

“As Time Goes By...” You Must Not Remember This: Burying the Past in the Italian Post-War Edition of *Casablanca*

1. Introduction

Scholarly studies have often discussed the huge impact of the film *Casablanca* (WB, 1942, directed by Michael Curtiz and produced by Hal Wallis) on American media and popular culture. Many critics have attempted to explain why the film continues to be regarded as one of the most iconic and celebrated Hollywood films of all times.¹ Both at home and abroad, *Casablanca* has attracted an outpouring of publicity, homages, remakes, etc. not only, but especially related to the film’s leading role (Rick Blaine), notably played by Humphrey Bogart. *Casablanca*’s screenplay, developed by Julius and Philip Epstein and Howard Koch from Murray Burnett’s and Joan Alison’s play *Everybody Comes to Rick’s* (1940),² has inspired many generations of film *aficionados* and has generated all sorts of spin-offs and references. Many English-speaking fans will recall Bogart/Rick’s memorable lines “We’ll always have Paris”; Ingrid Bergman/Ilsa’s “Play it, Sam. Play *As Time Goes By*”; Claude Rains/Captain Renault’s “Round up the usual suspects”; Dooley Wilson/Sam’s “You must remember this”; and so on and so forth. Italian viewers, on the other hand, will most probably be familiar with these lines in their corresponding Italian translation, given that *Casablanca* has, since its first distribution in Italy in 1947, received theatrical and television release in its dubbed version.³

As Jack Nachbar convincingly illustrated in his “Doing the Thinking for All of Us: *Casablanca* and the Home Front,” *Casablanca* was “only a single element in the propaganda rush to wartime justification” (6), only one of the many films and various publicity material produced and released by the Hollywood movie studios during WWII to be permeated by a pro-interventionist message. It will not be difficult to recognize the reasons why in the war-torn Italy of the immediate post-war years (1943-45), the anti-Axis message would not be particularly ideal from the political point of view of the fragmented Italian institutions, nor from the commercial perspective of Warner

Bros. We shall also see that, although not so intuitively, when the film was finally ready to be released in early 1947, its edition would be considerably affected by the legacy of Fascism; this in spite of Italy being, at that point, a democracy allied with the US. To illustrate this extent, the title of this article, modelled upon the first line of the film's love song *As Time Goes By*, which originally "focused on memory as a path to the future" (Nachbar 13), will conversely signify here the ideology-driven operation of historical intervention which affected the post-war Italian edition of *Casablanca* and exemplify the question of controlled public amnesia ("You must *not* remember this").

As many of the film's critics have successfully demonstrated, the narrative shape of *Casablanca* follows a classical Hollywood scheme, a cause-and-effect structure which involves an initial disruption (Act One), immediately followed by a second disruption (Act Two), and ends with a resolution that will restore social order (Act Three).⁴ As the voice-over narrator announces in a newsreel style at the beginning of the film, hundreds of people desperately trying to escape from the menace of the Nazis in Europe find temporary refuge in unoccupied French Morocco. In the exotic setting of Casablanca, refugees try to obtain visas to leave for America or they are forced to wait there until the war ends. Yet there are people in Casablanca who seem not to care about leaving. One of them is Rick Blaine, the American owner of the popular night club Rick's Café Américain where many European citizens seeking refuge in Casablanca gather to unwind, gamble and, especially, find an opportunity to escape from the war in Europe. Fortuitously, one night at the club, Rick comes into possession of two important letters of transit to Lisbon, from where it is possible to fly to America. Will the seemingly cynical and selfish American use these visas to finally leave Casablanca, or will he sell them to the highest bidder? That same night, Ilsa Lund steps into Rick's Café: she is looking for a way to fly to the United States, together with her husband Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid), one of the leaders of the European Resistance, a clandestine movement fighting against the Axis powers. As the story unfolds, a few flashbacks reveal that some years earlier, in German-occupied Paris, Ilsa and Rick had had a romantic relationship, which had left Rick with bitterness, old resentments, and painful memories regarding Ilsa (she had regretfully abandoned him

and joined her husband Laszlo, whom she had believed to be dead, without having the chance to explain to Rick the reasons behind her painful decision). After a series of political gambles with the French and German police, Rick (i.e., America) sacrifices his anguished love for Ilsa and abandons his isolationism to help her and her husband (i.e., Europe) to flee Casablanca for America where they can continue their fight for freedom. Backed now by the previously ambivalent French Captain Renault, Rick decides to embrace the "cause," joining in the fight (i.e., the war) against the Axis in Casablanca.

2. The background to the distribution of *Casablanca* in Italy

The background to the 1947 Italian distribution of *Casablanca* is as convoluted as the film's plot. A first "logistical" reason why this Hollywood film could not be distributed in Italian cinemas in 1943, in the wake of its successful domestic run, should be traced back to 1939. It was in 1939, in fact, even before *Casablanca* was produced, that Warner Bros abandoned the Italian market as a result of the Fascist government's decision to retain a monopoly on foreign film distribution. Let us take a step back to observe what happened to the distribution of American films in Italy during these critical years.

The increasingly protectionist measures directed at supporting the Italian film industry during the late 1930s culminated, towards the end of the decade, with the royal decree No. 1389, which, on September 4, 1938, formally established the "monopolio per l'acquisto, l'importazione e la distribuzione in Italia, possedimenti e colonie dei film cinematografici provenienti dall'estero," an autarchic control on foreign film distribution.⁵ This monopoly law (together with the related severe protectionist measures on the importation of foreign cinema, such as, for instance, the dubbing tax increase),⁶ caused the withdrawal from the Italian market in January 1939 of four US majors (MGM, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, and Warner Bros). A significant number of foreign films by small US companies such as Monogram, Republic, and Grand National would still circulate in Italian cinemas after the withdrawal of the Big Four.⁷ However, with the beginning of World War II and the decision taken by the Italian government to side with Nazi Germany against the Allies, Anglo-French film

productions were rejected. On December 31, 1941 a new regulation banned the programming of Anglo-American films in the Italian territory (Quargnolo 123). Moreover, from the early 1942 onwards a news blackout was ordered by the Ministry of Popular Culture on American, English, and French films.⁸

The political and social unrest in the Italian peninsula caused by the long years of war, sacrifice, deprivation, foreign occupation, and internal struggle are among the political and social reasons why *Casablanca* and many other Hollywood films portraying the war in Europe and anti-Nazi propaganda (e.g., the 1939 film *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, also produced by WB), were not immediately released in the country after the fall of the dictatorship and even after the end of the war. Because of their pro-interventionist message against the Axis, these films would not enjoy the same popularity in post-war Italy, Germany, or France, for instance, that they instead had in the US a few years before. Besides, as far as the Italian case was concerned, at the beginning of 1945 the monopoly laws promulgated during Fascism still formally stood in protection of the Italian internal market against American products.

When the Allied Forces reached Rome in June 1944, they established a Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) at the Allied Headquarters in Rome in the building formerly hosting the Ministry of Popular Culture (MCP).⁹ A *commissione temporanea per la cinematografia* worked while the new legislation on cinema was being implemented.¹⁰ The Allies would supervise the Italian offices in Rome until January 1946, and during this period the temporary film office would be controlled by the PWB.

Archival research has documented that, on March 1945, the PWB film section, presided over by Admiral Ellery W. Stone, head of the allied military command in Italy, organised a series of important meetings to discuss the situation of the (Italian) film industry.¹¹ During one of the first meetings, Admiral Stone managed to obtain the confiscation of the Cinecittà studios (which were been deployed to host war refugees),¹² while giving orders to retrieve and bring back to Rome those materials the Fascists had moved to the film studios in Venice. Importantly for the present discussion, the Admiral insisted on repealing the laws which protected the Italian market from the

(American) competitors and arranged for this gentlemen's agreement to be turned into legislative dictum.¹³ And in fact, following this meeting, various laws were enacted. On October 5, 1945, the lieutenant's decree No. 678 "*Nuovo ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica italiana*" officially abolished all the restricting norms on film distribution (art. 4, 5, 9) and both the ban on dubbing foreign films abroad and the dubbing tax to be paid by film distributors (art. 10).¹⁴

With the authorization of the PWB, the American film companies were able to release in Italian cinemas a considerable number of films, produced during the late 1930s and the early 1940s.¹⁵ Many of these films had been preventively dubbed or subtitled in Hollywood or in New York,¹⁶ and would run in the Italian circuit at least until mid 1946.¹⁷ However, like many other war-related fictional films produced in the US during the 1940s,¹⁸ *Casablanca* was not among the films immediately introduced in Italy by the PWB after its establishment in the new Roman headquarters. Whether under the suggestion of the PWB film section or not, Warner Bros seems to have been waiting for the Italian political and social waters to settle before releasing their film in Italian cinemas, and strategically postponed *Casablanca's* release until the most profitable moment. Distributors might have also decided to wait for Italian film translators and experienced voice-actors to prepare a domesticated dubbed version which could guarantee a successful run of the film in Italian cinemas.

On November 9, 1946, nearly four years after the film's theatrical release in the US,¹⁹ Warner Bros Continental Films applied to the Italian film office (now established under the *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri*) for permission to release *Casablanca* in the Italian commercial film circuit. The theatrical screening of the Italian dubbed version was then authorized, obtaining the obligatory *nulla osta* on January 10, 1947.

2.1. The approval of *Casablanca* in the Post-War Period

Although the decree No. 678/1945 abolished the preventive censorship of film scripts (art. 2), it nevertheless kept in force the Fascist regulations on film censorship (art. 11) that had been promulgated more than twenty years earlier, on September 24, 1923 (the royal decree No. 3287). This decree banned film scenes, facts and subjects:

Offensivi del pudore, della morale, del buon costume e della pubblica decenza;... contrari alla reputazione ed al decoro nazionale e all'ordine pubblico, ovvero che possano turbare i buoni rapporti internazionali;... offensivi del decoro o del prestigio delle istituzioni o autorità pubbliche, dei funzionari ed agenti della forza pubblica, del Regio esercito e della Regia armata, ovvero offensivi dei privati cittadini, e che costituiscano, comunque, l'apologia di un fatto che la legge prevede come reato e incitino all'odio tra le varie classi sociali. (art. 3)²⁰

This regulatory persistence across decades and regimes is extremely significant because it points to an “operational continuity” at the film office in matters of film censorship, a continuity which has similarly been documented for many aspects of institutional life in Italy after the end of the war.²¹ As far as “uncomfortable” foreign films were concerned, the commissions followed the censorship practice customary under the dictatorship:²² both the commissioners working at the film office and those who prepared the Italian versions of foreign films, e.g., distributors, translators, personnel at the dubbing studios etc. (people for the most part active during the regime) would use the post-production stage (translating, re-voicing, visual editing) as a tool to transform and modify any unwelcome content in foreign films.²³

In general, in order to obtain permission to distribute a film in the national cinema circuit, the film distribution or production company applied to the Italian film office with a film screenplay (often sent preventively), and a copy to be examined. After having assessed the suitability of the screenplay, a first commission examined the film and then decided whether to approve fully or partly (with age restrictions or other conditions), or reject the cinematic work. If authorized, the film would be distributed in cinemas. In the case of restrictions or rejection (*approvata con riserva* or *vietata*), the commission often specified the sort of visual or verbal changes to be carried out on the work in order to obtain the authorization. Then the producers or distributors had the option of re-editing the work to comply with the commission's indications, and resubmitting the modified version for a second examination. Otherwise, if the producers or distributors did not agree with the first decision, they could file an appeal and the same film

would be reviewed by a second commission. If the second commission confirmed the first verdict, the screening of the film was prohibited. In order to avoid this ban or to prevent the expensive procedure of cuts and changes at the post-production phase, the distributors usually preferred to carry out the changes after the preventive scrutiny of screenplays and translated scripts which might have preceded the first film examination. Whereas for domestically produced films this meant a further level of censorship at the early stages of a film's production, with regard to imported foreign works the film office's interference could be mainly exercised on the translated scripts of foreign films.

The archival documents of the film file of *Casablanca* include the translated script, the distributors' application and the film office authorization signed by the president of the film commission, Vincenzo Calvino, on January 10, 1947. From the authorization, the Italian edition of *Casablanca* appears to be a case of straightforward approval. A passage from the document reads:

Giudizio: Il film raggiunge una efficacia [*sic*] tensione spettacolare, favorita dalla buona realizzazione e dall'ottima interpretazione. Interessante la particolare ambientazione in una zona marginale della guerra. Poichè nulla da obiettare dal punto di vista politico e morale, si ritiene che il film possa essere ammesso alla programmazione in pubblico. (ref. No. 1440, *Italia Taglia*, MiBAC)

The commission approved the film without any “moral or political” objection, praised the excellent interpretation and the dramatic force of the film, and also made a point of highlighting the interesting “marginal” war setting (in other words, far from the more crucial battlegrounds of Western Europe). It has been discussed that the film's postponed distribution in Italian cinemas is an example of the co-implication of Italian and American economic and political interests during and after the war, so that when the film came out in 1942, it was not released immediately in Italy because of a mix of protectionist measures and commercial strategies. But “as time went by,” when *Casablanca* was ready to be seen in 1947, the scenario had changed. The war was over, and the fascist regime had been replaced by a democratic political

system. However, the personnel of the previous administration were largely maintained at the film office. The same should be said for the voice-actors and the translators who worked in the dubbing industry before and after the war. How did this “operational continuity” affect the Italian edition of *Casablanca* given that the film was approved without any “official” changes or restrictions? The documents found at the *Italia Taglia* archive and the dubbed version still commercially available in DVD can suggest reasons and explanations for the film’s approval.²⁴

3. *The dubbing of Casablanca*

Because the film was not released by the PWB, it had not been translated and dubbed into Italian abroad, but prepared in Rome by the *Cooperativa Doppiatori Cinematografici* (CDC), a cooperative formed mainly by the popular dubbing directors and actors of the 1930s. These film actors and directors started gathering together as early as August 1, 1944 under the lead of Augusto Incrocci, perhaps in the rush to secure themselves a spot in the chaotic post-war reassessment of the Italian film industry, and more specifically in the dubbing (or post-synchronisation) sector.²⁵ The Italian edition of *Casablanca* was one of the CDC’s first dubbing jobs and was commissioned by the Italian film production and distribution company Titanus. *Casablanca*’s dubbing director was the Italian screenwriter and film director Nicola Fausto Neroni, who was also *Capo Ufficio Edizioni* for Warner’s Italian dubbings. The name of the person in charge of preparing the Italian translation and adaptation of the dialogues is not mentioned in the files found at MiBAC. However, recent archival research has revealed that Carlo Silva was credited as the dialogue writer in the opening credits of a 16mm copy of the film.²⁶ Humphrey Bogart/Rick was given the Italian voice of the actor Bruno Persa (who revoiced him also in the Italian version of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, directed by John Huston, and in *The Big Sleep* by Howard Hawks); Bergman/Ilsa’s dialogues were dubbed by Giovanna Scotto, an actress active mainly during the 1940s and 1950s.

Although no document has been found attesting the exact date when the film was translated and re-voiced into Italian, it is very probable that the Italian edition of *Casablanca* had been prepared

between the date of the film’s importation tax [*bolletta d’importazione*], registered on July 4, 1946, and the date of the distributors’ official application for the film’s theatrical release (November 9, 1946).

Contrary to many other film scripts submitted to the film office during the post-war period,²⁷ *Casablanca*’s Italian script produced in 1946 does not contain any visible handwritten alterations. Yet, through a comparative study of the two scripts (the Italian I have found at the archive and the American original) and their respective film versions, a series of manipulations to the original text become evident. Changes were possibly implemented preventively by the hands of the Italian distributors and translators, either in order to prevent the risk of the film’s total rejection or to avoid the costs of further editing and cutting in the case changes to the Italian version were requested after the first examination. Although there is no official evidence that changes were contemplated or requested explicitly by the film commission, it is likely that somebody discussed an Italian edition of the film with the relevant authorities before developing the Italian version and submitting it for approval. Indeed, if the script had been presented for approval, and a final script re-submitted after being modified according to changes suggested by the film commission, these passages would have been documented in the *Casablanca* file at MiBAC. Thus, in this case, changes and cuts might have been effected during the process of translation, before submission of the translated script to the commission, and might have been designed, preventively, by the distributors to limit expense of money and effort (i.e., in the re-editing), and to bring it in line with contemporary film censorship requirements, which, as discussed above, were the same as those of 1923.

Although the war-related setting and characterisations mainly function in the film as a dramatic background to reinforce the hero’s redemption (and America’s intervention in war-torn Europe), many of *Casablanca*’s subjects risked incurring the film’s total rejection by the film office. As the following analysis of a few textual examples from the Italian script will show, *Casablanca*’s Italian dubbed version went through a complex process of manipulation and rewriting of the original contents which targeted 1) references to war crimes and military raids, 2) references to Fascism and to the involvement of

Italians in the war, and 3) the representation of Italian characters in the film.

3.1. War crimes

During one of the opening scenes, a “dark foreigner” (this is the way the character has been labelled in the American script) describes what is going on in the streets of Casablanca to one of the newcomers. As example 1 shows, his reference to military round-ups against civilians was neutralized in the Italian translation by keeping the subject related to the desert, and in particular associating this unoccupied territory with refugees and libertarians. Below **a.** indicates the dialogues in the original version while **b.** shows the corresponding lines in the Italian script:

- 1) The “dark foreigner” talks to the newcomers, while we see a man being shot by the Vichy police because of his belonging to the “Free France” cause:
 - a. “Two German couriers were found murdered in the unoccupied desert. This is the customary round up of suspects.”
 - b. “Hanno trovato due corrieri tedeschi uccisi nel deserto, il deserto non occupato. È la strada di solito battuta dai profughi, libertari.” (2)

A similar pattern of neutralization can be noticed in the next two examples, where the direct and indirect reference to political killings are toned down by making the reference to “Nazis” respectively implicit as in 2 or generic as in 3, where the straightforward expression “in a concentration camp” becomes the more acceptable locution “in a safe spot.”

- 2) Victor Laszlo keeping off the Nazi general Strasser:
 - a. Laszlo: “Even Nazis can’t kill that fast.”
 - b. Laszlo: “Ma non potrete mai ucciderli tutti.” (31)
- 3) Rick talking to the French Captain Renault:

- a. Rick: “I’ll make you a deal. Instead of that petty charge you have on him, you can get something really big, something that would chuck him in a concentration camp for years.”
- b. Rick: “Vi faccio una proposta. Voi avete arrestato Laszlo con un pretesto inconsistente; io invece vi offro un’occasione per arrestarlo e tenerlo al sicuro per anni.” (54)

There are of course several references to Nazis and to the Third Reich in *Casablanca*’s dialogues which were scrupulously maintained in the Italian dubbing. Also, it should be noted that the expression “concentration camp” is always used in the film (eight times in total) in relation to political internment rather than to ethnic genocide. The Italian dub adapter had mostly translated the expression literally as “campi di concentramento” (12, 31, 46, 50, 58), once as “campi tedeschi” (20) and once as “quando ero prigioniero” (47). Perhaps the neutralization choices observed in 2 and 3 should also be related to the technical constraints of the lip synchronization process: in this sense, the rewriting could have been implemented to ensure a believable Italian re-voicing (and, in fact, in these two examples both Henreid/Laszlo and Bogart/Rick are framed in close-up shots).

There are, however, various other adjustments to the Italian translation. One example in particular is indicative of a moralistic tendency toward censoring contents which were considered threatening to the reputation of the Catholic institutions. The tiny correction was made to a one-liner of the French captain Renault, who is trying to enquire about Rick’s past.

- 4) Renault is questioning Rick’s vagueness:
 - a. Renault: “Did you abscond with the Church funds? Or a senator’s wife? I’d like to think you killed a man. It’s the romantic in me.”
 - b. Renault: “Siete fuggito coi fondi di una banca? O con la moglie d’un Senatore? Sarebbe più romantico se aveste un omicidio sulla coscienza” (9).

The ironic hypothesis of “fleeing secretly with the Church’s funds” (which, on the other hand, could also be interpreted as “with the support of the Church”) was transformed into “did you abscond with

a bank's funds." This manipulative interpretation not only has been maintained in the Italian re-edition of *Casablanca* in 1992 (whose dubbed version is the same as the one prepared in 1946), but also kept in the Italian subtitles prepared exclusively for the DVD edition. The fact that both the re-edited dubbed version and the subtitles do not correct this interpretation is unfortunately indicative of the fact that re-editions are not always the result of a research-driven project aimed at restoring the original work in its entirety.

3.2. *Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War*

As for the references to Fascism, the examples show how a manipulation of the original dialogues in the process of translation has completely removed from the Italian script the references to Italy's Fascist past and the involvement of Italians in the war. In particular, the references to the Fascist presence in Ethiopia and in the fighting against the Republicans in Spain disappear.

- 5) Renault tries to understand the reasons behind Rick's unconvincing isolationism questioning his previous involvement against the Axis forces:
 - a. Renault: "In 1935, you ran guns to Ethiopia. In 1936, you fought in Spain on the Loyalist side."
Rick: "And got well paid for it on both occasions."
Renault: "The winning side would have paid you much better."
 - b. Renault: "Nel '35 avete mandato fucili ai cinesi, nel '36 avete combattuto in Spagna per la Repubblica."
Rick: "Sono stato ben pagato tutte e due le volte."
Renault: "La parte avversa vi avrebbe pagato molto meglio" (13).
- 6) Laszlo talks to Rick, in the attempt to underline Rick's past intervention in "good" causes (here basically repeating what had previously been said by Renault):
 - a. Laszlo: "You ran guns to Ethiopia. You fought against the Fascist in Spain."
 - b. Laszlo: "Avete aiutato i cinesi. Avete combattuto per la democrazia in Spagna" (44).²⁸

In both examples 5 and 6 direct references to the war in Ethiopia in 1935, which ended in the military occupation of Ethiopia by the Italian government, were substituted with a different geographical indication that wanted to recall the contemporary Chinese Civil War. In the first example, further adjustments made sure that the protagonist's role in supporting the Spanish Loyalist side was underlined, by using the expression "per la Repubblica" (capitalized in the original); in addition to this, the defeat of the Republican forces was toned down by rendering the "winning side" (i.e., the Nationalist side, supported by Nazi-Fascist troops) a more discrete "opposing side." Moreover, in the example 6, the mention of Fascism was removed and reworded with the more neutral expression "for democracy."

These political references to Fascism and Italian colonialism were only two isolated cases in the film, but they served a very specific purpose: they were the "Hemingwayan" moments in the film when the public found out about Bogart/Rick's "idealistic unselfishness" (Nachbar 6).²⁹ These lines, repeated twice, dramatized Rick's ambiguous past (apparently, he had always preferred to side with the "underdog") and they gave credibility to his ultimate sacrificial "conversion." These and other more or less overt political references in the film, whether used to criticize Nazi-Fascist ideology or to underline the impracticability of Rick's (America's) opportunistic isolationism ("I stick my neck out for nobody") had the illustrative function, as many other propaganda films produced by Hollywood during the wartime period, to explain to Americans, the home-front filmgoers, the reasons why they were fighting and the need for self-sacrifice in the name of a greater cause.

Thanks to the alternative rewriting observed in 5 and 6, the Italian dub adapter managed to avoid the deletion of this important trait of Rick's personality and to maintain the political tension so crucial in the story. At the same time, the manipulation was targeted well to appeal to Italian post-war filmgoers, because its message stressed how important was for Rick (and for Italians) to fight and to sacrifice for the Republic and for democracy.

3.3. Italian characters

In Italy, the state-regulated practice of dubbing has served many times the purpose of erasing references to anything Italian in a foreign film without hindering the film's release into Italian cinemas.³⁰ Official censorship directed at controlling the negative representation of Italians in film is documented in Italy from 1913 onwards, when the Liberal government of Giovanni Giolitti firstly regulated and taxed the theatrical screening of films in the Italian Kingdom (see the royal decree No. 785 of 25 June 1913 and its overt act No. 532, 31 May 1914). It is well known that during the 1930s unwelcome representations of Italians in film were denied permits for distribution in Fascist Italy: the American crime films *Little Caesar* (WB, 1931) and *Scarface* (UA, 1932) are perhaps among the most popular examples of this preventive censorship. These and others were cases where the talking picture negatively stereotyped Italians for their "innate" corruption or parodied them in buffoonish roles.³¹

The characters impersonating Italians in *Casablanca* have a minor role in the story. We are initially quickly introduced to the pickpocket (at work near the beginning of the film), and to Peter Lorre/Ugarte (the Austrian-Hungarian actor of 1931 *M*), who plays here a crook who stole the letters of transit after killing the German couriers, only to sell them on the black market. These two characters have short lines of dialogue and must have not been recognised as Italians by either the dubbing personnel or the film commissioners as they do not have an evident Italian connotation or accent in the film. Their lines were therefore translated according to those in the original script.

In the film there are two other characters whose Italianness is more evident and relevant for matters of film censorship: the first is the Fascist Captain Tonelli (played by the Italian-American actor Charles La Torre), the second is the dodgy club owner *signor* Ferrari (the British actor Sydney Greenstreet). According to Harnetz (166), it was Warner Bros's head of foreign publicity, Carl Schaefer, to suggest that the unpleasant characters in the film be turned into Italian (e.g., in Burnett's play the character later interpreted by Greenstreet appeared to be Spanish and named Martinez).

The Fascist captain Tonelli is a background character with only few lines of dialogue.³² Overall, the character is given scarce consideration by the French, German and American characters. These attitudes towards the Italian officer indirectly undermine the Italian's military role in *Casablanca* (and, by extension, on the international scene). The first time the Italian officer appears in the film, he introduces himself with vain pomposity (see fig. 1), stepping in front of the French lieutenant Casselle (standing on his left), inappropriately, as the Frenchman has just been introduced to the German major.



Fig. 1 Fascist Captain Tonelli (interpreted by Charles La Torre)

- 7) Captain Tonelli, as he inappropriately introduces himself and literally runs after major Strasser, who, on the other hand, does not look impressed by the Italian's presence and does not attribute any importance to him:
 - a. Tonelli: "Captain Tonelli. The Italian service at your command, major... Abbiamo grande piacere della vostra

presenza, caro maggiore. Il nostro comando è sempre pronto a servirLa.”

b. Ø (3)

While in the original version captain Tonelli switches from speaking English to Italian, and gives a pompous Fascist salute to the German officer, the Italian script **b.** did not report this line because the passage was entirely cut out. The original passage has been re-inserted in the Italian DVD edition, where the original soundtrack in Italian is audible (only the part that La Torre pronounces in English were translated and dubbed into Italian by another dubbing actor whereas the Italian words uttered by La Torre were maintained).

After this scene, Tonelli is mainly seen fooling around with Casselle gesticulating and arguing indistinctly anytime they appear on the scene. The second appearance made by Tonelli (see fig. 2 below) was also subject to cuts.



Fig. 2 Tonelli's Fascist salute

In these last examples the appearance of the Italian officer giving the Fascist salute as well as the line pronounced by the French captain Renault—while sitting with Rick outside the *Café*—made the Italian nationality of the character explicit and for this reason the

sequence was partly edited and the line completely removed. Renault's line will be dubbed by another Italian voice-actor for the more recent DVD edition and the line **c.** re-inserted.

- 8) Renault scoffs at Tonelli as the latter and the French officer pass by arguing indistinctly and gesticulating:
- a. Renault: “If he gets a word in, it will be a major Italian victory.”
 - b. Ø (p. 9)
 - c. Se lo lasciasse parlare, sarebbe una vittoria per l'Italia!

The second Italian character is the owner of the club *The Blue Parrot*, *signor* Ferrari. Ferrari is renowned in Casablanca for being in charge of the city's underworld activities.

- 9) Two unidentified characters in the street, one of them is looking for visas:
- a. Man in the street: “It can be most helpful to know Ferrari. He has a monopoly here on the black market.”
 - b. Uomo: “Potrà esservi utile conoscere il signor Ferak. Egli ha quasi tutto il monopolio del Mercato Nero qui.” (32)
- 10) Ferrari introduces himself to Ilsa and Laszlo:
- a. Ferrari: “As the leader of all illegal activities in Casablanca, I'm influential and respected here.”
 - b. Ferak: “Come capo della borsa nera di Casablanca, ho una rispettabilità da difendere.” (36)
- 11) Ilsa to Ferrari, complimenting his coffee:
- a. Ilsa: “Goodbye. Thank you for the coffee *signore*. I shall miss it when we leave Casablanca.”
 - b. Ilsa: “Buongiorno. E grazie per il caffè, signore. Così buono, non lo berremo mai più.” (39)

If the choice of the Italian surname (9), the appellative *signore* (pronounced *signore* by Bergman) (11), the explicit characterisation linked to underworld activities (compare it with the many examples of Italian gangsterism in US films) (10), and the fact that Ferrari is

seen adulating any women who passes by (a Latin Lover stereotype) were not already undeniable clues of his Italian characterisation, the final mention of the coffee made by Ilsa (11) leaves no doubt about Ferrari's Italianness. Little attempt was made to tone down his illegal operations (*he has a monopoly* > *ha quasi tutto il monopolio...*; *all illegal activities* > *black market*), and intolerable cuts as seen in Tonelli's case had to be avoided mainly because all protagonists, first Rick and then Ilsa and Laszlo, met Ferrari in order to discuss visas for America. Thanks to a simple change, the character's last name was adapted into the foreign/Moroccan sounding name *Ferak*. The change with Ferak was probably suggested by the fact that the character wears for most of the film a Moroccan Fez hat (see fig. 3 below).



Figure 3 Sydney Greenstreet as signor Ferrari/Ferak

The close compatibility of the names Ferrari/Ferak with the dubbing requirements (e.g., lip-synch precision) might have influenced the decision to use a similarly sounding name (qualitative synchronism is to be maintained as far as possible in the re-acting process). The

identity shift also respects quantitative synchronism, that is, each dubbed utterance has to contain roughly the same number of syllables as the original utterance. In this case, the replacement of Ferrari with Ferak would not cause any major hitch to the re-voicing phase and during the final dialogue-track mixage.

This detailed textual analysis of the visual and verbal manipulation of *Casablanca's* dubbing has brought attention to the political power of spoken language in film and to the role that censoring institutions can have in manipulating this language for ideological purposes. The rewriting and visual censorship discussed in this section are quite significant because they are not a reflection of the historical circumstances of the film's release (for example if the political contents of the film had been censored during the dictatorship), but rather of the remnants of the period prior to it (the film was censored under a democratic regime) as part of an "operational continuity" at the government film office and in matters of foreign film distribution and translation.

4. Concluding remarks

In 1985, in an oft-quoted intervention entitled "*Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage*," the semiotician Umberto Eco asserted that "*Casablanca* brings with it the scent of *déjà vu* to such an extent that *the spectator is ready to see in it also what happened after it*" (10; my italics).³³ Although in this passage Eco was suggesting that *Casablanca's* cult status derives from the film being an unconscious collage of "intertextual archetypes," we have seen how, in saying that, Eco could not be more *literally* right. The *déjà vu* I am making reference to here, however, would not be triggered by the film's quintessential clichés – for example, the intriguing love triangle set in an exotic war backdrop (in either Paris or Casablanca), or the hero's ultimate redemption through selfless sacrifice – clichés which have contributed to the enduring positive reception of the film in Italy as much as elsewhere.

Whereas American audiences watched the film in 1943, before the war ended, and not long after the "official entry" of the US in the second world conflict (December 1941), we have seen that

Italians, instead, could watch it only in 1947, less than two years after the conflict was over and during a different historical moment—after a poignant, first-hand experience of the conflict and of the difficult post-war reconstruction. Because of this, they were prone to perceive the references to war crimes, Fascism, and the parodic portrayal of Italian characters in the film with a greater sensitivity than did American audiences in 1942. Italian spectators would have experienced *Casablanca* with a different state of mind because for them *Casablanca* had the power to call up the past (‘already seen/experienced’ as the French expression suggests) both visually and verbally: the shameful experience of Italian colonialism, the involvement of Fascist Italy in the war and in war crimes on the side of Nazi Germany, as well as the visceral struggle between Fascists, occupiers and partisans. Borrowing Eco’s idiomatic expression, the feeling of *déjà vu* would have risked triggering, in the Italian audiences, feelings of shame, and discontent, or might have provoked social turmoil.

Both the Italian film commissioners and the American distributors would not want this *déjà vu* to occur in the cinemas nationwide, for political and commercial reasons. According to these political and economic agendas, direct and indirect references to Italy’s Fascist legacy in *Casablanca*’s fictional narrative were edited out from the dubbed version so that the film could receive theatrical distribution during this critical turning point in Italian history. Having *Casablanca*’s Italian edition manipulated in the way discussed above, the film still justified and at that point celebrated American intervention in Europe, but could also be enjoyed, as had been the case a few years earlier in the US, for its highly entertaining narrative clichés.

The censorship of *Casablanca* is a striking example because of the film’s mass popularity and because the intervention is not officially recorded in the case file at the *Italia Taglia* archive. However, this case is only one of many examples of film censorship directed at inhibiting the memory of Fascism and of World War II in Italy in the post-war period and beyond. Just to give a few examples, the German film *L’incrociatore Dresda* (*Ein Robinson*, 1940) was denied public screening authorization on June 25, 1947, because “è evidente come un film del genere non può essere riammesso in circolazione sia per il tipico carattere anti-inglese, sia perchè costituisce un incentivo alla

rivincita del popolo tedesco”; the British film *Il primo dei pochi* (*The First of the Few*, 1942) was authorized on June 26, 1947 with the condition that “sia eliminata nel quarto rullo la scena in cui appare lo staiter [*sic*] in divisa fascista.” In the same year, the state-run film office also motivated the rejection of the Italian film *I trecento della settimana* (directed by Mario Baffico), on July 23, 1947, specifying that “Il motivo del diniego è lo stesso che a suo tempo indusse il P.W.B. a vietare la circolazione della pellicola in questione: costituire [*sic*] essa una esaltazione della campagna militare condotta dall’Italia in Albania nel corso dell’ultima guerra mondiale.”³⁴

These and many other examples witness a complex series of censorship interventions in both Italian and foreign films dealing with fictional World War II narratives. As far as Italian films were concerned, political references could be attentively self-censored by the filmmakers during screenwriting and production: for example, Rossellini’s films *Roma Città Aperta* and *Paisà* were interested more in portraying the Liberation and the Allies’ intervention in Italy than in presenting criticism and parody of the recent Fascist past and of Italy’s war crimes. Besides, in these films, the brutality of dictatorships was shifted over the German characters, as if Italians were not co-implicated but just occupied by vicious and perverted foreigners.³⁵ Foreign films such as *Casablanca*, on the other hand, could (only) be modified during the post-production phase. Consequently, their cinematic portrayal of the public memory of war and of Fascist Italy needed to be modified at the stage of the film’s translation and re-voicing into Italian, and by visual editing.

One would have imagined that a film that incarnated the Americans’ ideal of “doing the right thing” should have been released in its original form in 1947 Italy, given the positive image that the American Allies had in the eyes of many Italians. Instead, the ideological rewriting and censorship of the recent past in the dubbed film is a clear testimony of how Fascist forces were still at work in the post-war period, supporting mechanisms of partial reading and manipulating historical references to the dictatorship and to its negative legacy.

I would like to thank Pier Luigi Raffaelli and the Italia Taglia team in Rome for their pivotal support with the archival research. Many thanks also go to the article's reviewer for the constructive criticism. All the film stills: Casablanca @1943 Turner Entertainment Co. A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

ENDNOTES

¹ For a well-documented discussion focused on the film's mass popularity and fortune in the US, see Merlock Jackson (33-41).

² On the dispute over the writing of *Casablanca's* script see Harmetz (35-60).

³ Dubbing, intended as a translation practice, consists of a preliminary stage of written translation and adaptation followed by a voice re-acting (or re-voicing) phase in a recording studio when a new dialogue-track is created to replace the original. The re-voicing phase is also often referred to with the term post-synchronization. A subtitled version of *Casablanca* has recently been made available in the Italian DVD special edition which marked the film's sixtieth anniversary.

⁴ See in particular Bordwell's pioneering *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) for a detailed study of narrative theory, and Harmetz for a well-documented description of *Casablanca's* production (1993).

⁵ As a consequence, Enic [*Ente nazionale industrie cinematografiche*], instituted earlier in 1935, was now put in charge of the distribution of foreign films in the Italian territory (art. 2). At the beginning of 1940, this control passed to Einape [*Ente nazionale acquisti importazioni pellicole estere*] presided over by Giacomo Dusmet.

⁶ The law No. 692, on May 27, 1940, increased significantly the dubbing fees to be paid by foreign film distributors, from the initial 25,000 Italian lire per dubbed film of 1934 to now 75,000 lire. Moreover, an additional charge of 20,000 was to be paid on each dubbing for any additional 500,000 lire earned by these dubbed films in Italian cinemas (this was fixed between the profit range of 2.5 and 6 million lire).

⁷ According to Quaglietti ("Cinema americano" 313), Columbia, Ufa, R.K.O. and United Artists films could still circulate until 31 December 1940. He indicated 58 films released in 1939, 83 in 1940, 34 in 1941, 8 in 1942 and 2 in 1943. Indeed, other archival sources document that, for instance, Universal films could also circulate without impediment. See ACS, MI, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Direzione Affari Generali e Riservati, massime, b.23, f.4 "Convenzione per facilitare la circolazione delle pellicole cinematografiche e film educativi."

⁸ See the announcement reported in the film journal *Cinema* (Editorial 113), February 25, 1942.

⁹ Since its institution in May 1937, the MCP (until then known as the Ministry for Press and Propaganda) had incorporated the *Direzione Generale per il Cinema* (DGC) and its film censorship office.

¹⁰ On July 3, 1944, almost a year after the formal dismissal of Mussolini on July 25, 1943, the lieutenant's decree No. 163 suppressed the MCP (art.1) and established the *Sottosegretario di Stato per la Stampa e le Informazioni* (art.2), initially led by Giuseppe Spataro. On December 12, 1944, the lieutenant's decree No. 407 modified the undersecretary's denomination in *Sottosegretario di Stato per la Stampa, Spettacolo e Turismo* and placed it under the direction of Franco Libonati. On July 5, 1945, the lieutenant's decree No. 416 suppressed the office (art.1) while permitting its work temporarily (under Giustino Arpesani).

¹¹ See Di Nolfo's historical account of the correspondence between the US government and film producers and distributors prior to this meeting. According to the historian, starting in September 1944, the film distributors were putting pressure on the PWB boards in Italy to open the Italian market to their exports and prevent Italy from re-establishing the Fascist monopoly laws.

¹² With regard to the conversion of the Roman film studios into a war refugee camp between 1944 and 1950 it should be mentioned the recent documentary film *The DP Camps of Cinecittà / Profughi a Cinecittà* (2012) directed by filmmaker and film historian Marco Bertozzi and based on research by Marco Bertozzi and historian Noa Steimatsky.

¹³ See the account given by Quaglietti (*Storia* 41-45) and the detailed report of Admiral Stone's speech in Forgacs and Gundle (135-137).

¹⁴ This decree was signed by Umberto di Savoia, lieutenant of the Reign and by the ministers Ferruccio Parri, Palmiro Togliatti, Mauro Scoccimarro, Vincenzo Arangio Ruiz and Giovanni Gronchi. It was published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* on November 3, 1945, No. 132.

¹⁵ A complete official list of these releases has not been traced back in SIAE records and other sources because the activity lay in the hands of the PWB. Quaglietti ("Ecco" 69-70) listed 57 films. Film archives in the US would probably yield some results and shed light on the issue.

¹⁶ 20th Century Fox was also dubbing its films in Madrid because a group of Italian dubbers was blocked in Spain, according to Quagnolo (44). Quagnolo also documents that Universal had been using the Italian facilities during the war until they stopped functioning in September 1943 (61).

¹⁷ See for example a short article published in *Films in Anteprima* in January 1947 which documents that on June 1946 American dubbings were still circulating in Italian cinemas. The passage read: "Gli americani sono sempre convintissimi che nessuno si accorga che essi stessi doppiano in italiano i loro film. Ingenui" (Salvioni 12).

¹⁸ As, for example, *Foreign Correspondent* (UA, 1940, directed by Alfred Hitchcock), which was authorized in Italy on December 17, 1946; *Mrs Miniver* (MGM, 1942, directed by William Wyler) authorized on September 16, 1946; or *Edge of Darkness* (WB, 1943, dir. by Lewis Milestone) authorized on June 26, 1950.

¹⁹ *Casablanca's* theatrical release in the US, originally scheduled for the spring of 1943, was strategically brought forward to November 26, 1942, when the film premiered at the Hollywood Theatre in New York. This way, the theatrical launch

took advantage of the media attention on North-West Africa, caused by the almost coincidental landing of the Allies' in the area (the so called Operation Torch). The film then debuted in Los Angeles on January 23, 1943 and ran throughout the States. See Merlock Jackson (33).

²⁰ Fascist film censorship in turn derived its statute from the laws of the previous Liberal governments which originally regulated and taxed cinematic screenings in the national territory. Compare later in the text.

²¹ See for instance the 23rd issue of *Zapruder* (2010) *Brava gente: Memoria e rappresentazioni del colonialismo italiano*, which traces the various forms of continuity and persistence of colonialism in Italy (Petricola and Tappi). The volume interestingly explores the crucial role of post WWII Italian social and political institutions in the partial, revisionist and opportunistic writing of colonial history.

²² In Mereu ("Censorial Interferences" 294-309). The study looked at censorship practices in the translation of foreign films distributed in Italy during the dictatorship and highlighted the rewriting of film inter-titles and dialogues which contained uncomfortable political, moral, and religious references.

²³ See Mereu (*Dub Debate*). This work focused on the complex interplay between practices of film censorship, domestication and film translation in Italy. Historical archival research revealed striking continuities of concern and practice at the state-run film office during the period 1923-1963.

²⁴ A new examination of *Casablanca* was carried out by the Italian film office and registered on September 28, 1992 (ref. No. 88005, *Italia Taglia*, MiBAC). This more recent scrutiny might have been requested by the distributors following *Casablanca's* re-release in a special DVD edition (with additional video packages such as audio commentaries etc.) which celebrated the film's fiftieth anniversary (1942-1992). The film has not been re-dubbed for the Italian edition in DVD, but only re-edited by adding previous visual and verbal cuts. No indications have been found about the film's adapter or about the studio that restored the cuts in the 1990s.

²⁵ See Caldiron and Hochkofler (83). For an account of how the CDC was born, the personalities involved in the cooperative and the emerging of the CDC and ODI in the 1950s see Di Cola (76-81; 95-111).

²⁶ It is probable that Carlo Silva was in charge of both the draft translation and the subsequent dialogue adaptation. The 16mm copy was most likely prepared during the 1970s and presumably originates from a previously dated 35mm Italian print (yet to be located). Many thanks should go here to Luca Portas, film archivist and conservator at the *Cineteca umanitaria sarda* in Cagliari (Sardinia, Italy), for his expert guidance and support during this later ongoing phase of archival film search and comparative study.

²⁷ An example of this censorship practice can be found in the Italian film script of *Suez* (20th Century Fox, 1938) which obtained authorisation in Italy in August 14, 1946 [ref. No. 1074, *Italia Taglia*, MiBAC]. The case is discussed in Mereu (*The Dub Debate* 184-187).

²⁸ These lines can still be heard in the Italian DVD edition of the film.

²⁹ Here Bogart's character is not presented dissimilarly to Gary Cooper's Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (a film very loosely adapted from Hemingway's novel), one of the highest grossing film in the US in 1943 (which was also released in Italy in 1947), and which also stars Ingrid Bergman. As documented in Harnetz (52, 57), it was Howard Koch to be responsible for the political tensions in Rick's character.

³⁰ See Mereu ("Italians in Films").

³¹ Other examples are found in the Italian editions of films such as *The Adventures of Marco Polo* (1938, US, dir. by Archie Mayo), *T-Men* (1947, US, dir. by Anthony Mann), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949, UK, dir. by Robert Hamer), *The story of Esther Costello* (1957, US, dir. by David Miller) etc. On early American films depicting Italian immigrants in New York see at least Giorgio Bertellini's "Black hands and white hearts: Italian immigrants as 'urban racial types' in early American film culture." For a more comprehensive survey of Hollywood's representation of Italians in films see Paola Casella's *Hollywood Italian: Gli italiani nell'America di celluloid* and Peter Bondanella's *Hollywood Italians. Dagos, Palookas, Romeos, Wise Guys, and Sopranos*.

³² The case of the Fascist officer could have also been grouped in the previous set of examples related to the censorship and rewriting of references to Fascism, but it is discussed under this section for clarity in the exposition.

³³ The paper was originally presented at the Symposium on "Semiotics of the Cinema: The State of the Art" held in Toronto, Canada, on 18 June 1984.

³⁴ The film did not obtain distribution even after various appeals on the part of the distribution company *Nettunia* until February 5, 1955.

³⁵ See the insightful description of the stylistic characteristics, narrative devices and the "politics" at the core of Rossellini's *Roma Città Aperta* in Wagstaff (94-184). On the Italians' shift of responsibilities for war crimes over the "bad" Germans refer in particular to Focardi.

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- Suez* - Italian film censorship file ref. No. 1074 (*Italia Taglia*, MiBAC)
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Difficult Years for *Anni difficili* by Luigi Zampa (1948)

1. *Anni Difficili*

Anni difficili (*Difficult Years*), directed by Luigi Zampa in 1948, is one of the films of the 1940s that does not belong among the masterpieces of neorealism.¹ Based on Vitaliano Brancati's short story "Il vecchio con gli stivali" (824-57)² and scripted by Brancati³ with Sergio Amidei, Enrico Fulchignoni, and Franco Evangelisti,⁴ the film is set in Sicily between 1933 and the first years after World War II and very courageously depicts the Italian people's prevailing attitudes towards Fascism before and after the Regime's fall.⁵

The protagonist, Aldo Piscitello (Umberto Spadaro), a municipal employee in the town of Modica, Sicily, is forced by the *podestà* (Enzo Biliotti), on the threat of being fired, to join the Fascist Party. Piscitello becomes a card-carrying Fascist with the approval of his wife, Rosina (Ave Ninchi), and his daughter (Delia Scala), and despite the indifference of his anti-Fascist friends. Furthermore, when the Regime promises a two-thousand-lira prize to employees who have been enrolled in the Party since 1921, Piscitello's wife has his registration backdated in order to get the Party affiliation card as *Squadrista*. His son, Giovanni (Massimo Girotti), is a royal army soldier who takes part in all the wars declared by Mussolini in Ethiopia, Spain, Africa, and Russia. During one of his furloughs, he becomes engaged to Maria (Milly Vitale), the granddaughter of the town pharmacist (Aldo Silvani), and marries her. When the Allies land in Sicily and the armistice is proclaimed, Piscitello loses first his son Giovanni, who is murdered by two retreating Germans, and then his job. In this story, the end of the Regime and of the war do not coincide with a renewal of the political class: with the Allied forces in control, the old *podestà* becomes mayor and fires Piscitello because of his documented status in the Party as a *Squadrista*.

Even such a brief summary reveals why *Anni difficili* has aroused strong opposition on all sides of the political spectrum. The portrayal of Italians that the film conveys does not spare anyone and was quite new in the history of Italian national cinema. In addition