained that fascism was a movement of the lower middle class, including students and intellectuals. However, a less nuanced view that gained a permanent foothold by the mid-1920s within the Comintern was that fascism was a capitalist movement and regime against the working class. In the summer of 1924, at the Fifth Congress, “reference to the lower middle class
as the chief constituent element of fascism became tantamount to heresy” and the accepted view was that fascism came from the upper middle class on behalf of capital (De Felice 47-48). Four years later at the Sixth Congress, the Comintern conceded the lower middle class had a role in the formation of fascism, but only a minor one (De Felice 48). Fascism, as they saw it, is the dictatorship of large capital that exploits middle-class frustrations in order to destroy the working class (De Felice 42). In this formulation, the role of resisting fascism lies with the working class alone; this view supports the idea that the socialist movement should not ally with bourgeois or social democratic parties in resisting fascism. Trotsky, in contrast, argued that the lower middle class has no inherent interests and can be won over by either the ruling class or the working class; whichever class has the lower middle class on their side has a decisive advantage in struggle (Trotsky 1971, 284). At the seventh congress in the summer of 1935, all mention of lower middle classes had disappeared from Comintern literature (De Felice 48).

In the post-WWII period, the idea that fascism was a lower middle-class movement that served to repair the crisis in capitalism has become a mainstay in both Marxist and non-Marxist historical accounts of fascism. Marxist historian G.D.H. Cole, and Marxist economists Dobb, Sweezy, Baran, Huberman, subscribe to this view, albeit with different points of emphasis. Non-marxist historians including Stanley Payne, Walter Laqueur, Adrian Lyttleton, and Alexander De Grand share this view. Renzo De Felice also is part of this consensus, yet his interpretation has been accused of casting fascism's transformation of Italian state and economy in a positive light (Blinkhorn 59).

The Comintern's response to fascism forms the historical context of a major turning point in the history of Marxism (Anderson 23). The Comintern's predictions that capitalism would lead to revolution, and that the working class would be the source of that revolution, were wrong. The Comintern had underestimated the effectiveness of fascists in building mass movements, crushing opposition, and seizing power. It had also overestimated the ability of the working class to act in ways that would improve their own conditions; in other words, they wrongly assumed that exploitation as a class under
capitalism would produce anti-capitalism as a politics. Enzo Traverso summarizes the particular impact the Holocaust had on socialism:

> Along with the idea of Progress, Auschwitz disposed once and for all of the conception of socialism as the natural, automatic and ineluctable outcome of history. Auschwitz’s challenge Marxism is thus twofold. First, history must be rethought through the category of catastrophe, from the standpoint of the defeated. Second, socialism must be rethought as a radically different civilisation, no longer founded on the paradigm of the blind development of the forces of production and the domination of nature by technology. Socialism must be based on a new quality of life; a new hierarchy of values... (Traverso 22)

The formulaic, economistic equation of proletariat and revolutionary outlook was disproven. The key component undertheorized and underestimated by the Comintern was ideology, which can powerfully convince people to act in ways that are not necessarily in their interest. Starting with Walter Benjamin's writing on fascism, aesthetics, and history in the 1930s, and continuing throughout the war and beyond with the Frankfurt school, Marxist theory in the West became oriented to questions of how capitalist culture and ideology creates “social regression” that undercuts socialist alternatives (Traverso 23).

### 3.4. Non-economistic Marxist interpretations of fascism

De Felice's overview of the variety of Marxist commentators who rejected the Comintern's mechanistic view of fascism spans from Guérin's work in the 1930s to the work of Sweezy, Baran, and Huberman in the late 1960s. What all of these writers agreed on was that fascism does indeed come from capitalist crisis but is a movement of the middle-class – not of capitalists themselves. This view accommodates particular facts about fascism that hold true in the case of CPI, such as CPI members and supporters are neither significantly middle-class nor rich, and that CPI is anti-capitalist. Independent Marxists made clear that fascism, upon gaining state power, dominated and made use of capitalism, and in important instances, capitalists were willing collaborators; but in other important instances, the interests of fascism and capitalism were not aligned. Generally speaking, these commentators, against the Comintern line, saw that fascism will not produce the forces that will bring about its own downfall.
The accounts of fascism provided by Gramsci, Trotsky, Guérin, Reich and Poulantzas are now considered. Gramsci observed fascism in its early stages as a movement, and later as a regime that survived multiple crises. The unique features of his analyses from that time period are an attention to the political nature of fascism, which he saw as relatively autonomous from class and economics. Trotsky's view was that fascism is strong when and where socialism is weak, and that the proletariat should not rule out working with the petit bourgeoisie (the middle class, especially the lower middle class) and Social Democrats. This is relevant if not to an understanding of CPI, then to a consideration of possibilities for contemporary anti-fascist strategy. Daniel Guérin's work discusses how “left wing national socialism” arises from failures of the left, and the ways in which fascist anti-capitalism is substantially different from socialist anti-capitalism. Lastly, Nicos Poulantzas' work emphasized that the Comintern response to fascism was indicative of its responses to labour in general, and overemphasized the forces of production (economics) at the expense of examining the relations of production (ideology) in forming fascism.

3.4.1. Gramsci and the united front

Against the predominant view within the Comintern, and despite his toeing of the Comintern line while PCI leader and before his 1926 arrest, Gramsci did not think that fascism was the last stage of capitalism, nor did he think that fascism was the “agent” of the bourgeoisie or finance capital (Adamson 616). Rather, he saw that “it had complex internal divisions reconciled only in a common fear of, and antipathy towards, the proletariat” (616). It was in early 1921, upon observing the first wave of brutal squadristi violence, that Gramsci first indicated that fascism was a movement of the petty bourgeois reacting against large-scale industrialization. Gramsci's identification of “the early petty bourgeois character of fascism” has become common knowledge asserted by historians of Italian fascism, like Federico Chabod and Adrian Lyttleton (616).

Gramsci's analyses of fascism centred around its contradictions. He saw divisions within the fascist movement that the left, he thought, should take advantage of – a view he began expressing in February 1921. On the one hand, the radical side of the early fascist
movement of the rural north was made up of unemployed war veterans and nationalists who were drawn together by anti-socialism, hyper-nationalism, and spontaneous violence (616). On the other hand, the conservative side of the fascist movement was made up of Mussolini and his followers in the urban north (616). Both camps were middle-class in socio-economic origin (619), but the latter had its roots in socialism and in an urban professional middle-class, and as such was more amenable to parliamentarism and organization than was the radical rural camp (616). Authorities and capitalists were more tolerant of Mussolini’s camp for these reasons: he offered more stability than did the more outwardly violent radicals such as D’Annunzio and Farinacci (616). Drawing on these observations about the diversity and contradictions within the fascist movement, Gramsci put forward the idea in his article “Forze E"mentarai” that “fascism is based on cross-class appeal, and cannot be explained merely in class terms” (618).

After Matteotti’s assassination, which was linked to the fascists and also used by them to justify a fresh wave of repression, Gramsci watched public support for fascism temporarily dwindle. This convinced him of the vacillating nature of the middle class (Gramsci 1971, cited in Adamson 623). Gramsci analysed the contradiction between fascism as a party and fascism as a regime. The former embodied extreme politics, and had the support of big agriculture and of a disenfranchised petty bourgeoisie (624). The latter had the support of industrial capitalists as well as a vacillating middle class. This division, exacerbated by the Matteotti crisis, was an opportunity for the PCI to ally with the middle class and peasants against fascism in general (624). Gramsci pursued this united front as PCI leader. These events and contradictions provided the material for Gramsci’s innovative concept of hegemony.23

23 Adamson differentiates between two senses of Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony”: he used it to signify a positive proletarian consensus, but also used it to signify dangerous inter-class alliances that included “large peasant masses” (Adamson 626). In his Prison Notebooks, Adamson contends, Gramsci stipulated that fascism had not achieved hegemony, but had taken advantage of a “hegemonic crisis” in which “the ruling class had failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have suddenly... put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution” (Gramsci 1971, cited in Adamson 628).
In his analysis of states that were not fully developed, and as such were “peripheral” to international capitalism, he identified “intermediate strata” as essential to social and political cohesion (625). These strata “mediate” between the regime on one hand, and peasants and workers on the other (625). Within the intermediate strata sit “democratic intellectuals” whom the PCI should try to win over to form a “counter-fascist bloc” that would challenge fascism in creating hegemony (626).

Gramsci’s record as a PCI leader reflects his assessment of non-proletariat classes and non-communist groups as worthy of alliance-building. Before Mussolini’s March on Rome, Gramsci had sided with Amadeo Bordiga in his “ultra-left” opposition to the Comintern’s call for a united front strategy to building communist party membership and to resisting fascism.24 Once the king had appointed Mussolini as Prime Minister, Gramsci realized the effectiveness of Mussolini’s political machinations and started to pursue a united front with the PSI (Adamson 621). Gramsci and those grouped around him, in line with the Comintern and against Bordiga, took control of the PCI in 1924. PCI membership rose dramatically during 1924 and 1925 (Agosti 105). Gramsci’s writings on fascism document his change of attitude towards the power of fascism and the required strategy to resist it – moving from seeing fascism as “transitory” (Adamson 617) and the communist party’s response as necessarily sectarian, to seeing fascism as chameleon-like, accommodating, and contradictory, and warranting a strategy of alliance-building.

In his writings from 1922 to 193025 he specifies that fascism, although it expresses some fundamental forces of the bourgeois system, is not itself definitively bourgeois; that it comes from the failure of both the leadership of the various left groups and of bourgeois parliamentary democracy; that it is primarily a political movement; and that its successes can be explained by understanding its hegemonic form of domination without consent as Caesarism (621; 630). A salient feature of his analysis that would both rub up against

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24 In October 1922, the Comintern had asked the PCI to join with PSI. The majority of the PCI had rejected this (Agosti 104).
25 Adamson refers to the following pieces as constituting Gramsci’s main early work on fascism: his article for the 1922 Fourth Congress of the Third International, “Forze Elementari” (Gramsci 1966), “Lyon Theses”, and “The Southern Question” (the latter two can be found in Gramsci 1971).
Comintern wisdom and also get picked up again by future Marxist thinkers such as Poulantzas is that politics and economics are relatively independent from each other (630). In the case of fascism, Gramsci saw capitalism as surviving political changes, and not as entirely driving those changes (630). Contra the Comintern, he saw that many industrialists were in fact committed liberals and not fascists; fascism's strength lay in its broad political appeal and parliamentary machinations (633).

3.4.2. Trotsky, the role of the middle class, and the failures of the left

Leon Trotsky's analysis saw fascism as the latest in a series of bourgeois revolutions, yet had a specifically petty-bourgeois (middle class) character, but financed by big capital (Trotsky 1971). The bourgeoisie specifically benefits from the early fascist grassroots movement that does the police and military's job of “wear[ing] down and demoraliz[ing] the more conscious parts of the proletariat by systematic mass terror and street warfare” (Mandel 18). This makes easier the fascists' move to ban non-fascist mass organizations after seizing power. So, as fascism develops as a mass movement and then gains a foothold in parliament, it allies with the capitalist class and then seizes and transforms the bureaucratic state apparatus (Mandel 19-20). The “victory of fascism expresses the inability of the workers' movement to resolve the structural crisis of late capitalism in its own interests” (Mandel 20). Ernst Mandel, in his introduction to a collection of Trotsky's writing on fascism, concludes: “When late capitalist society is deeply shaken, the pendulum always first swings to the left, and only after the workers' movement has failed does the right get its chance” (Mandel 38).

The crux of Trotsky's disagreement with the Comintern line on “social fascism” is apparent in “The Fascist Danger Looms in Germany” (Trotsky, “The Fascist Danger”) when he states that even if the passivity of Social Democracy helped fascism develop, it is now being attacked directly by fascism and revolutionaries should therefore join with Social Democracy against fascism. In this piece, yet again going against the Comintern grain, he argues that the lower-middle class is essential to any type of revolution or social change. The petty bourgeoisie, Trotsky argues, is exploited and disenfranchised, and views the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) with envy and hatred. Ultimately, however, the
petty bourgeoisie gives the bourgeoisie the power it needs to rule. Trotsky did not think the petty bourgeoisie will always necessarily side with the bourgeoisie: it can choose between aligning with capitalists or with the proletariat, though it usually aligns with the former. The proletariat, he says, needs to convince the petty bourgeoisie that it is worth aligning with. Fascist parties will take up the space that the leadership of revolutionary workers' parties have not themselves occupied (Trotsky, “The Fascist Danger”).

3.4.3. Guérin on the relation between capitalism and fascism

French anarchist-socialist Daniel Guérin's *Fascism and Big Business*, published in 1939, observes that the fascist reorganization of capitalist power occurred as a way to correct capitalism's prior failures under a system of parliamentary democracy: “Fascism is, to be sure, a defensive reaction of the bourgeoisie, but a defence against the disintegration of its own system far more than against any proletarian offensive – alas, non-existent” (Guérin 298). The capitalist class jettisoned liberalism when it no longer effectively served its interests and produced too many contradictions to sustain. Fascism therefore replaced liberalism as the political system under which the bourgeoisie could pursue profit.

In contrast to the Comintern line on fascism, Guérin's writing analyses fascism as destructive and totalitarian, physically and mentally, of everything that is not fascist, as opposed to those who see fascism's downfall as inevitable, and as producing forces that will destroy it (Guérin 289). Similarly to Trotsky, he comments that when exploitation gives rise to class consciousness yet the expectations of newly-conscious workers are unfulfilled by the left, they then funnel their energy into left-wing national socialism (Guérin 291).

Guérin points to how big business is actually not immediately supportive of fascism. First, the fascist state is expensive to maintain because of so many public servants, and this flies in the face of classical capitalism (Guérin 294). Second, many big industrialists who would suffer from war instead of benefit from it, were unenthusiastic about the state's preparations for war and were in conflict with militarily aggressive politicians like Farinacci in 1935 (Guérin 295). The war economy, he says, is too restrictive for big
business (Guérin 296) but big industrialists nonetheless stick with the fascist regime because its leaders are popular and are capable of instilling a sense of complacency amongst workers. Overall, though, capitalists craved stability, and saw cooperation with the state in traditional war to be less risky than opposing the state and enduring potential civil war (Guérin 296).

Guérin states: “fascist dictatorship is the iron hoop with which the bourgeoisie tries to patch up the broken barrel of capitalism” (Guérin 297). In other words, the fascist state is a strong state that supports capitalism even if big industrialists are skeptical of it. Capitalism continues under fascism and fascists in power have no plans to make any serious changes to it (Guérin 297), even if the form of capitalism is a bit different e.g. under fascism, Italian businesses are cut off from the international system (Guérin 298). He addresses fascism and capitalism as autonomous systems that cross each other but that are not the same. This is relevant to the present study in that it underscores the importance of not overestimating the power of economic crises in giving rise to far-right movements like CasaPound Italia and of not collapsing capitalism and fascism into one category.

In his chapter entitled “Fascist Demagoguery: 'Anti-Capitalist' Capitalism”, Guérin elucidates the difference between socialist anti-capitalism and fascist anti-capitalism. Although fascism is “in the service and hire of capitalism”, it must “make a show of demagogic anti-capitalism” (71). The specific form of anti-capitalism that fascism promises while it is still a movement appeals to both the middle class and the working class in that it is a “utopian and harmless anti-capitalism that turns them away from genuine socialism” (71). When fascism rhetorically attacks capitalism, it specifically attacks foreign capitalism rather than capitalism tout court – and this especially attracts the traditionally nationalist middle class (72). In both Germany and Italy, anti-capitalism is thus “transmuted” into nationalism, and further, more so in Germany than in Italy, into anti-Semitism. In addition to the xenophobia and nationalism that defines fascism anti-capitalism, so too does a focus on credit and finance capitalism. The 1919 Italian fascist program appealed to the middle class in that “The anti-capitalism of the middle-class has its chief target the organization of credit” instead of productive capital (79). When
fascism does attack productive capitalism, it attacks “big capitalism” and monopolies, while encouraging small-scale capitalism, small business, artisanship, and so forth – the traditional milieu of the middle class (80). The “closed commercial state” of corporative fascism would protect businesses from competition and centrally control prices (81). Fascism appeals to workers, too, through organizing them into guilds which would collaborate with employers' groups within industries and within an “economic parliament” (85). Early fascism tried to win over workers by promising that strikes could continue under fascism (as long as they were merely economic and not “political”) and that worker control of factories was always a possibility. On the eve of the March on Rome, Mussolini proclaimed: “Labor has nothing to fear from the fascist power...Its just rights will be loyally guaranteed” (Mussolini, “Proclamation issued the night of October 27, 1922”, quoted in Guérin 88). Fascist anti-capitalism was more of a set of promises made early on in order to attract support, rather than reality. Fascist anti-capitalism was also particularly anti-democratic in that working-class and anti-capitalist activity that did not explicitly support fascism was effectively destroyed: while Mussolini proclaimed loyalty to workers and peasants, squadristi were attacking socialist trade unions and socialist workers in the north, and received funds and support from big landowners scared of rising peasant power. Once fascists came to power, eventually all non-fascist trade unions and parties were banned, and economic inequality grew instead of shrunk (De Grand).

3.4.4. Poulantzas and the relations of production

Nicos Poulantzas' 1970 work Fascism and Dictatorship is understood as the essential Marxist interpretation of fascism written in the post-WWII period. In it, he argues that the Comintern's approach to fascism was dominated by a strict economism as were their policies towards labour in general. He develops Gramsci’s ideas by studying the relationships of particular layers of classes to capitalism in both the movement and state stages of fascism. One of the ways in which Poulantzas extends Gramsci's work is by exploring how the Comintern ignored the relations of production (ideology) and focused their analysis of fascism on the forces of production (economics). By neglecting, for instance, how workers relate to each other, orthodox Marxist approaches to fascism
ignored the social and cultural reasons why socialist revolution does not occur in cases of a falling rate of profit (43). This economistic misunderstanding fuelled the Comintern's incorrect prediction that capitalism, at the time of the Fourth Congress, was about to be overthrown. Poulantzas maintains that the fascist state is a form of the capitalist state that, although exceptional, can nonetheless demonstrate much about how the capitalist state works in general. He differentiates the exceptional Fascist state from Bonapartism and military dictatorships and, like many mainstream historians, considers Italy and Germany as the only true cases so far of fascism proper. Poulantzas' work is generally taken up more by Marxists studying the state than by scholars of fascism. Similar to Gramsci's legacy, Poulantzas' work emphasizes that fascism is not simply a response to economic crises but is one particular political response specific to the relationships between the state, the church, civil society, and the multiple layers of the working, middle, and upper classes.

3.5. Non-marxist accounts of fascism

Some of what may have been unique observations about the relationship between fascism and class made by dissident Marxists in the interwar period has become standard knowledge amongst mainstream non-Marxist historians. That fascism was a primarily middle-class, anti-communist movement with undeniable ties to capitalist interests is now part of the consensus. The advantage of more contemporary non-Marxist accounts is that they incorporate a wide range of knowledge from across disciplines and from a greater range of sources; their view is longer and perhaps more complete, complementing earlier accounts written during fascist times with the details afforded by several decades' worth of knowledge production.

3.5.1. De Felice, the middle class, and revisionism

De Felice's interpretation of fascism, presented in English in his 1977 *Interpretations of Fascism*, agrees with the consensus that fascism was a middle-class movement to “challenge the traditional, liberal political class for power” (Blinkhorn 59). For De Felice, the “revolutionary” values of the early fascist movement were not far off from those of the Enlightenment (Blinkhorn 59). He differentiates the “optimism and
creativity” of the early stages of Italian fascist activism with Mussolini’s later compromises that resulted in increasingly totalitarian social policy (Blinkhorn 59).

Fascism was an attempt to recast and reassert a new type of liberalism. More controversially, De Felice claims that Mussolini’s regime made positive contributions to Italian society and economy. This has earned him criticism and the label of revisionist, or “anti-anti-fascist”, historian.

De Felice's main work was his multi-volume biography of Mussolini (1974) in which he made use of newly-accessible historical sources to document the intentionality of Mussolini's reign, including his intellectual and ideological commitments (Gregor, 1978). This biography, however, remains untranslated into English. De Felice's text with which English-speaking audiences became most familiar was Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice (1976) – a collection of interviews between De Felice and Michael A. Ledeen. It is in this text that De Felice makes normative claims about Italian fascism – the less normatively-inflected historical details of which he laid out in Mussolini-- which directly provoked ire. He maintains that a significant portion of the fascist movement was in fact a “rising”, “revolutionary” middle class (12). Furthermore, there was a broad “consensus” in Italy that supported Mussolini from the time of the concordat with the Vatican until the beginning of the Ethiopian war (13). This consensus fractured when Mussolini allied with Hitler in 1936 and began his imperial conquest of Africa (14). De Felice's historical work has been accused of being selective while claiming to be neutral, and of presenting Mussolini's regime as the “lesser evil” when compared to Hitler's, thereby undermining all the wrongs of the regime as well as the legacy of Italian anti-fascism (Ventresca 19).

It is interesting to note, in respect to CasaPound, which has praised Mussolini's early activism and his Republic of Salò but has tried to distance themselves from his middle period of imperialism and racism, that De Felice says that, “The fascists of Salò said that fascism as regime had betrayed the ideals of fascism as movement” (51). It seems that the period of Italian fascism he is most attached to defending on the grounds of its popular consensus and creative aspect is the early fascist movement (45). De Felice sees the middle class as having become “an important social force [which] attempted to
participate and to acquire political power” (46). His work links with that of Gramsci and Trotsky in that all three authors articulate fascism as an attempt at “interclassism of a modern type” which is in actuality based on middle class interests and against socialism (49). The main difference between De Felice's view of fascism and class and that of dissident Marxists is that Marxists theorized middle-class interests as being opportunistically used by fascists and by the ruling class, whereas De Felice's conceives of the middle-class as capable of independent action.

In this text De Felice explains the difference of mass participation (evident in “social, recreational and sporting initiatives” (75) that lies between fascism and conservatism (55). This distinction also features prominently in Roger Griffin and Robert O. Paxton's works, and is a key feature of CasaPound's profile.

De Felice's 1970s scholarship marked a particular historiographical era that one author has stated was characterized by “The availability of new materials, the partial abatement of passions, the publication of state documents, the accessibility of archives, [and] the remarkable advance in research techniques” (Gregor 434). Meanwhile, other scholars have emphasized that body of work's dangerous claim to historical impartiality that only served to downplay the injustices of Italian fascism (Ventresca 2006). Undoubtedly, the new sources and new interpretations became of use to the subsequent wave of scholars researching fascism. De Felice in particular gave credibility to Marxist interpretations by writing about them in his 1977 work Interpretations of Fascism. It seems to have helped normalize amongst scholars of fascism the knowledge of fascism's middle-class character in fact, though transclass or interclass character in rhetoric.

3.5.2. Griffin and palingenetic ultra-nationalism

Two relatively recent historical studies of fascism compare the Nazi and Italian Fascist regimes as a way to come to a definition of fascism. These more general studies depart from country-specific historical studies of fascism in that, although they examine the details of both Italian fascism and German Nazism, they build general typological theories of fascism's defining features and behaviours.
Roger Griffin's *The Nature of Fascism* attempts to present fascism as “an ideal type” at the level of abstraction (9) to help researchers locate the “fascist minimum” in movements of the same general far-right family (12). His definition of fascism is that it is “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism” (25). He explains that *palingen* means again or new, and *genesis* means creation or birth--thus palingenetic “refers to the sense of a new start or of a regeneration after a phase of crisis or decline” (32). It follows destruction or “perceived dissolution” of the prior political and social order (32). He defines the qualifier “populist” as a “generic term for political forces which, even if led by small elite cadres...in practice or in principles (and not merely for show), depend on 'people power' as the basis for their legitimacy” (35). He defines ultra-nationalism as radical nationalism that is not related to anti-colonialism or representative democracy. It is “charismatic”, and does not rule through terror but rather cultivates the illusion of consensus (37). So, he says that the minimum aspect of a political ideology, in order to qualify as “fascism”, is palingenetic ultra-nationalism which has as its “mobilizing vision...the national community rising phoenix-like” after near-destruction (38). But this national community conjured by fascism is structurally weak in multiple ways that Griffin examines.

First, its strength is undermined by its “mythic core”. Fascism, unlike liberalism, socialism and conservatism, says Griffin, has no plan about what to do when it ceases to be a movement and has a chance to redefine the world. This lack of planning generates incoherence and contradictions. Therefore strong leaders are needed to cohere factions and choose dominant interpretations, so that the rank and file rarely gets to have an impact on politics (40). This undermines fascism's promise to embody the will of the people, and the discontent of the more militant rank and file threatens the political stability of the fascist order. Fascism responds to such threats by falling back on crisis as a way to garner internal and public support: both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were

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26 In 2007 Griffin published *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. His definition of fascism had not changed in that volume but its focus was the alternative modernity posed by fascism, and its relationship with both archaic forms and new hypermodern developments like the death camps (Roberts 2007).
able to sustain the sense of crisis “only because both movements pursued imperialist expansion against enemies abroad” (40). But in the long term, relying on crisis for mobilization and support is “untenable” because of the “practical constraints” on using terror and social engineering against one's own population, and because “making new enemies” through territorial expansion, prolonged war, and occupation, is a resource-intensive undertaking. When a goal is reached it becomes reformulated as part of an ongoing “treadmill” process (Weber 1964, 78). So this is the structural weakness implied by its palingenetic mythic core: the myth of fascism as the vehicle for national regeneration cannot be sustained forever.

Populist ultra-nationalism creates an irreconcilable contradiction between the type of democratic rule that fascism promises and the type of rule that it actually delivers. Griffin specifies that fascism is committed to being a mass movement but only if led by an elite in the name of a “national community yet to be realized” (41). Even though it is committed to “classlessness” which denotes “democracy, egalitarianism, and socialism”, the movement before and after the revolution is hierarchical (41). So the paradox is that it is “populist in intent and rhetoric” but “elitist in practice” (41). Fascist populism is essentially undemocratic: it can claim to be populist insofar as its base is “outstanding, exceptional” fascist men, and it is undemocratic insofar as it is structured by pervasive racism and elitist theories of society. In the end, “elitist populism” is unfeasible and unsustainable (41), because the leader will eventually die and fascist regimes do not have mechanism to replace leaders (43). He claims that “the intrinsic inviability of fascism both as regime and as a movement” lies in its “need to prolong indefinitely the palingenetic phase of revolutionary transformation” (43). De Felice's influence is noticeable when Paxton claims that fascism is neither modern or anti-modern but presents an “alternative modernism” (47) and that fascism is not reactionary but “revolutionary” (48).

Of particular relevance to the present study are Griffin's observations about the early influences on the Italian fascist movement, and how the movement behaved before it became a party. The extra-parliamentary pro-war campaign that started in 1914 had a “shared mythic core” that held that “a new post-liberal Italy” could come about from
joining the war (56). The people, ideas, and organizations involved in this campaign became the founders of the fascist movement after the war. Various periodicals and writers from 1900 until the war established the respectability of anti-socialism and anti-liberalism.

3.5.3. Paxton and fascism's opportunism

Robert O. Paxton's 2004 volume *The Anatomy of Fascism* is a historical comparison of Nazi Germany and Italian fascism, both defined as “a popular movement against the Left and against liberal individualism” (21). His salient points are that fascism uses what has been made culturally available by socialism, that fascism will opportunistically shed its ideological purity as it develops and seizes power, and that it will attempt to maintain its control of the state through cycles of normalization and radicalization.

Like De Felice and others, Paxton asserts that there is a difference between fascist anti-capitalism in the movement stage and in the regime stage (11), but he also insists that there are intermediate stages that demand attention, thereby extending the scope of the movement-regime binary (23). Instead he looks at the creation of movements, their rooting in the political system, their seizure of power, the exercise of power, and survival over the long duration (23). Particularly relevant to the case study of CPI, as a relatively new movement with no seats in parliament, are Paxton's observations about fascism in its two earliest stages. Fascism came into being by occupying space made available by a range of forces, including socialism.

Intellectuals made terrain ready for fascism by attacking Enlightenment values, though this attack cannot be said to have “caused” fascism (18). Intellectual and cultural preparation is different from “brining it about”: particular currents “made space available” but did not “cause” fascism (39). He states, “... fascists do not invent the myths and symbols that compose the rhetoric of their movements but select those that suit their purposes from within the national cultural repertoire. Most of these have no inherent or necessary link to fascism” (39). Early fascism had continuities with
socialism, as could be seen in the May 1919 Fascist program's expansionist aims and its demands for parliamentary and economic reforms. Paxton takes up the question of fascism's relationship with socialism, as well as Marxist accounts of fascism. Ultimately, he asserts, there is a difference between fascist anti-capitalism in words and fascist anti-capitalism in deeds, while in movement and while in power: when in power, “at most, they replaced market forces with state economic management” (11). The movement's priorities shifted as it progressed from movement, to party, to state power. Fascism was intellectually and culturally very open at first – but as it sought out power and a position in coalitions, admirers dropped off, and the movement abandoned intellectual currents that did not suit their new relationships (40). “Ideological underpinnings” became central again during World War II—so that it can be said that ideology was prevalent in the “morning and the evening” of the Italian fascist experience, but not in the middle years when fascists were focused on building alliances, seizing power, and staying in power (18). When put into the historical context of early Italian fascism, the fact that CPI is intellectually diverse and “ambiguous” (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Froio 22), and that it draws from the left and the right, is fairly normal for a fascist organization in its early stages.

Among the long-term preconditions for fascism Paxton identifies is a socialist tradition strong enough to have created “disillusioned clientele” such as those who were disillusioned by “the compromises of moderate parliamentary socialists” by 1914 (43). In terms of recruitment, the fascist movement brought together people from all classes, although most came from lower middle class. Key to this is the fact that “Workers were more available for fascism if they stood outside the community of socialists” (50). While the fascist movement drew from the ranks of the unemployed who were not represented by trade unions, they had a hard time recruiting Catholics, as they were already rooted in a collective tradition (50). In sum, the origins of Italian fascism were characterized more by its anti-capitalism, youth involvement, and intellectualism than its later stages (53).

There is plenty of literature exploring the connection between syndicalism and fascism. See for instance, Sternhell, 1976 and 1986, and Roberts, 1979. Mussolini himself was a prominent socialist until the end of WWI.
CasaPound shares these characteristics and therefore seems to parallel this early stage of inter-war Italian fascism.

In the process of transitioning from a movement to an official party in 1921, Italian fascists were forced to become more focused and precise, “highly selective” in their anti-capitalism, and less philosophically pure (57). Like Griffin, Paxton talks about fascism's move to the right. Paxton provides historical details for the broad strokes of historical interpretation provided by independent Marxists overviewed earlier in this chapter. The rightward shift originated in *squadristismo*'s anti-Slovene violence in Trieste which then progressed to the killing of socialist officials and burning of Labor Exchange and socialist offices in the Po Valley, actions that were backed by big planters and war vets (59). Fascists re-established big landowners' monopoly over jobs and land, “persuaded” peasants to abandon the socialist unions (60-61), and then started to supplant the state by occupying whole cities (61). In this process, the “left-nationalist Fascism of Milan of 1919” characterized by focus on nationalization, heavy taxes, workers' rights, atheism, republicanism and anti-monarchism, was abandoned (63). Radicals who had joined the movement early on left in protest and were replaced by police, army officers, landowners' sons, and some prefects (62). National politicians took notice; Giolitti included Mussolini's fascists in his anti-socialist electoral coalition in 1921 with the result was that 35 candidates were elected (64). So, the fascists found “a political space and adapted to fit it” (64). A mainstay belief within the fascist movement throughout its various stages is that the Italian state, post-war, could restore its strength through popular unity, and “overcome class conflict by integrating the working-class into the nation” and by getting rid of the “alien” (32). Early Italian fascists felt entitled to a share of the world's colonies and so “diabolized... South Slav neighbours, especially the Slovenes, as well as... socialists”, Ethiopians, and Libyans, as these were the populations that stood in the way of their territorial aspirations (37).

Through comparative analysis of European fascist movements, he concludes it is not enough to wear a uniform and beat up a minority group to be considered a fascist: “It took a comparable crisis, a comparable opening of political space, comparable skill at alliance building, and comparable cooperation from existing elites” (75). He declares:
“Fascist interlopers cannot easily break into a political system that is functioning tolerably well” (73-73). Without this breaking into the political system, minor fascist movements in the twentieth century have remained “pure – and insignificant” (75). Additionally, powerful intellectual and cultural preparation does not mean a fascist movement will be successful: the combination of what is going on in civil society and what is happening at the state level (army, judiciary, etc.) is more important (76). In the case of CasaPound, they tap into the Italian public's perceptions of the inability of the state to govern effectively in times of crisis. Furthermore, although CPI does not seem to be gaining electoral strength with much momentum, there is evidence and speculation of close collaboration between CPI and public officials.  

Nonetheless, according to Paxton, there are three precise roles that “intellectual preparation” plays in fascism taking root in the political landscape as more than a movement. These roles are: “1. discrediting previous liberal regimes 2. creating new poles outside of the Left around which protest (until recently a monopoly of the Left) could be mobilized 3. and in making fascist violence respectable” (77). Fascism succeeds, similarly to Bolshevism, in contexts with the “least-barricaded gate” (81). In CasaPound's case, inequality in access to quality housing and education are symptoms of a capitalist system in crisis. Evictions and real estate prices are soaring, and education cutbacks and privatization as part of European Union debt-relief conditions antagonize students nation-wide. CPI is using popular discontent with the economy and the Italian state to build a base and make what appear to be reasonable, well-intentioned and populist demands.

Italian fascism rose to power despite the conservative attempt to co-opt the fascists in 1921. Paxton compares the backstairs conspiracy that brought Hitler to power in 1933 (91-96) with the 1922 March on Rome and the king's acceptance of Mussolini as head of government (90). The important elements in the German case were the ascension to power through constitutional means, the use of emergency law, and the socialist failure (echoing Trotsky) to challenge chancellor von Papen (97). Paxton identifies the

28 See note 8 in chapter 2 about CasaPound’s links with former mayor Alemanno, and chapters 6 and 7 for comments about CasaPound’s relationship with the ruling Democratic Party and with LN.
“determining variables in the achievement (or not) of power” as: “numbers and muscle” in crisis; “conservative elites' willingness to work with fascism”; and “a reciprocal flexibility on the fascist leaders' part” (98). Additionally, non-fascist conservatives were complicit in anti-left fascist violence, in removing the ban on uniformed activity (when the ban was lifted, fascist violence erupted), and in turning a blind eye to violence by fascists and to aid from police and army. Non-fascist conservatives also ignored the aid the police and army provided for the fascists. Finally, non-fascist conservatives gave fascists “the gift of respectability”, and financial support (98). These particular observations preface details about CPI's relationships with the establishment. These relationships range from alleged police tolerance of their street violence, as in the case of the Piazza Navona protests, to alleged ties with local politicians and mafiosi29, to the respectability they have attained from the state via their official status as an Association for Social Promotion.

Consistent with non-Comintern Marxist claims that the relationship between capitalism and fascism was not consistent over time or across the ruling class, Paxton contends that business substantially contributed to the Nazi party through armament contracts and attacks on unions, but only after they had come to power (100). If not all segments of the ruling class have interests that are aligned with fascism, why did they build alliances with them, help them into power, and assist the regimes? Paxton points out that fascists offered the establishment support, especially from youth and workers, for conservative positions without having to rely on “emergency powers”, via the logic that nation is stronger than class (102): “Fascism offered a new recipe for governing with popular support without any sharing of power with the left and without any threat to conservative social and economic privileges and political dominance” (104). Both in Italy and in Germany, emergency decrees widened fascist government's power, helped dismantle the left, and garnered support for “anti-terrorist” measures (107). Lastly, Italian fascists and the Nazis, once they had achieved control of the government, consolidated power within their own ranks and in society in general through authoritarian responses to national crises such as the Reichstag fire in Germany's case or Matteoti's murder in Italy's case.

29 Discussed in chapters 6 and 7.
(118). Crisis, then, is a constant theme within fascism, whether it be formulated as a crisis sparked by internal threats to the social order (e.g. socialism), or as a crisis represented by external threats that can be overcome through war or colonization.

Paxton shows how Mussolini behaved according to a pattern of radicalization in order to appease party militants, followed by normalization in order to foster stability (and vice versa). The first such instance of this was when Mussolini came to power through militant bluffing and theatrics, then instituted a laissez-faire economic regime that seemed normal and non-threatening to the Italian ruling class. Later on, recurrent restlessness amongst fascist activists prompted Mussolini to invade Ethiopia in 1935 (153). The lessons here are that preserving capitalism is a way of staying in power, even if it is not part of fascist ideology, and that fascism in power is particularly opportunist.

In answering the question “What drives radicalization?”, Paxton points to pressure from the rank and file of the party, but spends more time discussing the radicalizing function of war, stating “war is indispensable for fascist muscle tone” (155). War in Ethiopia brought about internal cohesion and discipline (155), and fulfilled “traditional national imperialist dreams” and the desire for revenge for the 1895 defeat at Adwa. It revived “Fascist dynamism”, especially among young people (156). There were no geopolitical reasons for the Italian campaigns in France in June 1940, and Albania and Greece in the fall of 1940 – these were fought simply to create the impression that Mussolini was “waging his own war parallel to Hitler's” (157). The author goes on to discuss the Ethiopian war and the period of the Republic of Salò as forms of radicalization. The lesson here is that war served a function to keep the younger generation invested in the fascist project. This can be generally applied to the case of CPI's intermittent attacks on migrants and Roma in that they can be understood as moments that keep the movement's activists involved, invested, and energized whereas the more parliamentary dimensions of the movement do not offer equally stimulating opportunities.

Paxton draws the conclusion that “expansionist war lies at the heart of radicalization” (170). While the state engaged primarily in increasing consent in Italy through education, propaganda, and interventions in daily life and customs, it used “coercion” to
enforce racial apartheid in the colonies: “At the outposts of empire, fascism recovered the face to face violence of the early days of squadristismo and SA street brawling” (170). The examples of Germany and Italy, he maintains, show that war as a means to prolong the life of fascism through radicalization ends up destroying the nation that is supposed to be “at fascism's heart” (171). In the chapter 6, about race and racism, I will take up this dynamic, replicated by CPI, of agitating for welfare state provisions for white citizens, all the while reserving coercive methods of violence upon people of colour.

3.6. Conclusion: CPI as a fascist movement

This literature review has demonstrated that there is historical continuity between CasaPound Italia and Mussolinian fascism in terms of its social activities and mass character, its emphasis on crisis, its nationalist recasting of class issues so as to craft broad interclass appeal, and in its “leftist” fascist ideology. Reminiscent of Italian fascism's obsession with finance capitalism, as noted by Guérin, the capitalism that CasaPound targets is a capitalism that is perceived to be big, financial, and foreign. Stated CPI vice president De Stefano to a reporter, "We would like to see communications, transport, energy and health renationalised and the state constructing houses which it then sells at cost to families” (Kington 2011). Aside from proposals for nationalization, the economic policies contained in its platform target the financial industry: banks, interest rates, and collection agencies. Talk of workers' rights in CPI's platform is dwarfed by criticism of finance capital, confirming, for example, Guérin's observation that honing in on credit speaks to the frustrations of the middle classes without threatening their sense of stability under capitalism writ large. While CasaPound does have its own unofficial labour union, it does not extend its services to foreign workers. The CPI platform singles out foreign workers and foreign multinational corporations as targets of their particular brand of fascist anti-capitalism.

The enduring lesson from Gramsci that can be applied to the project of interrogating the politics of CasaPound Italia is that it is not economic crises alone that create opportunities for fascism; the success of fascism depends on how it selects and mobilizes a range of political and cultural forces. Specifically, CPI has selected narratives that have cross-
class appeal, such as those that emphasize nationalism and popular anti-immigrant and anti-Roma racism. A strategic lesson drawn from Trotsky’s analysis is that if socialist organizations and parties are to engage in anti-fascist struggle against groups like CPI, they will need to orient themselves to both the working class and the middle class in order to combat fascism’s cross-class pull.

CasaPound Italia has also been implicated in infrequent episodes of violence against immigrants and leftists. Although it cannot be easily compared the Fascist party in government because of the obvious differences in institutional power and popular support, Paxton's observations about the cycle of normalization and radicalization, the role of violence, and the dynamics of consent and coercion in fascist rule are germane. He argues that it is inherent in fascism to engage in cycles of normalization and radicalization: “Extreme radicalization remains latent in all fascisms, but the circumstances of war, and particularly of victorious wars of conquest, gave it the fullest means of expansion” (151). Mussolini had made promises to the people of Italy that begged fulfilment; he had to keep momentum going. Stability and normalization characterizes authoritarian regimes; the author differentiates between these and fascist regimes, who will resort to appealing to crisis in order to radicalize the support base and the party (148). In CasaPound's case, inequality in access to quality housing and education are symptoms of a capitalist system in crisis. Cost of living is steadily increasing as wages stagnate and unemployment increases; the state cuts public spending. In this context of “crisis”, the additional “migrant crisis” is perceived as an unfair economic burden on Italian citizens. CPI is using popular discontent with the economy and the Italian state, mixed with anti-immigrant racism, to build a base and make what appear to be reasonable and populist demands. This crisis-dependent strategy is consistent with Paxton’s analysis of fascism in general.

The literature about German and Italian fascism points to how fascism is a political movement, and then a regime, that responds to and makes use of capitalism, even though the interests of fascists on one hand and capitalists on the other often conflict. Many of the characteristics of early fascist interventionism that Griffin outlines have parallels in the protest politics of CPI today. The early fascist movement made use of the crisis of
public confidence in public officials' dealing with the war (61); similarly, CPI makes use of crisis of public confidence in government officials' dealing with a range of issues, most notably immigration and Italy's participation in the EU. Griffin notes that in its “chrysalis” stage, Italian fascism was “agitprop” led by small self-appointed elite (61); similarly, CPI emerged from the social milieu of the hardcore band ZetaZeroAlfa's fan base, and the lead singer Gianluca Iannone was CPI's founder and continues to be its leader30. However, Griffin's observation that the early Italian movement contained factions that had in common “primacy of action over carefully conceived political programmes” seems to be less evident in the case of CPI. Griffin notes that early fascists relied on the “charismatic” politics of the piazza (63); while that particular point may ring true with CPI, which regularly conducts its political interventions in public spaces like the street or the piazza, this does not override the existence of CPI's carefully crafted political platforms for the national organization as well as for its thematic projects and branches, like those related to education. Lastly, Griffin observes that early fascists used “war” as “a source of renewal and redemption” (63); as will become clear in the chapter of this thesis about race and racism, smaller scale domestic “wars” or instances of violence, as well as forays into international conflict zones like Syria, may be serving a similar purpose in CPI's activism. The fact that post-war fascism definitively swung to the right as a result of the spontaneous squadismo in the rural north (63) shows that the ostensibly left-wing nature of a fascist movement's initial economic and popular-democratic demands are not necessarily non-negotiable or permanent.

Fascism relies on the economic frustration and anticommunism of the middle class – but, as many socialists have maintained, this does not preclude the united front or popular front's strategy of involving the middle class and non-socialists in anti-fascist struggle. The literature on fascism emphasizes its opportunistic character: it will take up issues unsuccessfuly addressed by the state or by the left, and it will modify its ideology as needed in order to gain and maintain power, as well as to satisfy its activist base. This

30 Based on current literature on CPI, press clippings, and CPI propaganda online, it is unclear whether or not positions in CPI such as President or Vice President are elected.
makes fascism a particularly powerful political movement that should not be underestimated, as has tragically happened in the past.
CasaPound Italia prides itself on being more than a political movement, and on encompassing intellectual, cultural, and artistic aspects of life. The organization very consciously refers to intellectuals who make up its heritage and tradition. This might be an intentional attempt to create the impression that this is not a typical far-right organization of young thugs who beat up foreigners on the street. The formative historical and philosophical influence of Ezra Pound has been noted in chapter 3. A deeper consideration of the influence of the fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile on CasaPound indicates the problematic nature of this claim. This chapter considers Gentile's essential anti-dualism that provided a philosophical basis for the totalitarian, anti-individualist thrust of fascism. This aspect of fascism is intolerant of individual or group differences within the boundaries of the nation-state, and provides the theory behind the practice of violence against those who do not conform to fascism's project. CasaPound's valorization of Gentile's philosophy undermines their attempts to make their brand of fascism appear modern, given that modernity generally hinges on individualism and tolerance. First, however, I look at the political philosophy that CasaPound articulates in its organizational platform. It is a political philosophy that is economically leftist and grounded in collective rights. However, its anti-immigration politics, articulated in its platform, differentiate it from other leftist projects, as does the totalitarian Gentilean legacy it claims as part of its heritage.

4.1. CasaPound's political philosophy

As indicated earlier, research into both its theory and its practice can help us learn about the core philosophy of CasaPound Italia, though the present study predominantly focuses on its theory. Theory and practice are rarely identical. Although CasaPound's platform presumably acts as a basis for their work – for such activities as electoral campaigns,
their artists' association, or martial arts group – we should not take their platform as a representation of what they actually do. Rather, it is a glimpse of the organization they would like the public to believe it is – a sort of projected self-image or persona.

It is important to mention the limits of what can be gleaned from analyzing a document of an organization that is difficult to access for research purposes. It cannot be known how often or to what extent CPI activists stray from the platform, or how leaders within the organization tolerate individual or regional departures from the platform. Little can also be known regarding conditions of the platform's creation, or the specifics of how it is used to guide CPI organizational decisions and practices. What can be discerned, however, is that the platform was passed at a national convention, and that it is likely that some procedurally democratic process was involved in the platform's adoption. The platform (CasaPound Italia 2011) is a central and easy-to-locate feature on the organization's website and contains the most detail about what CPI stands for. Important too is the fact that the platform does not appear to have been modified since it was adopted in September 2011. This suggests it has significant staying power within the organization and that the organization takes it seriously.

CasaPound's platform contains eighteen categories of proposals (CasaPound Italia 2011). In general, the platform advocates for increased accountability and regulation in the financial industry and in the judiciary, nationalization of resources and industries, and expansion of the social safety net. The ideal state is streamlined and efficient, yet at the same time more involved in multiple aspects of life. CasaPound does not want a heartless, uninvolved neoliberal Thatcherite state; nor does it want a cumbersome, bureaucratic, nepotistic state. It wants a strong welfare state without the inefficiencies, corruption, and waste that are seen as its corollaries – especially in the Italian experience. The proposals are more often than not framed as solutions that depend on state-driven social reform and a strengthening or regeneration of the “nation”. Rights are mentioned.

To date, there has been no ethnographic research published in which the researchers have been granted access to CPI meetings. Gattinara and Froio's ethnographic research - the most recent study about CPI and that comes closest to its internal organizational workings - was conducted at public events and in one-on-one interviews with CPI activists, but not in meetings.
only as part of the phrase “workers' rights”, apart from one reference to the rights of the family. However, the word “dignity” is used repeatedly to indicate the goal of reform. The bearer of said “dignity” is rarely individual but collective: the nation, the community, citizens, workers, or the family. Because of the focus on labour, on the state as a vehicle for wealth redistribution, on the regulation of finance and industry, and on communitarian subjects rather than individual subjects, the platform appears to be on the left of the political spectrum. Particularly compelling in this regard are CPI's proposals around social security, housing, education, and police and prisons.

While CasaPound is silent about the rights of the individual, it is vocal about social rights, or in other words, about social welfare: “privatizations are threatening the fundamental rights that guarantee people's social dignity” (CasaPound 2011, 8). They claim that Italy is the home of the “welfare state and public security” (CasaPound 2011, 8), and that a government that endorses privatization and cutbacks is a government that “endorses slavery, U.S.-style” (CasaPound 2011, 8). Among their proposals grouped under the heading “Social Rights” are the proposals to index pensions to the cost of living, to provide a guaranteed minimum income to people living in poverty, and to fund such schemes through increased taxation of large companies, cooperatives, landowners (especially absentee landowners), and multinational corporations (CasaPound 2011, 8). They also call for restrictions on interest rates, fines, and collection agencies such as Equitalia (CasaPound 2011, 8).

In terms of housing, CasaPound is opposed to both rent and mortgages, and proposes “Social Mortgage” as an alternative -- a not-for-profit rent-to-own scheme. It demands that the state construct homes on publicly-owned land to sell “at cost to families... in monthly instalments not exceeding one-fifth of income” (CasaPound 2011, 10). These homes would be made immediately available, however, to any woman expecting a baby (CasaPound 2011, 9). Current tenants of public housing would have the ability to purchase their homes, using credit equivalent to the rent they have already paid over the years.
Education, too, is an area in which CasaPound makes fairly centre-left proposals. It wants students to have radically increased representation. Within educational decision-making bodies, it wants students to have veto power. It wants the state to continue funding schools and universities, and for privatization and cutbacks to stop. These demands, for power on the one hand and continued public funding on the other, are the mainstay of most student movements in Western countries with universal state-funded education. CPI's student organization, Blocco Studentesco (Student Block, BS), helps the wider organization to appear legitimate and to insert itself into the centre-left milieu of anti-government and anti-austerity activism. CasaPound's educational demands will be taken up in greater detail in chapter 5.

Given the association of fascism with increased police, military, and state violence in general, given the fact that CasaPound has been linked to violent attacks, and given the documented accusations from the left that CasaPound benefits from preferential treatment from the police, it is notable that CasaPound disavows police and prisons in the section of their platform called “For sovereign authority, against the police state”. They explain: “Our concept of authority has nothing to do with the police state. A sovereign and organic state does not need to impose itself through the legalized arrogance of their officials” (CasaPound 2011, 16). Their platform calls for immediate construction of new, “dignified” prisons, a parliamentary commission that inquires into the conditions of prisons, a code of ethics for police, and mandatory badge-display for police in order to discourage police brutality32 (CasaPound 2011, 16).

The one area of CasaPound's platform whose end goal is distinctly not reminiscent of the left is that which concerns immigration. CasaPound claims that a multiracial society is a sign of inequality and exploitation – of a lack of security in countries of origin that compels people to migrate to Europe. Upon arriving in Europe, CasaPound contends, they are exploited by unscrupulous employers taking advantage of their lack of legal equality. The platform document labels those who profit off of illegal migrant labour

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32 The centrality of anti-police brutality to the most recent wave of the Black civil rights movement coming out of Ferguson in the U.S. makes this an especially idiosyncratic demand for a far-right party.
“criminals”, and equates migrants with “slaves” (CasaPound 2011, 4). Their solution is two-fold: domestically, they call for “freezing of immigration flows”, deportation of migrants, and concurrent closing of all migrant detention centres. Internationally, they call for “support to all non-European identity movements that encourage the roots and the re-establishment of indigenous peoples” (CasaPound 2011, 4). Here CPI is in lockstep with ethnopluralism: essential to its opposition to immigration to its own country is its opposition to the encroachment of sovereignty by colonial or imperial forces. Hence CPI's open support of a range of nationalist movements around the world. CPI supports the Tibetan independence movement (“Tibet Libero”), allowing Tibetan immigrants in Italy to host information tables at CPI events. They also support Bashar al-Assad's Syrian Armed Forces, on the grounds that they are fighting U.S.-led imperialist forces (“Lanciano, Conferenza Sulla Guerra”). CPI's pro-Palestinian position is shared with many European far-right parties and personalities – such as the Hungarian Member of European Parliament Krisztina Morvai, supported by the fascist Jobbik party.

The above details constitute CasaPound's intentional, self-conscious political philosophy - what they want the world to think it believes. Apart from its anti-immigrant racism, its economic, institutional, and social policy proposals appear to be a mildly liberal in some cases and leftist in others. In the real world, the meaning of their program is mediated, of course, by people's common sense judgments of CasaPound. These judgments can, in turn, be informed by collective memory of fascism (whether sympathetic or not), media reports of CasaPound activities, social allegiances, and so forth. It is possible that the public understands contradictions between CasaPound's left-leaning platform and actual fascist practice, past and present, which is more violent and illiberal than their platform would suggest. CasaPound's actual illiberal practices, especially around education and immigration, will be examined later on in this thesis. But first I explore the philosophy of Giovanni Gentile, an illiberal intellectual whom CPI claims as part of their heritage, and whose totalitarian ideas expose the extreme-right dimensions of CPI's political philosophy.
4.2. The philosophy of Italian fascism: Giovanni Gentile

CasaPound's national headquarters is a five-minute walk from Rome's central train station, in a neighbourhood where many immigrants live. The seven-story building is monitored by security cameras; access is restricted to those who live or have business there. In the spacious outer front hallway, the walls are painted in bright colours with the names of people who make up CasaPound's “pantheon”. The tall sans-serif font is reminiscent of the art nouveau style of typography popular in the 1920s, and used by the fascist government in its propaganda and painting of public walls. Listed are artists, philosophers, novelists, poets, fascist politicians and decorated soldiers. The spectrum ranges from surprising and otherwise ostensibly non-fascist figures such as Jack Kerouac, Antoine St.-Exupery, and Black Elk (“Alce Nero”), to more notorious fascists such as Renato Ricci, Corneliu Codreanu, and Oswald Spengler. The name of Italian philosopher and politician Giovanni Gentile appears on the mural. And although he is only one of several philosophers listed, such as Plato and Plotinus, CasaPound's publicity material on the internet reveals a consistent organizational interest in Gentile.

In 2013, at least two CasaPound local chapters-- Friuli Venezia Giulia, and Abruzzi and Molise – commemorated the anniversary of Gentile's April 15 assassination by partisans, by erecting banners in public spaces overnight and then announcing it in press releases (Zarroli; “FVG: CasaPound ricorda...”). Additionally, various CasaPound chapters welcomed the recent publication of a book by Valerio Benedetti called Restoring Giovanni Gentile (or Riprendersi Giovanni Gentile) (Benedetti 2014) by hosting author talks, adding the book to their bookstores, and advertising these activities. Lastly, CPI directly references Gentile in its political platform in the following line: “We want a free Italy, strong, without guardianship, the absolute master of all its powers, reaching towards the future. A social and national Italy, according to the vision of the Risorgimento, and which is Mazzinian, Corridorian, futurist, D'Annunzian, Gentilian,

33 See Bjørkelo (27 Jan. 2015) for a description of CasaPound's headquarters and Bjørkelo (10 July 2015) for photos of the mural.
34 One example of such an event occurred in Trento in February 2015 (“Trento: Riprendersi Giovanni Gentile”).
Pavolinian and Mussolinian” (CasaPound Italia 2011, 2). So, CasaPound enlists Gentile's legacy in theory – in their political platform – but also in practice – in what CPI activists do on the ground. As Italy's self-appointed but also generally recognized “philosopher of fascism”, and as the politician responsible for education reforms during the fascist era, Gentile is worth looking at in order to gain a better understanding of CasaPound's politics.

4.2.1. Gentile's ontological claims

Hailing from the neo-Hegelian school of idealism, Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile wrote extensively on pedagogy and religion. In the years after WWI, Gentile became particularly known as someone who offered a “philosophy of action” capable of challenging the status quo, which at that point consisted of parliamentary democracy and liberalism. However, upon the fascist assumption of state power in 1922, this philosophy of action soon came to justify an authoritarian, omnipresent, spiritual state that valorized decisive action over thought (Moss 19). His philosophy was so congruent with fascist politics, and his support for the Fascist Party so enthusiastic, that he came to be known as the “philosopher of fascism” in the early 1920s. Mussolini appointed him as Minister of Public Instruction in the Fascist government from 1923 to 1924. While holding this post, Gentile brought education in line with the project of building a “new fascist man” firmly rooted in Italian nation and culture (Moss 25).

Culturally, Gentile's work is situated in the context of romanticism. Whereas the enlightenment tradition validated individual rights against the powers of the church and state, romanticism reacted by validating the organic unity of the individual and the nation-state. In the romantic framework, philosophies that insisted on the a priori fusion of thought and action, pure reason and rational will, as well as subjectivity and objectivity, ideas and reality, were par for the course (Moss 3). Unlike Marxists, Gentile

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35 Gentile lived from 1875 to 1944. His major works about idealism were the 1916 *La teoria generale dello spirito come atto puro* (*The Theory of Mind as Pure Act*, 1916), and *Sistema di logica come teoria del conoscere* (*System of Logic as a Theory of Knowledge*, 1917). On education, his major work was *Sommario di pedagogia come scienza filosofica* (*Summary of Pedagogy as Philosophical Science*, 1913/1914) were the 1928 *La filosofia del fascismo* (*Philosophical Basis of Fascism*, 1928) and *Origini e dottrina del fascismo* (*The Origins and Doctrine of Fascism*, 1929) (Moss 2002; Garavoso 2001).
and other fascist thinkers appropriated the “Hegelian idealization of the National state, and the Hegelian arguments against any individuality opposed to, or outside of, state organization” (Cohen 295).

In Gentile's case, his political philosophy can be traced back to an ontological conception that collapses the differences between reality and perception. Gentile denies there is an independently existing world: phenomena (the thing we perceive) and noumena (the thing in itself) are synthesized into “the phenomena that form objects of consciousness” (Moss 7). Actual sensation and our concepts about sensation are the same thing, and amount to judgment (Moss 31). There is nothing outside of human consciousness. There is nothing that is not phenomena. “Cognitive objects occur entirely within consciousness. The subject-object distinction lies within consciousness itself and not between consciousness and an object that transcends it” (Moss 28). This is an anti-dualist ontology that structures Gentile's anti-dualist political philosophy.

The assertion that dialectical opposites are immanently synthesized within human consciousness is the foundation of Gentile's best-known contribution to philosophy: “actual idealism”. “According to actual idealism,” explains Moss, “all dialectical opposites, including particular and universal, are organically synthesized and fully merged within present consciousness” (29). Instead of believing that theory and praxis are asymmetrical, Gentile believed that thought and will can, and ideally should, be merged (Moss 15). Instead of believing that reality could exist independently of the thinking subject, Gentile believed that the creative act of the subject is paramount (15). What exists is what we think and, simultaneously, create.

Whereas the Kantian idealist tradition “centers on the conception that reality as we understand it reflects the workings of the mind” (Rescher 412; emphasis added), Gentile's version of idealism centers on the more radical conception that there is no world, no reality, and no ideals without the mind (Moss 29). Hegel's idealism has largely been interpreted as arguing that modern dualisms such as reality and thought, or individual and state, are actually compatible through a dialectical development that leads to the “sublation” of opposites (Pippin 368). Gentile argued that this dialectical development,
which is reality, is only available to the Transcendental Subject – the thinking individual. Of course, this position is open to the criticism that it amounts to “solipsism, the position that holds that the self exists exclusively in a universe of its own making” (Moss 29). Additionally, the same criticisms levelled at the political consequences of Hegel's dialectical process that “sublates” opposites can be applied to the political consequences of Gentile's ontological anti-dualism: “where the great modern opposition between the state and the individual seems subjected to this same logic, and the individual's true individuality is said to reside in and only in the political universal, the State” (Pippin 369).

4.2.2. Gentile's political philosophy: the state and totalitarianism

Gentile's political philosophy is structured by this anti-dualist ontology such that the individual, outside of the state, is roughly equivalent to the status of independently existing reality within Gentile's ontology. The creativity of the state is more important and powerful than individual will, and individual worth can only exist in relation to its worth to the state. Moss explains that Gentile “recognized that an individual does not possess objective value independently of his or her nation-state” (Moss 63). However, this formulation seems illogical: he insists that the individual is of value when they act in accordance with the state, while also insisting that the state is not imposed from above but rather tries to create a synthesis between the individual and the state (Moss 66). In his 1928 *The Philosophic Basis of Fascism*, Gentile states, “In the case of Fascism, State and individual are one and the same things, or rather, they are inseparable terms of a necessary synthesis” (Gentile 1962, 367). Gentile's schematic for how this can play out in real politics is that Italy should remain a monarchy and that the parliamentary system should be replaced by a system of syndicates (or corporations) of employers and workers, directed by the state, of which Il Duce is the leader (Moss 72). The representatives of these syndicates would be appointed by state officials (Moss 73). Of course, this was a description of the corporatist state under Mussolini as it already existed at the time of Gentile's writing, rather than normative exegesis.
Gentile's “proposal” for (or description of) how the state should be organized is not only an example of the instrumentality of Gentile's philosophical work to fascism, but also an example of Gentile's, and fascism's, contradictory “populist elitism”. As Roger Griffin has argued in *The Nature of Fascism*, fascism rhetorically uses an idea of “the people” that appears democratic but that is contradicted by fascism's elitism (Griffin 41). Fascism endorses the purportedly excellent fascist man who is more capable of rule than others. “The people”, the nation, the community, appear at least minimally separate from a state that is assumed to be capable of carrying out the task of representing, or “expressing”, the people. However, the state cannot be a true representative of something that is not separate from it; representation relies on a separation of individual and state. The logical shortcomings of Gentile's political theory are evident in the practice of corporatism. Syndical representatives in Mussolini's corporatist state did not actually represent employers and workers; they were rather appointed by the state. Despite the fact that representation cannot truly occur unless there is a separation between two things, Gentile expresses that the state and the people can be and are, under fascism, synthesized into one organic unity. So Gentile's philosophy seems to actually subsume individuals under the state.

The ostensible perfection of this all-encompassing state seems to negate the need for ethics, principles, or standards. In contrast to classical liberalism, which holds that there are specific principles that ought to guide human action and the actions of states, Gentile says that there is no “intrinsic” right or wrong, justice or injustice; the status of an act is derived from whether or not that act fulfills duty to the state (Moss 60). We cannot know at present if any judgment is anything other than good. Something is good based on the extent to which fascist man, embodied by the state and the leader, wills it (Moss 67). Gentile conceived the state as having almost metaphysical status, and rebellion against it was unjustified: “the state was the supreme ethical entity and the individual ought to merge his or her will with it” (Moss 19).

That theoretical pillar of classical liberalism, freedom – freedom of choice, of thought, of conscience – is, in Gentile's thought, completely dependent on the state: “the authority of the State and the freedom of the citizen constitute a continuous circle wherein authority
presupposes liberty and liberty authority. For freedom can exist only within the State, and the State means authority” (Gentile 368-369). In this double speak, conformity and subordination mean freedom: “The iron law (una legge di ferro) is moral, necessary and represents greatest amount of liberty” (Moss 66). So what then, according to Gentile, is the bottom line of the fascist state – what drives it, if not principles? Moss explains: “Fascism is animated by mass feeling and faith of the Italian people rather than ideas or principles” (Moss 69). Of course, this feeling and faith can be moulded by the state through propaganda and through intervention in all areas of private and public life. The outcome is a tautology: what is good for the state is good for everybody, and what is good for the state is what it says is good for the state. The fascist state, moreover, is always in the process of becoming. This justifies constant change, activism, and crisis, created on the state's own terms; what follows is resistance to the legitimacy of any rational assessment of the state's actions through the application of a set of external standards or principles (Moss 63). Predictably, a criticism of Gentile's work is that it “presupposes the non-existence of eternal truths or values” (Moss 16). Congruently, the main criticism of fascist philosophy in general is that the “only guiding principle is expediency” and there are no set values or principles to which the fascist state commits itself (Moss 62). Furthermore, Moss maintains that Gentile's political theory “was directly influenced by the societal and political needs of Mussolini's fascism” (57), and given this, it is difficult to appreciate the merits of Gentile's thought without conceding legitimacy to real fascism.

Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's discussion of fascism and aesthetics offers further observations about Gentile's contribution to the philosophical underpinnings of fascism's obsession with the body, action, change, and resistance to principles. In her discussion of Italian philosopher Augusto del Noce's assessment of Mussolini, Falasca-Zamponi indicates that Mussolini retained the primacy of revolution in Marxist thought, while jettisoning both Marx's historical materialism and, therefore, the centrality of class in revolution. Thus, Mussolini turned revolution into an “irrational act”, glorified for the sake of “movement and becoming” without any final goal (Falasca-Zamponi 358). This idea of revolution for the sake of revolution, created by the state on its own terms, has
moral implications for how we treat others, and for how the state treats individuals. Falasca-Zamponi paraphrases: “If I have no moral duties towards others, then they are reduced to objects for me. Activism gives way to 'lived solipsism' for which 'I' am the only subject in a world of things” (358). We can see this prioritization of activism over thought in Gentile's *Origins and Doctrine of Fascism*: “no thought has value which is not already expressed in action” (Gentile 1962, 365). Fascism... “is eminently anti-intellectual, eminently Mazzinian, that is, if by intellectualism we mean the divorce of thought from action, of knowledge from life, of brain from heart, of theory from practice” (Gentile 1962, 365). If Gentile were arguing that theory must connect to practice or vice versa, this could be a fairly non-controversial if not attractive idea to contemporary liberals, and not much unlike the Marxist-influenced ideas of educator Paolo Freire. However, this is not his argument. His statements about theory and practice, when understood in the context of his anti-dualistic ontology and his broader political philosophy, should be taken to mean that theory and thinking should be subsumed under action. He resolves the tense opposition between state and individual, object and subject in the same way: he subsumes one under the other.

Falasca-Zamponi takes up this aspect of Giovanni Gentile's philosophy to further explore the implications of Mussolini's modification of Marx's politics of activism (Falasca-Zamponi 358). Reality is the product of “the thought's act of self-consciousness”, which is a spiritual activity of the will: “For Gentile, thinking was tantamount to acting and constituted the fulfillment of the spirit” (Falasca-Zamponi 358). Again, the moral implication of this is that “other thinking subjects are only abstractions of my thinking act and become objects as I think them. In this process of thinking them, they transcend the act through which I think them and end up being only things for me” (Falasca-Zamponi 359). She summarizes Gentile's approach to action as one in which everything is created through the activity of thinking and is always in motion. The thoughts of others do not matter; what matters are one's own thoughts and only if and when they are expressed in action. This solipsism is evidently anti-democratic, and antipathetic to the sea of difference and otherness that usually confronts the political subject in liberal political philosophy. The autonomy and worth of the individual – especially the non-fascist
individual who stands, by choice or by assignment, outside of the state – seem to be at stake in Gentile's “actual idealism”.

What better way to subsume the individual under the state than by involving the state in every aspect of the individual's life? This is the essence of totalitarianism. Although the study of fascism through the lens of totalitarianism has been largely rejected across the disciplines in recent decades, it is important to acknowledge the open enthusiasm with which Gentile described fascism as intentionally totalitarian. In his later work on the philosophy of fascism, Gentile wrote, “In the definition of Fascism, the first point to grasp is the comprehensive, or as Fascists say, the 'totalitarian' scope of its doctrine, which concerns itself not only with political organization and political tendency, but with the whole will and thought and feeling of the nation” (Gentile 1962, 365).

In Gentile's writing there emerges an important connotation of “totalitarian” as meaning something that extends beyond politics, as meaning “metapolitics”, and this echoes throughout CasaPound's self-descriptions today. Gentile wrote that “fascism is not a political system” even though it is centered around politics and even though it tries to solve 'political problems' through 'political method' (Gentile 1962, 366). He continues: “But in confronting and solving political problems it is carried by its very nature, that is to say by its method, to consider moral, religious, and philosophical questions and to unfold and demonstrate the comprehensive totalitarian character peculiar to it” (Gentile 1962, 366). While Gentile openly calls the basis of fascism totalitarian, his meaning is slightly different from that of the word totalitarian as it is used by political scientists to describe a regime in that it is relates more to conceptual scope than to governmental practice.

Hannah Arendt's classic study of totalitarianism examined Stalin's U.S.S.R. and Hitler's Germany and concluded that totalitarianism is a type of movement or regime whose final aim is to destroy the individual. The root ideology of totalitarianism is that human life, and the human welfare measures that parties and governments usually undertake to support it, has no worth (Arendt 45). As a means to this end, totalitarianism destroys classes and their associated political parties, and recasts what is normally considered
“politics” as the life of the nation. Individuals lose the sense of what is private and public, what is personal and what is political, and in the process of shedding the recognition of these boundaries that are, to Arendt, foundational to political life, individuals as masses become depoliticized. This does not, however, mean that they are passive: they become mobilized by the “strong fiction” provided by the movement or regime (Arendt 61). Under a totalitarian regime, there is no aspect of life left untransformed. The state has become substituted with the people, such that the head of state is in fact now the head of the people. As a regime, totalitarianism uses an entire state apparatus, including new secret police, systematic lying and secrecy, terror, and the violent methods of the mob, to enforce a uniform ideology. She specifies that Mussolini's regime was not in fact totalitarian because of the “small numbers” and "mild sentences" of political opponents, and because Italy's population was not large enough for the dictatorship to annihilate a significant enough number of civilians in order to achieve its goals (Arendt 7). Instead, she labels Mussolini's Italy as a "nontotalitarian dictatorship" (Arendt 9).

Writing several decades later, contemporary Italian historian Emilio Gentile36 (2004), like those before him, retains the sense that totalitarianism aims to destroy the individual, but in contrast to Arendt, describes totalitarianism as a continuous experiment that is often incomplete and imperfect (Gentile E. 328). Regimes can be totalitarian, but totalitarianism is not limited to regimes: it is rather an ongoing political project that can take the form of a trend, movement, or government. Gentile's definition is applicable to the case of CasaPound insofar as it recognizes the philosophical basis of totalitarianism and does not require that a project be successful in carrying out this theory in action, as would occur in the case of a government moving against its own population, to be labeled as totalitarian. The philosophical basis of totalitarianism, Gentile argues, is the bounding up of every dimension of the individual's life with the imagined national community as expressed through the “ethical state”:

36 Not to be confused with Giovanni Gentile.
In the totalitarian State, civil life was a continuous spectacle, where the fascist new man was swept away in the flow of orderly collective existence, in the re-enactment of rites, in displaying and worshiping symbols, in the constant appeal to collective solidarity to the point of mystic fusion, at least in peak moments, of psychological and emotional ecstasy, *of one’s own individuality with the unity of the nation and the race* through the magical meditation of the Leader. (Gentile, E. 339, emphasis added)

Totalitarian regimes and movements, symbol, ritual, and mobilization of the imagined “spirit” worked to subsume the individual mind and body into the collective. The philosophy that supports Italian fascism along these lines was that of the likes of Giovanni Gentile, which held that the worth of individual life is only found in its complete subordination, if not disappearance, into the collective as embodied by the fascist State. In this way, Gentilean philosophy is a totalitarian philosophy *par excellence*. That CPI counts this philosophy as an essential part of its tradition and intellectual repertoire associates CPI with the philosophy of totalitarianism. And of course, this totalitarian project drove the real regimes of both Hitler and Mussolini: “...each [Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy] came to offer a totalitarian vision of a new society in which a fusion between the private and the collective or the individual and the mass would take place.... At least in theory, each individual in all aspects of life would be integrated into the state” (De Grand 118). Historical research into everyday life before, during, and after Italian fascist rule shows that the fascists did not effectively or completely carry out this totalitarian vision (Bosworth 2005), but CasaPound is keeping this vision alive.

At a very basic level, Gentile's idea that the self has no value without the state, and that thought has no value without action, opposes the premises of liberalism that individuals have a right to freedom of conscience, choice, and agency. This means that CPI's gestures to ideas central to liberalism – such as citizenship, rights, and dignity- are shallow. In addition to the fundamental problem Gentile's basic philosophy poses to an assessment of CPI's ideological coherence, Gentile's philosophy of education and associated features of the Italian education system shed further light on the totalitarian and anti-egalitarian character of CPI's core philosophy.
5. Chapter 5

CasaPound and Education

In 2006, CasaPound Italia members founded the organization's student wing, Blocco Studentesco (BS) (Bartlett, Birdwell, Froio 26), which has since grown to include forty-two chapters across Italy (Gattinara and Froio 7). From observing BS's online rhetoric and aesthetic style on its webpage (“Blocco Studentesco”) the only immediately discernible differences between CPI (“CasaPound Italia”) and BS is that BS focuses very specifically on advocating for education reform.

CasaPound's position on education resembles both Gentilean philosophy and actual features of the fascist education system in some respects, but differs in many others. Gentilean philosophy of education, and education under Mussolini, embodied a totalitarian and authoritarian approach to the student-teacher relationship, and promoted an anti-egalitarian and elitist educational system. This heritage contradicts CPI's proposals to increase students' democratic rights within the education system and to improve access of lower-income students to higher education. Before looking at what CPI and its youth organization BS say and do about education and comparing it to its philosophical and historical antecedents, an overview of Gentile's philosophy of education and of his impact on fascist education is in order.

5.1. Gentile and education

Throughout Gentile's career, education was a central topic in his philosophy. In fact, he even considered pedagogy and philosophy as one and the same thing (Moss 25). His early writings gesture towards the fascist approach to education that was to become reality in the 1920s and 1930s. In his 1898 work The Instruction of Philosophy in High Schools, he defended the classical licea and argued that access to it should be “restricted”. This “implied a devaluation of technical schools that focused solely on professional goals” and amounted to a defence of an elitist, “aristocratic vision of education” (Moss 25). One of the intended consequences of his envisioned reforms would be that an “elite ruling class” would emerge (Moss 25).
His 1913/1914 work *Summary of Pedagogy as Philosophical Science (“Sommario”)* laid out important ontological conceptions that undergird the fascist conception of the teacher-student relationship and of the role of physical education. As discussed above, Gentile's “actual idealism” rejected ontological dualisms, such as that between subject and object. Because Gentile did not challenge the status quo of authority residing in the subject of the teacher, his general anti-dualistic idealism translated into a sublimation of student will into teacher will and an assumption that the teacher's will was the true reflection of that of the student. Just as Gentile understood true freedom as residing within the constraints of the state, so too student freedom resided within the constraints of teacher authority (Moss 32). Ultimately, this prefigured the relationship between citizen and state: “The relationship between student and teacher prepared the citizen for an understanding of his or her civic obligations, along with the duties of the legislators” (Moss 32). Gentile's political and educational philosophies were therefore authoritarian:

In the Gentilean fascist state, the relationship between those who govern and the governed is analogous to the dialectic between teacher and student in the schools, colleges, and universities, as Gentile envisioned them... The duty of the student is to merge his or her will with the volition of the teacher, not vice versa. (Moss 73)

An important element of Gentile's philosophy of education, outlined in the 1913/1914 *Sommario* is physical education, not as a means to an end such as overall health and well-being, but as a spiritual end in itself. Gentile's conception of the body reflects his idealist philosophy and is consistent with the focus on the body in fascist education and aesthetics that developed in the decades following the publication of this text. Explains Moss, “... the body is not a simple instrument of our spiritual activity; it is the entire human subject in the process of its continuous formation” (32). Gentile thought that the will can control the body as well as external objects through an absorbing, assimilating process he called “spiritualization”. Here we are reminded of Gentile's basic ontological premises that thought and action, subject and object, are not in fact separate. Similarly, body and mind are not separate. For instance, sensation – the human body's physical reception of external information – is, in Gentile's view, a *spiritual* act (31). Gentile asserted that in the process of “spiritualization”, Moss explains, “The self appropriates and assimilates a
material object” (30). As examined above in regards to the relationship between Gentile's ontological claims and his political philosophy, this conception threatens to actually negate the autonomy of the object, whether this be the outside world, others, political agents beyond oneself, or students. The self is central: every thing other than the self becomes subordinate to the self's process of “spiritualization”.

In 1921, Gentile published “The Reform of Education”, a collection of lectures whose audience was licei secondary school teachers in Italian-occupied Trieste (Moss 34). A year later, Gentile's contributions to the philosophy of education earned him the post of Minister of Public Instruction under Mussolini. He held this post until 1924 and during that time reorganized Italian schooling along the lines of “The Reform of Education” as well as his previous work. On October 14, 1923 Gentile's far-reaching reforms became law. Overall, the reforms reduced the quality and quantity of curricula outside of the humanities, standardized student assessment, and restricted access-- especially girls' access-- to university. In a move that reflected his commitment to classical education, Gentile introduced Latin to all secondary school grade levels. He integrated math and physics curriculum, and reduced the overall number of hours devoted to both (Giacardi 609). A secondary school program for girls was established, the content of which was “second-rate... it offered a diploma of no value as a professional qualification, no possibility of entering university and absolutely no teaching of the sciences” (Giacardi 609).

Specifically, Gentile reorganized the school system into streams that were deeply unequal in social value and prestige. Beginning at age ten, families of students would choose between five streams. The child could attend a school specializing in “handicrafts” which would not qualify them for post-secondary education. They could attend the Classical Lyceum, rich with classical and humanistic studies, traditionally attended for future members of the fascist ruling class (Grimaldi and Serpieri 155). The Scientific Lyceum “was considered less prestigious given the widespread idealist assumption about the inferior status of scientific knowledge” (Grimaldi and Serpieri 155). Both of these pathways led to universities. Blocked from accessing university, however, were the students in the secondary school specializing in aforementioned handicrafts as well as the
Technical Schools specializing in “applied scientific knowledge” (Grimaldi and Serpieri 155). Students planning to become teachers would enter into the Scuola Magistrale, which would qualify them to teach in the primary and lower secondary schools upon graduation, with no opportunity to attend university (Grimaldi and Serpieri 155).

Students now had to write standardized exams at the end of every school year, and the exams students had to write to graduate from secondary school became tied to a student's ability to enter university (Giacardi 609). The secondary school teachers' union lobbied against the reforms: for one, teachers understood standardized testing as paving the way for tying test results to teacher evaluations (Moss 34). The emphasis on training in philosophy and history was at once elitist in its aim – to train the future political leaders of the fascist party and a new fascist society – as well as tied to the nationalist project. In a liceo-ginnasio curriculum document from November 1923, the purpose of education is described as one that transmits “moral”, “spiritual”, and anti-technocratic values to the next generation:

The liceo-ginnasio must be an institution transmitting a humanistic-historical culture; it must educate students for the highest offices in society, for the professions, for political careers. It must give an education that begins at the roots of life, forming the man himself, as a moral being, who has a precise place in history, and therefore knows how arduous has been the progress of humanity from the primitive life of the cave dweller to the present state of civilization. Civilization does not mean the technical perfections so vaunted in our modern life, to the point of becoming the end and not a means; rather, it consists of the profound communion between souls, of a profound sense of human liberty and responsibility, the profound consciousness of one’s own personality.” (Ministry of Public Instruction, qtd. in Giacardi 610)

It should be noted that “liberty and responsibility” here, understood within the context of the fascist conception of the state and individual, means individual liberty within the constraints of the state, and the responsibility to uphold the state and nation.

So the basis of Gentile's educational philosophy was an anti-dualistic idealism that gives credence to totalitarian-inflected practices and interpretations of education – specifically, the pedagogical practice of the teacher “absorbing”, assuming, and thereby negating student will or agency, and the interpretation of physical education as a spiritual activity.
According to Gentile, the purpose of education is to develop an elite ruling class; and he sought to do just this when, as Minister of Instruction, he narrowed access to higher education, excluded girls from post-secondary pathways, and degraded the few educational opportunities that were still open to them. He rendered education more nationalist, spiritual, and philosophical. It appears that his goal was to create a ruling class of highly educated leaders with a philosophical, humanistic foundation in fascism and nationalism. Mussolini ensured that this project continued well after Gentile left his post, in hopes of creating the new fascist man capable of extending fascist rule for generations to come.

5.2. Education under Mussolini

Mussolini used “a typically democratic idea” about how the state “could create a new kind of citizen through education” (De Felice 67). De Felice credits this interest in state education for citizenship to Mussolini's left-wing roots (De Felice 67). Mussolini's idea was to create new citizens first, and only then could new institutions become effective and shorn of the conservative culture of the older generation. He saw the fascist revolution as actually unfolding in the future “when Italy would be populated by fascist citizens psychologically and morally different from the existing Italians” (De Felice 68). The goal of education was to replace a traditional conservative ruling class with a new fascist ruling class (De Grand 85).

According to De Felice, fascist education was a form of positive coercion – a granting of freedom to learn, debate, and explore, but within the normative confines of fascism. While Mussolini granted more liberties to youth publications and to other fora for youth debate, he stuck to the idea that “They would all be formed according to a preconceived idea, without allowing them the possibility of developing freely, even in the context of fascist logic” (De Felice 69). Here we see a resemblance with Gentile's philosophy of freedom and the individual existing only through the state. However, Mussolini started to forbid free debate amongst youth once the war on East Africa began in 1935 (De Felice 70). The decision to go to war was unpopular, even amongst fascists, and the stakes involved in free debate and potential dissent were raised.
Tied into the project of creating a fascist citizenry, fascist education reform attempted to limit access to higher education to an elite layer of men who would become the future leaders of the fascist party. The Fascist party and Mussolini used a two-pronged approach in their attempt to use education for the creation of the new fascist man: institutional education reform, and political education. In addition to the Gentilean school reforms of 1923, further reforms were passed in 1931, and 1939. The August 1931 reforms required that professors and teachers swear an oath of loyalty to the Fascist state; although this effectively rid the primary and secondary schools of anti-fascists, there was also resistance. Notably, a group of eleven university professors, prominent anti-fascist intellectuals, refused to swear the oath of loyalty (De Grand 85).

Even as the Fascist party preached an end to class conflict, it sought to preserve the source of that conflict: class hierarchy, along with hierarchies of race and gender (De Grand). The education reforms of 1923, 1931, and 1939 were tools to reify a social hierarchy based on nationality, gender, class, and fascist affiliation. In terms of nationality, the reforms required that Italian become the language of instruction in public schools and Italy's colonies and in the annexed Slovene region of Trieste. In terms of gender, women under Mussolini’s educational policies were banned from state exams, the teaching of particular subjects, and the professions (De Grand 75, 79). Changes were made in the 1939 reforms to encourage women to enter specifically into departments of home economics and modern languages, but this, again, was not entirely successful (De Grand 79). And in terms of class, the overall aim of the reforms were to “redirect” the majority of youth into technical training instead of academic studies, while providing elite, nationalist, classical education for university students and for party members. The reforms restricted social mobility for people who were not citizens, male, or Fascist Party members (De Grand 78). Education reform under Mussolini, during Gentile's ministry and beyond, reflected fascism's hard anti-egalitarian core.

Although public education became more stratified under Mussolini, he made sure to provide political education for youth of all classes and predispositions through mass youth organizations. The goal of these organizations was to indoctrinate youth with “basic myths” about race, war, violence, and the Duce, and to “counteract” the
socialization of the competing bourgeois hierarchies of church and family (De Grand 82). The fascist party developed a complex and ever-changing structure of mass youth organizations, organized by age and gender. The activities of these organizations were primarily physical and paramilitary in nature, and light on intellectual training and development (De Grand 82-83). They vaunted “excellence” through organized competitions in sports and academic subjects. The groups available to youths under the age of eighteen were led by elementary and secondary teachers who had also become Party members. Thus, both at school and in after-school activities, youth were under the tutelage of a layer of fascist educators formed through the purges of non-fascists and anti-fascists in the education system.

In February 1939 the Fascist School Charter brought about more changes to the education system (De Grand 79). In addition to the aforementioned attempted changes to women's education, the charter introduced a labour requirement for all students, in a “rhetorical bow to the idea of an egalitarian national or racial community. The idea that students be made to do physical labour formed part of the campaign against the individualistic bourgeois lifestyle that so dominated fascist propaganda in the 1930s” (De Grand 85).

This is an example of the contradictory and opportunistic character of fascism: it preached equality, despite actual inequality. Examples of deepened inequality under fascism can be found in the fact that actual educational practice attempted, in classic anti-egalitarian fashion, to stream students into either technical or elite academic pathways. The evisceration of labour rights and labour organizations outside of the fascist corporative structure kept economic inequality in place. The fascist state glorified women's reproductive roles by giving awards to mothers with large families, but excluded them from non-reproductive areas of life.

Under Mussolini, the state provided education to create a particular type of citizen that could populate and sustain new fascist state institutions into the future. Some freedoms were allowed in youth culture and education, as long as they were within the parameters of fascism. Political uniformity was ensured through purges and mass educational organizations, and social inequality along nationality, gender, and class lines became
more rigid as intellectual fascist men were siphoned off to universities and everyone else was expected to make do with technical training.

The idealist framework emphasized the difference between the humanities and science, and placed more value placed on the former. It organized the school system so that the elite had access to the best educational opportunities, while the majority of students were streamed into underdeveloped technical programs of study. Grimaldi and Serpieri comment that the predominantly social democratic post-war Italian constitution (in the writing of which fascists had no part) emphasizes equity and social justice, and as such, the post-war educational framework in Italy became influenced by these values (Grimaldi and Serpieri 152). Compared to fascist Italian education, post-fascist Italian education has attempted to balance the humanities and sciences, as well as the moral and social justice-oriented purposes of education with the marketized purposes of education (i.e. providing the economy with job-ready workers) (Grimaldi and Serpieri 153). Similar to developments in conceptions of health care, labour rights, and housing, by the 1960s civil society generally had come to see education as a universal right and schools as a public good to which all children should have access.

Gentilean idealism, however, kept a firm hold on educational policy and pedagogy up into the 1960s, no doubt helped by the lack of purges of fascists from the civil service – the same civil servants who had made the education system work in the fascist period kept their jobs in the post-fascist period (Grimaldi and Serpieri 151). Pedagogy was influenced by Gentilean idealism up into 1960s (Grimaldi and Serpieri 152) and Gentile's organization of schooling into streams starting at age ten lasted until 1962 (Grimaldi and Serpieri 154). The persistent elitist reality of the education system was temporarily challenged in the late 1960s and 1970s, but has since re-emerged in neoliberal educational discourse.

Significantly, the totalitarian, elitist, and anti-egalitarian character of the fascist education system is not echoed in CPI's platform. Rather, for the most part, CPI's platform mounts liberal demands shared by leftist student movements. In fact, the idealist framework for education put in place by Gentile has dovetailed, albeit awkwardly, with the recent
neoliberal experiments in education to which CPI is opposed. What follows is an exploration of how CasaPound has taken up populist opposition to neoliberal changes in Italian education, even as some of those changes are ideologically reminiscent of education under Mussolini and Gentile.

5.3. History of neoliberalism in Italian education

After the fall of Mussolini and the birth of the new Italian Republic, Italy's education system bore vestigial features of the fascist education for years to come even as the nature and purpose of education was subjected to social critique from a universalist perspective. In the post-war period, the character of services such as education and health were contested: were they private or public goods? Was education a privilege to be accessed through merit, or a fundamental right, needed in order to exercise other rights, and in order to participate as a citizen (Grimaldi and Serpieri 150)? In the 1960s and 70s in Italy, the latter universalist view prevailed, bringing about drastic reforms in both education and healthcare (Ginsborg 2001, 226). Illiteracy decreased and social mobility increased (Grimaldi and Serpieri 161). The middle class especially became more educated and more critical, and its youth participated in the hot autumn worker and student uprisings (Ginsborg 2003, 310).

One of the impacts of increased access to education and social unrest was the short-lived democratization and decentralization of schools. In 1974, the issuing of the *Decreti Delegati* met teacher and student demands for increased professional development, curriculum reform, and new experiments in pedagogy (Grimaldi and Serpieri 159). However, the impact of these changes was short-lived. Like other public service sectors, the overall Italian education system continued to be highly centralized, bureaucratic, and inflexible despite the weighty promise of change. Therefore, despite the decades of attempts of reform, educational inequality persisted in the 1980s. Educational funding for working-class families, technical and vocational education, professional development, and nursery schools stagnated at inadequate levels (Grimaldi and Serpieri 162). Specifically, the inequality took on the forms of class and geographical disparity between the more affluent and left-leaning North and the historically neglected South, even as
gains had been made to increase women's and girls' equality in education (Ginsborg 2001, 232).

Education in Italy underwent major neoliberal restructuring in the 1990s (Grimaldi and Serpieri 165), a response to a decade's worth of pressure from the OECD and burgeoning European Community to bring education in line with economic imperatives (Grimaldi and Serpieri 160). In Europe, neoliberalism in education has specifically taken the form of "a neoliberal agenda of individual flexibilized learning for labor-market needs" (Levidow 246). In this model, the empowerment of “vendors” and “business partners” to intervene in the educational sector is represented as “greater freedom” for students (Levidow 248). At the same time, the Italian public sector underwent massive privatization and reductions (Ginsborg 2001, 223). Privatization plans were “unrealistic because they believed in a radical slimming-down of the state at a time when the state, as we have seen, was more complex and permeative than ever” (Ginsborg 2001, 224).

In the 1990s the main changes to Italian secondary schools came in the form of pilot projects and curriculum innovation in response to the neoliberal expectation that educational content match labour market needs (Grimaldi and Serpieri 164). A new focus on student achievement and graduation rates emerged; the solution to student under-achievement and drop out (often appearing along lines of class and geography) were standardized benchmarks for evaluation (Grimaldi and Serpieri 165). Primary schools and universities underwent reform as well. All three levels of education became decentralized in governance but also lost much central funding, which was expected to be substituted with private-public partnerships (Grimaldi and Serpieri 163). Regions and local governments gained control of the education process while the central government's Ministry of Education still outlined "general principles", set curriculum, and "threshold performance levels" (Grimaldi and Serpieri 166). The key words to describe these changes were "autonomy and devolution" (Grimaldi and Serpieri 167). In elementary and secondary schools, head teachers (the equivalent of principals) were now expected to be entrepreneurs responsible for maintaining potentially lucrative relationships with business and community leaders (Grimaldi and Serpieri 169). To this day, the head teacher must “sell” the school, on the basis of its unique programs and features, to
prospective teachers and students (Grimaldi and Serpieri 169). The competitive responsibility of the head teacher includes getting funding for otherwise unfunded extracurricular activities, which in turn attracts parents (Grimaldi and Serpieri 170). Grimaldi and Serpieri note that even though the education reforms of the 1990s were neoliberal in character, they were nonetheless designed in a way to soften "the inequalities that could come out of market regulation" (165). This was a particular blend of the Italian welfarist model and the new neoliberal model.

It is important to note that the key decade during which the far right in Italy was reorganizing itself, on the one hand to become more mainstream via the Alleanza Nazionale, while, on the other hand, its more extreme factions became more fragmented and diffuse, neoliberalism in Italian education was gaining momentum. Youth living through the 1990s, including the youth who gathered around ZetaZeroAlfa, MSI-FT, and eventually CasaPound, had experienced a strong welfare state that had fully funded education, even if that welfare state was roundly criticized as corrupt and badly administered. The founders and initial members of CasaPound Italia had experienced the transition to an underfunded, competitive, market-based model of education. When in 2006, CasaPound Italia members founded the organization's student wing, Blocco Studentesco, the adolescent and university-age members of this organization would have had educational experiences mostly informed by the new neoliberal reality of the 2000s.

Since 2001, Italy's education system has gone through more cuts to education funding, increased competition for funding, and the successful introduction of standardized tests (Grimaldi and Serpieri 171). Despite this, its neoliberalism is not running at full hilt; Grimaldi and Serpieri describe Italy's education reforms as located “between managerialism, decentralisation and a tentative neoliberalism” (Grimaldi and Serpieri 148). Neoliberal trends in education within the European Community have added pressure to Italy's system: Italy is participating in the European Higher Education Area,
or “the Bologna Process”\textsuperscript{37}, which seeks to standardize university accreditation across Europe. It has been criticized for reforming “academic curricula towards a more specialized, technocratic training regime” (Delclós). Across Europe, starting in the early 2000s and continuing today, domestic cuts to education within this technocratic and competitive context have prompted students and faculty alike to engage in a range of protests, from university administration office occupations to street demonstrations, against the “neoliberal university”.

In 2008, Italian Prime Minister and business magnate Silvio Berlusconi had returned to government after criminal court proceedings, and the world was going through the shocks of the financial crisis sparked by the subprime mortgage crisis in the United States. In August, the Minister of Education Maria Stella Gelmini publicly stated:

'Authority, hierarchy, teaching, studying, hard work and merit. These are the key words of the school we want to create, dismantling that ideological construction made of empty pedagogyism that has infected like a virus the Italian school since 1968 […]. What we want is a school that teaches our pupils how to read, write and ‘do sums’ (Gelmini, 2008, qtd in Grimaldi and Serpieri 172).'

This was Gelmini's preface to a series of reforms that eventually turned Italy into one of the lowest spenders on education in Europe. Resistance was swift, widespread, and organized (Grimaldi and Serpieri 173). Starting in autumn 2008, high school and university students, often in coordination with teacher unions, mobilized against Gelmini's reforms. The mobilizations expressed “fear and criticism toward … processes of privatization and commercialization of culture and knowledge" and toward the "subordination of the educational system and research to business and to specific economic interests, resulting in an attack on the right to education" (Mosca 268).

Although Gelmini's praise of “authority, hierarchy, teaching, studying, hard work and merit” harkens back to a time when the Italian school system was still organized along the fascist Gentile's lines, and although the anti-neoliberal activity of students and

\textsuperscript{37} For an overview of educational reforms in Italy that have been implemented as part of the Bologna Process, see Ballarino and Perotti. For a social movement perspective on the process and resistance to it, see Delclós.
teachers harkens back to the Hot Autumn of 1968, of which fascists like Almirante and Rauti were enemies, CasaPound Italia and Blocco Studentesco, nonetheless agitate against neoliberal education. In October 2008, CPI participated in a massive demonstration against neoliberal cuts to education in Rome's Piazza Navona. One of the very few reported public displays of violence by CPI members occurred here, when they beat anti-fascists with belts (in the style of cinghiamattanza, which they have claimed is a consensual playful ritual amongst peers), and with batons wrapped in the Italian tricolour (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori).

Media produced by the extraparliamentary left in Italy associates CasaPound Italia with the police, and the case of the Piazza Navona protest is key to this argument. It accuses the state, when governed by the right, of tolerating-- if not outright collaborating with-- CasaPound and Blocco Studentesco. One document claims that police did not intervene when CPI members beat anti-fascists in Piazza Navona (CAU-N 26). Another source implies that when the police did intervene, it was only to make it look like the police were being impartial (Roma-- Nazifascisti Di Casapound). This video uses the actions of an apparent member of CPI at the Piazza Navona protest to support this claim. The video identifies a CasaPound protester with a red circle and traces his movements during the protest. At first he is shown standing at the front of a group of CPI protesters holding batons wrapped in the Italian tricolour. Other videos show that this was a moment before the group charged at a group of anti-fascists and engaged in fighting. He then appears behind the group, which is now seated (apparently being detained by police) and yelling at media that they did not provoke the violence, speaking with a police officer. Next he appears in the entrance to a police vehicle. This has been interpreted by leftist observers in Italy as evidence that CPI and BS are in collusion with the police, and that their “arrest” was staged. Another video (“29 Ottobre 2008”) shows similar footage, plus the efforts of two local politicians – one, a local spokesman for Forza Nuova (New Force, NF) and the other, a politician with the party La Destra – to intervene in the detention of

38 For CasaPound's version of events, see CasaPound Italia's video "29-10-08 Piazza Navona - (parte 1) Comunisti All'assalto Di Un Sogno Generazionale Parte 1."
the BS members. The video draws the conclusion that even though these parties claim to not support each other, they are in fact in collusion when it is convenient for them.

Despite student and teacher resistance in 2008 and 2009, the Gelmini reforms were passed, and the impact was significant. Between 2009 and 2012, the Italian government has reduced education funding by 8 billion Euro. A 2012 OECD report revealed that, in 2010, Italy is ranked second from the bottom of OECD countries in terms of expenditure per student (Schleicher 3). While Italy's spending on education had increased in the 2000s, the increase was far below the OECD average increase of education spending, and public sources of funding were dwindling while private sources of funding were increasing (Schleicher 5). Many Italian youth continue to not benefit from education: the report indicates that 23% of Italians aged fifteen to twenty three are neither in education nor employed (NEET), making Italy's percentage of NEETs the fifth highest among OECD countries (Scheicher 3).

At the post-secondary level, reform has continued to the present. Research funding has become more competitive and tied to performance (Education International). Smaller institutions have been forced to merge, leading to overcrowding, and some, forced to close. Reforms have allowed for more representation of businesses on university boards. Massive numbers of teachers, staff and researchers have been laid off, and for those who remain, salaries have been frozen (ETUCE).

In July 2010, the Italian government, still ruled by Berlusconi's coalition, voted in favour of an austerity package. Workers' and students' protests continued. CPI and BS continued to agitate against austerity and its effects on education. When Berlusconi quit in November 2011, he was replaced by Mario Monti, who convened a government of technocrats with more administration and industry experience than political experience. The government voted again in favour of another austerity package only two months later. Perhaps the largest anti-austerity protest from the Monti period occurred in October 2012, when thousands of students coordinated with teachers unions to protest in ninety cities across the country. Student union representative Roberto Campanelli told the press: “We are demonstrating to state our total opposition to the draft law 953 which would
scrap students' representatives in school boards and would enable private companies to enter our schools as is happening after the approval in 2010 of the Gelmini law” (“Italy: School, Students”). Also cited were tuition hikes for students not completing degrees within the regular time period, and cutting back scholarships. The parallels between mainstream student demands and those of BS are clear: access of lower-income and working class students to universities, privatization at all levels of schooling, and student representation on school boards were all key issues that remain to this day salient features of CPI's and Blocco Studentesco's platforms on education.

What has changed, however, since the 2008 Piazza Navona protests was CPI's tactical assessment of whether or not to participate in mainstream protests. On November 24, 2012, thousands of students protested Monti's austerity. Perhaps having learned that the conflict with anti-fascists at mainstream demonstrations was not worth it, CPI and Blocco Studentesco held their own anti-austerity rally in Rome, apart from the larger left-wing demonstration.

Berlusconi's downfall, due to a range of criminal charges, spelled instability for the Italian government. In quick succession, Berlusconi's party withdrew support for Monti's technocratic government, Enrico Letta assumed role of Prime Minister, and in February 2014, Blairite mayor of Florence Matteo Renzi became Prime Minister and formed a left-right coalition. Since then, Renzi's economic reforms have drawn ire from students and workers. Renzi's incarnation of neoliberal education reforms is a package called La Buona Scuola (“Good School”), which promises significant improvements to the quality of schooling in Italy, but without the financial resources needed to carry them out (Salerno, qtd in Education in Crisis).

Also relevant to students and youth is Renzi's controversial Jobs Act. This Act would modify the applicability of Article 18 of the Italian Constitution – the article that enshrines the Italian citizen's right to work, and has ensured job security for Italy's unionized employees— such that it would only apply to current employees but not to new hires. In effect, the Jobs Act would, through constitutional change rather than through collective bargaining, usher in a two-tiered hierarchy of workers – one tier with job
security and the other with vulnerability to being laid off according to economic imperatives. CasaPound Italia, in its platform adopted in 2011, organizes the platform section about jobs around Article 18. Their commitment of Article 18 is a good example of how idiosyncratic CPI is when compared to the more mainstream right as well as to other fascist parties. The Italian mainstream right sees Article 18 as an obstacle to economic prosperity, and other fascist parties see Article 18 as part of a constitution they refused to participate in writing, and as part of a democratic Republic whose existence they loathe. In keeping with its trajectory of convening separate actions on similar issues, CPI and BS have held anti-Renzi protests, with both *La Buona Scuola* and the Jobs Act as its targets. Within parliament, however, parties from the right support both sets of reforms and are opposed to modifying them at the behest of unions and leftist parties.

While CasaPound Italia did not publicly mobilize its members to participate in the November 16, 2014 or March 12, 2015 protests nationwide against Renzi’s *La Buona Scuola*, its Milan chapter held its own protest against Renzi on March 2. The chapter reports that more than two hundred students blocked the entrance to a high school. Spokespersons emphasized opposition to the Jobs Act on the basis that it would not effectively stop youth unemployment. They also emphasized the defence of the public and state-funded nature of Italy's schools (Blocco Studentesco Milano). CPI and BS have held similarly small rallies protesting the crumbling infrastructure of schools (“Basta Scuole Fatiscenti”).

Public demonstrations are only one part of CasaPound Italia and Blocco Studentesco’s education activism. Implying a strange affinity with – or mimicry of-- Italy's anarchist, socialist, and autonomist Occupied Social Centres which provide housing, recreation, and volunteer-led social services, local CPI and Blocco Studentesco chapters organize school supply drives and used book sales at the beginning of the school year for lower-income families (“Scuola, a Latina Torna”; CasaPound Italia “Distribuzione Gratuita…” 29 Aug. 2014). They tie these activities – combinations of dual-power welfare provision, charity, and direct action – to the demands to increase or guarantee income, to curb cost of living (especially rent), and to put textbook publishing monopolies out of business.
5.4. CasaPound and Blocco Studentesco platforms on education

Although the present study does not make claims about how CPI and BS compare to other anti-austerity youth and student organizations in Italy, CPI and BS’s platforms on education shed light onto their peculiar contemporary fascist conception of what would constitute good education, and current obstacles to achieving it. The platform frames education as a public good, provided by the state, to which “all citizens” should have access, not as “‘users’ of a service” but as “protagonists in the act of education” (CasaPound Italia 2011, 11). This liberal, Keynesian framing of education is pervasive—from international codes on human rights, to welfare state policies on education, to student movements that try to preserve these institutions of universal education.

The platform of CasaPound Italia sets out six policy positions on public education that can be characterized as attempts at increasing student democratic power and at protecting education from privatization. They propose enshrining student representation and student veto power on school boards, ending funding of private schools, and stopping privatization of public schools and universities. Consistent with Mussolini and Gentile's focus on the ideal, youthful fascist body, CPI proposes dramatically increasing physical and outdoor education. While the language in the preamble harkens back to Gentile's philosophy of education in that it stresses the value of education in creating a future generation that will help develop “organic society”, and the emphasis on physical education is reminiscent of both Gentilean and Mussolinian education, neither the language or the demands of CPI's policy positions are unique to fascism.

However, more direct links to fascist education can be found in the platform's section on culture. In this section, CPI proposes the “Creation of a state institution of education of the ruling class” (CasaPound Italia 2011, 12). Ostensibly, this is similar to the Fascist government's attempt to replace Italy's traditional conservative ruling class with a fascist ruling class through mass educational organizations that provide fascist political and paramilitary training, such as the Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (De Grand 86). They also
propose a “Cultural Olympiad, organized by the State, covering all main university subjects”, which is similar to the national artistic and cultural competitions open to the members of the GUF under fascist rule (De Grand 86).

How can we understand the contradiction between CPI's loyalty to an educational philosophy and presumably to an educational regime that based itself on this philosophy, and its promotion of the democratic rights of students in educational governance? The contradiction is allowable because students are constructed as “protagonists”, specifically within the current context when the state is constructed as the enemy. It is not the state per se against which CPI asserts student rights; it is the specifically non-fascist state. We can think of this as similar to Gentile's philosophy of action justifying rebellion when a non-fascist state was in place, and then this same philosophy justifying bringing individual thought and action into line with that of the state when it was fascist. Contextualized in this way, the contradiction between CPI's ostensibly democratic demands and their anti-democratic heritage suggests a robust opportunism. That is to say, the commitment to student democratic rights is contingent, short-lived, and shallow because it is not backed up by a substantial belief in democracy and individual rights. Further, there is nothing about procedural democratic rights that guarantees that these rights will be used in a way to extend the franchise in general, much less the substantial bases of democracy in an egalitarian fashion. Students could use their right to make education more elitist, and this is what actually happened in the case of San Secondo Parmense when the successful Blocco Studentesco slate decided to state their opposition to the inclusion of migrants in Italian public schools.

Like CPI's platform in general, Blocco Studentesco's platforms on education draw from across the political spectrum. Blocco Studentesco draws from the democratic centre in making demands that students have representatives with veto power on school boards and governance bodies. It draws from the left in its demands for equality of opportunity for lower-income students and its demands for schools and campuses to transition to solar energy. It draws from the right in its demands that schools teach a version of Italian history that glorifies the Italian nationalism and military victories, and in its demands that publicly funded schools be reserved for Italian citizens only. A thematic analysis of the
BS platforms on education shows that the most prevalent issues are democratic governance in both secondary schools and universities, financial accessibility to university for lower-income students (including affordable housing and transit), and changes to school pedagogy and infrastructure that would render education more student-centred, experiential, and modern.39

5.5. In conclusion: whose education?

Although BS platforms are less militant in rhetoric than the CPI platform, their scope is similarly far-reaching, evoking the sense that this new fascism intends to target and reform as many aspects of life, and student life, as possible. The BS platforms demand that school buildings be repaired and modernized; that critical inquiry and student control of curriculum be placed at the centre of the school experience; that all students have access to a modern online system for administrative interactions with their schools; and that athletics as well as direct experiential learning in the outdoors increase and become mandatory for all students. Blocco Studentesco's demands, although ambitious and covering multiple aspects of student life, are all more practical than idealistic: they are asking for the repair and maintenance of schools, not deschooling; for the ability to pay

39 It is instructive to compare BS's platforms to a manifesto of student struggle (“We are many youth, but with one struggle!”), referred to here as WAMY) written by representatives of student unions from Brazil and France in May 2012. This manifesto was subsequently signed by student unions around the world – including the coalition of student associations responsible for the long, heated, and influential student strike in Quebec, Canada of 2012 (“CLASSE signs”). A thematic analysis of the prevalence of both directly stated and latent concerns expressed in the WAMY document compared to the Blocco Studentesco's two platforms about public schools and universities suggests that although both documents emphasize class, austerity, and commodification, the BS documents shy away from naming these issues using terms shared with the left. For instance, although BS does implicitly reference poor and working class families as the beneficiaries of their proposal for payment instalment plans (rather than tuition freezes or cuts), and although it is opposed to universities becoming private, “tuition” is only directly mentioned once. In contrast, “tuition” is a term and concept that is at the front and centre of student struggles worldwide, and this is reflected in the WAMY document. Unlike the WAMY document, the BS documents only indirectly mention commodification of education. The words austerity, workers, and working class are fairly prevalent in the WAMY document but not directly mentioned at all in the BS documents. Whereas the WAMY document speaks to the struggles of women, LGBTQ people, and other people who experience prejudice and marginalization as valid and as connected to the student movement, the BS documents make no mention of the differences in identity and social power amongst students. However, the WAMY and BS documents make equal mention of social welfare schemes for students. The WAMY document asserts that students need access to housing, health, and childcare in order to realize their right to education; BS puts forward specific proposals for improving and expanding housing and transit for students. In this way, the BS platforms appeal to Italian students and families most disadvantaged by capitalism, without directly referencing capitalism.
tuition in instalments, not to abolish tuition altogether. These are bread and butter student issues for which BS members of school councils could fairly easily agitate without appearing too radical, yet which would significantly improve the quality of life for students, especially those from lower-income families. These demands would sound reasonable and attractive to many students and their families, regardless of prior political inclination. The lack of hearty anti-capitalist assertions makes these documents appear to be less politically honest than the avowedly anti-capitalist and more “utopian” claims of CPI – the parent organization. Further research could be conducted into the extent to which BS, as the youth and student wing of CPI, downplays the anti-capitalist thrust of CPI's politics in order to attract new recruits who might be more put off by the overt and purist “social fascism” of CPI.

Although the absence of CPI and BS at mainstream leftist anti-austerity protests in the past six years implies that their plans, if any, to operate within mainstream student unions are minimal, and that they have chosen to primarily organize separately, their platforms show that their demands are broad and popular enough to be aimed at winning over undecided youth. Further research would be needed to confirm the suspicion that their members probably come from family, school, and community contexts not already dominated by traditions from the left. CPI and BS offer their recruits an economic interpretation of youth underemployment, increased cost of living, and austerity in the education sector that substantially differs from the interpretation on offer by the left only in one real regard. Whereas the left offers an interpretation that identifies capitalism, businesses, and the ruling class as the culprits of neoliberalism and its effects on education, CPI (and BS, although indirectly) offer the interpretation that these same culprits can only make their designs manifest by relying on the exploitation of non-Italian migrants. Thus, CPI and BS anti-capitalism draws on both discontent with ruling relations as well as common sense anti-immigrant racism.

In observing CasaPound's and Blocco Studentesco's educational activism, the crux of the problem emerges: “no more crumbling schools” for who? Democracy and economic equality for who? The “citizen” in CasaPound’s politics is not a global citizen who has achieved “citizenship” by virtue of being born human, but is an Italian citizen, who in
reality tends to be white. By using the “citizen”, with all its inclusive and liberal-democratic connotations, as the political agent in their rhetoric, CPI disguises their racism as innocent nationalism. The lesson here is that the centre and the left do not have a monopoly on demands for greater democracy and equality in education. We need to specify that the answer to the question “Democracy and equality in education for who?” should be: for all, regardless of status or citizenship. This brings the present discussion to focus in on race and racism, as conceptualized and practiced by CasaPound Italia.
6. Chapter 6

CasaPound, Race, and Racism

This chapter will demonstrate that CPI's claims to be non-racist and non-xenophobic cannot be taken seriously. CasaPound advances racist ideas and practices while simultaneously denying such a stance. Their racism is evident in their admiration of the intellectual Julius Evola, and in their adherence to the legacy of the fascist leader Mussolini. Specifically, CasaPound's racist orientation is demonstrated in their public documents, in key components of Evola's racialist thought, and in examples of the fascist state's racist practices towards Jews and Africans. CasaPound is also racist in two further ways: in their actual anti-immigrant and anti-Roma activities, and, more ideologically, in their invocation of the Italian “citizen” as the bearer of entitlements to housing and education. The chapter proceeds to consider race in CPI’s platform, and then overview the ways in which Evola's political thought promoted a “spiritual”, but no less abhorrent, type of racism. The chapter then addresses the ways in which racism flourished under Mussolini, followed by consideration of specific examples of racism regarding immigration, the Roma community, and citizenship entitlements.

6.1. Race in CasaPound's platform

A preliminary step in evaluating CPI's racism or lack thereof is looking at how they talk and write about race and racism. CasaPound's usage of nationalist-populist language – a normal type of talk across the political spectrum in Italy – helps them avoid accusations of racism, if racism is defined as discrimination against a racialized group.

A close reading of their platform document, titled “Una Nazione” (“One Nation”), reveals virtually no usage of overtly racial terms such as white, Black, African, Jewish, or “gypsy” (“cigany” or “Rom”). Instead, the document uses the term “cittadino” (citizen) five times, to describe the beneficiaries of proposed changes, from introducing public control of banks, to defending public education. The document supplements the subject
of the citizen with the subjects “del popolo Italiano” (“the Italian people”), “lavatoro Italiano” (“Italian worker”) and “familiari” (“families”) (CasaPound Italia 2011).

Their public statements further attempt to obfuscate the racism of anti-immigrant ideology by decrying the exploitation of immigrants: “The hellish mechanism of mass immigration is one of the main vectors of displacement and social, cultural, and existential impoverishment at the expense of all the people involved, whether they are guests or hosts” (CasaPound Italia 2011, 4). However, like the German National Socialists who supported the immigration of all European Jews to the State of Israel (Massad 313), CPI's repugnance towards non-nationals living within Italy lies just below the surface of their declarations of support for some indigenous struggles to remain on their historic land, despite the pressures of colonization and globalization (CasaPound Italia 2011, 4). The ethnopluralist idea, explained in chapter 2, is that people belong in the space where they are born (unless they are present in that space illegally). People should not expect social goods from any nation-state other than their own. This normative framework agrees with with the global organization of citizenship and rights within the exclusionary and bordered order of nation-states, where nation of birth assumes a consistency according to race, nationality and rights.

This worldview is consistent with the already-existing global order of nation-states which poses complex hurdles to legal immigration, and increasingly militaristic and cruel responses to illegal immigration. Ethnopluralism rests on a cultural, rather than biological, racism. Within the ethnopluralist framework, ethnic and cultural differences are of theoretically equal worth. Differences are worthy of preservation, but this is possible only through separation, instead of through interculturalism or multiculturalism. So, in the ethnopluralist framework, its own argument goes, desirable social policy uses the means of separation to ensure the ends of racial harmony. The ends, however, appear similar to the means of segregation or apartheid, used within a framework of white supremacy. As suggested earlier, it is questionable how earnest ethnopluralism is when

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40 See Berteni, Giordano, and Sartori for discussion of CPI's choice to focus on the non-migrant poor.
its advocates, and those who benefit from its rhetoric, are also responsible for violence against immigrants and Roma.

6.2. Julius Evola and race

Like Giovanni Gentile, Julius Evola is often evoked by CasaPound. Although he is clearly not the only thinker about whom CPI provides workshops and commemorations, his presence is noteworthy. His name is included in their colourful mural at headquarters (Bjørkelo, 10 July 2015), and CPI has held workshops about him such as one on July 14, 2014 (Rapino). Furthermore, Evola’s birth was commemorated by the Pescara branch of CasaPound in a ceremony on May 19, 2013 (“In Piedi Tra le Rovine…”). One aspect of Evola's work, his racial theories, is particularly significant in assessing the complex adoption of racism in the work of CasaPound. It is doubtless that discussion of Evola's work inside far-right movements like CasaPound Italia addresses itself to more than simply Evola's racial theories from the interwar and WWII period. However, at least one Evola scholar maintains that his racism structures his entire thought as expressed throughout his body of work (Furlong 149). CPI's engagement with Evola can be understood as an endorsement of this racism, and contradicts CPI's public insistence that it is not a racist organization. The following discussion of the racism of Evola’s work and its influence on CPI demonstrates the truth behind the rhetoric.

Julius Evola was not as esteemed or prestigious a thinker as was Gentile during the fascist regime, though he did achieve some prominence for his racial theories in the 1940s. His political thought was much more eclectic than Gentile's, drawing from art, magic, and Eastern religious traditions. That his influence spanned well beyond the fascist years is evident in Pino Rauti's description of how fascists, incarcerated in the post-war period, would pass around Evola's books in prison (Rauti 12-13, qtd. in Furlong 1). This had been, for many of them, their introduction to an important intellectual influence. Evola's racialist theory, although never officially adopted by Mussolini, fit well with some of Mussolini's pre-existing ideas about the creation of a new fascist man.

41 See also a poster advertising an educational event called “Julius Evola, the master of tradition: a dialogue on Julius Evola”, held in Turin on March 13, 2009 (CasaPound Piemonte).
Evola was influenced in the 1920s by the work of the German theorist Oswald Spengler (also cited by CPI on their mural as a source of inspiration), who advanced the concept of “cyclical models of civilization”. Evola was also influenced by Eastern religions, specifically, Taoism, Tantra, Buddhism, and Vedism. Nietzsche's philosophy influenced Evola's ideas about spiritual elitism, and the anti-bourgeois, anti-egalitarian and anti-Christian dimensions of his work (154). Evola articulated a racism based on “traditionalism” and “magical idealism”; he further envisioned a “hierarchical, caste-based social structure” (Gilette 155) led by a transcendent elite (Furlong 7). Although Evola as a writer and thinker flourished under the fascist regime, he rejected the populist and hyper-nationalist basis of fascism. His envisioned transcendent elite does not need popular support of any kind to be legitimate (Furlong 145). Only through rule by this elite could the true strength and greatness of Western civilization be regenerated (Furlong 6). In order for this elite to become “transcendent”, its members would have to “free” their spiritual selves “through the purity of physical and mental discipline” and thus become one with the “supreme being” (Furlong 7).

Evola and his contemporaries understood his theory of race as more “spiritual” than biological. According to him, race is a “composition [that is] more or less stable and homogenous, that with the concourse of various factors has given place to a certain common type based in part on anthropology, in part on an affinity of feeling and behaviour, and in part on a community of destiny” (Gilette 158). Gilette observes that, according to Evola, “Pure races did not exist physically, but were rather an ideal toward which the racial spirit strove” (159). However, Evola offered contradictory explanations for racial diversity: at times he rejected evolutionism, declaring that race is “internal and essential”, and at other times he talked about “genetic self-mutation” as a process in which environment affects race (Gilette 159). For instance, if men respond to women like women and not as dominant men, “degeneration” creeps into the race, and a new, inferior race forms (Gilette 160). According to Evola, historical events, myths, ideas and feelings, can bring about “idiovariation” (genetic mutation). He felt that Italian fascism was a positive evolutionary force on the Italian race: “Because of the new heroic climate and competitive tension permeating fascist life, concomitant with fascist mysticism, anti-
sentimentality, and hardness if character, the Italian people were undergoing profound racial transformation” (Gilette 161). Evola claimed that Mussolini's “new fascist man” was actually the beginning of the “Mussolinian race”, which promised a new and stronger civilization (Gilette 161).

Evola's racial theory was deeply influenced by the Vedic tradition and, as such, classified humanity into castes differentiated by the extent to which they achieve balance between the three elements of body, spirit, and soul (Gilette 162). “Super-races” were responsible for great civilizations because they were the most spiritually developed and had the best equilibrium between the three elements (Gilette 162). Evola's racial classification system held that there are two main families of races: the Solar racial family, and the Lunar racial family. The former is male and Aryan in character; that latter is female and non-Aryan in character, and includes Jews (Gilette 163-164). Evola maintained that Italians were mixed from multiple Aryan races, including the Mediterranean Aryan race. Italians were dominated by their Nordic Aryan blood, and therefore are ultimately Nordic Aryan with a Mediterranean strain. Germans and Italians were Nordic brothers and shared the same physiques and values (Gilette 166). The early Romans exemplified the strength of the Italian race, but they degenerated when they mixed with “Semitized Mediterraneans of the Empire” (Gilette 166). Miscegenation, modernization, and democratization ultimately degenerated the race. Specifically, miscegenation led to individuals having the body of one race, and the soul of another, causing “hysteria” (Gilette 163).

In Evola's schematic, women and Jews were particularly a threat to the Italian race (Gilette 167). According to Evola, women are obsessed with love and sex; only male dominance can help them live in line with Nordic principles (Gilette 167). Evola believed that Jews were a combination of all the worst “races”. They were the antithesis of the Solar soul in that they were materialistic, cosmopolitan, anti-racist, and associated with positivist thinking (Gilette 167). They had “Judeacized” some Aryans (Gilette 167). Evola saw fascism as a way to stop these threats and to preserve the race. Specifically, he

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42 Evola also referred to the Solar racial family as the Hyperboreal racial family, and to the Lunar racial family as the Telluric racial family.
thought that war was good for regenerating the Italian race (Gilette 167). To Evola, biological racists with their eugenics and obsessions over improvements to the race were too superficial; likewise, to biological racists, Evola was producing “gibberish” (Gilette 168). This is relevant to contemporary considerations of fascism insofar as CasaPound's attempts to distance themselves from Nazism and racism have some basis in the fact that CasaPound's hero Evola promoted an ideology that, according to his contemporaries, was different from Nazi racist ideology. However, this does not diminish the gravity of Evola's racism.

Evola's work had the most direct impact on Italian fascist politics between the years 1941 and 1943. Evola went on a speaking tour of Germany in 1941, during which he controversially (to Italian fascists) rejected the Italian Mediterranean tradition (Gilette 169) that was glorified by the fascist education system. Nonetheless, Mussolini was an admirer of Evola: he gave him permission to start a new journal and an academic “commission” to look at race (Gilette 171). From the years 1941 to 1943, Evola's influence on some of the most virulently racist fascist party members peaked: he came to be admired by Alberto Luchini, the head of the Race Office and the network of “Centres for the Study of the Jewish Problem” (Staudenmeier 303), prolific anti-Semitic journalist Giovanni Preziosi, and mayor of Cremona and minister Roberto Farinacci (Gilette 155). Overall, Evola was popular even though his positions did not achieve consensus. Although he was critical of the biological basis of German racism, he visited Germany a second time, to meet with many key officials who agreed to collaborate on his new journal (Gilette 172). The specifically elitist, “transcendant” aspects of Nazi rule attracted Evola, as it held promise for a new order, new state, and ultimately a new civilization. Author H.T. Hansen elaborates:

Evola held the SS, which Himmler strove to design according to the model of the Teutonic Order, to be this elite. The castles of the SS Order, with their "initiations," the emphasis on transcending the purely human element, the prerequisite of physical valor, as well as the ethical requirements (loyalty, discipline, defiance of death, willingness to sacrifice, unselfishness), strengthened Evola in his conviction. (Hansen 62)
Two sources of opposition ultimately led to Evola's downfall within Italian fascist circles. The first was the Vatican, which was critical of Evola because of his “non-Christian philosophies”. Second, biological racists inside Italy argued that Evola's racism was mythological and impractical to implement (Gilette 172). His critics and the Vatican convinced Mussolini to withdraw support for Evola, leading to his work on the journal and the commission to be called off, though Evola stayed on the payroll (Gilette 174). Evola survived the war, and continued to write for far-right publications, with his basic premises never substantially changing. Furlong summarizes: “The complete Evola held views that it is fair, if somewhat summary, to categorize as elitist, racist, anti-semitic, misogynist, anti-democratic, authoritarian, and deeply anti-liberal” (Furlong 149). As for his impact, Furlong maintains that Evola is often referred to when far-right movements and intellectuals attempt to reframe their political position as beyond the traditional right-left spectrum, encompassing instead “issues on which far left and far right may be able to agree, such as globalisation, uncontrolled technological innovation and environmental change” (Furlong 18). Furlong even credits the disintegration of the traditional MSI and the emergence of new fascist, neo-fascist, and ex-fascist parties with the fact that Evola's work now receives “more thoughtful consideration” and that his readers “find broader and more interesting themes in his voluminous output” (Furlong 19).

6.3. Race and racism under Mussolini

Another piece of evidence of CPI’s racism is their conscious relationship to Mussolini and the legacy of Italian fascism. CasaPound consistently references Mussolini in their platform, all the while maintaining that they are not racist; this contradiction invites us to look at how racism flourished under Mussolini. Three major intellectual camps of racism existed under fascism in Italy: racist theories of the superiority of the Mediterranean race; those of superiority of the Nordic race; and finally those of the superiority of the Italian race (Gillette 2). Cutting across each of these camps was the conflict between spiritualist racists and biological racists (Gillette 3). Mussolinian racism was never coherent or consistent, and various strains contested each other within the party (Gillette 5). Mussolini's approach to race changed frequently (Gillette 5), but was characterized until 1937 by spiritualism and non-determinism (Gillette 8). Mussolini's racism was not
entirely biological: he thought that race requires “communal identity” and needs a “founding myth” about “predetermined destiny” (Gillette 4). However, in 1938, Mussolini used official racist policy to “propagate” the idea of creating the new fascist man, and this drew from his ideas of race. Through propaganda and public discourse, he “transformed” Africans and Jews into “symbols of the deadly ‘Other’, the anti-fascist nemesis whose existence helped to define the new fascist man” (Gillette 4).

Although scholars agree that Italy did not have an indigenous tradition of racial superiority based on ideas of biology, there is disagreement in the literature about the reasons for the official introduction of biological racism to Italian society in 1938 with Mussolini's racial policy. Until Italy's war with Ethiopia, Italian racism and anti-Semitism were cultural, though this should not lessen its seriousness. Assimilation of Jews and Africans into fascist Italian culture was seen to be a way to overcome cultural inferiority. He and his compatriots believed that assimilation of “others” was always possible, because race was based on shared identity, not blood. Mussolini was not interested in racial hygiene and sexuality until the Ethiopian war. Roberston summarizes:

> Whereas Nazi ideologues held that Germans were the master race by virtue of unique genetic characteristics, most fascist theorists held that the martial qualities of virulence, vitality and violence could be inculcated into their own people through discipline and training. A country in order to remain healthy, so Mussolini boasted early in 1935, needed a war every twenty-five years. (Robertson 38)

Evidence of this is the fact that many Italian Jews were Fascist party members (Bosworth 415). Another example of the non-biological character of Italian racism is that religious “judeophobia” was part of Italy's culture even though biological anti-Semitism was not (Roberston 40). However, there is disagreement about the sources of Italy's anti-Semitism. Robertson contends that the policy had been heavily influenced by Hitler's brand of racism (Robertson 38) and, further, that Mussolini's racism was a product of strategic geopolitical calculations. In contrast, Bosworth contends that fascist anti-Semitic policy cannot be blamed on Hitler's influence, and drew from pre-existing racism in Italian society: “In a way that the literature of the Holocaust does not always predict, anti-Semitism sprang more directly from the Italians' racism towards their black and Arab
subjects than from a passionate and primordial hatred of the Jews” (Bosworth 415). Italian racism against blacks, Jews, and Arabs pre-existed and also, importantly, survived the fascist years (Bosworth 473).

Robertson represents the view that Mussolini's anti-Semitic practices were pragmatic in that they varied according to his strategic assessment of how he could use the Jewish question to further a range of foreign policy goals. Mussolini was careful about the extent to which he advertised his anti-Semitic views because he wanted to appease Austrian Jews who could potentially resist union with Germany, and thereby help thwart German territorial ambitions along the Austrian-Italian border. Mussolini also wanted to appease Jews in countries on both sides of the Red Sea, which was of strategic importance to Mussolini's imperial aspirations in Ethiopia (Robertson 47). However, even Robertson concedes that anti-Semitism under Mussolini became more pronounced and biologically-based as Italy attempted to control colonial populations in East Africa through segregationist legislation premised on biological racism.

Racial legislation in Ethiopia was introduced after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1933 (Robertson 48). The “Organic Law of Eritrea” used the racialist phraseology of “physical characteristics” in its stipulation that illegitimate children of mixed parentage could not become Italian citizens (Robertson 48). However, on the ground, there had existed a “mutual tolerance” between white colonizers and Ethiopians, at least when it came to whites marrying women of colour (Robertson 48). This tolerance came to be replaced by more overt distrust and conflict when Italians launched war on Ethiopia and used poison gas against Ethiopian partisans (Robertson 49). In January 1936, Hitler's public speeches became more explicitly white-supremacist, and this coincided with more cooperation between Italy's and Germany's pro-colonial lobbies (Robertson 50). However, when Italy captured and occupied Addis Ababa in May 1936, they did not satisfy any of Germany's expectations about power-sharing in East Africa (Robertson 51). It was at this time that Italian racial policy in Ethiopia became much more aggressive: children of unknown parentage were denied citizenship in 1936; all inter-racial sexual relations were banned except for those between men and prostitutes in 1937; and Italians were not to be seen performing menial tasks in front of Ethiopians (Robertson 51).
Similarities between anti-Semitism in Italy and racial policy in Ethiopia intensified in 1937 (Robertson 51).

Robertson argues that intensification of colonization in Ethiopia circuitously relied on an intensification of anti-Semitism in Italy. Meanwhile, Preti contends that imperialist expansion into Africa made racism sensible to Italians. Further, he contends that it was not just alliance with Germany that was responsible for Italian racist policy under fascism (Preti 2). Racism was key to justifying the construction of Africans as “permanently subordinate recipients of limited and conditional Italian humanitarianism” (Preti 5).

Although Italian colonialism generally allowed for the possibility of assimilation and the possibility that colonial subjects could be “civilized” – indicating that the type of racism at play was not biologically based – it brutally punished acts of resistance, and enforced policies of apartheid and anti-miscegenation (Preti 5). Biological and cultural racisms coexisted in the fascist imperial project.

In the late 1930s, more Italian soldiers and workers were needed for the colonial project in Ethiopia, yet the state recognized that bringing more men into the colony ran the risk of widespread defiance against the racial anti-miscegenation laws. So the state undertook a massive effort to bring Italian women to the colony, coupled with mass education in Italy about racial hygiene. Jews and Africans were depicted as equally racially inferior in materials such as the journal La Difesa della Razza (“The Defence of the Race”), officially subsidized by the state (Robertson 53).

Changes in the colonies paralleled the development of official anti-Semitism in Italy. The first official statement prepared by Mussolini about the Jewish “problem” was released in February, 1938. In it, Mussolini promised that the fascist state had no plans to take any measures against the Jewish population and declared that the only way to solve the Jewish “problem” was to create a state for Jews in a place other than Palestine (Preti 20). He also said that the government would “keep watch” over Jews who had “recently entered the country” to make sure that they were not disproportionately involved in national affairs, and he gestured towards a quota system (Preti 20). This influenced all Jews to resign from public posts in which they had authority over a majority of non-Jews
Over the next few months, heated discussion in the press about the Jewish population continued, “while Mussolini, who had not yet decided what to do, continued to study the reactions of the Catholic Church and of groups abroad” (Preti 21). Hitler visited Mussolini in May 1938 (Preti 21), and this is believed to have influenced Mussolini’s introduction of racist and anti-Semitic legislation in the fall of 1938 against all “Semites and Hamites”43 in Italy and Ethiopia (Robertson 53).

After 1938, Jews, Protestants, and Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to increased levels of surveillance (De Grand 101). Italy established fifty concentration camps for “foreign Jews, Greek and Yugoslav Prisoners of War, and Italian political prisoners (De Grand 101). Even though the system of violence relied on a network of neighbourhood informants, which implies a certain degree of public participation in enforcing racial superiority, over the longer term “the German alliance, the racial campaign, and an increasingly risky foreign policy” was overall unpopular (De Grand 106).

The mere fact that CPI claims loyalty to Mussolini is sufficient evidence that CPI takes pride in a legacy of racism and killing. While it is true that it was only after the German occupation of Italy starting in September 1943 that 7,495 Jews were deported to German-run concentration camps (of which 610 survived), well before this point Mussolini's fascist government had put the infrastructure in place to make these deportations and killings possible (Bosworth 472). The state had already collected the numbers and addresses of Jews in Italy, and by June 1943 the government had already started planning for rounding them up and interning them in four work camps (Bosworth 471). This is on top of the “complex anti-Semitic legislation” in place since 1938 that purged Jews from educational and cultural institutions, drastically limited their employment, and then in 1942 subjected many to forced labour (Bosworth 471). Even once Marshal Badoglio replaced Mussolini as head of government in June 1943, these laws were not repealed.

CasaPound's claims to be non-racist and non-xenophobic have no legitimacy as long as they purport to inherit the traditions of Evola and Mussolini, which are thoroughly racist.

43 This refers to people of Jewish, Arab, and African descent.
Furthermore, CPI's interest in Evola not only reveals their racism, but also underscores the irrational, mystical element of their project. Additionally, the fact that they have named themselves after an artist, Ezra Pound, whose aesthetics and political viewpoints were deeply structured by a belief in a racial hierarchy that necessitates anti-miscegenation is further evidence that CPI is racist and that their public statements to the contrary are crude attempts at normalcy. In what follows, two other forms of CasaPound's racism are explored: their actual anti-immigrant and anti-Roma activities; and their invocation of the Italian “citizen” as the bearer of entitlements to housing and education.

6.4. CasaPound and racism

In addition to CasaPound's intellectual invocation of Evola and Mussolini, each with their own brand of racism, CPI is further guilty of racism through acts of violence and incitement against Roma, migrants, and Italians perceived to be anti-fascists. There are few reported cases in the mainstream media of CPI members violently attacking individuals, much less reports of criminal investigations into such attacks. However, independent leftist media have described some cases. A particularly gruesome case since the murder of the two Senegalese market vendors in 2011 (referred to in the introduction), is the case of an extreme attack by CasaPound on a young man. The leftist Italian website *Struggles in Italy* reports that in Cremona on January 28, 2015, a group of fifty fascists beat up seven to eight activists associated with the Dordoni Occupied Social Centre (*Struggles in Italy, 25 Nov. 2014*). One activist, Emilio, was beaten with a bar and kicked in the face and head while on the ground, resulting in a coma. The article notes that this event occurred within a context of increasing fascist violence against anti-fascists in Italy: in September in Naples, "far-right individuals" beat up a high school student wearing an anti-fascist t-shirt; in November in Rome, a similar group attacked football supporters with "bars and sticks" (*Struggles in Italy, 25 Nov. 2014*). Additionally, on March 8 of 2015, the party Left Ecology Freedom posted on their Facebook page the photo and testimony of a twenty-seven year old non-political man named Giacomo Gamba. On his way home from the bar, Gamba walked past a group of six young men putting up CasaPound posters, only to be followed, taunted, and finally
beaten up by them (“Timeline Photos”). Cases of overt violence like these appear to be spontaneous and occur against a consistent backdrop of CPI's more organized activities. CasaPound's activities, spontaneous or not, reinforce the notion that only white people belong in Italy. They are designed to stir up racist and xenophobic sentiments—many of them pre-existing. This can lead, and has led, to violent attacks against migrants, Roma, and their allies, effectively encouraging their removal from the public sphere.

6.4.1. Welfare from below, for “Italian citizens”

CasaPound routinely denounces the global neoliberal economic order that simultaneously creates and disavows migrant cross-border movement (CasaPound 2011, 4). Many migrants and Roma cross into Italy to escape pernicious underdevelopment, war, and human rights abuses in their home countries. Once in Italy, many waste away in informal camps or formal Centres for Identification and Expulsion, without access to health care or education, and frequently without basic infrastructure like heat or clean water. CasaPound claims that this system hurts both immigrants and citizens of “host” countries, and demands the cessation of immigration to Italy. Meanwhile, CasaPound also agitates for solutions to the same “crises” of global capitalism that disproportionately victimize migrants and Roma—such as lack of affordable housing and the high cost of living— but only for Italian citizens.

In 2008, CasaPound gained official status as an Association for Social Promotion (referred to here as ASP), which is a legal form based on constitutional principles, and which legally enables CPI to carry out its “welfare from below” activities. CasaPound agitates for ostensibly socialist demands, such as for social housing and fair labour conditions, well within the parameters of Italy's constitutional principles. However, like the constitution itself, CPI reserves these social goods for Italian citizens only. In Italy, because citizenship depends on residency requirements that are in practice nearly

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44 This research study has not ascertained whether or not CasaPound applies for and receives regional government grants, though their status as an ASP makes them legally eligible for regional government grants.

45 See ICLP. The right to work is enshrined in Articles 4 and 35, and the right to personal domicile enshrined in article 14 of the Italian Constitution.
impossible for detained or underhoused, exploited, poor, and unintegrated migrants and Roma to fulfill, citizenship is, in practice, racialized as white. CPI's charity is in fact charity for whites only. The very limits to its definition of who counts as a beneficiary of its services correspond to the limits to the state's definition of who has the right to expect care and protection from the state. CasaPound's practices are formed by, and also feed back into, the Western liberal-democratic understanding of rights and entitlements, through citizenship, which can only exist within the borders of nation-states. CasaPound provides services like its own union for non-unionized workers, and humanitarian disaster assistance to Italian families (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 21, 22). It publicly calls for an end to the provision of work for non-citizens: its platform outlines their demand for deportation of irregular immigrants and for the fining of employers who employ migrants (CasaPound Italia 2011, 4). They demand that the state limit social housing to citizens: they use the slogan “Case Popolari Agli Italiani!” (“Social Housing For Italians!”), to advertise a housing law they have proposed (CasaPound Italia, 20 Nov. 2013). Other citizen-only slogans include “No rise in the cost of living for Italians” (CasaPound Sardegna). In turn, such slogans help the non-migrant poor further take up citizenship as an identity that entitles them to being rescued from capitalist crisis, symbolized by high rents, by the “influx” of migrants imagined as stealing jobs, and by the rising cost of living. In other words, the concept of citizenship offers the non-migrant poor a basis on which they can legitimately claim the state is not fulfilling their rights. It offers them a basis on which they can legitimately agitate for those rights without interference from the state (freedom of association, equality under the law), and it offers them a basis on which to imagine non-citizen “others” as illegitimately encroaching on resources citizens alone are entitled to, such as social housing and non-precarious, full employment.

One example of CasaPound's “welfare from below” activities is the setting up of booths in public squares in working-class and middle-class neighbourhoods to hand out bread and pasta to those affected by the financial crisis. CPI's regional coordinator Andrea Ferris stated in a press release about one such event in the town of Sassari in October 2013: “[we are here] to protest against the continued rise of essential goods such as
pasta, which, in a moment of great crisis like this, strikes economically disadvantaged families” (CasaPound Sardegna). A banner at the event reads “No carovati al fianco degli italiani” (no high cost of living for Italians), clarifying that this act of charity is intended for citizens only.

In contrast to CPI, leftist “welfare from below” activities against and in spite of the Italian state assert an expansive conception of citizenship that does not have Italian nationality or residency as its criteria. Leftist squats have continually been used as spaces for political organizing on the one hand, and provision of welfare from below on the other, for society’s most marginalized and destitute. Since the 1970s, leftist squats have seized decommodified spaces – former factories left empty by the process of deindustrialization– and inserted underemployed and unemployed bodies into this space that are excluded from the formal calculation of value and profit-making. Bodies no longer enter the factory according to the disciplined routine of factory production for the purposes of work; having been abandoned by the industrial economy that has moved to the Third World to take advantage of lax labour laws, underemployed and unemployed bodies now enter the empty factories as part of the reconfiguration of the relationship between a de-industrialized economy and its literally decommissioned workforce. Given Italy’s strict residency requirements for citizenship and ongoing practises of detention, deportation and segregation of migrants and Roma46 that make successful residency virtually impossible, the recipients of squat services are often people of colour. In regards to the Venetian squat Rivolta and the activists that used its space, Nicola Montagna writes:

They organized contentious campaigns against the Centri di Permanenza Temporanea CPT)-- temporary detention centres – for undocumented migrants, the Italian participation in the war in Kosovo, and to promote the rights of social citizenship for those social subjects generally excluded from welfare benefits such as migrants, precarious flexible workers and the unemployed. (Montagna 6)

46 Most Roma people living in Italy are Italian citizens but are erroneously perceived, and given the same treatment, as non-citizens. In this paper I will refer to migrants and Roma, though the latter category does include European migrants. States Amnesty International (2013 October): “Approximately half of the Roma in Italy are Italian citizens. Others are recognized refugees from former Yugoslavia, migrants mostly from Romania and the Balkans and recognized or de facto stateless people.”
Key here is the term “social citizenship” to denote the status of human beings entitled to belonging and rights, beyond the strictures of the narrowly-defined citizenship of a nation-state.

CasaPound's tactic of squatting to publicize the demand for housing for Italian citizens suggests that the neo-fascist approach to space now extends beyond the traditional fascist spaces of the football stadium, football headquarters, and the street. Although CPI continues the fascist pattern of organizing sporting activities for young males as part of embodying the aesthetic of active, strong, youthful masculinity, it also directs the public's attention to the supposed victims of capitalism: the jobless, evicted white Italian working class. By setting up booths in plazas to hand out food to the elderly and unemployed, CPI creates a situation in which fascist spaces are no longer reserved for a subculture of male militants. By using state-authorized collectivist and solidaristic language as well as state funds, CPI inserts itself into the space of the respectable Italian public to do good works for deserving Italian citizens. The tactic is rooted in CPI's rearticulation of namesake Ezra Pound's ideology of the house:

Since its very first days, CasaPound has given lots of attention to this dimension [of housing], underlining Ezra Pound's reflections on the house as a holy place, as the place for the family, as the only safe place for a person. The house for CasaPound does not only hold a material value, but a symbolic one in defining the meaning of a person's life, which cannot follow the material logics of market capitalism. (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 16)

Squatting responds to what CPI sees as a crisis of capitalism unleashed on the Italian working- and middle-classes. Report Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese:

To this regard, the largest number of eviction orders in 2008 (when CasaPound changed its status to “association for social promotion”) were issued in Rome (7,574), among which almost 5 thousands were for arrearage. Over the past 5 years, the evictions were over 31,000 of which 19,273 for arrearage. In Rome over the past 5 years, the evictions were 11,612, among those 2,209 have been executed in 2008, with an increase of 18% compared to 2007. (Gattinara, Froio, and Albanese 12)
Without commenting on the racialized demographics of Roman evictees (presumably not all would fit CPI's definition of citizens), one can point to the basic difference between evictions of renters and the housing conditions of non-citizens. By neglecting the racialized dimensions of the housing “crisis” in Italy, and presenting it as only a crisis that affects evictees who previously were comfortably housed, CPI erases the much more brutal housing crisis of non-citizens who have invariably never been comfortably housed in Italy. For instance, the category of “housing crisis” excludes the segregation of refugees from Syria and Northern Africa on the island of Lampedusa. Here, the migrants who have survived the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean by dinghy cope with conditions of inadequate electricity, water, and food. Isolated from Italian society, they have little hope of interaction with people other than state functionaries, who will either deport them immediately, or move them to another immiserated space like an urban shelter, suburban camp, or detention centre where they will languish until deportation. By agitating for housing for “Italian workers” and “Italian families”, CPI renders the actual crisis in basic living conditions for non-citizens and the people of colour something that is neither about housing or about a crisis, but rather something so normal that it does not demand comment. CasaPound's welfare activities can be understood as citizen-only and therefore white-only services.

6.4.2. What is an “Italian citizen”?

In its interactions with the media and the public, CasaPound affirms a political ideology not explicitly centred on the subject of the white person, but rather centred on allegedly non-racial citizen-subject. CP maintains that it is a non-racial organization that does not promote hate. We can understand “citizen”, though, as a code for “white”, and “non-citizen” as code for “foreigner”, “black”, “gypsy”, and so forth. Generations of internal racism against outsiders as well as peasants and southerners (Merrill 1554), a colonial legacy in northern Africa, a failure to purge parliament, the state bureaucracy, and the judiciary of fascists (Ferrarasi 17-18), and a failure to incorporate anti-fascist values into national identity (Mammone 213), help construct Italy's non-citizens and Roma as irrevocably different from Italian citizens-- less deserving of the “human rights” valorized by the constitution. A low birth rate has contributed to a need for cheap and unregulated
labour in Italy, which is met by migrants constructed as undeserving of safe working conditions or decent wages (Merrill 1546). States Merrill:

This racialized and disposable surplus labor force occupies what Maurizio Ambrosini and other Italian scholars have referred to as “lavori delle cinque P: precari, pesanti, pericolosi, poco pagati, penalizati socialmente” (work of the five Ps: precarious, demanding, dangerous, low paid, and socially stigmatized; in English the three Ds: dangerous, dirty, demeaning). (Merrill 1549)

Although there are no official statistical reports that show the ethnic and national composition of Italian citizenry, and despite the evolving racialization of Italian emigrants in North America from non-white to white, observers have noted that non-migrant Italians increasingly understand themselves as white (Merrill 1543). Furthermore, a large percentage of both legal and “illegal” migrants to Italy are understood as non-white. The obstacles the state has put in place for immigrants to acquire citizenship guarantee that Italy more or less remain a nation of “white” Christians. Italian citizenship depends on residency requirements that are difficult for many migrants and Roma to meet, and many are already seen as non-white and “outside” of normal political subjectivity (the subjectivity that is entitled to rights) by virtue of country of origin, religion, language, and skin colour. To apply for citizenship, a non-EU national must have been legal resident for ten years and show “sufficient financial resources” and no criminal record (Polizia di Stato). Refugees and stateless people must hold residency for five years, and EU nationals must hold residency for four (Polizia di Stato). But Law 189 of 2002, known as the Bossi-Fini law, tightened residency requirements so that holding official residency is practically an elite experience: for a non-EU national to attain legal resident status, they must have a passport, an entry visa, and a signed contract with an employer, arranged accommodation, and money in place to cover the cost of a flight back to their country of origin (Eurofund). The Bossi-Fini law

47 Of legal non-nationals living in Italy (which totals 8% of total residents), 1.81% are Romanian (10% of which are Roma and are understood as “non-white”), 1.07 North African, .77% Albanian, .54% are from Sub-Saharan Africa (ISTAT). These 2011 statistics do not include “illegal” migrants, which the Catholic aid organization Caritas estimated this year at 1 million (“Italy: Illegal Immigrants…”).

48 See Merrill, 1551, for a description of the emergence of blackness and whiteness as social signifiers in the organization of race in Italy.
effectively sentenced migrants without papers and without connections to an employer to indefinite detention or a precarious life underground: “Having documents can make it easier for police to send an immigrant to his/her country; this encourages immigrants to “lose” their documents or give false names and nationalities (making police work more difficult and expensive), and to remain in the Centre for Identification and Expulsion as long as possible” (Struggles In Italy, “Immigration Policies...”). Therefore, Italian immigration laws materially bar migrants (the majority of whom are already seen as non-white) from becoming citizens or becoming closer to being understood as white. These laws thereby reproduce “citizen” as a seemingly non-racial signifier for the racial signified of “white” and “non-migrant”. Because of this, fascist organizations can succeed in claiming neutrality and non-racism when mobilizing on the basis of citizenship.

6.4.3. Demonstrations and violence

There are also overt activities that indicate CPI’s racism. CasaPound’s national organization and its regional chapters regularly hold a variety of public demonstrations, the majority of which are symbolic in nature, and a smaller number of which are held in close proximity to migrant or Roma communities for purposes of either direct incitement or direct action. Recently, their largest demonstration was held on February 28, 2015, in Piazza del Popolo in Rome, in conjunction with Lega Nord. The themes of that demonstration were opposition to Renzi’s immigration and economic policies, and opposition to the EU in general. Matteo Salvini of Lega Nord declared that the protesters want "a different Europe, where banks count less and citizens and small businessmen count for more" (Lambert). This demonstration is further significant for its bringing together of CasaPound with Lega Nord, a mainstream far-right party who has held important parliamentary positions during the Berlusconi era. Stated CasaPound president Gianluca Iannone to the press, "We are Mussolinians and we want to govern the country with Salvini" (Lucca).

Beyond symbolic demonstrations like this, held in public squares for the purpose of communicating a message and building the morale of supporters, CasaPound
demonstrations have also occurred for the purpose of inciting the public against “others”. In 2010, CasaPound members travelled to the community of Rosarno in Calabria to support locals who had beaten up migrant workers. The locals were responding to a migrant riot that had exploded when two migrant workers had been shot by other local residents. Explain Berteni, Giordano, and Sartori: “The reaction to the events has been a generic condemnation of all ‘violence’, where the shots fired at the migrants and the riots were made equivalent” (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori.)

Another example of demonstrations for the purpose of incitement is exemplified in the activities of a regional branch of CasaPound, which organized demonstrations and collected petition signatures against Roma merchants in the Rome municipality of Ostia on throughout the fall of 2013. A November 9 video of the apparently uneventful “demonstration” shows a respectable scene: a dozen or so adults standing with Italian flags next to a literature table on a sidewalk, engaging elderly passers-by in earnest conversation ("Ostia: Manifestazione CasaPound."). The location was chosen because this is a street where “abusive” Roma people sell used and cheap (“stolen”) goods. Although there were no reported direct encounters between protestors and Roma, the demonstration was held at that location to bolster the white Italian community's contempt for local Roma. The presumed effect of such demonstrations is that they will discourage Roma people to live and carry out their livelihoods in these public spaces. These demonstrations, while partially symbolic in nature, verge on direct action insofar as they whittle away the spaces where Roma can exist without harassment from non-Roma.

A type of demonstration that has become standard for CPI is actual “direct action” against migrants and Roma, aimed at closing down the limited spaces where they live and go to school. As the “migrant crisis” involving desperate refugees traversing the Mediterranean from Northern Africa has exploded in the past year, including thousands of tragic deaths, CPI and Blocco Studentesco appear to have become more virulent and frequent in their public protests against non-citizens and Roma. One such case has occurred in the eastern Rome neighbourhood of Tor Sapienza, which historically has been neglected by the state; its infrastructure and social services are notoriously underdeveloped. Residents claim that crime has increased in recent years with the arrival
of immigrants to the neighbourhood (Day). On the nights of November 10 and 11, 2014, a crowd of residents threw stones and bottles at a refugee reception centre called Sorriso (Struggles in Italy, 25 Nov. 2014). The crowd had begun to gather on Monday night; on Tuesday evening, a refugee had been attacked in the street (Day). By 10 pm, fifty people in front of a crowd of 250 threw rocks and "petrol bombs" at the centre (Day). Chants included "The blacks have got to go"; a dozen protesters chanted "Long live Il Duce" (Day). Migrant minors had to be evacuated from the centre for safety (“Clashes prompt...”). Fourteen people, including four police officers, were injured; protestors claim police brutality in the form of tear gas, batons, and being charged at for no reason (Day).

The end of 2014 brought unwanted attention to CasaPound when the media speculated that their involvement in the Tor Sapienza protests were at the behest of organized crime connections. On December 2, 2014, police arrested thirty-seven individuals in a mafia investigation. The exposed network, dubbed Mafia Capitale, is not connected to the traditional Mafia (the Camorra or 'Ndrangheta), but rather of a new constellation of individuals, many with prior involvement in far-right organizations and organized crime. Key individuals are Salvatore Buzzi, the owner of a "left" cooperative called “29 June”, as well as several garbage disposal businesses, Roma camps, and refugee reception centres. Luca Odevaine, first secretary of the ruling PD party (Democratic Party), national manager for asylum seekers reception centres for the Ministry of Interior, and manager himself of a larger reception centre in Lampedusa, is another key individual. Wiretapping revealed that Odevaine had been sending "large flows" of refugees to centres managed by friends throughout the country in exchange for kickbacks.

Management of reception centres is itself a racket: managers intentionally overcrowd centres to get more money from the state, which is contracted to fund the centres per person. Some centres purposefully focus on housing minors, as the money they receive per minor is more than that for adults. Buzzi is one of Odevaine's associates and in a wiretapped conversation Buzzi stated that he pays Odevaine a "salary" of 5000 Euro a month (Struggles in Italy, 05 Dec. 2014). The Tor Sapienza protest was aimed at a refugee centre not managed by Buzzi. In early December the media focused on the fact
that centres managed by Buzzi in the same area of eastern Rome were left untouched by
protests, and speculated that CPI was recruited by Buzzi to rile up public protests against
this particular centre so that it would be closed, thus opening up more opportunity for
Buzzi's reception centre business. Simone Di Stefano has denied that CPI has had any
involvement in, first of all, the more violent actions during the protests, and secondly,
that there is any connection between CPI and Buzzi. CPI has threatened to sue any media
outlets that continue to report that a connection exists (“Scontri a Tor Sapienza...”).

The incident at Tor Sapienza had been prefaced by an incident in a suburban village
further east within Rome's jurisdiction, in Settecamini, which had resulted in the
complete closing of a reception centre. In May 2014, CasaPound had claimed a victory
for Settecamini residents insofar as the Director of Social Welfare had announced the
cancellation of plans to open a proposed reception centre for political refugees
(CasaPound Italia, 29 May 2014). Like the residents of Tor Sapienza, those of
Settecamini claimed years of neglect, including being subjected to environmental
pollution from a nearby BASF plant (Struggles in Italy, 25 November 2014). In June
2014, CasaPound posted news on their websites encouraging residents to resist similar
plans for the placement of 2630 refugees in a centre on Via di Salone in another area of
east Rome, already in dispute because of the presence of a Roma camp (CasaPound Italia,
9 June 2014). Their website essentially called upon residents to not be passive in the
wake of the Settecamini victory, and to continue resisting the opening of reception
centres in already struggling neighbourhoods.

These incidents show that racism and ongoing economic inequality in Italy provide fertile
ground for racist physical attacks. Italy is already it an unsafe country for migrants and
refugees, regardless of what CPI says or does. CPI is, as Struggles in Italy has pointed
out, not orchestrating but rather riding the wave of popular anger and racism (Struggles in
Italy, 25 November 2014). The case of the east Rome suburb Corcolle shows how
violence and popular mobilization against migrants and refugees is normalized in Italy,
without the formal involvement of CPI. The Corcolle case also points to the inability of
the left and the traditional labour movement to welcome migrants and refugees and to
combat xenophobia and racism. In mid-September 2014, residents accused foreigners of
"attacking" buses and bus drivers, while migrants reported that local buses consistently refuse to stop to pick them up when they are the only ones standing at a bus stop. Non-foreign residents held a protest for "security" and safety, attended by "taxidrivers, shopkeepers, and neighbourhood committees" ( Forgnone). In the days leading up to the protest, two migrants had been beaten up in the street and hospitalized for injuries. Bus drivers and their union framed the issue as one of scarce resources: they simply did not have enough buses running frequently enough to pick everyone up. This sidestepped the obvious problem of racist incitement and violence against migrants and refugees.

Despite these fairly clear cases of violence against Roma and migrants, CasaPound relies on a narrative that constructs migrants and Roma as violent, and Italian citizens as innocent. This became clear in a recent case of direct action against Roma children. On Friday November 28, CasaPound and Blocco Studentesco members blocked Roma students from attending school in a district of north Rome ("CasaPound Impedisce..."); “Neofascists Block Roma...”). They both blocked the exit of the nearby Roma camp as well as the entrance to the closest school, carrying a banner that read "Stop Roma violence; some Italians do not give up" ("CasaPound Impedisce..."; “Neofascists Block Roma...”). A spokesperson told reporters that the action was "to respond with force to provocation of some members of the Roma ethnic group who recently threw stones at some Italian students attending schools in the district" ("CasaPound Impedisce..."); “Neofascists Block Roma...”). Two days beforehand, a local newspaper had carried reports that Roma youth had entered two schools and had thrown stones while inside the school; but hours later, the principals of each school contacted the media to deny that these incidents had occurred at all ("I rom attacano..."). The protests of November 28 were thus in response to events that had actually never happened.

6.5. In conclusion: opportunistic racism

CasaPound opportunistically gestures towards commonplace liberal attitudes by asserting that it is non-racist, by talking about the sorts of rights already guaranteed by the Italian state to citizens only, and by providing material assistance to Italians in neoliberal hard times. But these gestures are belied by the organization's conscious inheritance of the
racist, elitist, and violent legacies of fascist personalities such as Evola and Mussolini. Despite CasaPound's efforts, the core of these legacies cannot be made nicer or less fascist, especially in the past year as CasaPound's anti-egalitarian and xenophobic core has eclipsed its other aspects, by its association with increasingly public violent attacks on migrants, Roma, and anti-fascists. What would happen if the constitutional ban on the re-assembly of the Fascist Party was enacted and CasaPound were immediately outlawed? Most likely, neighbourhoods in east Rome would continue to erupt in racist protests and violence against migrants. The European Union would continue its plans to militarize its operation against migrant traffickers, even as they acknowledge that innocent lives of migrants, including children, will be lost. This probability shows that the problem is not only the fascists who have been allowed to flourish in contemporary Italy, but the terms, ideas, and conditions of race and inequality in contemporary Italy to which groups like CasaPound have successfully made themselves amenable. This context will be considered in the next and final chapter of the thesis.
7. Chapter 7

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the present study's exploration of the connection between CasaPound Italia and historical fascism, and hegemonic liberalism. It also positions CasaPound historically in order to answer the question “Does capitalism necessarily lead to fascist responses?” Based on the generic patterns of fascist organizational development in the past, and based on current conditions in Italy regarding migration, predictions about CasaPound are made. Questions for further research across disciplines are identified. Finally, the chapter concludes with some thoughts on the relationship between CasaPound and the Italian state.

7.1. Old and new fascisms

CasaPound Italia's contemporary socio-economic and historical context has certainly shaped its salient features. Decades of government corruption and failure to effectively address social inequality fostered public mistrust of the state and a hunger for alternatives. CasaPound's platform is oriented towards this dissatisfaction and attempts to brand the organization as an alternative that transcends the problems of the right and the left. This is, however, merely a contemporary spin on a classic fascist promise – the promise to surpass the left-right political spectrum and class conflict altogether through regenerating a unified nation. CasaPound's ethnopluralism, which insists that “cultures” be kept separate despite their inherent equalitiesimilarly, is a contemporary spin on anti-miscegenation ideology prevalent in interwar Italy. The links to anti-miscegenation are seen in their admiration of Evola and Pound, and of Mussolini, who created colonial policies that forbade inter-racial sexual relations. CasaPound's far-reaching, multi-dimensional scope of activities – from the arts to welfare provision – mimics Mussolini's totalitarian vision of a society completely conquered by the fascist worldview. Like its antecedents, CasaPound responds to and makes use of capitalism, by appealing to the middle class. In post-World War I Italy, Mussolini's Fascist Party appealed to the middle-class's economic frustration and to their anticommunism. In current times, CasaPound similarly appeals to the specific frustrations
of the middle class with the financialization of capitalism and its impacts on credit and mortgages. But it also appeals to Italians frustrated with the dismantling of the Italian welfare state, which effectively had not come into existence until the mid-1920s.

Further, CasaPound interacts with common sense anti-immigrant racism much in the same way Mussolini and his party interacted with popular desire to expand the nation by conquering adjacent and colonial lands. Both organizations representing fascism, then and now, have used and stoked racialized xenophobia and chauvinism. In the case of Italian colonialism, the prevailing ideology was one of cultural superiority over Ethiopians, Somalis, and Libyans, who were thought to benefit from benevolent, “civilizing” Italian rule. In the case of contemporary racism supported by CasaPound, the prevailing ideology is one of protecting Italian citizens (who are predominantly white and Christian) from the encroachment of “parasitical” foreigners (who are predominantly people of colour and many of whom are non-Christian). Both traditional Mussolinian fascism and CasaPound, then, have opportunistically shaped themselves to fill the gap left by the inadequacies and defeats of the state and of the left. Both old and new fascisms have taken up popular issues and recast them as issues of national crisis.

An understanding of the generic opportunism of fascism helps explain the contradiction between CasaPound's use of fascist intellectual history and the parts of its platform that synchronize with standard leftist and liberal principles. For instance, even as CasaPound calls for increased police accountability, prison reform, and judiciary reform, they laud Mussolini, who developed the use of secret police against political criminals. The opportunism thesis would offer an interpretation of this as a product of CasaPound pandering to contemporary sensibilities that are critical of the criminal justice system. But it could also offer the explanation that CasaPound has found a point on which they could agree with leftists, but for different ends. CasaPound's platform does, after all, include the statement that they seek amnesty for all political prisoners from the Years of Lead from the 1970s (CasaPound Italia 2011, 13). The fulfillment of this demand would, of course, benefit their movement in that prominent fascist activists would be released from prison. In the context of a parliamentary
democracy, fascists of course are opposed to the criminalization of fascists and are seeking to secure the freedom of fascists convicted of violent acts, or at least the betterment of prison conditions. Here then emerges a clearer picture of CasaPound's opportunism. They are not mounting proposals that they do not truly believe in, solely for the purpose of gaining credibility; in fact, the evidence suggests the proposals are genuinely supported and share the belief system of CPI members. The fulfilment of their proposals would benefit their movement, and not only through the popular credibility it would bring them, but also through securing a more stable organizational footing. Their proposals for increasing student representation also functions in the same way: these proposals make them look attractive, normal, and democratic to a young disenfranchised public, and the fulfilment of these proposals would open the way for CasaPound members, if elected, to occupy institutional positions of influence.

The past, then, is a resource from which CasaPound selectively draws. Publicly, it embraces the legacy of fascists like Giovanni Gentile, Benito Mussolini, and Ezra Pound. Internally and in ways that are less visible to the public, CasaPound conducts education about the more explicitly white supremacist and esoteric fascist Julius Evola. These four figures were each totalitarian, authoritarian, and anti-egalitarian insofar that in their intellectual work and in their material practices they advocated for the subsuming of the individual, and difference in general, into an undifferentiated and all-encompassing nation-state led by an elite. Each figure would agree that the individual has no worth and certainly no rights outside of the nation-state. This contradicts the very idea of natural rights embedded in the post-WWII human rights paradigm – the idea that all human beings have a set of rights just by virtue of being human, and not contingent on belonging to a nation-state. CasaPound's embrace of classic fascist philosophy and aesthetics is not surprising given that the only rights they speak of in their documents are the rights of citizens – the majority of whom in Italy, are understood to be white –and not human rights. Although not identical to each other, Pound and Evola's types of racism asserted that race is an essential, objective, demographic fact and is hierarchically organized according to worth. Inferior “races” become especially dangerous when they mix with other “races”, which is likely to happen should they stray from their civilization or country of origin. The contemporary version of this racism is the European populist ethnopluralism, steadily gaining traction with the National Front in France.
Not far below the surface of CasaPound's anti-immigrant racism – which claims to be about protecting the rights to jobs, housing, and education for Italian citizens – is an anachronistic bedrock of anti-miscegenation. CasaPound's political philosophy and intellectual heritage are consistent with their anti-immigrant and anti-Roma incitement and violence, and places them in the same general category as other more powerful and populous European far right parties that use ethnopluralist racism.

Regarding educational activism particularly, CasaPound and Blocco Studentesco epitomize their particular brand of nationalist, populist, and racist anti-austerity activism. They want better school infrastructure, better school democracy, and better pedagogy for Italian citizens. In this sense, CasaPound exaggerates their originality, evident in statements such as this: “First of all, linking CasaPound to the right wing is a bit restrictive. CasaPound Italia is a political movement organized as an association for social promotion. It starts from the right and goes through the entire political panorama. Right or left are two old visions of politics, we need to give birth to a new synthesis” (Liddell). However, their platform proposes that the state become better at what it is already doing: excluding non-citizens from the parts of the welfare state that remain.

7.2. Thinking about CasaPound historically

Neoliberalism has helped CasaPound Italia flourish. Cuts to and instability in housing, education, and employment give CPI concrete crises of which to take advantage. CasaPound's nationalist populism preys upon people's longing for collective meaning beyond fragmented and consumerist social relations fostered by late capitalism. Paul Ginsborg's historical accounts of twentieth century Italy certainly place some of the blame for the emergence of neoliberalism and the unfinished character of post-World War Two reforms on the Italian Communist Party's inability to bring about substantial and lasting reforms in the 1970s (Ginsborg 2001, 2003). Instead, the party opted for a compromise on labour rights and other reforms (Ginsborg 2003, 379). In short terms, where socialism has failed to meet people's needs as an alternative to capitalism, fascism has taken root.
Neoliberalism, which found its ideological footing in the 1970s and 1980s, and which guided government downsizing in the 1990s throughout the west, enabled governments to divest themselves of the responsibility of fully funding public social programs such as education and healthcare (Harvey 2005). Governments have passed laws and policies to facilitate this shift. Accordingly, in Italy and elsewhere, programs and institutions that fulfill social needs have started to depend less on the state's coffers and more on the market and on the volunteer-driven, non-profit “third sector” (Fazzi 2009).

The Italian government had begun to systematically cut state expenditures in the 1980s; by the 1990s it had recognized the need for decentralization of state services, a sort of “contracting out” of welfare services to non-profit third sector organizations, and from this emerged Law 383 (Fazzi 199; European Commission 3). This law legally defines and empowers “Associations for Social Promotion” as a way to fill the vacuum left by neoliberal-style government downsizing and cuts. This law enables non-profit groups with an organizational democratic constitution, and that express “participation, solidarity, and pluralism”, to register with the state and thereby become eligible for state tenders in administering social services (Fazzi 2009). CasaPound is technically an Association for Social Promotion under Law 383. That it has its own democratic statute and does not collect money for profit is enough to legitimize it as an Association for Social Promotion.

Although CasaPound is a creature of neoliberalism's crises and expanding third sector, it nonetheless proposes a social and economic alternative to this system. Like other popular movements against neoliberalism, it is grassroots in character in that it is extra-parliamentary and non-profit, and it depends on the volunteer participation of its members. CasaPound is, despite its fascism and despite its contradictions and opportunism outlined throughout this study, one of the range of anti-capitalist and anti-government forces in Italy. This poses a challenge to advocates for social change: it poses a challenge to how we understand democracy and political participation. Seen from a broad perspective, neoliberalism snatches democratic decision-making over public policy and finance away from the public and puts it in the hands of private elites. Wendy Brown, for example, has lamented the depoliticization of the American public under neoliberalism, observing that neoliberalism had rendered the American populace “pacified and neutered” and more amenable to neoconservatism (Brown 709).
Contrast this view, however, with the view from the bottom. From Occupy to the Printemps Érable, from student protests in Latin America to university occupations in Europe, people are participating in movements against austerity and neoliberalism. This is different from Brown's “passive and neutered” public. The case of CasaPound challenges us to consider that there are many different ways of doing democracy, grassroots political participation, and anti-capitalism. Specifically, this case shows that a key difference that sets the CasaPound option apart from others is how it conceives of who is entitled to public goods, rights, and belonging. The alternative they offer is specifically intended to benefit Italian citizens – a populace that, rhetorically and in actuality, because of racist immigration policies, is white.

By contextualizing CasaPound's activism within a broader range of anti-neoliberal movements, it should be clear that in answering the question “Do neoliberalism, austerity, and capitalism necessarily lead to fascist popular responses?”, the answer is “no”. For one, it leads to many possible types of resistance, and fascism is only one possible type. For another, the strength of fascism as a response to capitalism depends on the extent to which fascism and socialism are embedded within the particular context under investigation. Paxton's research has shown that members of fascist and Nazi organizations come from familial and social contexts not already linked to a collective tradition within, for instance, the church, the left, or trade unions (Paxton 50). CasaPound has certainly benefitted from a national context in which fascism as an ideology and fascists as people have not been thoroughly condemned or extricated from national consciousness, as Andrea Mammone has described (2006). This is also a context in which the ideology of national unity and forgiveness had hegemonic sway during the several decades of Christian Democrat rule, while the explicit anti-fascism of the socialist and communist parties was relegated to the sidelines (Ginsborg 2003).

This tolerance of fascism has helped CasaPound exist for more than ten years without interference from the state. There have been no attempts to ban it on the grounds that it is a reconstitution of the Fascist Party. By the same token, however, collective memory of fascism and anti-fascism within the left has helped keep CasaPound from effectively entering the official student union movement. The fiasco of
the Piazza Navona protest described in Chapter 5 is evidence of this. Italian collective memory is contradictory, and both its memory of anti-fascism and its amnesia of fascism has become apparent in the public's reaction to CasaPound.

CasaPound has used opportunism as a tool to extract key themes from anti-austerity politics and then to graft these onto their fascist foundations, in order to appear normal. Democratic representation, restored government funding of public services, social programs to reduce economic inequality amongst citizens, are all themes that more or less work with the model of early Mussolinian fascism as well as with new anti-capitalist, anti-austerity and anti-globalization models. Popular discontent with the government has not ebbed under Renzi, but it now seems much more explosive in the terrain of immigration than in the converging terrains of jobs and education. CasaPound's opportunism might focus more on the former themes in the coming years as there is no end in sight to the flow of desperate migrants from the Middle East and Northern Africa.

7.3. Questions for further research

Further research into CasaPound can glean guidance from literature produced by grassroots movements of the anti-fascist left in Italy. One particular example of literature from within the non-institutional anti-fascist left asserts that some questions about CasaPound Italia are not important because their answers are so obvious. The Collettivo Autorganizzato Universitario Napoli (CAU-N) states that scholars and observers should not bother with the question of whether or not CPI is truly a fascist organization. They offer an alternative set of questions:

What is the composition of the group Casa Pound (mean age, places of origin, the social position of its members, their personal and family relationships, past experiences...)? ... In which network of alliances are they inserted? How do they relate to the national leadership...? How can it change the balance of power in urban areas, as it can fit in the contradictions and limits of local politics (between the weakness of the center and a newfound aggressiveness of the center, accompanied by its severe limitations in recruiting youth)? What is the continuity

49 As of June 15, 2015.
between local and national government parties, dominant (large corporations, speculators, building speculators ...) and the neo-fascist project? (CAU-N 11)

These observations were made in 2009, when CasaPound's links with far right politicians were only starting to be uncovered by anti-fascists. However, the links unearthed then were not as damning as those that are now coming into the open. One of example of this are the reports of alleged collusion between CasaPound and Mafia Capital in the asylum-seekers' centre racket described in Chapter 5. Additionally, there has been more recent evidence of an alliance between Lega Nord and CPI. In September 2014, Mario Borghezio of Lega Nord attended CasaPound's two-day national conference in Lecce (CasaPound Italia, 29 Aug. 2014). He also attended the protests in Tor Sapienza, of which, as explained earlier, CasaPound was a noticeable part (“Borghezio a Tor Sapienza...”). In February's protest in Rome convened by Lega Nord and CasaPound, CasaPound vice-president Simone di Stefano remarked that CPI supports Lega Nord's bid for presidency and would want to rule with them (Lucca).

These developing circumstances and the paucity of literature on CasaPound from disciplines outside of sociology open up new possibilities. Scholars of media and communication studies could explore CasaPound's appropriation of Futurist artistic style in their posters, lettering, and logos, the details of their emergence from the Italian skinhead hardcore scene, and how they use social media, music, videography, and radio. In the field of political science, the relationship between CasaPound and other far-right movements and parties in Europe could be explored. There is evidence that CasaPound members have travelled to the Ukraine to fight against Russian forces. CasaPound's impact on the North American far right needs to be measured: on February 28, 2015, two CasaPound representatives gave a talk in Montreal, sponsored by the anti-immigrant and racist Fédération des Québécois de Souches (FQS). A Canadian named Rémi Tremblay wrote a report of this event, which was then posted and discussed on the AlternativeRight website. This article was cited on the discussion forum...

50 CasaPound is both virulently anti-EU and anti-Russia. They have sided with Ukrainian nationalist fascists who appear to be pro-EU. They have issued statements in support of the EuroMaidan protests which nonetheless criticize the popular push for greater integration with the EU, and CPI members travelled from Italy to fight alongside Ukrainian nationalist fascists of the Stepan Bandera tradition (Citati).
“CasaPound Happenings” on the global fascist website Ironmarch.org. The forum is used primarily by North Americans and their admiration for CasaPound's tactics is very clear (“CasaPound Happenings”). Finally, CasaPound's relationship with movements in the global South should be explored. Consistent with their ethnopluralist anti-immigrant racism, they support the nationalist and anti-imperialist struggles, insofar as these struggles are a means to keeping cultures separate (and Italy white). At their September 2014 national conference, a workshop was held, entitled “Solidarités-Identités: the Mediterranean path of solidarity” and featured a volunteer from the organization called Solidarités-Identités who had been active in Syria fighting with Assadist forces (CasaPound Italia, 29 Aug. 2014). Research could also grapple with the relationship between CasaPound Italia and parties from the centre and the centre-left. As CAU-N has noted, following a spate of homophobic street violence in the late 2000s, Paola Tanning of the Democratic Party met with CasaPound for discussion (CAU-N 26). This leads to the question of whether governments should aim to engage or isolate the far right. The recently uncovered potential relationship between CasaPound and a new Mafia configuration that makes profit off of immigration centres is certainly a fascinating research topic, not least because such research could develop understanding of the relationship between fascism and business.

Academic research is also needed into the options and consequences entailed by engagement or isolation. Isolation tactics include banning CasaPound under the current constitutional language that forbids the reconstitution of the Italian Fascist Party, taking away their legal status as an Association for Social Promotion, or enforcing current Italian hate speech laws, which would require that hatred against non-citizens be interpreted as hate against an identifiable group51. According to CasaPound's own reports as of February 2015, “…there are about a hundred different cases of members being on trial or awaiting trial for actions committed as part of their activism on behalf of CasaPound” (Tremblay).

51 Significantly, the anti-discrimination Mancino Law, passed in 2013, may be contributing to CasaPound's apparent immunity against being banned by the state. Explains one observer, an amendment to the law stipulates that “the Mancino Law does not concern 'organizations in the fields of politics, unions, culture, health care, education, religion or cults'…all organizations are now free to spread discriminating ideas” (Struggles in Italy, 21 Sept. 2013).
Academic work is needed on the impact of criminalization on groups like CasaPound: does criminalization have the potential to push them underground, becoming clandestine, less averse to the illegality of violence? Aside from the options of isolation or engagement, more up to date research is needed into how to prevent the further development and growth of fascist groups like CasaPound. A starting point would be an examination of non-fascist social and political institutions that are available for the socially, politically, and economically dissatisfied public to use as a vehicle to express their discontent and mobilize for democratic, non-fascist alternatives.

The field of sociology, especially political sociology, holds promise for further examinations of CasaPound. More research is needed into the demographics of CasaPound members and supporters, the socio-economic experiences that have influenced their political allegiances, and the political traditions of the families and communities from which they hail. The work of Gattinara and Froio (2014), and of Caiani and Borri (2013), has already initiated this sub-field. Their published work refers to extensive ethnographic and life-history data collected in the field. This data could be further analyzed, interpreted, and ultimately compared to Ginsborg's general observations about the proclivity of historically underdeveloped regions neglected by the Italian welfare state to develop alternative non-democratic ways of meeting needs (Ginsborg 2001, 2003, 2004). Caiani and Borri's work looks to action repertoires and resource mobilization to help understand the reasons why CasaPound and other far-right movements decide to use violence and other political strategies (2013). They found that political opportunities, as well as organizational characteristics related to dissent and democracy, help determine far-right strategies. The data used in these studies is drawn from twenty interviews with far right activists in Spain and Italy, combined with protest event analysis. This could be the starting point for further research into the impact of a number of developing circumstances, including criminalization, on CasaPound's strategic decision-making.

The present study’s focus has not extended to other areas of CPI’s rhetoric and practice, including issues such as sexuality, gender, and disability. Given traditional fascism's cult of masculinity, its focus on traditional motherhood as the defining feature of femininity, and its actual practices against
women's economic and political equality, it would be fair to predict that CasaPound's rhetoric and practices do not substantially stray far from these orientations. Also, given that Nazi Germany criminalized, imprisoned, and killed scores of gays and lesbians and people with disabilities, it would be fair, too, to predict that CasaPound has little tolerance for sexual, intellectual, or physical differences. But these are not foregone conclusions. It is quite possible that CasaPound's stances on differences in sexuality, gender, and ability opportunistically respond to contemporary liberal values of tolerance and diversity. Early evidence of this can be found in CasaPound's recent national conference which included workshops such as “Fearless Destinies: sex, love, and disability” (CasaPound Italia, 29 Aug. 2014). If this is the case, their stances probably combine some traditional fascist values with more contemporary sentiments.

Historical research about the Italian Fascist Party's pattern of development, from a small economically left-wing nationalist-populist protest movement, to a rapidly spreading violent movement against communists and workers, to a radically authoritarian state regime (Griffin 1993; Paxton 2004), suggests some patterns to look for in CasaPound over the coming years. It is possible that CPI could gain members and popularity through its presence in the spontaneous racist protests against immigrants and immigration centres, just as the Italian Fascist Party had experienced from 1920-1922 during their first campaigns of violence in the countryside. CasaPound's anti-immigrant and anti-Roma elements could eclipse the other parts of its platform that are not directly linked to immigration. Involvement in popular spontaneous anti-immigrant violence could also put transformative pressure on CasaPound's principles. New members and clusters of anti-immigrant protesters recruited to the organization could change the organizational dynamic such that the less immediately relevant proposals are dropped. Their platform could change to include short-term demand to abolish immigrant reception centres, and proposals on how to deal with migrant boats in the Mediterranean. We could see CasaPound turning to their blossoming alliance with the Northern League, already a participant in parliamentary discourse on the migrant crisis, for pre-made policies on immigration that respond to new developments within the Italian government and European Union. Shifting their focus to immigration, CasaPound could benefit from higher numbers, a more prominent profile, a sense of urgent crisis, and also the parliamentary
legitimacy that comes with allying with the Northern League. More research is needed into this aspect of the CasaPound movement.

The present study has focused on the discrepancy between CasaPound's claims to be non-racist, democratic, and a “new” type of fascism that transcends the left-right political spectrum, on the one hand, and their re-articulation of old far-right anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian political philosophy as well as their racist practices, on the other. This thesis project has delved into the economic and political history of CasaPound's recent emergence, dating back to their connection to early Mussolinian fascism. The conclusion reached is that CasaPound opportunistically uses liberal notions of citizenship, rights, and democracy to mask a more substantial illiberal, anti-democratic core. What is consistent across its semi-liberal public face and its internal illiberal core is the idea that national citizenship is the basis of individual worth and individual rights. National citizenship is the concept and set of practices on which CasaPound's legitimacy, no matter how tenuous, hinges. This brings us to an entirely different and more abstract set of research questions that beg reply.

Liberalism and fascism are both racist at least in how they depend on an agreement to preselect individuals deserving of rights. Citizenship, imagined by fascists as a vehicle for essentially strengthening current liberal practices of basing citizenship and rights on nationality, nails down the preselection of rights bearers. In other words, the hegemonic character of liberalism makes it easy for fascism to borrow its ideas about citizenship. To make it less easy for fascism to borrow from liberalism, we should trouble hegemonic citizenship altogether, and untie it and “rights” from the nation-state. This is a project that extends far beyond the limits of research into any one particular anti-immigrant movement. Rather, the case of CPI and movements similar to it prompt those who are opposed to fascism to explore new ways of critiquing the current citizenship paradigm and imagining a new one.

Research questions that could destabilize the hegemonic liberal citizenship paradigm shared with fascism could include: what are the social, political, and human rights not currently guaranteed to non-nationals in destination countries? Should social justice advocates struggle for extending citizenship to
non-nationals – for making it easier for non-nationals to become citizens – or struggle for other permanent means of ensuring rights for migrants, regardless of formal citizenship processes? Under capitalism, the right to work and receive a wage is instrumental to the right to life. Currently, migrants are generally in want of work, but given only the lowest paid and most insecure, exploitative forms of work. Alternatively, migrants are employed in areas where there are perceived skill shortages yet they are not entitled to equal rights with other skilled workers who have citizenship status (Stasiulis and Bakan 2005). Is it even possible under capitalism for migrants to have equivalent labour rights to citizens – or would this equivalency necessitate an economic system other than capitalism? What is the nature of the conflict, real or imagined, between the labour rights of citizens and the labour rights of non-citizens? Labour scholar Sam Gindin surmises: “If national citizenship doesn't really deliver to those who have lived in a state for decades, then universal citizenship has no chance of taking hold” (Gindin). Citizenship studies, migration studies, legal studies, labour studies, and especially the Marxist variants of these, are the fields that could be the best equipped to explore such questions.

7.4. Concluding thoughts: CasaPound and the Italian state

There are particular ways in which the Italian state benefits from having groups like CasaPound function at arm's length instead of being banned from the public sphere altogether. Notably, the discursive trick that the Italian constitution performs is significant. It commits the republic to human rights, while limiting these “human” rights to a narrow set of humans: Italian citizens. Without denying the real inequality between Italian citizens, one need only look at reports by Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch to see that it is the non-citizens within Italy's borders, or in the process of approaching its borders by sea, who suffer the most remarkable levels of violence without criminal investigation or appropriate public policy response. This rests on the fundamental idea that it is only citizens who are entitled to the rights that the state can fulfill. In this way, the Italian Constitution is a paradox: it stands for presumably universal democracy, solidarity, and human rights,

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52 Many articles of the constitution qualify that it applies to “citizens” and otherwise it is assumed that national constitutions apply to citizens only.
but only for its citizens, who are materially ensured by law to be as white as possible. CP does not have to try very hard to incorporate national chauvinism into its definition of who can participate in and benefit from their welfare-for-whites strategy – they are using constructs that are already made available to them by the state. Specifically, the crafting of the Italian Constitution's Article 18 about the freedom of association can be read as an attempt to avoid social conflict, particularly between labour unions and the government. It is also the Article that enables CasaPound to openly organize. Greek lawyer Thanasis Kampagiannis, writing about the relationship between Greek state and Greek fascist organization Golden Dawn⁵⁴, observes of parliamentary democracy:

...through the process of electing the government once every four years, i.e. the political heads of the state, it legitimises it(self) among the majority of the population, disguising it as a “neutral state, of all citizens”. A prerequisite for this is to grant elementary liberties to the organisation of those below (or even to organisations where those below can at least see the imprint of their interests). (Kampagiannis)

In this way, the freedom of association, combined with the right to vote, convinces the populace that they have a semblance of control over their lives. The fact that an organization like CasaPound can legally exist upholds popular belief in the democratic and free character of the state and its citizens. CasaPound's existence re-legitimizes the state that legitimized it in the first place.

Further, CasaPound enforces, through incitement and public rhetoric, Italy's strict citizenship laws. The promise of violence against migrants in Italy may have a real affect on migrants' decisions to travel to or settle in Italy. In general, the state economically benefits from giving legal autonomy and funds to grassroots associations because these groups undertake a cheaper version of what is normally one of the state's functions: providing a social safety net, staffed mostly by volunteers instead of by public servants. In the case of CasaPound, the task they perform is citizenship enforcement. The state can count on arm's length organizations like CasaPound to do join in inciting public hatred against migrants

⁵⁴ CasaPound Italia considers Golden Dawn a compatriot group. Evidence of this can be found in various postings on the CasaPound Italia page, such as this one from November 28, 2013: “Facebook has removed our poster about the conference with Golden Dawn which will be held on Friday 29 at Casapound Rome at 8 Napoleon III Street. Too bad, now you are all informed” (CasaPound Italia, 28 Nov. 2013).
and Roma, as well as against those who defend them. State Berteni, Giordano, and Sartori: “The ruling parties find Casa Pound's extreme stances useful to push the level of the political debate even further around social control, whilst at the same time widening their electoral and non-electoral reach” (Berteni, Giordano, Sartori). The state already engages in violence against migrants and Roma, but the fact that CP can incite public hatred without demobilizing consequences suggests that the state welcomes this extra help.

One possible explanation for the state's non-interference in regard to CasaPound's violence and incitement against migrants, Roma, and anti-fascists, is that this violence is essential to maintaining a public of citizens fortified against bodies marked as essentially different and undeserving of rights. It raises the stakes for those who are considering defying the racist status quo. When CasaPound makes an example out of street-level anti-fascists, who are against the state in general and its racist conception of citizenship in particular – as happened in the 2008 Piazza Navona incidents-- the state does not lay charges, denounce the fascists, or take away their status as an Association for Social Promotion. CasaPound undertakes the dirty work of physically battling with anti-fascists in the streets and this is of no consequence to their legal status nor does it diminish its legitimacy as a “solidaristic” Association for Social Promotion.

The result is a cycle of legitimization. The state legitimizes and normalizes this anti-democratic, fascist, and racist organization. CasaPound then uses the normalcy granted by the presumably democratic state to rearticulate its actual anti-democratic practices. The state in turn reaps what it sows: the organization of public sentiment against granting citizenship rights to migrants and Roma, and public participation in state-led violence against these “others” and in defence of an allegedly non-racist, liberal, democratic nation-state.


CasaPound Sardegna. “Crisi: Sassari, CasaPound Distribuisce 200 kg di Pasta Gratis a Latte Dolce.”


"CLASSÉ Signs the 'We Are Many Youth, But With One Struggle' Manifesto!” Stop the Hike.


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"Scontri a Tor Sapienza Con Estrema Destra Che Aizza, La Regia è Di Mafia Capitale." *LazioLive.*


Struggles in Italy. "Capital Mafia: Fascists, Politicians, Cooperatives and the Roman Mob."


---. "Racist Attack on Political Asylum Seekers' Centre in Rome and New Project for Italian Right."


