

May 2018

# The Basovizza Monument: Rebranding Public Memory, Constructing Identity, and Normalizing Political Agenda

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<https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1960>

THE BASOVIZZA MONUMENT:  
REBRANDING PUBLIC MEMORY, CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY, AND NORMALIZING  
POLITICAL AGENDA

by  
Louise Zamparutti

A Dissertation Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in English

at  
The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2018

ABSTRACT

THE BASOVIZZA MONUMENT:  
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POLITICAL AGENDA

by

Louise Zamparutti

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018  
Under the Supervision of Professor Rachel Spilka

In the early 1990s, Italy's former Fascist party, the newly renamed *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), began to promote a new interpretation of events that occurred in the final stages of World War II. In collaboration with local and national civic organizations, the AN promoted this rendition of history by publishing fictionalized memoirs and popular narratives, producing a nationally aired television drama, and finalizing the construction of a new national monument. The Basovizza Monument was officially inaugurated on February 10, 2007, and is now a popular attraction for tourists and classroom visits. This monument is the subject of my case study. My research questions concern how identity can be constructed by the rebranding and marketing of public memory, and how public memory and identity, enacted through the interaction of multiple layers of rhetorical constructs, can be used as a persuasive strategy.

This study followed Yin's (2014) model of a single-case qualitative research study, in which I evaluated multiple types of data and looked for recurring themes presented textually and visually. I used diverse case study methods to strengthen methodological triangulation and to maximize the scope of my inquiry. A key method in data collection was observation of the monument, including its physical structure, the symbols and text presented in various forms on the monument, and the surrounding site. I conducted interviews with stakeholders in the monument's construction and inauguration, tour guides at the monument site, and scholars from Italy and Slovenia. I analyzed different forms of contextual discourse that supported the monument's construction and public appeal, including popular narratives, television programs, films, and historical texts, many of which were produced and distributed through collaborative efforts of civic nationalist organizations and local and national political parties.

Theoretical intertextuality allowed me to develop a versatile articulation of the complex interaction of public memory, history, and identity construction. I applied the Discourse-Historical Approach, a methodology developed by critical discourse analyst Ruth Wodak (2001, 2015), to structure my analysis and identify discursive strategies and recurring topoi that are deployed in visual and textual features of the monument. The DHA allowed for a micro-level analysis of the individual discursive and visual elements that appear on the monument and in contextual materials and for a macro-level analysis of how these components interact to produce what Kenneth Burke terms a "terministic screen," a mode of perception that reinforces and maintains the knowledge produced and legitimized by the monument.

My analysis is framed within current and traditional theories on the rhetorical construction of identity (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Halbwachs 1950; Ricoer 2004; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart 1999) and the rhetoric of public memorial sites (Dickenson, Blair,

and Ott 2010). I argue that the monument enacts a rhetorical situation that both produces a narrative and reproduces established narratives that are legitimized within culturally mediated power systems. Like good technical writing, which, as Bernadette Longo states “is so clear that it is invisible” (Longo 2000, ix), the partiality of the narrative evoked by the Basovizza Monument is invisible, due to the normativity of form and content and deployment of established legitimized themes. In my analysis, I show how the controversy, deliberations, and power struggles among local civic organizations, regional political parties, and the Italian government that underscored the construction and inauguration of the monument as a site of national memory are masked in the presentation of the final product.

I conclude by showing how my analysis of the Basovizza Monument can broaden our understandings of how constructions of identity and presentations of diversity can be produced by multiple rhetorical constructs in civic, professional settings, and educational settings. I then propose some ways that we, as scholars, educators, and public citizens (and non-citizens) can expand ways that we critically assess how the normalization of extreme views and the production of inclusion and exclusion can work to secure power.

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To the memory of my parents

Phyllis Rose Zeisel 1926-1995

Agostino Valter Zamparutti 1918-1989

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to thank Dr. Rachel Spilka, my advisor, dissertation committee chair, major professor, and mentor through this entire graduate school journey that I never dreamed would be possible. Her warmth and encouragement combined with precise, conscientious, and useful feedback on my work guided me forward, and her fascination with and respect for my research was a constant motivation. I also thank Dr. Dave Clark for encouraging me to apply to the Professional and Technical Writing PhD program, especially during our initial encounters between yoga and martial arts classes at the UWM Klotsche Center. His guidance throughout my PhD program and articulate feedback on my initial forays into this research, including articles, conference presentations, and job application materials, have been invaluable in allowing me to continue this work.

Thanks to Dr. Shevaun Watson for providing insightful comments and feedback during my preliminary examination and in many subsequent meetings regarding this dissertation. Her perspective pushed me to delve into levels of inquiry that would both broaden and focus the scope of my work. Thanks also to Dr. Patricia Mayes for introducing me to scholarly work that proved to be crucial to my research and analytical methodology, and to Dr. Carolyn Eichner, whose continual encouragement and interest in my work propelled me to continue.

I also wish to thank Drs. Mick Day, William Keith, Shelleen Greene, and Robin Pickering-Iazzi, who provided advice during the early stages of this project. My research in Italy and Slovenia would not have been possible without the help of Bojan Radej, Dr. Andrej Mihevc, Dr. Jurij Fikfak, Tadeja Tominšek Čehulić, Alessandra Kersevan, Claudia Cernigoi, Biancamaria Scalfarotto-Rieppi, and Antonella Rieppi. I also thank my brother, Tony Zamparutti, for engaging in numerous conversations about memory and identity (and more) and for driving me

around the Karst region while I typed in the passenger seat. Most importantly, I thank my husband, Chris Hanson, for constant encouragement.

## Chapter One

### Legitimized Knowledge, Invisible-ized Agenda, and Inclusion/Exclusion



In the late 1990s my work as a dancer brought me to northeastern Italy where I became aware of a fiercely divided controversy over Italy's WW II memory and the idea of Italian identity. I was teaching choreography workshops at an interdisciplinary summer arts festival that drew artists from all over the world. The festival was an arena in which participants and spectators could mingle and celebrate hybridity, multiculturalism, and interdisciplinarity. In particular, the festival attracted local audiences who celebrated the Slavic culture and heritage of Italy's eastern border population, which at the time was the area's most prominent iteration of diversity and multi-ethnicity.

As I worked closely with this collaborative group for several summers in a row I learned that there was an opposing group in the area: those who promoted a singular version of Italian identity and who were opposed to the use of public funds to support various measures promoting

bilingualism and multiculturalism. I learned that this discord had been going on for a long time, since the end of World War II, in fact, when Fascist laws prohibiting any language other than Italian were lifted. But the struggle was becoming much more visible and vocal in the late 1990s. This was evident in demonstrations against bilingual education, graffiti promoting anti-Slavic stereotypes and constructing a threat of Slavic incursion into Italian territory, and the defacing of Slavic names on village signs with spray paint or bullet holes. At this time, I also heard that in a nearby village some far-right political groups had created a memorial for the Fascist victims of Yugoslavian violence during World War II. These political outliers (as they were described to me) were trying to pressure the central government to designate the site as a national monument. Local news stories tracked vicious debates about whether the monument, and the events it commemorated, were valid issues or political ploys to bolster the far right by glorifying Fascists. The issue was hotly contested but very localized, encapsulated in the complexities of this somewhat isolated border region. The discourse I was exposed to most suggested that the proposed national monument was an outrageous idea that was unlikely to go much beyond local ultra-right-wing banter.

When I returned to the area in 2011 to conduct research for my Master's thesis, the site had been inaugurated as a national monument and the discourse questioning the monument's validity had vanished. The narrative the monument enacts has now become a national narrative and it is considered neither political nor controversial. The events it portrays are an accepted and legitimized part of Italy's World War II history. The Fascist victims it commemorates are presented as Italian civilians. Lingering protests to the monument that appear on social media are generally regarded as the work of a few left-wing extremists. Their posts have few, if any, views or likes. Conversely, posts describing the monument or any other artifacts commemorating the

same events have thousands of views and likes. Many left-leaning people I spoke with accepted the monument as a nonpartisan site of public memory. The monument has been accepted as a purveyor of nonpolitical, neutral, and objective “fact.”

How did this happen? How did a political issue become de-politicized? How did a right-wing agenda become normalized into a narrative that constructs a singular and undivided Italian memory that has replaced previous memory contests and rival interpretations of history? How did controversial discourse so convincingly argue for truth that the controversy disappeared? And how does the narrative produced by the monument reconstruct Italian national identity in a way that reinforces (and produces new) configurations of inclusion and exclusion?

These questions raised broader theoretical questions for me, questions that I felt need to be investigated because of pressing issues in public discourse in the United States and globally that could have profound societal impacts. These questions form the primary research questions that shape my inquiry.

- How is knowledge legitimized by referencing established and culturally mediated value systems and beliefs?
- How are agenda, motive, and intent made invisible in different forms of public discourse through perceived neutrality and objectivity?
- How are memory and identity constructed interactively and used as persuasive strategies in order to produce configurations of inclusion and exclusion?
- How do configurations of inclusion and exclusion work to advance an agenda and to secure power?

By analyzing through a case study the process of knowledge building, discourse legitimization, and memory and identity construction produced by the public acceptance of this



monument and the silencing of all deliberative discourse surrounding its validity, I aim to address urgent issues in public rhetorics and technical communication theory and pedagogy. By applying theories from technical communication and rhetoric to a current phenomenon in public discourse and by showing how arguments are made through an interaction of visual and discursive strategies, this study provides insight as to how we can remain aware, engaged, and agential public actors in current discourse environments in which truth is both substantiated and challenged in changing public arenas.

### **The Production of Knowledge**

As instructors and scholars, we need to work to prepare students to critically review presentations of so-called “fact” and the impact of those presentations on identity, diversity, and public memory. We need to equip ourselves and our students with new methods with which to analyze the power structures that underscore the production of knowledge. Many of the traditional platforms in which knowledge is produced, such as scientific journals, digital and print news sources, and scholarly articles, are being called into question by political leaders and public citizens who put more faith in social media discourse than in these traditional sources. Public discourse is full of accusations that news sources are producing “fake news,” that fact-checking is a product of partisan back-stabbing, and that scientific evidence has been created for political means. Rival political leaders and representatives of non-governmental and corporate organizations stake claims on constructions of knowledge by claiming to present “the plain truth” – objective, neutral, and unbiased facts. At the same time, public understandings of what constitutes empirical evidence are being called into question. Competing discourses in a variety

of wide-reaching discursive arenas allow for knowledge to be constructed and de-constructed with increasing ease and speed.

My questions regarding the national designation and public acceptance of this monument echo many pressing issues that relate to knowledge building in the United States, in the European Union, and globally. Terms such as “true Americans,” “the real American people,” “true Europeans,” and other iterations of authenticity are deployed in order to draw lines between the documented and the undocumented, citizens and immigrants, and those who promote certain value systems and those who do not. Constructions of insiders and outsiders are supported by discourse that creates a shared memory and invokes notions of rightful ownership of property or territory, deploys nostalgia to produce a sense of unfairness and loss, and constructs a sense of threat from an outside group.

The success of this divisive discourse is evident in populist movements such as the anti-establishment Five Star movement in Italy, which won the largest percentage of votes in the March 2018 elections. The anti-immigrant, separatist Northern League came in second (and not surprisingly, these victories reflected the historical north-south divide, with the Five Star gaining the most votes in the south, where unemployment is high, and the League winning in the north). Luigi di Maio, the Five Star's candidate for prime minister, announced a new Italian republic “of the people.” The Five Star movement, while not as openly anti-immigrant as the League, still constructs a notion of “the people” based on an exclusive notion of who are the real Italians. Di Maio’s words recall the familiar catchphrase of Trump’s early campaign tweets: “We must bring the truth directly to hard-working Americans who want to take our country back.” The well-used phrase “hard-working Americans” is echoed by many political leaders in the United States who promise to restrict immigration; the implication of course is that certain kinds of people are

“true” Americans and that they work harder than the encroaching outsiders who present a threat to the dominant group.

In addition to using claims of “plain truth” to produce inclusion and exclusion, iterations of “truth” are deployed to build knowledge and to persuade audiences to take or to avoid certain actions. Scott Pruitt, Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency, proposed a “true environmentalism” to support his argument that burning fossil fuels has no effect on global climate change (*The Economist* Jan 25 2018) and to devalue empirical evidence provided by climate studies. His use of the term “true” attempted to rebrand the notion of environmentalism to include fossil fuel burning as a beneficial action. Protests and demonstrations following each mass shooting that occurs in a public setting, school, or university in the United States provide another example of rival claims to “truth.” While citizens call for stricter gun laws, NRA spokespeople and political leaders who depend on NRA funding present their alternate view of truth: more guns for everyone means more safety. One side argues that the problem is too many guns; the other side argues that the problem is too few guns. These opposed understandings of “truth” not only create mutually exclusive identity groups, but reveal a much more deeply ingrained system of inclusion and exclusion in the United States. School shootings in largely white areas prompt outspoken protests to gun availability, yet the voices of people living in areas that experience gun violence on a daily basis, many of which are largely non-white areas, consistently and systematically go unheard.

Rival versions of “truth” and contests over whose discourse produces knowledge are issues that are intertwined with memory, identity, and power. My aim with my case study is to provide new analytical methods for identifying how configurations of inclusion and exclusion are produced and used to secure power. Additionally, I aim to uncover some new ways that we

might critically review competing discourses and recognize discourses that are systematically silenced. A final goal of this study is to find new ways that we, as instructors, scholars, and public citizens, can identify incremental steps towards normalization and public acceptance of extreme viewpoints and actions.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Intertextuality**

My use of theoretical intertextuality broadens technical communication methodology and highlights the usefulness of qualitative research, not only in the field of technical communication but possibly also in other writing genres' approaches to analyses of public rhetorics. My methodology, which I describe fully in chapter two, incorporates perspectives from current rhetorical theory and critical discourse analysis and allows me to identify key argumentation strategies and recurring topoi that are rooted in classical Greek rhetoric. By connecting a current rhetorical situation to classical rhetorical traditions, I aim to show how technical communication and rhetoric can provide insight as to how we can remain informed, aware, engaged, and agential public actors in multiple arenas in which truth is substantiated through various means.

This case study highlights the versatility of technical communication and rhetoric as disciplines and also argues for their cohesiveness and discreteness. My intertextual approach bridges theoretical perspectives from technical communication, rhetoric, critical discourse analysis, social sciences, and history. I also synthesize theories on identity (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Halbwachs 1950; Ricoer 2004; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart 1999) with theories on public memorial sites such as those developed by Dickenson, Blair, and Ott (2010), Casey (2004), Endres and Senda-Cook (2011), and Poirot and Watson (2015). My interdisciplinary approach is firmly grounded in the disciplines of technical communication and rhetoric,

however, because I analyze how rhetorical situations are enacted and legitimized due to the perceived neutrality and objectivity of certain types of discourse, and I examine how these legitimized rhetorical situations influence public thought and action.

Through an analysis of visual and discursive artifacts that make arguments, this project brings new interdisciplinary perspectives to technical communication theory and energizes the importance of the field. This project expands the interdisciplinarity of technical communication and rhetoric by synthesizing theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches in new ways. Interdisciplinarity is not new to the field of technical communication, as scholars such as Bernadette Longo, Jack Selzer, Beverly Sauer, and others have shown in taking a cultural studies approach to technical communication (Scott, Longo, and Wills, 2006). Interdisciplinarity is increasingly seen as an important way to expand all types of inquiry and to broaden the methodological scope of individual disciplines. “Inquiry today takes shape in circumstances that are by and large porous, permeable, engaged, internally contradictory, unstable and dynamic,” states Barbie Zelizer (2008, 2). At the same time, the cohesiveness of individual disciplines is necessary, as it allows for focused and directed theoretical developments. My aim is to show how a perspective that is grounded in technical communication theory can inform an analysis of the persuasive function of memory and identity, can broaden understandings of how truth is enacted through the rhetoric of neutrality, objectivity, and fact, and can draw attention to some of the ways that extreme political agendas are normalized.

### **Invisible-ization**

My analysis offers a unique approach that synthesizes theory and methodology from interdisciplinary fields but is grounded in the field of technical communication. I begin with the

view that the monument is an artifact of technical communication and works as a producer of technical knowledge. My technical communication approach provides a way to examine how power structures are reinforced, or in some cases challenged, by elements of written and visual public discourse that, like examples of good technical writing, mask motive and intent and build accepted knowledge.

In *Spurious Coin*, Bernadette Longo introduces her account of the development of technical writing by stating “good technical writing is so clear that it is invisible” (Longo 2000, ix). She develops her theories on the relationship of invisibility and power in a later work in which she states “the invisibility of technical writing attests to its efficiency as a control mechanism because it works to shape our actions without displaying its methods for ready analysis” (Longo 2006, 111). When motive, intent, and agenda are invisible, discourse can more easily claim to present the “plain truth” or just “the facts.” Yet these claims are also what produce the invisible-ization of motive and agenda, revealing a circular scenario in which it is difficult to conclude how, exactly, invisible-ization is enacted. I chose the Basovizza monument as a case study because it provides an example of how objectivity and neutrality are used as argumentation strategies in the production of knowledge, and how the invisibility of the monument’s underlying motives produces its efficiency as a persuasive narrative. My goal is to distinguish and analyze particular elements that make the monument efficient as a knowledge builder and as a control mechanism.

An analysis of this monument is additionally useful because in this case the invisible-ization took place in a relatively short time span. Initially, the proposed monument sparked controversy, and during this time agenda and motive were visible and produced deliberative discussion. When the monument became naturalized as accepted and uncontroversial “fact,”

deliberative discussion was silenced. Agenda and motive became invisible-ized and the monument now works as a piece of efficient technical communication. Power struggles among local civic organizations, regional political parties, and the Italian government that underscored the construction and inauguration of the monument as a site of national memory are masked in the presentation of the final product.

I analyze the intersecting visual, material, and discursive arguments that enact a rhetorical situation that illustrates how “some possible statements are committed to discourse as knowledge while other possible statements are not committed to discourse and are, therefore, silenced” (Longo 2000, 76). The monument makes particular statements about memory, identity, and “fact” and commits them to discourse while other statements are silenced. In my analysis of all the intersecting discourses that contextualize the construction and popular reception of the monument I apply Longo’s concept of power struggles to examine how the production of knowledge relies upon and reinforces cultural power relationships. I investigate how certain forms of discourse, visual elements, and specific terminology were legitimized through cultural power systems and then worked to reinforce those same systems.

### **The Interaction of Memory and Identity**

I use this case study as a way to examine how constructions of memory impact understandings of race, gender, orientation, religion, citizenship, physical ability, and other articulations of identity. Shifting concepts of identity and changing ways that difference is perceived and named is an especially timely issue that requires critical review of how identity constructions are produced by discourse. A significant challenge is to find ways to question assumptions about sameness and difference without minimizing existing exclusionary practices

and inequalities that have resulted from these assumptions. A key aim of this project is to find new ways to expand current understandings of how changing rhetorical situations influence understandings of memory and identity and how these changing understandings might challenge or reinforce operative power dynamics.

Memory and identity are co-constituted. Understandings of collective and individual identity hinge on public memory and on the organization of the past into discrete events that are deemed worthy of public remembrance. Memory is rhetorical, constructed collectively through discourse and interaction, and our collective identity is directly joined to our “capacity for and enactment of remembrance” (Phillips 2004, 2). According to Ricoeur, “we owe to [Maurice] Halbwachs the bold intellectual decision to attribute memory directly to a collective entity, which he names a group or society” (2004, 120). Ricoeur describes the intersection of memory and identity in his hypothesis of “the threefold attribution of memory: to oneself, to one’s close relations, and to others” (Ricoeur 2004, 182). Edward Casey develops this concept further by naming four forms of memory: “individual memory, social memory, collective memory, and public memory proper” (Casey 2004, 20). The first three, constituted through increasingly expanding circles of interaction, inform the fourth, public memory.

My analysis shows how public memory is also a product of societal power systems. Decisions regarding how to divide and name past events, which events to commemorate, and how to commemorate these events result from power struggles among authors, audiences, and institutional decision-making bodies. Furthermore, memory is enacted not only by experience but by discourse about experience. Individual memory, states Halbwachs, “could not function without words and ideas, instruments the individual has not himself invented but appropriated from his milieu” (Halbwachs 1950, 51). Memory is constructed by discursive interaction and by



public discourse. “During my life,” states Halbwachs, “my national society has been theater for a number of events that I say I ‘remember,’ events that I know about only from newspapers” (Halbwachs 1950, 51). Ricoeur expands on this by describing the influence of imagination:

It is in the problematic of identity that we have to seek the cause of the fragility of memory manipulated in this way [that is, through culturally mediated actions of selective remembering and forgetting]. This is in addition to the properly cognitive frailty resulting from the proximity between memory and imagination, which finds in the latter its spur and its helper.

(Ricoeur 2004, 81)

My case study provides an example of how imagination is produced through invisible-ized, and therefore legitimized, discourse. In chapter three I explain in more detail how the discourse of uncertainty deploys culturally legitimized scientific discourse to suggest that lack of evidence implies potential and probable evidence. Ironically, lack of evidence – uncertainty – functions as an argumentation strategy to argue for the existence of evidence. The discourse of uncertainty, whose motive is masked (invisible-ized) by the objectivity enacted by legitimized discourse, invokes imagination that works as the “spur” and “helper” in the construction of memory and identity.

The enactment of memory also works through selective forgetting. Power struggles influence not only which statements are committed to discourse that determines what is imprinted into collective memory but which statements have been intentionally left out in order to be forgotten. As Bradford Vivian states, “personal as well as communal remembrance of the

past a priori requires conscious or unconscious decisions concerning which of its surviving impressions should lie fallow” (Vivian 2010, 11). In the construction of any monument, as with the creation of any type of discourse that suggests what should be remembered and how, “what was left out was as important as what was there.” Monuments are “as much about forgetting as about memory” (Foot 2009, 32). The monument in my case study directs viewers to remember some things and to forget others. It highlights some impressions and decides which others should be forgotten and “lie fallow.” Selective forgetting impacts identity by determining whose memory is worthy of commemoration, and therefore constructs configurations of inclusion and exclusion. Those whose memory has been forgotten are excluded from the discourse.

### **Culturally Mediated Understandings of Ethnicity**

Notions of different types of identity, such as national, racial, ethnic, and religious, can rely on constructions of public memory but can also be constructed and conveyed independently and can act to influence public memory. Identity can be constituted through a variety of rhetorical forms, including visual artifacts, film and television, social media platforms, and, as my case study shows, monuments. I examine the intersection of multiple rhetorical forms in the renegotiation of identity through iterations of sameness and difference, and I examine not only how collective memory can produce collective identity but also how identity can work to produce a sense of shared memory.

Like memory, identity can be constructed through discourse and imagination. Anderson (2006) argues that national identity results from a concept of the nation as an imagined community. Nations, he argues, are conceived through written language, therefore national identity is discursive. Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart (1999) expand this perspective and

argue that understandings of collective identity – national, racial, ethnic, and other categorized types of identity – result not only from written discourse but also from public and interactive discourses that produce an idea of an imagined community. As Wodak et al argue, “the question of how this imaginary community reaches the minds of those who are convinced of it is easy to answer: it is constructed and conveyed in discourse” (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart 1999, 22).

Furthermore, identity is conceptualized via social positioning and through configurations of similarity and difference that are realized and reinforced through discourse. Wodak (2015) examines the role of solidarity, inclusion, and exclusion in the production of identity: “Identity, in this complex struggle over belonging, is never static and defined once and for all; identity and identities are dynamic, fluid and fragmented; they can always be renegotiated” (Wodak 2015, 70). Wodak and Boukala define identity as “a theoretical concept [that] is always defined via *similarity* and *difference*” (Wodak and Boukala 2015, 256), and Bucholtz and Hall view identity as “*the social positioning of self and other*” and “as a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction” rather than, as some theorists have argued, as “housed primarily within an individual mind” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 586-587).

Identity is understood in terms of difference, therefore, and difference is understood based on culturally accepted understandings that have developed from multiple layers of visual observations and assumptions. Reisigl and Wodak argue that the term “race,” for example, “has nothing to do with biological reality,” and that “from a social functional point of view, ‘race’ is a social construction” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 2). The concept of “race,” like the concept of “ethnicity,” is problematized by the conflation of language relationship and speaker relationship.

People who speak the same language are assumed to share a “blood” or biological kinship. This neglects all “historical and geographical contingencies and factors of ‘linguistic imperialism’ that heavily influence language choice” (3). This problem produces one of the most common strategies used to produce inclusion and exclusion. In chapter three, I explain in more detail how ethnic difference is constructed on the basis of language difference despite many historical and geographical contingencies that determined language affiliation in the area where my case study takes place. In chapters four and five I analyze the specific visual and terminological motifs that developed from this initial language-speaker relationship conflation.

### **The Power of Monuments**

As stated earlier, public forgetting is as important as public memory. Monuments influence memory by pointing towards some past events and obscuring others, but monuments can also manipulate notions of what could have been and what could be, thus interweaving past, present, future, and what Barbie Zelizer calls “the subjunctive voice” (Zelizer 2004, 157). “Technically defined as the mood of a verb used to express condition or hypothesis, the subjunctive creates a space of possibility, hope, and liminality through which spectators might relate to images” (Zelizer 2004, 163). Monuments also manipulate understandings of the past in order to ensure a present and future understanding of identity. As Casey argues, “public memory is both attached to a past (typically an originating event of some sort) *and* acts to ensure a future of further remembering of that same event. Public monuments embody this Janusian trait; their very massiveness and solidity almost literally enforce this futurity” (Casey 2004, 17).

The materiality of physical structure works with pre-established connotations of location and the control exerted by a designated pathway that guides visitors through a point of entrance,

traversal, and exit. These characteristics of public monuments impart them with power to exert control over audiences in ways that other types of discourse do not. Dickenson, Blair, and Ott state that “memory places are especially powerful rhetorically” (Dickenson, Blair, and Ott 2010, 2) and “because of their place-ness, memory places mobilize power in ways not always available with other memory *techné*” (29). A memory place is a signifier that “announces itself as a marker of collective identity” (25) and establishes a particular understanding of time in relation to collective identity. “A memory place proposes a specific kind of relationship between past and present ... the visitor may be led to understand the present as part of an enduring, stable tradition” (27). My choice to analyze a monument as a case study is motivated by this additional power that physical memorial sites accrue. The monument I analyze presents a narrative that is also represented in literature, public speeches, film, and other “memory *techné*,” but I chose to examine the monument because its rhetorical power enforces the narrative in ways that these other discourses do not. It cements, metaphorically and literally, a statement about memory and identity in a once-contested location, finalizing the singular identity of that location. In chapters four and five, in which I present and analyze my findings, I incorporate these theories on the rhetorical power of memory places into my analysis as I compare the use of argumentation strategies in the monument and in the contextual discourse that supported its designation as a national memorial.

Monuments also work on viewers through both a “denotative force,” by referring to actual objects and events, and a “connotative force,” in which images are “assumed capable of invoking and repairing to broad symbolic systems that draw on certain meanings for the visual representations that are displayed” (Zelizer 2004, 159). In chapter three I describe how the

monument I analyze intertwines denotative and connotative forces to present a pit as the site of a mass grave despite a lack of evidence that the pit contains corpses.

My analysis of how this monument became normalized is an analysis of how a deliberative and interactive forum, characterized by controversy and disagreement, disappeared and gave way to one singular and uncontested version of “truth.” The selective constructions of memory and identity enacted by the monument produce knowledge that serves a particular agenda and secures power for certain actors, yet these motives are invisible-ized. The knowledge constructed by the monument produces inclusion and exclusion by silencing the discourses that initially sparked deliberation and controversy. Those who produced counter arguments are excluded from the monument’s narrative; additional configurations of inclusion and exclusion are implicit in the way the monument constructs a singular notion of identity.

In the next chapter, I describe my methodology, including the case study design, phases of the case study, and analytical approach. In chapter three I provide a timeline of the major steps that led to an unused mineshaft becoming renamed, rebranded, and re-conceptualized as a site of World War II public memory. In chapter four I present my findings and analysis of recurring motifs and identify key themes in these motifs. In chapter five, I discuss the implications of my findings and the possible applications of this research study in the fields of technical communication and rhetoric. I elaborate on my explanation of how this study contributes to these fields and offer some suggestions for how this study, following the same qualitative research processes, might be repeated in a different context and applied to broader situations.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

In this chapter, I describe my research design and explain why this type of qualitative research study best addresses my research questions. I then explain my pre-study, study, and post-study data collection phases. Following that, I present my analytical methodology, which employs analytic strategies from the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and integrates Kenneth Burke's concept of Terministic Screens as a mode of analysis.

#### **Research Design**

My research design follows Yin's model of a single-case qualitative research study that is primarily descriptive and exploratory. The case I examined is one in which renaming, rebranding, and re-conceptualizing of memory and identity intersected with the silencing of deliberative discourse and the normalization of once-controversial issues. This provided a rich topic for an analysis with which to explore my research questions:

- How is knowledge legitimized by referencing established and culturally mediated value systems and beliefs?
- How are agenda, motive, and intent made invisible in different forms of public discourse through perceived neutrality and objectivity?
- How are memory and identity constructed interactively and used as persuasive strategies in order to produce configurations of inclusion and exclusion?

- How do configurations of inclusion and exclusion work to advance an agenda and to secure power?

My project meets the following three conditions that Yin identifies for qualitative research study topics.

- 1) the main research questions are “how” or “why” questions
- 2) the researcher has little or no control over behavioral events
- 3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon (Yin 2014, 2)

My research questions described above are all “how” questions. As the researcher, I had no control over the institutional and media discourses that legitimized, publicized, and valorized the monument, nor did I have any control over the behavior of visitors to the monument. In some instances, what Yin refers to as “informal manipulation” (Yin 2014, 12) may have occurred, yet this does not constitute control over behavioral events.<sup>1</sup> And although this project includes a history of a past rhetorical situation, the main focus of my study was a contemporary phenomenon, which is how contemporary discourse has reframed the past to construct a new rhetorical situation. I analyzed historical discourse prior to and during World War II and political discourse in the 1990s and early 2000s in order to contextualize my analysis of the contemporary rhetorical situation enacted by the monument.

This is consistent with Yin’s definition of an empirical inquiry that

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<sup>1</sup> One example of informal manipulation was when one of my interviews was conducted in the monument’s Documentation Center while several visitors were present. The “interview” took on more of a performance-like quality, in which the interview subject addressed a larger audience than expected, and the conversational aspect of an interview was replaced by a presentation-style lecture. I consider this to be “informal manipulation” because I still had no control over the behavior of the interview subject.



- investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident (Yin 2014, 16).

My study examined the monument as it exists in its real-world geographical, cultural, and political contexts, framed by the history of the construction of the monument and designation of the place as a site of national memory. In addition to archival documents and historical texts, I analyzed the two sources of evidence that distinguish case studies from histories, which are direct observation and interviews. As Yin states, “although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations – beyond what might be available to a conventional historical study” (Yin 2014, 12). Because of this, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are difficult to distinguish, and are in fact malleable, as the monument presents existing contextual narratives and constructs its own discourse. Even the boundary between the space surrounding the monument and the physical artifact of the monument are difficult to separate, as the space represents all the surrounding discourse concerning the town of Basovizza and its historical and present-day identity struggles.

Additionally, my case study can be distinguished from other forms of research by the large number of variables of interest, which are due to three conditions as defined by Yin: “making an in-depth inquiry, studying conditions over time, and covering contextual conditions” (Yin 2014, 212). My aim was not to attempt to draw distinct boundaries between phenomenon and context, but to identify the nature of the interaction of phenomenon and context and to engage with their overlap.

## **Validity of This Case Study**

My case study can be tested for validity by following the four criteria outlined by Yin for determining validity and assessing the quality of a case study research design. The first, construct validity, is the process of “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (Yin 2014, 46). I constructed this project by identifying a process of data collection and an analytic methodology that allowed me to investigate my research questions. The second criterion, internal validity, involves “seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships” (Yin 2014, 46). My research questions engage with the connections and possible causal relationships between certain narrative themes and discourse legitimization, identity construction, and the normalization of political rhetoric.

The third criterion, external validity, involves identifying a study’s wider scope, or “defining the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized” (46). My research questions address a domain beyond the findings specific to this case study; the results of my analysis allowed me to form some more general hypotheses about the interaction of public memory, identity, and institutional power systems, and to raise questions for further research on the role of different types of public discourse in the establishment of normative structures. My case study examined how the monument functions persuasively on multiple levels and across multiple genres; therefore, it was not simply an investigation of what happened in one specific time and place.

Yin’s fourth criterion, reliability, demands that the data collection process be repeatable with the same results. My consistent data collection process, systematic process of

documentation and organization of data, and structured analytic methodology formed a research study that could be repeated using the same methods.

### **Data Collection**

My data collection process involved reading contextual materials, making observations at the monument site and in the Documentation Center, and conducting interviews with tour guides at the monument and scholars who have researched and published work relating to the monument.

### **Phase One**

#### **Pre-Study: September 2016-June 2017**

My initial research on this topic began in 2015 while I was in the region working on a separate project.<sup>2</sup> As described in chapter one, I had become interested in the monument several years earlier, and that interest led me to look for archival documents and read historiographical literature on Italian-Yugoslavian relations, political analyses of postwar Italy, and popular literature describing Yugoslavian violence against Italians in World War II. I also had informal conversations with nearby residents about the monument and did some initial and casual observations of the monument.

The contextual discourse I gathered during this phase can be classified into three types:

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<sup>2</sup> This was an article comparing World War II archival documentation on mass graves in northeastern Italy to popular literature and film that presented narratives of ethnic cleansing of Italians by Yugoslavians. The article, "Foibe literature: documentation or victimhood narrative?" was published in *Human Remains and Violence*, 1.1 (2015), 75–91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7227/HRV.1.1.6>.

- Institutional texts, such as public speeches by political leaders, articles published by political parties, and websites and social media sites produced by political organizations
- Popular literature, usually presented to the public as non-political, yet often funded by publishing institutions with political affiliations
- Public media, including film and television broadcasts, presented as non-political but commissioned by political organizations

In September of 2016 I began more specific preparations for this research study. I made initial email contacts with scholars to set up meetings for the summer of 2017. During this time, I continued my background reading, adding to the above sources additional literature on qualitative research methods, technical communication theory, memory and identity, and discourse analysis. In the early spring of 2017 I began contacting representatives from the civic groups that were instrumental in promoting the construction of the monument in order to set up interviews and meetings. In June, 2017, I traveled to the area to begin Phase Two.

## **Phase Two**

### **Study: June-August 2017**

This phase of the study employed multiple investigative methods in order to collect multiple sources of evidence. These investigative methods and sources consisted of observation, discourse analysis, and interviews.

## **Observation**

I took photographs of the monument and of textual inscriptions on the monument's stone placards. In the Documentation Center, I photographed maps, artwork, and narrative billboards. I observed the number of visitors at different times and on different days and listened in on information given to them by the tour guides. I also walked through the town of Basovizza and other nearby villages and observed smaller and less known memorial sites and structures. Additionally, I visited local cafes and other businesses and made informal observations of languages spoken in conversation and written on various signs and placards.

## **Discourse analysis**

This included reading the text of inscriptions on stone placards and taking note of symbols and iconography that appear on the monument and surrounding stones. At the Documentation Center, I purchased two different pamphlets and a DVD (which plays continuously during the Center's opening hours).

## **Interviews**

This was the most challenging investigative method. Contacting representatives of the civic organizations that had been instrumental in constructing the monument proved difficult. My emails were unanswered even after multiple attempts and I was not able to reach any of these organizations by phone. I then tried a more direct approach, which was to conduct an informal interview with a volunteer who was staffing the Documentation Center. He advised me to send an email to the secretary of the Lega Nazionale in Trieste. She promptly answered my email and provided me with a phone number of Diego Redivo, a historian whom she described as one of

the most knowledgeable regarding this topic. I was able to reach him by phone and set up an interview with him at the monument site. The interview took place on August 11, 2017, from 1:00 pm until about 4:30 pm.

Due to a personal contact in Ljubljana, Slovenia, I was also able to set up three interviews there. The first was with Dr. Jurij Fikfak, an ethnology professor at the University of Ljubljana who has written extensively on Italian-Slovenian identity issues. We met on the morning of August 7, 2017 and spoke for about two hours. The second was with Tadeja Tominšek Čehulić, who works in the Slovenian National Archives and is involved in Italian-Slovenian reconciliation missions. She spoke with me on the afternoon of August 7, 2017, also for about two hours. The third meeting was with Dr. Andrej Mihevc, a geologist and speleologist at the Karst Research Institute in Postojna, Slovenia. He has conducted numerous excavations of foibe caves in Slovenia, and the results of his research call into question the Italian claims that excavations of these caves are impossible. We met on August 8, 2017, for about three hours.

I came to each of these meetings with three questions:

1. When and how did you initially begin researching the foibe?
2. Why do you think the monument was constructed and designated as an Italian national memorial in 2007, as compared to so many other World War II memorials that were constructed soon after the war?
3. Have there been any protests or counter-discourse to the monument that you know of?

In my meeting with Diego Redivo, I did not ask any of these questions because he began speaking as soon as we introduced ourselves and the “interview” became more of a lecture. He addressed these questions in his lecture, however. In my meeting with Dr. Jurij Fikfak, my first

question led to a more in-depth conversation about identity and public discourse relating to the monument. Tadeja Tominšek Čehulić provided me with detailed information on Italian-Slovenian reconciliation missions regarding the issue of the foibe and here too I chose to listen to her rather than re-direct the conversation, as this was her area of expertise and it showed me an additional area of discourse I had not been aware of. Similarly, when I met with Dr. Andrej Mihevc, he spoke about events and political circumstances, and it was more valuable to me to listen to him rather than interject with my questions. In each of these meetings, I observed a different perspective on the issue and a different attitude towards me as a graduate student from the United States; both factors influenced the discussions.

### **Phase Three**

#### **Post-study: September-October 2017**

This phase involved writing follow-up emails to the people I interviewed, reviewing the pamphlets and video from the Documentation Center, and looking through social media sites (Facebook and Twitter) about the monument.

#### **Data Analysis**

I compiled a database of all the data and organized the data by motif, sources in which the motif occurred, and instances of public circulation of the sources over time. Using the DHA, I conducted a micro-level analysis of the individual visual and discursive elements that appear on the monument and in contextual materials and integrated that analysis into a macro-level examination of two predominant themes produced by these intersecting motifs.

## Data Triangulation

Following Yin’s model, this case study “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion,” (Yin 2014, 17). I organized the data in terms of primary sources, which included archival documents, photographs, interviews, and informal discussion, and secondary sources, which included popular literature, the monument website, social media, videos, television and film broadcasts, public speeches, a public holiday, and journal articles. Figure 1, below, shows the model I constructed to indicate the different levels of interactivity of the different sources: the secondary sources directly interact with the monument, while the primary sources framed my analysis of that interaction.

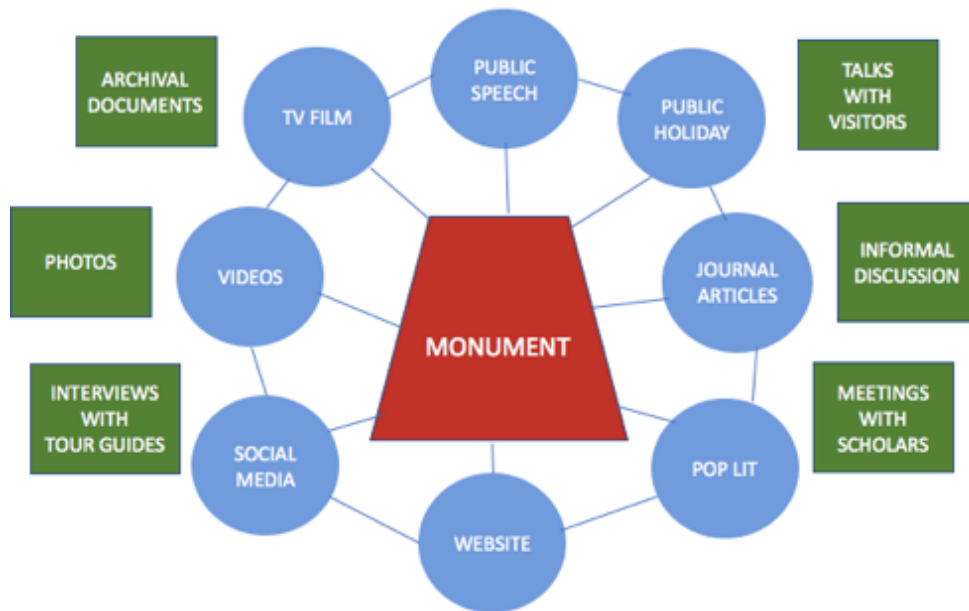


Figure 1. Intersecting Discourses.

My central unit of analysis was the monument, and my subunits of analysis were:

- The intersecting discourses shown above, which are analyzed in chapter four



- The geographical and political context, including location, historical background, and national and international circumstances, which are described in chapter three

I identified recurring motifs in the data and constructed my initial hypotheses about the relationship of these motifs to discourse legitimization, invisibility of agenda and the enactment of neutrality and objectivity, and the construction of memory and identity. In forming my hypotheses, I took into account what Yin refers to as possible “rival explanations” (Yin 2014, 135), such as the “societal rival,” in which unrelated social trends could account for my conclusions. Additionally, I addressed the possibility of investigator bias and informal manipulation. Investigator bias can be a risk when starting from theoretical propositions that might affect perspective. For example, working from the theoretical proposition that identity is constructed through discourse, I might risk concluding too quickly that the construction of specific identity categories is a direct result of discourse I have discovered in my data collection (investigator bias). I might then risk presenting only the data that most clearly illustrates that conclusion (informal manipulation). I addressed rival explanations and these risks by situating my findings within the surrounding historical, political, and cultural circumstances, and by seeking to investigate how certain things happened concurrently rather than attempting to construct a direct cause and effect relationship.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Triangulation**

My analysis was framed by the concept that a monument, as a public space, is a rhetorical construction (Dickenson, Blair, and Ott 2010) that is built upon discourses that are legitimized within culturally mediated power systems. As such, a monument functions as a site of technical interaction, in which the deliberations, disagreements, and power struggles that underscore its

construction are invisible in the final product. Like good technical writing, which, as Bernadette Longo states “is so clear that it is invisible” (Longo 2000, ix), the partiality of the narratives evoked by the Basovizza Monument is “invisible,” due to the normativity of form and content. In analyzing my data, I looked for ways in which the monument’s form, content, structure, and location enact an invisibility of motive and agenda.

I examined this concept of invisibility by analyzing different strategies that the monument and surrounding discourses use to enact objectivity and neutrality and to mask political motive or agenda. I then analyzed how these strategies interact with rhetorics of inclusion and exclusion within established power systems. I also considered what surrounding factors may have contributed to the collaboration of the political, civic, and religious stakeholders who worked to construct and promote the monument at this particular time and in this location.

### **The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)**

My main methodological approach was the DHA, which was developed by critical discourse analyst Ruth Wodak (Wodak 2001, 2015a). The DHA “provides a vehicle for looking at latent power dynamics and the range of potentials in agents, because it integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical sources and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded” (Wodak 2011, 38). This approach provided a method through which I could identify the different power systems (political, economic, civic, religious), agential forces (individual actors, institutions, organizations), and social contexts in which certain discourses have developed and are circulated. It provided tools and strategies that helped structure my analysis of different types of artifacts across a span of historical and political

circumstances. It also provided me with a language with which to analyze recurring motifs and a system for tracking the circulation of these motifs among multiple audiences.

The DHA differentiates three dimensions of analysis:

- The topics that are spoken and written about
- The discursive strategies employed
- The linguistic means “that are drawn upon to realize both topics and strategies”

(Wodak 2011, 38)

My analysis focused primarily on the second dimension, discursive strategies. I occasionally dealt with the first and third in my analysis, but these are generally more relevant to a linguistic analysis of interpersonal discourse. The identification of specific discursive strategies provided a structural map for analyzing the terminology that is used in written discourse and in the juxtaposition of terms, names, and titles that appear on the physical structure of the Basovizza Monument and in the exhibition hall. The DHA applies to language use, both written and spoken, but I extended many of the concepts of the DHA to apply to visual motifs. Although this transfer might risk investigator bias – visual information naturally must be interpreted in order to correspond to discursive signifiers – I focused on visual motifs that have established significance within their cultural context. For example, a cross might have many possible discursive interpretations, but in the context of a country dominated by Roman Catholicism where the crucifix is familiar in almost every public office, school, bank, and private business, the cross motif has an established and singular reference.

## **DHA Characteristics and Triangulation**

The DHA identifies 11 research characteristics of its program (Wodak 2001, 67). Below, I describe the five research characteristics that characterize my integration of theories and research methods.

### **The approach is interdisciplinary in theory and methodology, and theory and methodology are integrated in order to analyze the object of investigation.**

Theoretical and methodological interdisciplinarity was essential to my analysis of the Basovizza monument. My approach integrated theoretical perspectives and methodology from technical communication (Britt 2006; Longo 2000; Scott, Longo, and Wills 2006; Winsor 2003), linguistics (Wodak 2001, 2011, 2015; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Bucholtz and Hall 2005), rhetoric (Burke 1968; Dickenson, Blair, and Ott 2010), and other disciplines including history, politics, and social science (Ben-Ghiat 2000, 2001, 2004; Habermas 1989, 2003; Halbwachs 1950; Ricoeur 2004). Using these integrated approaches provided theoretical and methodological triangulation in my analysis.

### **The approach is problem-oriented, that is, is not focused on “specific linguistic items” (Wodak 2001, 69).**

This project was primarily a rhetorical analysis, not a linguistic analysis of spoken interactions. Additionally, my investigation was oriented towards institutionally produced discourse. The personal interviews I conducted were focused towards individual reactions to and opinions of that institutionally produced discourse rather than the linguistic elements of the

interviewees' discourse. My approach was problem-oriented because I approached the monument and surrounding discourse as the problem I investigated.

**The approach incorporates fieldwork and necessitates moving back and forth from theory to empirical data.**

My research involved fieldwork in the form of observations and interviews as well as analyses of published and institutionally produced artifacts. My analysis necessitated shifting back and forth between theory and empirical data because I used a variety of primary and secondary source materials and an interdisciplinary theoretical approach. This characteristic also contributed to theoretical and methodological triangulation.

**The approach is intertextual. “Multiple genres and public spaces are studied, and intertextual and interdiscursive relationships are investigated” (Wodak 2001, 70).**

Yin states that one of the major strengths of case study data collection is “the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (Yin 2014, 119). Wodak’s concept of “intertextuality” is analogous to Yin’s reference to the use of multiple sources and his concept of triangulation. My examination of interdiscursive relationships was achieved by charting the convergence of multiple sources of data (data triangulation), applying multiple intersecting theoretical perspectives (theory triangulation), and synthesizing multiple methodological approaches (methodological triangulation) (Yin 2014, 120). I examined the interdiscursive relationships among examples of popular literature, film, television, news sources, public speeches, and the implementation of a public holiday (which functions as a public “space” that occupies time). This intertextual analysis established a context for the examination of the

monument. Intertextual analysis also situated the data I collected from interviews, because I contextualized my interviewees' responses within the discourses with which they were interacting, such as the monument, the Documentation Center, or any examples of the surrounding discourse (literature, television film, speeches, etc.)

### **The historical context is analyzed and integrated into interpretation**

In chapter three, I describe the historical context preceding and surrounding the designation of the site as a national memorial. I took into account the national political, cultural, and economic factors in Italy from the postwar years onward and the international circumstances that affected Italy's internal political environment and its relationships with bordering Slovenia and Croatia, as well as its relationship to the European Union.

### **Discursive Strategies and Mode of Analysis**

In my analysis, I focused on three discursive strategies identified in the DHA. These strategies allowed me to analyze the recurring motifs I identified and then modeled into two main themes.

Reisigl and Wodak define discursive strategies as follows:

By 'strategy' we generally mean a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim. As far as the discursive strategies are concerned – that is to say, systematic ways of using language – we locate them at different levels of linguistic organisation [sic] and complexity.

(Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 44)

Identifying specific discursive strategies allows for a close analysis of how different types of terminology and linguistic interaction might work to create “a positive self and negative other presentation” (Wodak 2001, 73). My data analysis included visual imagery and iconography along with discursive practices, and I applied the DHA’s concept of discursive strategies to include visual rhetoric as well. In chapter four I show examples of where I identified the following strategies in the terminology and imagery I collected.

In addition to analyzing how these practices, or strategies, impact constructions of identity in terms of positive self and negative other, I analyzed how they work to legitimize discourse and mask (or “invisible-ize”) motive and intent. I then examined the use of these strategies and devices through Kenneth Burke’s concept of Terministic Screens (Burke 1968) to show how particular understandings of memory and identity might be perceived as neutral and objective presentations of fact rather than interpretation or political agenda. The way I synthesize these analytical perspectives is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Strategy	Referential/Nomination	Predicational	Argumentation
Objectives	Construction of ingroups and outgroups	Labelling social actors positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	Justification of positive or negative attributes
Devices	Membership categorization, biological and depersonalizing metaphors, and synecdoches	Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits	The use of specific topoi to justify inclusion and exclusion, discrimination, and preferential treatment
			Topoi
			Definition/Name-Interpretation Threat/Danger Humanitarianism Syllogism
Mode of Analysis	Terministic Screens		

Figure 2: Analytical Perspectives

## **Referential/Nomination Strategies**

These are the strategies “by which one constructs and represents social actors: for example, ingroups and outgroups” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 45). As shown in the chart above, these are the objectives of referential/nomination strategies, and the devices used are membership categorization, biological and depersonalizing metaphors, and synecdoches. Identifying this strategy provided a deeper way to analyze nomenclature and terminology, for example the use of the term “foibe.” In chapter three I describe the usage, significance, and dissemination of this word to a national public and in chapter four I show other examples of terminology that function as referential/nomination strategies, such as the terms “Slav” and “Italian.” I treated these terms as referential/nomination strategies for several reasons. For one, the term “Slav” is a synecdoche developed from Yugoslavian, Yugoslav, Slavic, South Slav, and other terms that have been used in different contexts to refer to an ambiguously and heterogeneously defined population that includes Slovenes, Croats, and other national and linguistic groups of both northern and southern Slavic origins. The term has traditionally been used as a derogatory term in eastern Italy (Franzineti 2006, 92), and thus enacts a depersonalizing metaphor. Opposing of the term “Slav” to “Italian” constructs ingroups (Italians) and outgroups (Slavs) and facilitates the use of biological metaphors, since the notion of ethnicity, despite the concept’s ambiguous bases and discursively constructed origins, implies biological distinguishing characteristics. My analysis investigated the use of this and other examples of referential/nomination strategies in foibe discourse and imagery.



## **Predicational Strategies**

Predicational strategies are closely related to referential strategies, and “reference can already bear the feature of predication,” so there is an overlap in the ways that certain uses of terminology can be seen as both referential and predicational strategies. Predication differs from reference, however, in that it is “the very basic process and result of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, events, actions and social phenomena” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 54). Predication therefore involves the direct assigning of evaluative attributes and the constructing of or reference to negative or positive stereotypes.

An example of the use of predicational strategies relating to my analysis is the dominant depiction of Italians as artistic, romantic, peaceful, pious, and humanitarian. This stereotype is widely used in World War II literature and film that portrays Italian soldiers as unwilling and incompetent fighters due to their inherently peace-loving nature. Italy’s involvement in the war is frequently depicted as reluctant and non-aggressive (Focardi and Klinkhammer 2004, 336). This facilitates the notion that Fascism was a legitimate form of government and obscures its discriminatory policies, the Racial Laws, and mass deportations of Jews and other marginalized populations to concentration camps. In contrast to this stereotype and evaluative attribution of positive traits to Italians is the negative stereotype of the aggressive and barbaric Slav. Examples of this are seen in references to primitive superstitions in descriptions of how Slavs bury their massacred victims in order to avoid afterlife retribution (Burigo 2005) and in the presentation of the atrocities and genocides during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s as a return to a typical Slav behavior (Toth 2006, 319). My analysis examined how these and other predicational strategies are evoked and in what ways they might reinforce existing stereotypes or present new

attributive characteristics to designated identity groups and to produce configurations of inclusion and exclusion.

### **Argumentation Strategies: Topoi**

Argumentation strategies are the means “through which positive and negative attributions are justified and legitimized” (Wodak and Boukala 2015a, 94). Argumentation strategies are described by Wodak (2001), Reisigl and Wodak (2001), and Wodak and Boukala (2015a) in terms of recurring *topoi*.

Following the Aristotelian tradition, we approach *topos* (pl. *topoi*) as a rhetorical and dialectical scheme that offers the opportunity for a systematic in-depth analysis of different arguments and statements that represent the accepted knowledge – *endoxon* – and which are usually employed by orators or opponents to persuade their audience of the validity of their opinions. *Topoi* are thus defined as parts of argumentation that belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises.

(Wodak and Boukala 2015a, 94)

In other words, identifying *topoi* allows for an analysis of how reference to cultural and societal assumptions – assumptions that have legitimized discourse and built cultural knowledge – functions as a justification for statements and arguments. Identifying *topoi* reveals the effectiveness of circular argumentation in reinforcing established beliefs and uncovers specific ways that discourse and imagery can be persuasive by echoing culturally accepted assumptions.

The concept of *topoi* also provided me with a system for identifying recurring argumentation strategies, identifying themes that are evoked discursively and visually, and investigating how these themes interact with culturally produced power relationships and legitimized knowledge. Additionally, “*topoi* allow recognising and systematising [sic] arguments; they also illustrate important parameters in the discursive construction of identities, which are based on inclusion/exclusion strategies” (Wodak and Boukala 2015a, 95). In other words, this concept provided a way to see how images, names, and terms function argumentatively, either together or as discrete motifs, and how they interact with power, normative constructions of knowledge, and identity.

Wodak (2001) identifies 15 different *topoi* for her analysis of discriminatory discourse in an ultra-nationalist political petition in Austria in 1992-1993. For my examination of the relationship between discourse and identity in my case study, I used the four *topoi* described below. These are the *topoi* that most directly allowed me to identify the ways in which referential/nomination strategies and predicational strategies are justified and normalized.

#### 1. Topos of Definition or Name-Interpretation

Wodak describes this in terms of the conclusion rule that is as follows: “if an action, a thing or a person (group of persons) is named/designated (as) X, the action, thing or person (group of persons) carries or should carry the qualities/traits/attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X” (Wodak 2001, 75). This *topos* was useful in identifying how victims and perpetrators are named and in identifying the qualities/traits/attributes that are consistently linked to these names. I noted the occurrence of the name “Istrian Italians,” for example, linked to traits and qualities such as civilian, citizen, student, teacher, mother, father, and other traits associated

with peacetime family life. Through this topos of definition, Istrian Italians, many of whom were Fascist military or government officials who oversaw the operations of concentration camps, can be argued (implicitly) to carry the peacetime/family life traits, since those are the traits contained in the meaning of “Istrian Italians.” Due to this implicit argument, therefore, Istrian Italians are civilians (and the term Fascist is absent from the discourse).

## 2. Topos of Threat or Danger

This topos has many subtypes, but the condition or rule that is most relevant to my analysis is: “If there are specific dangers or threats, one should do something against them,” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 77). If a situation is presented as a danger or threat with a named perpetrator (which could be a specifically labeled ethnic/racial group, or a category such as “immigrants”) it can construct a “victim-victimizer reversal” in which “the victims are thus made responsible for the prejudices directed against them” (Wodak 2001, 75). If a military insurrection that occurred in a fixed time and place is termed a campaign of “ethnic cleansing” by Slavs, for example, the threat of ethnic annihilation is evoked and the conclusion can be drawn that Slavs are a danger to be acted against. This allows for further conclusions to be drawn, such as the justification of prejudices directed against Slavs and the argument that the incarceration of Slavs in the Fascist era may have been a preventative measure. The topos of threat or danger provided a way to identify the contingencies that may have affected the decision to designate this site as a place of national memory and may have influenced public acceptance of that decision.

### 3. Topos of Humanitarianism

This topos states “If a political action or decision does or does not conform with human rights or humanitarian convictions and values, then one should or should not perform or make it” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 78). This topos was useful in my observations of where and when this topos is invoked, and where and when it is not. Examples of the invocation of the topos of humanitarianism include portrayals of Slavs as brutal warriors contrasted with an absence of any discourse about Slavic civilians. The topos of humanitarianism redirects focus away from the military and political complexities of the region during the final phases of World War II and instead focuses on inhumane acts perpetrated by Slavs. This topos allowed me to identify the ways in which the actual military event was decontextualized and re-conceptualized as a human rights issue.

### 4. Topos of Syllogism

This is the argumentation strategy in which a premise “starts with something specific and concludes with something general” (Wodak and Boukala 2015a, 96). This topos justifies the inflation or globalization of a specific event into a generalized conclusion. For example, in the case of this monument, a specific military event was inflated to an assumption that Slavs intended to invade and annex all of Italy and to annihilate all Italians and the very idea of Italian identity. In very simple terms, the argument might be articulated as “the Slavs want Istria; Istria is Italy; therefore, the Slavs want Italy.”

The DHA provided a system for articulating the different strategies that intersect so that I could map their interaction and show how certain motifs are persuasive through a layering of individual argumentation strategies. In chapter four I show how all of these topoi intersect in the

specific examples I analyze, and in chapter five I discuss the implications of the persuasive function of these argumentation strategies.

### **Terministic Screens as a Mode of Analysis**

In chapter three I connect Burke's concept of the Terministic Screen to the significance of the nomenclature of "foibe." In chapter four I use the concept of the Terministic Screen to show how legitimacy is granted to terminology that constructs an Italian "race" that is conflated with nation-state membership, ethnicity, and language orientation. Burke's concept of Terministic Screens allowed me to show how the recurring motifs in the data I collected reflect and construct categories of similarity and difference, and how these understandings of similarity and difference form a screen that directs how subsequent observations are made. This concept intersects with Longo's notion of invisibility and illustrates how the legitimacy granted to certain discursive constructions might be achieved partly due to societal and cultural Terministic Screens.

The notion of the Terministic Screen also gave me a new way to conceptualize Foucault's theories on how discourse shapes knowledge and his concept of the "will to truth" as an action directed by the viewer. Foucault states, "knowledge is defined by the possibilities of the use and appropriation offered by discourse" (Foucault 1972, 183). "True discourse, liberated by the nature of its form from desire and power, is incapable of recognising [sic] the will to truth which pervades it; and the will to truth, having imposed itself upon us for so long, is such that the truth it seeks to reveal cannot fail to mask it" (Foucault 1972, 219). Imagining the "will to truth" as a Terministic Screen provided an angle for analyzing how nomenclature can direct attention in specific ways that construct understandings of truth while the intentionality of this attention-

directing is masked because it functions as a screen, much like a pair of glasses that affect vision but that one is not aware of wearing.

My application of these concepts informed my analysis of discourse that constructs Italians and Slavs as antagonistic categories and filters out other possibilities for conceptualizing actors, subjects, objects, and relationships. People and populations could be viewed in terms of social class terms, such as landowner, industrialist, sharecropper, employer, and employee, or in terms of inclusive rather than divisive concepts, such as hybrid, multilingual, transnational, and multicultural. Instead, the Terministic Screen through which people are conceptualized and the basis framing all discussions of identity is one that names humans as Italian *or* (not *and*) Slav; this is the screen through which visitors to the monument focus their attention. Italian-Slav nomenclature fails to recognize its will to truth – its desire to categorize in this way – and sees this categorization, via the Terministic Screen, as the truth itself, absent of will.

### **Modeling Themes**

By examining recurring motifs that occur across these categories of analysis, I identified two prominent themes:

- Catholic iconography and terminology
- Holocaust imagery and narrative

These themes merge to characterize the visual and textual rhetoric of the monument and surrounding contextual discourse. In chapter four, I present my findings to show how these themes work to legitimize the narrative presented by the monument, “invisible-ize” the motive, intent, and “will to truth” behind the monument’s narrative, and produce configurations of inclusion and exclusion by leveraging constructions of memory and identity. But first, in chapter

three, I provide a timeline of local, national, and international circumstances that frame the development of the site from its origins as a relatively unknown and unused mine shaft to a designated site of national memory. This background information traces the early influence of the Catholic church in sacralizing the site and identifies key international circumstances such as global recognition of the Nazi Holocaust and widespread awareness of the concept of genocide in advancing the notion of an Italian genocide.



## Chapter Three

### A Mineshaft is Renamed, Rebranded, and Re-conceptualized as a Site of Public Memory

“Every historical event begins with a struggle centered on naming.” (Milan Kundera)<sup>1</sup>

The transformation of a small pit in an obscure little village on the Italy-Slovenian border into a national monument was achieved through a process that can be discussed in terms of three distinct yet interdependent actions: renaming, rebranding, and re-conceptualizing. In this chapter, I provide a timeline of the main events leading up to the inauguration of the monument as a national memorial. In this chronological account of the mineshaft pit-to-monument transformation process, I identify specific and discrete actions of renaming and rebranding that worked together to produce a rhetorical situation that re-conceptualized collective memory and constructed an exclusive understanding of Italian identity.

#### The Basovizza Pit Phase 1: 1900 to World War II

“The Basovizza mine shaft,” states the leaflet printed by the Lega Nazionale<sup>2</sup> and distributed at the monument’s Documentation Center, “is an artificial cavity excavated in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to look for coal. The Czech industrialist Karl von Skoda began excavating the shaft in 1901.” Other than this brief statement, very little information on pre-

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<sup>1</sup> This quote appears at the beginning of Abbott Gleason’s *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> The Lega Nazionale, or National League, is a civic nationalist organization that receives federal funding. The branch of the LN in northeast of Italy is controlled by local right-wing political parties.

World War II use of the pit is provided in any existing literature. The operation of the mine, who the miners were, or what was the controlling mining company are all left in question by the focus in all contextual discourse on the site as a burial ground of Italians massacred by Yugoslavians in World War II. The significance of the Basovizza pit today has nothing to do with its original purpose in the pursuit of coal, but lies in its location and the historical role of this location as a site of territorial and ideological rivalry.

Basovizza is about two miles from what is now the Slovenian border, in the steep hills a short distance above the Italian port city of Trieste. Power struggles over territory, memory, and identity have characterized the region since long before World War II. These struggles became urgent and violently contested issues during the war. The choice to locate a national monument that describes an exclusively Italian tragedy and designates the area as Italian soil creates a single narrative out of a complex web of territorial, political, and ideological contests, which are further complicated by disjointed yet intersecting military operations. Here I provide an overview of the region's power struggles over territory, memory, and identity.

The area around Basovizza is marked by centuries of changing imperial and national governance and shifting borders. Prior to World War I, the area was part of the Austrian empire. The area's inhabitants could have named their identity in terms of various controlling imperial and national powers, including Austrian, German, Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, or Yugoslavian. As a key port for east-west trade routes, it was also an area of migration that at different points in history saw influxes of people from different areas. In the early 1900s the city of Trieste "was seen as a microcosm of the ways in which cultural diversity could be politically managed in Europe as a whole" (Sluga 2001, 33). But this idealized view of European multiculturalism dissolved after World War I. The notion of a hybrid and diverse population became regarded as

one of the region's "foundational myths" (Miklavčič 2008, 4) when the regions around Basovizza, Trieste, and the Istrian peninsula, all areas that had large Slovenian and Croatian populations, were allocated to Italy. At that point "discussions of the political modalities that might best represent class as well as cultural diversity, or even hybrid identities, were of little political consequence internationally" (Sluga 2001, 38). The new border separating Italy and Yugoslavia was idealized as a representation of a logical territorial division between what had become understood as discrete Italian and Slavic populations. Naming the area as Italy and rebranding the area as essentially Italian allowed for a re-conceptualization of the border decision as one based on ethnic distribution rather than on political power struggles. It legitimized the drawing of a national border with the idea of a clean separation of discrete and biologically different ethnic populations.

Identity struggles in this region are most visible as a conflict between singular and plural understandings of identity. The Basovizza monument presents a narrative that argues for a singular understanding of identity, that is, the notion that Italians and Slavs are discrete ethnic groups whose geographical separation is neatly manifested in national boundaries. This narrative supports the legitimization of national borders and the idealized notion that borders are drawn for logical, scientifically tested reasons, such as the collection of census data. Yet the region's identity struggles and the ways in which the Basovizza monument works to mask these struggles reveal the instability of this ideal and highlight the tension between institutional and individual agency in identity construction. This is most clearly illustrated by the ways national census data uses reported linguistic orientation as a way to construct and map ethnic identity categories.

Attempts to name and map particular ethnic groups into specific locations rely on a conflation of language and speaker relationship. This conflation assumes that people who speak

the same language also share a biological kinship, which neglects the “historical and geographical contingencies and factors of ‘linguistic imperialism’ that heavily influence language choice” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 3). Language orientation has traditionally been a key strategy used by governing institutions to justify their borders. Additionally, in order to argue for territorial rights in areas marked by linguistic hybridity institutional census takers often offered incentives for certain linguistic orientations. Faced with census takers’ questions about language affiliation, inhabitants of hybrid areas often answered “with pragmatism ... perhaps shaping their own declarations in the hopes of deriving personal benefit or enhancing personal security” (Hametz 2005, 110 n31). Identity categorization in hybrid regions demonstrates how agency can shift from a controlling outside power to an individual. Although the census is in itself an institution of power (Anderson 2006, 163) and illustrates the role of surveillance as a technology designed to discipline individuals in society (Foucault 1977, 215-216), individuals in the multi-lingual and ethnically hybrid region around Basovizza could make choices as to how to identify themselves, thus shifting agency to individual inhabitants to some degree.

All of these factors – rival claims to territorial rights, imperial and national changes in governance, shifting borders, diverse understandings of identity, and intersecting motives of both institutions and subjects – influenced the role Basovizza played in World War II military and political struggles. In this next section, I provide a brief description of how this area was situated at the epicenter of multiple power struggles from many different sides during World War II. The Basovizza monument selectively chooses and interprets certain events and omits others, and my aim in this next section is to draw attention to some of the events the monument’s narrative leaves out and to show how these omissions facilitated subsequent actions of renaming, rebranding, and re-conceptualizing of the war and of the region’s role in the war.

## Basovizza in World War II

World War II reignited struggles over territory, memory, and identity in Basovizza. For most of World War II the area was controlled by Fascist armies and German Nazi troops. When Italy signed the Armistice with the Allies in September of 1943 the Italian military system collapsed, and the disorganized chaos in the area around the Istrian peninsula created an opportunity for Yugoslavian Resistance troops to surge into the region in an attempt to take back what they understood as their territory. During this incursion it has been estimated, based on eye witness accounts and scattered military memos, that Nazi and Fascist soldiers were executed and their bodies deposited into naturally occurring caves throughout the region (Pupo and Spazzali 2003, 25). These caves have since been named “the foibe” in Italy.<sup>3</sup>

After 1943 the area was incorporated into the Territory of the Third Reich, and between 1943 and 1945 the region was a battleground that involved Nazi troops, Italian military personnel that had remained loyal to the Fascist Regime, and different Yugoslavian armies that were also at war with one another and vying for control of postwar Yugoslavia (Oliva 2002, 64; Pupo and Spazzali 2003, 45-51). In May of 1945, as the war was drawing to a close and the Anglo-American Allies were advancing into northern Italy, many northern Italian cities had succeeded in driving out the Nazi occupiers (Ginsborg 2003, 68). In the east, the leading Yugoslavian Resistance army – the communist army led by Tito that would form the government of postwar Yugoslavia – gained control of Istria and the area surrounding Trieste and the village of Basovizza. During this incursion, the Yugoslavian political police and intelligence service,

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<sup>3</sup> “The foibe” is the plural of “foiba.” The singular form is used in the official title of the Basovizza monument, “The Foiba of Basovizza,” whereas the plural, “the foibe,” is used to refer to the many caves that are thought to exist as mass graves in this region. Later in this chapter I discuss the function of the word “the foibe” as a signifier of Italian genocide and the renaming of Basovizza as a “foiba,” even though the pit at Basovizza is technically a human-made cavity, not an actual geological “foiba.”

OZNA,<sup>4</sup> arrested Nazi and Fascist collaborators along with members of the Chetniks (another Yugoslavian resistance group, not affiliated with communism), the Ustaše (a Croatian fascist organization), the Domobrani (the Croatian Home Guard), and any others deemed to be enemies of the Yugoslavian Communists (Burigo 2005, 318). Many of those on the OZNA arrest lists are presumed to have been executed and their bodies deposited into foibe caves throughout this region and in many other areas of what was to become postwar Yugoslavia (Mihevc 2011).

For the Yugoslavians, this military incursion was motivated by the desire to recover territory that they defined as Yugoslavian land. For the Italians, it represented an invasion of Italian territory by Yugoslavians. Yugoslavian and Italian military and political institutions each defined the region as essentially theirs and saw the other as an encroaching army attempting to rob innocent civilians of their rightful homeland. The Basovizza monument, situated on what is now the Italian side of the border, cements the historically contested area as Italian soil. The monument performs the additional function of lamenting Italy's loss of areas further east that were allocated to Yugoslavia after the war.

### **The Immediate Postwar Years: 1945-1950s**

#### **Italy-Yugoslavia Border Negotiations and Cold War Politics**

The end of World War II marked the beginning of new border negotiations in many regions of northern Italy. The negotiation of the Italian-Yugoslavian border was exceptionally complicated and significant globally because “representations of Slav and Italian, East and West differences were profoundly constitutive of the encounter between communism and anticommunism” (Sluga 2001, 133). Beginning in May, 1945, the region around Basovizza was

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<sup>4</sup> *Odeljenje za zaštitu naroda*, or Department for the Protection of the People.

provisionally divided into two zones: Zone A, made up of the northwestern part of Trieste and controlled by the Allied Military Government (AMG), and Zone B, made up of the southeastern part of Trieste and Istria's northwest corner and controlled by the Yugoslav Military Government.<sup>5</sup> Temporary border arrangements implemented by the AMG kept Trieste and the area around Basovizza under local Italian administration and control (Dato 2013, 39). The AMG imposed many of the legal and civic administration methods from the prewar Fascist state, and although it repealed Fascist racial (anti-Jewish) laws, it did not repeal any of the Fascist anti-Slav laws. "William Sullivan, the AMG's British political advisor, argued that ... the AMG's use of Fascist laws was necessary to defeat communism" (Sluga 2001, 115). In and around Basovizza, in Zone A, fears of Yugoslavian expansion fueled anti-Slavic, pro-Italian discourse in the local press (Orecchia 2008).

The region surrounding Basovizza was therefore "an early and key point at which an emergent Cold War discourse began to be articulated" (Ballinger 1999, 73). Furthermore, "during the Cold War, the Italo-Yugoslav border – like the Iron Curtain – was put into place in the context of changing political significance of borders, and in defiance of evidence of the ambiguities, complexities, and inconsistencies of local political and national identities." In this area, therefore, nationalism was not the cause of Cold War border making but rather a result of it (Sluga 2001, 135). From this perspective, the making of the Italian-Yugoslavian border and the making of Basovizza as an unquestionably Italian place based on the construction of discrete ethnic categories, Italian and Slav, served a purpose in Cold War politics of securing Western European, non-communist power. Since Italy had the largest communist party in Western Europe after World War II, the construction of a memory of Italians murdered at the hands of Slav

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<sup>5</sup> The Italy-Yugoslavia border was not officially finalized until the Treaty of Osimo on October 1, 1975 (Unger and Šegulja 1990, 39).

communists also produced an understanding of Italian identity in opposition to communist identity.

Rival claims of ethnic autochthony – the claim that one discrete ethnic group is indigenous to a certain territory – are also key in how memory and identity are discursively presented in this region. Each side claims to have been the original occupant that was invaded by the other and each side argues that the majority population in the contested territory is either ethnically Italian or ethnically Yugoslavian. Early attempts to present Basovizza as a burial ground for victims of ethnically-motivated violence masked the political significance of the site. Presenting Italians as a persecuted ethnic group whose suffering was only due to being Italian was a key strategy in constructing Basovizza as Italian territory and as a place of exclusively Italian memory. Naming victims as victims of ethnic violence constructed a configuration of inclusion and exclusion that removed communist Italians from the definition of ethnic Italians.

### **The Discourse of Uncertainty**

During the immediate postwar years “pro-Italian organizations of Trieste pleaded with military authorities for an inquiry which might include the exhumation and identification of the bodies in the pit,” and “in the ensuing years, a petition for additional research into that controversial mine became a leitmotiv in the Italian press” (Dato 2013, 40-41). Curiously, however, the Lega Nazionale leaflet, which is provided as an explanation of why Basovizza is designated as a site of national memory, states that “between 1953 and 1954 the Cavazoni company reclaimed metal scraps from the bottom of the shaft without coming across any human remains.” Although the lack of any discovery of bodies in the pit is freely admitted in the leaflet, this information is provided to support the argument that *not* finding bodies suggests that there



*could* be bodies – possibly many more than could ever be known. I refer to this as the discourse of uncertainty, which is a key strategy used to support the claim that the pit *does* contain victims of a genocide. Through the discourse of uncertainty, bolstered by evocative and graphic descriptions of torture and death, a version of truth is constructed. In a counterintuitive yet effective argumentation method, this truth is justified through lack of evidence and by the idea of possibility – it cannot be disproven.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1950s “some witnesses, widely exploited by the Italian press along with further similar accounts related to other foibas,<sup>7</sup> reported of mass killings in the Basovizza pit during the first days of May 1945. Public opinion claimed that military and civilian personnel had been ‘killed just because they were Italian’, claiming a ‘national genocide’” (Dato 2013, 39). These claims were presented in various forms of public discourse accompanied by the phrases “killed just for being Italian” or “victims whose sole crime was being Italian,” which persuaded the Italian public to accept the notion of a genocide (Pupo and Spazzali 2003, 110-113).<sup>8</sup> Although a significant number of reports emerged indicating that foibe caves were first used by Nazis and Fascists to dispose of murdered antifascist civilians, including Slovenes, Croats, Bosnians, Jews, and many other ethnic groups (Baracetti 2009; Burigo 2005; Cernigoi 2012;

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<sup>6</sup> The discourse of uncertainty serves an additional purpose: by refusing to officially investigate Yugoslavian war crimes, Italy could avoid having Yugoslavia officially investigate Italian war crimes in a tacit agreement of mutual nondisclosure. I was informed of this tacit agreement in separate interviews with scholars Jurij Fikfak (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Andrej Mihevc (Postojna, Slovenia) in August, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Here the author has pluralized the singular “foiba” as “foibas” rather than using the more common Italian pluralization “foibe.”

<sup>8</sup> The terms “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” have never been brought to an international court. Pamela Ballinger proposes that the racial and ethnic terms that constitute the legal definition of genocide have, since the end of the Cold War, become appropriated in the depiction of political persecution by communist regimes. “As a result,” she argues, “we may be witnessing the increasing ethnicization of claims about past violence” (Ballinger 2003, 130). This helps explain why the idea of an “Italian genocide” was widely accepted in the 1990s, which I will describe later in this chapter; however, the promotion of the notion of an Italian genocide here in the 1950s illustrates a different motive that I argue was based on renaming as a way to construct an exclusive notion of Italian identity.

Cossu 2010; Franzinetti 2006, Mihevc 2011; Pirjevec 2009; Volk 2008), the discourse in the Italian press and local media argued that the caves were used exclusively to hide mass killings of Italian civilians by Slavs.

### **Archival Documents**

Archival documents and police reports from the AMG indicate that various deep caves in the region contained corpses, horse carcasses, and miscellaneous military equipment from mass killings (Pirjevec 2009; Pupo and Spazzali 2003; US National Archives). These reports are based on observations from outside the caves and from eyewitness accounts, and they vary in estimations of numbers of victims, ranging from 400-500 (Dato 2013; Pirjevec 2009), to a “best estimate” of 3000-4000 (Baracetti 2009, 659), to hundreds of thousands (Toth 2006). Although a small group of scholars argues that these claims are exaggerated and based on conjecture rather than evidence (Cernigoi 2012; Kersevan 2006; Volk 2008) and despite evidence that victims were Italian Fascist or German Nazi military and government officials (Dato 2013; Pirjevec 2009; Pupo and Spazzali 2003), the notion that the foibe violence was a genocide of Italian civilians became accepted as fact. The words “foibe” (plural), “foiba” (singular), and “infoibati” (those killed and thrown and buried in the foibe), “through a synecdoche became a way to refer to the whole Yugoslav anti-Italian violence” (Dato 2013, 38). The lack of definitive archival evidence is used as a foundation for the rhetorical construction of the idea of an ongoing wave of violence too large to even imagine.

Archival documents that do exist are taken for granted as fact. Elizabeth Britt argues that the discourse produced by institutions often evades critical review and that institutions “are marked by a certain taken-for-grantedness” (Britt 2006, 137). Documents about exhumations at

Basovizza are assumed to be neutral and objective due to the taken-for-grantedness of government and military institutions. Information presented in archival documents, undergirded by the institutions that produced them, produces a rhetoric that justifies and objectifies discourse on the Basovizza mine shaft. Although “most archival documents have oral origins (police reports, phone calls, army reports, investigations using interviews and interrogations, trial documents), and are as unstable and ‘subjective’ as oral history itself” (Foot 2009, 5), this subjectivity is obscured by the legitimacy granted to the perceived objectivity of government and military institutions. In curious irony, both the existence of and the lack of government archives serves as strategic argumentation methods in producing an understanding of the Basovizza pit as a site of Italian genocide. The few archival reports that were produced by the AMG are used to present the site as a place of mystery: the profundity of the tragedy will never be known.

Below is a brief description of the documents I discovered in the United States National Archives that were produced by the AMG. These provide a glimpse of the uncertainty surrounding the issue of the foibe and show how the dominant public discourse on the foibe, presented and analyzed in chapters four and five, is completely separate from these archival records and is comprised of entirely different genres.

In a telegram dated June 22, 1945 sent by Alexander Comstock Kirk, American political advisor named Ambassador to Italy in 1944, to the United States Secretary of State, Kirk states that he received reports from British military personnel that there was

a large pit approximately 1000 feet deep within the area desired by the Yugos in Venezia Giulia. It is declared by inhabitants of this area that the Yugos had shot hundreds of Italians whose corpse they threw into the pit, then shot several

hundred German POWs whose bodies were thrown over the Italians. The Yugos then shot a number of horses whose carcasses were also dropped over the bodies of the human beings in the pit. The British ordered an investigation into this matter and although the inquiry is not yet complete, they received a report just two hours before this meeting that grappling hooks dropped down had produced human flesh.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequent documents reveal the AMG's ambivalence to conduct thorough investigations of Basovizza. An American military report from the Eighth Army Headquarters dated July 1, 1945 states that investigations were being carried out regarding allegations from various observers in Trieste that Yugoslavians had thrown hundreds of corpses of Fascist officials and German soldiers, followed by horse carcasses, into an 800-foot-deep unused mine shaft in Basovizza. The report states that the investigations were largely unproductive due to noxious gasses in the shaft and recommends that investigations be closed due to the hazardous conditions and difficulty identifying any of the bodies in such a state of decomposition.<sup>10</sup> Several more documents, dated July 10, 1945, also recommend closing the investigation and sealing off the shaft opening.<sup>11</sup>

On July 19, 1945, a memo was issued requesting that the case be re-opened and the site be excavated, since it might be related to investigations of war crimes against British and

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Kirk, American political advisor, to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1945, received June 23; Number 2725; DC/L:MAS:MEM 7/18/45; 16-248-1; Unclassified/Declassified Holdings of the National Archives (U/DHNA); National Archives Trust Fund (NWCT-2R/Room # 2710); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (NACP).

<sup>10</sup> Eighth Army Headquarters to Secretary of State, 1 July 1945; AFHQ/A GSI (b); M 465 I. U/DHNA; NWCT-2R/Room # 2710; NACP.

<sup>11</sup> File No. G-1/Br/15110/-3. 10 July 1945; U/DHNA; NWCT-2R/Room # 2710; NACP.

American personnel. On July 24 an agreement was made between British army generals and Winston Churchill that ordered a complete investigation of the Basovizza mine shaft.<sup>12</sup> As the investigations continued, however, another cable to the Secretary of State in Washington dated 16 July, 1945 reported that the “discovery of a number of unidentified bodies in pit at Ternova Diccola ... according to a report from the British XIII Corps. Great difficulties expecting in recovery of the bodies and investigations are being carried out.”<sup>13</sup> By December 1945 it was presumed that neither British nor American soldiers’ bodies were in any of the pits in question, and deliberation over whether to attempt exhumation processes was ended and the case officially closed.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Additional Reports – Secondary References to Archives**

According to some other accounts, “other explorations were conducted in those times, by AMG Civil Police, private associations, and Italian authorities along the border region under their control. The investigations were conducted in 71 foibas and pits. Half of them contained corpses. The total number of bodies exhumed was 464. Out of these, 247 wore a military uniform. Only 61 civilians and 53 soldiers were identified. Among the soldiers’ bodies, besides Italian and German soldiers there were a few partisans and one Soviet officer, while among civilians many Slovenian villagers were exhumed” (Dato 2013, 41). It is unclear whether these

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<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Kirk to the State Department; War Department Classified Message Center/Incoming Classified Message, 24 July 1945. Nr.3037. U/DHNA; NWCT-2R/Room # 2710; NACP.

<sup>13</sup> War Crimes Index Cards Venezia; No. CM-IN 16186 (16 Jul 1945) from General Somervell (10-45). Document no. 16-248. NW 563519; NARA 1986. There is in fact no location named “Ternova Diccola,” but the name could be a misprint of Ternova Piccola, a small village just outside of Trieste.

<sup>14</sup> Summary Sheet; MTO File 16-248; MTO Case No. 167 from Curtis H. Porterfield, Captain, JAGD, and Informal Routing Slip, General Headquarters, Central Mediterranean Force. File No. 16176/1/A-3. 26 Dec.1945; Number 3 from A-3 to JA received 2 January 1946. U/DHNA; NWCT-2R/Room # 2710; NACP.

numbers were obtained from military archives or elsewhere, however. Additionally, these exhumations were conducted in various pits in the region but not at the Basovizza pit. There were only two documented explorations of the Basovizza pit:

In August 1948 nine speleologists, supported by the AMG Civil Police officer De Giorgi, in an attempt to organize a detailed exploration, documented that the actual depth of the hole had risen to 192 m, in spite of the original 226 m. Afterward, in December 1953, a company trading ferrous scrap was authorized to collect all metal objects from the pit. The company declared that it was able to reach the bottom of the abyss without encountering any corpses or explosives. (Dato 2013, 41)

This reiterates what is stated in the Lega Nazionale leaflet and further illustrates how uncertainty was a much more effective strategy than documented evidence in supporting the claim that Basovizza was a burial site. Furthermore, even if archival documents were available that might have provided evidence of buried corpses, references to archival information must be contextualized within what Ruth Ben-Ghiat refers to as the “obstructionist practices” of the Italian government regarding access to archives that report actions carried out by the Fascist regime (Ben-Ghiat 2004, 137). “To cite just one example,” she states, “we still are not in a position to obtain a full picture of Italian actions and policies during World War II ... research on Italian war crimes has been hindered by the continuing closure to researchers of virtually every document collection” (Ben-Ghiat 2004, 147). Italian demands for access to archives that reveal Yugoslavian WW II war crimes might risk a similar request from Slovenian and Croatian

researchers about Italian Fascist war crimes.<sup>15</sup> Rather than engaging with this potentially destabilizing issue, the Italian press conjured the notion of mystery surrounding the case of the foibe and relied heavily on the idea of uncertainty to present the foibe as a tragedy too large to imagine. Layered onto this uncertainty was use of the foibe as a metaphor for buried history and the insinuation that Italy's history had been covered up by left-wing rhetoric.

### **The Basovizza Pit in the 1950s**

During the postwar years, the mineshaft was used as a landfill and for the disposal of waste from an oil refinery, yet discussions about its contents leveraged the notion of possibility as a way to transform it into a site of public memory: “Mysteries and uncertainties permeated the pit. The unclear situation provided any political group the ammunition to speculate and promote the best fitting plot to suit their interests” (Dato 2013, 42). Right-wing political groups in the region collaborated with local civic groups that included the Federazione Grigioverde (Gray-Green Federation), a federation of WW I and WW II veterans, and the Lega Nazionale (National League), a so-called cultural association that received federal financial support but was controlled by local right-wing political parties. These groups worked with local priests, who “played an exceptional part, because of [the Church’s] traditional social role in dealing with death and running public rites, while anything showing communist brutality was welcome” (Dato 2013, 43). These groups worked to promote the idea that the Basovizza mine shaft was “the biggest natural burial ever heard of.”<sup>16</sup> This was achieved by making mathematical calculations of how many corpses could fit into the pit considering its presumed depth.

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<sup>15</sup> In a personal conversation (Oslo, Norway, 2015) with a Croatian scholar working in the government archives in Zagreb, I was told that no Italian authorities have ever requested archival documents from Croatia.

<sup>16</sup> This quote, stated in August, 1948 by AMG Civil Police Officer De Giorgi who oversaw explorations of the Basovizza pit, has been cited in numerous sources, including Dato 2013, Pirjevec 2009, and Pupo and Spazzali

The use of scientific and mathematical terminology was also a renaming strategy that worked to suggest evidence and to enact a sense of objectivity. Naming the approximate number of meters of depth gave validity to the discourse of uncertainty by deploying language that was culturally accepted as legitimate, credible proof. The legitimization of scientific terminology illustrates Longo's concept of power struggles. "Because scientific and technological language is the dominant way of knowing the world for us," Longo states, "the value of scientific study is not questioned" (Longo 2000, 74). Calculated estimates of how many corpses could potentially fit into the pit were accepted as credible evidence of numbers of victims, and any counter arguments revealing that no excavations had taken place only benefitted the discourse of uncertainty by suggesting possibility. A place of no exploration was thus renamed as a place where scientific study had taken place, in the form of mathematical calculations, and therefore rebranded as a site of possibility (there could be so many corpses).

This discourse was presented in local press and at commemorative events led by representatives of legitimized and respected institutions (civic groups and the Church), resulting in a reconceptualization of the pit as an actual burial ground. The ethos of the local press and media, which provides another example of Elizabeth Britt's "taken-for-grantedness" of institutions, combines discourse that is animated by affect, using graphic visuals and descriptions to appeal to viewers' emotions, with the discourse of uncertainty. These elements work together to legitimize the version of truth presented in the monument.

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2003. The statement is based on estimates and speculations about the size of the pit and calculations of the number of corpses that could fit inside. These estimates were circulated in the Italian media and thus were "destined to become extremely pivotal to public opinion" (Dato 2013, 42).



### **Basovizza as a Burial Ground: 1959-1990**

In the ensuing years, while the pit continued to be used as a landfill, exhumations were declared to be too dangerous and furthermore, impossible.<sup>17</sup> In 1959, the pit was sealed off and the discourse of uncertainty was brought to public attention when local commemorations were conducted by the political and civic organizations described above and by local priests (Dato 2013, 50). At this time the pit began to undergo a name change: the local press and media began to refer to Basovizza as a “foiba,” which allowed all reference to the original function of the pit as a mine shaft and a landfill to disappear.

The renaming of the pit as a foiba rebranded the site as a particular kind of burial ground, one that was defined as a Slav plan to wipe out Italian identity. Naming the violence as the “Italian genocide” rebranded the term “foibe” into a term that signifies only this so-called genocide, rather than the geological formations the word used to refer to. With this nomenclature in place, discussions regarding whether there actually were any bodies buried in the pit became moot, since the word “foiba” functions as an indicator of a widespread plan to enact ongoing violence. The pit, where corpses were never discovered and excavations were physically prevented by an immovable concrete slab, was re-conceptualized as evidence of an Italian genocide.

Here it is necessary to explain the terminology of the terms “foiba” and “the foibe.” The significance of this term and its effect on Italian understandings of memory and identity are

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<sup>17</sup> The rhetoric of danger and the impossibility of exploration continues to dominate discussions regarding any further exhumation of Basovizza or any other sites presumed to contain corpses of Italian victims. The unknown number of caves and of corpses they might contain is a central argument supporting the notion of an Italian genocide. However, a series of systematic and thorough excavation and exhumation missions beginning in the early 2000s is being carried out throughout Slovenia, in which corpses have been identified to be of multiple origins all over the former Yugoslavian republic: Slovenians, Croatians, Macedonians, Bosnian Muslims, Jews, and many others. Detailed information on these excavation missions was kindly provided to me by Dr. Andrej Mihevc, a lead geologist and speleologist conducting the missions, in an interview at the Karst Research Institute in Postojna, Slovenia, August 8, 2017.

illuminated by Kenneth Burke's notion of the terministic screen, which I also apply in my findings chapters in analyzing contextual discourse. Here I focus on how the word "foibe" works as the foundation of the narrative that the monument reflects and reproduces, allowing for the generation of additional narratives that echo and reinforce that produced by the monument.

### **Foibe: The Power of Terminology**

One of the most significant actions in the construction of an Italian genocide is the use of the nomenclature of "foiba" and "foibe." The naming of multiple and disconnected military events with one single term – "the foibe" – created a discrete, recognizable, and memorable concept. The singular definition of "foibe" as the victimization of Italians at the hands of Slavs is understood throughout Italy and replaces any previous understandings of the word in its geological context. The word functions as a synecdoche, producing related terms such as "infoibati," which names the people who were thrown into these chasms. This naming constructs an identity group, the infoibati, which is stretched further to refer to anyone who was affected by Yugoslavian appropriation of formerly Italian territory. The word "foibe" creates a nomenclature that focuses all subsequent discourse through its lens, concentrating Italian memory and identity around the themes of martyrdom, victimhood based on ethnic identity, and exile.

The Lega Nazionale leaflet states that the word "foibe" is derived from the Latin *fovea* and refers to the "natural chasms typical of the karst landscape." These chasms "since ancient times" have been used "to dispose of objects and corpses which nobody wanted found." The historical use of these caves as disposal sites seems to have been largely due to convenience: "because of the rocky character of the soil, which is difficult to dig, foibas were traditionally used as waste disposal sites" (Dato 2013, 37). Stories in the Italian press in and around Trieste

began using the word “foibe” to describe Yugoslavian violence against Italians during WW II (Fumich 2008, Orecchia 2008, Pirjevec 2009, Pupo and Spazzali 2003); the Lega Nazionale leaflet states that “the term came into use in 1943, after the discovery on the bottom of some chasms of hundreds of bodies of victims of massacres of that period; in some cases they had been thrown in alive” (the leaflet cites no sources for this statement).

Although this understanding of the term “foibe” and its derivatives was understood locally in the postwar decades, the word remained unfamiliar to most Italians. This changed in the 1990s, when far right political parties successfully brought the terminology of “foibe” to a national stage (described in more detail below). The term has now been accepted and is understood throughout Italy as a national tragedy and as an issue that is nonpolitical, nonpartisan, and uncontested. As indicated by a public speech in 2007 from Italy’s former communist party leader, Giorgio Napolitano, who described the foibe in the exact language of the far right, “the interpretation of the foibe as an act of unilateral and premeditated ethnic cleansing has now become the official line across the political spectrum in Italy” (Knittel 2015, 312 n5). Today, the term is not only referential but carries emotional weight, melding reference to physical burial with metaphorical meaning; it invokes what Accati and Cogoy refer to as the “perturbante” (Accati and Cogoy, 2010), a pathological fear of annihilation of self and of identity.

The action of naming the foibe creates a “terministic screen,” a lens that focuses all interpretations of World War II memory and of Italian identity through the referential, metaphorical, and symbolic meaning of “foibe.” The name and the terministic screen it produces allows for a rebranding of identity and a re-conceptualization of World War II. Burke states, “any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others” (Burke 1968, 45). The nomenclature of “foibe” directs attention into the channel that

conceptualizes the Basovizza pit as a burial ground, that imagines a genocide enacted upon Italians as a discrete ethnic group based on blood kinship, and that interprets World War II as a situation in which innocent, non-violent Italians were victims and not aggressors. This nomenclature does not direct attention into channels that remember Fascist anti-Slav laws, for example, or that remember civilian support of Fascism and tacit acceptance of Fascist violence, nor does it direct attention into a channel that recognizes the many non-Italian victims of violence instigated by Yugoslavian communists.

Burke continues:

Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the *attention* [sic] to one field rather than to another.

*Also, many of the 'observations' are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made.* In brief, much that we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms.

(Burke 1968, 46)

The naming of Basovizza as a foiba is effective due to the terministic screen created through the terminology of "the foibe" and the possibilities implicit in that terminology. This terminology allows for a conceptualization of the "infoibati" to include any Italians whose lives were affected by the new Yugoslavian Communist state. The Yugoslavian military insurrections in 1943 and 1945 that led to the initial development of "foibe" as a leitmotif are presented in tandem with the migration of Italians from Istria after the war when the area became part of

Yugoslavia. Those who left Istria are also included in the definition of the “infoibati,” and the loss they suffered is fused to the notion of an Italian genocide in the understanding of “the foibe.” These separate situations are thus joined together and cast as an exclusively Italian tragedy. In chapter four I provide examples of the ways these two different sets of historical events, the military insurrections during the war and the postwar relocations that continued for many years after the war, are presented together in a way that suggests a cause-and-effect relationship (“Italian genocide” causes Italians to flee) that becomes believable when viewed through the “foibe” terministic screen.

#### **Public Acceptance of The “Foibe” Narrative: 1990-2000**

Several significant circumstances both within Italy and on an international scale influenced the role the Basovizza site would play in Italian public discourse. First, political scandals led to a complete overhaul of the Italian government. Second, historical revisionism devalued the WW II Italian Resistance and rehabilitated Fascist soldiers. Third, international events including the collapse of communism as a world power and the breakup of Yugoslavia shifted public attention and brought the terminology of “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” into Western European public discourse. In Italy, this terminology further justified an ethnic-identity-based understanding of “foibe” terminology. All of these factors interacted to create a new opportunity for the right wing to rename itself, rebrand its image and normalize its agenda, and re-conceptualize Italy’s World War II history for a national public. This national re-conceptualization created the need for a national monument to commemorate World War II in new way, and Basovizza filled that need.

## **Government Upheaval**

Throughout the postwar years, Italian WW II historiography was characterized by a contest between two rival narratives: one that presented a unified Italian Resistance that fought Nazi and Fascist oppression and a contrasting narrative that presented a patriotic Fascist regime that had only marginally, and reluctantly, collaborated with the Nazis. These two rival narratives paralleled a political power struggle between the Christian Democrat Party on the right and the Communist Party on the left. The tension between these two forces and their competition for exclusive understandings of memory, history, and national identity, however fierce and even violent at times, created a stability through the postwar years. This was destabilized when the government was rocked by political scandals on a scale that was unprecedented even for Italy. From 1992-1996, over 5,000 people, including half of the members of parliament, were implicated of being involved in bribery, and both the Christian Democrat and the Communist Party dissolved in what turned into a complete government overhaul (Cooke 2011, 163).

These bribery scandals are familiarly referred to as “Tangentopoli,” derived from the word “tangente,” meaning bribe (literally, tangent, as in tangential pay), plus “poli,” meaning city. “Tangentopoli” can be translated into something like “bribe city.” The judicial investigations into these crimes are known as the “mani pulite,” or “clean hands” investigations; these names suggest that Italy’s “bribe city” government was washed clean of corruption. The resulting government overhaul is viewed as the end of the First Republic and the beginning of Italy’s Second Republic. These names are informal designations, since the constitution was not formally rewritten, yet renaming the supposedly cleaned-up government as the “Second Republic” worked to suggest a new beginning.

This renaming process allowed for additional levels of renaming, rebranding and re-conceptualizing, specifically a renaming and rebranding of the Fascist party, which was necessary since the right wing had lost momentum. As journalist Tobias Jones writes:

The credibility of the Italian communist party obviously collapsed, but so did that of the Christian Democrats. Their winning card (and that of their coalition partners) had always been that they represented a dam against ‘red terror’. Once that threat was gone, the dam looked rather unnecessary and – many finally dared to say it out loud – rather corrupt.

(Jones 2003, 146)

When the Christian Democrat party officially dissolved, Italy’s Fascist party, the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) reinvented itself. The MSI changed its name to the Alleanza Nazionale (AN), or National Alliance. This renaming distanced the party from the connotations attributed to its Fascist name and allowed the party to rebrand itself as a “normal, right-wing party” (Franzinetti, 2006, 88).<sup>18</sup> The AN joined the coalition of the right, spearheaded by the newly-elected Silvio Berlusconi and his right-wing *Forza Italia* movement. Berlusconi’s rise in popularity and the energizing of nationalist, right-wing parties was bolstered by historical revisionism, which brought a new understanding of Italy’s World War II history to a lay audience.

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<sup>18</sup> A similar example can be seen today: Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French far-right party National Front, has proposed renaming the party National Rally to shed its racist and anti-Semitic associations and rebrand its image.

## Historiographical Reinterpretations

Beginning in the early 1990s, some historians began to argue that the popularity of the Resistance narrative, presented through films, memoirs, public holidays, and monuments, had been largely inflated, that the Italian antifascist Resistance had been of minor consequence in the war, and that the Italian Resistance was actually “a minority value” for the Italian public. (Cooke 2011, 176). This new wave of discourse de-legitimized Resistance memorials and criticized identification with the values of the Resistance by arguing that the public had been deceived by left-wing Resistance mythology. Historical discussions regarding World War II called for the need for “objective facts” and a de-glorification of the anti-Fascist resistance. Understandings of what was “true” and what was “myth” began to shift, as did notions of who were friends and who were enemies. This discourse was supported by the notion that Italy had undergone a civil war during WW II: a war between the Resistance and those who remained loyal to the Fascist regime.<sup>19</sup> Historiography renamed a prior “truth” – the glorification of the anti-Fascist Resistance – as “mythology,” and renamed World War II as a struggle in which Italy was threatened by an internal enemy – the communist Resistance.

As this view gained popular support, celebration of the Resistance was overshadowed by glorification of Fascist heroes. For example, Berlusconi refused to acknowledge April 25, the holiday traditionally associated with the Resistance as the day of National Liberation, and instead celebrated April 18, 1948 as the true watershed moment in Italian history, as this was the day the Christian Democrat party defeated the Communists and other parties of the Left; the day, in

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<sup>19</sup> The notion of a civil war in Italy was brought to a public audience when Claudio Pavone published *Una Guerra Civile (A Civil War)* in 1991 and this notion was taken up in many examples of subsequent literature, such as Romolo Gobbi, *Il mito della Resistenza* (Rizzoli, 1992) and *Una revisione della Resistenza* (Bompiani, 1999); Giampaolo Pansa, *Il Sangue dei Vinti* (Milano, Sperling & Kupfer, 2003) and *I cari estinti. Faccia a faccia con quarant'anni di politica italiana* (Milano, Rizzoli, 2010); and Renzo De Felice's many works on Fascism and Mussolini.



Berlusconi's words, Italians chose "freedom" and "the West" (Cossu, 2010, 7-8). The AN requested an official inquiry into the foibe in 1997, arguing that "Italy needs to remember in order to redefine itself as a community, to contribute to the creation of new national ties in the context of a reconciliation founded on truth" (Sierp 2014, 97-98).

The AN's requests also included the rehabilitation and recognition of several Fascist brigades, however, and initially, their efforts to shift public memory only reinforced political divisions. One additional renaming action was needed to mend this internal division, and that was to recast the enemy as an external and ethnically different invader. The efforts of the AN sought to unite a politically divided nation by calling for national recognition of the "Italian genocide" narrative presented by the Basovizza site. Several key international events facilitated this process. These included the collapse of Communism as a world power and the violence taking place in the breakup of Yugoslavia, which brought the terminology of ethnic cleansing and genocide into Western European public discourse.

### **International Events**

As Berlusconi's coalition of the right rose to power, representatives of the AN in northeast Italy collaborated with local civic nationalist groups to rename the WW II "civil war" narrative as an ethnic struggle. The civil war narrative had been built upon pre-1990s political divisions that had lost traction with the political scandals and government reshuffling and had become outdated with the collapse of Communism as a world power and the end of the Cold War. Instead, the AN presented WW II memory in terms of ethnic issues. This new narrative renamed the struggle as one not between Fascists and anti-Fascists, but as one between Italians and an external enemy, the Slavs. Debates over whether more Italians identified with the largely

communist-led Resistance or with the Fascists – a notion that had promoted the “civil war” narrative – were redirected by this new narrative that argued that a united Italian public had been threatened by a Slavic campaign of ethnic cleansing and territorial expansion.

The breakup of Yugoslavia created an opportunity for some authors to present the foibe as a precursor to the violence taking place there in the 1990s. Right-wing political writer Lucio Toth writes that the foibe were an example of “ethnic cleansing” that was then “reproduced in ex-Yugoslavia at the moment of the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ... a re-explosion of ethnic and religious, or pseudo-religious, hatred” (Toth, 2006, 319). Publicity about ethnic cleansing that was happening in Yugoslavia provided a “ready-made label for the foibe” (Franzineti, 2006, 89), and “gave Istrian Italians new occasions to denounce the Slavs as wild animals” (Wolff, 2006, 112). These intersecting rhetorics – the renaming of the external enemy as the Slavs, the terminology of ethnic cleansing, and reference to Yugoslavian violence used as proof of Slavic brutality – worked together to energize the need for a national memorial that spoke to the so-called ethnic struggle and to legitimize Basovizza as a site of public memory.

### **The Making of a National Monument: 2000-2007**

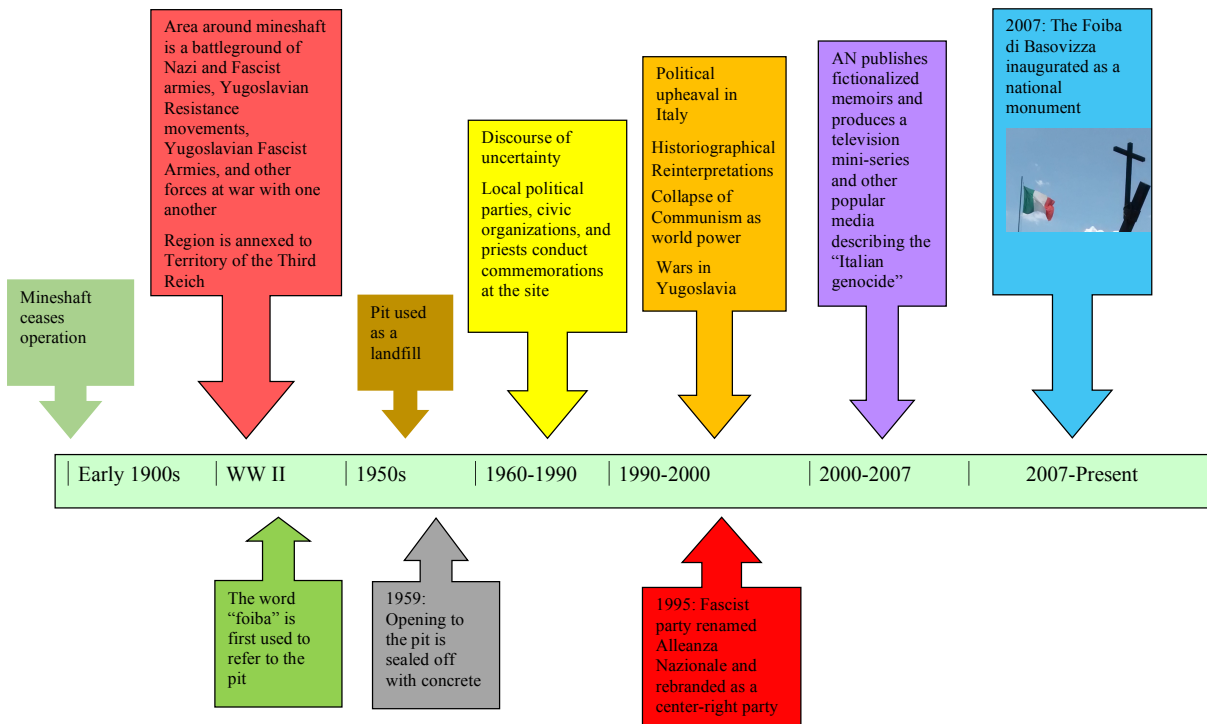
The AN produced “Italian genocide” narratives in a variety of forms circulated to a wide public audience. These included character-driven fictionalized memoirs, pseudo-historical articles, and a television miniseries, *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. The TV-film was presented as fiction; Italy’s telecommunications minister stated in a printed interview that a fictional story would be more effective than an actual documentary because it would “play to the emotional sensibilities of the viewers” (Knittel 2014, 171). In this case, as with much of the literature, visual media, and

public events commemorating the foibe, truth was enacted through an interaction of ethos (the authors know what they are talking about) and pathos (affect), and the reverse logos enacted through the discourse of uncertainty. These intersecting discourses on the foibe, which I analyze fully in chapter four, became increasingly accepted to Italian audiences as the terministic screen enacted by the nomenclature of the foibe renamed, rebranded, and re-conceptualized Italy's experience in World War II.

In 2004, also due to the efforts of the AN, a public holiday, *Giorno del Ricordo*, was enacted into law and welcomed by Italy's then-president Giorgio Napolitano in a nationally televised public speech. Napolitano, a longtime leader of Italy's former Communist party, presented the discourse promoted by the former Fascist party as nonpartisan, non-political, and universal discourse. By the time the Foiba di Basovizza was officially inaugurated as a national memorial in 2007, the political deliberations regarding its designation as a national memorial site and the memory of the pit's prior identity as a mineshaft and then as a landfill had become irrelevant and forgotten. The monument, now a popular attraction for tourists and classroom visits, stands as the main emblem of "the tragedy that unites the Italian people" (Knittel 2015, 236) and acts as a neutral, apolitical, and uncontested indicator not only of what the Italian people ought to remember but of who the Italian people are.

The Foiba di Basovizza as a national monument is a testament to the victors in this power struggle, who, through a series of actions of renaming, rebranding, and re-conceptualizing, were able to legitimize one story while others were silenced. The Basovizza monument renames a pit as a "foiba," rebrands World War II conflicts in terms of ethnicity, and re-conceptualizes Italian identity as an ethnic category based on blood kinship. This intersected with political, national, and international circumstances to produce the right *kairos* moment in which Italy's central

government accepted arguments from political and civic organizations claiming that Basovizza should be a national remembrance site. The monument reproduces this process of renaming, rebranding, and re-conceptualizing through a narrative that masks that process and constructs a knowledge that is taken as objective, nonpartisan knowledge.



Timeline: Mineshaft to National Memorial

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings: Catholic and Holocaust Themes**

In this chapter, I present the findings of my data collection in terms of recurring motifs I identified. I organized these motifs into two main themes: Catholic iconography and terminology and Holocaust imagery and narrative. Using strategies from the DHA, I analyzed the motifs in terms of how they interact to produce these themes. The analysis is organized into three main sections that address my first three research questions. First, I show how these intersecting themes work together to legitimize knowledge by referencing established and culturally mediated value systems and beliefs. Next, I show how agenda, motive, and intent are made invisible through presentations of neutrality and objectivity. Finally, I show how the monument constructs memory and identity and uses these constructions to produce configurations of inclusion and exclusion. I address my final research question in chapter five, where I examine how the configurations of inclusion and exclusion that are produced through the monument's narrative work to secure power.

#### **Recurring Motifs and Knowledge Legitimization**

The motifs I identified appear either as text or visual images. Text includes words that appear in published print or digital artifacts, public speeches or videos, and inscriptions on the monument. Visual images include photographs, videos, digital images, and aspects of the material structure of the monument. Figure 1 lists motifs, identified as text (T) and/or visual (V), and when and where they appeared in different forms of public discourse and in the memorial

site. At the end of this chapter I provide a complete list of all motifs, sources, and dates of publication/distribution.

MOTIF	1990	2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-present	Total 1990-present
Genocide/Ethnic Cleansing	P (T1)	P (T2)	A (T1) PS (T1) B (T1) M (T1) O (T1)	P (T1) O (T1, V1)	B (T2)	13
Death March		P (V1)	T (V1) MW (V1)	D (V1)		4
Martyrdom/Sacrifice		P (T1) T (V1)	M (T7) B (T1)	P (T1)	P (T1)	12
Barbed Wire			WV (V1) B (V1)	D (V1)		3
Bleeding Hands			M (V1)	O (V1)		2
Cross		TV (V1)	M (V5) B (V1)			7
N. Cossetto		P (T1) SM (T1, V1)	P (T2) WV (T1, V1) M (T1, V1)	D (T1, V1) P (T1)	P (T2)	14
Italian Flag Colors		T (V1)	M (V3)	W (V1) B (V1)		6
Slav	P (T1)	P (T2) T (T1)	A (T2) PS (T1) WV (T1) B (T1)	D (T1) P (T1)	B (T1)	12

Key:

P = popular literature

PS = public speech

A = article

T = television

SM = social media

M = monument physical site

W = monument website

B = monument brochures

WV = website video

D = DVD at monument

O = other source

Figure 1: Motifs

The following examples of recurring motifs show how knowledge is legitimized through references to established, culturally mediated values and belief systems. I isolated specific motifs

in order to record when and in what form each one appeared in public discourse, but they all overlap, intersect, and reinforce one another. Through a DHA analysis, I show how they legitimize the narrative produced by the monument by relying on the established credibility of Catholic and Holocaust themes.

### **Genocide/Ethnic Cleansing**

The use of the terms “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” is one of the most salient motifs in the narrative produced by the monument and surrounding discourse. The discursive construction of a World War II Italian genocide sets up a parallel to the Nazi Holocaust and in some instances the phrase “Italian holocaust” is used to refer to Italian victims of the foibe.<sup>1</sup> The public holiday that commemorates Italian foibe victims, *Giorno del Ricordo*, is on February 10, two weeks after *Giorno della Memoria* – International Holocaust Memorial Day.<sup>2</sup> The proximity on the calendar and similar name of these two holidays causes some confusion in a country whose civic holidays have undergone many changes since unification. Many Italians I spoke with expressed confusion between *Giorno della Memoria* and *Giorno del Ricordo*, confusion that is exacerbated by annual commemorations that combine Holocaust and foibe commemoration into one event. Additionally, equating the foibe with the Shoah allows for an interchange of nomenclature that exaggerates the nature of the foibe violence dilutes the severity and exceptionality of the Shoah (Tenca Montini 2014, 105).

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<sup>1</sup> In identifying the instances of the genocide motif, I distinguish between the lower-case “holocaust” when the word is used interchangeably with “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” as a motif, and the capitalized Holocaust, to refer to the actual Shoah and its function as a theme in the foibe narrative.

<sup>2</sup> February 10 was chosen because it marks day the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1947. The treaty allocated territory to Yugoslavia that had been part of Italy in the Interwar period and prompted the “exodus” of Italians from these territories. The Italian exile community had been commemorating their loss on this day for decades prior to the official implementation of the holiday in 2004, so it was the logical choice for a foibe remembrance day.

All of these terms – genocide, ethnic cleansing, holocaust – illustrate the use of referential/nomination strategies, predicational strategies, and the topoi of definition/name-interpretation, threat/danger, humanitarianism, and syllogism. The referential/nomination strategy of naming an Italian genocide produces membership categorization to create an ingroup (Italians) and an outgroup (Slavs) upon which positive and negative attributes can then be attached (predicational strategies). Italians, as victims of ethnic cleansing, are assigned the attributes of innocent and peaceful civilians, whereas Slavs, as instigators of ethnic cleansing, are assigned attributes of brutality. These labels facilitate the use of stereotypes that present Slavs as naturally warlike and primitive and allow the topoi of definition/name-interpretation to produce a definition of Slavs as “ethnic cleansers,” a stereotype that is additionally justified by Yugoslavian ethnic cleansing campaigns in the 1990s. The remaining three topoi follow this logic: threat/danger is invoked by the notion of a plan to instigate a genocide; humanitarianism is invoked by translating military and political issues into human rights issues; and syllogism is invoked by extrapolating from a targeted military operation a precise plan to wipe out an entire population.

The notion of an organized plan to conduct a genocide-like elimination of the “italianità” – the Italian-ness – of territories that Yugoslavia wanted to claim (or reclaim, according to Yugoslavia) emerged in popular and scholarly literature in the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Foibe: un dibattito ancora aperto (Foibe: a debate still unresolved)* by Roberto Spazzali (1990) was one of the most influential works in advancing this notion. Spazzali argues, however, that the foibe were “motivated not by some primordial ethnic hatred but rather by the desire to sever the territory’s ties with the Italian state and install a communist Yugoslav regime there” (Ballinger 2003, 245). Spazzali’s articulation of a type of “genocide” echoes narratives of Soviet



elimination processes and situates the foibe as part of communist Yugoslavia's plan to purge the territory of opponents to the regime. This notion, though not expressed in terms of ethnically motivated violence, illustrates the topos of threat or danger. A danger is presented (communist takeover), a perpetrator is named (Yugoslavians, also named as communists), and victims of Italian anti-Slavism can be made responsible for prejudices directed against them: historical and current anti-Slavism, ranging from Fascist internment of Slavic populations to the anti-Slavic graffiti I observed in the 1990s, can be justified since Yugoslavian communists presented a threat and a danger to Italians.

Discourse shifted in the early 2000s, however, as this notion was remodeled into the notion of an "ethnic cleansing" campaign. As indicated in chapter three, public media attention to the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s brought the terminology of genocide and ethnic cleansing into public discourse and provided a newly legitimized discursive mode of interpreting the foibe. Additionally, the end of the Cold War reduced the impact of communism-versus-freedom discourse. Presenting the foibe as ethnic cleansing recast the violence as a human-rights issue rather than a political one; the topos of humanitarianism was employed.<sup>3</sup> Anyone, at any place in the political spectrum, can agree that a humanitarian concern warrants public attention. In addition to enacting neutrality and objectivity, which I discuss in the following section of this chapter, this de-politicization of the narrative served to legitimize the need to designate a national memorial site. This topos was deployed when the AN made the initial demands for national recognition of the foibe in 1997 and is evident in the literature and public media that the AN produced from this point onwards.

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<sup>3</sup> As stated in chapter two, the topos of humanitarianism is as follows: "If a political action or decision does or does not conform with human rights or humanitarian convictions and values, then one should or should not perform or make it" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 78).

Popular literature and media that began to circulate at this time feature the words “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” interchangeably and liberally. Many examples also reference the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s to reinforce this depiction. In an article published in the Italian history journal *Clio*, Lucio Toth describes the foibe as an example of “ethnic cleansing” that was then “*reproduced* in ex-Yugoslavia at the moment of the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ... a *re-explosion* of ethnic and religious, or pseudo-religious, hatred” (Toth, 2006, 319; italics added). The 1990s wars in Yugoslavia are thus reinterpreted as a return to the Slavic habit of enacting ethnic cleansing. In a public speech aired on national television in 2007, Italy’s then-president Giorgio Napolitano referred to the “movement of hatred and of bloodthirsty fury” and the “annexationist Slav plan” that “assumed the sinister contours of an ethnic cleansing.” This wording is another example of the use of the topos of humanitarianism and directs the focus away from the military and political complexities in which the foibe occurred and presents them as unprovoked inhumane acts.

The topos of humanitarianism is invoked again later in the same speech, where Napolitano states

And in Europe is born the refusal of aggressive and oppressive nationalism, from that expressed in the Fascist war to that expressed in the wave of Yugoslav terror in Venezia Giulia, a Europe that excludes, naturally, also every form of revanchism.

While admitting the culpability of Fascism, this statement still produces a negative evaluation of “Yugoslavs.” Napolitano presents what the Fascists did as a war – a bad thing, but

permissible, and in some cases unavoidable, within the constructs of modern military and political systems and modern nation states. The Slavs, on the other hand, were enacting a wave of terror, an action which is not condoned by modern society and does not conform with humanitarian convictions. In the statement above, Napolitano also reduced more than two decades of Fascist occupation and violence to a “Fascist war” and positioned it on a par with several months of disorganized incursions by the Yugoslavian communist resistance (the “wave of Yugoslav terror”). He also placed “Fascist” and “Yugoslav” in antagonistic positions, a referential/nomination strategy that does not name Italians in referencing the “Fascist war” but does name Yugoslavians as instigators of inhumane actions. In addition to the topos of humanitarianism, a predicational strategy is employed in the implication that the foibe were acts of revenge; this implication assigns the negative attribute of vengeance, described as a primitive and inhumane behavior that the humanitarian convictions of Europe would naturally exclude, to the Slavs.

The motif is evident on the monument and in the Documentation Center. One of the stones of the monument dedicated by the Federazione Grigioverde (the federation of WW I and WW II veterans) states

With pride the martyr of the slaughters of the foibe

Does not cease to show his devotion to his homeland ...

In memory and in admonishment of their supreme holocaust

The DVD that plays in the Documentation Center features another example of the usefulness of this referential/nomination strategy. To contextualize his description of the Slavic

ethnic cleansing of Italians, he explains that Slavs have historically been at war with one another: Serbs versus Croats versus Slovenians versus Macedonians etc. Hatred of Italians, he argues, was a way to unite Slavs. Instead of conducting ethnic cleansing against one another, Slavs could now be united ideologically by anti-Italianism. His argument calls upon stereotypes that are evidenced by his choice of historical context, that is, what to describe and what to leave unsaid (for example, what about Fascist violence? What about Italian invasions of North Africa?). He also echoes Holocaust historiography that presents anti-Semitism as a unifying solution for a fractured Germany.

In all the examples of discourse that emerged after 2000 promoting a narrative of ethnic cleansing, an additional feat is performed: the World War II foibe killings are merged with what is known in Italy as the “esodo” or “exodus,” referring to the post-World War II relocation of Italians from the eastern part of the Venezia Giulia region and the territories around Fiume, Dalmatia, and Istria.<sup>4</sup> Those who participated in the “esodo” self-identify as “esuli,” or exiles, and the narrative of their relocation is linked to the narrative of the foibe as one overarching experience of territorial loss and fear of annihilation. In many cases the word “infoibati,” originally coined to refer to those whose bodies had been thrown into the foibe, refers to the esuli as well.<sup>5</sup> This illustrates the use of the topos of syllogism: the expanding of a premise from something specific to something general. Specific military insurrections are generalized into a genocide that is further generalized to include the esodo. The result is the broad notion that Slavs

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<sup>4</sup> These areas, like the area around Basovizza, are historically contested, liminal areas, but were part of Italy during the Interwar period. After World War II, much of Venezia Giulia remained in Italy while the easternmost part of the area is now Slovenia. Fiume (now Rijeka), the Dalmatian coast, and the Istrian peninsula are now in Croatia.

<sup>5</sup> Jurij Fikfak began our meeting/interview in Ljubljana in August, 2017 by stating that it is impossible to study discourse on the foibe in any meaningful way without also studying discourse on the “esodo.” The two events, he stressed, are so completely fused in public discourse that they are considered to be one and the same thing.

aimed to eliminate all that is Italian, including people, territory, and all that is understood to constitute “italianità” or Italian-ness.

The topos of syllogism is also enacted in the visitors’ experience in the Documentation Center. The DVD that plays continuously during the Documentation Center’s opening hours features interviews with esuli who describe their experiences fleeing their homeland as the Yugoslavians take over their property. Their testimonies are juxtaposed with the billboards in the Documentation Center describing the military insurrections in World War II that resulted in the foibe killings. Visitors thus experience both narratives as one collective Italian tragedy. The terminology of genocide and ethnic cleansing wraps the “esodo” and the foibe together into a narrative of physical annihilation that is supported by additional motifs that both reflect and reinforce this narrative. These testimonies also invoke the topos of humanitarianism via the ethos of the war survivor and the elder. The elderly people describing the trauma of their loss of property and homeland immediately produces affect. Viewers relate to their memory of the peaceful days before the Yugoslavians came and performed an action that goes against human rights. The topos of humanitarianism reinforces the referential/nomination and predicational strategies that label Slavs as invaders and Italians as civilians and masks the experience of Slavic civilians living under Fascist occupation in this same area.

### **The Death March**

The motif of the death march supports the use of terminology of genocide and ethnic cleansing by presenting both the foibe and the esodo with images that simultaneously deploy familiar imagery from Nazi Holocaust memorialization and Catholic iconography. The visual suggestion that people were forced to march to their burial in the foibe references Babi Yar with

the addition of images that reference the Stations of the Cross. The Death March image also employs the topoi of threat/danger, humanitarianism, and syllogism. Sepia-toned images of people traipsing in long lines and clutching bundled possessions recall images of Jewish families being relocated to and from ghettos, sent to concentration camps, or forced into death marches. These images, whose origins are not indicated – it is unclear whether they are taken from actual footage of World War II and post-World War II relocations or produced more recently with actors – are featured on the Basovizza monument website and in the DVD shown in the Documentation Center.

A version of the death march is also featured in the 2005 television film *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. This two-part miniseries was commissioned by the AN and produced by RAI, Italy's national television station. When it aired in 2005 it was reportedly watched by over six million viewers (Knittel 2014, 172) and it is now available on YouTube. This melodrama presents an entirely fictional rendition of the foibe, but the final scene attempts a “turn to the archival” (Knittel 2015, 234) by dropping the film score and transitioning to a silent scene in grainy black and white. The camera slowly pans out from close-ups of women, children, and elderly people marching along to a panoramic view of the entire landscape, where we see an endless procession of villagers marching. This is where the film ends, leaving viewers with the impression of a population subjected to a systemized removal.

### **Martyrdom and Sacrifice**

The Death March motif is imbued with the martyrdom motif in all images that reference the Stations of the Cross. Additionally, visual and textual depictions of martyrdom and Christian sacrifice are presented throughout the physical structure of the monument, in art works located in

the Documentation Center, and in many examples of contextual discourse. As I showed in chapter three, the Catholic Church was actively involved in working to designate the Basovizza pit as a sacred memorial site from the early postwar years, and many of these martyrdom references result from direct input from the Church. When the pit was sealed off in 1959 the event was commemorated with a Catholic Mass attended by over two thousand people (Ballinger 2003, 140). The Mass included the dedication of the stone slab that sealed off the pit, inscribed with the words

Honor and Christian mercy to those who are fallen here. May their sacrifice remind men of the road of Justice and Love, on which flourishes true Peace.

(See Figure 2)



Figure 2.

A local priest, Flaminio Rocchi, also dedicated the memorial stone that indicates the estimated depth and possible number of corpses (Figure 3). Rocchi is originally from Istria and identifies as one of the *esuli*. In his book *L'esodo dei 350 mila Giuliani Fiumani e Dalmati* (1990) he refers to the “Calvary of the Infoibati,” the victims’ “via crucis,” and “il cammino verso il sacrificio” – the path towards the sacrifice. “Rocchi depicts these victims in Christ-like terms,” observes historian Pamela Ballinger, “as having been sacrificed for the sins of others” (Ballinger 2003, 141).

Additional references to sacrifice and martyrdom are found on the inscriptions of many of the stones on the monument site. For example:

- “On the fiftieth anniversary of the sacrifice of the 97 finanzieri killed in the foiba of Basovizza” (Figure 4; finanzieri are customs officers)
- “In memory of the martyrdom of our ‘infoibati’ brothers” (Figure 5)
- [stone dedicated by] “the committee of foibe martyrs”
- “the sacrificial agony of the innocents” and “the martyrdom of the infoibati”





Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

The motif of martyrdom and sacrifice are also featured in *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. One of the film's main characters, Giulia, sacrifices her life by throwing herself into a foiba in order to protect the life of her young son whose father, a villainous Yugoslavian commander who raped Giulia, is hunting him down. According to scholars Knittel (2015) and Verginella (2010), it is no coincidence that this sacrificial character is named Giulia – a metaphor for the Venezia Giulia region that was “raped” by Yugoslavia.

The use of Catholic iconography in Italian monuments is not exclusive to the Basovizza monument. The path leading to the monument that commemorates the World War I Battle of Caporetto, for example, is decorated with statues representing the Stations of the Cross. The monument (whose actual address is, in fact, Via Crucis) was constructed during the Fascist era and stands in what is now the city of Kobarid, in Slovenia. What sets the Basovizza monument apart from other Italian monuments that employ Catholic iconography, however, is the use of imagery and discourse that melds these Catholic motifs with Holocaust reference. Rings of barbed wire, for example (Figure 6), are featured on postcards produced and distributed by the Lega Nazionale at commemorative Masses at Basovizza. Images of barbed wire rings can be found on the monument website, in the monument brochure produced by the Lega Nazionale, and in the DVD shown in the Documentation Center. These barbed wire rings refer to the way victims were reportedly bound before being killed and thrown into the foibe pits. They act as a visual reference to the crucifixion and Christ's crown of thorns and also recall the locks of hair from concentration camps that are shown in some Jewish Holocaust memorials. Two culturally legitimized belief systems – the crucifixion and the Holocaust – are thus intertwined and work to legitimize the narrative of the Basovizza monument.



Figure 6.

### **Norma Cossetto**

The character of Norma Cossetto appears in numerous examples of discourse describing the foibe violence. Her story exemplifies the topos of humanitarianism. Although she never produced a diary and the accounts of her life are fictionalized, she functions as the Anne Frank of the Italian “holocaust.” The validity of the Norma Cossetto story is contested by some authors (Cernigoi 2012, Kersevan 2008, Volk 2008), but these challenges are overshadowed by the popularity of her biographies and fictionalized memoirs.



Figure 7.

The photograph of her face appears in social media platforms, on the Documentation Center billboards (Figure 7), and in the monument website video. The DVD shown in the Documentation Center shows her photo, describes her life and death, and features interviews with people who talk about her. One of the earliest renditions of the Norma Cossetto story to

reach a national audience is in Arrigo Petacco's *Esodo: la tragedia degli italiani d'Istria, Dalmazia e Venezia Giulia*,<sup>6</sup> published in 2000. The image of her face decorates the front cover of *Vita di Norma Cossetto uccisa in Istria nel '43*, by Frediano Sessi (2007)<sup>7</sup>, and this book has also been transposed into a stage play (Tenca Montini 2014, 105). She is featured in Giuseppina Mellace's *Una Grande Tragedia Dimenticata*<sup>8</sup> (2014), and she is the subject of the graphic novel *Foiba rossa. Norma Cossetto, storia di un'italiana* by Emanuele Merlino and Beniamino Delvecchio (2018).<sup>9</sup>

Petacco's version of the Norma Cossetto story, which is fairly consistent with subsequent versions, states that Norma Cossetto was 23 years old (some stories say 24) and a university student living in Istria when she was captured and arrested by Croatian communists in 1943. Her father, Giuseppe Cossetto, was the podestà (the Fascist term for mayor) of Santa Domenica di Visinada, now Vižinada, in Istria (Tenca Montini, 2014, 104). Petacco gives a detailed description of Norma's torture, sexual violence, and subjugation to "every kind of agony" (Petacco, 2000, 61). "The death of Norma Cossetto," writes Petacco, "is one of many dramatic episodes that symbolize the savage wave of violence brought down on the Italians of Venezia Giulia, Istria and Dalmatia" (2000, 60).

The Norma Cossetto story differs from Anne Frank's, however, with the addition of martyrdom and sacrifice. Norma died "per l'italianità dell'Istria"—for the Italian-ness of Istria—and her death is presented as an "excruciating via crucis" (Petacco 2000, 62). The Norma Cossetto story employs predicational strategies, attributing saintly characteristics to Norma as

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<sup>6</sup> This title can be translated as "Exodus: the tragedy of the Italians in Istria, Dalmatia, and Venezia Giulia."

<sup>7</sup> Translation: "The Life of Norma Cossetto, killed in Istria in '43."

<sup>8</sup> Translation: "An Immense Forgotten Tragedy."

<sup>9</sup> Translation: "Red foiba. Norma Cossetto, the story of an Italian."

well as positive characteristics of respect and moral authority to her father (the Fascist official). The story relies on the topos of threat/danger, representing the threat of ethnic annihilation and the danger of the Slav encroachment. It also uses the topos of syllogism, as her martyrdom functions as a representation of the sacrifice and martyrdom of all Istrian Italians, and the topos of humanitarianism, as she and her father are subjected to inhumane acts while the culpability of their presence as Fascist occupiers is erased from the story. Additionally, Norma is described in terms of normalized humanitarian ideals: she is educated, artistic, beautiful, and looking forward to marriage and motherhood. The description of her father as podestà aligns his authority with respect, rank, culture, and civility, and makes no association of Fascism with military occupation or violence.

This leads to the next section of this chapter, in which I show how the political controversy that initially characterized the monument and the political motives of the actors responsible for working to designate it as a national memorial site have been made invisible through discourse that suggests neutrality and objectivity and through arguments that appeal to humanistic concerns and present the narrative as supra-political.

### **Invisible-ization of Political Agenda**

What initially caught my attention about the Basovizza monument was the disappearance of the controversy surrounding its validity. A narrative that had been questioned, challenged, and deliberated in political and civic discourse was now accepted as a nonpolitical and non-questionable issue of human rights. The legitimized discourse of an Italian “holocaust,” constructed in Christian terms, de-politicized an issue that had previously been understood as a conflict of rival political ideologies. Although the monument “reveals to what extent just such a

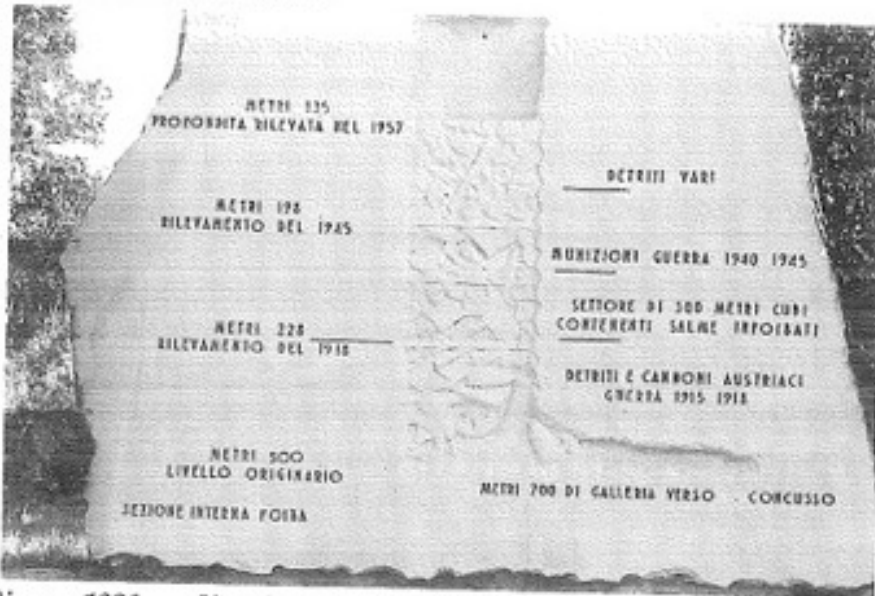
one-sided and exclusionary narrative of sacrifice and victimhood is characteristic of the official discourse on the foibe as a whole” (Knittel 2014, 179), in public discourse, the exclusivity of this narrative is masked by the impression of neutrality and objectivity. The political agenda that began with the Fascist party, rebranded as the AN, is made invisible by discursive strategies and visual presentations that claim to be presenting objective facts and “plain truth.”

These truth claims are convincing not only due to their form and content, which I describe in the examples below, but also due to Britt’s concept of the “taken-for-grantedness” of the institutions that produce these claims. Institutions are often assumed to present existing knowledge rather than constructing it. In the case of the Basovizza monument, the taken-for-granted institution is not Italy’s central government, however, although that is the organizational body responsible for the monument’s eventual official inauguration. Italy’s central government is anything but taken for granted as a purveyor of truth. Rather, the taken-for-grantedness of the monument is achieved through the institutions of math and science as a form of knowledge. Institutions are “agents in cultural narratives, as entities that both rely on and influence what we perceive as reality” (Britt 2006, 148). The institutions of math and science rely on empirical evidence – numbers, measurements, and calculations – to present a picture of reality. Mathematical knowledge also influences what we perceive as reality, by presenting numbers, measurements, and calculations as accurate renditions of truth. Because numerical calculations are accepted as objective and neutral facts, the presentation of numbers on the monument allows for the invisible-ization of political agenda and motive.

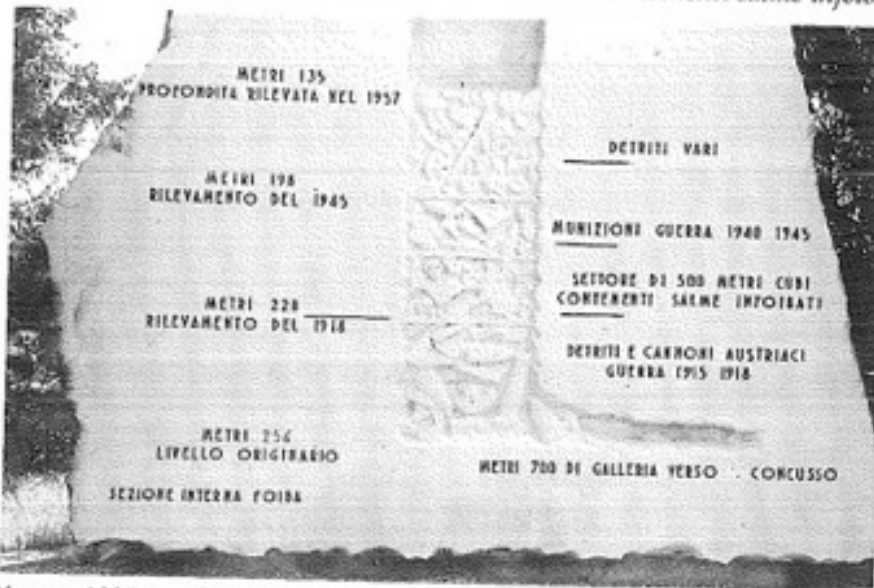
Neutrality and objectivity are positioned in contrast to political motive and supposedly neutral mathematical calculations are not regarded as active agents in the promotion of a political agenda. The memorial stone dedicated by Flaminio Rocchi at the sealing-off ceremony in 1959

is inscribed with numbers that indicate the estimated depth of the pit and the potential number of corpses (Figure 3). These numbers are substantiated by the institution of mathematics and therefore are accepted as objective and neutral “facts,” absent of any “will to truth.” Yet researchers Claudia Cernigoi (2012) and Alessandra Kersevan (2006) have observed, and provide photographs to show, that the numbers on the inscription were changed in 1997 (Figure 8). A photograph of the stone from 1996 shows that the inscription read “a section of 300 cubic meters contains infoibati corpses.” A photograph of the stone one year later shows an inscription that reads “a section of 500 cubic meters contains infoibati corpses” (Cernigoi 2012, 193 and Kersevan, 2006, 187). This change does not reflect any additional measurements or excavations; the pit was sealed in 1959. The stone itself, even when scrutinized up close as I did, shows no signs of alteration.

## Il falso di Basovizza



*Giugno 1996* Si noti: - livello originario: metri 500  
- settore di 300 metri cubi contenenti salme infoibati



*Giugno 1997* Si noti: - livello originario: metri 256  
- settore di 500 metri cubi contenenti salme infoibati

Figure 8.

The observations made by Cernigoi and Kersevan and the photograph of the change are part of a small body of marginalized discourse that challenges the narrative of the monument. This discourse is not widely known, but it does spark a localized smattering of counter-discourse that labels Cernigoi and Kersevan as left wing radicals and their work as propaganda. The



monument, on the other hand, is bestowed with a supra-political objectivity. The physical inscription on the solid, material structure of the stone suggests a permanence that further cements the perceived integrity of the mathematical calculations it presents. Numbers etched in stone are understood as facts, while photographs in left-wing publications are presumed to be adjusted to suit political motives.

Historian Diego Redivo, in contrast to surrounding claims that the foibe is not a political issue, presented the narrative in entirely political terms. In the interview I conducted with him on August 11, 2017 at the monument, he described the foibe killings as a communist endeavor that represented only one aspect of a worldwide communist threat. The monument at Basovizza, in his view, is not only a memorial to those who died but a reminder of the gratitude owed to all who fought against communism. Thanks to the Americans, he stated, we (meaning western Europe) did not become part of the Soviet Union. This was a curious statement, considering actual World War II allegiances, but he may have been referring to post-World War II Cold War politics. Or perhaps the statement was directed as a gesture of thanks towards me as an American and a representative of the United States. Redivo's unpublished article, "Un Dibatto Appena Nato" (A Debate Just Begun), sent to me shortly after our interview, reflects the same perspective, presenting the foibe and the esodo as a loss in the fight against communism.

Redivo's political perspective was an exception to the apolitical narrative presented in the monument. However, his stance also makes claims of objectivity by presenting anticommunism as a normative standard. He described the Lega Nazionale as a non-political, cultural organization and made no reference to the Lega's financial and personal ties to local right-wing political parties. His description of the foibe, the esodo, and the circumstances surrounding the

inauguration of the Basovizza monument placed anticommunism as the neutral and mainstream Italian position.

The motifs that enact neutrality and objectivity combine with a broader agenda-neutralizing characteristic of the entire monument, which is its appeal to humanistic concerns. The topos of humanitarianism works on viewers to present the foibe as a human rights issue and divorces this interpretation of the events from its politically controversial motives. In the next section of this chapter, I show how legitimized discourse and claims of non-political neutrality and objectivity work to construct memory and identity in ways that produce and reinforce inclusion and exclusion.

### **Memory and Identity**

The towering wooden cross is the first thing that comes into view when approaching the monument from a distance. The Italian flag, reaching almost as high, comes into view next (Figures 9 and 10). In the outdoor structure of the monument and the materials in the Documentation Center, memory and identity are constructed through two main strategies: first, the memory of Italian suffering and loss is based on naming “Italians” and “Slavs” as two diametrically opposed and biologically distinct ethnic groups; second, the memorialization of Italian victims relies on a rendition of Italian virtue that is expressed in terms of education, professionalism, adherence to traditional gendered roles, and whiteness.

In the next two subsections of this chapter, I first explain how the notion of Italian identity is framed by the binary opposition of Slav and Italian as perpetrator and victim. These two opposing terms constitute a referential/nomination strategy that names Italians as the ingroup and Slavs as the outgroup, configuring inclusion and exclusion in terms of whose memory and

whose history the monument acknowledges. I also show how Burke’s concept of the Terministic Screen provides an additional perspective on how this binary construction reinforces the version of collective memory the monument presents. Then I examine how Italian identity is constructed in the monument and surrounding discourse and explain how that construction draws additional boundaries of inclusion and exclusion within the concept of “Italian.”



Figure 9.



Figure 10.

### **Italian-Slav Opposition**

The opposition of identity groups labeled “Italian” and “Slav” and the presentation of these two groups as discrete and mutually exclusive is necessary for the effectiveness of Catholic iconography and Holocaust imagery and narrative structure as intersecting themes. The use of Catholic iconography feeds this opposition through an implied association of Italian to Catholic and Slav to “godless,” an association based on assumptions of Yugoslavian communist atheism underscored by pre-Yugoslavia Italian notions of Slavic barbarism. The Holocaust theme works into this structure by suggesting that extermination measures were enacted on one identifiable ethnic group (Italians) by another (Slavs).

As motifs, the words “genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,” and “holocaust” depend on this identity categorization and opposition. Furthermore, the Italian-Slav opposition also allows for the word “Slav” to function as a motif. The word “Italian,” on the other hand, is not a motif, but represents the point of view of the narrative. Italians are the ingroup and thus constitute the given, the norm. “Slav” is the outgroup, the Other, and thus functions as a motif. This motif intersects with and reinforces motifs in addition to that of genocide/ethnic cleansing, such as the motifs of sacrifice/martyrdom, the Death March, and Norma Cossetto.

The motif “Slav” appears in foibe narratives from 1990 onwards.<sup>10</sup> It is featured on the monument website, in both brochures available in the Documentation Center, and in the Documentation Center DVD. In other forms of discourse, the term is used in popular literature (Spazzali 1990; Petacco 2000; Pupo and Spazzali 2003; Toth 2006; Mellace 2014) and in the 2005 television film *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. Napolitano repeatedly used the term in his public speech in 2007, which, in connection to the many other expressions Napolitano used such as “ethnic cleansing,” “a nationalistic paroxysm,” and a “wave of blind violence,” prompted Croatia’s then-president Stjepan Mesić to call the speech offensive (Franzineti 2006, 90) and to publicly accuse Napolitano of “overt racism, historical revisionism, and political revanchism” (Knittel 2015, 312 n5). This illustrates how the word “Slav” works as a referential strategy that allows for a string of depersonalizing metaphors and stereotypes to develop.

In addition to the predicational strategies identified earlier that label Slavs with negative attributes such as barbaric, warlike, primitive, and vengeful, the word “Slav” assigns an

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<sup>10</sup> The Italian use of the word “Slav” as a derogatory term or to produce the idea of a threat from an alien race began long before its use in foibe narratives. Historian Glenda Sluga traces the use of the term in scholarly and political discourse to the early twentieth century, though it became more pronounced in the 1950s. Sluga cites, for example, the work of Giani Stuparich, whose writing turned from multiculturalism to patriotism and a notion of Italian racial purity (a notion troubled by his Slavic and Jewish heritage). Stuparich described an invasion of Trieste by a “Slav race” and called for Italians to defend themselves against obliteration by the Slavs (Sluga 2001, 165).

additional negative evaluation because, unlike the word Italian, “Slav” is not connected with a nation-state. Although the word “Yugoslavian” appeared in pre-1990s discourse about the foibe, the dissolution of Yugoslavia facilitated the morphing of “Yugoslavians” into “Slavs” and allowed for the binary opposition of two unequal terms. “Italian” is constructed as an ethnic category in order to validate its opposition to “Slav” and to justify the ethnic cleansing narrative, but the word “Italian” refers to an actual nation with territorial boundaries (albeit contested ones). “Italian” implicitly refers to a societal structure that is considered to be modern and more civilized than the unbounded, roaming, and tribal connotations associated with the word “Slav,” connotations that are enforced by applying present-day identity constructs from present-day situations – the non-existence of Yugoslavia – to past events. Ironically, the word “Slav” is coined through Italian discourse, yet the idea of a unified Slavic population is credited to the “Slavs” themselves, who, according to the historian featured in the Documentation Center DVD, became united because of their anti-Italianism and through their unified mission to exterminate Italians. This predicational strategy neglects any other factors contributing to the formation of a unified Yugoslavian nation; in fact, it neglects its existence. Additionally, the topos of threat/danger and the topos of syllogism are enacted through this discursive construction.

### **What it Means to be “Italian”**

The two structures that dominate the entrance to the monument, the Italian flag and the giant cross, link the primary symbols of nationhood and Christianity. Each of the stones arranged in a semicircle in the field outside the Documentation Center makes some reference to Catholicism and/or to the Italian flag (Figures 11 and 12), as do the artifacts exhibited inside the Documentation Center (Figures 13 and 14). The motif of bleeding hands, referencing the

crucifixion, is featured in a sculpture commissioned by the Lega Nazionale for the Documentation Center (Figure 15). This linkage of nationhood and Catholicism forms the basis for all presentations of Italian identity in the monument and contextual discourse predating and subsequent to the inauguration of the monument. It can be seen in foibe memorial structures in other areas of Italy as well, such as the one recently dedicated in Piazza Martiri delle Foibe (The Foibe Martyrs Piazza) in Lanciano, Italy (Figure 16).<sup>11</sup> Italy is a Roman Catholic country, historically and currently (and unapologetically) influenced by the Vatican presence and the dominance of the Church in civic affairs, and as discussed in the previous section, sacrifice and martyrdom are a key motif in foibe narratives. The Italian Catholic identity constructed by these narratives and presented in the monument is even more specific than that, however, and this specificity is formed through particular constructions of memory.

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<sup>11</sup> Lanciano is also the site where the first Eucharistic miracle is reported to have taken place and is authenticated by the Catholic Church. Here too the commemoration of foibe “martyrs” is merged with the exodus from Istria. <http://lanciano.zonalocale.it/2018/02/10/lanciano-commemora-i-martiri-delle-foibe-nel-giorno-del-ricordo/31498?e=lanciano>



Figure 11.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.



Figure 14.



Figure 15.



Figure 16.

The monument constructs memory through actions of selective forgetting. The monument and surrounding narratives draw attention away from Italian communism, Italian Judaism, northern Italian prejudice against the South, and immigration. Italy's postwar decades were dominated by the political rivalry of the Christian Democrats and the Communists. By presenting Italian identity as exclusively Catholic, the legacy of this political rift is redirected into an understanding of a unified Italian public. The absence of any reference to the Jewish presence in Italy facilitates a selective forgetting of the Fascist Racial Laws and the Italian



extermination of Jews. Finally, visual and written narratives that depict beauty in terms of skin whiteness and virtue in terms of industry, education, and artistic production make subtle hints towards Northern Italian and light-skinned European superiority. This constructs a version of memory and identity that diverts attention away from Italy's legacy of prejudice against the South as well as Italy's massive influx of immigrants that has become an immigration crisis.

Some of the clearest examples of this selective forgetting and redirecting of focus are the nostalgic representations of Istria, Fiume, and Dalmatia before World War II, when they were part of Italy. The rhetoric of nostalgia works as a predicational strategy and assigns positive attributes to Italians from these areas while employing negative stereotypes in depictions of Slavs. The billboards in the Documentation Center show a Yugoslavian invasion of these territories at the end of World War II and leave out any reference to the Italian invasion of these territories after World War I. The DVD that features testimonies of esuli provides visitors with a constant auditory background while they view the billboards and other artifacts in the Documentation Center. Flags for Istria, Fiume, and Dalmatia are on display and available for purchase at the entrance to the Documentation Center (Figure 17). These flags decorate the reception desk alongside the Italian flag, ribbons in Italian flag colors, and a soccer ball (Figure 18).



Figure 17.



Figure 18.

These items reference symbols that visitors can relate to and link to their shared Italian identity. “At the heart of the notion of identification,” state Stewart, Smith, and Denton, “is the belief that symbols unite people” (Stewart, Smith, and Denton 2012, 148). These symbols – flags, a soccer ball, the cross – unite people who accept a particular notion of Italian identity, and wrapped into that notion of Italian identity is the idea that Istria, Fiume, and Dalmatia are essentially Italian. The narrative presents Italians as the original settlers of the land and the rightful owners to the territory and to the memory of tragedy and loss.

The rhetoric of nostalgia is also evident in several examples of contextual discourse such as popular literature and film. Anna Maria Mori describes the beauty, strength, and talent of Istrian women in her 2005 memoir *Nata in Istria (Born in Istria)*. The women she describes embody traditional normative standards for Italian women and Italian beauty, as in the following passage:

Alida Valli. This is why we all knew her.

Beautiful like porcelain; there was an exceptional transparency in her youthful beauty, as if in fact there were a light coming from inside her. But she was also gifted professionally, and humanely courageous. She began life delicate, innocent, and sincere, but her life became intense and agitated. This was the same journey as that of the land in which she was born.

(Mori 2005, 215)

The passage continues by comparing the beauty of Istrian women to the elegance of Istrian architecture in a reminiscence of grandiose houses that were lost to the Yugoslavians.

...as for many of us, her house is no longer her house (who knows how it ended up) ... it was a large, elegant house, with a large wooden entranceway and wrought iron balconies, and it had been repainted in ochre and light celeste blue.

And for some mysterious reason, the houses almost always resembled the people who lived there. And this house, simultaneously sturdy and beautiful, with a particular nobility that was not at all pretentious, really resembled her.

(217).

This description constructs a specific notion of what constitutes Italian identity and beauty, one that is stated visually in the television film *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. The film depicts Istrian Italian women with pale skin, delicate features, and smooth hair. They display traditional

Italian feminine roles: one is a music teacher in an elementary school; another earns her living by singing in a restaurant. They are mothers whose main purpose throughout the film is to protect the lives of their sons. Their beauty and innocence replicate the idealized representation of Italians in Istria and is contrasted to the villainous Slavs, almost all male, whose portrayal mimics the portrayal of Gestapo soldiers in Holocaust films.

The nomenclature that labels Italians and Slavs as two discrete, mutually exclusive, and antagonistic ethnic categories and the construction of an exclusive concept of Italian identity that implies Catholicism, professionalism, and whiteness creates a Terministic Screen that directs attention into these channels rather than others – other channels that might, for example, reflect the multiculturalism and hybridity of the area, consider military, political, and class issues in WW II discourse, and include a broader concept of Italian identity. The discursive construction of “Italian” and “Slav” as discrete categories combined with the singular notion of Italian identity is so embedded in discussions about the foibe that it masks the “will to truth” behind it – the power structures, political actors, and societal circumstances that benefit from the creation and continued maintenance of this concept of identity.

This presentation of memory and identity raises the question of whose monument this is and for which Italians does this monument commemorate history. In constructing Italians as the ingroup, sub-outgroups are produced by particular and exclusive understandings of what it means to be Italian. This construct raises questions such as how would a Jewish Italian feel at this monument that recasts the notion of “holocaust” in Catholic terms? And how might an Italian of Slavic, Middle Eastern, or African descent feel in observing this presentation of Italian as an ethnic identity (and with porcelain skin)?

Furthermore, constructing a parallel between the foibe and the Shoah produces an equation that invites non-Jewish Italians to identify with the Shoah tragedy. This is exemplified in a poster advertising a “Shoah-Foibe” school production that presents these two events as one (Figure 19). This parallel reveals another level at which the Basovizza monument and the narrative it produces construct inclusion and exclusion. The narrative constructs the foibe and the esodo as one extensive and proscribed plan of ethnic cleansing and connects territorial loss to the notion of ethnic annihilation. Crucial to this narrative is the “ethnic” category of Italians constructed in terms of dominant cultural normative structures: Catholic, white, gender-traditional (in affiliation, orientation, and societal role), and non-immigrant. By inviting this “ethnic” group to join in and identify with a loss of the magnitude of the Holocaust, an established configuration of inclusion and exclusion is reproduced. Italians who conform to the dominant power system’s definition of “Italian” are once again the ingroup. Those who do not conform – which may include recognized and unrecognized victims of the Holocaust – are once again the outgroup.



Figure 19.

In the next chapter, I examine how the configurations of inclusion and exclusion produced by the monument might work to secure power. I discuss how my findings from this case study might complicate and broaden understandings of how discourse is legitimized, political agenda is normalized, and identity is leveraged in order to advance particular agendas. Additionally, I propose some ways that this study might expand our analyses of rhetoric in classrooms, professional and public policy, and civic engagement.

### **List of all Motifs, Sources, and Dates**

#### **Genocide/ethnic cleansing**

- 1990** Spazzali, R. *Foibe: un dibattito ancora aperto*. (Book)
- 2000** Petacco, A. *Esodo: la tragedia degli italiani d'Istria, Dalmazia e Venezia Giulia*. (Book)
- 2003** Pupo, R. and Spazzali, R. *Foibe*. Milano: Mondadori. (Book)
- 2006** Toth, L. "Sulle Foibe in Venezia Giulia e in Dalmazia (1943-1950)." (Article)
- 2006** Toth, L. "Perche Le Foibe: Gli eccidi in Venezia Giulia e in Dalmazia (1943-1950)." (Pamphlet/book)
- 2007** Napolitano speech (on national TV)
- 2007** Monument (inscriptions on stones)
- 2009** "Sacratio di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale" (Documentation Center brochure)
- 2014** Mellace, G. 2014 *Una Grande Tragedia Dimenticata: La Vera Storia Delle Foibe*. (Book)
- 2015** Shoah-Foibe school play in Sanguinetto (program found online)
- 2017** "Foiba di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale" (Documentation Center brochure)

## **Death march**

**2000** Petacco, A. *Esodo: la tragedia degli italiani d'Istria, Dalmazia e Venezia Giulia*. (Book)

**2005** *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (TV miniseries – video)

**2007?** Foiba di Basovizza website

**2013** Documentation Center DVD

## **Martyrdom/sacrifice**

**2000** Petacco, A. *Esodo: la tragedia degli italiani d'Istria, Dalmazia e Venezia Giulia*. (Book)

**2005** *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (TV miniseries – video)

**2007** Monument (inscriptions on stones)

**2009** “Sacratio di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale” (Documentation Center brochure)

**2014** Mellace, G. 2014 *Una Grande Tragedia Dimenticata: La Vera Storia Delle Foibe*. (Book)

**2018** Merlino, Emanuele and Delvecchio, Beniamino. *Foiba rossa. Norma Cossetto, storia di un'italiana*. (Graphic novel)

## **Barbed Wire**

**2007?** Foiba di Basovizza website (video)

**2009** “Sacratio di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale” (Documentation Center brochure)

**2013** Documentation Center DVD

## **Bleeding Hands**

**2009** Sculpture commissioned for monument

**2011** Monument at Lanciano

## **Cross**

**2005** *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (TV miniseries – video)

**2007** Monument (main structure and inscriptions on stones)

**2009** “Sacratio di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale” (Documentation Center brochure)

## **Norma Cossetto**

**2000** Petacco, A. *Esodo: la tragedia degli italiani d'Istria, Dalmazia e Venezia Giulia*. (Book)

**2000** Facebook Page (created “about 9 years ago”)

**2007** Sessi, Frediano. *Vita di Norma Cossetto uccisa in Istria nel '43*. (Book)

**2007?** Foiba di Basovizza website (video)

**2007** Monument (Documentation Center billboards)

**2013** Documentation Center DVD

**2014** Mellace, G. 2014 *Una Grande Tragedia Dimenticata: La Vera Storia Delle Foibe*. (Book)

**2018** Merlino, Emanuele and Delvecchio, Beniamino. *Foiba rossa. Norma Cossetto, storia di un'italiana*. (Graphic novel)

## **Italian flag or colors**

**2005** *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (TV miniseries – video)

**2007** Monument (main structure, decorations on stones, and Documentation Center reception desk)

**2007?** Foiba di Basovizza website

**2009** “Sacratio di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale” (Documentation Center brochure)



## Slav

- 1990** Spazzali, R. *Foibe: un dibattito ancora aperto*. (Book)
- 2000** Petacco, A. *Esodo: la tragedia degli italiani d'Istria, Dalmazia e Venezia Giulia*. (Book)
- 2003** Pupo, R. and Spazzali, R. *Foibe*. Milano: Mondadori. (Book)
- 2005** *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (TV miniseries – video)
- 2006** Toth, L. “Sulle Foibe in Venezia Giulia e in Dalmazia (1943-1950).” (Article)
- 2006** Toth, L. “Perche Le Foibe: Gli eccidi in Venezia Giulia e in Dalmazia (1943-1950).”  
(Pamphlet/book)
- 2007** Napolitano speech (national TV)
- 2007?** Foiba di Basovizza website (video)
- 2009** “Sacratio di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale” (Documentation Center brochure)
- 2013** Documentation Center DVD
- 2014** Mellace, G. 2014 *Una Grande Tragedia Dimenticata: La Vera Storia Delle Foibe*. (Book)
- 2017** “Foiba di Basovizza Monumento Nazionale” (Documentation Center brochure)

## Chapter Five

### Reading Between the Lines: Recognizing Inclusion, Exclusion, and Power

In this concluding chapter I discuss some of the broader implications of my findings. In particular, I look at how the normalization of extreme views and the production of inclusion and exclusion can work to secure power. I then propose some ways that scholars, educators, and public citizens (as well as non-citizens) can expand ways that we recognize, critically review, and respond to structures of inequity.

As I stated at the beginning of chapter one, what initially motivated me to pursue this research project was the neutralization and widespread public acceptance of what had been a controversial issue. The Basovizza monument began as a project instigated by Italy's former Fascist party, but it is not the appearance of a Fascist monument in Italy that presents a problem. Historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat titled a 2017 *New Yorker* article "Why are so many Fascist monuments still standing in Italy?" Why are they still there, she asks, and why don't they spark controversy? Ben-Ghiat explains that unlike Germany, which officially outlawed the public display of Nazi paraphernalia, Italy never went through any formal process of reeducation. There is no official law against Fascism in Italy. According to Ben-Ghiat, Italy's existing Fascist monuments are either ignored and taken in as part of a landscape scattered with a plethora of relics from the past, or function as reminders of a minor wrong turn in Italy's history. For most Italians, Fascist monuments recall a distant past that is unrelated to current issues and concerns.

Fascist monuments openly refer to a political stance that no longer exists in name; therefore, they are archaic. The monument at Basovizza is different. The Basovizza memorial is

rooted in a Fascist agenda, yet initiated by a party that masked its Fascist heritage by renaming itself the Alleanza Nazionale (AN), or National Alliance. The AN normalizes its Fascist agenda and normalizes the monument by presenting the monument as apolitical. The civic organizations represented on the monument stones bear no evidence of their political affiliations: veterans groups, local priests, and the Lega Nazionale (funded by right wing political parties, but branded as a cultural organization) are all seen as non-political. Additionally, unlike the archaic Fascist monuments, the Basovizza monument interprets the past in ways that do reflect current issues and concerns. It is timely, not archaic, precisely because it is *not* a Fascist monument; it is accepted as universal and apolitical.

My aim with this case study has been to show how the normalization of this monument reflects a process of knowledge building. It legitimizes a particular and partisan rendition of the past and presents that rendition as neutral and objective. I have argued that the political motives that initiated the call to designate this location and structure as a site of public memory have become invisible. What is most powerful about this monument is the insidious nature of its political agenda. The ethnic cleansing narrative presented by the monument is accepted as an uncontested collective memory. It is not a Fascist monument; it is an Italian monument.

But for which Italians? It claims to be for all Italians, yet, as I have shown, the monument produces inclusion and exclusion by presenting a “truth” in terms of memory and identity that is true for some and not others. I propose that this exclusive construction of Italian identity might function as a way to secure power for certain political, civic, and corporate interests. This reconstruction of Italian identity rekindles Fascist values of ethnic purity, piety, and specific gendered normative standards and excludes Italians who do not conform to these value systems. This works to secure power for those whose dominance might be threatened by globalization,

migration, digitalization, or other circumstances that could recalibrate established power dynamics.

This case study analysis of the Basovizza monument illustrates the interaction of different types of public discourse, political/cultural circumstances, and the production of accepted knowledge. In this final chapter I address my fourth research question: How do configurations of inclusion and exclusion work to advance an agenda and to secure power? I address this question by discussing how my case study methods might be useful in civic engagement, professional and public discourse, and classroom settings. I offer some suggestions as to how we might more thoroughly “read between the lines” of discourse that is taken for granted as universal and propose some ways to consider how configurations of inclusion and exclusion are produced by renditions of universality. I conclude by discussing the tension between empirical evidence and critical review of presentations of “fact” in the formation of common sense – what counts as truth for a particular audience.

In chapter one I engaged with the notion of knowledge production and examined how rival discourses leverage memory and identity in order to stake claims to different versions of truth. I applied Bernadette Longo’s concept of the invisibility of technical writing to show how this monument masks partisanship and obscures the power struggles that led to the legitimization of its narrative. After explaining my research design and methodology in chapter two, chapter three provided a timeline and chronological explanation of how Basovizza, a liminal area marked by changes in governance and divergent understandings of memory and identity, became the location for a national memorial site. I showed how the inauguration of this monument contributes to ongoing memory contests and rival understandings of identity in terms of

linguistic, cultural, and political affiliation, but translates these disputes into ethnic difference, presenting “Italian” and “Slav” as two discrete and biologically dissimilar ethnic categories.

In chapter four I presented and analyzed my findings in order to show how the narrative produced by the monument, based on these understandings of ethnic difference, is constituted by recurring textual and visual motifs that produce Catholic and Holocaust themes. My findings and analysis identified specific argumentation strategies deployed through the physical structure of the monument combined with contextual artifacts, including popular literature, websites, videos, images in published texts, and paraphernalia on display and for sale at the Documentation Center. I also showed how the increasing incidence of certain motifs in different forms of public discourse enacted the right kairos moment in which the inauguration of a once-controversial monument was a logical and non-controversial feat.

In the following sections, I first suggest some ways that this project can inform how we actively engage in our communities and challenge identity constructions based on notions of difference that are advantageous to the privileged. Following that, I discuss how different forms of public discourse stake claims to neutral, objective, and uncontested common sense and thus enact normativity. I then propose some applications of my findings and analysis on pedagogical approaches to writing and communication courses. Finally, I conclude by situating my findings within discussions on realism versus relativism and propose some practical areas for further research on how constructions of identity and normalization of extreme views can be recognized and challenged.

## **Civic Engagement**

Articulations of difference come to the fore at different times for different reasons. The normalization of the right-wing agenda manifested in the Basovizza monument relied on a specific articulation of difference – the “ethnic” difference of Italians and Slavs – that came about due to a combination of political circumstances and civic involvement with and response to those circumstances. My analysis of how this identity divide became legitimized could inform the ways we examine local and national events in the United States that push certain iterations of difference into prominence.

Citizenship versus non-citizenship has always been a way to describe difference among inhabitants of the United States, as it is in many immigrant nations, but this iteration of difference became much more acute when Trump-era politics imposed more pressing deportation threats and measures against non-citizens. When the U.S. Census Bureau approved a Justice Department request for a citizenship question on the 2020 U.S. Census, public and institutional response revealed just how controversial this issue is. According to National Public Radio,

The Justice Department says it needs a better count of voting-age citizens from the census in order to enforce protections against voting discrimination under the Voting Rights Act. But critics of the citizenship question say they're worried adding the question will discourage non-citizens, especially unauthorized immigrants, from participating in the national headcount. More than two dozen cities and states have filed lawsuits to try to remove the question.

(npr.org)

The addition of the citizenship question is the topic of a public hearing scheduled for May, 2018. Meanwhile, lawmakers have demanded that the Census Bureau make public the internal documents related to the decision and NPR has filed Freedom of Information Act requests for the documents. Public response on social media to both the question and to the Bureau's withholding of documents has revealed what a divisive issue this is. The addition of the citizenship question at this particular time indicates that citizenship status is a useful way to divide people for the current administration. Additionally, it brings to prominence a sharp divide in public opinion between those who think the question is controversial and those who think it necessary.

Arguments in favor of the citizenship question use tactics I identified in my analysis, such as the rhetoric of nostalgia, which is deployed to argue that a citizenship question on the census form was the norm for most of U.S. history. The removal of the question after the 1950 census is presented as an error to be fixed to help the country return to a better, fairer, and more accurately represented era. The topos of humanitarianism is deployed to argue that this question is designed to protect citizens' right to vote: Commerce Secretary Wilber Ross states the citizenship question will "permit more effective enforcement" of the Voting Rights Act. Republican Congressman Clay Higgins, also a member of the Homeland Security Committee, argues that the addition of the citizenship question is "common sense," stating "Americans deserve to know how many citizens versus non-citizens are residing in our country." (Berry, *USA Today*, April 10, 2018). This statement reveals differing notions of ownership and belonging. Higgins' reference to "our country" draws a discursive boundary between those who belong and those who do not.

In my case study, I showed how areas historically inhabited by people of hybrid Italian and Slavic linguistic and cultural affiliations are depicted by the monument as essentially Italian areas that were taken over by Yugoslavia. There is an implicit warning message in this narrative that mourns territorial loss that is paralleled by the citizenship question on the U.S. Census: it calls a certain group of people to assert their authenticity as genuine citizens or their land will be taken away. Both the monument and the arguments in favor of the census question deploy the topoi of threat/danger and syllogism and show how nostalgia for a better past combine with nomination strategies – “Italian/Slav” and “our country” – to produce effective arguments.

Prior to the designation of Basovizza as a national memorial, different iterations of difference, those based on World War II military and political affiliation, were more pressing. Surrounding Basovizza, in neighboring villages on both the Italian and Slovenian sides of the border, are numerous unofficial memorials. These smaller structures, most of which were constructed in the decades immediately after World War II, represent discourses that have now become marginalized. Memorials to antifascist partisans stand in close proximity to memorials to Fascist soldiers, representing two sides of a political divide that at one time constructed identity groups. Unlike good and “invisible” technical communication, these memorials present ideologies that are very visible. They are archaic political statements, relics of an outdated ideological battle in which World War II affiliations constructed identity along political lines.

As political statements, these rival monuments have been subject to critical review and deliberation manifested in graffiti rivalries. A memorial to Slovene antifascists was defaced with swastikas, a black circle and Celtic cross (a popular symbol of neo-fascist groups), and the words “onore ai caduti delle foibe” (glory to the victims of the foibe). On a memorial to Yugoslavian victims of the German offensive in December 1944, swastikas, Celtic crosses, and the words



“morte ai rossi” (death to the reds) were painted over the names of the victims (Fikfak, 2009, 352-357). These memorials serve as platforms for anonymous exchanges of opinion and are testaments to loyalty to and protest against ideological stances. The Basovizza monument has been immune to this exchange, however, except for an instance in 2011, when the concrete entrance wall was spray painted with the words “No memorial for yesterday’s fascists, no space for today’s!” This was an isolated attempt to de-invisible-ize the political agenda of the Basovizza monument and to protest against the ideology it presents. There have been no graffiti messages or protests since. This raises questions about what types of circumstances initiate counter discourses and act as catalysts for civic engagement. When might a neutralized and accepted narrative become controversial? My analysis of the political and cultural circumstances contextualizing the acceptance of a once-controversial narrative could also inform analyses of how an accepted narrative can become controversial.

Additionally, my findings could provide insight on how we might be better equipped to recognize motive and intent behind seemingly neutral presentations of events and experiences. My findings could raise awareness of how discourse that claims to be universal might be producing inclusion and exclusion in ways that secure power to dominant, powerful institutions. I showed how a political agenda was normalized through the deployment of legitimized forms of discourse, recognized motifs that reference culturally established belief and value systems, and argumentation strategies that called upon humanitarian (rather than political) concerns. By investigating the methods by which this normalization took place, I provided some tools for examining how exclusion can be produced or reinforced through the deployment of identity constructions and discursive strategies that create a so-called universal narrative.

In examining how institutions secure power, I refer again to Britt in the distinction between organizations, which “exhibit self-consciousness,” and institutions, which are taken for granted (Britt 2006, 136). In my analysis I distinguished the political and civic organizations that collaborated in the construction of the monument as examples of self-conscious organizations from the institutions I identified, which are the overarching value systems that secure power for these organizations and that escape critical review because they are taken for granted. Additionally, as Britt states, “institutions do not exist in isolation” and they should be “examined as cultural agents entangled with other institutions” (Britt 2006, 147). My study showed how the entangled institutions of scientific and mathematical knowledge, nationalism, religion, and the notion of racial/ethnic purity worked to secure positions of power for certain organizations and to serve the interests of some and ignore the interests of others.

By raising awareness of how power is secured in organizations by taken-for-granted institutions, my study can also provide ways to identify the incremental steps towards normalization and the invisible-ization of political agenda. Small normalizing steps can occur in many forms of public discourse. For example, Roxane Gay describes how the 2018 “Roseanne Reboot” – the revived version of the 1990s sitcom *Roseanne* – normalizes Trump-ism. “This fictional family, and the show’s very real creator, are further normalizing Trump and his warped, harmful political ideologies,” she argues. Gay points out how the show tries to make palatable an extreme political agenda and the exclusive construction of “working class Americans” (that is, white) that it presents. Through likeable characters and token representations of diversity, the show makes a step towards normalization. A further step towards normalization would be if Trump-ism were invisible-ized and there were no more deliberations about the show’s

whitewashing of extreme and exclusive ideologies – in other words, if the show became accepted as nonpolitical and critical reviews such as Gay’s were marginalized or silenced.

### **Institutional and Public Discourse**

The normalization of controversial and exclusionary narratives illustrated by the Roseanne Reboot and in the Basovizza monument also raises questions about agency among authors, institutions, and audiences. I showed how the monument and its surrounding discourse transmitted a message to a passive and receptive audience, locating agency primarily in the authors. This was the agential shift that initially caught my interest: public response to the monument and deliberation about a controversial narrative located agency in audiences. Yet due to an interaction of contextual circumstances and effective argumentation strategies, the monument was accepted as non-controversial and audiences no longer interacted with the narrative, but passively accepted it. This can be more clearly illustrated by Slack, Miller, and Doak’s description of the “transmission” model of communication.

#### **Author Agency: The Transmission Model**

Slack, Miller, and Doak introduce their theories on the role of the technical communicator by presenting the “transmission” model as one of the most simplistic, and therefore most widely critiqued, understandings of communication. Due to the widespread critique and rejection of this model, they state, “it is nearly requisite to begin any introductory text on communication theory with an explanation and rejection of it” (Slack et al. 2006, 28). A description of this model is useful in illustrating how, as controversy and deliberation over the monument were marginalized, the messages conveyed by the monument escaped critical review.

Slack et al. describe the transmission model as one in which “meaning is a fixed entity; it moves in space ‘whole cloth’ from origin to destination” (Slack et al. 2006, 29). According to this model, agency is understood to be situated solely in the transmitter, that is, the author of a text. In this model of communication, “to communicate is to exercise power” (Slack et al. 2006, 31). The monument can be seen as a mode of communication that exercises power by transmitting a narrative directly to viewers, both through the credibility of its material structure and the deployment of strategies and topoi described by the DHA, such as the referential and predicational strategies and the topoi of humanitarianism, syllogism, and threat/danger.

Although the transmission model is widely viewed as an outdated and inaccurate rendition of communicative interactions, Slack et al. present this model in contrast to their “translation” and “articulation” views of communication, which situate varying degrees of agency in the receiver. This perspective provides an additional way to understand the normalization of the monument and the narrative it produces. The initial controversy and deliberation can be seen as an example of the “articulation” model, in which “the concepts of meaning and power are dramatically refigured” (Slack et al. 2006, 39). The meanings that were produced were critically reviewed, assessed, and deliberated by multiple audiences, and critical review was likewise reviewed, assessed, and deliberated. The silencing of these deliberations and the widespread public acceptance of the monument can be seen in terms of the transmission model of communication; audiences no longer interacted with the monument deliberatively but accepted its narrative as knowledge and as “truth.” This acceptance of “truth” was not based on empirical evidence but was achieved through a combination of discursive tactics that produced a legitimized notion of common sense.

## **Building Knowledge into Common Sense**

Dana Cloud argues that we have moved far beyond the notion that empirical evidence works as a constitutive force to argue for truth. “Let us leave behind the idea that there are universal truths,” she states “in favor of the idea that whose truth gets to count as truth is always a contestation among classes with contending interests in an unequal society” (Cloud 2018, 159). In the contest over whose truth gets to count – or, in Longo’s terms, which statements are committed to discourse and which are silenced – Cloud identifies specific and “compelling rhetorical mediation tools” that are particularly effective. These include “emotion, embodiment, narrative, myth, and spectacle” and are the tools of successful mediation that produce “common sense” or *doxa*: the “set of truths” that “win adherents because they are packaged in terms of established beliefs and values along with meaning frames – schemes of interpretation that selectively include, omit, or emphasize features – that cultivate belief” (Cloud 2018, 3). *Doxa*, or common sense, in other words, is what functions as “truth” for a given public.

My analysis used a different analytic method and different terminology – the discursive strategies and topoi identified in the DHA – to explore similar issues relating to how *doxa* is produced. Cloud’s approach suggests ways that left-leaning political actors, protest movements, and counterpublics can use mediation tools to counter the *doxa* produced by the right. My aim is to add to this inquiry by investigating instances in which right and left affiliations become invisible and to look at how political positions become normalized. What I find particularly threatening about the universal acceptance of the Basovizza monument is its separation from its extreme right-wing political roots and the implications of that separation on identity and power. The monument constructs a particular and partisan understanding of what it is to be Italian. This understanding, mediated by discursive strategies, motifs, and Catholic and Holocaust themes,

configures inclusion and exclusion in ways that advance particular political agendas but is accepted as nonpolitical and nonpartisan. The narrative is *doxa* for all Italians, but “all Italians” only includes those who conform to this *doxa* understanding of “Italian.”

My hope is that through this process of observing, identifying, and examining the tactics deployed in the monument to construct a “common sense” version of Italian identity, I have provided some useful ways to identify subtle and insidious ways that partisan agendas are advanced and invisible-ized behind a veil of universality. In this next section I suggest some ways that my findings might be useful in expanding pedagogical approaches to issues of identity and presentations of “fact.”

### **Study Implications for Pedagogy**

This analysis can inform pedagogical approaches to how we treat the concept of identity in the classroom and the tools we provide our students. The implications of my findings can apply to pedagogy across multiple disciplines, but I focus here on how my analysis can be applied to writing and communication programs including, but not limited to, professional writing and technical communication courses. My findings can broaden ways we engage with identity in classroom interaction, rhetorical analysis, and consideration of audience, all of which impact students’ writing processes.

### **Classroom as Community**

From the moment they enter the writing classroom, instructors and students engage in a community with clearly bounded borders in space and time. My focus here is primarily on face

to face classroom settings. However, although the differences between in-person and digital learning environments is part of a much larger discussion, many of the implications I discuss here can be applied to online classroom communities. Upon entering any communal arena, we observe one another and take note of similarities and differences based upon discursively produced and culturally mediated understandings of difference. In the classroom, first impressions of difference and similarity are based on visual information; in online classrooms, first impressions might be based on names, writing style, and the content of an introductory blog or discussion forum.

My findings illustrated how perceptions of difference can be produced by the interaction of political circumstances and public discourse. By applying Burke's concept of Terministic Screens, I showed how discursive presentations of difference direct attention in specific ways that reinforce these differences and produce understandings of identity categories that are perceived as fixed and permanent rather than constructed in their societal context. To create an inclusive classroom, it is useful to recognize how the Terministic Screens that train our perceptions evolved. In my chapter four analysis of the binary opposition of Italians and Slavs I showed how this discursive construction directs further observations and interpretations in terms of that perceived opposition. This leaves no room for understanding identity non-categorically or in terms of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and hybridity. My findings can inform the ways we challenge binary and fixed identity constructs such as male/female, white/nonwhite, able-bodied/disabled, native/non-native English speaking, and other forms of difference that, for reasons that are societally produced, appear to be significant and fixed.

When we challenge culturally mediated notions of difference, however, we also need to contextualize efforts to diffuse identity boundaries within historical systems of power and

dominance. When debunking myths of ethnic, racial, gender, or other differences, we have to continue to raise awareness about the systems of oppression and configurations of exclusion and inclusion that exist due to those myths. This was illustrated in a class discussion on dis/ability, in which several of my students brought up the notion of the “unseen disabilities.” They argued that invisible conditions such as physical pain, psychological distress, or learning disabilities can be as prohibitive as a visible physical disability. In considering the classroom as an inclusive community, we might argue that there truly is no difference between the experience of someone in a wheelchair and someone with dyslexia. However, there is a significant difference, which is that people in wheelchairs are immediately seen as “disabled,” and are devalued due to culturally mediated norms and the valorization of visual normativity over difference. As I did with my case study, I propose we invite students to weed through the multiple circumstances and discourses that feed into the production of values and norms and to examine how the malleability of identity categorization is contingent on challenging those norms.

### **Rhetorical Analysis**

Additionally, my case study analysis can inform the ways that we ask students to rhetorically analyze texts. By analyzing how the intersecting discourses and political and cultural circumstances facilitated the normalization of the narrative produced by the monument, I uncovered some of the ways that claims of neutrality and objectivity work to legitimize discourse. As instructors, we might apply this to our teaching pedagogy by questioning, and asking students to question, the origins of normative standards and conventions that enact neutrality and objectivity. As I showed in chapter four, claims of neutrality and objectivity can be used as persuasive strategies and quantitative information can be selected and presented in



ways that are presented as nonpartisan and objective but work to advance an agenda. My findings can help identify rhetorical strategies deployed in different types of documents to advance particular agendas while appearing neutral and objective.

For example, technical documents such as instruction manuals, product descriptions, and analytical reports are often considered to be neutral and objective, as are the graphics they employ to inform, instruct, and persuade their readers. We ask students to identify how information is selected and presented in ways that aim to persuade audiences and to question the perceived objectivity numerical and diagrammatic material; I propose that we also ask students to take a comprehensive look at the motives behind these presentations and to examine why they are perceived as neutral. My findings can inform the ways we can examine how claims of neutrality and objectivity are enacted through language, information design, and choice of medium that reflect cultural norms and value systems.

Additionally, my analysis can broaden the ways we ask our students to analyze how institutional forces legitimize certain constructions of identity over others and how this is reflected in different types of discourse. For example, by showing how nomination and predication strategies were effective in producing negative and positive stereotypes, my findings can help identify ways that terminology enforces power dynamics. Terms used to describe and label marginalized groups, such as “minority,” “at risk,” or “underprivileged,” carry connotations, implicitly and explicitly, that suggest degrees of importance, innate behavioral tendencies, and subordinate status. While this terminology is often intended to identify real situations and lived experience and therefore to allow conditions of inequity to be addressed, articulations of difference also often reflect the perspectives of the powerful and might work to secure positions of power.

## Consideration of Audience

My findings complicate understandings of the relationship between authors, texts, and audiences and can expand the ways we teach audience assessment. The narrative structures and referenced legitimized belief systems that the monument employed not only targeted an audience of those who adhere to those belief systems, but constructed an audience by creating a sense of collective identity around the idea of shared trauma and the threat of annihilation. I showed how the construction of “Italian” and “Slav” as two antagonistic, mutually exclusive identity categories created an audience that was the ingroup whose solidarity is strengthened by the construction of a foreign enemy, the outgroup. This audience is united in an understanding of Italian identity that excludes multiculturalism and instead envisions “Italian” as a discrete ethnic group.

I propose finding new ways to ask students to analyze how audiences are produced by texts by examining how audience creation is enacted within historical and cultural circumstances and societal power systems. We should ask our students to analyze not only how an audience is created, but why. The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama is an example of an artifact students can examine in terms of audience creation. The historical, geographical, and cultural contexts of this memorial are deeply intertwined with the monument itself, yet the ways and reasons why the monument might produce an audience are complex. The monument is expected to be completed in late April, 2018, and was initiated by Bryan Stevenson to commemorate the victims of lynchings and to reveal how “lynchings of black people were essential to maintaining white power in the Jim Crow South” (Capps, *The Atlantic*, 2017). The monument is surrounded by juxtaposed civil rights monuments and confederate monuments in a city with a legacy of civil rights action and anti-civil rights violence. In contrast to the Basovizza

monument, which constructs a singular concept of identity and obscures contextual rival discourses, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice contributes to an ongoing interaction among rival discourses. Stevenson states that the memorial is part of an effort towards truth and reconciliation, indicating the effort to broaden, rather than narrow, the memorial's audience.

Consideration of audience for the Memorial for Peace and Justice raises complicated questions about audience assessment and construction. Does the monument produce inclusion and exclusion by appealing to civil rights activists and excluding confederate sympathizers? Or does the monument aim to create an inclusive audience that bridges the divide between civil rights and confederate audiences? More importantly, we might ask why this memorial is being constructed now. How might this monument affect the way power is distributed because of the audiences it creates?

These questions are further problematized by different audiences' acceptance of "fact," returning to the question of how *doxa* is produced – how knowledge is built – through effective mediation tools. I showed how the Basovizza monument produced a set of "truths" by deploying effective visual and discursive strategies and very little empirical evidence. I challenged what little empirical evidence is presented on the monument by showing how it was produced through estimation and calculation, not by actual excavations. Stevenson is in the process of tallying the number of black Americans murdered by white mobs from 1877 to 1950; should his empirical evidence also be challenged? Or do the confederate monuments that surround the Memorial for Peace and Justice do this already? In the concluding section to this chapter, I consider these questions in relation to further research possibilities.

## **Relativism Versus Realism: Now What?**

In conclusion, encouraging a more effective critique of presentations of fact raises some additional questions. How do we negotiate rival presentations of truth and competing constructions of knowledge with actual empirical evidence? If our perceptions of the world are framed by our capacity to forge those perceptions into language, how do we valorize lived experience and observation? And, especially in cases in which human rights violations are presented, how do we balance critical review of public discourse with standards of human rights? Latour asks: “While we spent years trying to detect the real prejudices hidden behind the appearance of objective statements, do we now have to reveal the real objective and incontrovertible facts hidden behind the illusion of prejudices?” (Latour 2004, 227). Latour proposes a renewed approach to critique that cultivates a realism that deals not with trying to determine “matters of fact” but to develop a multifarious perspective on “matters of concern” – a critical perspective that understands each object of scientific inquiry as a “gathering,” mediated by human and nonhuman participants. As I described earlier, Cloud deals with this dilemma by suggesting “rhetorical realism,” which she describes as

...the idea that communicators can bring knowledge from particular perspectives and experiences into the domain of common sense, and that we can evaluate truth claims in public culture on the basis of whether they exhibit fidelity to the experience and interests of the people they claim to describe and represent.

(Cloud 2018, 15)

Informed by both Latour's and Cloud's proposed approaches, as well as the many interweaving theories upon which each of their perspectives are built, I am further motivated to focus on the question of who is included and who is excluded from presentations of empirical reality and constructions of common sense. If truth claims are to be evaluated on how well they serve the "interests of the people they claim to describe and represent," as Cloud states, what about the people who aren't described and represented? Truth claims that serve the interests of the privileged marginalize the existence of those who aren't served by those interests; how can their truth be claimed?

This question was influential in motivating my initial foray into the normalization of the Basovizza monument. My aim with this project has not been to dwell on the problematic of realism versus relativism but to investigate how understandings of reality are mediated by the relativistic discourses that are heard because they represent and reference institutions of power. In my case study, I showed how audiences were persuaded that a pit contained bodies of Italians massacred by Slavs. I argued that the object of scientific inquiry that produced this version of common sense came into being due to an intricately woven web of conjecture and mathematical calculation, a convincing discourse of uncertainty, motifs that referenced institutionally accepted belief systems, and discursive strategies that promoted negative and positive stereotypes. All of these convincing factors reference the institutions of power from which they originate.

Nonetheless, this case raises questions about how to assess presentations of objective and incontrovertible facts. As I noted in chapter three, in my interview with Andrej Mihevc at the Karst Research Institute in Postojna, Slovenia, I was presented with his data on the excavation missions he has been overseeing since the early 2000s throughout Slovenia. I saw photographs of the skeletal remains of bodies. I read through reports that documented what was found in each pit

that was excavated and dated the remains to the immediate postwar years. I saw photographs of coins, belt buckles, shoe parts, and other personal details that originated from areas all over what had been Yugoslavia. This data was presented to me as empirical evidence. At some level of understanding taking into consideration the mediation of knowledge within cultural contexts, I accept this data as fact. And it is this data, this discourse, that is omitted from the Basovizza monument narrative. This data, suggesting that thousands of Yugoslavians were executed by other Yugoslavians and their bodies deposited into what the Italians call foibe, would make it difficult to maintain the argument that Slavs conducted an ethnic cleansing campaign against Italians.

My hope is that this study might provide impetus to explore further questions about how identity is constructed through discourse that is widely circulated in different public arenas to different publics, and how presentations of identity affect the lived experiences of people who accept, reject, or challenge these presentations. This case study can lead to further research on public monuments as well as on different forms of public discourse. Using the same analytical methods, one possible future project might be to investigate a reversal of the process that occurred with the Basovizza monument: a case in which an accepted form of public discourse became controversial, as has happened with many confederate monuments in the United States.

A case study research project that aims to investigate the de-normalization of one of these monuments or any other example of an artifact whose political agenda is no longer invisible might examine the following questions: What outside forces might influence the way people perceive the “facts” an artifact presents? What might cause these “facts” to be questioned and for the prevailing *doxa* to be challenged? Whose unheard voices might begin to be heard, and why? In more general terms, scholars need to delve deeper into research that examines how identity

construction can be used to produce inclusion and exclusion, how those configurations can secure power to the powerful, and how those configurations might be challenged and that power de-stabilized.

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## EDUCATION

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## PUBLICATIONS

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Zamparutti, L. Book Chapter, The Foibe as War Narrative: The New Antiheroes of the Second Republic. In *A Century of Italian War Narratives*. Rodopi-Brill (forthcoming).

Zamparutti, L. (2018) Plato, Mary Baker Eddy, and Kenneth Burke: Can We Talk About Substance? *Rhetoric Review*, 37:2, 199-211. DOI: 10.1080/07350198.2018.1424479

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DeVasto, D., Graham, S.S., and Zamparutti, L. (2016). Stasis and Matters of Concern: The Conviction of the L’Aquila Seven. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 30:2, 131-164. DOI: 10.1177/1050651915620364

Zamparutti, L. (2015). Foibe literature: documentation or victimhood narrative? *Human Remains and Violence*, 1:1, 75–91 © Manchester University Press. DOI: 10.7227/HRV.1.1.6

## GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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Zamparutti, L. (November, 2017). Rebranding Italian Identity: monuments, memory, and martyrs. Social Science History Association Annual Conference. Montreal, Canada (via Skype).

Edenfield, A., Keith, W., and Zamparutti, L. (October, 2017). Improvisational Games in the Professional Writing Classroom: A Cutting Edge Strategy for Fostering Participation, Engagement, and Active Listening. Association for Business Communication Annual International Conference. Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, Ireland.

Zamparutti, L. (July, 2017). The Giorno del Ricordo Speech: Unifying a Public through Divisive Rhetoric. Rhetoric in Society Conference of the Rhetoric Society of Europe. University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

Workshop on Rhetoric and Civic Life: A Case Study in Integrated Communication. Rhetoric Society of America Institute (May, 2017). Workshop Leader: Debra Hawhee. Bloomington, IN.

Zamparutti, L. (April, 2017). The Foibe as War Narrative: the new antiheroes of the Second Republic. American Association of Italian Studies/Canadian Society for Italian Studies Conference. Columbus, OH.

Zamparutti, L. (March, 2017). Mary Baker Eddy: Platonic Rhetoric, Counterpublicity, and Religious Identity Construction. Conference on College Composition and Communication. Portland, OR.

Edenfield, A. and Zamparutti, L. (October, 2016). Theater Improv in the TW Classroom: Fostering participation, engagement, and active listening through theater games. Conference for the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication. Savannah, GA. (proposal accepted; conference cancelled)

Zamparutti, L. (May, 2016). Burke, Christian Science, and Plato: It's All About Substance. Rhetoric Society of America Conference. Atlanta, GA.

Zamparutti, L. (May, 2016). Demographic Maps as Visual Narratives: Enactments of Distinction, Categorization, and Boundary Cutting. Rhetoric Society of America Conference. Atlanta, GA.

Zamparutti, L. (January, 2016). *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*: Ethical Implications of the Docudrama. UCLA Graduate Student Conference. Los Angeles, CA.

Zamparutti, L. (September, 2015). Victims, Martyrs, and Brava Gente Past and Present: Constructing the foibe as a national symbol in Italy. Symposium *National Symbols Across Time and Space*. University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.

Zamparutti, L. (January, 2015) The Foibe and Giorno del Ricordo: re-creating national identity through narratives of victimhood. UCLA Graduate Student Conference. Los Angeles, CA.

Zamparutti, L. (November, 2014) Italy's Giorno del Ricordo: creating a counterpublic identity in the Second Republic. Association for the Study of Modern Italy Conference. London, England.

Zamparutti, L. (October, 2011) Peer Tutoring in the Writing Center: Does Age Difference Make a Difference? Midwest Writing Center Association Conference. Madison, WI.

## **INVITED CLASS LECTURES**

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Zamparutti, L. (October, 2016) Effective Presentations: Talk to Your Audience. Invited Lecture, Mechanical Engineering 496, College of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Milwaukee, WI.

Zamparutti, L. (November, 2015) Public Speaking and Effective Presentations. Invited Lecture, Mechanical Engineering 496, College of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Milwaukee, WI.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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**Business Writing, Technical Writing, and Health Science Writing Instructor**, F2F, online, and blended courses; full semester and summer intensive courses (2013-Present)  
Department of English, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

**Professional Writing and Public Speaking Instructor** (2014-2015)  
College of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

**Research Assistant, Translator, and Editor** (2010-2012)  
Peck School of the Arts, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

**Writing Center Tutor** (2010-2011)  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

## SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

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Panel Chair (July 2017). *Leaders' Speeches*. Rhetoric in Society Conference of the Rhetoric Society of Europe. University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

Panel Chair (April 2017). *A Century of Italian War Narratives: Making Sense of it All*. American Association of Italian Studies/Canadian Society for Italian Studies Joint Conference. Columbus, OH.

Conference Organizer: Executive, Budget, and Keynote Committees (April 2016). Marquette University-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Graduate Student Humanities Conference. *Conflict and Liberation*. Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.

## OTHER EMPLOYMENT HIGHLIGHTS

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Editor, *Complex Society* by Bojan Radej, Slovenian Evaluation Society (2015-2018)

Translator (Italian to English), *Boccaccio and his Desk* and *Paratextual marketing techniques in the first two editions of Dante's Convivio*, by Beatrice Arduini, University of Washington (2011-2017)

Editor, scholarly articles by students and faculty in Engineering and Material Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI (2010-2015)

Health and Wellness Director, Meredith Mathews YMCA, Seattle, WA (2006-2009)

English Language Learning Program Director, Downtown Seattle YMCA, Seattle, WA (2004-2006)

English and Theater Arts Instructor, Manzano, Italy (2003-2004)



Owner and Director, Zamparutti Dance Company (1988-2002)

Dancer, Anzu Furukawa Dance Company, Braunschweig, Germany (1993-1994)

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

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Writer, Ronald McDonald House of Eastern Wisconsin, Wauwatosa, WI (2010-Present)

Yoga Instructor, Austin Foundation for At-Risk Youth, Seattle, WA (1996-2009)

## **CREATIVE WORKS**

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Zamparutti, L. (2014) *Identità*. Stage play produced by Windfall Theatre, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

## **LANGUAGES**

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Bilingual English-Italian

Fluent in French

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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American Association for Italian Studies

Association for Business Communication

Association of Teachers of Technical Writing

Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication

Global Society of Online Literacy Educators

Modern Language Association

National Communication Association

National Council of Teachers of English

Rhetoric Society of America

Rhetoric Society of Europe

Social Science History Association

## **REFERENCES**

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