



Charlemont grant report

Recipient name:	Dr. Benedetta Carnaghi
Discipline and subject area:	Humanities and Social Science
Amount and year awarded:	€2,487 in 2023
Title of project:	'Making fun of the Fascists: Humour Against the Leader Cult in Italy, France and Germany, 1922-1945.'

Summary of findings:

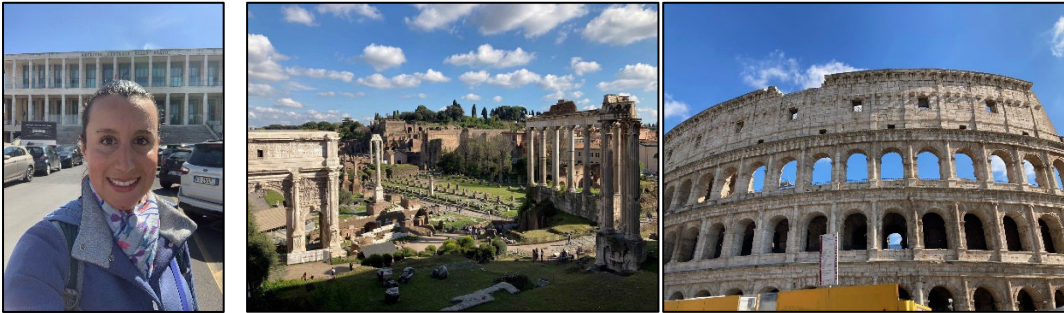
Thanks to the Charlemont Grant, I made significant progress on the archival research for my project. The grant helped fund two research trips. My first research trip was to the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome (7-29 April 2023). First, I focused on the prefects' reports. The prefects were the recipients of all denunciations against the culprits of the crime of 'offesa al Duce' (offence to Mussolini). Those who issued these denunciations were not only Fascists, but also spiteful neighbours, passers-by or colleagues who took advantage of someone else's misstep to get rid of an enemy. These reports are proof of how totalitarianism works: its nonsensical propaganda and its manic repression of dissent are omnipresent, to the point that one wonders whether the prefects' time would have been better spent sanctioning more serious crime. Then, I looked at the archives of the antifascist satirical newspaper 'Il Becco Giallo', founded by Alberto Giannini in January 1924. The Fascists repeatedly threatened Giannini and subjected him to violence until he was sentenced to five years of confinement and escaped to France in 1926. While in France, however, Giannini shockingly went from editing an antifascist satirical paper to directing the Fascist satirical paper 'Il Merlo'.

My second research trip was to the Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine in Paris (20 April-4 May 2023), where I found a direct counterpart to the 'offesa al Duce' in the many folders devoted to the 'offenses au chef de l'État' (offences against Vichy's Marshal Pétain). This confirmed to me the feasibility of my comparative transnational project. I also found humorous material parodying the Vichy leaders (Pétain, Laval, Darlan) and dissecting their false propaganda in the Resistance movements' underground press.

Finally, I met with Professor Alya Aglan from the Paris I University who had just published an anthology of wartime humour with Gallimard ('Le rire ou la vie: Anthologie de l'humour résistant 1940-1945'). She gave me very valuable research tips, suggesting, for example, that I visit the exhibition devoted to French humourist and Resistance member Pierre Dac at the mahJ (Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme). During WWII, Dac emigrated to London and joined the team of the BBC radio programme 'Les Français parlent aux Français', where he countered the Vichy regime's collaborationist propaganda with ridicule, delivering more than eighty editorials and songs castigating Marshal Pétain, his fellow collaborators, and the Nazi occupiers.



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Plans for continuing collaboration:

I am spending another month in France now (November 2023) thanks to the French Residency Grant of the Embassy of France in Ireland, and this allows me to continue the collaboration with the SIRICE research laboratory at the Université Paris I – Panthéon-Sorbonne.

I have since transitioned to a new role (British Academy Newton International Fellow at Durham University in the UK). I aim to organise a conference entitled ‘Laughter as a Political Coping Mechanism: Interdisciplinary Approaches’ and I intend for this conference to be a collaboration between Durham, University College Dublin and the SIRICE research laboratory at the Université Paris I – Panthéone-Sorbonne. I would like the conference to involve an interdisciplinary range of scholars from history, literature, political science, psychology, and journalism. The topic lends itself to both academic and non-academic conversations.

Publications associated with this project that you have been involved in:

I will work on securing a book contract for my proposed monograph. I also presented a paper entitled ‘Resisting Fascism through Satire: Anti-Fascist Publications from a Transnational Perspective’, at the conference.

‘Publishing Anti-Fascism’ at the University of Reading (11-12 September 2023). I am planning to turn that paper into a publishable article.

Dissemination and plans for future dissemination:

This is a list of my conference presentations:



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'Making Fun of the Fascists: Humour Against the Leader Cult in Italy, France, and Germany, 1922–1945'. Seminar for the UCD School of History and Centre for War Studies, University College Dublin, Ireland, 13 October 2022.

'Totalitarianism from Below: Fascist and Nazi Spies in the Second World War'. Presentation for 'Critical Perspectives for Peace and Conflict', Launch of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, University College Dublin, Ireland, 28 February 2023.

'Convictions, Acquittals, and Appeals: Fascist and Nazi Spies at the End of World War II'. Presentation at the North American Society for Intelligence History Annual Conference, University of Calgary, Canada, 20–23 July 2023.

'Resisting Fascism through Satire: Anti-Fascist Publications from a Transnational Perspective'. Presentation at Conference 'Publishing Anti-Fascism', University of Reading, UK, 11–12 September 2023.

'Vertrauensmänner: Nazi Intelligence in France after the French Defeat of 1940'. Presentation for panel 'The German Victory in the West 1940 in a Global Perspective', Forty-Seventh Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, Montréal, Canada, 5-8 October 2023.

'Devenir traîtres professionnels au cœur des réseaux résistants et de l'antifascisme en exil. Une histoire de faiblesse' ('Professional Traitors at the Heart of the Resistance at Home and in Exile: A Story of Weakness'). Presentation for the CEPSI (Centre d'études sur la paix et la sécurité internationale, Centre for International Peace and Security Studies), University of Montréal, Montréal, Canada, 10 October 2023.

'Fascism and Women Spies: Agents, Agency, and the Trope of the Femme Fatale'. Presentation at 'Women, gender, fascism. Research paths and new interpretations', Annual conference of the 'Società italiana delle storiche', Rome, Italy, 9-10 November 2023.

Outreach and engagement activities:

I am making a deliberate effort to schedule more public-facing presentations alongside my academic presentations. In October, I presented a paper in a panel at the Forty-Seventh Annual Conference of the German Studies Association in Montréal. I took advantage of this opportunity to also get in touch with the Université de Montréal and schedule a public lecture on my work for their 'Centre d'études sur la paix et la sécurité internationale' (CEPSI).

Finally, after the wonderful experience I had this year at University College Dublin (UCD), I asked the Head of the School of History at UCD if I can remain affiliated with UCD and the Centre for War Studies as a visiting fellow or adjunct. I hope this will be a chance to participate in future editions of the UCD festival and the Dublin Festival of History, with which my mentor at UCD, Mark Jones, has extensive experience.