Strike a Pose: Propaganda in Augustus’ and Mussolini’s Imperial Imagery

Colleen Syler Parker
Old Dominion University

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STRIKE A POSE: PROPAGANDA

IN AUGUSTUS’ AND MUSSOLINI’S IMPERIAL IMAGERY

by

Colleen Syler Parker
B.A. August 1990, Virginia Commonwealth University
M.T. May 1995, Virginia Commonwealth University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
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Approved by:

\underline{\text{Kathy Pearson (Director)}}

\underline{\text{Maura Hametz (Member)}}

\underline{\text{Elizabeth Zahoni (Member)}}
In Ancient Rome, the transition from Republic to Empire was a volatile time. Augustus used his skills as a propagandist to consolidate his military position and craft specific images after the death of Julius Caesar. Augustus needed to appeal to Roman ideals in leadership, and recover the morality and traditional family values which had become lost in the Late Republic. In conjunction with this, he attempted to bolster religion and create a lasting legacy in a dynastic and architecturally structural sense.

Almost two thousand years later, Mussolini echoed many of the same themes as Augustus in his use of romanità. He capitalized on traditional ideas of ancient Rome to consolidate power within his fascist government and establish himself as Il Duce. Also, Mussolini used fascist ideology to manipulate the tenets of the Catholic Church to renegotiate the position and image of religion in fascism and his role within that religion.

The effectiveness of each ruler's propaganda varied due to the forceful implementation of his agenda and outside political factors that existed during the time in which these men lived. This paper studies Augustus' and Mussolini's use of propagandist methods in establishing the specific images each man wanted the people to embrace and, in some cases emulate, during their respective regimes.
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Thanks to Glenn Bugh of Virginia Tech who has graciously offered a sounding ear and wonderful pictures to accompany my text. Much heartfelt appreciation goes to
Arthur Engel, who cultivated my love of history many moons ago at VCU, first as a professor then as a valued friend. As Livy said in his Histories, "Potius sero quam numquam." Gratias multas tibi ago, anime mi. Thanks to my friends and co-workers who made sure I remembered how to breathe and laugh and supported me throughout the process. My deepest gratitude goes to my wonderful husband, Robin Parker who, with infinite patience, listened to me time and again and has now become quite knowledgeable on Augustus and Mussolini, despite his best efforts to the contrary. Because of his encouragement, compassion and humor, this thesis was possible.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, charismatic leaders have employed propaganda to amass power and establish empires. Augustus and Mussolini realized the importance of propaganda as a tool to control the actions and attitudes of society to perpetuate propagandist images. Both Augustus and Mussolini were skillful manipulators in that they employed a wide variety of methods to persuade the masses to accept their visions for Rome and Italy. The most influential rulers mastered multiple techniques using coinage, literature, speeches, and public games to attract throngs of cheering crowds. Those seeking office swayed citizens with games and spectacles, monuments and buildings constructed to glorify people or deeds, parades through the streets, and boldly colored posters or graffiti on city walls displaying political campaign slogans.

Effective propaganda uses the best available methods of communication to persuade audiences. It can also manipulate a person or group of people to believe or behave in a particular or predicted manner. Rulers can control these methods through political means or through cultural programs and various forms of visual imagery. The actuality of a ruler’s propaganda will vary due to that leader’s ability to implement his agenda and the influences of outside political factors during the time in which he lived.

Augustus held a particular vision for his new government. He amassed a number of honors from Princeps to Pontifex Maximus that covered the roles necessary to win and

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maintain power. He used various methods of propaganda to sway the Senate and the Roman people to accept him, fulfill his vision, and make it part of their daily existence. These methods included games, military parades, coinage, buildings, statuary, literature, governmental dictates, and the manipulation of his family to consolidate power and crafted images of himself to reinforce the titles he amassed in the process.

In the aftermath of World War I, Mussolini echoed a majority of Augustan themes through his own agenda for fascist Italy. He came to power with a goal to unify Italy and recreate the glory and prestige that the Roman empire possessed under Augustus. The events Mussolini’s propaganda set forth showed both continuity with ancient Rome and changes that he had to work within his government. Modernity presented its own set of challenges for Mussolini in dealing with the evolution of political, cultural and religious issues. Mussolini also had new methods and means of propaganda techniques at his disposal that were far beyond what Augustus possessed. These included the cinema, radio and the speed with which information could travel, not only through Italy, but worldwide. Unlike Augustus, Mussolini’s voice, gestures and demeanor could be heard and viewed by the masses.

While the message is important, so is the means of conveying that message. Each man faced his own unique set of circumstances that necessitated particular methods to appeal to the different levels of Roman and Italian society and establish appropriate images they wished to present that would cement their goal of consolidating power. This thesis examines the similarities of Augustus’ and Mussolini’s use of propaganda to foster a specific image within each ruler’s establishment of a new authoritarian government. It
also views the complexities each faced in crafting these images due to the changing atmosphere over the course of history and how history has treated the images.

**Augustus**

After winning victory over his enemies, Octavian attempted to clear his reputation from any lingering blame through an aggressive propaganda campaign, manufacturing a positive image of himself for the Roman people to respect and emulate as he worked to establish a peaceful rule.² Octavian portrayed himself as a victorious general, a powerful statesman, father figure, and head of religion to his citizens. Each honor or new title he acquired presented challenges; however, in projecting these leadership images, he was able to consolidate power, cement his imperial dynasty and carry through his vision for Rome. Reinventing a new image would be a hard fought battle because bloody proscriptions, civil war, and negative propaganda tainted the reputations of Marc Antony, Aemilius Lepidus and Octavian (later Augustus), members of the second triumvirate.

Quite a number of sources exist from ancient times in various forms of completion. Collectively, these accounts provide opportunities to piece together events and the interactions of people, and to gain outside perspectives that a single account may not provide. Individually, each work suffers from some deficiencies such as dubious authentication of facts, or the influence of their own times, but remains valuable in corroborating or refuting what has already been written. Specific authors will be addressed in order of historical importance. For Augustan propaganda, early authors had the benefit of living at or around the time of the principate and had firsthand knowledge

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or even personal contact with the emperor. Later authors had access to earlier authors and works that no longer exist. However, their accounts are not always historically accurate. Fergus Millar noted that it was standard practice for ancient historians to use other sources to construct their accounts.³

The most important work from the principate was Augustus’ own *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (*Res Gestae*) or, The Accomplishments of the Divine Augustus. Augustus wrote this personal glorification of his deeds when he was seventy-six years old and able to reflect on his life. It systematically recounted projects he instituted that were important to his empire, how he wanted to be remembered, and what he accomplished for the people during his reign.⁴ This autobiographical cataloguing of deeds and rationalizations resulted in Augustus’ propagandist legacy to those who were important in his success of making Rome a powerful empire.

Augustus inscribed this work in both Latin and Greek onto bronze tablets and displayed it in front of his vast Mausoleum in the *Campus Martius* near his other great monument, the *Ara Pacis*. As would any ruler wanting to rewrite his own political memory and perpetuate his propaganda, Augustus exaggerated his role in domestic affairs and military victories throughout the work in order to maintain the larger than life image he had created.⁵ Unfortunately, he took credit for many of the accomplishments made by others, such as Agrippa, his trusted advisor, son-in-law and at one time, his


accepted successor. The *Res Gestae* is also important for what it omits. Augustus passed over much detail in his dealings with Antony and Cicero and his interactions with them in the political turmoil after Caesar’s death.

Livy was one of the first historians to write about Augustus and the principate, but Livy’s grandiose history of Rome stopped at 9 BCE and much of it was lost. Tacitus claimed that Augustus called Livy a Pompeian for his views, but in one of his famous claims of clemency, Augustus overlooked this and still considered him a friend. Livy’s narrative of Roman history paralleled much of Augustus’ *Res Gestae*. Livy echoed and reinforced many of Augustus’ ideas about the restitution of the republic through his work. Livy’s narrative also wrote favorably about Augustus’ “influence to monopolize historical facts in the service of his own ideological program.”

Livy enjoyed a clean slate in recounting the early years of Rome and the rise of Octavian to his position of Augustus. Livy enhanced the greatness that was Rome and highlighted important people in Roman history to whom regular Romans could relate. He wrote of the brave Sabine women who mediated a truce between their fathers and the husbands who abducted them. This well-known piece of history would have lent more power to Octavia’s plight with Antony after she mediated for her brother during the

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7 Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.


11 Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.9-13.
Battle of Actium. This helped shape the ideology by reinforcing powerful propaganda imagery and strong feelings of a common nationality within the Roman people.

Cicero was a novus homo; he was not an historian, but an orator and voluminous letter writer. His valuable insight on the inner workings of the upper class and personal involvement with the key players of the Late Republic provides a wealth of material in conjunction with historical accounts. Cicero’s personal and public attacks against Marc Antony in the Philippics made a powerful enemy of Antony; Octavian used these writings as negative propaganda to fuel his own war against Marc Antony and later, even Cicero himself.12 During the proscriptions not even Octavian could save Cicero against Antony’s wrath.

Cassius Dio is one of the most important resources for scholars to study concerning the Augustan Age. Of senatorial rank, Dio Cassius, lived during the reign of Commodus and served as governor of Smyrna on the western coast of Turkey.13 He is most famous for his Roman History (Historia Romana), which, ironically, he wrote in Greek. Much of his Roman History no longer exist but he had access to important sources now lost, and he provided detailed, chronological descriptions of accomplishments of Augustus and the people who surrounded him. Books 51-56, covering the time of Augustus, have survived intact and provide insights on his rise to power and subsequent reign as well as filling in gaps missing in history.14

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13 Modern day Izmir.

An avowed monarchist, Dio's own commentary revealed that he favored the Augustan system and attempted to provide an unbiased account. He saw that in reality Augustus was not a military leader and even found some of his deeds and behavior during the proscriptions reprehensible. However, over the course of his writing, Dio generally praised Augustus' development of the principate and attempted to mitigate some of his less than honorable deeds. Dio encapsulated much of Augustus' rule in Tiberius' funeral speech for Augustus in Book 38. Through Tiberius, Dio recounted all the deeds Augustus accomplished, awards he received, and beneficences he granted to the people. Based on this account, Dio argued that Augustus deserved the title of *Pater Patriae*.

The early second century author Tacitus held many high governmental positions and through these acquired an insider's perspective of imperial workings. Tacitus offered a retrospective analysis of Augustus' personal and governmental character and insight into the later reign of Augustus. His important work on the Augustan principate, *The Annals*, began with the death of Augustus in 14 AD, and was more comprehensive on the reign of Tiberius.

Tacitus claimed it was his plan to be objective towards his treatment of the "little bit [that he wrote] about Augustus and the principate of Tiberius without anger or partiality," but this was not always the case. Tacitus dismissed the principate as

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16 Dio 56.38.1-41.9.

Augustus’ “cover for the reality of overwhelming military strength that rested on control of the armies and backing of the mass of the people and was reinforced by the formation of a dynasty.” Later authors such as Appian and Dio acknowledged that this may have been part of Augustus’ early career, but Tacitus did not go in to the depths of transformation that they did.

Tacitus focused on the flaws in the family and was not convinced that Augustus was successful in returning Rome to the greatness of the Republic, calling it not the res publica restituta but constitutam rem publicam. He gave a scathing indictment of the Augustus’ principate, claiming it was a necessary evil and that Augustus was more interested in himself rather than Rome. Tacitus conceded that, at the time, Rome did need a strong, single figure to lead it out of the chaos.

Suetonius was a member of the equestrian class and held offices under the emperors Trajan and Hadrian. It was then that he began to write his biographies or Lives. He displayed a fair degree of objectivity towards his subjects and did not seek to delve into and analyze his characters as much as Plutarch did. He offered a more factual style of writing and was quite honest in showing Augustus’ use of nationalistic propaganda. He believed that Augustus thought about restoring the republic, but did not do so due to the instability of the early state. Augustus had “hopes of laying the lasting foundation of

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20 Galinsky, 77.
political stability, and of winning the reputation of *optimi status auctor* (the author of the best settlement).”

Plutarch issued a caveat for the reader that he was not writing exact histories so much as showing the characters of the lives he presented through their deeds. While many historical events are accurate, his accounts of the behavior and whims of the people cannot be taken as historically reliable. Plutarch’s accounts of the *Life of Antony* and *Life of Cicero* included a great deal of information on Octavian’s and Antony’s relationship and insights into Roman politics during the second triumvirate. Plutarch’s *Life of Antony* and *Life of Octavian* helped bolster Octavian’s reputation by detailing many of his strengths as a political and military leader while casting Antony as his anthesis.

Velleius Paterculus lived during the early empire and served in the military under Tiberius. His work *History of Rome* is uniquely valuable because it gave significant detail from that period and covered the years between the works of Livy and Tacitus. Although not as popular as the more celebrated historians, other contemporary scholars argue that Paterculus’s innocent enthusiasm gave a more striking account of events and people than the polished, trained rhetoric produced at the time. Velleius was not intentionally deceptive in his recounting of events, but his loyalty to the reigns of

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Tiberius and Augustus tended to color his objectivity and led him to exonerate Augustus in many of his actions.\textsuperscript{24}

Appian lived in the second century after Augustus and admired Augustus and his principate. He, like Dio, gave full accounts of the Late Republic period, but Appian’s account of Antony from 35-31BCE was lost.\textsuperscript{25} His views also emulate Dio in establishing a difference in his view of Octavian and his ruthless behavior during the triumvirate, and the more polished Augustus in his principate.

The poet Ovid, famous for his love poems, explored his own personal trials in his infamous poem \textit{Tristia}. Ovid wrote \textit{Tristia} in approximately 2 BCE when he claimed his exile was only due to a poem and a mistake, \textit{carmina et error}.\textsuperscript{26} He refused to name the error and claimed in his autobiographical section that an author is not always the subject in his poetry, but some scholars connect this poem with the indiscretions and moral indecency scandal of Julia the younger.\textsuperscript{27} From exile he appealed to Augustus’ wife Livia to intercede with Augustus on his behalf. This benefitted Augustus’ political propaganda by promoting his wife and elevating her status by placing her in the role of mediator.


\textsuperscript{27} Ovid \textit{Tr} 2.10. Although Sallust mentioned nothing factual about Sempronia’s having actual involvement in the Catilinarian Conspiracy’s proceedings, he maligned her character as evidence of what could happen when women took an active role in the public sphere. Sallust called her “masculine in her behavior and wanton in her sexual pursuits.” Sallust, \textit{Catafiniae Coniuratio} trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1955), 25.
Sallust lived during the late republic and had retired from political life by the time Octavian came to Rome. His main contribution was his work on the Catiliniarian Conspiracy. It is only referenced here for its view on Sempronia, the mother of Fulvia, whom he claimed was "wanton in her passions" and "careless with her money and her reputation." She had "committed many crimes which were audacious enough to be the work of a man."28 The negative Republican view of women who dared to venture beyond the accepted, traditional roles and into the public matters of men had great bearing on Octavian's propaganda against Fulvia during the Perusine War.

In modern historiography, Ronald Syme commanded a leading voice on the revolutionary ideology of the Augustan Age. His wrote his pioneering work, *The Roman Revolution*, in 1939 as a thinly veiled attack on Mussolini’s quest for Italian domination. Syme argued that Augustus’ violent, revolutionary tactics were necessary against a republic that was no longer able to govern effectively.29 After the disorder of the Civil Wars, Romans appeared ready to surrender their freedoms. This public attitude allowed Augustus to succeed in his bid for power and implement a strict government that was not a return to the Republic.30 Syme stated that the republic was rife with propaganda in this revolutionary period, and that the "purpose of propaganda was threefold — to win the appearance of legality for measures of violence, to seduce the supporters of a rival party and to stampede the neutral or non-political elements."31 Augustus succeeded too well,

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28 Sal *Cat* 25, 40.
then used his authority within the government to promote various images to secure power.

Many decades later, Karl Galinsky wrote *Augustan Culture* challenging Syme’s ideas. Galinsky believed that Augustus’ transition from republic to principate was a more gradual, cultural change, rather than the violent revolution of Ronald Syme’s view. Galinsky argued that propagandists’ overt attempts to “influence the thinking of people” can be viewed too simplistically with regard to the establishment of such an empire after a civil war. However, his analysis of propaganda through imagery does support the evolution of Augustus over time in establishing the principate and his subsequent dynasty.

The historian Kenneth Scott’s most relevant works examined the use of propaganda in the late republic and how it detailed distinctive periods and events concerning Octavian’s behavior and ascent to power. Scott showed Octavian’s unscrupulous use of positive and negative propaganda to achieve his ends. In one instance, Octavian burned letters “defaming his character or policies.” Scott also linked Mussolini’s use of imperial themes to the fascist regime. That he wrote this during the early ascent of Mussolini gave it a more powerful impact than it would have had looking at Mussolini’s ideas in retrospect.

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Paul Zanker encapsulated the theme of his work directly in its title, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. In persuasion, imagery is a very powerful tool. For Augustus, visual imagery was one of the most important means he possessed to appeal to the masses. The images and important themes that Augustus wished to idealize for the Roman people became a "visual language" within his propaganda.  

Zanker analyzed the buildings, statues, coins and other monuments that Augustus used to manifest his transformations, and showed how this language spoke to the people and the gradual effect it had on Augustus throughout his principate.  

Beth Severy examined the use of family in Augustus’ imperial power to demonstrate that propaganda and legislation “politicized family roles” and transformed Augustus’ family into a state institution which became crucial in the principate.  

Augustus manipulated this image of *paterfamilias* and used it to create his image of a proper Roman statesman. Severy’s descriptions involve all aspects of the family as image-building propaganda, from arraigned marriages to statuary and coinage, and support the premise of Augustus’ transformations.

Through a series of essays, Barbara Levick’s work *Augustus: Image and Substance* documents the steps Augustus took in his bid for absolute power. She analyzes and challenges the accepted version of image transformation in Augustus’ own personality cult and his self-presentation through propaganda.  

Levick acknowledges that Octavian behaved treacherously in his quest for power and that his culpability

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36 Zanker, 3.


equaled that of Antony.\textsuperscript{39} In her discussion of how Augustus transformed into a more benevolent ruler, she follows the Tacitean argument that these transformations were “pleasing to the apparent beneficiaries – but poisonous to freedom.”\textsuperscript{40} Augustus desired sole power and used whatever methods of propaganda available to him to achieve his ends.

Another very important focus of propaganda is coinage and the scholarship devoted to the use of coins as propaganda is immense.\textsuperscript{41} Coins were used daily throughout the empire, and sometimes commemorated specific events. Since the Republic, coins had progressed from mythological and historical designs to “the representation of a ‘virtue’, with its moral content, provid[ing] a reference to contemporary events.”\textsuperscript{42} Octavian personally oversaw mints when he travelled through the eastern provinces. He initiated the images of Pax and Victoria he wished displayed on coins after he deposed Antony and Cleopatra.\textsuperscript{43} In that particular case, he used coins to send a message that would be widely distributed around the empire and disseminated to the eastern provinces.

\textsuperscript{39} Levick, 27, 30.

\textsuperscript{40} Levick, 115.

\textsuperscript{41} For a full treatment of coins in propaganda, see also Harold Mattingly \textit{Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum. Vol. I, Augustus to Vitellius} (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1965), and C.H. V. Sutherland’s \textit{Roman Coins} (New York: Putnam, 1974).


\textsuperscript{43} Sutherland, \textit{Coinage}, 29.
The best propaganda is most often current and timely, but the imagery on coins was a durable reminder for long periods of time. Coins could be minted anywhere in the empire and put into circulation quickly. They promoted commemorative events or new ideas. Augustus honored his daughter Julia’s fertility by promoting her and her sons’ images on coins, making her the second woman honored in this manner. His wife Livia became a religious symbol of fertility and prosperity through the use of her image in coinage which remained in use from Augustus’ rule through that of the Emperor Galba.

Augustus also had a great vision for transforming the visual landscape of Rome and took great pride in his restoration and construction of monuments, buildings, and the splendid Forum of Augustus. In the Res Gestae, he detailed each construction, how much its use benefitted the public, and for what honor or to which person it was dedicated. Sometimes he also revealed the inspiration for the monuments he restored or created. Each statue, monument or temple was part of the propaganda he needed for his public images. These included military tributes, general buildings for public welfare, and temples that he restored or built to bolster the moral and religious beliefs that he felt were lacking in society.

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Mussolini

Two thousand years after Augustus, Mussolini echoed similar themes in his propaganda. From the emergence of fascism, sources have analyzed all aspects of Mussolini's adoption of Augustan propaganda. Through Mussolini's speeches, autobiographical accounts, pictures and videos, modern historians can trace how Mussolini wanted the world to view him. The texts of his speeches display the progression of Mussolini's self image in his rise to power. A speech in 1914 showed an angry, socialist Mussolini prophesying, "But you have not seen the last of me!"47 In this and his early speeches, the youthful excitement and promise of action burst forth. Later, when temporarily exiled in Salò, his writing became more subdued as when he acknowledged, "[w]e must drink this bitter cup to the dregs. Only after we have touched bottom can we hope to rise again. Only intolerance of their humiliation will endow Italians with the strength to rise above it."48

Mussolini's ideas and reputation benefitted from the strong convictions of those who surrounded him in his early days. Giovanni Gentile initially established his reputation as a Professor of Historical Philosophy at the Universities of Palermo and Rome. He became Mussolini's Minister of Public Instruction in 1923 and was vocal in expressing his ideas of social and political reforms in Italy, emphasizing "coercion over consensus."49 One of his works from 1928, "The Philosophic Basis of Fascism" outlined


the developing ideas of fascism starting with the Risorgimento in the late 1800s. Gentile traced fascism in terms of philosophy, nationalism, and religion, although he stopped short of calling fascism a religion. While Mussolini received much of the credit, Gentile wrote the Doctrine of Fascism in 1932. By this time, Mussolini had been in control of the Italian government for ten years and fascism was well ensconced.

Margherita Sarfatti was another important influence on Mussolini during the early stages of fascism. One of his early, long-term mistresses, she was a driving force behind his personality cult which formed the platform for many of his propagandist initiatives. Her extremely popular biography of Mussolini, Dux, published in 1926, created the myth of Mussolini as a youthful, courageous "true Italian," and new Roman emperor. The success of this biography at the height of Mussolini’s career helped to solidify the image of Il Duce that Mussolini wanted the world to see.

Emil Ludwig, a German journalist, presented an appealing portrait of Mussolini that revealed more about him than just politics. Ludwig spent time casually interviewing Mussolini and published it as Talks with Mussolini. It covered seemingly random topics with each chapter centered on discussion of a different question. Ludwig’s comments on Mussolini’s verbal and physical behaviors, combined with Mussolini’s answers, were very positive. They reinforced Mussolini in a range of images, from Il Duce to a simple

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“patriarchal” ruler who only desired the best for his country. Ludwig’s romanticized image of a heroic Mussolini created an idealistic portrait of a larger than life leader and perpetuated the almost mythic cult of Il Duce.

Since Mussolini’s ascension to power, historians have studied his regime and written extensively about his fascist ideology. An important work in English still considered influential today is Ronald Syme’s Roman Revolution, published in 1939, on the eve of World War II in Europe. Although it covered the Roman transition from republic to empire, it caused a stir with its harsh treatment of Augustus and thinly veiled but controversial parallel with Mussolini.

Other historians such as Kenneth Scott and A. Pelzer Wagener were also well established classicists and wrote about Mussolini’s fascination with ancient Rome. Kenneth Scott had already produced an article on Augustan propaganda when he wrote “Mussolini and the Roman Empire” in 1932 about a “young intellectual” who was “called by destiny as that other Italian [Augustus] had been so long before him.” Unlike Syme, Scott admired Mussolini and all he accomplished in Italy that paralleled Augustus’ principate and wrote positively about Mussolini’s use of romanità, or the concept of Romanness, in national identity. While Wagener made similar comparisons between the early empire and fascist Italy and, in turn, Augustus and Mussolini, he was less enthusiastic than Scott. He was more cautious in his praise of Mussolini, but still felt

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54 Emil Ludwig, Talks with Mussolini (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1933), 116.

55 Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 55.

56 Syme, Roman Revolution, 2.

that Mussolini possessed the ability to lead Italy toward expansive glory and prestige as Augustus had done.\textsuperscript{58} Wagener saw fascism as a positive, beneficial move for Italy and a better alternative than Communism which was more dangerous to society.\textsuperscript{59}

Although the previous government oversaw restoration and archaeological excavations of ancient sites, Mussolini emphasized a resurgence in these areas, specifically in the Augustan monuments to instill national pride in the Italians which formed an important part of his propaganda. Mussolini hired archaeologists and spent many years excavating and restoring ancient structures. He also restructured entire areas of Rome to reflect Augustan architecture as "the utmost importance in the self-representation of Fascism."\textsuperscript{60}

Borden Painter's in-depth analysis of the archaeological aspects of romanità in and around Rome revealed Mussolini's propagandist purpose in recovering and glorifying the visual imagery of the Roman empire for the masses. Mussolini "used the city [of Rome] as his stage to project himself and his fascist revolution to Italy and to the world," with the backdrop of monuments and architecture tracing its strong lineage to imperial Rome.\textsuperscript{61} These structures Mussolini chose to reconstruct precisely linked themes he deemed important to his propaganda.

In \textit{Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy}, Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi detailed the effect that pageantry and the symbolic nature of Rome had


\textsuperscript{59} Wagener, 677.


\textsuperscript{61} Borden W. Painter, \textit{Mussolini's Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 158.
on fascism. While she acknowledged Gentile’s “cultural-political” approach of “politics as religion,” she believed that Mussolini’s agenda was more complex and he had an aesthetic vision to his regime.\textsuperscript{62} Her ideas on the relationships of symbols and modern methods of propaganda on Mussolini’s rule echo those of Paul Zanker and his explanation of Augustan imagery.

Prominent biographers, such as Robert Bosworth, Peter Neville, and Denis Mack-Smith have agreed that Mussolini used any means to promote his own fascist agenda and sway people to believe in his regime and its propagandist policies.\textsuperscript{63} These authors viewed Mussolini in retrospect and analyzed his actions in the wake of historical outcomes, whereas Ludwig sat through many personal conversations with Mussolini and wrote a much more personal account.

Mussolini grew up amidst the tension in Italy concerning the Roman Question and his own words and turbulent relationship with the Catholic Church were often contradictory and color his interactions during his regime. In his political writings and speeches, Mussolini was very vocal about his anti-clerical leanings which he hid when these views contradicted his negotiations with the Church during the Lateran Accords.

Edwin Hoyt claimed that Mussolini’s Catholic leanings were not just a show; his mother ingrained Catholicism in him, his outward anti-Catholic rhetoric was not real, and any attacks on the Church were “calculated by Mussolini to please his Fascist extremists.”\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} Falasca-Zamponi, 7-9.


\textsuperscript{64} Edwin P. Hoyt, \textit{Mussolini's Empire: The Rise and Fall of the Fascist Vision} (New York: Wiley, 1994), 109, 111.
Other historians were more severe in their critiques of Mussolini’s religious leanings. Peter Kent stated that Mussolini was irreverent and his only interest in religion was what it could do for his political prospects in Italy.\footnote{Peter Kent, \textit{The Pope and the Duce: The International Impact of the Lateran Agreements} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 9.} John Pollard argued that while Mussolini realized the important influence of the Church and its policies in Italy, he conducted his negotiations “without abandoning any of his instinctive and lifelong anticlericalism and atheism.”\footnote{John Pollard, \textit{The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929-32: A Study in Conflict} (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22.} Still, Mussolini infused fascism with qualities that appealed to the deeply religious base in Italy while still promoting his own propaganda. All of these interpretations shift focus when analyzed alongside Giovanni Gentile’s claim of fascism as the state doctrine.

Emilio Gentile took the relationship between fascism and religion one step further by claiming that fascism replaced Christianity as the religion of Mussolini’s new empire. This sacralization of politics refocused the arguments between the Catholic Church and the fascists by turning fascism into a new, independent religion. Some of fascism’s ideology set out to mimic aspects of the Catholic Church and derived much of its moral fiber from it. Gentile also explained that \textit{romanità} fit into this “fascist mythology” as a symbol of the Italian’s “rebirth as the spiritual heirs of the ancient Romans.”\footnote{Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," \textit{Journal of Contemporary History} 25, no. 3 (1990): 245.} He also contrasts Sarfatti’s claim that she helped create the myth of Il Duce with the view that it emerged from the ‘fascist religion’ which came about over the course of Mussolini’s rule.
Jan Nelis, a leading authority in Mussolini’s use of romanità, has published countless articles and books that link Mussolini’s rationale in drawing people towards romanità that Mussolini saw as central to Italian fascism.\textsuperscript{68} One important area of Nelis’ research looks at Mussolini’s involvement in the use of romanità through his speeches and writings. He traces how Mussolini viewed the Classical past through its mistakes and successes and how modern Italy could emulate the regeneration Augustus achieved in his principate.\textsuperscript{69} Nelis’ ideas have also built on Emilio Gentile’s ideas of sacralization and expanded them through their relationship with romanità in fascist culture and in Mussolini’s discourse.\textsuperscript{70} Nelis’ works provide a solid bridge between those of Falasca-Zamponi and Emilio Gentile.

Claudio Fogu’s work, \textit{The Historic Imaginary}, examines the “fascist vision of history” from ideology, to romanità and religion and extols Giovanni’s crucial role in its formation.\textsuperscript{71} From this analysis, he expands on the idea of modernity in fascist ideology and the creation of the \textit{Il Duce} mythos. Fogu claimed that the popular motto, “\textit{Il fascismo fa la storia, non la scrive} (Fascism makes history, it does not write it),” encapsulated modernity in Mussolini’s regime.\textsuperscript{72} Mussolini used the nationalist ideas of Italy’s past as a spark to motivate the Italian masses towards his fascist goals. Ultimately, he concluded


\textsuperscript{69} Nelis, “Constructing Fascist Identity,” 400.

\textsuperscript{70} Nelis, “Constructing Fascist Identity,” 393.

\textsuperscript{71} Claudio Fogu, \textit{The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 7, 25.

\textsuperscript{72} Fogu, 12, 21, 193.
that fascism controlled the immediacy of the past in present history. This may be the case ideologically, but it is only part of the message Mussolini attempted to convey to the people through his fascist government. His use of tangible propaganda revered the past but expanded on it in the present to form new images in the manner of ancient Rome.

While Augustus laid the basic structure for the dynastic empire that survived him, Mussolini capitalized on the legacy of this empire when he constructed his own based on fascism and modernity. Both men restructured their propaganda techniques to capture the will of the people to fulfill a specific agenda. Chapter two offers an in-depth look at Augustus from his early days in the second triumvirate when he was still known as Octavian, to his transformation after the Civil Wars. It will explain how he used propaganda to successively change his image from a feared, ruthless general, to a paternalistic statesman, and finally, the head of the state religion. Each image adapted to the changing times, especially in defeating his enemies, controlling society and establishing dynastic power.

Chapter three explains how Mussolini used romanità and fascism to capitalize on existing struggles occurring in Italy during the interwar period. Mussolini instilled patriotic nationalism in the Italian people through his heavy use of propaganda. Like Augustus, he used chameleon-like skills to change his image and create an almost mythic presence. Unlike Augustus, the state did not control religion. The Church's influence on Italian society meant that Mussolini had to balance a delicate situation with the people while appealing to their spiritual and cultural mentalities in re-engineering the pagan empire of the Caesars. As fascism gained acceptance, it became an alternative to

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73 Fogu, 193.
Catholicism as Mussolini treated fascism as a state religion in his efforts to sway the affection of the masses.\textsuperscript{74}

Chapter four takes a collective look at the results of both Augustus' and Mussolini's use of propaganda in crafting various images throughout their respective rules. Each man faced the challenge of pulling a country together after a revolution and made similar decisions in their quest for sole power. Mussolini had the benefit of looking back to the Augustan principate for inspiration and a common national identity for the Italian people. The country had changed since the days of the Roman empire and Mussolini faced issues with modernity which Augustus did not have.

\textsuperscript{74} E. Gentile, "Political Religion," 237.
CHAPTER II

AUGUSTAN PROPAGANDA

"commentum id se, ut ad illorum vitam velut ad exemplar et ipse, dum viveret, et
insequentium aetatium principes exigerentur a civibus."\(^1\)

Victorious General

Following the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, both Antony and Octavian claimed
his legacy: Antony by merit and Octavian by inheritance. Outwardly, they donned a
facade of cooperation, but privately, there was a great deal of animosity between the
two.\(^2\) Caesar’s widow Calpurnia appointed Antony executor of Caesar’s estate after his
death. When Octavian came to claim his inheritance, he discovered that Antony had
siphoned money from it.\(^3\) Antony thought he could simply dismiss this youth and be the
one to take Caesar’s place in society. He had served with Caesar in government, had
many military victories to his credit, and seemed a likely successor. Antony opposed
Octavian as Caesar’s heir and blocked Octavian from public offices, but Octavian made
allies in the Senate and fostered public goodwill that unsettled Antony enough to
reconsider.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Suet. Aug. 31.5. My translation is, "I entrust this [dedicating temples and honoring the memories
of great leaders from Rome’s beginnings], while I might live my life just as leaders of a succeeding age will
be demanded theyse themselves as a model to those [men] by the citizens."

\(^2\) Dio xlv 11.1.

\(^3\) Plut. Ant. 26.1.

Octavian posed a political threat to Antony’s own power and financial benefit from Caesar’s estate. Unlike Caesar or Antony, Octavian had little military background. Nicolaus of Damascus claimed that Octavian wished to join Caesar in battle but that Octavian’s mother, Atia, opposed this and Caesar did not press the issue out of consideration for Octavian’s poor health. Octavian needed to establish himself militarily in the tradition of past generals to compete with Antony’s accomplishments and reputation and could use the association of someone with Antony’s reputation and military experience. However, by forming a partnership, they each served the other’s needs. With Octavian, Antony could retain Caesar’s supports for his own political gain.

The nineteen year old Octavian aligned himself with Antony and Lepidus in 43BCE. Although it was not a harmonious union, they portrayed it as such, even issuing coinage to commemorate the triumvirate, illustrating their alliance publically (see Appendix, Figure 1). However, even after joining forces against Caesar’s assassins, Antony accused Octavian of plotting to kill him. Octavian turned this back on Antony to his own advantage, attempting to discredit Antony. Their rivalry became public fodder with each side attempting to discredit the other on an ever grander scale and attempting to court the public goodwill.

The one matter they agreed upon was the destruction of Caesar’s assassins. Unfortunately, this justified vengeance became a source for eliminating personal enemies with each man compiling a list. In his Res Gestae, Augustus explained his behavior

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6 Sutherland, Coinage, 33-4.

during the proscriptions. He banished them "through legitimate trials, exacting
vengeance for their sacrilege" and eventually defeating them in battle. Plutarch echoed
this almost exactly, writing that Augustus needed to "avenge his father's [Caesar's]
murder and save the republic." This was in keeping with traditional values with *iustitia*,
justice, for the family gens and a show of his *pietas*, piety, to the Roman people.
Suetonius stated that avenging Caesar's death was behind Octavian's every campaign
during the period of the Civil Wars. If not necessarily true, it provided a great rallying
cry and a reminder of familial values.

Dio recounted this period of the proscriptions with disdain, that not only were the
victims tortured and executed, but "no one of their number could take vengeance on one
of his own enemies, if he was a friend of one of the other two, without giving up some
friend in return." Dio also seems to hold Octavian blameless by claiming that the
heinous acts were "committed chiefly by Lepidus and Antony" and that Octavian only
took part "because of his sharing the authority since he himself had no need at all to kill a
large number." Octavian had just come to Rome and had not acquired as many enemies
as Lepidus and Antony had made over the years. It is likely, however that Augustus'

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8 Aug. RG 2.


11 Dio 47.5.5.

12 Dio 47.7.1-2.
behavior during the principate and transformation of his image led Dio to modify any criticism of Augustus’ actions during the proscriptions.\footnote{Reinhold and Swain, 159.}

One noted casualty of the proscriptions was Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero and Antony had a turbulent relationship and according to Plutarch, Cicero avoided the Senate house because he feared Antony would do him harm.\footnote{Plut. Cic. 43.4-5.} When Octavian arrived in Rome, Cicero made friends with him, hoping Octavian would look to Caesar’s former supporters for help. Then Octavian could champion Cicero against Antony in their private war, as well as the public one that was brewing. Cicero was an asset to Octavian in the months after Caesar’s assassination when Octavian needed Caesar’s supporters. Cicero also helped Octavian’s inheritance case by insisting that he had a dream in which Jupiter himself proclaimed Octavian as the savior who would lead Rome to greatness.\footnote{Plut. Cic. 45.}

Cicero fed Octavian’s attempts to ingratiate himself with the Senate by giving speeches about Octavian raising an army against Antony. Cicero exaggerated when he said they needed to prevent Antony from advancing on Rome, but it helped Octavian by portraying Antony as an enemy of the state.\footnote{Plut. Cic. 45.2.} Cicero’s death worked against Octavian because Cicero was, at times, more of an asset than a liability in the Senate. Cicero had shown that he would use Octavian for his own power-driven needs. This and the
savagery of Antony’s behavior in the murder of Cicero proved a political boon to Octavian’s propaganda after the proscriptions.\textsuperscript{17}

Two specific episodes in the late Republic, the Perusine war and the battle of Actium, displayed how Augustus used negative propaganda and vicious attacks against his enemies to discredit them and justify his own behavior. One of the most notorious acts of propaganda emerged from the Perusine War of 41 to 40 BCE. Fulvia Flacca Bambula, the daughter of Marcus Fulvius Bambalio, acted on behalf of her husband Antony while he was on campaign in Greece.\textsuperscript{18} Caring for her husband’s affairs in his absence should have earned her the respect of society but Fulvia was a strong-willed woman who took a commanding, active role in political negotiations and war which overstepped traditional boundaries.

According to Dio, when Antony and Octavian went east to fight Julius Caesar’s assassins in 41 BCE, she and Lucius Antonius, Antony’s brother, ruled together as consuls rather than Lucius Antonius and Publius Servilius. Dio recorded that Fulvia obtained such authority that people sought her influence and courted her for favors.\textsuperscript{19} Appian claimed that she used her womanly wiles and her children to beseech the troops to remain loyal to Antony while he was in the East.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Gowing, 258-9; Appian, \textit{Bella Civilia}, trans. and ed. Horace White, J. D. Denniston, and E. Iliff Robson. Loeb Classical Library (London: W. Heinemann, 1912 – 1913), 4.19.20; Dio 47.8.1-4.


\textsuperscript{19} Dio 48.4.1.

\textsuperscript{20} App. \textit{B. Civ.} 5.14.
Octavian felt threatened enough by her deeds during the Perusine war to wage a second vicious, written propaganda war against her.²¹ Martial attributed epigrams to Octavian which claimed he would rather fight her in battle than succumb to her sexual desires for him.²² There is no evidence that Fulvia harbored these feelings, but this negative propaganda toward a strong willed woman rebelling against the traditional female stereotype and behaving in a more masculine than feminine manner would be a charge Octavian would use again against Cleopatra in the battle of Actium.

Many Romans may have recalled Sallust's less than flattering depictions of Fulvia's mother Sempronia during the Catilinarian conspiracy. Octavian's public outrage against Fulvia's actions further cemented the image of her masculine behavior which was unbecoming in a Roman woman.²³ Antony did not ease matters by his absence from Rome and association with Cleopatra. Rather than increase the acrimonious relationship with Antony, Octavian transferred this hostility to Fulvia, furthering the animosity between them.²⁴ This transference alleviated tensions between the two men and disparaged the more expendable Fulvia, leaving open the chance that there might still be an alliance with Antony and Cleopatra that could give Octavian the illusion of victory.

In a further attempt to maintain a publically united front, Octavian and Antony decided to blame the vile rhetoric of the Perusine War on Fulvia and her unwomanly behavior in stepping outside traditional roles, even though she behaved as a good wife in

²¹ Syme, Roman Revolution, 414.


²³ Sal. Cat. 25.1-5.

²⁴ Dio 48.4.3.
honing her duty to her husband. Women’s public roles were connected to a sense of familial duty where their actions reflected back upon their husbands and family, both positively and negatively. 25 This would later become an important piece of propaganda in Octavian’s use of his family and his image as a paternal figure.

With her death, Fulvia became a casus belli and Octavian and Antony were able to publically put aside their animosity toward each other. However, Alison Weir explained this propaganda against Fulvia as Octavian’s wish to reduce his own involvement in the war and also to reduce the negative image he and Antony acquired in the proscriptions. 26 Antony then married Octavian’s sister Octavia, who would later be an important part of her brother’s propaganda war against Antony and Cleopatra in support of traditional family values (see Appendix, Figure 2).

Antony’s break with Rome and his association with Cleopatra provided Octavian with a battery of propagandist issues to discredit Antony while he was out of Rome. Actium was the crowning achievement in Octavian’s push for sole power and the events leading up to it were fraught with propagandist rhetoric. Both Octavian and Antony knew that it was important to win public support in the quest to control Rome, but Antony was far away in Egypt, a fact that Octavian exploited at every turn. Octavian used Antony’s relationship with Cleopatra as the excuse for Antony’s failure in everything from the Parthian expedition to bewitching Antony into marriage while he was already married to Octavia. 27

25 Severy, 25, 30; Wood, 8.


27 Scott, "Political Propaganda,” 36; Zanker, 57.
Octavian was not above using Octavia to provoke Antony. He did this on two separate occasions and used Antony's shortcomings to turn the Roman people against Antony. The second triumvirate expired in 38 BCE and Marc Antony and Octavian had always been on less than cordial terms, even though they made many public attempts to show solidarity. The idea of Octavia as mediator was important enough for Plutarch, Appian, and Dio Cassius to give it a full account in the political play between Octavian and Antony at Tarentum in 37 BCE. Whether Octavia was the one who initiated the arbitration, or was a pawn between the two men depends on the source and how one translates the original Latin text. It would not be far-fetched to argue that Octavian initiated the meeting. He knew Antony was weak and used the political value of his wife as Octavian's sister to obtain needed supplies. Octavian could use this incident as propaganda in swaying public opinion against a weakened Antony.

Two years later, in 35 BCE, Octavian sent her to join Antony, her legal husband, even though now he claimed to have married Cleopatra (see Appendix, Figure 3). Upon arrival, Antony refused to see Octavia and unchivalrously forced her to return home alone in disgrace, although Antony accepted the money and troops she brought for him. Octavian considered this "an outrageous insult" but still used it to incite the public against Antony whom he considered "bewitched" and a "slave to Cleopatra's passion."

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29 Singer, "Octavia's Mediation." 174; Mary White Singer gave a detailed account of the affair and believed that Plutarch and Dio favored Augustus, thus casting Antony as the villain. Appian's account showed that Octavia initiated the mediation and sided with Antony towards her brother; App. *B. Civ.* 5. 93.

30 Plut. *Ant.* 53; Scott, "Political Propaganda," 36; Dio 34.1.
In 32 BCE, Octavian received another opportunity to display Antony’s anti-Roman sentiments. Traitors from Antony’s camp, Marcus Titius and Munatius Plancus, divulged the contents of Antony’s will which he left in the safekeeping of the Vestals. Octavian went to the temple of Vesta and demanded that they hand over Antony’s will. When they did not, he entered the sanctuary and removed it himself. Not only did he obtain the will illegally, he made it public to the Senate. Antony, still in Egypt with Cleopatra, was unable to defend himself. When the public discovered that he heavily favored Egypt and his Egyptian family in his will, they turned against him, believing that if this were true, then perhaps the other propaganda Octavian perpetuated was true. Octavian again turned all of this negative, ill-will towards Cleopatra, the current woman in Antony’s life. By proclaiming war on her, Octavian was able to manipulate the public by drawing attention to her foreign ways and the potential threat of Egyptian rule and loss of their historical identity.

*Auctoritas* could be considered as political power, influence, or even public image. The level of *auctoritas* one held determined how Roman society viewed that man. Octavian used this to celebrate his great victory over Antony and Egypt and he built an elaborate mausoleum to establish his *auctoritas* in Rome (see Appendix, Figure 4). It was not uncommon for wealthy citizens to build large tombs for themselves, but this mausoleum was not just a tomb for Rome’s first emperor; its huge size also signified victory. Constructed shortly after the defeat of Antony, it was Octavian’s representation

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31 Dio 50.3.1-5; Plut. Ant. 58-4-6; Zanker, 72.
32 Cooley, 111.
of the proper tomb for a Roman, as Antony had expressed in his will that he be buried in Egypt with Cleopatra. Augustus achieved victory during the Civil Wars; he defeated his enemies and succeeded in creating the Pax Romana, a time of peace and prosperity. The tomb also functioned as a site of reverence, holding the remains and honoring the memories of Marcellus, Agrippa and Augustus’ two grandsons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar.

In continuing this self-aggrandizing building trend, Augustus boasted in chapter 21 of the Res Gestae that “I built the temple of Mars Ultor (Mars the Avenger) from plunder on private space near the Forum of Augustus.” This temple served as an important visual reminder of Augustus’ victories and tied together pieces of his military propaganda. He initially made the promise to build the temple during the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE when he avenged the death of his “father” Julius Caesar by defeating Brutus and Cassius, but it was not completed until 2 BCE. Not only did this temple remind the people of the relationship Mars had with the founding of Rome, but it stood as a military repository for weapons, a place where the Senate would vote on triumphs and the starting point for those taking commands abroad.

Augustus also commissioned public representations of himself which reflected his program of propaganda. Archaeologists discovered a statue of Augustus at the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta which they attribute to around 20 BCE (see Appendix, Figures 5 and

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34 Zanker, 72, 76; Suet. Aug 100.
35 Levick, 214.
36 RG 21.1.
37 Dio 55.10.1-6; Suet. Ant. 29.2; Kearsley, 97.
It depicted Augustus as a victorious military general and also referred to his divine ancestry. Here, Augustus was once again a virile general with his hand raised in a victorious pose, and holding a staff as a sign of imperium. Symbolic of Augustus’ auctoritas, the breastplate on the statue depicted the Roman standards, lost by Marcus Crassus in 53 BCE, which were returned when both parties established peace in 20 BCE and Parthia became part of the Roman empire. The return of these standards marked a victory, not just over a nation and adding to the empire, but another reference to Augustus’ vision of the republic and its ideals.

The various iconography of Augustus’ breastplate illustrated several themes. Galinsky explained the significance of the main characters as Mars, the victor, accepting the standards from the Parthians which were stored in the new temple of Mars Ultor. Another image is of Tellus, often related to Ceres, or Mother Earth. The same character is depicted on the famous Tellus Panel on the Ara Pacis, the Altar of Peace, dedicated in 9 BCE. The continuity is certainly not an accident and over the years it reinforced the precise imagery Augustus envisioned to reinforce specific images to the Roman people. A tiny statue of Cupid astride a dolphin rests at the base of the statue. It appeared to gaze up at Augustus and reach up to grasp his tunic. The dolphin illustrated naval victories, most notably Octavian’s over Sextus Pompey in 36 BCE and later over Antony in

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38 Zanker, 188, 190.
39 Galinsky, 61; Levick, 282.
40 Galinsky, 155-6; Kearsley, 98.
41 Galinsky, 156.
42 Zanker, 175, 189.
31BCE. Cupid held great importance in Julian ancestry. Caesar claimed that the Julian family descended from Aeneas through his son Iulus. In Greek mythology, Venus was the mother of Aeneas. When Augustus deified his adopted father, Julius Caesar, he added to the mythos of this claim which by association, reflected upon him.

The defeat of Antony and Cleopatra set Octavian up for sole power. However, he had to prove he was a statesman, not just a military leader. Not only did he have to survive the Civil War, he had to prevail. He had acquired an image of ruthlessness which may have served well in battle, but not in his new role as benevolent leader. This meant a careful construction of the public image he wanted to portray to the Roman people and a careful crafting of the deeds he used to reach out and win the support of the Senate and the Roman people for his actions and leadership. He needed to bind the people to him. It took years for his new image to develop and it would not be rebuilt overnight.

Augustus changed his propagandist techniques to generate a new, milder image of the fatherly statesman. Augustus needed to shift the blame away from himself, and this instance also fit perfectly with his portrayal of himself as Augustus the pater familias of Rome in restoring the forgotten mores of the Republic.

Statesman

With the death of Antony, the exile of Lepidus and the reduction of the senatorial class, Augustus achieved his goal of sole power. He worked to separate himself from the military persona of previous years; the man who had participated in the bloody proscriptions and downfall of Antony, Cleopatra and the murders of Caesar and Cicero.

This new Augustus would usher in an era of peace; not simply a return to the old

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43 Galinsky, 160.
republic, but a newer, better model of his own design. Augustus’ vision included refining his propaganda skills in refashioning this new image.

Octavian carefully cultivated more than one image to remind the people that they owed the peace and prosperity of Rome to their new ruler. He needed to promote more than the image of Imperator, the victorious general and softened his image to show he was a master statesman and a father figure to the people. This did not happen immediately as it was necessary to overcome the ruthless reputation he had gained during the triumvirate. Augustus’ youth held contradictions of cruelty and clemency although he tended to expand on his clemency and ignore or justify the cruelty. In his Res Gestae, Augustus claimed that as a victor in war, his mercy extended to those who asked because he preferred “to preserve than to destroy.”

44 Dio wrote that he “would do everything in a mild and humane way, after the manner of his father [Caesar].”

45 Suetonius examined both clemency and cruelty, giving equal weight to each without attempting to rationalize either.

After the Battle of Philippi, a certain father and son begged Octavian to spare them. Octavian had the father executed in front of his son; the son subsequently took his own life while Octavian and all the rest of the prisoners and troops looked on. This action turned the men toward Antony as a leader and caused them to revile Octavian.

46 After Actium, Octavian bullied his way to power opposing members of the Senate while

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45 Dio 48.3.6.

courting popular support using threats and intimidation from himself and others in the senate who supported him.\textsuperscript{47}

In 27 BCE, Augustus made an overture to renounce his consulship and transfer control back to the Senate. They refused, either out of respect or fear. This became tantamount to a confirmation of Octavian’s supreme authority.\textsuperscript{48} Later that year, the senate granted Octavian a series of honors denoting an end to the Civil Wars and a transition to a more stable society.

He received the name Augustus to complement this new image. It elevated him over any other Roman citizen in authority and power and secured his \textit{auctoritas}.\textsuperscript{49} Other honors included the power to retain arms and troops, and as controller of the military, he earned the right to triumphal honors, \textit{ornamenta triumphalia}.\textsuperscript{50} Along with these, he received ornamental laurels, oak wreaths and the golden \textit{Clipeus Virtutis} (Shield of Valor) which was displayed in the Senate House and denoted his clemency (\textit{clementia}), justice, (\textit{iustitia}) and piety (\textit{pietas}) (see Appendix, Figure 7).\textsuperscript{51} Even though he was now sole ruler, he did not want it to appear that Rome was reverting back to the monarchy, which had its share of negative memories for the Roman people. Augustus wanted the citizens to see this new phase as one of prosperity and peace. He altered his propagandist

\textsuperscript{47} Cooley, 113; Suet. Aug. 26.1; App. B. Civ. 3.88; Dio 46.43.

\textsuperscript{48} Dio 53.12.

\textsuperscript{49} Levick, 72. She advocates that this is merely a name, a \textit{cognomen}, not a specific title such as \textit{Pater Patriae}.

\textsuperscript{50} Dio 53.12, Levick, 93.

\textsuperscript{51} Levick, 73, 228.
messages to manipulate the citizens to follow this new path and eclipse the memory of the past.

In a gesture of clemency after Actium, Octavian chose Cicero’s son as his co-consul. During their tenure in office, Octavian began his campaign to eradicate Antony’s image in Rome by removing Antony’s statues and voiding any honors he had received. This action may have resulted more from guilt or a show of political propaganda as Cicero’s name still held some importance and Octavian needed the compliance of the Senatorial class.

Octavian used his established auctoritas to institute his initial social reforms. He proposed that his empire return to the ideals of the res publica. Not only did he need to prove to the Roman people that he ushered in peace from war, pax, but it was important to put the rancor of the Civil Wars behind them and move to a more harmonious peace within the state itself, concordia. In what was meant to be a hearkening back to traditional values, Octavian saw this period after the second triumvirate and downfall of Antony and Cleopatra as an opportunity to re-institute the morals and ideals of antiquus, the old Rome. Primary among these was a return to the core family values which he boasted in his Res Gestae as one of his accomplishments. He claimed that he brought back many “ancestral practices which were by then dying out in our generation,” and instituted new practices and legislation reflecting these.

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52 Plut. Cic. 49.3-4.  
53 Barrett, 124.  
54 RG 8.5.
Octavian deified Julius Caesar, thus manipulating the memory of dictatorship and used this new image to further his own agenda. He relied on his connection with his great uncle [father] Julius Caesar since his gens, the Julian, was one of the most prominent in Rome. This perpetuated his use of family, religion, and strengthened his own lineage in justifying his rightful place as ruler. It also helped to overshadow the fact that when Octavian initially arrived in Rome, he was criticized for his lack of prestigious lineage. Suetonius cited one Antonius and another Cassius who spread rumors that Octavian’s maternal ancestors were in turn a shopkeeper, a baker and a money-lender. Even Cicero recorded Antony’s glee in looking down on Octavian’s mother’s “rural” lineage. What clan, or gens, a person belonged to was very important in social and political standing, and in considering potential mates to consolidate political connections. Octavian took great care when arranging the marriages of the children in his familia to insure that they made valuable connections with other members of the Senatorial class. He strengthened his own familial structure using the children and his sister as political propaganda in the consolidation of his empire, but he did this gradually over the course of his rule.

Octavian himself could be accused of political propaganda in his own marriages. He wanted to forge an alliance with Sextus Pompey, the son of Pompeius Magnus, so he married Scribonia, a close relation of Pompeius’. Even though she bore Octavian’s

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55 Levick, 118.
56 Suet. Aug. 4.2.
57 Cic. Phil. 3.6.15.
58 Wood, 27.
59 Suet. Aug. 62; Syme, Roman Revolution, 228, 416.
only living child, Julia, he divorced her almost immediately afterward, complaining of her shrewish ways. Whether this was true or not, it allowed him to extricate himself from this arrangement and marry Livia Drusilla, member of the powerful Claudian gens. At the time she met Octavian, she was the wife of Tiberius Claudius Nero who was also an enemy of Octavian during the Civil Wars. The Claudians were a powerful, influential family in Rome. The alliance with the ancient Claudian gens served as the perfect piece of propaganda for Octavian to establish himself in prominent Roman society and overcome his novus homo status.

Octavian became adamant about the harmonious portrayal of a strong and pious Roman family structure. “While the end of civil war had brought peace and relaxation of anxiety, it also brought a relaxation of morals which the newly transformed Augustus could not accept.” In 18 B.C. Augustus implemented legislation concerning family morals that set new standards for the Empire, while appealing to the “antiquus” in spirit. According to legislation, women who bore at least three children, "ius trium liberorum" were honored and rewarded with legal and financial independence from the usual tutula, or guardianship, most women faced. Along this same line, Augustus instituted the Leges Juliae in 17-19 BCE which rewarded those who married and had

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60 Suet. Aug. 62.

61 Vell. Pat. 203.


63 Syme, Roman Revolution, 443-4.

64 Fantham, 42.
children, but also punished those who remained unwed or childless, to increase the birth-rate in Rome.\textsuperscript{65}

New Augustan laws brought prominent imperial women like Octavia, Livia and Julia prestige and public honors. Augustus' insistence on his own family serving as a model for a controlled and morally acceptable family life began the transition of the family and morality into the public sphere. Through showcasing his family in a precise manner Augustus controlled the image he wanted the public to see and emulate according to his vision.\textsuperscript{66}

Augustus publically honored his wife by dedicating important civic monuments on dates associated with her. He dedicated the \textit{Ara Pacis}, his great altar of Peace, an altar in the \textit{Forum Clodi} on Livia's birthday, and the \textit{Ara Numinis Augusti} on their wedding anniversary.\textsuperscript{67} Furthermore, Livia's images on statues and coins gained her a certain cult image status (see Appendix, Figures 8 and 9).\textsuperscript{68} This prestige elevated her to a level beyond that of a simple wife, even one of an emperor as it was not typical for Roman women to appear on coinage.\textsuperscript{69} While in exile, the poet Ovid prayed for clemency to a coin emblazoned with the images of Livia, Augustus and Tiberius.\textsuperscript{70} He believed that

\textsuperscript{65} Severy, 52; Bauman, 105.

\textsuperscript{66} Mary Boatwright, "Women and Gender in the Forum Romanum," \textit{Transactions of the American Philological Association} 141, no. 1 (2011): 124, 125, 128.


\textsuperscript{69} Wallace-Hadrill, "Image and Authority in the Coinage of Augustus," 79.

\textsuperscript{70} Ov. Tr. 2.7.
this act could grant him favors from across the empire even as his wife sought audiences with them in Rome.

Octavian and the Senate had already honored Octavia and Livia with portraits in 35 BCE as deliberate propaganda designed to elevate the status of the women in Octavian’s household, and possibly as a means to protect Octavia against any propaganda of Antony. The only other women in Rome allowed this privilege were Vestal Virgins. This honor thrust Octavia and Livia into the public realm in a manner outside their traditional roles and rivaling that of priestesses of the most prominent cult in Rome. In all of the honors and awards for his family and friends, Augustus was “masterful at shedding glory on others in such a way as to bask in its reflected glory,” garnering all the propaganda without any seeming effort.

The irony of Augustus’ morality legislation was probably glaringly humorous and hypocritical for the citizens because Augustus was none too secret about his own extramarital affairs, but “[e]mperors would make known (or invent) an ideal of the imperial family’s harmony as a vital component in the propaganda of imperial power.” The imperial household faced tremendous scrutiny while upholding many images and very public roles. Gossip in the Senate surrounding Livia’s influence over Augustus was


73 Wood, 35.

“exaggerated, always malevolent” and “was all too well founded” which amused some senators who were fully aware of his propaganda attempts.75

Octavia was a very important figure in these relationships as the sister of Octavian and he capitalized on the contrast of her with Cleopatra and Fulvia, two of Antony’s other wives. The behavior of each of the women furthered his image as paterfamilias and the role family values played in that image. Octavian used malicious propaganda techniques to portray Fulvia and Cleopatra as the antitheses of the Roman woman. Octavia was rewarded with public accolades, and historians praised her for her behavior as they would a military hero for his exploits in battle. These same tributes covered a multitude of areas for Octavian; in praising her qualities and displaying her image in statues and on coins, she honored her family and this was an effective way of creating negative feelings toward those Octavian opposed.

After Antony repudiated Octavia, she continued to live in his house and conduct public affairs in his name with his clientes until he ordered her to be removed from the home.76 This humiliating treatment of Octavian’s sister was a stunning blow. Octavian capitalized on Antony’s betrayal as a way to publically chastise him for his repudiation of Octavia, the very model of what a true Roman matron should strive to be.77 In doing so, he deliberately juxtaposed her with the foreign ways of Cleopatra and ensnarement of Antony.

75 Syme, Roman Revolution, 414; Dio 54.16.4-5; Wood, 77.

76 Plut. Ant. 54.1-3.

77 Wood, 28; Plut. Ant. 53.7-9; Severy, 39.
Octavian may have used the criticism of “unwomanly wiles” against Cleopatra and blamed her for Antony’s downfall, but it was a ploy to appeal to Roman fears. If Octavian could convince the Roman people that a foreign Queen could enslave a Roman general enough to turn against Rome, move the government to Egypt and possibly drain the treasury, people would be quick to protect their assets. Fear was a great motivator.

Octavia herself engaged in behaviors beneficial to Augustus’ image of the imperial family. Octavia raised not only her and Antony’s children, but the surviving children from his marriages to Fulvia and Cleopatra as members of the imperial household with all the associated rank and privileges. As with his blood relations, these children served as political propaganda when he married them off in advantageous alliances for Rome. Octavian knew that Romans would clearly favor the matronly qualities of Octavia over Cleopatra’s foreign ways and Octavia would garner their sympathy and support. Attacking Antony’s morals also fed into Augustus’ campaign of reinstating the values which would help restore Rome to its former Republican prestige. Augustus even used Octavia’s death in 11 BCE as political propaganda. His eulogy showed his devotion to his sister and took advantage of public empathy to remind the people of his family’s divine status through Julius Caesar and the importance of his entire family’s position within the Roman state.

In addition to coins displaying family members, Augustus used them to symbolize the changes in governmental structure he wished to disseminate to the public at large, as he did in Egypt after Actium. He downplayed his auctoritas and dignitas, but he

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78 Plut. Ant. 54.4, 87.1-6.

79 Wood, 34.
emphasized his role in obtaining stability for the Roman people which he had obtained 'pro merito meo' with no mention of the triumvirate.\textsuperscript{80}

Statuary also reinforced the family image by depicting Augustus as a traditional senatorial-class \textit{paterfamilias}. Augustus projected this fatherly, yet authoritative image from his own family to the Roman people. He wanted them to see him as a generous patron as well as an able statesman. In addition to the imposing, militaristic statues, he had ones constructed of him in a more relaxed pose, wearing the toga of a senator (see Appendix, Figure 10).

For many years previously, \textit{consuls}, \textit{aediles} and rich citizens provided the people with games and festivals to generate political support, especially if they were running for an office. Augustus was no different. To manipulate public sentiment, he provided creature comforts that would generate external as well as internal peace and harmony. He provided gladiatorial games and athletic games in his own name and in the names of his sons, grandsons and other magistrates.\textsuperscript{81} Providing patronage for games for another not only gained goodwill from the people, but also loyalty from the person he honored, so it was a calculated gesture more than simple generosity. As long as people were happy and well fed, they were complacent and compliant. Games and spectacles gave people entertainment, but they had to eat. Many times, Augustus mentioned that he distributed grain to the people or gave money to the public treasury so that they might be adequately

\textsuperscript{80} Sutherland, \textit{Coinage}, 28.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{RG} 22.1-3; Dio 52.30.
fed. He took great pains to mention that it was his private money that he distributed, so that the people would know to whom they should give thanks for their bounty.

At the end of the Civil Wars, not only was the country in need of stability, but the very physical foundation needed repair. Buildings, roads and sewers were in terrible shape as rarely did any infrastructure planning take place and there was no consistency. Augustus chose residents from all classes of society to form panels or committees to restore the roads and sewers. This gave everyone, not just the elite, a sense of pride and ownership, using nationalism to sway the people favorably towards his reforms.

Augustus also instituted a furious building program in Rome. In chapters 19 to 21 of the *Res Gestae*, Augustus catalogued the structures he either restored or built outright for the Roman people. He built or repaired many public buildings such as the senate house and repaired the theatre of Pompey. He honored many members of his family, both living and deceased, in structures such as the colonnades of Livia and Octavia and the Theatre of Marcellus, while encouraging members of the senatorial class to contribute what they could to the built landscape of Rome. This prominent display of monuments to his family perpetuated Augustus' image of a benefactor to the city, and served as a not so subtle reminder of the importance of the Julian family.

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82 *RG* 15.1-4, 18.

83 Livy 5.5; Zanker. 20.


85 *RG* 19.1; 20.1; Tac. *Ann.* 72.1-2.

Religious Leader

Romans valued and upheld traditions that dated back centuries. As they conquered foreign lands from Britannia to Egypt, Romans either assimilated local deities or tolerated new gods as separate sects. They introduced these new idols with varying degrees of acceptance and many sects flourished within these new religions and their multitudinous forms. These cults and worship practices existed side by side throughout the breadth of the empire for hundreds of years. From the private religious icons of the familial lares and penates, to the public temples of gods and goddesses, religion was an integral part of Roman society which Augustus also manipulated in his propaganda. Augustus used tradition and the role of religion in the daily lives of the Romans as propaganda to bolster his new religious image and again, started with his family.

As Octavian, he acquired a list of religious honors and designations that added to his prestige as ruler, ultimately receiving the designation of Augustus in 27 BCE, Pontifex Maximus in 13 BCE, and Pater Patriae in 2 BCE. This honor of Pater Patriae, father of the country, was the highest honor a person could receive from the state. It showed the positive results of the image Augustus had crafted over the years. These honors given to him by the Senate and the public for his patriotic duties drew greater attention to his family as the “first” family of the state. Each time he added to his list of images, it gave him greater power and authority which, in turn, allowed more of his propagandist ideals to flourish.

One religious sect that was undisputedly important to Augustus was the cult of Vesta. Vesta was the chaste goddess of the hearth, the ‘sacred’ center of the Roman

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home. Her cult was one of the most venerated in Rome and her priestesses were the most honored and important women in the city after the wife of the emperor.

The Vestals were six women chosen to serve the goddess Vesta and were charged with keeping the sacred flame of Rome burning. In addition to societal rights, Vesta was believed to have given them the gift of purification. The Vestals’ virgin status, and even their lives, was inextricably linked to the well-being and survival of the state. The Vestals embodied the city and were responsible to the entire city, their family. Augustus used them heavily in his religious propaganda. He even consecrated part of his own home to Vesta in his service as *Pontifex Maximus*, thus tying his own household gods to her cult.  

This action, combined with linking his Julian gens to Venus, further elevated his image as a religious icon to the Roman people.

In 30 BCE, the Senate greeted Augustus with fantastic honors and the Vestals purified him in the eyes of the Roman people after his involvement in the Civil Wars. This ceremony not only demonstrated Augustus’ piety and dedication to Vesta’s cult, but also showed that the gods approved of his military victories and leadership of the state. It was an important display of propaganda to the Roman people helping to solidify his position as a powerful leader.

Augustus constructed major religious monuments which served to join all images created in the ultimate displays of propaganda. He claimed to have restored eighty-two temples in 28 BCE alone. The restoration of temples was part of his push to restore the

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88 Dio 54.27.3.


90 RG 20.
glory of Rome with his reinstitution of morality; in this case, religious morality. He had already built the Temple of Mars Ultor, combining his militaristic image with a religious aspect, and consecrated part of his home as a temple to the goddess Vesta. He justified adding a temple to Apollo to his house on the Palatine when lightning struck part of it.  

The *Ara Pacis*, dedicated in 9 BCE, has survived as one of the most important structures from Augustus’ time because of its rescue and restoration by Mussolini (see Appendix, Figures 11 and 12). Augustus noted that when he returned from Spain and Gaul in 13 BCE the “senate decreed that an altar of Augustan Peace should be consecrated in thanks for my return on the field of Mars, and ordered magistrates and priests and Vestal Virgins to perform an annual sacrifice there.”  

Constructed of marble, the panels of the *Ara Pacis* showed the religious figures from various cults in Rome and, most importantly, the Vestal Virgins. Augustus and his family are clearly depicted in a prominent display of reverence and devotion. Augustus also showed images of peace surrounding the goddess Ceres as the Earth mother and goddess Tellus. All of this was specifically designed to honor his family, show them as religious icons and set them apart from the masses as worthy of reverence and prestige. Augustus had established himself as bringer of peace. With this greater public attention where he used his family to model his initiatives for the public, Augustus carefully crafted a god-like image of how he wanted the public to view him and his family.  

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91 Favro, 240.

92 *RG* 12.2.

93 Levick, 214.

Imperial power encompassed not only the empire, but the emperor who, during Augustus' rule, became the Pontifex Maximus, the chief priest of the city (see Appendix, Figure 13). During the second triumvirate, Lepidus held this honor and Augustus allowed him to continue in this position even when he was permanently exiled to Circeii, until his death in 13 BCE. In the Res Gestae, Augustus explained that Lepidus "seized" the position during the civil wars, and that Augustus magnanimously allowed him to continue serving even though it was his right as Julius Caesar's adopted son. New statues depicted Augustus as Pontifex Maximus, wearing the robes of a priest with his head covered as in the posture of one making a sacrifice.

In the post Civil War era, Octavian had great plans for himself, his family and his country. He firmly established himself in the Julian and Claudian gentes, garnered news titles such as Augustus, Pater Patriae and Pontifex Maximus which granted him authority, intelligence and piety, and a country yearning for unity and stability. This meant a total social reconstruction of Roman culture which he instituted through manipulation and propaganda according to his vision. In his revival of Roman tradition for his state building, he focused on the two things he knew would appeal to society, family and religion.

Two thousand years later, Rome would be in a similar situation and Benito Mussolini looked at the example set by the great emperor Augustus to fulfill his vision of what Rome could become in this new era. However, Mussolini had to appeal to more

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96 RG 10.2 "quod pater meus habuerat." In 44 BCE the Senate decreed that any son, natural or adopted, of Caesar's would inherit the position of Pontifex Maximus; Dio 44.5.3.

97 Zanker, 128.
than Roman tradition to fulfill his ideas. The state and its religion had undergone many changes since Augustan times and these would become obstacles that he had to overcome or incorporate into his propaganda.
CHAPTER III
MUSSOLINI'S PROPAGANDA

"Everything turns upon one's ability to control the masses like an artist."  

Mussolini came from a common background, and liked to emphasize this in his speeches. In 1922 he told a crowd of union workers that his "father was a blacksmith who bent red-hot iron on the anvil" and that as a boy, he helped his father in this "hard and humble work."  

As an adult, he brought himself to the forefront of politics by aligning himself with the fast moving Socialist Party. There he capitalized on his journalistic skills to promote himself within the party. In 1912, he strongly emphasized the "revolutionary" role of the socialist party at the Italian Socialist Party Congress. Like Augustus, he too needed to assert himself in his bid for power and establish a foothold in the government. He cultivated the image of Il Duce and echoed the themes of Augustus and his empire in his political appeals to the Italian people. Mussolini emerged as a complex individual who hid behind contradictions and a great deal of controlled media propaganda.

Throughout his rise to power and twenty-year rule in Italy, Mussolini worked to establish the fascist regime, and in order to give it a unifying foundation he reached back to a common history. Augustus' career delineated specific stages in his imagery as he wove elements from the military, the notion of a paterfamilias, and a religious leader at

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1 Mussolini, as quoted in Ludwig, 127.

2 Mussolini, As Revealed in His Political Speeches, 81.

3 Falasca-Zamponi, 42.
various times throughout his principate. From the time of the March on Rome in October, 1922, (see Appendix, Figures 14 and 15) Mussolini incorporated associations with the Roman empire, but his transitions between the different images overlapped more than Augustus'. Mussolini saw the tradition and glory of the Roman empire as a platform for his political and propagandist structure to draw upon (see Appendix, Figure 16). Romanità was the framework from which all other aspects of Mussolini's imagery sprang.

In 1919, Italy was just emerging from World War I when Mussolini took power, and militaristic aspects of Mussolini's regime never faded from view as his Doctrine and expansion plans bore out. Mussolini was Il Duce, the charismatic leader and paternalistic father overseeing the welfare of his country. Like Augustus, he indefatigably involved himself in every aspect of Italian life. By 1936 Mussolini had become dictator and had proclaimed himself the head of a new Roman empire. Like Augustus, Mussolini individually wielded great power, and he too amassed a number of titles to be all things to the Italian people.

Mussolini foresaw great plans for Italy. He embraced the historical ancestry of Roman tradition and symbolism as part of his propaganda to promote Italian nationalism and establish himself as head of a new government. In a modern age where information was readily available on a more immediate basis, Mussolini faced his own challenges with propaganda to manipulate the masses. The flexibility of Mussolini's cult of romanità relied on many aspects of Rome's empirical past to showcase the glory of
Rome which appealed to the Italian people, and fascism "depended heavily upon romanità for coherence" in this new regime.  

Mussolini claimed that "the keystone of the Fascist doctrine [was] its conception of the state, of its essence, its functions and its aims." The focus was not on the individual, but the collective, denying himself and directing all of his energy, faith and discipline toward the state in all its glory with the rest of the world. Giovanni Gentile wrote in 1928 that the "utilitarian scope" of fascism also focused on the "whole will and thought and feeling of the nation." Fascist propaganda continually appealed to the Italian sense of nationalism, common background, and long history as the founders of the great Roman empire. Sarfatti claimed that the ancient myths and legends of Rome engulfed Mussolini's boyhood imagination. This idealized image of Mussolini provided him with a platform to manufacture a distinct and personal connection with the past. Mussolini tied fascism and its ideas and symbols to ancient Rome and proclaimed Civis Romanus sum (I am a Roman citizen), which, with his journalistic flair, he reiterated in future speeches and writings directed toward the people.

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5 Benito Mussolini, The Doctrine of Fascism (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1936), 39; G. Gentile, "The Philosophic Basis of Fascism," 301.

6 Giovanni Gentile, Fascism, 299.

7 Sarfatti, 68; Notaro, "Resurrecting an Imperial Past," 65.

Romanità

Mussolini understood the public need for pageantry and symbolism to unite the culture. He boasted in an interview with Emil Ludwig in 1932 that, “[t]he Roman greeting, songs and formulas, anniversary commemorations, and the like -- all are essential to fan the flames of the enthusiasm that keeps a movement in being. It was just the same in ancient Rome.” Italy adopted the imagery of the *fasces lictoriae* or *fasces littorio*, as the “Lictor’s rods, the symbol of unity, of strength and justice, and in 1926 a royal decree officially made these the emblem of the state.” The ax jutting from the rods also symbolized the judicial power of the ruler and the authority of the fascist state of which he was now the head. This symbol became the most noticeable icon of the fascist government and was used on many fascist buildings and even items as common as manhole covers (see Appendix, Figures 17 and 18). The fasces eventually established the relationship between fascism and Italy under Mussolini’s rule.

Mussolini insisted on doing away with the traditional “bourgeois” handshake greeting and replaced it with the Roman salute. As Falasca-Zamponi has suggested, this greeting evolved over time from a symbolic gesture of ancient Rome to a full-fledged acknowledgement of fascist nationalism among the people, and separated individuals based on those who displayed a “betrayal of fascist principles.” Eventually this link with ancient Rome was forgotten and it simply became another example of fascist propaganda pageantry.

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9 Ludwig, 121.

10 Mussolini, *Doctrne*, 14; Falasca-Zamponi, 95, 99.


12 Falasca-Zamponi, 113.
Pageantry emerged as the most visible aspect of Roman society which Mussolini incorporated. Roman generals reveled in their triumphal parades, hosting games and building monuments for the people. Mussolini also restored the Circus Maximus and used it as a site for fascist exhibits. Mussolini echoed triumphant Roman generals in his parades and capitalized on Romans' fondness for pageantry and symbolism, while serving as a reminder of their connection to Augustan Rome. In his triumphal parades, Mussolini revived the Roman Step, Passo Romano, which showed marchers in militaristic uniformity, hearkening back to Roman legions.

Mussolini built the vast Via dell'Impero to give his triumphal parades the proper backdrop. This spacious highway connected the Colosseum to the base of the Capitoline Hill and the Piazza Venezia, which contained Mussolini's offices and balcony where he gave many of his speeches (see Appendix, Figure 19). The new road also provided a venue for his fascist propaganda parades which the public thronged to see. It was also a prominent place to display maps depicting the various stages of the Roman empire throughout its development (see Appendix, Figure 20). Mussolini dedicated these in a grand ceremony on April 21, 1934, the anniversary of Rome's birth date.

The Via dell'Impero afforded wonderful views of the Augustan Forum and the Basilica of Maxentius. Mussolini also used the excavations and reconstructions to clean

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13 Painter, 32-3.

14 Falasca-Zamponi, 113.

15 Now called the Via dei Fori Imperiali.

up a neighborhood of crowded tenements. However, the revitalization of this area displaced many families and ruined many ancient and medieval monuments including churches and historical homes. Mussolini liked to link his speeches to Roman events or dates such as the 1922 Birthday of Rome speech where he tied the birthday of Rome to the (Fascist) Labour Day (Festa del Lavoro). Mussolini lined the road with bronze statues of emperors related to the surrounding fora and this gave visual emphasis to his words.

**Archaeology**

Tangible reminders of ancient Rome were everywhere in buildings, ruins, and monuments; they were, and are, a part of Italian history and literature. The ancient past brought the Italian people a sense of cohesion and nationalism, and Mussolini was not the first leader to borrow its legacy for his own propaganda. During the *Risorgimento*, the nationalist patriot Giuseppe Mazzini included an idea of the ancient united with the present in his vision of Rome. Mussolini relied heavily on Roman archaeology as part of his propaganda to connect with the past glory of Rome and promote Italian nationalism within his *romanità*. He commissioned historians and archaeologists to research events and authenticate certain rituals and symbols. Like Augustus, Mussolini initiated an

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17 Painter, 22.


19 Nelis, “Constructing Fascist Identity,” 402; Minor, 150; Falasca-Zamponi, 91.


21 Falasca-Zamponi, 90.
intense building and restoration campaign. The continual construction and excavations "persuaded both Italians and foreigners that fascism meant dynamism and durability."\textsuperscript{22} Scholars who wrote about fascism in its early stages were very enthusiastic about Mussolini and romanitè. A. Pelzer Wagener stated "... will not these resurrected memorials, the very shrine of empire, cause the hearts of the Italian people to burn once more with national pride and the passion for foreign expansion and world dominance."\textsuperscript{23} Jan Nelis argued that this use of romanitè helped to fill the void which existed in fascism's "feeble ideology."\textsuperscript{24} Archaeology strengthened Mussolini's ties to Imperial Rome both physically and ideologically. It also visually focused on nationalism for the people, not always as much for the historical aspects of the archaeology itself but for the fascist identity Mussolini hoped to create and the propaganda necessary to appeal to the masses.\textsuperscript{25} In the process, he destroyed many buildings and monuments he deemed insignificant or did not align with his vision.

During a long-term project to excavate the Colosseum and the Roman Forum, archaeologists left major sections of the old Imperial Fora exposed and strewn about as mythical reminders of former glory and past nationalism.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, in the destruction of a sixteenth-century church, the San Nicola Cesarini, Mussolini's team discovered the ruins of four ancient temples. He refused to demolish them to build

\textsuperscript{22} Painter, 9.

\textsuperscript{23} Wagener, 671.

\textsuperscript{24} Nelis, "Constructing Fascist Identity," 415.


\textsuperscript{26} Andrew McFeters, "The Past Is How We Present It: Nationalism and Archaeology in Italy from Unification to WWII," \textit{Nebraska Anthropologist} 22 (2007), http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebanthro/33: 56; Painter, 10.
anything else, and left the remains as a visible reminder of Roman grandeur. Protecting Italian heritage helped boost his popularity among the Roman people and reinforced the myth of him as the father of the country.

Just as Augustus built the Forum of Augustus (Foro di Augusto) to establish his authority by placing his mark on Rome with his new empire, Mussolini built the Forum of Mussolini (Il Foro Mussolini). As he did in restoring other ancient monuments and putting the fascist stamp on them, Mussolini called to mind this aspect in designing his own forum, directly linking the two traditions. Ancient fora emphasized ornate temples, monuments to victories, and were a place to hear politicians and public speakers. Mussolini’s forum was also educational, but emphasized fascist values including youth and physical fitness. Governmental buildings surrounded the forum, including the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), the fascist youth organization. Workers created mosaics and statues in imitation of ancient Rome, but with striking fascist iconography (see Appendix, Figures 21 and 22). A large obelisk was one of the first items constructed, dedicating the work to Il Duce just as Augustus used obelisks to imply the dominance he held over enemies and cities alike. The Forum was not destroyed after World War II as many fascist icons were, but still remains. The obelisk towers over the forum and the mosaics and statues remain as a reminder of Mussolini’s stamp on Rome’s reconstruction. This propagandist setting displayed the improved state and greatness of Italy to Italians and foreigners alike (see Appendix, Figures 23-25).

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27 Painter, 7-8.

28 Perry Willson, Women in Twentieth-Century Italy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37.

29 Painter, 41-1; Kostof, The Third Rome, 72.

30 Baxa, 73.
The Decennale in 1932 marked the ten year anniversary of Mussolini’s March on Rome. In the manner of ancient Roman games and spectacles commemorating a triumph, the fascists planned their own spectacular pageantry to honor the event. Two attractions, the official opening of the Via dell’Impero and the Exhibit of the Fascist Revolution (Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista), garnered the most attention.31

Museums or exhibits highlighted fascist propaganda items constructed to promote nationalism on multiple levels. Mussolini commemorated the Mostra della rivoluzione fascista, the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution on the same day as the Via dell’Impero. Although called an exhibit, it encompassed much more than that. At first glance, it embodied the rise of fascism and the positive effects it had on Rome through artistic expressions and historical artifacts. However, it was not just the exhibit itself that was a tremendous piece of propaganda, but the construction of the exhibit and the iconography it contained. The Mostra was only supposed to be open for six months, but its popularity and propagandist value kept it open for two years.32

Citizens and fascist organizations sent photographs or any type of historical or personal artifacts for the exhibition; artists then designed twenty-three rooms to honor fascism and showcase these relics.33 Ordinary people who had no official role in the building of fascism could now claim a piece of it and feel empowered in their ownership.

Much of the propagandist imagery included visual symbols meant to appeal to romanità. From the beginning, the exhibit was designed to impress with twenty-five

31 Painter, 22; Bosworth, Mussolini’s Italy 274.


meter high Fasci gracing the thirty-eight meter rectangular entrance painted "'Pompeian' red." The use of red denoted violence, blood and was the symbolic color of Mars, the god of war and military patron of Rome. The staging and constant repetition of symbols, colors and images were set in such a way as to evoke an emotional response.

Two rooms in this exhibit of historical interest capitalized on emotional propaganda. The Room of the March on Rome prominently staged elements of Roman imperial imagery. The popular Roman eagle, a “rough-hewn Roman sword” which united Rome with its past, and DUX chiseled on the wall presented an “archaeological dimension” in its display of romanità which mirrored Mussolini’s embrace of Roman archaeology. Three dimensional images of the eagle high overhead, and another of Mussolini emerging through a wall made the exhibit appear to come to life. This allowed the audiences to feel as if they were part of the experience.

The next room, the Sacrario, or The Chapel of the Martyrs, honored the martyrs of fascism. Chapels are sanctuaries of prayer, and the allusion to martyrs easily translated to the concept of the adoration of the saints for the mostly Catholic population of Italy. Inside the chapel, the focal point was a cross “inscribed with the words ‘Per la patria immortale’ (For the immortal fatherland),” and the room contained “relics of the fascist martyrs.” The religious elements were muted, but imbued with fascist and nationalist emotion. They echoed Giovanni Gentile’s argument of the feasibility of fascism as a religion. Mussolini was still appealing to mass sensibilities by associating

multiple ideas with fascism. In writing about this exhibit, Minister of Culture, Giuseppi Bottai, an early member of the Blackshirts and later editor of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, acknowledged that fascism “has its own martyrs and devotees,” that “positions an entire people around an idea, rendering them humble.”

Museums or exhibits were among many fascist propaganda items constructed to promote nationalism on multiple levels. The *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* opened in September 1937 and lasted a full year during the *Bimillenario Augusteo*, the two-thousand year anniversary of Augustus’ birth, showcasing his glorious principate and ancient Roman history. The *Mostra* contained rooms dedicated to Augustus’ creation of the principate, his ideas of peace for Rome and the hearkening back to traditional, moralistic principles. Mussolini was careful to highlight themes and areas that linked romanità to fascist ideology and him to Augustus and this exhibit contained an area titled “*Fascimo e Romanità*.” Mussolini wanted the people to see him as the new Augustus and with this in mind he created a tangible and permanently visual monument of how fascist propaganda could parallel the greatness of the Roman empire. This exhibit also marked the connection between it and the new Italian empire which Mussolini proclaimed in 1936.

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41 Painter, 76.
This exhibit also contained several connections between romanità and Christianity. First, across from an altar dedicated to the Genius Augusti was a cross on which was written words from the Gospel of St. Luke (II, 1-14). Archaeologist Eugenie Strong claimed that the interest in this piece lay in the fact that Christ was born sometime during the reign of Augustus and posed the question about the stature of Augustus’s reputation in this proximity to the Christ reference. In superimposing Christian iconography over fascist imagery, Mussolini appealed to the Catholic sensibilities. Subtly, fascism was carrying the same message and garnering more supporters to the cause.

The Piazzale Augusto Imperatore, scheduled to celebrate the two thousand anniversary of Augustus’ birth in 1937 was not completed until 1941. It encompassed elements of the Roman empire, Christianity, and fascism. Mussolini used images evoking ancient Rome, such as Romulus and Remus with the ever present she-wolf, the symbolic fasces, and statues of Victory. He linked the ancient and fascist military heritage with adornments of armor.

The centerpiece of the Piazzale Augusto Imperatore was the Ara Pacis, the Altar of Peace honoring Augustus which Augustus originally constructed in the Campus Martius (see Appendix, Figure 10). Mussolini commissioned the careful reconstruction of the Ara Pacis and its glass pavilion housing next to the remains of Augustus’ Mausoleum, another glorious reminder of Augustus’ victories over his enemies and the

\[\text{\footnotesize\[42\text{ E. Strong, "}'Romani\text{t}a' throughout the Ages,'} The Journal of Roman Studies 29, no. 2 (1939): 148, 150; Painter, 75-77.\]}

\[\text{\footnotesize\[43\text{ Painter, 74.}\]}


empire’s past greatness that Mussolini wished to continue in his own government.\(^4^4\) Mussolini set the deadline for the reconstruction to coincide with the celebration of the *Bimillenario Augusteo*, a monumental opportunity which focused on the link between the two rulers and the symbolic connection to the past.\(^4^5\) While allowing for the strong continuity with the ancient world, it remained important for Mussolini to emphasize the degree which fascism benefitted modern Rome. For Augustus, the *Ara Pacis* emphasized the peace he brought to Rome. Mussolini echoed that in the stabilization he purported to the Roman people through fascism, but he wanted and needed to establish the empire Augustus enjoyed.

As in ancient Rome, Augustus’ own words contained in the *Res Gestae* were engraved in bronze, and displayed next to the *Ara Pacis*.\(^4^6\) Mussolini also re-opened the permanent home of the *Mostra della rivoluzione facista*. In detailing fascist construction sites in Rome, Spiro Kostof briefly explained that in Mussolini’s master plan for Rome, these monuments and exhibits were the “new saints of the *Risorgimento*” meant to “deemphasize the ritual centers of papal Rome” and reclaim the city for Mussolini’s nationalist ideology.\(^4^7\)

\(^{4^4}\) Lazzaro, 22.

\(^{4^5}\) Kallis, 811; Wilkins, 55; Lazzaro, 23. Lazzaro makes a specific point that “the aim was continuity, not change over time.” While important, this cannot be wholly accurate in light of Mussolini’s propagandist aims.


Mussolini was not only concerned with what imperial structures to restore, but where they should be placed for maximum propagandist effect. This included moving the reconstructed *Ara Pacis* into the *Piazzale Augusto Imperatore*. Manipulation of the monuments re-directed the public focus toward a distinct sliver of the Roman empire Mussolini felt reinforced the themes of fascism. Placing these monuments together created an idealistic image of Augustus and his principate which merged with the ideology of fascism and encouraged people to look toward the future bearing these ideas in mind. Mussolini purposely juxtaposed the *Ara Pacis* and the Augustus’ Mausoleum and surrounded them with buildings displaying fascist motifs, such as the *fasces*, and inscriptions tying the two empires (see Appendix, Figures 26–28). The *Ara Pacis* was more than just a monument, it was an altar to Augustan peace and in placing it near the Mausoleum of Augustus, Mussolini created a sacred area that he hoped would reflect on him and his fascist ideology. Mussolini used the spirit of Augustus to explain his behavior in using the imperial monuments to further his propaganda. The inscription, placed on one building, *Fabbricato B*, reads:

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HUNC LOCUM UBI AUGUSTI MANES VOLITANT PER AURAS
POSTQUAM IMPERATORIS MAUSOLEUM EX SAECULORUM
TENEBRIS EST EXTRACTUM ARAEQUE PACIS DISIECTA
MEMBRA REFECTA/ MUSSOLINI DUX VETERIBUS ANGUSTIIS
DELETIS SPLENDIDIORIBUS VIIIS AEDIFICIIS AEDIBUS AD
HUMANITATIS MORES APTIS ORNANDUM CENSUIT ANNO
MDCCCCXL A F. R. XVIII
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48 Wilkins, 58; Kostof, “The Emperor and the Duce,” 303.


50 My translation is, “This place is where the spirit of Augustus flies through the breezes, afterwards the emperor’s mausoleum, extracted from the darkness of the ages, and the scattered pieces of the altar of peace restored, the leader, Mussolini ordered the ancient narrow places destroyed and the place fashioned with streets, buildings, and shrines fitting for the customs of humanity in the year 1940, in the eighteenth year of the Fascist Era.”
The excavations and exhibits served as more than just historical propaganda. Mussolini, as did Augustus, set out to transform the city of Rome. The narrow, winding streets from ancient and medieval times and dirty crowded tenements gave way to wide open avenues and spacious fora. During this fevered building and restoration time, Italy saw an increase in tourism. People came from all over Italy and the world to see the ancient sites and what fascism entailed. To encourage this, the Fascist Party used travel discounts and incentives for people to view the exhibits and cultural experiences around the city. Patrons of the Mostra della Impero could have their train ticket validated at the ticket office after viewing the exhibit and receive a seventy percent discount.

As Suetonius claimed Augustus found Rome a city built of brick and left it a city of marble, Mussolini had another method of interpreting this idea. Mussolini’s most ambitious building project was the Universal Exhibition, the Esposizione Universale di Roma, or EUR, set to mark the twentieth anniversary of the March on Rome and host the world fair of Rome. He wanted to build a Rome on the sea, but this time one of stone and marble in the fascist ideal of modernity. Clean, bright architecture would reflect the city’s symbolic peace and prosperity which Mussolini brought to Italy in much the

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51 Baxa, 71.


53 Suet. Aug. 28.3.


55 Notaro, “Exhibiting the New Mussolinian City,” 16.
same way as had Augustus’ *Ara Pacis* almost 2,000 years earlier. This new city would be home to all things fascist and encapsulate Mussolini’s idealistic vision.

The *Museo della Civiltà Romana* (The Museum of Roman Civilization), constructed of the ubiquitous white stone, would house the permanent exhibit of the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, Roman art, and a scale model of Rome under the emperor Constantine. Its colonnaded entrance echoed ancient architecture down to the chiseled Roman lettering displaying its name (see Appendix, Figure 29).

The most striking building in the city was the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* (The Palace of Italian Civilization). With its rows of decorative arches (216 arches in all) reaching seven stories tall, and statuary set in the bottom arches, it most resembled a square version of the Roman Colosseum (see Appendix, Figure 30). The plans and the imposing buildings were designed to impress and show people the permanence of fascism in Italy. Unfortunately, the city did not fulfill its intended purpose as World War II interrupted construction. Mussolini did not live to see the eventual completion of his masterpiece, though it remains a monument to his vision. The importance the Italian government places on Roman identity is still valued. Imperial Rome remains a vital part of Italian history and without Mussolini’s involvement in the excavation and preservation process, many of these monuments might still be buried and lost to generations.

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57 Notaro, “Exhibiting the New Mussolinian City,” 18; Painter, 131.

58 Notaro, “Exhibiting the New Mussolinian City,” 20; Painter, 128.
Religion

Initially, Mussolini had difficulty fitting the Catholic Church and religion into his Doctrine. While Mussolini acknowledged the positive effect of the Church and religion on Italy, the Catholic Church was too deeply ensconced in Italian history and tradition for regular Italians to abandon its ideology completely. After 1929, in the Lateran agreement, it became the official state religion.

In his Doctrine, Mussolini asserted that fascism "has not got a theology but a moral code." Even if privately he did not agree with the tenets of the Church, and as was his contradictory nature also stated that "the fascist conception of life is a religious one," he needed the Catholic Church because it was well established in Italian society.

In his early years as Prime Minister and later, Duce, Mussolini may still have feared the power of the Pope and the Catholic Church, but after 1929, in the Lateran agreement, it became the official state religion.

While Mussolini was following in the footsteps of Augustus, creating his new Roman empire and winning the loyalty of Italians, he conducted secret negotiations with the Vatican. He sought to end the troublesome Roman Question that had created a division in relations between the Catholic Church and the Italian State for decades. By 1870, the Italian state seized the Papal lands and destroyed Pope Pius IX’s authority over the Papal States in Italy. Still, the Popes refused to acknowledge the Kings of Italy as sovereigns, excommunicated them and refused to acknowledge the authority of the kings

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59 Mussolini, Doctrine, 30.
60 Mussolini, Doctrine, 9.
61 Pollard, I.
over what the Popes still considered church property.\textsuperscript{62} Anti-clerical outbursts fanned acrimonious discord between the Church and State until 1929.

Earlier in his journalistic career, Mussolini published many articles against the Church and its authority in his paper \textit{Il Popolo d’Italia}, even going so far as to say in 1919 that the Church should be abolished, and the Pope should be made to leave Rome.\textsuperscript{63} Mussolini had gained significant power since becoming prime minister in 1922, similar to Augustan \textit{auctoritas}. By 1926, dictator Mussolini was in a powerful position and had initiated a tenuous relationship between King Victor Emmanuel and the fascist government. He realized the powerful propaganda in placating both the church and Italian government. Pushing for the solution to the Roman Question with the Lateran Pacts put him in a seemingly benevolent position of power and accord with the Pope and the Catholic Church.

Mussolini received much credit for completing the agreements between the Vatican and the Italian state. He decided that, in public and in theory, it was easier to appear to make the Church an ally, so they formed an uneasy alliance.\textsuperscript{64} Afterwards, if only for a little while, Italy basked in the peace which this settlement provided, and the people credited Mussolini much as Augustus was credited with the \textit{Pax Romana/Pax Augusta}. This increased his appeal and prestige, not just in Italy, but globally.

The public’s conversion to the myth of “fascist religion” was considered “an indispensable element in the consolidation of power” and one of the themes of

\textsuperscript{62} Neville, 5.

\textsuperscript{63} Pollard, 21-22.

\textsuperscript{64} Mack Smith, 159.
propaganda Mussolini used to manipulate the masses.\textsuperscript{65} Giovanni Gentile’s idea of the sacralization of religion was not a new idea, but was reinforced during the height of fascism. Fascism was interested in transformation of the state by adapting its policies to what the masses in society needed, and if that meant revolution, Mussolini was prepared for that.\textsuperscript{66} Emilio Gentile provided further study on this concept in conjunction with romanità. Giovanni Gentile believed that “[f]ascist religion placed itself alongside traditional religion, and tried to syncretize it within its own sphere of values as an ally in the subjection of the masses to the state” using “myths, symbols and religion.”\textsuperscript{67} Mussolini even stated, “[i]f Fascism were not a faith, how did it or could it give stoicism and courage to its legions?”\textsuperscript{68} When people can internalize a belief, it becomes real and an ideal to look to for guidance. Fascism manipulated people towards accepting its doctrines as this faith.

Achille Starace, the influential fascist party secretary from 1931-1939, was an enthusiast for incorporating a heavy use of symbols and rituals into the ‘fascist religion’ because they provided “enthusiasm and order.”\textsuperscript{69} He was responsible for the implementation of the Roman salute and the increasingly elaborate ceremonies and “demonstrations, system of beliefs, and myths and rituals, centered on the sacralization of the state.”\textsuperscript{70} The pageants and demonstrations mobilized the masses and energized them

\textsuperscript{65} E. Gentile, “Political Religion,” 244.
\textsuperscript{67} E. Gentile, “Political Religion,” 230.
\textsuperscript{68} Mussolini, My Rise and Fall, 151-2.
\textsuperscript{69} E. Gentile, “Political Religion,” 238, 242.
\textsuperscript{70} Mack-Smith, 176-77; E. Gentile, “Political Religion,” 230.
towards nationalism, which was one of Giovanni Gentile’s ideas in the *Doctrine of Fascism*.

This religious indoctrination involved education. Educational books of The National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista; PNF*) stated that the party had the task of “keeping the flame of the revolution” alive. This directly alluded to the priestesses of Vesta who were similarly charged with keeping the eternal flame of Rome burning. Augustus, as the *Pontifex Maximus*, chief priest, oversaw this cult, just as Mussolini was the center of the cult of fascism.

The schools instilled fascist ideology in Italian children. Once this “ideology was transformed into dogma, the masses’ political participation had to take the form of collective worship.” Giovanni Gentile, as Minister of Education after 1925, realized that the schools were an important source for spreading fascist propaganda. The greatest target of indoctrination occurred in the middle and upper middle classes because they were the ones able to remain in school. Classical history was a subject very familiar to Italians, so teaching *romanità* in conjunction with fascist doctrine flowed together to create a whole new curriculum for the age. In the *Balilla*, the Youth Movement, which was very important to Mussolini’s fascist propaganda, and his *Fascisti*, ranks were given division titles such as maniples and cohorts in deference to the classical Roman army. Children were taught about the superiority of the Italians and the empire that was their

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73 McFeaters, 56.
inheritance. Propaganda posters for the Balilla displayed the emblem of the now ubiquitous fasces in their logo (see Appendix, Figure 31).

Ludwig asked Mussolini about the Balilla and the education of the youth, and Mussolini claimed, "We educate them in accordance with the ideal of the nation" and that "the individual is subordinated to the State." For them, Mussolini was the fatherly leader who would restore this empire to them through the teachings of fascism. Students brought this enforced rhetoric to their homes and were pawns in spreading the message of the fascist regime. Education was an additional, continued source of contention between Mussolini and Pope Pius XI with each wanting the ability to indoctrinate the impressionable youth of Italy for their respective causes.

The General

Mussolini's experiences in war and membership in the Socialist and Fascist Parties served him well in organizing and working with others. His natural oratorical abilities gave him an edge in the political arena. The military was also a strong element in Mussolini's fascist government. Initially, he attacked it, calling its leaders pro-capitalist. As a youth, he tried escaping military service, but eventually served and was wounded in World War I. During the March on Rome in 1922, he used this military experience to advantage. Later he desired expansion of the empire and attempted to colonize Ethiopia in 1935. That same year, in his Doctrine of Fascism, Mussolini advocated violence and revolution, stating that "fascism...does not believe in the possibility

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74 Ludwig, 172.
75 Painter, 69.
or utility of perpetual peace." As the head of state, needing a military unit that was loyal to the party, rather than one more loyal to the government, he created the squadristi, a fascist militia which he used to enforce martial law.

Mussolini stated early in his dictatorship, "Fascism sees in the imperialistic spirit — i.e. in the tendency of nations to expand — a manifestation of their virility," and within this, the use of military force as he did not see this happening peacefully. Bosworth echoed Mussolini stating that, "affirming and expanding the borders of Italy's place in the world had, after all, been a keynote of the fascist agenda from the movement's earliest days." Mussolini needed to do more than just proclaim in 1936 that he established a new Roman empire, and through colonization Mussolini could take care to accomplish this and compete on a world stage with other developed countries. Colonization was not inclusive of violence and force. In Libya and Cyrenaica, some tribal leaders allied themselves with the Italian state. "Colonialism was, for these chiefs and notables, a pragmatic way to preserve their interests and positions."

Mussolini hoped to gain greater economic benefit for the Italian state from territorial expansion. Much of Italy was poverty stricken after World War I and sending poor Italians to colonies outside of Italy to "make their fortune" proved convenient in removing them from Italy. Mussolini hoped that colonizing these Italians and having them send profits home would help Italy through colonial prosperity. Once in charge in foreign

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77 Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, 145.


79 Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 279.

lands, the fascist government seized lands through eminent domain. Mussolini desired the Mediterranean basin for historical, economic and political reasons. He appealed to the nationalism they shared with Italy as past members of the Roman Empire while repressing them and keeping them from being full partners in this new empire.\footnote{Mia Fuller, “Preservation and Self-Absorption: Italian Colonization and the Walled City of Tripoli, Libya,” in \textit{Italian Colonialism}, ed. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 137-8.}

For all of his belligerent talk of war, bounty and national pride for Italy, he was not as successful as he portrayed himself, wavering in decisions and hoping he would not have to become involved too deeply in conflicts that would stretch Italian finances. Even in Italian losses he claimed victory for Italy and boasted that he planned it that way all along, manipulating the masses so successfully that they believed his propaganda. However, in the case of Cyrenaica, the Agency for the Colonization of Cyrenaica (ECC) was so short on finances that the Italian colonists had to pay back the costs of their houses and farms through what they produced. These houses were barely livable, but Mussolini received reports that colonists were housed in “magnificent villas.”\footnote{Federico Cresti, “The Early Years of the Agency for the Colonization of Cyrenaica (1932-1935),” in \textit{Italian Colonialism}, ed. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 78.} As much as he boasted of her superiority, Italy did not have the strategic advantage and leadership of other countries.\footnote{Mack Smith, \textit{Mussolini}, 248.}
The Statesman and the Cult of Il Duce

Mussolini’s early start in working for newspapers, eventually becoming editor of his own paper, *Il Popolo d’Italia*, allowed him to use his talents for capitalizing on the interests of the people, but also enabled him to manipulate the information they received. Fascism strove to be the party of the people and become involved in every aspect of their lives. In this totalitarian state, Mussolini was best as its head, directing people because he claimed he understood the nature of man, but "imperialism implies discipline, the coordination of efforts, a deep sense of duty and a spirit of self sacrifice."84

However, aside from pageantry, festivals and exhibits, there had to be a daily substance for fascism to attach itself. As much as people could become involved and take ownership in doing their part for the government, the fascist party could recruit new members, further their cause and instill loyalty in party members. Mussolini’s building and excavation frenzy put many people to work, and in an interwar economy with high unemployment, work was a valued commodity.85 Fascism reminded people of this collective, national unity every day in coins depicting images of the king, the *fascio littorio*, and Roman iconography (see Appendix, Figure 32).

Just as in ancient Rome, fascism stressed the structure of the family and its core values. Fascism also feared a declining birth rate and honored fertility. The government recognized women for having many children for the state and held public Mother’s Day celebrations.86 Mussolini’s wife Rachele Guidi embodied the image of the ideal fascist


85 McFaters, 58.

woman. She was a wife, the mother of five children, and stayed out of the public view, preferring to live modestly on the family farm. She seemingly acquiesced to the boundaries set by fascism and Catholicism. This was not exactly true, but it portrayed the image fascist propaganda wished to perpetuate about her and Mussolini’s home life.

As the official First Lady of Italy, Guidi supported her husband by participating in fascist ceremonies. On La giornata della fede, the Day of the Wedding Ring in December, 1935, Rachele, along with the Queen, gave up her own gold ring as a dutiful wife to support the government and the military in the campaign against Ethiopia. In return, they were given rings made of iron. It was the symbolic gesture of the wife sacrificing for her home and her country that led other women to follow suit. In ancient Rome, the actions of the wife reflected upon those of the husband, and in this way Guidi mimicked the actions of a Roman matron. This helped in positively reinforcing the image of the family structure, and by association, the modern pater image of Mussolini.

Mussolini likened himself to Augustus and the heavy publicizing of the nationalist aspects of archaeology and historical exhibitions perpetuated this image. What captivated the world more than things Mussolini created was the man himself. The personality cult of Il Duce grew out of Mussolini’s charismatic qualities and the ones that emerged from the propaganda machine as fascism grew. Gentile claimed that “The birth of the ‘cult of the leader’...had taken place within the confines of the ‘fascist religion’, and as such was a consequence of it.” Paolo Orano, one of the earliest supporters of

87 Mack-Smith, 108; Bosworth, Mussolini’s Italy, 344.

88 DeGrazia, 77.

fascism and a prominent writer who followed Mussolini from the Socialist Party, espoused the idea of “Mussolini as a religion” and the cult of Il Duce was not far behind.90

Mussolini was a ruler for modern times. He liked to show himself driving fast cars, motorbikes, and flying planes, all dangerous pursuits designed to display youth and masculinity.91 Sarfatti claimed, “he [Mussolini] is a man of courage. He loves danger. The very idea of cowardice revolts him.”92 He gave the appearance of being indefatigable and a man who could master anything. These seemingly superhuman qualities helped to foster the mythos of Il Duce.

Every street corner displayed postcards and magazines with Mussolini’s image. The weekly magazine Illustrazione Italiana contained photographs of important national and international events and from January 22, 1924, they heavily featured Mussolini.93 These images, posters on the walls of buildings and the word DUX or Duce in mosaics and statuary, reminded Italians of the fascist message because it had become intertwined with that of its leader (see Appendix, Figure 33). Mussolini liked to be photographed as a regular person, one who could relate to the common man; not always as a military figure. He made appearances working in the fields during threshing season, “bare-chested in an image of virility and strength.”94 Ludwig’s biography contained pictures of Mussolini


91 Falasca-Zamponi, 70.

92 Sarfatti, 342.

93 Falasca-Zamponi, 47-9.

94 Falasca-Zamponi, 153.
on horseback and in regular clothes with dirty boots talking to workers with shovels.\textsuperscript{95} Ultimately, the iconic image of Mussolini became that of him in 1934, seizing a pickaxe and beginning the restoration of the Mausoleum.\textsuperscript{96} Even these limited encounters fostered his relationship with people because knowing of his modest background, they could relate to him on their level.

The advent of modern technology worked perfectly in promoting Mussolini as a cult figure. The cinema portrayed people as figuratively and literally larger than life in glorifying personalities. At a 1937 inauguration of a film studio in Rome, Cinecittà, Mussolini exclaimed that the “cinema was the regime’s strongest weapon.”\textsuperscript{97} Before movies, theatres would show informational “shorts” depicting Mussolini working hard for the people.\textsuperscript{98} This method of propaganda was ideal for his personal image and heightened the mythos of \textit{Il Duce}. These were not simply flat images; film allowed people to make that personal connection and the association became real. The image, along with radio broadcasts of his speeches contributed to Mussolini’s overwhelming presence in the everyday lives of Italians.\textsuperscript{99}

Fascism combined nationalism and revolutionary socialism to appeal to the masses and the mythos of Mussolini drew people to him in their confidence of his

\textsuperscript{95} Ludwig, 104a, 120a.

\textsuperscript{96} Notaro, “Resurrecting an Imperial Past,” 61.


\textsuperscript{98} Falasca-Zamponi, 46-7, 84.

\textsuperscript{99} Falasca-Zamponi, 84, Lasansky, 115.
leadership abilities.\textsuperscript{100} Using romanità to evoke memories of a common history in promoting nationalism elevated the ruins and monuments to tangible reminders of a proud past and easily maneuvered within the scope of Mussolini’s ubiquitous propaganda techniques. In 1922, Mussolini enthusiastically started a fascist empire modeled after ancient Rome. By 1945, internal strife and the excessive toll of a second World War so close on the heels of the first failed to maintain the motion of Mussolini’s vision. There was no dynasty as Augustus had so carefully crafted, and Mussolini’s new empire met its end.

\textsuperscript{100} Falasca-Zamponi, 188.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

After posters have long disintegrated and graffiti chipped away or worn smooth, scholars need to piece together the remaining propagandist evidence of Augustus and Mussolini. Both Mussolini and Augustus incorporated elements of propaganda that mobilized the masses. In doing so they reinvented themselves through various images so that they might harness the goodwill of the people and direct that energy toward promoting their policies to harness sole power. Leaders need elements of military, charisma, an organized governmental structure with like-minded individuals and a strong sense of nationalism. The problem lies with power hungry individuals who desire ultimate control to the detriment of the masses and the country.

One important aspect that does remain consistent is symbolism. As a new culture adopts a symbol, the nature of it may change to adapt to the new association. Mussolini transformed Rome into “an antique stage set where every ruin stood as an implicit legitimation of the revived Empire.”¹ One use of symbolism was architecture which served to promote nationalism for both Augustus and Mussolini through the buildings, statues, and monuments that surrounded them. These were tangible reminders of the power and authority they established. Once they solidified this power, they needed to control the masses. Their use of visual, iconic imagery won out and persuaded the masses to believe in the ideology crafted for them.

Zanker argued that those in power are influenced by their own agendas. This image they have created of themselves and the roles they play on the public stage are

¹ Notaro, “Resurrecting an Imperial Past,” 69.
affected by the propaganda that they and their opponents created. While initial control began with force and manipulation, over time each leader developed a personality cult that eventually became a separate identity and eclipsed the ruler. Augustus and Mussolini came upon obstacles in their path, whether they consisted of people, battles, or establishments. These issues forced Augustus and Mussolini to alter specific images to work around problems and continue their paths to succeed.

Through their respective uses of propaganda, both Augustus and Mussolini were responsible for creating a specific memory for the public, one designed to make people favorably pre-disposed to their leader and his policies. In turn, this historical memory can only be overcome by looking outside the accepted propagandist information remaining over time.

When the senate granted Octavian the name Augustus, it implied the entrance to a new level of peace and prosperity. He capitalized on this aura and over time, this title became the revered one. Augustus founded a new empire based on what he believed were the best ideals of the late Republic. In turn, he fostered a new memory of how people remembered the Republic. This is specifically what led later writers, even as early as Tacitus, to remark that it was not a res publica restituta but constitutam rem publicam. Once an idea is planted, it continues to grow. Each successive writer had to sort through the successive memories of their time and the compounding propaganda to arrive at Augustus' own vision.

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2 Zanker, 3.

3 Syme, The Roman Revolution, 323, 14; Benario, 98.
For Mussolini, the "myth of the Duce" outlived the very regime it created. Italians believed in the fascist regime because of the cult of Il Duce and what Mussolini came to represent for them. Mussolini had the benefit of modern technology to push his personality cult to heights Augustus never could. While Augustus did well with statuary and coinage, Mussolini took advantage of photographs, movies and radio. Even today, videos are readily available for people to experience Mussolini's speeches as he gave them and witness the cheering crowds. Looking back to the past in retrospect does not mean that a ruler will duplicate that era exactly. The evolving nature of society over time offers the opportunity to choose and modify.

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4 Falasca-Zamponi, 58.
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APPENDIX

Figure 1. Golden *aureus* from 41 BCE portraying Octavian and Antony as co-rulers. *Copyright GNU free documentation.*
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antony_with_Octavian_aureus.jpg

Figure 2. Coin from 39 BCE showing the marriage of Antony and Octavia. This was important in publicly displaying the cooperation and family alliance of Octavian and Antony, although privately, they were often at odds. *Copyright GNU free documentation.*
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mark_Antony_and_Octavia.jpg
Figure 3. Silver Denarius of Cleopatra and Antony from 32 BCE. Their images on the coin publically display their association in Egypt. This public acknowledgement was a huge boon for Octavian who used Cleopatra and Antony’s involvement in Egypt as propaganda against Antony in Rome. Copyright GNU free documentation. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marcus_Antonius_-_Celopatra_32_BC_90020163.jpg

Figure 4. Mausoleum of Augustus. This is the current state (in 2005) of the huge mausoleum August built for himself in 28 BCE as a symbol of his auctoritas and defeat of Antony at Actium in 31 BCE. Copyright GNU free documentation. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma-mausoleo_di_augusto.jpg
Figures 5 & 6. Augustus of the Prima Porta. This statue, from approximately 20 BCE, displays Augustus as a victorious general, commemorating the “victory” over the Parthians, but it also includes religious iconography on the breastplate and miniature statue of Cupid at his feet. *Copyright GNU free documentation.*
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Augusto_di_pirma_porta_inv_2290_02.JPG

Figure 7. The golden *Clipeus Virtutis* (Shield of Valor) which hung in the Senate House and honored the newly created Augustus in 27 BCE. The inscription reads, “*SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS IMP CAESARI DIVI F AVGVSTO COS VIII DEDIT CLVPEVM VIRTIVS CLEMENTIAE IVSTITIAE-PIETATIS-ERGA DEOS PATRIAMQVE.*” *Photo is courtesy of Creative Commons.*
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clipeus_virtutis_Augusto_Arles.jpg

Figure 9. Golden *aureus* depicting both Tiberius and Livia during the reign of Tiberius. Although they are not co-rulers, her continued use on coins shows her continued influence. The coin dates from 36-37 CE. *Copyright GNU free documentation.* [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tiberius%26Livia_Aureus.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tiberius%26Livia_Aureus.jpg)
Figure 10. Statue of Augustus as statesman. This statue, currently in the Louvre, shows Augustus wearing a toga and holding a scroll. There is no military or religious iconography present. The head dates from approximately 30-20 BCE and is not original to the body which dates from the middle of the 2nd century CE. *Copyright GNU free documentation.* http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caesar_augustus.jpg

Figure 11. *Ara Pacis Augustae* in its new housing designed by Richard Meier, 2006. *Photo courtesy of Glenn Bugh, 2012.*

Figure 13. Statue of *Via Labicana Augustus*, Augustus as Pontifex Maximus from approximately 12 BCE. Here Augustus is wearing a loose toga which is draped over his head in a religious stance. No icons depict military or governmental status. *Picture is from the National Museum of Rome and has been released into the public domain.*

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CaesarAugustusPontiusMaximus.jpg
Figure 14. Mussolini surrounded by Blackshirts during the March on Rome in 1922. *Image has been released into the public domain.*
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:March_on_Rome.jpg

Figure 15. Medal from 1922 commemorating the March on Rome. *Photo is courtesy of Creative Commons.*
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Medaglia_commemorativa_Marcia_su_Roma.jpg
Figure 16. Map of Augustan Rome from 1886. The dot shows the site of Augustus’ Mausoleum. Image has been released into the public domain.  
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Rome_Augustus_mausoleum.JPG

Figures 17 and 18. Photographs showing the Roman Fasces on manhole covers. The left picture shows the year 1940 in both regular numbers and the Fascist dating. Photos courtesy of Rhonda Regan, 2012.
Figure 19. Photograph showing the *Palazzo Venezia* which terminated one end of the *Via del Imperio*. Mussolini delivered many of his speeches at the center window balcony, and it connects with the *Sala del Mappamondo* which he used as his office. *Photo courtesy of Rhonda Regan, 2012.*

Figure 20. Photograph of three of the four maps on the Basilica of Maxentius along the *Via dell’Impero*. A fifth one depicting the annexation of eastern Africa during the Fascist regime was removed in 1936. *Photo courtesy of Rhonda Regan, 2012.*
Figure 21. Mosaic of the *squadristi* in Mussolini's Forum, now the *Foro Italico*, constructed between 1928 and 1938. These mosaics imitated the style of ancient Rome, but with fascist iconography. *Photo is used with the permission of Michael Tinkler.* [Link](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma-foroitalico3.jpg)

Figure 22. Mosaic in Mussolini's Forum, now the *Foro Italico*, constructed between 1928 and 1938. Another in the ancient style, visually chanting *Il Duce*. *Photo is used with the permission of Michael Tinkler.* [Link](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma-fotoitalico.jpg)
Figures 23 and 24. These pictures show the massive obelisk in Mussolini's Forum, now called the *Foro Italico*. Figure 23 is a postcard from 1938, one of the many ways the Fascist government used its imagery in propaganda. Figure 24 shows that the obelisk remains in pristine condition as of 2010. *Images have been released into the public domain.* http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RM-Roma-1938-Foro-Mussolini-il-monolite.jpg. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MonolitoMussolini.JPG.

Figure 25. Close up of the obelisk in the *Foro Italico*. It gives the fascist date of year 10 which corresponds to 1932. *Photo is courtesy of Creative Commons.* http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mussolini_column_opera_balilla_anno_x.jpg.
Figure 26. Current picture of *Fabbricato B*, on the south side of the *Piazzale Augusto Imperatore*, contains an inscription of how Mussolini linked Fascism with the spirit of Augustus. *Photo courtesy of Rhonda Reagan, 2012.*

Figure 27. Close up of the Roman and Fascist imagery on *Fabbricato B*, on the south side of the *Piazzale Augusto Imperatore*. *Photo courtesy of Rhonda Reagan, 2012.*
Figure 28. Close up of the Fascist inscription and imagery on *Fabbricato* A, on the south side of the *Piazzale Augusto Imperatore*. Its style echoes that of Roman sculptural friezes. *Photo courtesy of Rhonda Reagan, 2012.*

Figure 29. The *Museo della Civiltà Italiana*, was built between 1938 and 1943 in the style of the Roman colonnade. This monument also incorporates the stark white imagery. *Photo is courtesy of Creative Commons.*

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma_EUR_Colonnato_MCR_BW.jpg
Figure 30. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, or Square Colosseum, was built between 1938 and 1943. Designed to mimic the Roman Colosseum with rows of arches from top to bottom, it held statuary in the bottom arches. It demonstrates Mussolini’s desire for a stark, marbled visual effect. Photo is courtesy of Creative Commons. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roma_Palazzo_della_Civilt%C3%A0_Italiana_BW_-_from_Commons.jpg

Figure 31. The Opera Nazionale Balilla, the Fascist Youth Organization and Ministry of Education. This was a report card cover from 1932. Note the preponderance of fasces in the image and surrounding the text. Photo has been released to the public domain. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1932-pagella-balilla-copertina.jpg
Figure 32. Fascist coinage from 1939 inscribed with an image of King Victor Emmanuel III and fascist symbols of the Roman eagle, laurel wreath and fasces. Photo is courtesy of Creative Commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IT-1939-Lira-L-1.jpg

Figure 33. Fascist poster from around 1939, depicting Mussolini as a strong military leader. Photo has been released to the public domain. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mussoliniposter.jpg
VITA

Colleen Syler Parker
History Department
BAL 800
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, VA 23529

Colleen Parker is originally from Crown Point, Indiana. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1990, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts, double majoring in English and History. She returned to Virginia Commonwealth University in 1994 and earned a Master of Teaching degree in English. Colleen then began teaching English and Latin at the high school level. Upon moving to Suffolk, VA, she continued her Latin studies at Christopher Newport University. While there, she participated in the Seventh Annual Paedeia 2008, an undergraduate and graduate student research conference with her paper, “Sensual Themes of Passion and Destruction in Vergil’s Aeneid 2.1-249,” under the directorship of Dr. Jana Adamitis. Colleen entered the Master’s of History program at Old Dominion University in the fall of 2008. In April 2012, she presented an abbreviated portion of her thesis at the 15th Annual Brian Bertoti Conference at Virginia Tech. Currently, Colleen is teaching Latin and after graduation hopes to pursue a doctoral degree in International Studies.