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Author: Martijn van Gils

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Material Remembrance in Contentious Spaces: Framing Multi-Scalar Memories and National Culpability in the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*¹

Martijn van Gils

Research MA, Comparative Literary Studies, Utrecht University
martijn-max@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the last decade, several initiatives to build a state-of-the-art Holocaust museum in Rome have been proposed only to subsequently fail to materialize—primarily due to fund cuts. Instead, today, the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah* consists of a small, self-sufficient project with very limited display space (one floor), often dependent on travelling collections. The museum's development and its current status are relevant for memorial discourses in Italy. The memories of Fascism and Italy's role in the Holocaust sit uneasily in public discourses: from the post-war era, there has been a tendency to defer national responsibility through circulation of the *brava gente* myth and the focus on Nazi occupiers rather than Italian collaborators and the ideology of fascism that preceded Hitler. While such initiatives as the creation of the Day of Memory have generated a platform for debate, this apologetic attitude has persisted in public circles, leading to a divided memory scape.

As a material and symbolic entity, the *Museo* makes a conscious attempt to intervene in this divided memory. In this paper, I will engage with two of the *Museo's* past exhibitions to analyse its discursive framing of Italy's role in the Holocaust, incorporating a multi-scalar analysis and drawing on the concept of "cosmopolitan memory." I will argue that the *Museo* is a local site of memory that establishes a dialogue with transnational memorial discourses. This is reflected in both the *Museo's* contents as well as its setup: due to its small size, the *Museo* is often dependent on travelling collections. In its exhibitions, the *Museo* provides interrelational descriptions of the socio-political climate in the 1930s and focuses on multiple ethnic and national groups. However, it does not reflect on individual perpetrators, which would further aid its desired—and necessary—pedagogical function of contextualising its historical subject matter from the framing of the present.

KEYWORDS

Italy, Holocaust, memory, cosmopolitanism, museum, perpetrators.

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In the last decade, several initiatives to build a Holocaust museum in Rome have been proposed only to subsequently fail to materialize. Funds were freed up by city authorities, but progress was delayed and funds were subsequently dropped (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 2014). The anticipation that came with this long process is visible in a number of online articles by a variety of Jewish and Italian news agencies. Some examples of news article titles, in chronological order, are: "Rome Closer to

Shoah Museum" (Italy Magazine 2008); "Italy's First Holocaust Museum to be Built in Rome" (Palmieri-Billig 2011); and then "Plans for Rome Holocaust Museum in Jeopardy" (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 2014). The planned museum promised to be a state-of-the-art building, located in the Villa Torlonia, a "grand neoclassical residence where Mussolini and his family lived from 1925 to 1943" (Italy Magazine 2008), and where ancient Jewish catacombs are located (Jewish Telegraphic Agency

2014). These plans have, to date, not come to fruition. Instead, today, the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*, located in the Jewish quarter (or former Ghetto) of Rome, forms a small, self-sufficient exhibition project with very limited display space (one floor), often dependent on travelling collections—although, as I will discuss, they also design their own exhibitions. The *Museo* opened its inaugural exhibition on 27 January, the Day of Memory, in 2015.

The *Museo*'s development and its current status are relevant for memorial discourses in Italy. The memories of Fascism and Italy's role in the Holocaust sit uneasily in public discourses: from the post-war era, there has been a tendency to defer national responsibility through circulation of the *brava gente* myth and the focus on Nazi occupiers rather than Italian collaborators and the ideology of fascism which preceded Hitler (Knittel 2015: 154-155; and Clifford 2013: 5-6; see below). As Natascha Chang states, "[u]nlike Germany, Italy never underwent a formal de-fascistization process and never had a chance to acknowledge collectively or even to begin to come to terms with its past" (Chang 2008: 106). While several developments from the 1990s onwards have generated new platforms for discussion, and there is now increased recognition of national responsibility, memory remains divided in Italy, and no national "duty to remember" has emerged so far. As a material and symbolic entity, the *Museo* makes a conscious attempt to intervene in this divided memory. Echoing Chang's claim, the director of the *Museo*, Marcello Pezzetti, states that "Italy, like Austria, was a partner of Nazi Germany—not a victim, as the populace generally holds. Unlike Germany, we have never even begun the process of soul-searching. Italians don't feel involved—they do not consider themselves as having collaborated" (Palmieri-Billig 2011, n.p.). He also prospectively states that the *Museo* will engage with such issues of culpability. In the present time, this raises

the question of how the *Museo* has engaged with these memorial discourses in practice.

In this paper, I will investigate the ways in which the legacies of Fascism and the Holocaust are remembered in the newly-created *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*. While the focus is on a localised site of memory—the museum—this space exists in dialogue with the city of Rome as well as national and international discourses of remembrance. My method therefore incorporates a multi-scalar analysis, prominently including a consideration of how the *Museo* frames Italian culpability within the context of a divided memory scape. First, I will outline the complex status of the memories of Fascism and wartime persecutions of Jews in Italy, as well as relevant theories from the field of cultural memory studies, including "cosmopolitan memories," "divided memories," and "frames." Then, I will analyse two of the *Museo*'s exhibitions to gain insight into the ways in which the *Museo* does not simply record history, but actively contributes to shaping it into a narrative, framing Italian culpability in the Holocaust by drawing on transnational influences, both materially and symbolically.



Historical and theoretical background

Historical context

Before turning to the analysis, it is important to establish some relevant historical and theoretical contexts. Firstly, a short outline of the histories of the Jewish ghetto in Rome and Italian fascism is in order. The Jewish ghetto was defined and established in 1555 by a Papal bull issued by Pope Paul IV, which forced all the city's Jews to move into the area (Gruber 2013: 121). Stephen Dunn describes this bull as "one of the most ferocious pieces of anti-Semitic legislation ever carried through anywhere before

1933” (1958: 132). Curfews were instated in the ghetto; Jews could not engage in any occupations except refuse-collecting and trade; and they could not own property or associate with Christians—among other restrictions (Dunn 1958: 132). The walls of the Ghetto were not broken down until 1848, by order of Pius IX, although the wall-less Ghetto remained operational under Papal rule until 1870 (Lerner 2002: 1, 32). Afterwards, the quarter remained the primary centre of Jewish life and culture in Rome (Lerner 2002: 1), and it continues to be an important site of Roman history today—this is where the old synagogue is located, as well as the contemporary synagogue which hosts Rome’s Jewish museum.

There are various manifestations of Holocaust remembrance in the Jewish district today, including plaques and Stolpersteine. Both of these material interventions into the city scape illustrate the interplay between personal narratives and collective remembrance—an important characteristic of memorial practices. Regarding the former: one of the plaques in the area commemorates the arrests of October 16, 1943, presenting a personal narrative by someone who knew the people that were deported from the place where the plaque stands today. The plaque states that the people mentioned in the account “represent all the families destroyed by anti-Semitic hatred.”

Similarly, this dynamic of giving concrete representation to individual victims is also illustrated in the phenomenon of *Stolpersteine* (literally stumbling stones). These are small, brass cubes bearing an inscription of the names of victims of Nazi persecution (Figure 1). There is a Twitter page dedicated to Stolpersteine with more than 12,000 followers as of 1 February 2018. It regularly posts updates about new Stolpersteine in various cities (such as Stockholm and Frankfurt). Reportedly, as of December 2017, there are around 63,000 Stolpersteine across twenty-one European countries (Demnig, December 16, 2017). In

Rome, a number of Stolpersteine are present, with a proliferation of them occurring in the Jewish quarter. At one spot, there is a cluster of no fewer than ten Stolpersteine. The proliferation of Stolpersteine across Europe constructs a larger narrative out of individual ones. The purpose of Stolpersteine is to make people stop to look at them and give some thought to the victims. Moreover, wherever they stick out of the ground, they can literally become ‘stumbling’ blocks, forcing one to take note of them at the very least. This manner of commemorating individual victims contributes to an international network of Holocaust remembrance, constructing an affective connection with the past.



Figure 1: Stolpersteine in the Jewish quarter, Rome. Photo credit: Martijn van Gils.

Fascism as an ideology rose to popularity in early twentieth-century Italy through the agenda of Benito Mussolini, who founded his radical National Fascist Party following the political crisis of the post-World War I years. Mussolini destroyed his opposition by using systematic violence, before being elected to power in 1922 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018). Stanislo Pugliese provides a concise overview of the relationship between Italian Fascism and anti-Semitism. He outlines how there was no trace of official anti-Semitism in the Fascist Party of 1922. By this point in history, Italian Jews

participated actively in society and were even present in the highest echelons of the fascist hierarchy. Only from 1934 onwards did the anti-Semites within Fascism rise to prominence, which culminated in the Racial Laws of 1938, which mainly targeted Jews, banning them from almost all areas of society (Pugliese 1999: 242). It has often been commented that these laws, while they may have functioned to strengthen ties with Germany, were not the result of any direct German interference (Michaelis 1978: vii; Clifford 2013: 73).

Following Mussolini's fall in July 1943, the German occupation of Italy began. The German occupiers ruled through violence and the aid of local fascists. At this time, throughout German-occupied Italy, many Jews and opponents of the regime were rounded up and sent to detention camps or prisons, with many Jews being sent straight to concentration and extermination camps in Poland and Germany (Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Italy – Anti-Fascist Movements" 2018).² Rebecca Clifford notes that some Italian officials saved Jewish lives; however, their motivations were not always pure as, within the context of the occupation, many of them had the maintenance of Italian authority in mind (Clifford 2013: 76). Furthermore, German round-ups of Jews were made much easier due to the pre-work done by the Fascist Party (Clifford 2013: 77), and there was a significant number of deportations orchestrated by Italians alone (Zimmerman 2005: 21).

Cultural memory: the core concepts

Following this complex socio-political situation during World War II, Italy was forced to engage in a renewed process of identity formation, in which the state would have to negotiate its relationship with past political allegiances. Alessandro Portelli describes this as "the continuing struggle over the question of what kind of Italy emerged from the ruins of the Second World

War" (Portelli 2006:32). I shall provide an outline of how discourses around Italy's role in the Holocaust developed after World War II; for now, I will first outline the trends in cultural memory studies that inform my article. In the following paragraphs, I will engage with the transnational formation of cultural memories, the concepts of *divided memories* and social *frames*, and the issue of engaging with perpetrators instead of only victims.

Particularly in recent years, there has been an emphasis on collective memory as constituted by transnational flows (see De Cesari and Rigney 2014). An early concept that posited the importance of highlighting memory cultures which transcend the nation-state is that of "cosmopolitan memory." This term was coined by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider in their 2002 article "Memory Unbound," to engage with the transition from national to cosmopolitan memory cultures. Cosmopolitanism, according to Levy and Sznaider, refers to processes of "internal globalization," in which issues of global concern are incorporated into the local experiences of an increasing number of people (Levy and Sznaider 2002:88). The Holocaust is the most prominent example of "internal globalization," and also the focus of their article. Levy and Sznaider emphasise the role of global media representations in shaping cosmopolitan memories, and trace the historical roots of the emergence of cosmopolitan memories to remembrances of the Holocaust. A core feature of cosmopolitan memory is the increasing focus on the remembrance of the victims, as an incorporation of the "Other," which has become the "central mnemonic event" in contemporary times (Levy and Sznaider 2002: 103).³

Anna Bull and Hans Hansen critically engage with the concept of cosmopolitan memory, putting it in contrast to the concept of "antagonistic memory," which exists alongside the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance. Antagonistic memory re-

2) For an excellent, more comprehensive overview of Jewish life in Italy under Fascist rule, see Meir Michaelis' *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (1978).

3) The increased predominance of the victim's standpoint in collective memory cultures is also addressed in Jeffrey Olick's book *The Politics of Regret* (2007).

imagines national territories in exclusionary terms and is based on a rigid boundary between “us” and “them” (Bull and Hansen 2016: 393). In their article, Bull and Hansen put forth the concept of “agonistic memory” to reconcile the co-existence of the two forms of memory. According to them, the agonistic mode of remembering avoids the pitfalls of the other two modes of remembrance by not pitting “good” against “evil” “through acknowledging the human capacity for evil in specific historical circumstances,” and by integrating both perspectives on the past: the victim’s and perpetrator’s (Bull and Hansen 2016: 399).

There are two issues raised by Bull and Hansen which I will delve into here: the need to engage with perpetrators and the issue of reception. Firstly, Bull and Hansen emphasise the need to engage with a multiplicity of perspectives in order to arrive at a historical understanding. Remembrance of the past should rely on testimonies from both perpetrators and victims (Bull and Hansen 2016: 399). In this regard, Bull and Hansen’s article is emblematic of a new trend in memory studies: the area of perpetrator studies. As outlined in the Editors’ Introduction to the newly established *Perpetrator Studies Journal*—whose mere existence illustrates the growing interest in this area of research—we are experiencing a perpetrator studies “boom.” While there has been research centred on perpetrators for a few decades now, as a field it has come to its own only in the last five or ten years (Critchell *et al.* 2017: 1-2). The core assumption of perpetrator studies is a rejection of the notion that perpetrators were “beyond human understanding” (Clendinnen 2002: 79; Knittel 2015: 142). These scholars argue instead that there is much to gain from understanding the historical positioning and ideological motivations of perpetrators; where *understanding* means just that, and not identification or justification (Clendinnen 2002: 89; Knittel 2015: 142).

Critchell *et al.* argue that “refusing

to engage with perpetrators for fear of losing one’s moral compass is to ascribe to them a power and influence that is both unwarranted and dangerous” (2017: 2). In order to ensure that “Auschwitz not happen again,” as Adorno famously stated in his essay “Education after Auschwitz” (1966), it is imperative to study perpetrators and the systems that gave rise to them. This involves a recognition of what Hannah Arendt influentially called the “banality of evil.” Dovetailing with Bull and Hansen’s emphasis on acknowledging the human capacity for evil in specific circumstances, the banality of evil refers to the unsettling notion that everyone carries the potential to commit acts of evil (Critchell *et al.* 2017: 4-5).

Secondly, there is the matter of *reception* which Bull and Hansen’s article raises in noting how the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance has failed to supersede the national model (2016: 390-391). Similarly to modes of remembrance, memories themselves are not unified and are subject to local interpretation. To engage with this, I shall turn to the concept of *frames* which has become increasingly important within memory studies. As Frank van Vree points out, within frames, certain memories are accepted and circulate throughout the public sphere, while others are filtered out, as there is no social space which gives these narratives shape and meaning—although they may circulate within limited spheres (2013: 7-8). This notion is more fluid and apt at accounting for silences than merely focusing on hegemonic state influences or perceived collective traumas. For the purposes of my paper, the question is how Italian society engages with the issue of national responsibility in memories of the Holocaust. The *Museo* must be situated within a context of social frames, in which the notion of national responsibility holds an uncomfortable position as a divided memory, as I will outline below.

Marianne Hirsch, while she endorsed Van Vree’s use of the concept, added a more



critical note in stating that the model does not explain “how frames can be shattered, scenarios restaged or narratives rewritten” (2013: 17). In his book *Emerging Memory*, Paul Bijl coins the concept of “emerging memory,” to provide additional insight into how frames can be altered. Similarly to Van Vree, Bijl speaks of the “ambiguous presence” of certain memories in society (2015: 12). Bijl puts greater emphasis on the reciprocal logic between the “frame” and the “framed” as they produce one another. Following Butler, he argues that, while frames structure modes of recognition, they are not all-determining, and certain media objects have the power to question dominant frames (Bijl 2015: 30). Emerging memories are “those representations of the past that are periodically rediscovered while retaining their shady presence” (Bijl 2015: 13).⁴ Thus, frames are constituted through a complex interplay between such facets as traumatic forces, “official” and individual narratives pushing against each other, a sense of national identity influenced by international forces, etc. Furthermore, they are affected by social and temporal changes, which are produced to a significant degree by media objects.

The concept of “frames,” apart from accounting for historical silences, may also help to explain how memories are *reconfigured* in certain ways by subsequent generations, depending on the socio-political climate. This brings me to “divided memories,” an important concept from memory studies which is key to this paper. “Divided memory” as a concept first came to be used in historical debates in Italy of the 1990s, when alternative memories became an object of study (Foot 2009: 8). As the notion of “frames” suggests, and as Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone put forth in their book *Contested Pasts*, the past is constituted in narrative, representation and construction (2003: 2). The interplay between individual and collective memories leads to a “battlefield” situation “where nothing is neutral and

everything is continually contested” (Passerini, “Memories of Resistance,” qtd. in Foot 2009: 1). “Divided memory” thus refers to a situation in which two or more competing narratives on the same historical timeframe exist simultaneously. Foot defines divided memory as follows: “Divided memory is the tendency for divergent or contradictory narratives to emerge after events, and to be elaborated and interpreted in private stories as well as through forms of public commemoration and ritual. These memories are often incompatible, but survive in parallel” (2009: 10).

Rather than remaining static, however, divided memories are sites of endless contestation. Foot contends that these “conflicts” can be affected by politics, historical research, and cultural change (2009: 10). Having outlined the relevant theories, it is time to consider how the memory of the Holocaust developed in post-World War II Italy.



Holocaust memories in Italy

Italy’s role in systematic anti-Semitism is a suitable example of contestation of memory, as it sits uneasily within discourses around the Holocaust. Post-war myths in Italy generally involved a displacement of agency: a comfortable “negationism” which allowed distance from a sense of responsibility by focusing on the Nazi occupation (Clifford 2013: 5; cf. Knittel 2015: 154). This is echoed in the statement by Chang cited above, namely that Italy never had a formal “de-fascistization” process. “To invoke the memory of fascism in the Italian context,” she states, “inevitably points to unresolved questions of agency and accountability that are part of a sustained scholarly and public debate” (Chang 2008: 106). In the aftermath of World War II, the essentialised image of the largely victimised yet heroic Italians prevailed in public consciousness. Fascism

4) A similar argument is put forth by Alexander Wilde, who discusses “irruptions of memory,” where symbols of memories are sporadically given public expression by events such as official ceremonies, book publications, or the discovery of the remains of disappeared persons, reminding the political class and citizens of an “unforgotten past” (1999: 475).

was framed as a lamentable “parenthesis” in Italian history, which was mild compared to the much more violent Nazi occupation (Clifford 2013: 5; Knittel 2015: 154).

While some academics, in different periods, claimed that Italian society has largely accepted responsibility for wartime conduct (see Michaelis 1978: vii; and Sarfatti 2006: xi), the academic consensus holds that the memory of Fascism as a “parenthesis” has remained very powerful (Perra 2008 & 2010; Gordon 2012; Clifford 2013; Knittel 2015; Girelli-Carasi n.d.; Maria 2017). Dan Stone even claims that, in Silvio Berlusconi’s Italy, “the so-called ‘post-fascist’ narrative that all Italians were victims became the norm” (2013: 23). Clifford outlines the complex development of Holocaust commemorations in Italy after World War II. Glossing over the decades after World War II until the start of the twenty-first century, Clifford states that, before the creation of the Day of Memory in 2000, there was no central commemorative ritual in Italy marking the persecution and deportation of Italian Jews during the Fascist period and the war (Clifford 2013: 91). Commemorative ceremonies were primarily held at the local level and did not draw sustained attention from the broader public. Even when the genocide was commemorated, the idea that the war period had been a parenthesis and that the general populace had “chosen a ‘good’ path during the war, even if their leaders had chosen a ‘bad’ one,” remained prevalent (Clifford 2013: 101).

This narrative would begin to be more seriously challenged after the fiftieth anniversary of the Racial Laws, in 1988, which marked “a revival of interest in the history of Italy’s Jews, and a notable interpretative shift as scholars began to question the extent of Italian involvement in and sympathy for Fascist anti-Semitic policies” (Clifford 2013: 105). Clifford contextualises the shift in consciousness in the deceleration of the Cold War, which brought with it a re-evaluation of the history

and memory of World War II in many European countries (2013: 6). However, although scholarship on Jews in Italy proliferated in the 1990s, commemorative practices largely remained unchanged at first (Clifford 2013: 106).

It was yet another fiftieth anniversary—which came not long after—that stirred debate, as some memorial activists demanded a reconsideration of the 1943 round-ups in Rome and their place in national history and memory (Clifford 2013: 141). These activists felt that a rethinking of the past was necessary due to “the growth of the extreme right, the search for new national identities as the old ideologies of the left crumbled, and concerns about the increase of violent racism both at home and in Europe as a whole” (Clifford 2013: 141). This rethinking did not however produce a unified memory: historians from both the Left and the Right revisited the history of the Fascist period, generating a wave of controversial historiographical debate (Clifford 2013: 145). Despite the controversy, the genocide increasingly became the subject of media and cultural attention (Clifford 2013: 151). Illustrating the divide, two distinct proposals for a “Day of Memory” emerged in Italy in the 1990s, which differed in their approach to the issue of culpability. One proposal emphasised Italian responsibility for Fascist-era treatment of Jews, and one centred on Fascist responsibility for the persecution of a wide range of people, not only Jews (Clifford 2013: 171). When one bill was hopelessly stalled in the Senate, the Parliament postponed the debate on the two motions for “a period of reflection” (Clifford 2013: 181).

Clifford outlines how, during this period from 1997 to 2000, several governments across Europe created official Holocaust memorial days, and the European Parliament called for 27 January to be adopted as a Europe-wide Holocaust Memorial Day (Clifford 2013: 222). Thus, by 2000, a commemoration day became a political necessity for many Italians. Italy





had joined the “Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research” and signed the Stockholm Declaration, committing to encourage appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance (Clifford 2013: 223). Despite the fact that diplomatic considerations played a large role in these decisions, it remains noteworthy that the initiatives, including the first proposals for a Day of Memory, emerged following public debate on Italian responsibility during the Holocaust, illustrating the effects of social debates on issues of historical responsibility, which were given a platform in the 1990s. In spite of increased calls to recognise Italian responsibility, the Day of Memory which was instated in Italy in 2000 was, as Clifford states, “politically neutral.” It called more generally for remembrance of “extermination and the persecution of the Jewish population and of military and political Italian deportees to Nazi camps,” never explicitly referring to the Fascist regime (Clifford 2013: 229-230).

Further, Clifford states that the Day of Memory in Italy was, and remains, characterised by “hesitant and hazy state participation” (Clifford 2013: 222). Rather than a single event, the Day of Memory is characterised by hundreds of events across the country which are organised by various Jewish communities or groups representing the victims of Fascist and Nazi persecution (Clifford 2013: 231). The state’s lack of involvement notwithstanding, the number of events illustrate the willingness of members of the public to commemorate the Holocaust. Clifford states that the commemoration “became a platform for the re-examination of certain key aspects of post-war Italian identity” and a site to contest the *brava gente* myth (Clifford 2013: 234). Within the space of a few years, the issue of national responsibility “had gone from being almost completely absent from official discourse surrounding the Day of Memory, to being a common theme in official statements” (Clifford 2013:

240). While these statements had become politically fashionable, however, they did not constitute a sustained “duty to remember,” being rather an end in themselves (Clifford 2013:242).

While there is no concrete study as to the precise degree of recognition of Italy’s anti-Semitic oppression during Mussolini’s rule—in Italy or abroad, or among the older and younger generations—it is clear that there is a tension between the discourses, and that the memory of Italian accountability for Jewish persecutions remains divided. That the *Museo* is hosted by a grassroots organisation and lacks governmental funding is unsurprising, given the continuing hesitation by political leaders to engage in national remembrance of Italian responsibility during the Holocaust. At the same time, the *Museo*’s existence is itself exemplary of the public commitment to acknowledge Italian responsibility for Jewish persecutions, and the desire to educate an increasing number of people. I will now investigate how the *Museo*’s curatorial practices embed it within a transnational discourse of Holocaust memory, and how the *Museo* frames the issue of national responsibility in two exhibitions from 2017.



Primary analysis:

Museo della Fondazione della Shoah

The *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah* provides insight into the contemporary status of Holocaust remembrance in Rome and Italy. It is a recent addition to the memorial spaces of the Jewish quarter, alongside the plaques and Stolpersteine as mentioned earlier. In my analysis of the *Museo*, I will discuss two of its exhibitions: an exhibition on Nazi and Fascist propaganda, which ran from 30 January to 7 May 2017; and the exhibition that followed it, on *European Sport under Nazism*, which

ran from 18 May to 28 July. The former was an original construct by the Fondazione, whereas the latter was an import from Paris. I will analyse these exhibitions in relation to the *Museo's* aims and the above outlined theories of cultural memory studies. For the first exhibition, I draw on a book the *Museo* published based on it, which contains the exhibition's primary arguments, as well as photos and brief descriptions of the documents that were present in the *Museo* at the time. For the second exhibition, I draw on an analysis of the spatial organisation of the museum spaces, the posters and objects present in the *Museo*, and a complementary booklet which was provided to visitors.

A museum can be considered a medium, similarly to print, film, and social media. Museums participate within networks of storing and disseminating information, playing a crucial part in identity formation (of cities, nations, families) in the connections they establish with the past. As Jenny Kidd states, museums require visitors to “perform identities they may be uncomfortable with (...), to locate themselves and their communities within (or perhaps in opposition to) politically charged and ideologically loaded displays” (Kidd et al. 2016: 1). Museums convey a narrative which forces the viewers to position themselves in relation to the past it conveys (or constructs, as museums construct their own narrative of the past). By confronting Italian visitors with a narrative of their Fascist past, the *Museo* does just that; but, as Susanne Knittel states, “perhaps a certain degree of unsettlement is exactly what is required to shake visitors out of a distancing, even complacent idea about the past” (2015: 168).

This interpellation of the visitor to perform new identities is revealing of the relationship between the museum and its visitors. The project of the Shoah museum in Rome is part of an attempt to foster understanding of the Holocaust. According to the *Museo's* website, their aim is simply to educate visitors about the

Holocaust in general, glossing over the pedagogical function of teaching Italians specifically about their own past. In 2011, director Marcello Pezzetti stated that they planned to “speak directly to Italians” about their past in a special section on Italy (Palmieri-Billig n.d., n.p.). Since the planned state-of-the-art museum was never built, there is no clearly-marked area which performs this role. This is not to say that this aspect of the *Museo's* intervention has been removed. During my own visit to the *Museo*, the curators provided our group with a tour. Verbally, they emphasised the lack of recognition of Fascist responsibility in public discourse, although they focused their tour largely on the exhibition and only mentioned the contemporary discourses in Italy with respect to Fascist responsibility at the end. So, at least in oral communication, the curators make attempts to have people reflect on Italy's duty to remember its own role in the history the *Museo* presents. In the analysis of the exhibitions that follows, I will discuss the role Italy's past plays within the exhibitions, considering the *Museo's* use of a multi-scalar framework and the issue of national culpability.



European Sports under Nazism: the spatial organisation of an exhibition

Beyond the position of museums within broader media ecologies which I mentioned above, a museum utilises a variety of media. Walking through the Shoah Museum in Rome, one encounters posters with pictures and complementary text, a screen which plays a short film in a loop, as well as old objects such as magazines, postcards, shoes, and a brass cup. Visitors who do not speak Italian are provided a booklet of over fifty pages, conveying the information in a language that they understand. This booklet, too, contains a variety of media: there are pictures with accompanying notes,





Figure 2: Display cases and posters at the exhibition *European Sports under Nazism*. Photo credit: Martijn van Gils.

historiographical texts by different authors, and even an autobiographical account, as well as an interview. The *Museo* makes use of visual as well as textual presentations to convey its exhibition topics.

The primary source of information for visitors are numerically organised posters which describe different aspects of the history of European sports in the 1930s and 1940s. In my analysis below, I shall focus on these posters and the manner in which the *Museo's* framing contributes to historicising Italy's role in the Holocaust. Before turning to this, I will discuss the materiality of the *Museo*: its use of objects, the spatial organisation of the exhibition, and the *Museo's* situatedness in Rome's Jewish district. The study of material culture has increasingly turned to the direct engagements by visitors with the objects themselves, rather than seeing the objects as only attaining meaning through their contextualisation within a narrative (see Dudley 2009, 2012). While this is an intriguing way of considering museum objects, it is an approach which is most suitably applied to those exhibitions that allow a greater degree of engagement with the objects. Sandra Dudley argues that our encounters with material objects in most museums do not mirror real-life subject-object encounters, as the objects are usually separated through glass and "Do Not Touch" signs, leading to a predominance of the visual (2012: 2-3).

In the *Museo della Shoah*, objects are largely treated the same way: sealed within glass cases and accompanied by notes providing their historical context (Figure 2). This is not necessarily a "wrong" approach: despite her focus on the irreducible materiality of museum objects, Sandra Dudley does not argue against the value of interpretations and meanings. She states that "clearly, the very resonance and power of material objects in and outside museums is often, if not usually, inextricable from their history and links" (Dudley 2009: 5). The presence of the objects primarily serves to grant the exhibitions a historical aura, which is constitutive of the experience of walking through a museum. Objects form a visible part of an archive, imbuing the exhibition with a sense of authenticity. During our informal tour of the *Museo*, a curator proudly mentioned their exhibition on anti-Semitic propaganda—which occurred prior to the one on sports, and which I also discuss in this paper—stating that "important documents" had been present in the *Museo*. This illustrates the dominant usage of objects in museums as part of an "object-information package" (Dudley 2009: 5).

This is not to say that this authenticity is the only function of the displayed objects. As shown in Figure 3, beyond presenting historical documents, as in the *Razza Nemica* exhibition, the exhibition on sports also contained more everyday objects, including shoes, and in another case, a ball. These are not documents merely imparting an aura of authenticity, but form an actual window into the past life of people who actually owned these objects. Through this display of mundane objects, the *Museo* does, to a degree, allow for affective engagement with the objects, although this engagement remains limited to the visual.

With respect to the spatial organisation: the *Museo* contains a central room, a slightly elevated open space on the right-hand side of the entrance, and a separate room on the left-hand side. The numerical

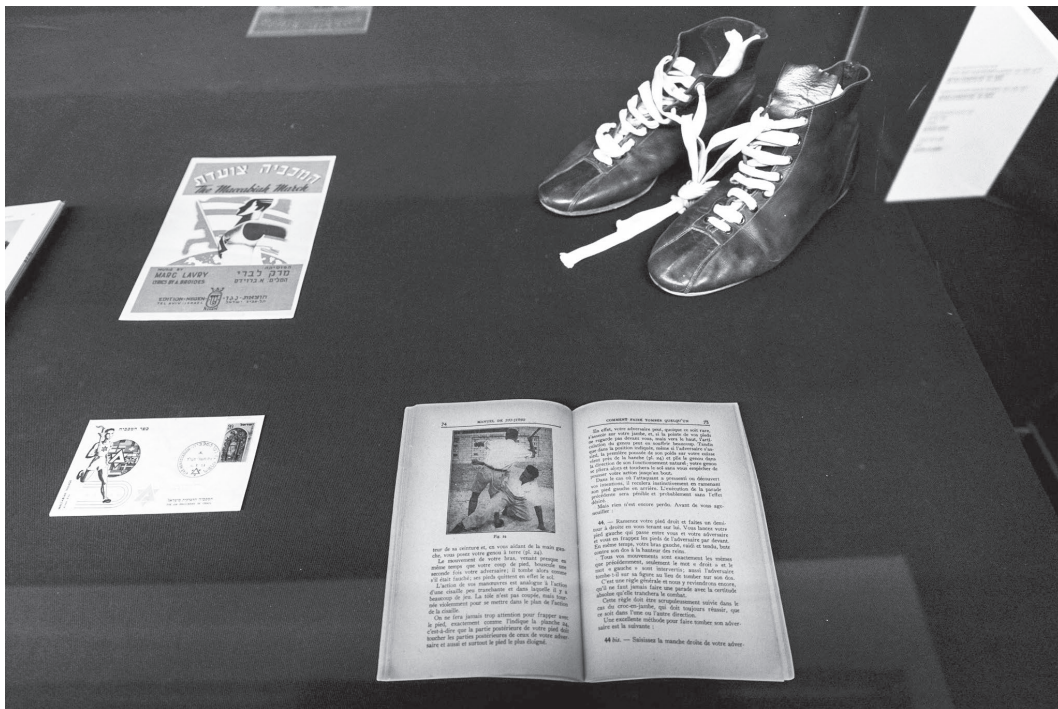


Figure 3: Shoes alongside historical documents at the exhibition *European Sports under Nazism*. Photo credit: “Fondazione Museo della Shoah—Onlus” Facebook page (uploaded 29 May 2018).

organisation of the posters stimulated the visitor to trace a path which would begin on the right-hand side and lead back through the central room into the final room. In this room, which is relatively closed-off from the rest, a second set of posters—different from the primary set of posters—were on display. Whereas, as I will discuss below, the majority of the posters (from one to twenty-one) conveyed a general narrative on sports in Europe within the given time frame (Germany, Italy and France together), the set of five posters in the third room focused on Italy. This dovetailed with the *Museo*’s goal to incorporate a special section on Italy—however, the third room was not fully dedicated to the posters centring on Italy, as it also included the final few posters from the primary set. This is noteworthy, as it reveals how the size of the *Museo* does not allow for a special section on Italy, and the curators are forced to improvise. As a result of the hodge-podge in the third room, this section of the *Museo* was not clearly marked (through a sign above the door or similarly)

as being dedicated to Italy. Indeed, in their set-up, the curators delineated a path for visitors to follow along all the posters, and made an effort to “separate” the posters on Italy, so if the spatial organisation of the exhibition left to be desired, it was because of the very limitations of the venue.

Finally, before moving to my analysis of the framing used in the exhibitions, it is worth reflecting on the location of the venue itself. The *Museo* embodies the transnational memory of the Holocaust in Rome. Eric Gable states that museums and modern cities have grown up together. Museums are deeply intertwined with a city’s “civic project,” as they are emblematic of a city’s image (Gable 2013:32). More specifically, the *Museo* is a site of memory within the Jewish quarter. Located near the ancient synagogue and the contemporary synagogue, which also serves as the Jewish museum of Rome, the *Museo della Shoah* is embedded within local spaces associated both with Jewish life in Rome more generally, and the deportations of October 1943, more



Figure 4: Crowd gathered before the Museo. Photo credit: “Fondazione Museo della Shoah—Onlus” Facebook page (uploaded 26 April 2018).

specifically. The Fondazione’s social media presence suggests that the *Museo* is quite well-known locally: on their Facebook page (which has nearly 5,000 likes at the time of writing), photos may be found of sizeable crowds gathered before the *Museo* during particular events (Figure 4). Further, in a personal interview, one curator revealed that the *Museo* is often visited by groups of primary school students from Rome or its surroundings. Through these visits, they are able to stimulate the next generation to start to come to grips with the memory of the Holocaust and Italy’s role within it.

Its local fame notwithstanding, the photo also reveals that the *Museo* is not explicitly visible to people unfamiliar with the area. Just behind the speaker, a small plaque is visible on the fence, which is the only true indication outsiders have that

the *Museo* is situated there. The poster hanging above it is more visible, but it advertises only the exhibition, and not the *Museo* itself. If I may draw on an anecdote: when our group was scheduled to receive a tour of the *Museo*, we had a hard time locating it, despite knowing the address. After some fruitless searching, we found it mainly due to telephonic contact with the curator who was to give us the tour. That the *Museo* appears to be known locally—as evidenced by their social media presence and the primary school groups that visit it regularly—but is more obscure to outsiders may reflect the Fondazione’s strong focus on the Italian public. Beyond this, it is also further indicative of the limited resources they have access to. As I have argued, the *Museo* is a site within a specific part of the city, where it is also best known. Despite this,

as I will now go on to argue, the exhibitions do not simply focus on Rome, but instead on the developments within Italy as a whole, as well as Germany and France. The *Museo* does not present nations as discrete entities, but instead as constantly interacting with each other.



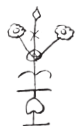
Historical contexts: the focus of the exhibitions

In the following sections, I will analyse the *Museo's* framing of Italy's national responsibility for Jewish persecutions, including an account of its treatment of historical figures. One noteworthy aspect of the *Museo's* exhibitions is their temporal focus. Significantly, the *Museo* resists a strong focus on the years of the Nazi occupation, from 1943 to 1945. Instead, the exhibitions largely focus on the socio-political climate and the lead-up to the Holocaust by centring on propaganda or legal developments. This is more obviously manifest in the exhibition *La Razza Nemica*, which centred entirely on anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany and Italy. However, it is also foregrounded in the other exhibition, on *European Sport under Nazism*, which covers the years 1936 to 1948 but centres on the lead-up to the 1936 Berlin Olympics and the contentious climate in Europe regarding racial issues. Further, for the eightieth anniversary of the 1938 Racial Laws, the *Museo* created an exhibition to commemorate a dark chapter in the history of a country that "considered itself 'civil'" (Fondazione, "Itinerant Exhibition," n.d.). From the very outset, the *Museo* has made efforts to avoid deferring responsibility for Jewish persecutions in Italy to the German occupation.

The focus on propaganda and the socio-political climates is clearly visible in both exhibitions under analysis. Firstly, a major point the exhibition on sports makes is how

sports were an important outlet for German and Italian propaganda. The first poster and the introduction of the booklet outline how the Fascist regime was the first in Europe to launch a large-scale sports policy, as sports functioned as training and leisure activities for soldiers, as well as instilled inspiration in the masses during wartime (Dietschy 2017, n.p.). The posters and the booklet provide much background to the interrelationship between sports and propaganda, notions of boycott and the "alternative" Olympics (in Barcelona, as well as the Maccabiah Games for Jewish athletes), and the role of sports in internment camps. They stress how the Berlin Olympic Games were "the media event" of the 1930s, and the epitome of the Nazi and Fascist regimes' display of power. The first poster states how both Hitler and Mussolini took advantage of public sporting events to assert themselves as great leaders. The exhibition emphasises how sports tourism flourished, and propaganda was disseminated in multiple countries. The booklet states that the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda "covered the globe with postcards, badges, information bulletins in 14 European languages, not to mention the 200,000 posters translated into 19 languages" ("The Reich Games" 2017: 25).

These developments, the booklet stresses, were directly related to the political climate of the time. In his contribution to the booklet, "The Nazi Olympics: A Prelude to the Holocaust," George Eisen claims that the Berlin Olympic Games changed the balance of power on the continent. The success of the Games "proved to be a key ingredient for reinforcing the Nazi hold on German society" and world opinion in general (Eisen 2017: 75). Earlier on, the booklet links the sports policies of Germany and Italy to war: dovetailing with the posters, it argues that sports competitions became demonstrations of power, "less and less metaphorically so," to flaunt Nazi flags or Fascist uniforms ("Sports: The March to War" 2017: 52). One particular example, illustrated by the ninth poster of the



negotiate the socio-political climate in Europe and the operational logics of anti-Semitic propaganda. By shifting the focus from a decontextualized presentation of deportations to also include propaganda, the *Museo* historicises anti-Semitism in Italy and beyond, revealing how this propaganda was received in, and shifted, Italian social frames. The public is thus framed as (partly) responsible in the framework of Jewish persecutions.



Staging cosmopolitan communities: victim narratives and culpability

Beyond the focus on propaganda, the exhibition on sports also prominently draws on personal narratives, which transcend national and racial boundaries. Featured in both the posters and the booklet, there is the narrative of Alfred Nakache, an Algerian-born French Jew who was a professional swimmer. At the beginning of the German occupation, Nakache could continue participating in competitions. However, he increasingly became the target of anti-Semitic attacks in the media and was barred from entry in the 1943 French championships, before being deported to Auschwitz the next year. He continued to swim—sometimes as an act of resistance to maintain his dignity, other times as an act of subservience as the guards would force him to swim. His wife Paule and daughter Annie were also sent to Auschwitz, where they met their end. Nakache survived his Auschwitz experience, and would go on to participate in the 1948 Olympics (“Alfred Nakache” 2017).

Nakache’s narrative exemplifies many of the issues at stake in the exhibition space. Though situated in Italy, the exhibition focuses many of its personal stories on people from other locations. That the exhibition prominently draws on Nakache’s narrative is unsurprising, given that this exhibition is

an import from France. Beyond Nakache’s narrative, however, other examples include Johann Trollman, a German Sinto, and Jesse Owen, an African American. Both of these figures have their own poster dedicated to them in the exhibition. This goes to show that the narratives cover a diversity of backgrounds; they do not focus solely on Jews, but extend to other oppressed minorities. Often, Holocaust discourse centres on Jewish oppression, and while this is certainly understandable, the corollary is that certain other groups fall out of narrative representation. The cross-cultural connections made in the *Museo* contribute towards a diversification of Holocaust memory, since the experiences of different national and ethnic groups are represented as interconnected.

Even though the *Museo* is located within the Jewish quarter and its exhibitions focus largely on anti-Semitic propaganda, the sports exhibition nonetheless allows scope to articulate the sufferings of other groups. While it does not equate these groups as such, it does place them within the same memorial field and divides its attention between the groups proportionately. As I discussed above, part of the *Museo*’s “aura” lies in its presence in the Jewish district of Rome, surrounded by the ancient Synagogue, the modern Jewish museum, and a multitude of plaques and Stolpersteine. By organising an exhibition which, through its spatial organisation, leads visitors down a narrative track which only ends in the “special section” on Italy—insofar as this exists currently—and which provides narratives of multiple different groups, the *Museo* participates in a kind of “internal globalisation” described by Levy and Sznajder. Drawing on transnational narratives without providing a rigid distinction between the sufferings endured by different groups, the *Museo* articulates new communal identities, expressed within a common narrative. This is symptomatic of what Levy and Sznajder describe as the modern turn to the victims, in which



societies choose to “incorporate the suffering of the ‘Other’” (Levy and Sznajder 2002: 103).

Levy and Sznajder also note that the function of this cosmopolitan memory is a “future-oriented dimension,” in that no new formative myths are constructed—instead, the Holocaust and other memories come to symbolise a world of uncertainties (Levy and Sznajder 2002: 101-102). While I do not question the validity of memory as a tool for learning from the past, I would note that, in Italy, the problematic debates surrounding national responsibility for the Holocaust structure much of the discussion, instead. A recognition of wrongdoing is necessary before social acceptance of the perceived “universality” of the Holocaust can occur. By universality, I mean what Levy and Sznajder state is now the common perception of the Holocaust in Europe: that “it can happen to anyone, at anytime, and everyone is responsible” (2002: 101). In Italy, where the memory of national responsibility is divided, issues of culpability centred on the past remain crucial to negotiate. The focus on propaganda which I described above is a step towards involving the wider public in this narrative of responsibility, avoiding a view on culpability as attributable to only a few prominent figures.

However, beyond the personal narratives of victims which the exhibitions provide, neither of the exhibitions I considered contains reflections on individual *perpetrators*. Beyond the central figures of victims such as Nakache, which have entire posters dedicated to them, there are many instances where another victim is mentioned, and a brief outline is given of who they were. However, perpetrators are largely cast in broad terms. The above-mentioned outline of propaganda in Italy, for instance, begins by stating that until the mid-1930s, “Fascism did not persecute Jews” (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 77). This use of the broad word “Fascism” recurs throughout the text. Mention of individual perpetrators is primarily limited to Mussolini and Hitler;

and, although other figures are mentioned, such as Jean Borotra, the new sports commissioner under the Vichy regime, there is no attempt to contextualise these figures or understand their motivations.

For an organisation that wishes to highlight issues of culpability, it would indeed be worthwhile to include narratives about individual perpetrators. Characteristically of cosmopolitan modes of remembrance, the *Museo* retains the features of engaging primarily with victims. However, as Bull and Hansen (2016), as well as other scholars working in perpetrator studies, point out, memorial sites have a pedagogical obligation to engage with perpetrators to give visitors an understanding of who they were, and what systems gave rise to them. While the *Museo* usefully focuses on propaganda, and highlights how common people were made complicit to or even participated in the system of persecution, it fails to address individual perpetrators and their specific developments and motivations. In practice, therefore, the *Museo* does not contribute towards understanding perpetrators as much as it should, and a shift in curatorial practice would be desirable in this respect.

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Transnational framing: a multi-scalar approach to national culpability

This is not to say, however, that the *Museo* does not take positive steps towards recognising Italian culpability. As I have already argued, the *Museo* usefully highlights the role of the public by educating people about propaganda. I now wish to highlight a different aspect which is particularly significant in framing *Italian* responsibility: the manner in which the relationship between Italy and Germany is framed. This theme was prominently treated in the *Museo*'s exhibition on anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany and Italy. The books' merit lies in its balanced, inter



relational discussion of the two countries. Its very title, *La Razza Nemica: La propaganda antisemita nazista e fascista*, implies a division, as it distinguishes between Nazi propaganda and Fascist propaganda. At the same time, the information in the book provides a view on the two as working together and often operating within the same spheres.

One section of the book is devoted to propaganda in Germany and one to propaganda in Italy. There is also a shorter section on their interrelation. In my analysis, I want to focus on the information in the section focusing on propaganda in Italy. Paraphrasing the contents of the section, it outlines how, until the mid-1930s, Fascism did not actively persecute Jews, and Italian Jews actively participated in society. Italy was even a safe haven for some German Jews. A shift took place following the creation of the Rome-Berlin axis in 1936, when the countries strengthened their ties. Then, anti-Semitic propaganda truly exploded and reached every corner of society. Of particular significance was the publication of *Fascism and the Problem of the Race* in 1938. Mussolini actively promoted and accelerated this propaganda. In 1938, the Racial Laws were pushed through in Italy; in Germany such laws had been active since 1933. Jews were then seen in Italy as not belonging to the Aryan race, as opposed to Italians. The ideological climate of the late 1930s in Italy may be characterised as similar to the one Nazism constructed in Germany, although anti-Jew artefacts and movies were not very prominent in Italy, and the time span was not as long (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 77).

The brief description of the rise of anti-Semitic propaganda and sentiment in Italy which the book provides is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, while it provides an interrelated discussion of Italy and Germany, it deals with them separately and does not displace the full blame onto Germany for pushing an agenda onto Italy. Despite this, it is not overly damning to

Italians, ensuring that fair descriptions are given: it takes pains to emphasise that while anti-Semitic propaganda and laws were rampant in Italy, they were still worse and lasted longer in Germany. Finally, of particular note is how it characterises the discourse as similar to Nazism, not inspired by it or any such phrasing—even as the book notes that the racial laws in Germany preceded those in Italy. This balanced, interrelated account of Italy's role in the past alongside Germany is a great example of how the issues of agency should be addressed. Rather than framing Fascism as a “parenthesis” in history, the book sheds light on Italian responsibility for the development of anti-Semitism in the 1930s.

At the same time, the section on the interrelation between the two countries stresses the cooperative nature of these developments. For instance, the book mentions a German paper, *Der Stürmer*, which commented on and drew inspiration from Italian anti-Semitic propaganda and legislation (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 164). Further, the book devotes a section to an anti-Jewish film, *Suss, the Jew*, which was produced in Germany but first screened in Venice. As the film was circulated in Italy, it led to anti-Semitic demonstrations in various cities—such as Florence, Rome, Turin—and even a case of arson in a synagogue (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 169). This narrative exemplifies the transnational flows enabling the spread of anti-Semitic propaganda, and crucially, that the film was well received within Italian social frames.

The exhibition on sports employs largely the same framing, of discussing Germany and Italy within the same breath without however subordinating one to the other. This exhibition is not as focused on Italy as the other one: as I have stated, the French context plays a relatively large part in this exhibition. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that while the title of the exhibition *La Razza Nemica* focuses both on Nazism and Fascism, the title of this exhibition is *European Sports under Nazism*. Despite the



larger focus on the Nazism aspect, Italy is still present in the contents of the exhibition itself. One poster, for instance, delves into the role of football within the Fascist and Nazi regimes, outlining how both regimes assumed control over their respective sports federations. Moreover, in one poster that addresses the Vichy regime in greater depth, it is stated that the Vichy government wanted to reform physical education. As a result, a Sports Charter was adopted in 1940, which was “inspired by the 1928 Italian Sports Charter.” Thus, the exhibitions largely deals with the two countries separately, although they do investigate the transnational flows between them. Most importantly, the Fascist regime is presented as an entity which acted autonomously.

This dimension of Italian autonomy within the framework of Jewish persecutions is discussed in the exhibition’s “special section” on Italy. The fourth poster in this section provides an outline of the relationship between sports and racism in Italy, stating that the Fascist regime promoted an idea of sports as a tool for “racial regeneration,” presenting an ideal “new man.” This figure of the new man, intimately connected with sports, was imbued with racial ideas, as notions of race increasingly came to be defined from a biological viewpoint. Significantly, when the poster turns to an outline of deportations, it outlines how the Italian sports world “zealously” carried out the exclusionary politics set forth in the 1938 Racial Laws, taking a first step towards their systematic deportation following the occupation in 1943, when Jewish sportspeople were left to their fate and quickly forgotten. The exhibition thus draws attention to the historical aspect I outlined in my background section, acknowledging that work performed by Italian officials not only excluded Jews from society, but directly made possible their deportation at a later stage.

Furthermore, the exhibition stresses the public’s complacency within this

system. The section following the one on deportations concerns resistance. This section begins by stating that only a few isolated examples of courage stood out in the face of a majority who was indifferent to the erasure of the names and achievements of the Jewish sportspeople. In stressing the role of officials within the sports world as well as the complacency of the public, the exhibition highlights Italian responsibility within the framework of the Fascist regime before the occupation. Through this framing, the *Museo* speaks to Italian visitors, who must engage in a process of working through their own past without the comfort of deferring the full responsibility to an occupying force.



Situating the *Museo* within transnational figurations

Finally, I wish to return to a consideration of the material, through a discussion of the *Museo*’s position within transnational flows of Holocaust remembrance. Beyond the cross-cultural connections drawn in the contents of the exhibitions, the very setup of the *Museo* positions it within transnational discourses and figurations. As the Holocaust is a phenomenon which exceeds national boundaries, so too is Holocaust remembrance something that cannot be performed or formulated in national terms. The phenomenon of Stolpersteine, as well as the displays of the *Museo* discussed above, already illustrate this. The transnational nature of the *Museo* is further illustrated in the ways in which the project operates: as the *Museo* is not so much a proper museum as a small project, often depending on travelling collections from other museums to construct its exhibitions. While the exhibition on propaganda was their own construct, the exhibition on sports was imported from Paris. This helps explain the relative focus on French figures (such



as Nakache) in the exhibition; although, as I illustrated, its subject matter transcends national borders.

Furthermore, one of the *Museo's* first events was the itinerant Anne Frank exhibition, “conceived and designed by the Anne Frank House of Amsterdam and promoted by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Italy” (Fondazione, “Anne Frank” n.d.). This exhibition, which according to the website has been translated into over twenty languages and has visited over one hundred countries, has “long been a stimulus and source of inspiration for educational activities and projects” (Fondazione, “Anne Frank” n.d.). The exhibition conveys a localised memory while travelling and being re-inflected wherever it goes, depending on that locale’s connection to the memory. Beyond this, the exhibitions which are the *Museo's* own creation—including *La Razza Nemica*—are promoted on their website as being available upon request for use in institutions, schools, or cultural organisations that wish to host them (Fondazione, “Itinerant Exhibitions” n.d.). The exchange of travelling exhibitions reveals how the *Museo* is part of a network of Holocaust remembrance, in which the memory of the Holocaust is localised in various contexts by drawing on transnational flows.

This is echoed on the website of the *Museo*, where it is stated that “[t]he creation of the museum in Rome will allow the capital of Italy to join the great cities of the world (Jerusalem, Washington, Berlin, London, Paris) that have museums dedicated to the Shoah” (“The Foundation” n.d.). With the (small) museum which now exists, Italy has taken an important step in joining this international figuration of discourses surrounding Holocaust remembrance. The *Museo* thus constructs a dialogue between itself and other spaces of remembrance—elsewhere in Europe, in Israel, and in the U.S. This results in an interaction between the local and the global: while the *Museo* displays many transnational narratives,

there is still a focus on the Italian context. In line with the stated aims of the *Museo* to educate Italians about their own past, the *Museo* takes Italy (and Germany) as its primary focal points, while still embedding itself within a larger, transnational discourse.

Considering my earlier discussion of how the *Museo* itself forms a site of memory within the Jewish district of Rome, it becomes clear that many scales come together within this museum: the local, as a site of Italian Jews’ historical oppression and contemporary life; the municipal, as the site containing the Jewish quarter within the capital city of Italy; the national, as a “duty to remember” encouraged by the *Museo*; and the transnational, in the material and linguistic exchange promoted by the exhibitions and the treatment of multiple contexts. All these scales form part of the *Museo's* scope in addressing issues of national responsibility.



Conclusion

To conclude, analysing Rome’s Holocaust museum, and considering the lack of one entirely until 2015, reveals the problems underlying Italian memories of the Holocaust. The *Museo* holds a paradoxical position: on the one hand, its material difficulties are illustrative of hesitant state participation; on the other hand, its existence now and its embeddedness in local practices show increased recognition of its narrative. The *Fondazione della Shoah* attempts to make its narrative heard through the mouthpiece of the museum, but as long as they are restricted to a tiny exhibition space, while being dependent on travelling exhibitions and lacking funding, they have some way to go. In general, as scholars such as Clifford have outlined, Holocaust memorialisation remains a relatively disperse and uncomfortable act.



The *Museo*'s uneasy beginnings and its present status are symptomatic of this.

As I have argued, the *Museo* stimulates reflection on the Holocaust and achieves partial success in addressing the role of Italy within it. Focusing on the socio-political climate in Europe leading up to the Holocaust, the *Museo* is true to its aim of interrogating how common people could have been driven to participate in a system of oppression, or stay complacent within it. The exhibitions display a multi-scalar mode of remembrance which draws connections between various national and ethnic groups, addressing the Holocaust as a transnational phenomenon and constructing new cosmopolitan identities by incorporating the suffering of the "Other." Beyond addressing the victims only, the transnational connections also frame Italian culpability via the depiction of the relationship between Italy and other nations, particularly Germany. The relationship is framed as one based on cooperation and mutual inspiration. While the *Museo* recognises that systemic violence was truly realised by the Nazi occupation, it stresses the role of socio-political dynamics in Italy in the 1930s, and particularly the 1938 Racial Laws, as leading up to the events of the Holocaust. The narrative presented by the *Museo* in its book on the topic provides a balanced and inter-relational discussion of the Fascist ideology as similar to, not inspired by, Nazism. Going even further, the exhibitions historicize how the Fascist regime inspired other regimes, e.g., the 1940 Sports Charter in France which was based on the 1928 Italian Sports Charter.

The very setup of the *Museo* draws cross-cultural connections, as its presence within the city of Rome draws Italy into an international figuration of Holocaust memorial sites. The Fondazione is partly dependent on travelling collections. Particularly exhibitions such as the Anne Frank exhibition connect the museum space to other localised contexts, which is symptomatic of the transnational flows of

memory on the Holocaust. The curators of the *Museo* are making every effort to keep the project alive, waiting for the funding that has been withheld from them for over a decade. The discourse it presents in recognising mutual wrongdoings by Germany and Italy is valuable. One can only hope that the foundation will soon achieve its goals of a proper memorial space, so that Italians can truly begin working through this still contentious facet of their past.

Despite its focus on propaganda and its framing of national responsibility, the *Museo* mirrors the problems in the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance, as it has failed to reflect on individual perpetrators. It largely works from a reductive top-down approach, speaking of perpetrators only in broad terms. This is where the *Museo* can still improve, as engaging with the historical specificity of perpetrators is crucial in realising the pedagogical function which the *Museo* set for itself. As Knittel argues, "without a nuanced, critical engagement with the perpetrators, 'learning for the future' is at best superficial and at worst entirely lacking" (2015: 166). In an age where killing has become increasingly "easy" or large-scale and even impersonal (when use is made of tools such as drones), it is ever so important to draw pedagogical value from studying perpetrators. Understanding their historically specific positions and motivations is necessary in order to build a more inclusive future, based on a public recognition of past wrongs.



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