

“... RIVALRY, HOSTILITY, AND *ROMANITÀ*.” AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AS
ROMA’S ULTRAS

by

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Abstract

“... RIVALRY, HOSTILITY, AND *ROMANITÀ*.” AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AS ROMA’S ULTRAS

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This is an ethnographic study of Italian Ultras, the organized and ritualized fan organizations associated with professional soccer in Italy. It examines the relationships between their belief and behaviors, paying particular attention to their political behaviors. The study follows 15 months of anthropological fieldwork undertaken in Rome, Italy. Its goal is to assess the role that the Ultras’ particular critical understanding of modernity plays in organizing and actualizing their behaviors inside and outside of sporting contexts. Part of my effort in this study is to examine local reactions to national and international issues of globalization and liberalization. In following this line of inquiry, which sets my study apart from recent scholarship on the Ultras, I hope to contribute to a more anthropologically informed discussion of the Ultras as a critical part of politically extreme responses to social and political predicaments of the early-21st Century.

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Teams in the Italian Serie A, 2006-2007 (listed relative to finishing position):

Football Club Internazionale Milano (Inter or Inter Milan)	Milan
Associazione Sportiva Roma (Roma)	Rome
Società Sportiva Lazio (Lazio)	Rome
Associazione Calcio Milan (Milan)	Milan
Associazione Calcio Fiorentina (Fiorentina)	Florence
Unione Sportiva Città di Palermo (Palermo)	Palermo
Empoli Football Club (Empoli)	Empoli
Atalanta Bergamasca Calcio (Atalanta)	Bergamo
Unione Calcio Sampdoria (Sampdoria)	Genoa
Udinese Calcio (Udinese)	Udine
Associazione Sportiva Livorno Calcio (Livorno)	Livorno
Parma Football Club (Parma)	Parma
Catania Calcio (Catania)	Catania
Reggina Calcio (Reggina)	Reggio Calabria
Cagliari Calcio (Cagliari)	Cagliari
Associazione Calcio Siena (Siena)	Siena
Torino Football Club (Torino or Toro)	Torino
Associazione Calcio Chievo Verona (Chievo)	Verona
Ascoli Calcio 1898 (Ascoli)	Ascoli Piceno
Associazione Calcio Rinascita Messina (Messina)	Messina

Teams in the Italian Serie A, 2007-2008 (listed relative to finishing position):

Football Club Internazionale Milano (Inter or Inter Milan)	Milan
Associazione Sportiva Roma (Roma)	Rome
Juventus Football Club (Juve or Juventus)	Torino
Associazione Calcio Fiorentina (Fiorentina)	Florence
Associazione Calcio Milan (Milan)	Milan
Unione Calcio Sampdoria (Sampdoria)	Genoa
Udinese Calcio (Udinese)	Udine
Società Sportiva Calcio Napoli (Napoli)	Naples
Genoa Cricket and Football Club (Genoa)	Genoa
Atalanta Bergamasca Calcio (Atalanta)	Bergamo
Unione Sportiva Città di Palermo (Palermo)	Palermo
Società Sportiva Lazio (Lazio)	Rome
Associazione Calcio Siena (Siena)	Siena
Cagliari Calcio (Cagliari)	Cagliari
Torino Football Club (Torino or Toro)	Torino
Reggina Calcio (Reggina)	Reggio Calabria
Catania Calcio (Catania)	Catania
Empoli Football Club (Empoli)	Empoli
Parma Football Club (Parma)	Parma
Associazione Sportiva Livorno Calcio (Livorno)	Livorno

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to Topic and Methods

I. The Italian Ultras

A. The Ultras of AS Roma

The Ultras chosen for research in this study are organized around their support of the team *Associazione Sportiva Roma* (AS Roma). They were chosen for two reasons: first, they are reputed to be the most well organized Ultras in Italy; and second, because they have made worldwide headlines in recent years for their violent and destructive behavior. There are material/structural and ideological aspects of their organization. Materially/structurally, there are no less than 27 groups, with each having its own hierarchy, leadership, and ideology. They occupy the Curva Sud (South End Zone) of Rome's Olympic Stadium. However it is possible at various moments of their history, including this one, to find Ultra groups in the Distinti Sud (South Stands) and Curva Nord (North End Zone) sections in addition to their traditional "home" in Curva Sud.



Figure 1. Curva Sud Roma choreography proclaiming "There is only AS Roma." 1994

Ideologically, AS Roma's Ultras have been influenced by the shifts toward rightist politics seen by others studying Ultras in other cities. Their numbers swelled, along with the rise of the right, in the late-1980s following the political and demographic patterns described by Roversi and Balestri (2002) (summarized in Chapter 2). However, more so than other Ultras located in the larger cities, AS Roma's Ultras are characterized by intra-Curva political divisions, so that groups like *Boys Roma*, *Fedayn*, *Ultras Romani*, *Romulae Genti*, and *Giovenezza* lead the rightists; and groups like *LVPI*, *XXI Aprile 753 a.C.*, *Orgoglio Romano*, and *Brigata Bravetta* lead the leftists. Each of the 27 groups hold weekly meetings to discuss choreography, membership, merchandising, and even community policing. They also act as social clubs that become foundational to youth socialization and allow older members to remain involved in the sport and community.

Since the growth of the *Movimento Ultrà* (the early nomination of the Ultras phenomenon by Ultras themselves) in the 1970s and subsequent crisis of the early-1980s characterized by less centralized leadership, generation turnover, and increasing violence, AS Roma's Ultras have been distinguished by broad and sharp internal divisions organized around political ideology.¹ This division was made visible through the ideologies of the two founding groups of Roma's Ultras, *Fedayn* and *Boys Roma* in 1972.

While *Boys Roma* began with and maintains a fascist orientation, *Fedayn* began as a group of the radical left (hence the name referencing the Palestinian liberation movement). In subsequent years, however, *Fedayn* has shifted its political position toward the right, leaving the left to the

¹ Notice the use of both *Ultrà* and *Ultras*. The original term was *Ultrà*. It was prominent until the mid-1990s, when, for reasons hard to explain (there is no consensus amongst AS Roma's Ultras as to why the term changed) *Ultras* was used. Most agree that it was part of a generational turnover within the phenomenon, and thus a way for the younger, somewhat more extreme, generation of Ultras to distinguish itself from the previous generation of *Ultrà*. In this project I will use *Ultras* when discussing plural members and the phenomenon in general and *Ultra* when discussing one member, even if in Italian one *Ultra* is still called *un ultras*.

groups mentioned above, among others. Although all of the separate Ultra organizations support AS Roma, they are often adversarial, dismissing each other's activities and needs within the Curva and city. Because the unity of the Ultras associated with particular teams is often assumed, AS Roma's Ultras are understood as an anomaly.

My study will explain the divisions between the Ultras of AS Roma as resulting from the depth of the various groups' ideological commitments. Although the idea that the Ultras have these commitments is not unique to this study, their being studied as the basis of the phenomenon is. Why this is so will be made clear below. Briefly, though, it must be explained that I began fieldwork prepared to study political action from a "traditional" political process perspective. That is, to determine how being an Ultra influenced political behavior such as voting and party affiliation. Instead, I discovered a world where political action is very much defined by "extra-political" activities like organizing violent raids on socialist concerts, gay pride parades, and Roma camps.



Figure 2. Roman Ultras of the far right. 2008.

The entire fieldwork period, October 2006 to January 2008, coincided with the second government of Romano Prodi. Prodi, a center-left politician, defeated Silvio Berlusconi and his

center-right coalition in April 2006. Prodi was a popular target of scorn amongst the Ultras with whom I was embedded. His liberal stances on the rights of cohabitating couples and homosexuals; Italy's need of immigration and commercial competitiveness; and even on the rationale of Turkish membership in the European Union were attacked in the offices of all of the rightist Ultras of AS Roma.



Figure 3. Roma camp burning outside Naples in 2007.

Domestically, the most explosive political and social issues during my time in Italy were alleged Romanian and Roma criminality; the inability of the state to properly collect and dispose of garbage; and, most importantly, violence between the state and the Ultras. Despite the political distance between Prodi and his government and the fascist Ultra groups, the animosities between the two did not fully surface until the February 2, 2007 killing of police officer Filippo Raciti during Ultra violence after Catania hosted Palermo (figure 4). From that evening Prodi's government, in

conjunction with the *Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio* (FIGC - the Italian Football Federation), began restricting the activities of Italy's Ultras to the most severe levels in the history of the Ultras phenomenon. This crackdown on the Ultras culminated in the November 11, 2007 killing of SS Lazio (Rome's second soccer team playing in Serie A, the highest level of professional soccer in Italy) Ultra Gabriele Sandri by Officer Luigi Spaccarotella of the National Traffic Police. It is these two deaths which defined the actions of the Ultras and their relations with the state during my research.



Figure 4. Ultras attack police in Catania resulting in the death of Officer Filippo Raciti. February 2007

B. Italian Ultras in General

The Ultras of AS Roma were chosen for study because of their own particular attributes. Above I mentioned their reputation for being well organized, an advantage for anyone studying the phenomenon because ideologies and practices are easier disseminated and delineated in larger conglomerates. AS Roma's Ultras, I said, made news in the years before this study began for their violent behaviors. And, while I did not intend to study violence, the nature of their violence, and the "ethic of violence" they utilize are of great interest to me. However, there are other Ultras which would have allowed similar opportunities for study. Those of Juventus in Turin, AC Milan, and

Internazionale in Milan are also well organized and prone to violence. They also share aesthetic practices, a wealth of rivalries and agonistic culture with the Ultras of AS Roma.

The Italian Ultras as a whole are less particular manifestations of a general phenomenon than unique embodiments that share characteristics. They share a sensibility which links them in opposition with one another and only rarely links them in opposition to an outside force. That being said, there are shared elements, namely an opposition to *Calcio Moderno*, or modern, consumerist soccer (see below), which make the Ultras as a whole a consistent Other to the industry of soccer. And, there are elements that can be classified as general to the Ultras of Italy.



Figure 5. Inter Milan's Curva Nord in choreography proclaiming their proprietorship of Milan. 2007.

Aesthetically, the Ultras share a commitment to *tifare caldo*, or to be hot fans. In Italy this has come to refer specifically to the Ultra style of singing, clapping, and sometimes jumping in unison. Their songs are all highly partisan for their team and ironically or sardonically against the opposition. The Ultras all display banners (the various types will be discussed below) and flags (of their team, city, region, political party, or specific Ultra group) during games. Likewise each Italian curva would

have created a choreography (a large curva-wide coordinated demonstration of colors and images) at some time. In Chapter 2 I discuss the personal style of AS Roma's Ultras. Only rarely do the points of Roman Ultra style intersect with other Ultras - mainly in the recent habit of wearing hooded sweatshirts, large sunglasses, athletic shoes, and a scarf around the waste or neck (which can be easily brought to cover the face in the event of violent conflict).

All Italian Ultras have a well-developed system of rivalries. Later in this chapter I will discuss the rivalry system of AS Roma's Ultras. The same rationales are used by others. Suffice it to say that history, geography, politics, Ultra conflicts, and team conflicts play their parts in generating, maintaining, and escalating Ultra rivalries. Similarly, the Ultras all share an agonistic culture which allows them to thrive on opposition, conflict, and warring aggression (to be discussed at length below). This agonistic culture certainly promotes violence against the state, in the form of the forces of law and order and the bureaucracy of the Italian soccer federation. However, not all Ultras can be said to actively use violence against the police.

The Ultras represent themselves as sharing an ethos, culture, or world view which they call the *mentalità Ultras* or simply *mentalità*. This *mentalità* will be discussed, defined, and explained later in this chapter, but for now it will suffice to describe it as a set of ideals which provides a moral and ethical framework in which to *be* an Ultra.

It might seem that if the Ultras share aesthetics, culture, and ethics, then they must be somewhat monolithic. In reality, the Ultras are expressions of extreme commitment to local particularity. As such, the content of their aesthetics and ethics is often determined so close to home as to be irreplicable and largely irrelevant in other contexts. For example, the shared adherence to localism, or *campanilismo*, is unknowable without the content of localism. In Rome, that largely

takes the form of *Romanità*, the extreme attachment to Rome and things Roman. However, as explained below, *Romanità* was also a discourse used by fascism to promote the Romanization and fascistization of all Italians during the fascist regime. Thus, the deep commitment of the AS Roma Ultras to *Romanità* also exposes them to fascism. In other civic contexts, this would be impossible. In fact, in a city like Verona, the popular opposition to Rome as capital of Italy often creates the opposite affection toward Rome. This dissertation demonstrates the depth of narratives and symbols furnished the Ultras by Rome and its history and the equal depth of commitment to these on the part of the AS Roma Ultras.

II. The Ultras, An Encounter From Afar

On Saturday, 22 April, 2006, my family and I, all American, attended the soccer match between AS Roma and UC Sampdoria at Rome's Olympic Stadium. Both teams were filled with excellent players and both were having successful seasons in Serie A (the highest professional division of Italian soccer). Yet, it was the atmosphere in the stadium that was most memorable about the game. The atmosphere was coming primarily from one area, however, the "end zone" area called Curva Sud. The fans standing in that section were unlike any we had encountered at American sporting events. Nor were they like the Italian fans seated nearby in Tribuna Monte Mario (Grandstand Monte Mario).

For the entirety of the 90 minute game, the Ultras sang and waved flags in the *giallorosso* (red and yellow) colors of AS Roma and Rome. At the game's beginning some of them held aloft emergency flares and smoke bombs that burned in the same colors as their flags. During the game there were various homemade banners displayed throughout the Curva. All of this action had little relationship with the on-field action of the day. That no one scored for their team seemed not to

dampen the fans' enthusiasm. Nor did it matter that no one else in the stadium joined in their songs, flag waving, or any other exhibited behaviors. They stood and cheered on their team from the opening to closing whistle, resting only during the 20 minute halftime break.

All of this action took place behind a fortress of long banners, each of which displayed the name of a particular group. More than a curva of thousands acting in unison, what was happening instead was several groups of approximately one hundred persons each singing as a group - their group. It was evident that each person holding an emergency flare did so as a member of their unique group, as these were not universal in the Curva but only in front of or near a group banner. Similarly the songs were begun by one group and then spread through the Curva, becoming more widely audible. And, as one looked more closely, the flags being waved, while sharing the colors of AS Roma and the city of Rome, more often than not glorified the group over which it was being waved.

III. How to Explain the Ultras?

This encounter with the Ultras mirrors that of most persons, whether as soccer fans (rival or compatriot), journalists, or academics. It notes the most obvious aspects of their behavior: aesthetics, performance, and organization. However what that brief encounter could not tell us is the "why" behind their actions. I believe that the political aspects of their behavior allow us to discover that "why," but before I explain my rationale, it is important to first address other approaches that incompletely explain the phenomenon.

A. Aesthetics and Performance

The most visible aspect of the Ultras are their various ritualized behaviors related to the attendance of soccer matches: the singing of songs for their city and team and against those of their opponents, waving of flags of city and team, performing large choreographed displays of sometimes

remarkable complexity and beauty, lighting of emergency flares and powerful bombs, and displaying homemade banners with various messages intended for opponents, contiguous fans, and the broader public.

Christian Bromberger was one of the first anthropologists to study the aesthetics of the Ultras. He saw the stadium spectacle offered by SSC Napoli's Curva A Ultras and was convinced that he was witnessing one of Mauss' "complete social events" (Bromberger, et al, 1993, pg. 101). He began studying the relationship between the bombs, flares, flags, and songs, and the social institutions comprising the Neapolitan poor industrial class, finding close ties between the two. Further, he saw in the songs and ironic fandom (what is now called *tifare contro*, to root against) of the SSC Napoli supporters a metaphor of Neapolitan collective identity as a city deeply committed to its own (unchanging and counter-to-modern) traditions, long scorned by the rich north (Bromberger, et al, 1993, pgs. 98-99). As for the Ultras themselves, he defined them as intensely devoted, ritualistic, and creative fan organizations that engage in carnivalesque behaviors with flags, banners, choreography, smoke bombs, emergency flares, and a catalogue of songs of various levels of devotion and scorn (Bromberger, et al, 1993, pgs. 89-102).

An approach to the Ultras that focuses on the roles they play and even the rituals and social dramas of which they are a part is an intriguing prospect. Indeed, their performances are just that, each with its own rhythm, intensity, subject, and framework. They vary between time, place, and space (Schechner, 2005, Pgs. 112-117). However, for reasons given below, I decided that such an approach would not tell me what I wanted to know about the Ultras. It would tell me a lot about their in-stadium behaviors, but little about the other 166 hours of their week. I have, however, been influenced in this light by the work of Heidegger and Turner. Both have allowed me to understand

how the Ultras ritualistically embody a combination of historical political symbols and current Italian politics through postures, gestures, and choreographed poses or how the extremes of their behavior lend to the creation of liminal communities (see chapters 5 and 6).²

B. Development, Hooligans, and Violence

If the aesthetic elements of the Ultras are their most visible and superficial, given that most who experience the Ultras from afar delve no deeper than their in-stadium performances, then my search for the “why” of the Ultras’ political behaviors demanded another approach. Understanding the Ultra phenomenon in aesthetic terms of carnival, ritual, performance, and fandom is at best partial and leaves us wondering how to explain the full set of behaviors witnessed on the evening of February 2, 2007, when police officer Fillipo Raciti was killed during rioting after a game between Catania and Palermo. That evening the Catania Ultras targeted the forces of law and order and engaged them in a relatively contained but deadly guerilla skirmish.

Nor do the Ultra aesthetics, as symbolically violent as they may be, allow one to expect the larger, but less deadly, war against the state, law and order, and the business of soccer, witnessed in Rome, Milan, and Bergamo following the police killing of Gabriele Sandri on November 11, 2007. It is these killings which form the *anima ferocia* (ferocity of spirit) of this dissertation. Both brought to the light the relationships between the Roman Ultras and the hegemony of the state and media, and between the Ultras and a political-philosophical discourse of Counter-Enlightenment ideas. In essence, I am more interested in how the Ultras come to graffiti a Roman wall with “Enough

² I am thinking here of Heidegger’s “gestell” (framing) as the setting of a framework for the possibilities of reality. From Heidegger, Martin, 1977, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. W. Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row. As well, communitas, Victor Turner’s understanding of liminal populations and belonging through unique experience, from Turner, Victor, 1982, *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications. Pg. 74

immigrants, homes and work for Italians,” and sign such a message *AS Roma Ultras* (thus taking credit for the sentiment *as Ultras*) than with the pageantry of their in-stadium experiences (figure 6).



Figure 6. *AS Roma Ultras* graffiti stating “Enough immigrants, homes and work for Italians.” Vicolo del Lupo, Rome. 2007.

Other researchers have shared my predilection for the ways in which the Ultras interact with the larger cultural and historical context. Antonio Roversi (1994, pgs. 359-381), Carlo Podaliri, and Carlo Balestri (1998, pgs. 88-100) have sought to account for the most extreme aspects of Ultra behavior by focusing on violence, thereby moving beyond the largely aesthetic understandings of Christian Bromberger (1993). Unfortunately their results have also been only partially successful. As I argue below, it is problematic to agree with Roversi’s understanding of the Ultras as examples of youth deviancy (1994, pgs. 363-364). His and Balestri’s claim that the Ultras are merely fans who also engage in social and political activity is also problematic, as I will show (1998, pg. 97).

Previous research on the Ultras has been influenced by the hegemony of UK Sociology and

its studies of the Hooligan phenomenon of England. Eric Dunning and a team of scholars known collectively as the Leicester School have become the most respected authorities in the field of sports related violence.³ The Leicester School's point of departure is Norbert Elias and his model of the "civilizing process." This model posits that the specialization of labor and rise of the modern state have made modern subjects dependent upon one another in ways that prohibit the unpredictable emotional outbreaks characteristic of Medieval and Renaissance society. Combined with the efficiency of the modern state (forcing on all a degree of rational behavior), the lengthening chains of interdependence have diminished the level of interpersonal expressive violence. Eric Dunning and other Leicester School scholars apply Elias to the study of sports, demonstrating that the transformation of Medieval folk-football into soccer and rugby entailed a curtailing of violence, at least until recently (Dunning, 1994; Dunning, 1999; Elias, 1971; Finn, 1994). Positing that hooliganism occurs among those least exposed to a civilizing process, they perpetuate a class-based explanation of fan violence (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990).

There are important differences between hooliganism and the Ultras. Podaliri and Balestri explain that hooliganism, despite being a universal descriptive of diverse phenomena, refers specifically to English working-class gangs of often unruly soccer fans who organize primarily to fight and drink (1998, pg. 88). They utilize particularly English cultural elements like working-class masculinity (as it corresponds with drinking and fighting), which are less central to the world of the Ultras (1998, pg. 89). It is with these tendencies that recent anthropological research tends to contrast most saliently.

³ For a discussion and critique of the Leicester School, see Armstrong, 1998, Pgs. 1-11

According to Richard Giulianotti, the delayed entry of anthropology into the study of soccer is due to the institutionalized overriding concern with policing, controlling, and criminalizing spectators (1997, pgs. 4-9). This has led to research money being given primarily to studies aimed at policy against hooligans, in turn advancing the credibility of the sociology and psychology of hooliganism. These studies focused mainly on classifying working class behavior through theoretical determinism. What is missing from the study of soccer fans, be they bourgeois consumers, English hooligans, or Italian Ultras, is ethnographic detail.

Gary Armstrong has begun to provide ethnographic data on the English hooligans. His study of the hooligans associated with Sheffield United Football Club demonstrates how narratively driven can be the English hooligans, who are themselves acting as a break against the “capitalist takeover” of English soccer (Armstrong, 1998, pgs. 123-137). Elsewhere Armstrong and Malcolm Young have studied the impact of anti-violence laws on the hooligan phenomenon (1997) and the content of Scottish stadium songs (2000). As yet there have been no extensive ethnographic studies of the Ultras in English, although the English journalist Tim Park’s *A Season With Verona* (2002) chronicles his season spent traveling with the Ultras as well as the team of Hellas Verona Football Club.

Ethnographic data will provide us with a way of understanding not only the aesthetics and violence of fandom, but also the political behaviors on which I focus. Anthropology, with its highly local investigative techniques married with global theoretical concerns, can show soccer in cultural contexts in which heterodox moral and existential issues envelop the game.

C. Fascism and Politics

Taking up Giulianotti’s challenge to study soccer in host communities and in the subjective terms through which it is locally known, during 15 months of anthropological fieldwork on the

political behaviors of the Ultras of the soccer team AS Roma, I came to understand them not as impassioned fans who occasionally take part in the political process as members of a politically liberal society but rather as an extremely political counter-modern cultural movement which aims to restore communal, spiritual, and ritual dimensions to modern life. They seek to do so by challenging the political, ideological, and aesthetic processes of global-market capitalism, which, through global consumerism, cultural and political pluralism, and individualism, threaten to destroy, as they understand it, the particularity of Roman cultural forms.

After the February 2007 death of Raciti, many commentators were quick to label the perpetrators of violence as delinquents out only to cause trouble and commit anti-social behavior. Even those who tried to defend the Ultras were unwilling or unable to see what happened as part of a larger project, or as part of a counter-modern conceptual system. Professor Vincenzo Abbantano likened the Ultras to the “disaffected” French youth who burned the Parisian suburbs in the autumn of 2005. These were people, he said, who acted without a “political conscience.”⁴

We are left to wonder at his reaction to the news that the young man accused of killing Officer Raciti was a middle-class member of the fascist party *Forza Nuova*, who had worked the previous summer to have a Gay Pride parade cancelled in Catania.⁵ Elsewhere, in Civitavecchia, an interesting piece of Ultra graffiti relating to the Catania violence was found. “2-2-2007 Vendetta for Carlo Giuliani,” it said, referring to the protestor killed at the 27th G8 Summit in Genova in 2001.⁶

What the details of the Raciti killing demonstrate is that the Ultras’ violence, in this case

⁴ www.football-italia.net/feb03k.html

⁵ www.independent.co.uk/football/news-and-comment/1822753.html

⁶ *La Repubblica*, Friday, February 9, 2007. Sec. B, pg. 2

against the state, is not perpetrated without a political conscience. Roversi and Balestri (2002) have shown that the Ultras were politicized in the 1990s, even beyond their original class-based political forms. Actual mob-and-political violence aside, what my work seeks to understand is how these politicized Ultras use their respective ideologies to create, maintain, and elevate their rivalries and understandings of Italian soccer and social life. In other words, my work understands, like Antonio Gramsci, that all aspects of human experience are political and involve the creation of knowledges (narratives) and counter-knowledges (Wolf, 1999, pg. 44).



Figure 7. Ultras of AS Roma and SS Lazio attack the police after the death of Gabriele Sandri. November 2007

The political concerns of AS Roma's Ultras *as Ultras* are ambivalently related to contemporary fascism's most popular parties, *Fiamma Tricolore* and *Forza Nuova*. While issues that concern these Ultras are certainly important to these parties, my research demonstrates that the large majority of Ultras have become devoted to these concerns without the intervention of organized fascism. The issues I have in mind range from the political, such as immigration and international

trade, to the metapolitical, such as rights movements, cultural protection, and sovereignty. The link to fascism clouded further by the highly philosophical nature of their own political agenda against *Calcio Moderno*, as well as the influence of Counter-Enlightenment political philosophy, both of which are analyzed in the dissertation. For now, I must say that the ambivalence of the relationship between organized fascism and the Ultras is such that the latter is considered here more a cultural than political movement. As such, it has more in common with New Right political philosophy than with political fascism (Bar-On, 2007, pgs. 6-25). The politics of the Ultras are ultimately less concerned with the political *qua politics* than with how fascist-inspired political ideas shape their vision of Rome, the AS Roma soccer team, and themselves.

Because of this, in no way can the influence of the right on AS Roma's Ultras be seen as due to an invasion of the far right parties, as others have argued (see Dal Lago and De Biasi, 2002; De Biasi and Lanfranchi, 1997; Podaliri and Balestri, 1998). Instead, fieldwork demonstrated that the Ultras harbor and utilize a moral and ethical system that generates its own political orientation. If some are fascists it is because of the common elements that exist between the Ultras and fascism - most notably *squadrisimo* (organization and activities in the form of paramilitary groups); an ethic of violence that celebrates engagement and aggression; pageantry as a form of political action; and a harsh critique of modernity (Griffin, 2007, pg. 181).

Griffin's work, *Modernism and Fascism* (2007), continues the earlier analysis of Emilio Gentile (2003) which showed that, while fascism was a modernist, because modernizing, force, it was informed by an attack on modernity itself. The question for fascism, as well as Gentile was then, what form of modernity was fascism to create? While modernizing and attaching itself to Futurism and its vision of speed, industry, efficiency, and power, fascism also promoted agrarianism, autarchy, and

the celebration of Italian folkways. It was devoted on the one hand to increasing industrial output, and to using international warfare as a means of masculinizing populations, but on the other hand to a philosophical anti-materialism and hostility to political liberalism. Further, Sternhell argues that while fascism maintained capitalism as an economic model it was horrified, via Nietzsche, of modern bourgeois values such as universalism, individualism, progress, natural rights, and equality (Sternhell, 1994, pgs. 7-8).

According to Griffin (2007), Gentile (2003), and Sternhell (1994), this contradiction was born not only from the material limitations of early-20th century Italy but from the ideological and philosophical influences of fascism. These influences, in the persons of Nietzsche, Ernst Junger, Ezra Pound, Gabriele d'Annunzio, and, for Hitler, Benito Mussolini, are now called part of the Counter-Enlightenment tradition (Wolin, 2004). Today's Ultras of AS Roma are similarly influenced by these thinkers, amongst others. They are committed to challenging the hegemony of the current state of modernity, be it understood as post-modernity, hyper-modernity, or globalized-market capitalism. Thus, I argue that they, like fascism itself, are counter-to-modern, even if neither are pastoral in outlook.

Franco Ferraresi has studied the post-war right in Italy and concluded that, although the far right is often in organizational disarray, Counter-Enlightenment thought is still popular there, as are the Counter-Enlightenment philosophical traditions of Friedrich Nietzsche and Julius Evola. This thought carries with it, in his words, "nationalism, chauvinism, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia ... frequently couched in the terms of rescuing original identities [that are] threatened by the encroachment of ... globalization [and] the Americanization of culture" (Ferraresi, 1996, pg. 56).

Within the political activities and ideas of the Ultras we find precisely these elements of

Counter-Enlightenment thought. It was Ferraresi's work that prompted me to focus on the ideological elements of Ultra behavior. Knowing from scholarship on the Ultras that the political right became popular amongst them during the same late-1990s period in which Ferraresi was studying the Italian far right, I immediately began searching for intersections between the ideology of the one within the other. The most obvious common links between the Ultras and the far right, as well as between Ferraresi's and my analysis, are Nietzsche and Evola, both of which feature prominently in my research. However, where Ferraresi and I diverge is in his assumption that the only youth manifestation of rightist ideology is the skinheads, of which Italy is largely bereft (Ferraresi, 1996, pg. 201).

IV. Ultras Defined, Including Key Concepts

As I have already demonstrated, the Ultras are misunderstood if seen as merely impassioned fans who occasionally, as members of a politically liberal society, take part in the political process. When defining the phenomenon, then, one cannot overlook the political nature of how they conceive and perceive themselves, nor the pageantry and beauty of their public display in and around Italian (and European) stadiums. The problems others encounter when attempting to understand the Ultras occur largely because they tend to separate the aesthetic from the political. When one combines them, however, and refuses to see them as distinct parts of Ultras conception and behavior, who they are and why they do what they do becomes more clear.

David Kertzer's study of Italian communist political symbols (1996) provides a model of analysis that serves the purpose of this study, which seeks to examine political behavior largely from the perspective of ritual and symbols. It seeks to understand the relations among mental images, philosophical/historical ideas, and aesthetic principles that express themselves in public rituals and

representations (Fugo, 2003, pg. 19). Thus it will at once collapse the division between spiritual and material, being inclined to search for the micro-historical relations between thought and language. The relations between class or status and political participation, while also relevant to the material consequences of the spiritual thrust of the Ultra “form of life,” will be a secondary focus.

Although I am most comfortable with this kind of approach, I feel that the subjects of the study prompted the methodology I have chosen. The Ultras live as what Victor Turner called “social anti-structures” because they have withdrawn symbolically and actually from the larger community in order to fully embrace their “signal mark of identity” (Turner, 1979, pg. 48). While they are aware of who they are and what is their historical and cultural mission, the terms of which, as will be explained, come largely from fascism, Futurism, and political philosophers like Nietzsche, Sorel, and Le Bon who were highly critical of modernity, their political focus is largely “ritual and cultish.” As Kerzer explains, politics of this kind are not only interested in transforming society, but doing so strictly within the terms of the cosmological myths that buttress the movement or party in question. This form of politics is best studied, in my opinion, by concentrating on the role of the “symbol systems” that “create order” by “reifying symbolic categories” as products of nature rather than the human (Kertzer, 1988, pg. 13). This focus on the political from the perspective of the symbolic challenges the division between real (material, power-oriented) elements and symbolic (a sign-driven “language” constructive of identities) elements, seeing instead a continuum of change and action that simultaneously engages our emotional and “irrational” centers (Kertzer, 1988, pg. 4; Kertzer 1996).

The focus of inquiry duly shifts, thereby, from the actual workings of liberal politics, per se, to an understanding of the intellectual and ideational background of a system of politics and its “reality making” function (Hoberman, 1984), not in a neo-Marxist way to connote a mode of

deception whereby the ruling class stays in power, but as a system of knowledge (or controlling concepts and theories) that does not merely describe but creates reality (Pronger, 2002). The distinction between politics and political ideology, then, is rendered artificial. The categories “overlap, interpenetrate, and feed from each other, exchange, transform into one another” (Schechner, 1988, pg. 197). This is especially important in Italy, where politics becomes a marker of identity in highly personal ways, bleeding into other areas of life seemingly unrelated to the political system (Kertzer, 1996).

Having provided the reader with explanation of the methodological assumptions I hold about politics, narrative, and human behavior, I will now turn to defining four of the major concepts of this project: *mentalità*; Ultras; agonistic, or oppositional form of life; and *Calcio Moderno*. It is impossible to comprehend the Ultras without an understanding of these four concepts. The definitions that follow all point to the political and ideological aspects of being an Ultra, which come to include the aesthetic aspects as well.

A. *Calcio Moderno*, A Brief Overview

Calcio Moderno (Modern Soccer) is perhaps the most important concept used by the Ultras at this particular time - not only because it ties their self-interests to international manifestations of resistance to globalization, but because it incorporates the other three important concepts identified above. It is used in the dissertation to denote the postmodernization of fandom and the sports experience as focus has shifted toward the cultivation of global markets at the expense of, argue the Ultras, local communities. It also refers to the business of soccer, including the clubs, international federations (such as FIFA and UEFA), the media, and the system of club owners and player transfers (trades). Thus, *Calcio Moderno* provides the view of globalization held by the Ultras, through which

they come to equate anything harmful to themselves, the Ultras phenomenon, or AS Roma as equally harmful to Rome and its local culture and traditions. Finally, *Calcio Moderno* is important for representing the conceptual “other” to the Ultras, becoming their arch enemy. As I will demonstrate, when Gabriele Sandri, a Roman Ultra of SS Lazio, was killed by police in November 2007, for many Ultras he was killed by *Calcio Moderno*.



Figure 8. The basis of an ethical life: no to modern soccer. Curva Sud Roma. 2007.

B. *Mentalità*

i. A Poetic Ideology

I will use a particular (maybe peculiar) vocabulary to discuss the ways in which the Ultras understand, and interact with, their environment. Anthropology has developed a number of strategies for explaining this problem. The term “ideology” is still the most popular way of denoting a system of logic that impacts in some way upon reality. Already in 1973 Clifford Geertz saw fit to perform a genealogy of ideology, such was the term’s overuse. Marx popularized the concept in negative

terms, as a bourgeois “discursive sheet” laid atop the reality of proletarian suffering and need for unity (Hoberman, 1984, pg. 17). Biologist James Danielli uses “ideology” but to denote “the discursive practices which institute each human society’s field of consciousness” (1980, pgs. 87-94). The idea of an order of consciousness as part of a cultural system is perhaps still best explained by Evans-Pritchard, for he shows that the Azande exist within a symbolically coded system of representation by which consciousness is inscribed. This system, as he says, is “the very texture of ... thought” (1976, pg. 222). The idea of “texture of thought” moves us closer to how “ideology” will be used in this study. Geertz correctly critiqued the term as inexact and suffering from a lack of value. However, his idea of a cultural system as a “web of meaning” seems closer to how recent scholarship uses “ideology” (1973, pg. 124).

A student in 2008 experiences “ideology” differently than did previous generations. Verily, we do so not even as ideology. This is because of the success and popularity of Bourdieu’s “habitus” and Foucault’s “episteme” as variations on “ideology.” Habitus names the categories through which we interact with the world. It is “a system of acquired dispositions functioning ... as categories of perception and assessment” (Brownell, 1995, pg. 17). Foucault’s “episteme”, in contrast to “habitus,” is less focused on the body and the material conditions of existence. Instead, it is explained succinctly as an “order of knowledge” and a “general grammar” consisting of language and structures of power (political and discursive) that create the very “conditions of possibility of existence” (Foucault, 1970, pg. xxiv).

Even where ideology is used it is understood as a system through which power and ideas collide. Eric Wolf offers a rich critique of our “metaphysical” tendency to, on the one hand, acknowledge the cultural nature of conception, without, on the other hand, seeking to understand the

consequences of conception upon culture (1999, pgs. 279-283). Culture-specific ideologies, he explains, may share a function - to “orient society to act within the field of its [society’s] operations,” but they are unique in form, logic, rationale, and effect (Wolf, 1999, pg. 280). Thus we must seek to pull-back our gaze and incorporate into ideology’s purposes the “material resources and organizational arrangements” of the world being affected (Wolf, 1999, pg. 280).

Similarly, Antonio Gramsci accentuated the active nature of thought in his understanding of ideology. He understood ideas to be the moving force of culture, but not at the expense of the material or oppositional forces also at play in a society (Crehan, 2002, pgs. 99-104). The class impact on ideas and ideology, he explains, is so pervasive that the lower, or subaltern, classes only come to self-consciousness by way of a series of negations of the class power and identity of their enemy ruling class (Crehan, 2002, pg. 100). In this way, Gramsci left no distance between the availability of self-consciousness and the possibility of class warfare, as well as theorizing the power central to all workings of culture.

Later scholars also sought a liberatory model of idea formation. “Episteme” is used by Sylvia Wynter as an alternative to “ideology” because it lends itself to an understanding of each culture’s specific “system of symbolic representation,” or “mode of subjective understanding.” However, even as she searches for clarity and power from concepts, she also uses Fanon’s “sociogeny” or “sociogenic principle” to explain culture-specific behavior-orienting criteria (Fanon, 1967, pgs. 2-14; Wynter, 1995, pgs. 5-57). Both Wynter and Fanon stress the creation of knowledge inherent in ideology and central to all cultures. They did so not to understand this process on its terms but to connect it with the failings of modernity to provide an ecumenical basis of knowing the human species. As such they point to a deeper understanding of the role of concepts and ethics in cultural

processes.

Similarly, Allan Young maintains the discursive theme in describing the “practices, technologies, and narratives . . . of various interests, institutions, and moral arguments” constitutive of reality (1995, pg. 5). Paul Kroskrity goes further, but also resorts to using “ideology” in explaining the “language ideologies” that “represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group.” This includes “notions of what is ‘true,’ ‘morally good,’ or ‘aesthetically pleasing’” (Kroskrity, 2000, pg. 8). What these scholars point to is a methodology that accounts for the reality producing power of knowledge. But, as I hope to make clear, so do the subjects of this study.

ii. Fascism and the Problem of Morality in Social Science

This study seeks to explain the relationship between ideology and behavior through ethnographic data. The specifics of my fieldwork and data collection are presented below. For now, however, let it suffice to say that I completed 15 months of participant observation fieldwork as well as almost 200 questionnaires and seven long interviews. In the field, I was constantly aware of the things being said around me: the justifications, insults, greetings, introductions, explanations, anecdotes, language lessons (which included the Roman dialect and how it can be used to situate oneself in a group or social setting). These were recorded either in a small journal that I used for gathering interesting quotes, or as voice/video memos with the video function of a digital camera. The voice/video memos were especially helpful in reminding me of places, situations, and contexts. And, the accompanying videos allowed my transcriptions to include visual cues that often went unobserved in live settings. Approximately three nights a week were spent transcribing notes and voice/video memos into proper fieldnotes. As well, the particular situations and settings of discussion

were important in determining the precise ways in which Ultras present themselves (or perform, as Richard Schechner explains) (Schechner, 1988, pg. 117). But perhaps most importantly, I was attentive to who and what the Ultras spoke about.

Therefore, I was less concerned with researching a Foucaultian genealogy of terms and concepts and the ways meaning is produced historically. Nor was I prepared to produce a model of the classificatory system used by the Ultras, following Levi-Strauss. Instead, it was the nature of my research that prompted me to concentrate on the “discursive” elements of Ultra life. Just as Kroskrity speaks of “regimes of language” I present the Curva Sud, the domain of the Ultras, as a “kingdom of the word” because of the primacy of place it affords language and narrative (Koon, 1985, pg. 4). The Ultras of AS Roma not only speak about a *mentalità* and a form of life disconnected from, and at odds with, the modernity of the liberal global-market, but they act upon this disconnection. In acting, they express a deep and conscious commitment to the ideas and ideals around which they cohere.

For instance, I passed an evening with a small group of Ultras discussing the *Arditi* (The Bold - Italian assault infantry of WWI) and their relation to the *Brigate Nere* (Black Brigades - Special Forces of the Italian Social Republic [RSI] at the end of World War II). Aside from the oddity (from the perspective of an American) of a group of young men (each younger than 30) casually discussing an obscure history, the scene was valuable because they spoke about both with reverence and an understanding that in these soldiers there was a model of proper contemporary behavior. This was furthered by their attempts to equate themselves with the *Arditi* and *Brigate Nere*. “The Ultras,” said Massimiliano, “are today scorned like the *Arditi* after the first world war - and demonized like the fighters of *Salò* [alternate name for the RSI]. It is only right, though, because we all wanted the same

things.” Among the romantic list of common desires was “to live according to values - bravery, strength in the face of any opposition, brotherhood” Eventually, the conversation became less solemn and concluded with the participants celebrating their identity as “*bastardi neri*” (black bastards, or hard men).

After leaving the bar, I witnessed these Ultras holler mild insults at African purse sellers packing away their sack of merchandise for the evening. If I witnessed, or more importantly, noted and described, only the insults - which asked the Africans to do something more substantial (*significativo*) with their lives (and to do so away from Rome) - or worse, chose to disconnect them from the evening’s discussion, this dissertation would be far less valuable as a description of the Ultras and their behaviors. While using terms and concepts that encapsulate a wide variety of behaviors, like *mentalità* and agonistic culture, I also tried to move away from terms like racism or xenophobia because these tend to mask the motivation and even humanity of those so labeled.

Instead, as is apparent from this vignette, the subjects of this study forced me to understand the moral aspect of creating social science. Most of the respondents to my questionnaires consider themselves to be fascists. Indeed, the “air one breathes” amongst the Ultras is thick with the memory, examples, and folklore of the fascist period. Recent scholarship on fascism has rehabilitated the phenomenon as a valuable subject of study, but there are still consequences of the moral and political aversions to the phenomenon, including misleading accounts of policy and personalities. RJB Bosworth is praised for his biography of Mussolini (2002) and his history of Mussolini’s Italy, yet the latter text is littered with words like “wicked,” “evil,” “intrusive,” “racist,” “henchmen,” “corrupt,” “lies,” “neurotic,” and “gullible” (Bosworth, 2005, pgs. 4-5).

The political aversions should not be separated from the moral, but nevertheless, Claudio

Fogu explains that one must often take drastic methodological measures to circumvent the assumptions of leftist scholars that there was/is no cultural component to fascism. “[This] practice . . . consigns cultural events to that all-encompassing, all-equalizing, and most uncritical rubric of ‘propaganda’ and considers them . . . peripheral to either a historical or theoretical explanation of the fascist phenomenon” (Fogu, 2003, pg. 14). Methodologically, recent scholarship has turned toward the intellectual foundations of fascism. Gregor (1999, 2001, 2005) and Schnapp (2000) re-examine structural components of fascism, such as Corporatism and racial ideology, in light of the thinkers and technocrats within the phenomenon, while Sternhell (1994) examines the intellectual antecedents that motivated the fascist critique of modernity. Elsewhere, Fogu (2003), Falasca-Zamponi (1997), Emilio Gentile (1996, 2003), Griffin (2007), and Farrell (2003) have turned toward discursive analyses that feature close readings of texts, rituals, and images to present fascism’s cultural and social critiques of liberalism as they relate to Counter-Enlightenment traditions.

Carlo Ginzburg has shown that micro-histories, with a greatly reduced scale of observation, allow one to challenge the “polarizations between social and cultural history, [and] analysis and narrative.” Micro-histories focus on individual cultural acts, events, or reproductions, thereby repositioning macro-historical studies and, in the case of fascism, their moralizing tendencies. Though I do not resort to micro-history, the method does lend itself to understanding the relationship between words and grammar - or experience and its narrative structures (Ginzburg and Poni, 1991, pg. 8).

Like Ginzburg I use the sources that my subjects use to describe and explain themselves. Alas, these sources, like fascism, are all morally and politically tainted. Though Nietzsche, Sorel, Le Bon, and Evola are attacked for lacking a commitment to a liberal democratic or egalitarian social order,

they are popular and widely discussed and analyzed in Ultra circles (see Appel, 1999, pgs. 1-15; Hansen, 2002, pgs. 95-104; Stone, 2002, pgs. 1-61). It is fitting, then, that Ultra ideas and vocabulary be used to explain aspects of Ultra behavior and thought. In this spirit I conducted my fieldwork, notwithstanding that fascism and the Counter-Enlightenment are considered unsavory, morally objectionable moments in history (MacDonald, 2002, pgs. v-lxx; Wolin, 2004, pgs. 2-4; Bar-On, 2007, pgs. 21-30). The criminalization of the Ultra phenomenon in moral terms by the Italian press and general population (the uninitiated, in Victor Turner's language) made it imperative that I seek to understand the distance (morally) between them and the Ultras.

iii. *Mentalità* and Myth

Having presented the need for a “poetic” usage of ideology, we may now turn to the reason for the previous diversion: the *mentalità* of the Ultras. Like ideology, *mentalità* connotes many things. *Mentalità* translates normally as mentality, but according to the Harper Collins Sansoni *Unabridged Italian Dictionary* (2007) it can also denote a cultural worldview, so as to extend beyond the individual mind-set which it denotes in English. The Ultras, who use the word perhaps more consistently than any other when discussing the world and themselves, mean it in this broader sense. Hence, the way it is defined here is important. Before doing so, I want to briefly discuss how the Ultras' use *mentalità*. I will then turn to the basis of my thinking of a definition. This comes not only from those who study *weltanschauung* but also consciousness, narrative, and myth

Mentalità is most commonly used by the Ultras as an explanation of what makes them different from others. Usually, the “others” in question are the bourgeois fans glorified by the Italian media as “real” or “true” soccer fans, or the bourgeoisie in general. The distance between the Ultras and the bourgeoisie is guaranteed by behavior - violence, aggression, and extreme commitment to

rivalry and hostility; but also, according to Pasquale, a longtime Ultra, honor, commitment, and “unfailing steadfastness” (*fermezza*). However, the Ultras explain their own commitment to these behaviors as a product of *mentalità*. This is an important element of the Ultras phenomenon because, as I will demonstrate, the majority of Ultras could be classified economically as bourgeois, yet speak of the bourgeoisie as living a life that is empty and fatuous. That they do not live such a life is, again, a product of their *mentalità*.

It is also interesting that the Ultras use *mentalità* as an explanation of their difference from others, as the concept is common amongst Italians as a way to understand, not only individual personalities, but social and political aggregates as well. For instance, while one may possess a *mentalità infantile* (childish outlook) or *mentalità chiusa* (closed-mind), there is also the possibility of a *mentalità dei popoli latini* (Latin worldview). It is commonly said, pejoratively, that a *mentalità del Sud* (Southern personality/form of life/culture/mentality) may explain the underdevelopment of the southern Italian regions.

When used to discuss social and political aggregates, it seems the larger the aggregate, the more negative becomes the *mentalità* said to be in use. For example, both Barzini (1996) and De Martino (2005) posit the existence of something peculiar to either Italy, Italians, or certain Italians. Barzini’s text is, in essence, a list of features of the Italian *mentalità* - almost all of them negative and parochial. Moe (2002) studied the creation of the Southern Question, the idea that the south is somehow culturally and morally different from the rest of Italy, and, in the end, explains that foreign authors discerned a spiritual difference between Italians and other Europeans (of the north and west).

Conversely, the *mentalità* of townspeople, political parties, or phenomenon like the Ultras, is usually discussed as the basis of extremely positive co-identification. In Rome, the Roman

mentalità was given as rationale for a refusal to eat peanut butter. When presented with the decidedly American sandwich spread, a friend in Monteverde, the neighborhood in which I lived, declined a taste on the grounds that, “it is not part of our *mentalità* to eat something like that.” Returning to the Ultras, *mentalità* was most commonly invoked during games away from Rome - or in discussing these games - when engaging with opposing Ultras. “The thirst for feelings of raw electricity,” I was told by Stefano, a 41 year old Ultra of the group *Monteverde*, “is something particular to the Ultras. You either have it or you do not; and those who do not would never do what we do. Our *mentalità* seeks these encounters.”

It is important to understand how diffused amongst AS Roma’s Ultras is this idea of *mentalità* as something that promotes aggression, violence, and a defensive posture toward a variety of foes (discussed below). Every Ultra I encountered in Rome spoke of the Ultras as, if nothing else, completely and utterly different from others. On the occasions when *mentalità* was invoked, it was consistently presented as the basis of that difference. Often it seemed that what the Ultras meant was an earned credibility or honor, in the sense of Campbell’s (1964) understanding of how threats confer manliness in honor based societies. We might think of it thus as a spirit - as a common indicator of responsibility and expectation. However, *mentalità* was also given as an indescribable sensation of connectedness to other AS Roma Ultras created during important AS Roma games, as if one could sense *mentalità* in the air. In this way, the *mentalità* could incorporate the tension and hostility with the elation and camaraderie - sensations of the heart - felt during and after games.

One can see that their usage of the concept leaves us unable to codify it in any meaningful sense. To the American reader, it might seem that culture is a good translation and way towards understanding *mentalità*. However, it too becomes just a metaphor when faced with the wide range

of usages of *mentalità*. This confusion is compounded by the fact that many of these same Ultras only use culture to connote physical/material goods and cuisines. Otherwise, *mentalità* was used. Therefore, I created my own definition of *mentalità* drawn from its usages and features. I will begin the discussion of that definition with myth.

Augustine described consciousness as a process of “expectation, attention, and memory.” “The future, which [the mind] expects, passes through the present, to which it attends, into the past, which it remembers” (Saint Augustine, 1961, pg. 277). As Kirsten Hastrup (1995) explains, through memory of the past and anticipation of the future we use cultural symbols and institutions to create a bridge between these two and the present. In the present, action and experience meet.

This connection of past, present, and future is critical to the way the Ultras engage life experience. Like others, they use narrative to weave a “conscious self,” but they do so with great emphasis on myth, martyrs/heroes, brotherhood, and place (Rose, 1997, pgs. 224-248). Therefore the construction of personal meaning is an especially conscious process amongst the Ultras, especially given the collective and public nature of the “language,” myths, or narratives used (Rapport, 1998, pgs. 81-101).

Myth is central to the Ultras’ *mentalità*. How it is used lends itself to being studied from the perspectives of the anthropological pillars on myth: Durkheim, Malinowski, and Levi-Strauss. Myth, according to Durkheim (2001), strengthens social cohesion and unity by inscribing norms of social order via ritual and ritualized institutional behavior. Malinowski (1992) focused instead on the value of myth, especially as a tool in the legitimation of a particular social structure, thus connecting myth with power, morality, and social mores. Levi-Strauss (1990) searched for meaning not in the narratives of myth but in their subconscious structure, thus understanding myth as an objective,

universal mode of thought. Together, these three approaches all offer insight into the purpose and functioning of myth in the Ultra *mentalità*. That it is cohesive and constructive of distinction between groups of people, that it is connected to morality and has value in justifying social structure, and that it operates as a self-standing phenomenon will become clear in the chapters that follow.

The Ultra *mentalità* operates as an ideal against modern liberal market-driven understandings and expectations of the human. The myths that the Ultras are the only bastion of purity left in Italian soccer, and that they are the “keepers of the faith” on guard against the victory of *Calcio Moderno*, motivate them to critique consumerism as an end and, more importantly, to seek to establish or maintain structures, in the form of both Ultra groups and political organizations that undermine the democratic and egalitarian foundations of the liberal market. Nietzsche urged the pursuit of a life in which myth acted to offset modernity’s “common-currency humans” and the absence of mystery (2004, pg. 36). He attacked the modern life in which the utilitarian pursuit of money and career had defeated the heroic life spent in creative and dangerous pursuits of nobility and honor. Likewise, Sorel understood myth as a “supra-ordinate goal,” as the foundation of motivation and action (1999, pg. 20). He explains that the collapse of myth (as motivator of behavior) in the modern world has contributed to the victory of a limited historical outlook (with no belief in glory) and atomistic individualism (with no understanding of or desire for collective greatness) (Sorel, 1999, pg. 27). The Ultras understand myth as do Nietzsche and Sorel - as a goal and a motivating force to a very particular form of life that is aggressive, violent, and martial.

iv. *Mentalità* Defined

Moving beyond an understanding of *mentalità* that is limited to an individual’s outlook personality type, I am stressing its connections with consciousness or *weltanschauung*. I do so

because *mentalità* provides not only an impetus to behavior but an orientation toward behavior. Geertz differentiates *weltanschauung* from *ethos* in order to distinguish cognition from evaluation (1973, pgs. 126-127).



Figure 9. Classic Ultra sweatshirt proclaiming “Our world view knows only hatred and rivalry.” Empoli. 2007.

Weltanschauung refers to the picture of the actual social conditions of a group - “their concept of nature, self, and society,” while *ethos* is the group’s moral-ethical, aesthetic, and evaluative structures (Geertz, 1973, pg. 127). This division occurs at the level of culture and it ensures cultural stability, assuming the *weltanschauung* is an accurate representation of the culture’s *ethos*. If one takes the division of *weltanschauung* and *ethos* as a given then I am proposing, based on the strong ethical content in much Ultra behavior, that through *mentalità* they are rejoined.

The ethical component of *mentalità* must be stressed. As the Ultras construct what I call an agonistic form of life, in which all social relations reflect a will to opposition and rivalry, they also develop an emic personality that revels in the distance between themselves and others. Thus, their character clearly reflects the milieu in which it is formed. The tension between the Ultras and the

larger social context with which they must interact in order to attend soccer games, and crucially, in which they are judged, impacts the ethical content of their *mentalità*. In other words, there is reciprocity between state and media power and the Ultras' *mentalità* (Wolf, 1999, pgs. 252-257).

Seeing themselves largely outside the state, or as a pure critique of the Italian state, the Ultras often seem a contained universe where the discourse of strength and honor interact with a will to violence and rivalry. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the content of the *mentalità* is a response, or counter, to the power of the state to impact upon the freedoms of the Ultras. With the advent of new bureaucratic means of excluding the Ultras from soccer games their feelings of repression have never been more pronounced. Thus they possess a seething bitterness toward the state and the forces of law and order (to be discussed below). Additionally, however, the state and media have the power to morally condemn the Ultras and, until the wide availability of internet access and cell phones, to control information and public discourse about them.

When the state prohibits the Ultras from attending games they find other spaces to watch or participate, be they spaces of consumption or of protest. In some cases Ultras would watch AS Roma play in bars or in homes. Following the prohibition against fans in certain stadiums enacted after the death of Raciti, Ultras traveled to these same stadiums to protest against the restriction of personal freedom in Italy, but from the outside. The tendency amongst the Ultras of AS Roma is to subvert state repression by restricting their in-stadium performances and at the same time aggregating in smaller numbers in alternative spaces.

When the hegemony of the state is displayed through the creation and dissemination of a moralist discourse of Ultra criminality, the Ultras incorporate such discourses into the content of their *mentalità* (Wolf, 1999, pgs. 44-45). This makes the relationship between the Ultras and the media

complex and dynamic. Although from Counter-Enlightenment sources the Ultras embrace an agonistic form of life, the terms of their agon - conceptual and violent oppositions and a sense of worth correlated to how deeply one is aggressive and oppositional - the media attacks against the Ultras for being too violent and focused on rivalry seem to fuel even higher levels of hostility. Similarly, the media uses a highly moralistic language to condemn the Ultras. This language in turn is central to the Ultra *mentalità*. Because of this fluidity the discourse of the media often matches that of the Ultras week-to-week. Further, this keeps the *mentalità* relevant and active for the Ultras because the world condemns them on the same terms in which they condemn the world.

Thus I define *mentalità* as a systemic narrative of beliefs, attitudes, and values that motivates behavior and provides a particular moral-ethical orientation to behavior. It links the present to past and future through myths and cultural symbols that enable groups to cohere and construct distinctions between them and others.

Much of what constitutes the *mentalità* of today's Ultras comes from Italian political history: namely, fascism, and the other counter-modern movements that either contributed to, or coexisted with, fascism. Thus, it has taken as its own the intellectual components of these prior movements. Like the fascists the Ultras maintain a desire toward strength, honor, discipline, order, valor, heroism, memory, and tradition. Like fascism and Futurism they also celebrate war and a militarism that consists of warrior attributes. At the level of their *mentalità* and political motivations, the Ultras harbor a vision of the future and a strong critique of modernity. At the level of their culture there is a desire to embrace the mythic and spiritual dimension of life - a life built on communal and spiritual

principles: a life with a clear *nomos* (Berger, 1967, pg. 74).⁷

Like *mentalità*, which is used by all strata of Italian society, the Ultras' use of honor connects them to other Italian and Mediterranean forms of life. Despite the fact that honor is as varied in its uses throughout the Mediterranean as is *mentalità* in Italy, anthropology made it the basis of the creation of the Mediterranean cultural area. Peristiany (1965) identified an ideal of honor operating in the majority of Mediterranean cultures that is pursued at the expense of material advantage. At a civilizational level, this contributed to economic underdevelopment and material backwardness. On a personal level, honor is a virtue - *the virtue* even - but one that is functional only within an environment of competition and competitiveness. Individuals assert themselves against others, co-identified as equal protagonists, in a system of honor and dishonor (Peristiany, 1965, pgs. 1-11). Peristiany understands honor as a moral sentiment but also as a "fact of repute and precedence," attesting to its systemic nature (Peristiany, 1992, pg. 5).

Although below I assert that the Ultras are an agonistic form of life, which also connects them with a concept central to the creation of a southern or Mediterranean anthropology, I do so only as a metaphor for a life defined by rivalry and hostility, which puts them at odds with the prevailing form of modern life in contemporary Italy. I have taken the concept from Friedrich Nietzsche and intend it to be used as a point of distinction from what Gianni Vattimo calls the contemporary "neutralization of culture and politics" (Vattimo, 2011, pg. 174).

Likewise, here, I discuss honor not as a characteristic given the Ultras by a metaphysical Mediterraneanism, but as part of a set of behaviors they have taken from fascism and Counter-

⁷ *Nomos*, as used by Peter Berger in his description of the "sacred canopy" is a suprahuman organizing principle that is used as a "shield against terror."

Enlightenment philosophy. Indeed, while honor as I have just presented it fits perfectly within the Ultras' rejection of capitalism and *Calcio Moderno* (the business of soccer) for the sake of something more primordial, it is possible that the fascists were also influenced by honor in a Mediterranean context. However, if, as Herzfeld (1985) explains, poetics must be locally contextual, I have relied upon the Ultras' own discussions of honor (within a system of other traits discussed at length below) in placing it so prominently in this dissertation. In other words, while it may be demonstrable as a Mediterranean character trait, it is unquestionably central to fascism and its critique of modernity.

Mentalità is for the Ultras their proof of having a deeper agenda than just being “delinquents” or “fans.” It is used as a guiding structural principle, much as anthropologists use “culture.” And, like culture itself, *mentalità* is the ground of reality - as I said above, both ethos and weltanschauung. It is not only the “why” that drives their behavior in a grand scale but a set of ethical values that also acts as a break on behavior. It is, in effect, the “content of their character.” Through *mentalità* an Ultra can be shown to act in accordance with “being Ultra” or not. Thus, without a commitment to the *mentalità* one, according to the Ultras, is simply not an Ultra.



Figure 10. *Romulae Genti* Ultra gesturing to those outside Curva Sud. 2007.

C. Ultras Defined

Taking all of this into consideration, the political and ethical components of the Ultra phenomenon, the depth of the symbolic field that animates their public spectacles, and even the particular elements of their general history, I define the Ultras as a type of fan organization originating in the late-1960s that brings, along with carnivalesque behaviors with flags, banners, choreographed displays, flares, bombs, and a catalogue of songs of various levels of devotion and scorn, a high level of social and political thought and action into the act of fandom.

The Ultras understand themselves, as do I, often as a movement, an ideology, and/or a culture which seeks to restore communal, spiritual, and ritual dimensions to modern life. They seek to do so by challenging the political, ideological, and aesthetic processes of modern industrial culture, which, through global consumerism, cultural and political pluralism, and individualism, threaten to destroy the particularity and uniqueness of Italian (and in the case of AS Roma's Ultras, Roman) cultural forms.

The Ultras are a social phenomenon. They aggregate in groups ranging from 3-5 people to as many as 2,000.⁸ Despite the myriad divisions between the groups, which often leads to conflict and strife within the Ultras, there is no impetus to enter the Curva or go to away games alone. Soccer provides the context for the Ultra phenomenon for reasons that are unclear. According to Roversi, the leading scholar of Ultra origins, the Ultras began in the curvas because those who formed the original groups were already there (1994, pg. 360). That the AS Roma Ultra groups have maintained

⁸ The larger conglomerate groups, such as *Commando Ultra Curva Sud* and *AS Roma Ultras*, both discussed at length in Chapter 2, can have as many as 12,000 members. The numbers above represent the normalized groupings of Ultras - some in small and selective groups, others such as *Boys Roma* and *Fedayn* in larger but selective groups, and others still, like *Ultras Romani*, who open themselves to anyone who will pay their membership fee. These differences will be discussed in Chapter 2.

their connections to Curva Sud is mainly because of the bleeding of the AS Roma soccer team into an idealization of the city and its history.

Of course, each generation of Ultras have been fans of the game and the team. However, just being fans opens them to other avenues of consuming the game and team that do not involve the sacrifices, dangers, and discipline of the Ultras. Hence, there must be another seduction of the Ultras beyond the game itself. I understand that other seduction to be the *mentalità* and the ethical opposition to the modern bourgeois form of life. To wit, as the state has become more hostile to Ultra in-stadium behaviors we are finding groups - *Padroni di Casa*, discussed in Chapter 2, is one - that are willing to aggregate as Ultras but to operate primarily beyond the in-stadium milieu that has defined the Ultras up-to-now.

The Ultras can be categorized as a movement form of what Roger Griffin calls “political modernism,” in as much as they seek an “alternative modernity and temporality” (a limited social order in open revolt against the values of modern liberalism) that is incompatible with liberal conceptions of the human and society (2007, pgs. 181 and 201).

D. Agonistic Form of Life

In the aftermath of the February 2007 game and riot in Catania, Palermo manager Francesco Guidolin complained that the Catania fans had created the atmosphere of a “war zone.” Dal Lago and De Biasi identified “war” as the most dominant metaphor in the Ultras *mentalità* (1994, pg. 85). The Ultras’ self-understanding is produced by an ever-present system of antagonisms. Rivalries between and within town, region, geopolitical boundary, political affiliation or ideology, and historical rivalry form the basis of the Ultra involvement with soccer, so much so that it is nearly impossible for them to engage the game without the presence of one of these forms of opposition. I conceptualize these

as “natural oppositions” because they are components of Ultra interaction with soccer that can potentially only involve other Ultras. The Ultra oppositions to the media and the state I think of as “meta-natural” because they address the larger political issues of the Ultra war against *Calcio Moderno*.

In his essay “Homer’s Contest,” Friedrich Nietzsche explains that the Greeks lived a life of “combat and victory” in which warring competition, and pleasure in victory, were acknowledged; they even colored their ethical concepts like *eris* (2007, pgs. 174-181). To battle was a means of salvation, not just for one’s people or city but against the very chaos of the natural world. Perpetual peace, a very modern utopia according to Nietzsche, would not have been desirable to the Greeks because their lives were given meaning by the struggles and victories associated with war and contest (Van Boxel, 2005, pg. 80).

However, for contemporary scholars of “agonistic pluralism,” a deconstructionist theoretical movement which seeks to explain the irreducibility of difference in democratic societies, the enemy is largely ourselves. Agonism for these scholars, such as Samuel Chambers, Bonnie Honig, and Chantal Mouffe, does not apply to the foundations or possibilities of greatness of a cultural system, as posited Nietzsche, but instead to the nature of democracy which is pluralist and designed to maximize debate (Chambers, 2001; Honig, 1993; Mouffe, 2005).

Where agonistic pluralism seeks a mutually affirming, largely discursive struggle between multicultural or political combatants, Nietzsche understands the agonist to actually compete or fight in order to elevate his self-status, and the status of the protagonist’s city at the expense of others. For AS Roma’s Ultras, pluralism is an impossibility. Their commitment to agon is so deep that there is scant possibility of unity within their own curva, let alone amongst Ultras representing other teams

and cities.

While the agonism of the Ultras contains elements of both the Nietzschean and pluralist understandings of agon, the Nietzschean is central to the Ultra phenomenon. They understand themselves as agonists who fight for the honor of their city, their team, their *curva*, and their group. They compete during games through songs, banners, and choreographed displays for a sense of pride and victory that is felt just as strongly as the victories gained on the soccer field or in the streets through fighting.

However, as *Calcio Moderno*, the idea and system of an industry of soccer that places the utmost importance on profits and revenues, has begun to be the hegemonic conception of the game in Italy, the Ultras have been forced to limit themselves to a form of agon which is closer to the “moralistic” option offered by pluralism. In the post-Raciti world of soccer, insulting banners or songs now lead to games being played behind closed doors. Game-related violence, which was virtually non-policed until Raciti’s death, now leads to time in jail.

The new social barriers to Ultra agonism have done nothing to limit the oppositional nature of their mentality and self-understanding, however. “Being an Ultra,” I was told by Massimo, a former member of the fascist group *Monteverde*, “is embracing rivalry, hostility, and *Romanità* (extreme attachment to Rome and things Roman). Without these, one is not an Ultra [of AS Roma].”

i. Agon and Altruism

Agon is an important way to begin to understand the Ultras because of the way it connects with their extremely limited modes of altruism. During my research period it was often put to me that “Roman culture was the most beautiful in Italy,” but that the culture was being diluted by foreigners and foreign influence. This understanding of political and social forces working to promote the

degradation of Roman “traditional life” was uncovered as well by Michael Herzfeld (2009) as he studied the impact of gentrification on the Monti neighborhood of Rome. I was repeatedly told that the Romans must do something to protect themselves from dilution. Given statements like this, I was pressed to understand the implications of having such a narrow, protected, and antagonistic sense of self or inclusion.

If, as Sunic and others have argued, the altruism of liberal globalization is driven by a morality of total inclusion, wherein the universalization of man is made complete in a global marketplace, then the altruism of the Ultras can be described as one of exclusion, exclusivity, and local particularity (de Benoist and Champetier, 2000, pgs. 40-41; Sedgwick, 2004, pg. 100; Sunic, 2007, pgs. 5-8). Their inter-altruistic co-identification is exaggeratedly restricted. And, I am suggesting, their narrow boundaries between us and them are related to their aggressive and militarist morality. The Ultras utilize not only a highly moralized critique of modernity but one rich with the words of Counter-Enlightenment thinkers like Nietzsche and Evola. They blame cultural degeneration on the values celebrated by liberalism. As Evola explained, “what is needed is a new radical front with clear boundaries between friend and foe. The future does not belong to those of crumbling and hybrid ideas but those of radicalism - the radicalism of absolute negations and majestic affirmations” (2002, pg. 113).

ii. Natural Oppositions

AS Roma’s Ultras utilize history, geography, and politics to create an ever-evolving system of rivalries. Their closest rival is SS Lazio, the second team of Rome. Only three other Italian cities are home to more than one high-level soccer club. The clubs in each of these, Turin, Milan, and Genova, share one another as central rival. However, the more interesting aspects of hostility

formation occur beyond intra-city rivalry.

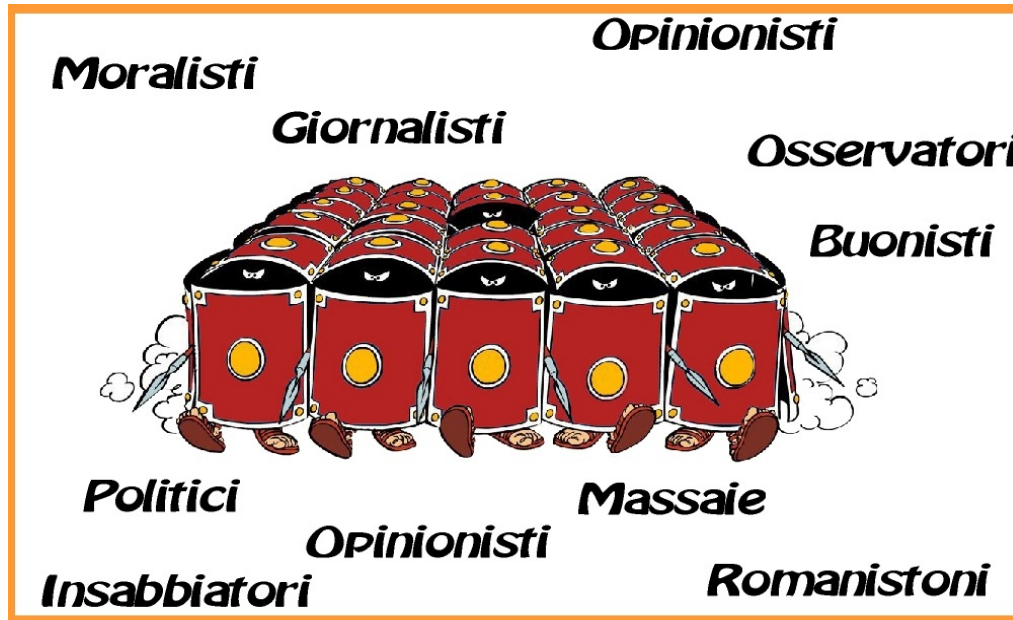


Figure 11. Flyer portraying the Ultras as legionaries in formation against their enemies. 2008.

AC Milan is the most hated enemy of AS Roma's Ultras, SS Lazio aside. This is because of the killing of Roman Ultra Antonio De Falchi by his AC Milan counterparts outside Milan's San Siro stadium in 1989. Since his death, AS Roma's Ultras dedicate their fandom and aggression to De Falchi each time the two teams meet. Somewhat more abstractly than killings between curvas, AS Roma's Ultras maintain rivalries based on Roman and Italian history. One of the most bitter, if rarely contested, given the small stature of the team involved, was with AC Perugia. The rivalry with the small (now defunct) Umbrian team stemmed from a centuries old rivalry between the two cities, as Perugia stood on the fringes of Roman dominion for most of its early history. Similarly, the Ultras share common hatred with AC Fiorentina of Florence because of that city's status as a Guelph stronghold during the late-Middle Ages, when the rival Ghibellines led the Pope's enemies in Rome.

For the same reason there is rivalry with Genoa FC of Genova. Modern political history has given a deeply felt hatred to the games contested between AS Roma and both Atalanta BC of Bergamo and Brescia Calcio of Brescia. These rivalries are based on the rise of the Lega phenomenon and its opposition to Rome as capital and symbol of Italian corruption. Meanwhile, AS Roma's Ultras share a special rivalry with the South's other large club, SSC Napoli of Naples, as discussed in later chapters. To AS Roma's Ultras, SSC Napoli is the "team of the South," a region stereotyped for poverty, underdevelopment, and organized crime (see Schneider, 1998).

Finally, politics proper is a common motivator of Ultra rivalry. AS Roma's Ultras tend toward the far right politically and thus are aggressively opposed to curvas which gravitate in the opposite direction. The main example of a leftist curva in Italy is the Curva Nord of AC Livorno's Ultras. Like the rivalry with SSC Napoli (and with Naples in general), this one will be discussed at length below, but it is notable here as a rivalry which is felt only by the Ultras. There is no rivalry between the teams, as AC Livorno only rarely play in Serie A, out of which AS Roma has only spent one season.⁹ When the two teams do play, the opposing curvas more closely resemble extreme political rallies than groups of soccer fans. Before the post-Raciti crackdown, AS Roma's Ultras would display numerous Nazi flags, neofascist celtic cross banners, and banners with various anti-communist messages. Lately, these have been replaced by Roman Salutes and chants of "Duce!" "Duce!"

iii. Meta-Natural Oppositions

The Ultras' soccer rivalries I have labeled "natural" because they "make sense" within the world of soccer. One could argue, as do many of the leftist Ultras within Curva Sud Roma, that

⁹ Serie A presently consists of 20 teams (historically it consisted of 18 but was recently changed to reflect the 20 teams of the English Premier League - the best example of *Calcio Moderno* in the world of professional soccer [discussed at length below]). Each season the three teams finishing in positions 18-20 are relegated to Serie B. The top three finishers in Serie B are likewise promoted to Serie A.

political rivalries are unnatural to the Ultras. While I agree that a rivalry that is not also played on the field between the teams is out-of-place in the world of soccer, it is difficult to examine the history of the Ultras and not conclude that political affiliations have played a part from the beginning (see Chapter 2). Further, while the political warfare between the far left and far right can explode into violence in any Italian city at any moment, I found it unlikely that AS Roma's fascist Ultras would travel to Livorno to engage its communist Ultras unless a game was also taking place.

In contrast to these oppositions we must also be aware of the hostility that exists between the state, the press, and the Ultras. These oppositions I have labeled meta-natural because they exist beyond the natural soccer related rivalries, but also because they offer a commentary on the natural rivalries as well. As I explained above, the Ultras' *mentalità* contains a moral critique of modern bourgeois life. It presents itself, and the Ultras' form of life, as an oppositional cultural model guided by commitments to strength, honor, aggression, brotherhood, and spiritualism. But it also presents itself as an opposing model of virtue which is created by action, occasional violence, shared exhilarating/traumatic experiences, and courage. I found these characteristics to have been imported into the Ultras by group leaders influenced by fascism, Roman history, and the political philosophy of Nietzsche, Evola, and Sorel. However, I also found that the Ultras celebrated these characteristics most often after they had been attacked by the media and the state for having these very characteristics.

There is a correlation of power between the Ultras and the state and media. This power is not only political but moral, as the hegemonic media is, for all but the Ultras themselves, able to control the discourse and the terms of debate on the Ultras. Apart from bemoaning the criminality of the Ultras, the media uses a moralistic language to condemn the Ultras as "delinquent" "animals" who

engage in barbaric behavior attached to a misguided and misplaced sense of rivalry. The media is helped in this by spectacular newsreel footage of the Ultras violently engaging one another and the police. Before returning to the criminalization of the Ultra phenomenon I must turn to the hostilities between the state and the Ultras.

From the perspective of AS Roma's Ultras the state is ambiguous. Even for the fascists, the state is not the goal of fascism's redemptive powers but only the city of Rome. The Ultras with whom I conversed for hours about Nietzsche's critique of liberalism, Evola's reconceptualization of *Romanità*, and Sorel's understanding of the role of political violence never moved their arguments to the Italian state. However, if one was asked who or what is the greatest threat to the Ultras and their form of life, the answer would be quick and consistent: the police (usually referred to as "la guardia," the guard, or "l'infame," the infamous) or *Calcio Moderno*. The Ultras understood the police primarily as the guardians of the business interests of soccer, not of the state. Similarly, the Ultras seek to make life difficult for global capitalism, in the form of advertising, foreign investment, and commoditization, associated with soccer. By extension, though, they understand the state to represent the same interests, so that the state is subsumed as well into *Calcio Moderno*.

That being said, there is true hostility between the Ultras and the forces of law and order, hereafter referred to as the police. This hostility pre-exists the killings of 2007, reaching back to the mid-1990s and the turn to the right of many of Italy's curvas (Podaliri and Balestri, 1998, pg. 89). Giorgio Agamben has provided an enlightening way to understand this hostility and the relations between the Ultras and the state. Agamben (2005) argues that liberal states are able to utilize what he calls a "state of exception" or state of emergency to diminish individual rights in order to strengthen the security of the state. In such a state of exception, suspicion and surveillance are

increased and legitimized as protective measures of the general well-being of the state (Agamben, 2005, pgs. 32-40). I argue that such a state of exception is the normal context of interaction between the Ultras and the state. Each Ultra is under suspicion and surveillance (as CCTV systems are required in Italy's stadiums) and each game is militarized with hundreds of riot police in highly visible formation. One of my most vivid fieldwork memories is of state police officers setting atop a mini-tank complete with machine-gun turret outside the guest section of Florence's Artemio Franchi stadium. I was forced to wonder what the Ultras would have had to do for them to open fire.



Figure 12. Ultras in Genova attack police after the killing of Gabriele Sandri. November 2007.

For most citizens of liberal states, the state's power is largely invisible. Policing is not simply an act of repression but one of complementary exchange. The goals of the state are merged with those of the (bourgeois) citizen. Thus, the prosperity of one is grounded in adherence to the ideals and, in the words of Schmitt, friend-enemy relations of the other (Crehan, 2002, pg. 100). The night of Sandri's murder saw Ultras in Rome attack police stations in addition to the offices of the Italian

Olympic Committee. In response, members of Romano Prodi's government labeled the Ultras "terrorists" who were seeking to rest control of the state. This language was buttressed by the condemnations of journalists and, in turn, by non-Ultra Italians with whom I interacted daily. The highly moral language used by the media, when analyzed in this light, is perfectly suited not only to demonize the Ultras but also to present them as beyond the moral and political responsibility of the state.

E. *Calcio Moderno* Revisited

Earlier I spoke of *Calcio Moderno* as the idea and system of an industry of soccer. It is better understood as the postmodernization of fandom and commoditization of soccer. *Calcio Moderno* acts as one of the most important signposts in the world of the Ultras. It is an organizing principle that has no peer in their world view, and as such it interacts with their world in a variety of ways (Podaliri and Balestri, 1998, pg. 98). Most importantly for the scope of this project is its relationship with the rise amongst the Ultras of a discourse of counter-globalization.

The concept itself began as a critique of the industrialization of soccer in the late-1990s, as changes to the format of UEFA's Champions League competition gave the impression of UEFA being desirous of creating a TV-based European "super league" (Williams and Giulianotti, 1994, pgs. 8-9). The Ultras feared that the game was becoming a malleable form of entertainment rather than a deeply ingrained manifestation of local cultures. Similarly, they feared that the game was becoming a nexus of multinational corporations which would reduce it to a vehicle for selling advertising (McGill, 2001, pg. 29).

As their fears began to be realized, opposition to *Calcio Moderno* became a counter-ideology to globalization. The Ultras believe that television audiences and the revenues generated by

advertising are more highly valued by clubs than local fan support; and that fans are now understood merely as consumers. Indeed, American-style merchandising is openly touted by FIFA and UEFA as a progressive generator of income for the clubs under their jurisdiction. While the sporting aspects of *Calcio Moderno* are worrying enough for the Ultras, including the creation of world-wide fan bases and the power of television executives to determine game times, it is more so the sterilization and standardization promoted by *Calcio Moderno* on which the Ultras have declared war (Sandvoss, 2003).

This aspect of the discourse of *Calcio Moderno*, and even globalization, is perhaps the most active but also most elusive. The Ultras declare themselves “*non omologati*” (non-standardized) and utilize a highly moralized language that seeks to negate what they see as the encroachment of a foreign, corporate friendly morality of inclusion, tolerance (of racial, sexual, ethnic difference), and multiculturalism. While the Italian media attacks the Ultras for existing beyond the bounds of this morality, the Ultras counter-attack by accusing the media of attacking them *only* because they are beyond bourgeois liberal morality.

The Ultras demonstrate what anthropology is so well designed to explain about globalization: that for all of the technological brilliance of the encroaching American culture and theoretical flare of its academics, the processes of imposition can produce cultural dispossessions of an ugly and destabilizing kind (see Creed, 2011). As Neil Smith succinctly explained, “deterritorialization actually involves the diminution of territory” (Quoted in lecture, CUNY’s Graduate Center, 2005). What is at stake for the Ultras is apparent when Joseph Maguire explains that the world is “compressed” via a world economy, global technology, transnationalism, and global division of labor (Maguire, 1999, pg. 13).



Figure 13. *Monteverde Ultras graffiti*. Monteverde, Rome. 2007.

The idea of protecting the game and those with whom it is entwined (the Ultras themselves) from processes of globalization and postmodernization is an important aspect of Ultra life. *Calcio Moderno* motivates behaviors that center on protecting the sport from forces that would divorce it from its local particularities. And, because the sport, clubs, and cities in which they take place are conflated within Ultra thought, I argue that their behaviors, by extension, are designed to protect their cities from the destructive standardization of globalization.

V. Research and Methods

A. Anthropological Practice

The research that led to the production of this dissertation proceeded with an eye toward creating what John Lofland called an analytic ethnography (Lofland, 2005, pg. 27). That is, one that combines description with explanation. And while the analytic element of the project will date it as coming after the rise of postmodernism and post-structuralism in American anthropology, this study was inspired by the desire to create a classic ethnographic study - one that is thoroughly based in

anthropological methods like participant observation.

As the Comaroffs (1992) and Michael Herzfeld (1987) demonstrate, methodology does not take place in a vacuum. Any work that is theoretical, philosophical, or ethnographic must also be political - in that method will invariably be positioned in time and place. Because anthropology is aware of this it allows its practitioners a great deal of freedom and demands their responsibility to approach method as seriously as the subjects of research. I have chosen ethnographic methods and concepts that will best explain the Ultra phenomenon. By attempting to use their own words and concepts, I demonstrate my faith that the Ultras can explain themselves better than I. By using their concepts, I demonstrate that concepts are never arbitrary but always part of a system (Nietzsche, 2002, pg. 20). They grow in concert with other concepts and within epistemic and cultural environs. Thus, I am consciously writing an ethnography that mixes the conceptual and contextual in the hope that the text embodies the spirit and *mentalità* of its subjects.

Participant observation allows the fullest of involvement in the lives of anthropological subjects. Without this form of information gathering this project would not have been possible, as it was only through constant contact with the subjects of research that an adequate level of trust and mutual respect was developed. For although Ultras regularly seek publicity, their structure and functioning is usually known only to those within the movement and organizations (Roversi 1994, pg. 379).

In addition to participant observation, 180 questionnaires and 7 long/in-depth interviews were used to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative research was carried out between months six and eight of a thirteen month period between October 2006 and January 2008. Because trust was such an important element of my research design, I felt the need to wait until my presence was no

longer obtrusive before having the Ultras commit to being subjects. The seven long interviews proved most useful for gathering information that has depth but that can be codified. They were sought only after the highest level of trust was established, but those which occurred in the final months of my research period, particularly after the December 2007 protest at the Circo Massimo (discussed at length in Chapter 9), were given voluntarily and at the urging of the Ultras themselves.

Subjects for this project were actively recruited in two ways. One, at the stadiums where AS Roma plays, either in or away from Rome. And, two, in the meeting places, such as cafés, stores and offices maintained and frequented by the Ultra groups being studied. In both cases, fliers were distributed asking for participants. However, the large majority of subjects were gathered by way of word-of-mouth and recommendation from friends and cohorts who had previously participated. Most of these recommendations came from Ultras who witnessed my commitment to being a fan of AS Roma. I carried a flag, sang the songs, cursed defeats, and shed tears after victories.

Being seen as someone committed to AS Roma and respectful of the Ultras' ideals allowed me access that no journalist could achieve, as did being seen by Ultras in the bars, cafés, markets, and places of business of Monteverde, the neighborhood in which I lived, discussing AS Roma, Italian and world politics, and giving insight into the United States - particularly its popular culture. (I will describe Monteverde in more detail in Chapter 2.)

Granted, this did not happen overnight. My "currency" gained value amongst the Ultras mostly after being seen long distances from Rome in order to cheer-on AS Roma. For the Ultras it is a question of honor to suffer long distances and an amount of discomfort to support the team. Therefore, trains from Udine, Turin, or Reggio Calabria to Rome; the overnight ferry to and from Cagliari; and airplanes from Palermo and Lisbon were great places to be seen. I enmeshed myself in

their world and was often approached and invited to talk, instead of having to approach people.

B. Research Amongst Curva Sud Roma

The nature of the Ultras and Curva Sud Roma in particular made some research goals unattainable. The Ultras are highly distrustful of, and thus hostile to, the media and the academic community. They are purposely unavailable and unreliable to these bodies, seeing both as too willing to sensationalize Ultra experience in order to increase either their own profits or simply to demonize the Ultras. Care had to be taken in the field, then, to be introduced to others by their friends and acquaintances. As well, bodily harm was threatened on more than one occasion, the most serious instance being in Florence when I was reproached by the leader of the fascist group *Arditi* (named after the Italian assault infantry soldiers of WWI) for filming the curva. The depth of the divisions within Curva Sud created serious impediments to the gathering of subjects. It is difficult to move from one political extreme to the other within the Curva, unless one is making a commitment to the political form to which one arrives.



Figure 14. Me in Curva Sud with *Romulae Genti*. January 2010.

As a short-term researcher, it was impossible to make such a commitment (and still be taken seriously). Because of the extreme disparity of outlooks on the far right within Curva Sud, it was decided to make deeper connections with these groups - even at the risk of alienation from leftist respondents. Further, because the radical left within the Curva is particularly sensitive to the Ultras being exploited, it was often impossible to gain their trust and understanding. Even within a group like *Fedayn*, which has moved toward the right from its far-left roots, there are still many members who refuse to help anyone who may profit from studying the Ultras.

These same concerns buttress the divisions within the Curva. There are stark political contrasts between the various groups, as discussed briefly above. But often these divisions are seen as natural, in that they are found within the larger societal context. It is instead the issue of profit that divides groups most clearly. Therefore, the two biggest groups in the Curva, *Ultras Romani* and *Boys Roma*, both of which sell merchandise in order to fund their activities, are vilified amongst others in the Curva who see such behavior as akin to capitalist exploitation.

VI. Conclusion

Above I have defined the Ultras as a type of fan organization which conceives of itself as a movement, an ideology, and a culture seeking to restore communal, spiritual, and ritual dimensions to modern life; sketched its *mentalità* and agonistic form of life; and introduced its opposition to *Calcio Moderno*. Having also delineated some of the theoretical and philosophical assumptions at the heart of this dissertation, I feel the reader is ready to more deeply understand the phenomenon. Chapter 2 describes the social organization of Curva Sud Roma. Chapter 3 explains what it is like to be amongst the Ultras on game, and non-game, days. Chapter 4 discusses the deaths of Filippo Raciti and Gabriele Sandri and how these relate to the Ultras' war against *Calcio Moderno*. Chapter

5 explains more thoroughly the values and *mentalità* of the Ultras. In so doing it discusses how Nietzsche instructs Ultra belief and behavior, the moralistic nature of Ultra oppositions, and violence. These themes are continued in Chapter 6 on Agonism. Chapter 7 explains the Ultras' *Romanità*, the extreme attachment to Rome and things Roman. Chapter 8 describes the political behaviors of the Ultras, while Chapter 9 is a first-hand account of the protest of the 2007 at Rome's Circo Massimo. Chapter 10 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of its merits in relation to other approaches to the topic.

CHAPTER TWO: The Social Organization of Curva Sud Roma

Gli Ultras della Roma siamo noi (We are AS Roma's Ultras)

Quelli che combattono per voi (Those that fight for you)

In un calcio che non ha bandiere (In a soccer without flags)

Siamo solo noi vecchie maniere (Only we do things in the old ways)

Non c'è stadio che non ci vedrà (There is no stadium that will not see us)

Non c'è gruppo che c'affronterà (There is no group that will oppose us)

Siam tornati forti più di prima (We have returned stronger than ever)

Sul cuore la Lupa Capitolina (On our hearts the Capitoline she-wolf)

The anthem of the *AS Roma Ultras* is one of the most important songs sung by today's Curva Sud. Not only because it is a microcosm of the Ultra *mentalità*, explaining as it does the Ultras as the preservers of a past tradition and representatives of a culture with deep oppositions and hostilities, but also because of its history. *AS Roma Ultras* was the most recent attempt to merge the various groups found in AS Roma's Curva Sud. Its break up during the 2004-2005 season has shaped the Curva one finds today.

Despite the fact that the group collapsed amid a swirl of confrontations, suspicions, and hatreds, the anthem is sung during every game played by AS Roma both at home and at away games. For those who supported *AS Roma Ultras* (during its dissolution), it is sung as a statement of defiance and longing. For those who sought liberation from the coalition, it is simply a good and fun song to sing.

As with many aspects of Ultra behavior, the anthem of *AS Roma Ultras* works on many levels. It is a broad statement directed at those outside the Ultra phenomenon, or, as it was originally intended, at those standing against Curva Sud, but it is also a specific attack on particular people

within that very Curva. In short, it is a monument to the divisions that define today's Curva Sud.

This chapter will provide the historical and demographic background of the more theoretical and ideological components of the dissertation that follow. First, the Ultra phenomenon in Rome will be addressed, including the demographic trends that were visible in the Curva I entered in 2006. This will be, as the chapter's first section heading explains, Curva Sud Today. The next section, Ultra Dynamics, explains how the ideological commitments of the various groups within Curva Sud shape its content and terrain. Then, a detailed account of the dynamic processes of change with the curva will be presented. That section is titled Fission and Revision Within Curva Sud Roma. The chapter concludes with Ultras - Hatreds and Commitments, an explanation of how the major fault lines between the Ultras help us to understand the phenomenon.

What follows is more than a presentation of the background and history of AS Roma's Ultras. It is a social history of Curva Sud in that it is a narrative devised completely from the explanations and accounts of the Ultras by whom the Curva is formed. It was written as what Carlo Ginzburg called a micro-history (1980, pgs. xxii-xxvi). It strips away, literally and figuratively, the story of the Ultras created by the Italian press and sports publishing industry to reveal a separate moral and cultural space - one dominated, as this dissertation demonstrates, by a *mentalità* that consciously regulates and motivates the behaviors and narratives of its adherents.

In the Ultras' eyes, their lived history, even when narrated as briefly as this, is invisible to those beyond the phenomenon. While they have no desire to be known by outsiders, a more complete understanding of who they are and how the phenomenon became what it is, it is felt, will assist the Ultras who are being criminalized and convicted of crimes in Italian courts of law. Besides, although they might not want to be known by outsiders, they certainly desire notoriety.

I. Curva Sud Today

Important Groups Mentioned in Chapter Two

Fedayn. 1972. Far Left until early-1990s, then slightly of the right. Mainly non-political since 2006.

Boys Roma 1972. Extreme Right. Merchants.

Commando Ultra Curva Sud. 1977-1987. Not a political group but gradually became a rightist group because of Boys' influence.

Opposta Fazione. 1989-2003. Extreme Right.

Arditi. 1992. Extreme Right..

AS Roma Ultras. 1999-2006. Organized to unify the political elements of the Curva.

Tradizione Distinzione Roma. 1995-2007. Extreme Right.

Monteverde. 1995-2005. Extreme Right.

Padroni di Casa. 2007. Extreme Right.

Ultras Romani. 2001-2009. Extreme Right. Merchants.

Antichi Valori. 2002-2006. Non-political.

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Figure 15. Curva Sud Roma. October 2006.

When fieldwork for this project commenced in October 2006, Curva Sud Roma was a

fractured collection of infighting groups. While demographically Curva Sud is consistent with other Italian curvas, its level of division, and the hostilities that buttress them, are unique. As I explained in the introduction, there are no less than 27 organized groups in today's Curva Sud. The largest of these groups (*Boys Roma 1972*, *Fedayn*, *Padroni di Casa*, *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo*, and *Ultras Romani*) have close to 1,000 members each.

There are also many groups with around 20 members each and many more with between 4- and-10 members. Each of them have their own ideological commitments and often unique vision of what the Curva and the Ultras are optimally to be (see below). These groups account for less than half of the 16,000 seats in Curva Sud. Thus, they share the space with a large number of unaligned fans of AS Roma. When one views the Curva from the outside it is possible to discern this divide, as the Ultras tend to wave flags and display banners while the other fans do not (figure 15 and 17). Differences and tensions between groups and between the groups and these fans define the dynamics of the Curva.

A. Demographics

i. Age, Gender, Class, and the Curva Groups

Antonio Roversi's 1994 study of FC Bologna's Ultras revealed a group that was almost homogeneously Italian and male, but mixed in terms of class (1994, pgs. 375-380). Specifically, his survey of 264 Ultras consisted 82.9% of males whose average age was 19. Of the 17.1% females the average age was 24 (Roversi, 1994, pg. 376). 80% of the FC Bologna Ultras were workers and 20% were students. Of the workers, the vast majority were employed in service, construction, or repair-shop work. The students attended either university or vocational (high) school (Roversi, 1994, pgs. 377-378). They were, thus, no "sub-proletariat," as Roversi remarks, but instead working-class

and petit bourgeois (1994, pg. 377).

These numbers are supported by my survey of 180 AS Roma Ultras. The average age of male respondents was 20. They made up 95% of respondents. The few female respondents averaged the same 20 years of age. While my small sample size is not representative of the curva as a whole, it does represent the 3 large groups who cooperated with my study (*Boys Roma*, *Ultras Romani*, and *Padroni di Casa*), the largest and most influential in the Curva, *Fedayn* aside. Along with questionnaires I was able to gather data through participation in group events, thereby understanding the groups' internal distinctions, such as leadership and age.

Boys Roma 1972 (henceforth *Boys* or *Boys Roma*) Ultras range in age from 17 to 37. Amongst the normal members the age ranges were between 19 and 26. Amongst the four leaders of the group, excluding the 17-year old son of former leader Paolo Zappavigna, the ages range from 25 to 37. The group of around 950 is 96% male and 4% female. Although the group's office is located in San Lorenzo, a working class zone of the Castro Pretorio neighborhood nestled between the Termini train station and Piazza Bologna (north-east of the historic center of Rome), the *Boys* Ultras live in various areas of Rome, ranging from Monti, Testaccio, Monteverde, and Cinecittà in and near Rome's center, to Frascati, 20-miles from Rome in the Castelli Romani (figure 16). (*Boys Roma*'s presence in San Lorenzo will be explained below.) 90% of them were born in or near Rome. The majority of those not born in Rome were born in the Lazio or Campania regions. There is also a *Boys* Ultra from Greece and two brothers from Albania. Each of them came to Rome to attend *La Sapienza* University.



Figure 16. The neighborhoods and zones of Rome.

90% of the *Boys Ultras* are employed, either in the service industry or doing clerical/office work. Amongst the latter, one works for TIM, the national telecom company and another for Grifo Latte, a dairy distribution company based in Perugia. 45% of *Boys Ultras* are students, either at the University or in the latter stages of high-and-vocational school, which means many of the students also work.

Ultras Romani's average age is 24. It's leader, William "Spadino" Betti is 35 while the three Ultras comprising the group's *direttivo*, or management board, are between 25 and 18. The group of 800 is 80% male. The large female element is due to girls who join their boyfriends in the group. In other words, there is no section specific for female membership. The Torino FC Curva contains a female-exclusive group named *Girls*. It is unique in Italy. Amongst the groups in Curva Sud Roma the 20% female membership in *Ultras Romani* is an anomaly. In the other large groups not central to this study, *Fedayn* and *Ultras Primavera-San Lorenzo*, there are very few females.

Ultras Romani draws from a wide range of territory in-and-near Rome. Most of their members live outside the city, with 18% coming from Ostia, the original home of the group, as well as Latina, Castelli Romani, and Nomentana. Within Rome, Cinecittà, Prati, Flaminio, and Esquilino are home to sizable numbers of *Ultras Romani* Ultras (figure 16). No one in the group was born outside Italy. Like *Boys*, most members were born in Campania or Lazio.

80% of *Ultras Romani* Ultras are employed in service industry, clerical, and manual labors. Among the latter there are several commercial fishermen and state trash collectors. Only 10% of the group's members are students. The high number of students in both *Boys* and *Padroni di Casa* accounts somewhat for the greater presence of those groups, along with *Fedayn*, in Rome.

Padroni di Casa seems a mix of *Boys Roma* and *Ultras Romani*. It has smaller membership, at approximately 550, but it entered the Curva only in 2007. Most of its members came from a formerly dominant Curva Sud group named *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* (Tradition and Distinction) which controlled the lower section of the Curva from the mid-1990s until its demise in 2007. Other members have come from the group's activities amongst the far right (explained below and in various chapters that follow). Like *Boys* and *Ultras Romani*, the leadership of the group is older than its general membership. The three leaders are between 37 and 29 years old. The average member age is 22. The group is male dominated with only 2% female membership. These few women, unlike *Ultras Romani*, are not simply girlfriends of male members, but often members of the far right in Rome who have entered the Curva because of *Padroni di Casa's* politics. The group's office is called Casa Pound, in honor of Ezra Pound. Opened in 2006, it is now part of a national network of the far right movement known as *Casa Pound Italia*. Although its Curva group is largely male oriented, there were several females present at Casa Pound each time I visited. Only

one of these did I recognize from game attendance.

The group's office is located in the Casal Bertone zone of Prenestina, a neighborhood southeast of Rome's center. As the former home of *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*, most of its members live nearby, being pulled from Testaccio, Cinecittà, Celio, Monteverde, Trastevere, and even Campo Marzio and Colonna in Rome's center (figure 2).

A full 65% of *Padroni di Casa* Ultras are students. 90% of these are at the University and are active in *Blocco Studentesco*, the university manifestation of *Casa Pound Italia*. Otherwise, 80% of the group's members are employed. There are full-time political activists in addition to service and office workers in the group. Of the latter, two are friends who together opened a *paninoteca* (sandwich shop) in Monteverde, one works for Alitalia, and another is a *barista* (bar man) at Tazza d'Oro near the Pantheon.

ii. Age, Gender, Class, and the Unaligned Fans in Curva Sud

When compared to the organized groups, the unaligned fans in Curva Sud are a younger and less homogeneous crowd. As I have explained, I cannot claim to have representative data for this wide mass of people. However, I received questionnaires from 35 of these fans and was able to have several long interviews with them. Additionally, I experienced many games with them, so that I feel I came to know many of them just as well as I did the Ultras of the groups. As research progressed, though, it became clear that I would need to focus upon group members in order to best understand the Ultra phenomenon.



Figure 17. Curva Sud Roma in 2006 showing location of groups.

While these fans were committed to AS Roma and in some cases to Rome in the same measure as the Ultras, they did not possess the same ardor for these as the group members. Demographically there are differences between these fans and the Ultras. 80% of my respondents were male with an average age of 17. The females were slightly older averaging 19 years of age. As the groups tend to deny membership to fans under-18, this swath of territory in the center of the curva tends to be the proving ground for young fans. It has also become the domain for many small groups. It has been shown in other curvas that the generational turnover in the late-1990s saw a shift away from older established groups and toward smaller units banded together by more violent behavior, pre-existing friendships, or a desire for independence (Roversi, 1994, pg. 374; Roversi and Balestri, 2002, pg. 134). The females visible in the area are often seen with male counterparts but can also be seen in small cohorts (5 or less), cheering-on AS Roma.

In general my respondents were students, either in college or highschool and living at home with parents. Only 7% of them were employed. These worked in service industry jobs in their neighborhoods, selling *gelato*, waiting tables in restaurants, and cashiering in stores and pharmacies.

Similar to the Ultras, they were born in or near Rome. Several of them claimed family in Puglia, Sicily, Campania, and Abruzzo. They lived in diverse neighborhoods in Rome - Monteverde, Ostiense, Prati, Pigna, and San Lorenzo. Unlike the older Ultras, none lived outside Rome.

What makes this group interesting in relation to the Ultras is not their age or length of residence, but the distance between how they view themselves within Curva Sud and how they are viewed by the Ultras. 80% of the unaligned fans who completed questionnaires consider themselves Ultras. Many more of those with whom I associated during research discussed issues of the Curva or Ultras as if they were their own. In other words, the vast majority of the unaligned fans that I encountered in Rome consider themselves Ultras. Fully 100% of group-affiliated Ultras with whom I interacted in any way consider the unaligned fans not to be Ultras. In fact they consider them to be among the main reasons that the Curva was in difficulty (the other reasons will be explained below). How does one explain this divergence of perception and conception?

98% of the Ultras travel away from Rome to attend AS Roma games. Those who did not suggested it was only work obligations which kept them from traveling. Each of those who did not travel expressed remorse as well as their fondness for traveling to away games. Amongst the unaligned, only 30% travel to attend games. And, while 85% of the Ultras are willing to travel long distances (specified as Turin, Sicily, or outside Italy) to attend games, only 5% of the unaligned fans are so willing. Further, only 25% of them admitted to attending Ultra rallies or functions beyond the stadium (such as lectures, dinners, masses, and funerals).

B. Beyond Ultra Demographics

This contrast is informative as to how the Ultras conceive of themselves. If examined sociologically, so as to discern what it is that the Ultras do, or even who they are, the answers are clear. They are young men who devote much time and energy into attending soccer games. However, even quantitative data gathered in Curva Sud Roma demonstrate that they are much more than that. It is unwise to expect an awareness of systemic classification amongst research subjects, as participants often find reasons for acting as they do self-evident. However, the Ultras possess a discourse that is loaded with behavior-inducing ethical imperatives and an awareness of “being Ultra.” Thus, they have reason to suspect that the unaligned fans are simply not Ultras.

I have already stated that the unaligned fans do not wave flags during games. In the years before the state repression of the Ultras’ in-stadium behaviors (begun following the death of Filippo Raciti in February 2007) there were six visible elements to their form of fandom: constant singing, emergency flares, smoke candles, flags, large choreographed displays, and the homemade banners called *striscioni*. Unaligned fans tend not to take part in this style of fandom. They will sing and help with Curva-wide choreography but otherwise they refrain from these displays. That being said, the data revealed two major cleavages between the Ultras and the fans in the curva.

To be an Ultra, one simply must travel away from Rome to attend games. Indeed, I witnessed a core of supporters in Portugal, Sicily, Sardegna, Turin, Udine, and Reggio Calabria. I also know of others who traveled to Manchester, Greece, and Ukraine all in two seasons (2006-2008). The *trasferta*, or away game, is central to the Ultras’ ideal of suffering for AS Roma (to be discussed at length in the next chapter). As a favorite Curva Sud song reveals, “we grind up the kilometers, we overcome the obstacles, with AS Roma deep within our hearts.”



Figure 18. AS Roma's Ultras in Lecce. 2000.

As well, to be an Ultra one must devote time and energy to one's group beyond attending games. For the most committed Ultras, the groups are an extension of their families. It was common to meet Ultras who were always, whether at dinner, a midday café, an Ultra office, or a print shop, with the same group of fellow Ultras. Within their *mentalità*, the group is the vehicle through which one is an Ultra. Thus, it is to be an object of devotion, just as Rome and AS Roma. This is evident when an Ultra carries the group's banner to an away game (also discussed below) and arrives at a stadium hours before kick-off so that the banner can be hung in the most strategic (i.e. most visible) location (figure 19). For if the banner is present, the group is present.



Figure 19. Ultras hanging a small banner in Parma. 2007.

i. Leadership and the Curva Sud Groups

Roversi and Balestri (2002) identified a leadership crisis amongst Italian Ultras beginning in 1995. This crisis saw the Ultras moving away from hierarchical groups with well-developed leadership structures and strict rules of conduct toward smaller groups without centralized leadership. They give two reasons for this shift. First, the Ultras became the domain of a more hedonistic and violent element. Thuggery became rationale for action for many of the new small groups (Roversi and Balestri, 2002, pg. 140). Second, the state began policing the Ultras more harshly after a series of episodes brought Ultra violence into the general Italian consciousness. The most severe of these was the 1995 killing of Genoa Ultra Vincenzo Spagnolo by his AC Milan counterparts. The state began cracking down on the large, well-organized groups, those which actually had a code of ethics and the ability to police their own members, while leaving alone the “stray dogs” that tended to commit the most violent of acts. By 1998, the major groups in the most important curvas were largely bereft of leadership (Roversi and Balestri, 2002, pg. 140).

In Curva Sud Roma, the dating used by Roversi and Balestri coincides not so much with a

leadership crisis brought about by police repression as with an intra-curva fight amongst the various groups for supremacy of the Curva. In fact, the most influential Curva Sud groups of the time, *Boys Roma*, *Fedayn*, and *Opposta Fazione* (Opposing Faction) all benefitted from strong leadership. It was only after the 2005 disintegration of the conglomerate *AS Roma Ultras* (discussed below) that lack of leadership became an issue amongst Curva Sud Roma.

Nevertheless, when I arrived in Rome in October 2006, I found a Curva Sud that was dominated by one very powerful group with a single leader (*Ultras Romani*); a former behemoth with no leader (*Boys Roma*); and two legendary groups with leadership but which refused to lead the Curva as a whole (*Fedayn* and *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*). There were also numerous small groups and the large but benign *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo*. To best illustrate the importance of leadership amongst Ultra groups, I will briefly examine *Ultras Romani* and *Boys Roma*.



Figure 20. Spadino (in center with tattooed left arm raised) and some of *Ultras Romani*. Empoli 2007.

Ultras Romani was founded in 2002 by William “Spadino” Betti, a longtime member of *Fedayn* (figure 20). Spadino, as he is known by all in the Curva, sought the permission of then-leader of *Boys Roma* Paolo Zappavigna to create a new group in Curva Sud, and with *Boys*’ backing

he was able to take the space occupied by the group *XXI Aprile, 753 a.C.*. Although the group is hated by most of the other Curva Sud groups (for reasons which will be made clear below), it is the most powerful and active in today's curva. This is because of Spadino's authority and notoriety. Unlike other Ultras, Spadino seeks relationships with the club and even the players of AS Roma. He seeks to make the Ultras an integral part of Italian soccer, instead of the adversarial element they have been and are.

There are three Ultras who operate below Spadino in the *Ultras Romani* hierarchy. These have responsibilities from running the group's offices and organizing travel to and from away games to carrying the group's banners in and away from Rome. These three, along with Spadino, form the *direttivo*, or managing board, of the group. While Spadino, at 35, has over ten years of experience in Curva Sud, each of the others is 25 or older and have between seven and eight years of experience. This style of leadership was the norm for early Curva Sud groups like *Fedayn*, *Boys Roma*, and *Commando Ultra Curva Sud (CUCS)* and it allowed these groups to survive the shifting loyalties and animosities of the curva. Because of the short history of the group there has been no generational turnover of leadership.



Figure 21. Paolo Zappavigna demonstrating with *Boys*. 2004.

The same cannot be said of *Boys Roma*. Begun in 1972 by Antonio Bongi and several of his friends, *Boys* is the oldest Ultra group in Rome. Bongi was actively involved in the group until 1994. After having groomed two longtime members to replace him and his generation as leaders, he retired from the group. These two, known amongst the Ultras as Pinuccio and Armandino, succeeded in making *Boys* the largest and most powerful group in Curva Sud. The group boasted a membership of 1,800 Ultras during their reign. In 1999, however, a *Boys* member named Paolo Zappavigna was named sole leader of the group (figure 21). He had been accepted into the group by Pinuccio and Armandino two years earlier and, having shown a gift for organization and lack of fear of violence, quickly made himself an unofficial leader of the group.

Zappavigna controlled *Boys Roma* until his death in 2005 following a motorcycle accident. From 1999 to 2005 he was the most influential group leader in the history of Curva Sud Roma, able to single-handedly determine the fates of all the other Curva groups (*Fedayn* excluded). Being just 39 and having an almost messianic following, Paolo had no able successor in waiting. Unlike the two previous generational turnovers for *Boys*, Paolo's death left a dire lack of leadership in the group.



Figure 22. Entering Milan's San Siro Stadium behind the *Boys* leaders. 2007.

In October 2006, *Boys* was lead by a council of four Ultras, each between 25 and 37 (figure 22). Lacking the charisma of Zappavigna, they were reduced to keeping the group alive until a proper successor could emerge. In fact, one had done so before Zappavigna's death, but was prohibited from attending soccer games for three years (from 2003 to 2006) for his part in the suspended SS Lazio-AS Roma game of 2003 (discussed in Chapter 9). It was not until the beginning of the 2007-2008 soccer season that the leader, affectionately known as "il Duce" by the *Boys* Ultras, was able to take control. Even then, however, the group was barely visible during games in and away from Rome. Another potential leader, the son of Paolo Zappavigna, was being groomed by the current leadership of the group to take control in the near future.

Through all of this, the *Boys* membership was diminished by 50%. Whereas they had been a ferocious group of around 2,000 fascist Ultras before and during Zappavigna's control, they were barely 1,000 Ultras in 2007. Amongst these there was infighting between those loyal to *Forza Nuova* and *Fiamma Tricolore*, the two Italian neo-fascist parties.

What these examples demonstrate is the importance of recognized leadership. Even amongst the groups not discussed here there is a definite leadership structure in place. In the cases of *Fedayn* and *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo*, which have a commitment to democratic leadership, there is a system in place which allows decisions to be made. In the smaller groups there is often no leader but a small group of equals comprising not only a leadership council but the entirety of the group. These groups of between four and ten people, however, have no intention of attempting the magnitude of public display of which the larger groups are capable. Choreography, the most

grandiose form of Ultra expression, is simply too large a task for a small group.¹ Further, because the groups also function as political, cultural, or social entities beyond the stadium, disorganization and weak leadership are a burden that can sink an Ultra group.

II. Ultra Dynamics

We have seen that there are at best subtle differences of demographic composition between the Ultra groups and the unaligned fans in Curva Sud; age, gender, and occupation look quite similar. It is instead inter-group dynamics related to leadership and political ideology that determine the longevity or visibility of a group. Before the mid-1990s proliferation of smaller groups in the curva, neighborhood representation would have been an important point of distinction between the large groups. However, as my data demonstrate, today most large groups are populated by Ultras from various areas in and around the city of Rome, while the small groups tend to be populated by Ultras from the same neighborhood. None of these small groups have made the neighborhood central to their group, though.

The distance between the Ultras and the unaligned fans provided a better way of understanding the Ultras than did the demographic data. From the behavioral and ethical dimensions of the Ultras' self-understanding, as people who believe and act in certain ways prescribed by their self-conscious dedication to "being Ultra," we saw the potential for several vectors that intersect to create a dynamic Curva Sud Roma. Of these, political ideology and affiliation are the most important. Also influential are the territorial and spatial constraints within the Curva, and the strife between groups caused by the desire of some of them to sell merchandise. While the first is often

¹ While there is no English equivalent of how *coreografia* is used in Italian to refer to a large choreographed display, I will henceforth use *choreography* when discussing the large choreographed displays of the Ultras. Think of one performing a choreography, full-stop, without adding what act is being choreographed.

an issue of alignment and alliances, the second is embroiled with the very conception of what is an Ultra. Further, each of these alliances and conceptions will also intersect with competing expectations of what type of space the Curva is - Ultra or free? These will be addressed in the remainder of the chapter.

A. *Mentalità* and the Curva

The *mentalità* or worldview of the Ultras, as I explained in the previous chapter, is a deeply ethical will to opposition and rivalry. Much of what I studied amongst the Ultras I relate to their *mentalità*, not only because I feel that a proper understanding of their worldview is crucial for understanding the Ultras, but because they use the concept to explain so much of their behavior. Later chapters will explain the content of the *mentalità* and how it relates to specific situations in an Ultra's life experience. Now, however, I will demonstrate how the Curva has been and continues to be shaped by the Ultras' commitment to a "*mentalità* Ultras."



Figure 23. Rome's Olympic Stadium alongside the CONI offices and Stadio dei Marmi.

As I briefly demonstrated above, there is a behavioral distance between the group-belonging Ultras and the unaligned fans in Curva Sud. The Ultras are adamant that if one does not support AS

Roma in the Ultra style (flags, songs, flares, smoke torches) and does not travel to support AS Roma away from Rome, then one is not an Ultra. Their *mentalità* works in the same fashion, providing a template for how an Ultra understands soccer, the Curva, Rome, and the world. It makes an Ultra a political actor, although not necessarily a fascist or communist. It gives the Ultra an understanding of *Calcio Moderno* and how it infiltrates the curva through merchandising. It also gives the Ultra an expectation of what kind of space is the Curva, be it an organized and hierarchical space or one that is more anarchic and hedonistic. There are other elements of the *mentalità* which will be made clear throughout the pages that follow. However, these are the main elements that make the Curva a dynamic space and a space rife with division and hatred.

B. Curva Sud Roma: A History of Political Ultras

The curvas of Italian soccer stadiums had been populated since the post-war period with a young and hardscrabble crowd. Violence and aggression was normal in or near these curvas long before the Ultras made them their homes (Foot, 2006, pg. 325). However, while rivalries and willingness to act aggressively pre-existed the Ultras, it was the Ultras who made these the basis of a *mentalità* and form of life. The Ultra phenomenon was born in Milan. The first group in AC Milan's Curva Sud, *Fossa dei Lioni* (Lions' Den), was created in 1968. One year later *Boys SAN* (*Boys Squadra d'Azione Nerazzurre* - Boys Black and Blue Action Squad) became the first group in Internazionale (Inter) Milan's Curva Nord.

The two groups are of interest to the history of Curva Sud Roma because each was the prototype for the Ultra phenomenon in general. Both laid similar foundations for a style of fandom that still defines the Ultras (flags, flares, organized clapping and singing, and drums). But more importantly, each became emblematic of organizing the Italian curvas in line with principles that

transcend soccer - in this case, politics and the traditional class and political associations of the clubs themselves. As such, *Fossa dei Lioni* celebrated the working-class traditions of AC Milan and leaned toward the political left, while *Boys SAN* was founded with the political symbols and ideologies of the far right, using Inter's traditional association with the city's industrialists as a base. While these two large groups were unimpeded within their curvas, laying the foundation for political affiliations that have lasted until today, Curva Sud Roma's groups were divided between left and right leaning Ultras.



Figure 24. Seating plan of Rome's Olympic Stadium.

i. *Fedayn* and the Radical Left²

As one can surmise given their choice of name, *Fedayn* was until the late-1990s associated with the radical left. Unlike AC Milan's *Fossa dei Lioni*, which adopted a radical stance only after its founding, *Fedayn* was committed from its beginnings to a radicalized left. This is because

² The group summaries that follow were largely taken from member accounts. In the case of *Fedayn*, which refused to cooperate with my study, their portrayal comes from members of *Antichi Valori* (Antique or Classical Values), a sister group of *Fedayn*.

Fedayn's founding came after the radicalization of youth politics that swept from universities to popular manifestations from 1969 into the early 1970s. The founding members' awareness of the Palestinian terrorist organization stems directly from their involvement in campus activities at Rome's *La Sapienza* University.

Fedayn was started by Roberto Rulli and a group of student friends. It was intended to be a social club for young radical fans of AS Roma in the Quadraro zone of the Prenestino neighborhood, located between Rome's historical center and Cinecittà (figure 16). From this club, originally meeting at a bar on Piazza Numidio, *Fedayn* intended to make Curva Sud an extension of the historically leftist working class found in Quadraro. This close association between neighborhood and group was an original feature of AS Roma's Ultra groups; until 1977, all of the groups in the Curva were associated with one of the city's neighborhoods.



Figure 25. *Fedayn* Ultras in 1982.

In that year *Commando Ultra Curva Sud* (*CUCS*) was created with the merger of several small groups. Its Curva-wide displays of choreographed fandom quickly made ideal the large conglomerate, given the size of Rome's Olympic Stadium and Curva Sud (figure 24). In today's

Curva Sud, one still finds vestiges of this tradition, with the collection of smaller groups known collectively as *Testaccio* (in homage to the neighborhood just south of the Aventine Hill where AS Roma was founded and where the team played in its early years), the group from, and called, *Tor Bella Monaca*, and the Ultras from San Lorenzo who compose half of the *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo* group (figure 16).

Until the 1977 entrance of *CUCS*, Curva Sud Roma was known as a *curva rossa* (red curva) because of the pervasive Communist influence. Along with *Fedayn* were *Fossa dei Lupi* (Wolves Den), *Pantere Giallorosse* (Yellow-red Panthers), and *Panthers*, smaller groups comprised of radical leftists and student activists - even if their first commitment while in Curva Sud was to AS Roma. While both the neighborhood and leftist connections of the original Curva Sud groups have largely been relegated to history, *Fedayn* has not suffered for influence among AS Roma's Ultras. Although it too has lost its association with radical leftist politics, it is still a signpost for a type of Ultra that puts club support and group loyalty above political ideology.



Figure 26. The heart of *Fedayn*'s section remains empty in protest of the post-Raciti crackdown on Ultras. AS Roma-SS Lazio 2007.

ii. *Boys Roma* and the Extreme Right³

Boys Roma is an icon amongst all of Italy's Ultras. It is the oldest Ultra group in Rome, being born two months prior to *Fedayn*. It is perhaps misleading to talk about the early years of *Fedayn* and *Boys* as a struggle for control of Curva Sud. This is because *Fedayn*'s control over Curva Sud was such that *Boys* began in Curva Nord. Even there, they caused a stir amongst the fans of AS Roma, as they attended each game with megaphones, drums, and bugles (the first Roman group to make their presence known in this form). The drums and megaphones quickly became standard for all the groups, making both curvas of the Olympic Stadium a cacophony of noise, especially given the lack of unity of the performers.

It is not only the style and method of fandom introduced by *Boys* that makes them iconic. They were also the first in Rome to organize with a rightist political position. Instead of battling to enter the leftist atmosphere of the early 1970s Curva Sud, Antonio Bongi and a small group of affluent friends congregated in Curva Nord (figure 24). Coming together from wealthy neighborhoods like Parioli, Vigna Clara, and Baduina, the *Boys* founders sought to form a "*fascio d'azione*" ([fascist] action group), that is, something that would be active in Rome as not only a social club but one ready and able to engage the left in "action" beyond discourse (figure 16).⁴ From the beginning the *Boys* members wore uniforms, or at least matching shirts and scarves, to the stadium. The uniforms were motivated by the desire to emulate *squadristi* (members of fascist

³ *Boys Roma* was named after a mistranslation of The Who's 1965 song "The Kids Are Alright," of which the chorus announces, "if the kids are united then we'll never be divided." Kids is translated *ragazzi* - Italian for kids, children, and boys. The chorus becomes "*se iragazzi sono uniti non saranno mai sconfitti*." In addition to Inter Milan's *Boys SAN*, there was also a *Boys* ultra group associated with FC Torino in Turin that predated *Boys Roma*. Founder Antonio Bongi claimed that the name was taken from that group, as he and his friends were fascinated with the Torinese ultras.

⁴ In a December 2007 interview, Fabio, a leading member of *Boys*, used "*fascio d'azione*" specifically to connote the inter-war fascist action squads.

paramilitary squads), not so much in style, but in world view. Their tight organization, even when entering the stadium, was spectacular and quickly copied by all of AS Roma's Ultras.



Figure 27. *Boys* Ultras in 1976

Although *Fedayn* and *Boys* represented opposite ends of the political spectrum, there is a sense looking back that, at least in the early years of the Ultra phenomenon in Rome, the political differences were less dramatic than they would become as more extreme fascist groups like *Opposta Fazione* (Opposing Faction) and *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* (Tradition and Distinction) came on the scene in 1989 and 1995, respectively. *Boys* members from the Curva Nord years are proud of their fascist leanings and that they founded something with lasting value. They are more proud, though, that they “brought the fascist history of Rome to light for four generations [sic] of Romans,” said Fabio, amongst the current leaders of the group. “But,” he acknowledged, “neither *Boys* nor *Fedayn* would have engaged the other purely based on political differences at that time.”

Back then, to be a fan of AS Roma was enough. From the perspective of the Ultras involved, the political differences in the early Curva were largely irrelevant. It was at most a secondary issue,

something that was important outside the stadium but of little salience inside. That being said, there was very little contact between the groups. “*Fascisti per fascisti, comunisti per cani*,” (Fascists for fascists, communists for dogs) was the saying at *Boys*. And given their lack of desire to engage the communists, the distance between Curva Nord and Curva Sud suited *Boys* fine.

iii. *Boys, Commando Ultra Curva Sud, and the Origins of Fascism in Curva Sud*

In 1977 *Boys* moved to Curva Sud in order to take part in *Commando Ultra Curva Sud*, the original blanket Ultra organization in Rome, known by its acronym *CUCS*.⁵ Already by that date AS Roma’s Ultras were great in number and woefully unorganized. With better organized Ultras, especially those of Torino FC, making weekly headlines for their choreographed displays and thunderous support, the various leaders met and decided, under the direction of a man known only as “Geppo,” to unite behind one banner and to coordinate all support. Thus was born the largest Ultra organization in Italy.

CUCS made Roma’s Ultras a household name. They became not only the symbol of Curva Sud, but also of AS Roma, and Italy’s Ultras in general. They made discipline and organization an Ultra trait; communication and mid-week meetings became a necessity. Despite giving the appearance of tight organization (the *CUCS*-led Curva was often a 10,000 person wall of coordinated color, song, clapping, and beating) there remained great heterogeneity within (figures 28 and 29). For one, *Fedayn* was only loosely associated with the group. They still held considerable weight as an Ultra group but refused, as Federico of *Antichi Valori* put it, “to submit to the oath of another group, to put aside their own particularity, even for the good of the Curva or AS Roma.” In

⁵ *CUCS* is pronounced as if one word in Rome, like “kooks”, and the Ultra will often say “the *CUCS*” in English instead of “il *CUCS*.”

contrast, *Boys*'s popularity exploded within *CUCS*, mostly because they acted as the group's muscle.



Figure 28. Ultra according to *CUCS*. 1984



Figure 29. Ultra according to *CUCS*. 1984

In the early years of *CUCS* there were very few violent episodes, but by the early 1980s it was common for the more well-organized opponents to engage. *Boys* ultimately used their notoriety

within *CUCS* as rationale for leaving the organization, doing so in 1984, although with a commitment to defend the *CUCS* as they would defend themselves. The move toward aggression within *Boys* did not signal a general move within Curva Sud, but by now *Boys* was full of the most radical element of the Curva and perhaps the city.⁶

In the mid-to-late-1980s *Boys Roma* became synonymous with *squadrisimo*, holding a nationalist and rightist position that not only looked back to Mussolini's fascist party, but forward to a new fascist Rome. Becoming more and more organized (given the impetus to do so from *CUCS*) *Boys* in these years brought the far right into Curva Sud. A new generation of leadership coming from Rome's *La Sapienza* University, but more importantly, from within, also added a new intellectualism.

This generation of Ultras was the bedrock for the explosion of the phenomenon in the 1990s. For groups like *Boys* it was responsible for a radicalization of the *mentalità Ultras*. No longer was being an AS Roma fan enough. There was also a long and glorious Roman history and iconography that had to be incorporated into the Ultra experience. With the money, numbers, and organization to dominate the Curva, *Boys* began staging their own Curva-wide choreographies. These choreographies were laden with *Romanità* (a deep commitment to Rome and things Roman), using a vision of fascist Rome to create an Ultra Rome - one that, according to those who were there, was instrumental in guiding the general shift toward a rightist Curva Sud.

iv. *Opposta Fazione* (Opposing Faction), Politics, and Violence in Curva Sud

In 1987, *CUCS* split into two groups over the right of the Ultras to be hostile to AS Roma.

⁶ According to Fabio, one of the current leaders of *Boys*, in this period the group even attempted to contact the Roman publisher of many Julius Evola works about a possible speaking engagement. He also claims that leading neo-fascists involved in the far right in Rome often frequented events sponsored by *Boys*, among them Giovanni Alemanno.

The schism erupted when the club signed a former player of SS Lazio and FC Juventus (AS Roma's and Curva Sud's biggest rivals) named Lionello Manfredonia. Two years later, in 1989, the largely pacific Curva Sud that *CUCS* and *Boys* had dominated for ten years was preparing to become the domain of violently fascist groups.

The benchmark date for the political takeover of Curva Sud is debated amongst AS Roma's Ultras. Some say it was always a politicized space. Others say it is yet to be so. For those who give examples, the founding of *Fedayn* and *Boys*, from the left and right respectively, laid the foundation for politics in the Curva. Or, it occurred when *Boys* left *CUCS* in 1984 to pursue its own fascist agenda. These explanations suggest that the Curva has been a politicized space since 1972, and that the *CUCS* split merely made existing differences impossible to ignore.⁷ It is said, as well, that, instead of long-standing division dominating the history of the Curva, there are only brief moments of sharp exchange, smoothed over by long periods of common purpose. What few argue about, however, is the change in the Curva effected by the 1989 addition of *Opposta Fazione*.



Figure 30. Rightist
CUCS Ultra. 1983

⁷ This is my position on the matter as well as that of *Boys* and *Padroni di Casa*, the most fascist of the current curva groups. Those on the left tend to deny the importance of politics within the history of the curva.



Figure 31. *Boys Ultra*.
1987.

Opposta Fazione came into being after the youngest and most radical element of *CUCS-Gruppo Anti-Manfredonia* (CUCS-GAM) decided to form their own group. They sought something different - literally to be the hardest, most uncompromising Ultras that Rome had yet seen. They were opposed to having relations with other groups and the club, much like *Fedayn*. But unlike the leftists, *Opposta Fazione* was of the far right. They did not seek to mimic *squadristi*, as the early form of *Boys* had done, but aimed at *being squadristi*. They wanted to be a paramilitary organization that went to AS Roma games. As such, they rarely traveled without arms, often going to away games with a cache of clubs, brass knuckles, and bombs.



Figure 32. *Opposta Fazione* marching in Florence.
1990

Unlike previous Ultras, who thought more about choreography and spectacle than fighting,

Opposta Fazione sought out confrontation with opposing Ultras. They made it a normal part of game day to await traveling Ultras outside the guest section, or in other parts of Rome, to attack them. Until the early 1990s, when other Ultras began to match *Opposta Fazione*'s methods, they were vilified for having betrayed the Ultra movement. The calls of betrayal came from the areas of the Curva that were still of the left, and from the sizable remainder of *CUCS*.



Figure 33. *Opposta Fazione*. Turin 1994.

Not only was *Opposta Fazione* actively seeking confrontation and fights, but they were the most radically fascist of any group in the Curva. *Boys* understood *Opposta Fazione* as *camerate* (fascist comrades). Having an agenda to make the Curva fascist, *Boys* used *Opposta Fazione*'s constant threat of violence to help create two new rightist groups in the early 1990s - *Arditi* in 1992 and *Frangia Ostile* (Hostile Fringe) in 1993.



Figure 34. *Opposta Fazione* graffiti. “Our motto: Make Violence! Signed with a fasces. Via Gailia. Rome. 2007

Elsewhere, the right was well-represented by the group called *Monteverde*. From 1995 to 2005, *Monteverde* was one of the most visible and famous groups in the history of Curva Sud. It was composed entirely of Ultras from the wealthy Roman neighborhood of the same name, located on the western side of the Gianicolo hill (figure 16). It was also one of the most aggressively fascist organizations in Curva Sud’s history, using as its symbol the two-headed axe affixed to a crusader’s shield, and being one of the first to utilize *squadrismo* (the form of thuggish community based policing most associated with the origins of Fascism) in ridding their neighborhood of vandals, drug dealers, and *stranieri* (strangers).⁸

⁸ The two-headed axe, or bipenne, are connected specifically with Greek nationalism and fascism and lately with European nationalism. The shield of the crusades, or *scudo della cruciata* is the fascist Ultras’ contribution to recent fascist symbolism. It is a short flat-topped shield resembling the Croatian national symbol, but with its top left corner hollowed.



Figure 35. *Monteverde* Sticker.

Antonio Roversi (2006) included *Monteverde* (along with *Boys*, *Opposta Fazione*, and *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*) in his study of the most feared and important fascist Ultras in Italy. Although he made no mention of their *squadrisimo*, other Curva Sud Ultras knew *Monteverde* above all because of their legendary exploits in the streets of their neighborhood. “In the late-1990s,” said Fabio, one of the leaders of *Boys* in 2007, “the fascists were the kings of the Curva. We used to beat anyone who confronted us. But there was only *Monteverde* that was courageous enough to take that attitude to their neighborhood.”

Diego, a 39 year-old Ultra who was active in the group from 1995 to 2001, when he stopped going to games in order to spend more time with his new family, gave a better sense of what *Monteverde* was doing. “We weren’t ‘straightedge’ or anything,” he said in 2007, referring to the American youth movement against drugs and alcohol, “but we understood drug dealers to be bad for our community. There was a club on Via Barrilli that became a magnet for cocaine dealers. All night there would be cars coming into the area to get drugs. We didn’t want this. So we confronted a few of them and put a stop to it. After that success we began looking out for anyone who didn’t

belong. Roma panhandlers we pushed down to (Circonvallazione) Gianicolense. I remember,” he continued, “there was a rash of scooter burnings sometime before the Jubilee (year 2000). We started investigating after Giorgio, a good member of the group, had his burned. We never found out who did it but once word got out that *Monteverde* was looking for the culprit the burnings stopped. It got to the point where we just put our stickers on signs at the end of ‘our’ streets and no one went near them without good reason.”



Figure 36. *Monteverde*. AS Roma-AS Livorno 2004

Monteverde was intended to be more than a group in the Curva Sud; members used their resources to create a well-heeled and largely well-read movement, small but politically-extreme. They were not alone among Curva Sud groups to be connected to a particular neighborhood, and to seek to bring the experience of their neighborhood to the stadium. But they were extreme in the way they returned from the stadium invigorated with a sense of responsibility and grandeur, thereby investing their neighborhood with the spirit of community and collective responsibility that guides many of the Curva’s groups.

v. *Boys, Tradizione Distinzione Roma (Tradition and Distinction), AS Roma Ultras: The Most Extreme Ultras Yet*

Throughout the 1990s, *Boys* continued to lord it over Curva Sud, consistently maintaining around 1500 members (Garsia, 2004, pg. 81). At the height of their power in 1997 *Boys* opened an office, the first Ultra office in Rome. Instead of seeking a location near the group's roots in Parioli, Vigna Clara, or Baduina, they chose to set up shop in the neighborhood called San Lorenzo (figure 37).



Figure 37. *Boys Roma's* office. 2007.

San Lorenzo lies between *Termini*, Rome's main train station, and Piazza Bologna. It has the distinction of being the zone that sustained the most bomb-damage during WWII, thus it is largely post-war in architecture and plan (figure 16). It houses the *La Sapienza* University and the Aeronautical Ministry, both in large complexes of bold fascist neoclassical design. But, other than these and the *Boys* office, it is home to little else fascist. *Boys* desired to be a conquering, colonizing army in San Lorenzo, making no attempt to integrate into the traditionally leftist working-class neighborhood.⁹ With this same arrogance, *Boys* (with *Arditi*, *Opposta Fazione*, and other smaller groups) marched through Curva Sud and the rest of Italy - the most aggressive Ultras in AS Roma's history. Because they also had a benevolent attitude toward the other AS Roma fans and a true love

⁹ Below I explain the founding of the *Boys* office in detail, including how they operate today in assumed opposition to the other occupants of the neighborhood.

for AS Roma they were unchallenged. That is until the beginning of the 1999-2000 season.

In the summer of 1999, *Opposta Fazione* aligned with a band of smaller groups that had been congregating in the *basso*, or lower section, of Curva Sud to form *AS Roma Ultras*. This new group consciously recruited members from both the left and right, seeking to curb the recent dominance of politically based groups in the Curva. *Boys* refused to join, but others, like *Antichi Valori*, a break-away section from *Fedayn* (but which still stood behind the historic *Fedayn* banner) embraced the attempt to unite the Curva behind one banner. *Opposta Fazione* was involved, many believe, because by then, after too many battles with Ultras and the police, they were simply burning out. Their desire to act as new Roman *squadristi* had never truly materialized (even if the idea was taken up by younger *Boys* members as well as *Monteverde* and others) and their leadership was faltering.

AS Roma Ultras stabilized the Curva like no group had before. They gave voice to all political ideas and made space for even the smallest of groups. The group took advantage of many older Ultras returning to the Curva, as well as new technologies like internet and cell phones to revolutionize how Ultras communicated and organized.¹⁰ Soon, however, the leadership of *Opposta Fazione* abandoned the wider coalition (which still included the membership of *Opposta Fazione*), to merge with *Boys*.

By this time, 2002, *Boys* was under the direction of Paolo Zappavigna, a 15-year veteran of the Curva, who had experienced its previous unities and schisms. He had seen *CUCS* rise and fall, seen the left decline and the right ascend, all the while safely ensconced in *Boys*. Thus, he had no real allegiance to anyone else in the Curva, with the exception of *Opposta Fazione*. With Paolo's

¹⁰ The group created the www.asromaultras.org website, which continues to operate, even in the absence of the group itself, as the premier ultras website in Italy. Cellular telephones allowed Ultras to communicate more openly on game days. This was especially important with large groups traveling to away games. In 2007 cell phones allowed Ultras around Italia to learn of the killing of Gabriele Sandri before the media began reporting the event.

backing (at that time, like having Papal authority) a minority within *Boys* united with the defected leadership of *Opposta Fazione* to re-create *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*, a small group dating to 1995 but destined to become the last of the great ideologically based groups in Curva Sud. It was renamed *Padroni di Casa* (Masters of the House) in 2007.



Figure 38. *AS Roma Ultras* leads the curva. 2004

Tradizione Distinzione Roma, like *Boys* and *Opposta Fazione* before it, had designs on creating a separate movement within the Ultras. Instead of using the Ultras as a platform for what may be called a generic fascism (hanging Celtic crosses or the Italian national flag over their group banner, performing Roman salutes), however, they focused more on the Roman elements of fascism's history (from fascism's desire to connect itself with Classical Rome to its impact on the modern city of Rome). This was especially evident in *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*'s banners and group iconography.



Figure 39. *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* banner. “Lazio-Livorno. Same Initial, Same Oven.” AS Roma-AS Livorno 2004.

At the same time, *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* focused less on confrontation and more on the act of fandom - a contrast with *Opposta Fazione*. Despite the group being radically committed to, and associated with, fascism, during AS Roma games they joined with any groups interested in supporting the team. They sang, co-signed banners, and helped create and pay for choreographies with each and all. They were motivated by “love of AS Roma, love of our city, [and] of its history.” But, *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* (and later as *Padroni di Casa*) was also actively involved in their office in intellectualizing not only the Ultras phenomenon, but also fascism “and its tradition as a heroic reference point for those of us who are convinced that in this modern age of dissolution it is impossible to escape and realize yourself according to just ideals.”¹¹

Of those ideals, one was more prominent than others: the superiority of Rome to all other cities and civilizations in human history. If defending the honor of Rome meant attacking police or

¹¹ Quote from Mario, a 7-year member of *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*.

other Ultras then it was right to do so. More than just the world of soccer was at stake for *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*. “If Western Modernity has inverted the celebration of strength, honor, and greatness that were truly Roman, then the Ultras, through their *mentalità* and brotherhood will create a new revalued way of being.”¹²



Figure 40. *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* . 2005.

Tradizione Distinzione Roma's, or *Padroni di Casa*'s most important contribution to the history of AS Roma's Ultras was to make radicalization a part of being in the group. They understood themselves as part of a long-range attack on modernity and used the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, Ezra Pound, and Julius Evola to convince themselves and others. As I explained in Chapter 1, these writers, along with Georges Sorel, are understood and discussed in the offices of this and related groups such as *Boys*.

According to Lorenzo Contucci, the foremost authority on Curva Sud Roma (as creator and

¹² Ibid. “Revalued” is used here purposely, as this part of my conversation with Mario was focused on how the Ultras used the Nietzschean critique of morality in their attacks on the media's criminalization of the Ultras phenomenon.

curator of the *AS Roma Ultras* website - a veritable compendium of information about AS Roma's Ultras), before *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* no groups had thought of using "critical philosophy" as justification or explanation of the Ultras phenomenon. "The older generation, like the *CUCS*," he explained, "were aware of Nietzsche, for sure, and even Evola, who was popular amongst *Boys* and the *MSI* [*Movimento Sociale Italiano*] crowd, but no one used them as a part of being an Ultra until *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*. It's the same as what they've now done with Pound. If you want to be in *Padroni di Casa* you have to study Pound and know how what he says relates to the Ultras as *Padroni di Casa* understands it."¹³

C. Calcio Moderno and Merchandising in Curva Sud Roma

i. Merchandising, Purity, and Self-Sufficiency

Merchandising is a contentious issue amongst AS Roma's Ultras. For some in today's Curva Sud, like *Ultras Romani*, *Boys Roma*, and *Lupi*, it is a means toward self-sufficiency. This is an idea with long roots in the Ultra phenomenon. Because travel and choreographies are expensive undertakings, many groups in Italy sought to fund their activities by selling items bearing their, and their teams', logos. Even if this practice violated copyright laws (a point finally to be enforced in the wake of Filippo Raciti's killing in 2007, when the government forced the soccer clubs to distance themselves from the Ultras both formally and symbolically) and often put club symbols in league with those of political extremism, the clubs were unwilling to be seen as greedy or hostile to the Ultras and the public.

These groups operate offices (like *Ultras Romani* in Ostia and Quadraro and *Boys* in San

¹³ Ezra Pound's influence on the Ultras seems largely confined to *Padroni di Casa*. Pound is understood as a fascist thinker amongst the Ultras who form the core of this project, but none were overly interested in him beyond those of *Casa Pound* and *Padroni di Casa*.

Lorenzo [figure 37]) or display their merchandise outside the Curva Sud on game days (*Ultras Romani*, *Boys*, and *Lupi*). Through the selling of scarves, t-shirts, sweatshirts, stickers, hats, and even books they fund their curva-based activities and political and social initiatives (explained in detail below and in succeeding chapters).

To other groups in the Curva Sud, like *Fedayn*, *Ultras No Profit*, and all of those comprising *Basso Sud* (a loose collection of groups occupying the lower part of Curva Sud), the selling of merchandise cheapens the idea of being an Ultra. While *Fedayn* produces items of clothing for its members, these are never for sale. If a member is caught selling an article of clothing marked with their logo he or she is immediately expelled. This happened in early 2007 as a long-time member in need of money was identified selling a rare *Fedayn* sweatshirt from 2002 on ebay for over 200 euros. Although the Ultra was dismissed from the group, he was given 300 euros collected from the group's other members as a way to ease his financial hardships.

Fedayn's history in the Curva Sud has been as a stabilizing force. Despite the shift from the political left to the right within *Fedayn* - the largest and most important group founded on the left that navigated this switch in loyalties - its name and presence have consistently pointed to an Ultra that is "unflappable and infallible:" unflappable because always present; infallible because never bowing to the whims of fashion. More specifically, it is because "*Fedayn* Ultras wear no uniform." The idea of denying a uniform is linked with a commitment to being Ultras in a form that is least connected with the material culture of modern society.

Fedayn understands the Ultra in a pure form, as literal guardians of AS Roma and the Curva Sud. Thus, their theory of action is based on one sole motive: to defend the honor of the club, Curva Sud, and *Fedayn*. Defending the honor of Curva Sud means engaging enemy Ultras in a courageous

and aggressive way. It also means condemning and fighting anyone who attempts to profit financially from the Ultras, either from within or without. For *Fedayn*, a group like *Ultras Romani*, which has multiple offices, a website, and a catalogue of merchandise, is just as much a part of *Calcio Moderno* as foreign ownership of clubs and global television coverage.

As said Massimo, a 7-year *Fedayn* veteran, “Ultra is a *mentalità* above all, a way of being. It is not something one can acquire by buying a scarf. It is a commitment to one’s brothers and to AS Roma, in good or bad times. Especially bad times.” Until 2007 (again because of the killing of Raciti), the selling of merchandise was often accompanied by the selling of tickets to away games. The classic relationship between clubs and Ultras is one of mutual dependence.

The clubs depend on the Ultras for unconditional support. In turn, the Ultras expect the various players to play “*per la maglia*,” shedding blood, sweat, and tears for the jersey - the symbol of the club - instead of personal fame or, worst of all, money. The idea that one plays with proper respect and pride for the colors of the club is also expressed as playing “*per i colori*,” for the colors. One need not be the most skillful player to be adored by the Ultras as often it is enough to play for the shirt. Conversely, even the most skillful player who is seen as lazy (and therefore taking advantage of the club and the Ultras) may be vilified for failing to play for the shirt. The Ultras further expect the manager to be willing to succeed even without the most talented and able squad and the club to spend money wisely while always deferring to its traditions and symbols. The relationship is fraught with potential trouble generated by disillusioned Ultras, of whom the clubs are wary.

The Ultras depend on the clubs for access to the stadium before home games, in order to hang their banners and sometimes bring in items frowned upon by the police; to ensure a lack of

serious policing by colluding with the Prefect of Rome (*Prefetto della Provincia di Roma*) to keep the police from entering the curvas; and to provide free tickets for away games. These tickets are offered to groups in good standing with the club. Distributing them is a way for AS Roma to discipline the activities of different Ultra constituencies, as well as ensure enthusiastic support.



Figure 41. Police search the banners and flags of AS Roma's Ultras as they enter Curva Sud. February 2007.

Perhaps needless to say, away game ticket distributions amplified divisions within Curva Sud. When *Fedayn* and other not-for-profit groups received their tickets they distributed them amongst the group's members and gave them to children and teens unable to buy tickets. The group would then rent a coach or arrange a train car for travel to and from the game. Travel with the group was a privilege of being a member. For the other groups who sold merchandise, their ticket allotment would be distributed amongst the group leadership, often 10-15 persons, and the rest sold at face value, a 100% profit for the group. Further, game tickets would be bundled with a seat on a coach or train car for an additional profit to the group. There was no legal prohibition against the

Ultras selling the tickets or space on transports, so it was left to other Ultras to keep them from exploiting the situation, at least according to *Fedayn* and like-minded groups.

To *Ultras Romani* and *Boys*, leading culprits of such commercialized arrangements, the sales were merely a way to ensure their independence and readiness to act, via choreography and proper organization, on behalf of the Curva Sud at large. And, there were always many people eager to travel under the auspices of these groups, as there was safety in numbers as well as cache acquired from being seen with them. Nevertheless, those who sold organized away game travel were vilified by large areas of the Curva Sud for exploiting their fellow Ultras.

ii. Merchandising and *Calcio Moderno*

For *Fedayn*, the selling of merchandise (and away game tickets and travel) is tantamount to practicing *Calcio Moderno*. It is a betrayal of the Ultra *mentalità* and the expressly written manifestoes of almost every group in the Curva. There is a righteousness in the voice of those who speak against merchandise (bearing a group's name and/or logo for sale to the general public) in the Curva that one does not witness when discussing any other topic. Not only does the selling of merchandise reduce the Ultra to vulgar capitalists, say *Fedayn* members, but it also cheapens the experience of being an Ultra. If a stadium of 60,000 can all hold aloft a *Boys* scarf, what is the value of committing oneself to the group and sacrificing oneself for the honor of wearing one? Without this honor, according to some, the Ultras are decadent.

The crux of the issue, though, is found in the metaphor most used to describe the practice: *si mangia dalla Curva* (one eats from the Curva). To be seen as eating, or desiring to eat, from the money of other Ultras is to be seen, as Gianluca, a longtime *Fedayn* member explained during a game with bombs and flares alight all around us, as “reducing the Curva to a marketplace and the

Ultras to vulgar consumers.” Upon asking members of one Ultra group about another in Curva Sud or even elsewhere in Italy, frequently one is told before anything else, “they eat from the curva.” Of course, for those groups who sell merchandise, the practice is understood as a means toward self-sufficiency.

From the perspective of *Ultras Romani*, they are not a group seeking enrichment from Curva Sud, but merely a new way of being Ultra. Adriano, one of the most energetic and committed Ultras I have met, explained to me that the group was not as far removed from Ultra traditions as other groups think, despite their being the only group in the history of Curva Sud that one pays a membership fee to join. In response to charges of “eating from the curva,” he told me that *Ultras Romani* is more involved with charity and fund raising initiatives (such as money for imprisoned Ultras, memorials for deceased Ultras, helping children’s hospitals in Rome, and helping sick and needy AS Roma fans) than any other group in Italy.

These types of benevolence are common place in Curva Sud and other Italian curvas, but because *Ultras Romani* maintains relationships with the club and players, theirs are given more attention than other efforts. Federico of *Giovinezza* (Youth, but also the title of the Italian national anthem under fascism), one of the purist (and most fascist) groups, countered by reminding me that all the groups work in their communities, and do so without commercializing being an Ultra.

Ultras Romani is also attacked because it operates multiple offices, a website, and offers many items for sale bearing its name and logo. It organizes charter buses and even planes for every away game. In doing so, *Ultras Romani* seeks, in Spadino’s words, “only a small profit, which [they] use to keep the website and offices available for all Ultras to use.”¹⁴ They also use their profits to

¹⁴ I spoke with Spadino about this before 2007 AS Roma’s Champions League match against Sporting Portugal in Lisbon.

organize choreographies. Since 2006 they are the only group which has performed choreography in Curva Sud - one of which, for SS Lazio-AS Roma, involved the entirety of the curva.



Figure 42. *Ultras Romani*. Flags and flares. December 2006.

The other charges leveled against *Ultras Romani* were less enthusiastically parried by Adriano. The most egregious of these concerns relations with the club and even law enforcement. Spadino can often be seen on the sidelines of AS Roma games, and even sitting alone on the team's chartered buses and flights. His relationships with law enforcement, Adriano explained, stemmed from personal friendships - not at all rare in the Ultras community.¹⁵ Regardless, *Ultras Romani's* detractors pull no punches on the matter. The police, I was told and heard repeatedly, are *infame* (infamous) and enemies of the Ultras' form of life.¹⁶ Yet according to Adriano, "Spadino uses these

¹⁵ Indeed, I met numerous former-Ultras working in law enforcement at various levels. They maintain their former friendships from the curva and often know more about today's curva than the Ultras themselves.

¹⁶ The only English many Ultras seemed to know was four words: All Cops Are Bastards, a popular refrain imported from England. The relationship between law enforcement and Ultras will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

relationships to give the Ultras a better image and receive better treatment from the police.”

D. Curva Sud Roma Should Be What Type of Space?

While many of AS Roma’s Ultras point to *Calcio Moderno* and the reduction of the Curva to just another space within the global marketplace as the reason why merchandising is largely frowned upon, the issue points to another fault line within the Curva. Along with politics and merchandising there exists a question about what type of space Curva Sud should be. Those on the left envision a curva that is non-political and thus unspoiled by the mundane issues of society. The right, conversely, envisions a curva that is highly political, organized, and hierarchical.

The left in-and-of-itself is almost inconsequential in Curva Sud. This is because the vast majority of the Ultras and unaligned fans who consider themselves leftists desire a non-political curva. Even *Fedayn*, which is now of the right, also desires a non-political curva; that is, a curva in which political affiliation and ideology do not factor in the act of fandom. As we have seen, though, *Fedayn*’s non-political stance does not influence the political aspects of the Ultras’ war against *Calcio Moderno*. The unaligned fans with whom I spoke and experienced games are far more lenient than *Fedayn*. According to Gabriele, an unaligned fan who considers himself an Ultra, “in the curva we should be able to do what we want. We have no fear of police reprisals. We can come, drink, be with friends, show our support for AS Roma, and no one should be able to tell us otherwise - the groups included. We who are not affiliated with a group,” the 16-year veteran of Curva Sud and away games continued, “are far more free than the organized fans [Ultras]. They are just like soldiers who unthinkingly follow whatever their bosses tell them.”

The groups, by contrast, feel that the Curva should be a militarized zone, with Ultras standing in formation whether in supporting the team or in making statements, through song or

banner, about the society of which the Curva and Ultras are a part. Coordination, suffering for the team and Rome, singing and clapping even when AS Roma is losing, and taking part in the ritualized traditions of Curva Sud are necessary for the Curva to represent itself in an honorable fashion. Those fans who come to games only to spectate are seen as a hindrance to a unified and disciplined Curva. “If one makes complaints against [*Boys*] because we sell merchandise,” explained Fabio, one of the group’s leaders in 2007, “they should be far more concerned with the fans who enter the Curva unwilling to be Ultras. The Curva is not an anarchic utopia but a hierarchical and mechanical space. We come here with a job to do. If they want to hang around and get stoned with their friends they should do so outside this hallowed ground.” I asked Fabio if the Curva was ultimately a fascist space. “Absolutely,” he said, “one should have the mentality of a *squadrista* when entering the Curva. Relax at home. Come here as a militant marching into battle.”

Interestingly, Ultras on both sides of this question talk of the Ultras as a movement. To the groups the Curva is a place of fraternity, bonding, becoming conscious of the world, a place to demonstrate one’s political ideology and to make connections between sport and society (Ginsborg, 2003, pg. 119). To them, the Ultras are a movement with a particular understanding of soccer and society - even if that understanding can vary greatly depending on one’s position within the phenomenon. The Ultras are a collection of young, aggressive, like-minded individuals who, for all their differences, desire a soccer that is pure and symbolic of only the communities its teams represent (Ginsborg, 2003b, pgs. 112-119). To the unaligned fans, the Curva is and should remain neutral in every way except in its devotion to AS Roma. It is a space best left devoid of politics; a place where black, red, white, and green hold no power - where instead the red and yellow of AS Roma are the only colors that matter. To them the Ultras might very well be a movement, but it

should be one only at game time and in relation to the game.

III. Fission and Revision Within Curva Sud Roma

Each of the issues discussed above, politics, merchandising, and the question of anarchy or organization within the Curva, create their own fault lines across which Ultras must navigate. The dynamism of the Curva is made visible by these divisive issues. This is certainly so when they are able to influence the formation and dissolution of groups. Although the political divide between left and right is potentially the most explosive issue amongst AS Roma's Ultras, it has been rendered less so by the overwhelming majority of the Curva's groups organizing around the right. Political rivalries are instead played-out across curvas, such as when AS Roma plays AS Livorno. Nonetheless, within groups of the right, there are differences and rivalries that often lead to conflict. Although there has yet to be an explosion between the two, *Boys* and *Padroni di Casa* are affiliated with opposing neo-fascist political movements beyond the Curva. As well, not all groups on the right sell merchandise or away game tickets. Thus, an open sense of hostility permeates the air between these groups. Finally, the utopian vision of Curva Sud's purpose is also far from benign. It might not lead to conflict but it certainly creates hostility and distrust.

Consider the demise of *AS Roma Ultras*. It was not only the most important conglomerate of Curva Sud groups in history, but was also destroyed by the issues that organized this chapter: politics, merchandising, and vision of the curva. From 1999 to 2004 *AS Roma Ultras* was the most powerful and influential Ultra coalition in Italy. It had organization, broad membership, powerful alliances, and the respect of the entire Italian Ultra community. Under its guidance Curva Sud was creative. The majority AS Roma's games played in Roma began with choreography, one of which was chosen the most beautiful Italian choreography ever by *tifonet*, a popular Ultras website (figure

43).¹⁷



Figure 43. *AS Roma Ultras* choreography chosen most beautiful in the history of Italian Ultras. SS Lazio-AS Roma. December 2000.

Within Curva Sud, *AS Roma Ultras* was rich in *Romanità. Vecchie Maniere* (The Old Ways), its “fanzine,” or monthly magazine with low production values distributed at a group’s office or place in the curva, featured a regular column on Rome’s history.¹⁸ And, many of its choreographies glorified not AS Roma but Rome itself. It was also political. Because of its core membership, which included *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*, it tilted toward being a rightist group, but it was also a voice

¹⁷ www.tifonet.com is a website which serves as a common site for all Italian Ultras. It posts photos, news, or press releases by any curva or individual group. After the deaths of Raciti and Sandri it also collated articles from various Italian newspapers.

¹⁸ Fanzines are primarily an English phenomenon. In England they are likely to have team news and columns written on games and team events from the perspective of the fan. They are not necessarily “hooligan” vehicles. In Italy, the fanzine is strictly an Ultras phenomenon. Instead of a fan’s perspective on their team, they are an Ultras perspective on being Ultra - going to away games, attending group meetings, and the place of Ultras in their city.

for all of Roma's Ultras against *Calcio Moderno* (Cacciari, 2004, pg. 18). And yet, it was unable to maintain its position as the organizational centerpiece of the Curva.

A. *Antichi Valori* (Ancient Values) and the Fate of *AS Roma Ultras*¹⁹

i. *Antichi Valori* Goes To Brescia

In September 2002 *Ultras Romani* and *Boys* co-organized travel by train to a game in Brescia. The two groups shared a common history, as in 2001 Spadino had asked for, and received, the backing of Zappavigna in order to break from *Fedayn* to start *Ultras Romani*. Interestingly, it is assumed by other groups that the *Boys* leader was not sought as a rightist political ally but as a merchant ally. In truth, Zappavigna was far and away the most powerful Ultra leader in Curva Sud Roma and with his backing anything would have been possible in the Curva.

Accompanying the Ultras to Brescia were two uniformed Carabinieri officers, something never-before experienced by AS Roma's Ultras. When Spadino and Zappavigna, respective leaders of *Ultras Romani* and *Boys*, were sought for explanation, it was discovered that they were not taking the train but Zappavigna's car to the game. It was later confirmed that Spadino and Zappavigna had asked the state police to "escort" the group along the journey and to the stadium.

This event marked *Ultras Romani* and *Boys* as *infame* (infamous), the most negative status marker issued by the Ultras.²⁰ After that, no one who used either group for away game travel would be considered an Ultra by the other groups in the Curva. Because it is too difficult and expensive for most smaller groups to organize travel to away games, it is common that they use the services

¹⁹ What follows was explained to me by Federico, a founding member of *Antichi Valori* and the most committed Ultra I met in Rome. It is certainly biased but it is also the only written explanation for the fall of *AS Roma Ultras*, arguably the most important moment in the history of the Ultra phenomenon in Rome.

²⁰ *Infame* is often reserved for police, to the point that if someone speaks of *l'infame*, they are speaking of law enforcement.

of larger groups. On this day, the *Fedayn* offshoot and *AS Roma Ultras* member group *Antichi Valori* was on Spadino's train to Milan.

Being of the "purist" of values, refusing even to wear scarves marked with a name or logo, members of *Antichi Valori* were furious. They were a group of 35 students, service industry workers, and professionals from the area around the Vatican. While not "professional intellectuals," they were known for the scathing wit and satire of their banners and contributions to *Vecchie Maniere* (The Old Ways - the fanzine of *AS Roma Ultras*). One member was on the staff of the Vatican Library. Consequently they were believed to be the brains behind *AS Roma Ultras*.

While many of them were of the right, the group was not politically designed. They embraced the fascist element of Rome's history, but just as much the Classical and Baroque as well. They were a group with many friends amongst the Ultras who stood most firm to the idea that the Ultras are a movement against capitalist modernity. Therefore, they also had many enemies. By the time the train reached Brescia, they had, via cellular phones, alerted all of the other *AS Roma Ultras* groups, plus *Fedayn*, to what was happening.



Figure 44. *Antichi Valori* banner illuminated by flares. 2003.

ii. *Antichi Valori* v. *Calcio Moderno* and *Curva Sud*

The fate of *Antichi Valori* was tied to the fate of *AS Roma Ultras*. What happened to these two groups, one small and fanatically ideological, the other a super-collective with more power than any other group, is demonstrative of the pressures faced by Ultra groups and the fragility (by way of its great combustibility) of the *Curva Sud*.

The repercussions of the trip to Brescia were not immediate for most. Because *Antichi Valori* was a small group, it was not expected to take a physical stand against *Boys* and *Ultras Romani* alone. But because it was aligned with *Fedayn* and a part of *AS Roma Ultras*, it would not have to. For 25 years *Boys* and *Fedayn* had existed in *Curva Sud* without engaging one another. Both groups agreed long ago to pretend that the other does not exist. With *Boys* and *Fedayn* mutually estranged, *Ultras Romani* was left with the charge of eliminating *Antichi Valori*. However, *Ultras Romani* had ties with *AS Roma Ultras*, and was thus unwilling to escalate the situation. This physical stalemate allowed for calm, but it also allowed the tension to rise between *Antichi Valori*, *Boys*, and *Ultras Romani*.

Antichi Valori began displaying banners against the “merchant Ultras” at every home game, the most representative of which was unfurled during the 2002 game between SS Lazio and AS Roma: “*per passione non per contanti, al muro gli ultra\$ mercanti*” (For passion, not money. To the wall the merchant ultra\$) (figure 45). It was a message not only to *Ultras Romani* and *Boys*, however, but one designed to connect these groups with the largest and most influential of SS Lazio’s Ultra groups, *Irriducibile*, who also sell merchandise.²¹

²¹ *Irriducibile*: invincible, relentless. When searching for examples of Ultra thought being ecumenical or universal in scope, one more often than not finds only negative examples, as in this case when *Antichi Valori* is speaking of all Ultras in Italy who engage in capitalistic behavior.

Over the course of the next year, barbs were traded between Ultras on either side of the issue. Against the merchant Ultras, *Antichi Valori* and *Fedayn* became examples of virtue and honor within the Curva. A new group calling itself *Ultras No Profit* was formed, as well as an Ultra organization (not a proper group but a collective, or think-tank) called *No al Calcio Moderno*, both of which considered anyone seeking to exploit the Ultras for profit, be they authors, journalists, industrialists, or even other Ultras, to be *infame*, or *personae non grate*.

By the summer of 2004, Zappavigna and Spadino had seen enough. They met in the Cutty Sark Bar, a notorious fascist hang-out near Piazza Bologna, and decided not only to get rid of *Antichi Valori*, but *AS Roma Ultras* as well. To do so, they enlisted *Boys'* old friends, *AS Roma Ultras* member group *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*. With *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* aligned with *Ultras Romani* and *Boys*, an aggressive and dynamic triumvirate was formed that would rule the Curva for the subsequent years.



Figure 45. *Antichi Valori* banner against merchant Ultras. AS Roma-SS Lazio 2002.

At this turn of events, *Antichi Valori* turned to *Fedayn* in hopes that they would help restore

order to the Curva, even if only by counseling a meeting with the other groups. According to those present, *Fedayn* capo Massimo, a legend in the Ultra community, chaired the meeting at which it was decided that *Fedayn* would not get involved with the conflict, except as the patron of *Antichi Valori*. It was also decided that if moves were made to disband *AS Roma Ultras*, neither *Fedayn* nor any other group would attempt to save it. This is because the groups sought autonomy above all. They were not interested in controlling the Curva Sud, only their own memberships. Much like *Boys'* rationale for dissolving their association with *CUCS* in 1984, the groups wanted to be able to pick and fight their own battles.

To begin the 2004-5 season *Antichi Valori* decided no longer to unfurl their banner in Curva Sud. This was a sign of defeat. There were too many forces aligned against them to warrant their continuing as a small autonomous group. It took until January 30, 2004 for *AS Roma Ultras* to fold. After doing so, the same people who had created and populated the group stayed in Curva Sud. But by not standing behind a banner they were essentially removing themselves from the battle to control the Curva. This left *Boys*, *Ultras Romani*, and *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* on one side, and *Fedayn* on the other, with the first three in proper control of Curva Sud. Their control would be short lived, however.

iii. *Ultras Romani* Briefly Wins the War

In July 2005, just after the previous season's conclusion, Paolo Zappavigna was killed in a traffic accident. As the leader of *Boys* and patron of *Ultras Romani* and *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* these groups went into shock. The death was especially disastrous for *Boys*, as the entirety of their leadership was now disconnected from the group. Zappavigna was dead and his two assistants were *diffidati* (legally prohibited from attending sporting events) for three years for their part in

having the SS Lazio-AS Roma suspended at half-time in March 2004 as a protest against *Calcio Moderno* and the corporate take-over of the game.

Meanwhile, *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* never made much of an attempt to take control of the Curva. In fact, their own place in the lower section of the Curva was under attack, as the smaller groups there attempted another alignment similar to *AS Roma Ultras* called *Curva Sud 1973* (the year in which it was decided between Ultras of AS Roma and SS Lazio that the former would primarily inhabit Curva Sud and the latter Curva Nord of Rome's Olympic Stadium). Their only desire, however, was to keep the lower section free of merchant Ultras. *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* would eventually dissolve in 2007, reconstituting itself as *Padroni di Casa*. Finally, in 2008 *Ultras Romani* was forced out of Curva Sud by a former *Fedayn* leader named Riccardo. In a showdown shrouded in mystery the common consensus is that he brutally beat Spadino and thus won the right to expel him and *Ultras Romani* from the Curva. The group which took its place in Curva Sud, *Royalist*, is non-political but is committed to ensuring that no new merchant groups form in the Curva.

IV. Conclusion: Ultras - Hatreds and Commitments

The Curva that I entered in 2006 was dominated by *Ultras Romani* and the issue of merchandising in Curva Sud. The fallout from *AS Roma Ultras'* disintegration was still settling as well, with many of the most respected Ultras in the Curva relocating to the Tevere grandstand. In somewhat subdued form, given the spectacular Curva Sud demonstrations arranged by *AS Roma Ultras*, fandom continued. As did the legacy of political groups in the Curva. *Padroni di Casa* brought a level of political activism and sophistication never before seen by AS Roma's Ultras. And yet, if one studied just the aesthetic elements of the Ultras, thereby ignoring the political and

ideological fault lines of the Curva, such a study would yield data that is deep and enriching to the study of the Ultras. In the chapters that follow the *mentalità*, agonistic form of life, and the political ideologies of certain groups take center stage. It was the purpose of this chapter to provide the explosive context in which much of what follows took place.

CHAPTER THREE: The Everyday Life of the Ultras

The previous chapter presented a history of the most important and contentious events that have combined to create the Curva that I entered in 2006. The chapter was created by combining accounts of those events given me by the Ultras themselves. The purpose of the chapter, then, was to provide the reader with two things: knowledge of the groups and the context in which they exist within the Curva and the ultras phenomenon; and an understanding of the Curva as a space in which all relationships and places are contested.

In the coming chapters, the most important elements of the Ultras will come into focus, including their relationships with violence, fascism, and Counter-Enlightenment political philosophy. This chapter will instead present the more mundane aspects of the Ultra experience: namely, the game-attending experiences. Based on what we already know of the Ultras and their in-stadium behaviors, it might seem incongruous to describe game attendance as mundane. But, given the unpredictability of so much of the beyond-the-stadium life of the Ultras - the involvement of soccer-and-state-related authorities in their activities (see Chapter 4), and the extreme nature of their political activities (Chapters 4-8) - going to a game often appears as the most normal activity in their lives.

The chapter will be divided between Ultra experiences *in trasferta* (before, during, and after away games) and in their home stadium, Rome's Olympic Stadium. I will present a detailed account of an away game to Palermo so that one may know exactly what goes on when Ultras travel for hours to see AS Roma play, and in order to explain why doing so is important to the Ultras. Then, I will present the reader with game experiences in Rome's Olympic Stadium. I will begin, however, with a brief examination of the personal style of the Ultras.

I. The Personal Style of the Ultras

A. Hooligan Style

Like the Hooligan phenomenon in England, the Ultras have a particular style of dress and comportment that has changed over time. Phil Thornton identified the origins of hooligan fashion in the 60s counter-cultural movements of skinhead and “suedehead” (Thornton, 2003, pgs. 14-17). The former was a working-class response to the bourgeois aesthetic of the popular music of the day. In place of pencil suits and bohemian hippie garb, the skinheads sought a more masculine, stripped-down aesthetic of old blue jeans rolled-up above or tucked into ten-hole Doc Martens (work boots), tight fitting t-shirts, a scarf (if attending a soccer match), and, of course, a shaved head.

The “suedehead” movement grew out of skinhead. As Thornton describes, “the skins had mutated into bootboys, longer-haired versions of their former selves, the fashions inspired by a peculiar mish-mash of 70s styles such as flares, Doc Martens, and three-star jumpers” (Thornton, 2003, pg. 16). These two styles dominated “terrace” fashion in England until the early 1980s when the Casual aesthetic was born.

Casual is a style based on mass-produced sports wear. It ranges from athletic track suits to polo shirts and madras pants. There are two constants though to Casual style. One, sneakers are the most prized piece of the wardrobe. And two, a Casual never wears the colors of the team they support, especially when attending games. Casual has had the biggest impact on the Ultras phenomenon.

B. Ultras Style

i. Beginnings

As I described in the previous chapter, the original Ultras appropriated the style of political

radicals (from students to factory workers) in the late-1960s (Podarliri and Balestri, 1998, pg. 90). This style consisted of green parkas, blue jeans, sneakers, and, most importantly, the full-face covering balaclava mask. It is possible that this style was originally influenced by the radical Marxism that dominated the student movement and factory struggles after 1968, both of which were reactions to the neo-capitalist and American Dream models of consumption that defined the postwar Italian *Dolce Vita* (Ginsborg, 2003a, pgs. 300-309).

ii. Mid-80s Borrowing from the Hooligans

From these beginnings inspired by Italian radicalism, the Ultras came to borrow from the English hooligans as well, especially after Liverpool FC played the European Cup final in Rome in 1985 (Roversi, 1994, pg. 368). In the meantime, though, Ultras developed a style all their own, incorporating the parka and balaclava of the earliest years of the phenomenon with flared pants, work boots or sneakers, and polo shirts.

The 1985 European Cup final in Rome had a huge impact on AS Roma's Ultras. Amongst England's hooligans, those who followed Liverpool had a myriad of unique styles. The two most visible amongst these were the Mods and Casuals. The Mods' style was based on that of the "droogs" of Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971): tight fitting pants, work boots, dress shirts, suspenders, and dinner jackets (Thornton 2003, pgs. 147-150). The Mods were inspired as well by the Kubrick film, moving away politically from both leftist socialism and rightist fascism into the realm of anarchism (discussed in Chapter 4). The Casuals, as I said above, wore no colors associated with Liverpool but wore instead fashionable sportswear.

In the years following that 1985 game, in which Liverpool beat AS Roma (the game coincidentally being played in Rome's Olympic Stadium), the Curva Sud groups began to attach style

to their senses of identity. *Boys* and *Fedayn* were still associated with the political radicalism on which they were based, and thus maintained the parkas and balaclavas, as did *CUCS*. However, more and more of the smaller groups springing up in the lower section of the curva were either Mods or Casuals, including the groups *MODS* and *Roma Casual Firm*, the latter group using the English word for a UK hooligan group, firm.

iii. Into the 1990s with a Style of Their Own

Just as a series of lines can be drawn between the politics, ideologies, and economics of the groups (i.e. if they sell merchandise), one could now draw a line based on style. Leftist groups maintained, as they still do, the late-60s iconic styles, but were joined by the Mods, whose political anarchism was far closer in affiliation to the left than right. On the right, however, parkas were shed in the 1990s in favor of the *felpa*, or tight fitting zip-front sweater, and hooded sweatshirt. When one wore the *felpa* a balaclava was worn as well, and when the hooded sweatshirt was worn, the hood was deployed. Ultras did so in response to the state's use of Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) to identify perpetrators of "soccer related violence."¹ Typically the lower part of the face was covered with a scarf. Boots, blue jeans, or, as the 1990s progressed, camouflage pants completed the look.

Other parts of the right, including *Monteverde* and *Opposta Fazione*, adopted the Casual style, but only because it afforded them some anonymity on game days. It is these two looks, the head covered storm trooper and the innocuous bourgeois sight-seer that came to represent Ultra-style entering the 2000s.

¹ Ultra violence and the state's attempts to police it will be discussed at length in the following chapters.



Figure 46. Ultra wearing balaclava. Genova 2010.

iv. Style in Today's Curva Sud

In today's Curva Sud there are a few Mods, some parka-wearing leftist radicals, many Casuals, and many rightist storm troopers. The one style-constant that unites these tendencies is that the clothing choices are also worn everyday. In other words, the Ultras who take up these modes of dress do so in their daily lives as well as at the games. More to the point, most will don only a scarf of their Ultra group or AS Roma to mark their affiliations on game day. On days when no game is being played, it is rare to find an Ultra wearing AS Roma's colors (red and yellow), whether in the form of a scarf, hat, or shirt. Ultra style is not fundamentally about team colors

The most recent additions to the Roman Ultra wardrobe are Munich brand sneakers and bomber jackets with fur-lined hoods. These are worn on any day the weather allows or demands, and by Ultras across the political spectrum. Sneakers of any kind are the most popular footwear amongst AS Roma's Ultras. Munich, a type of indoor-soccer shoe, Nike Shox, and Adidas and Puma training shoes are all equally popular. Unlike amongst the UK hooligans, Doc Martens and other work boots are worn only by the most ideologically committed members of extreme right or left groups. Interestingly, almost all of the females associated with Ultra groups wore the same fur-trimmed

bomber jacket and sneakers as their male counterparts.

Another visible trend among the rightists in Curva Sud is short sleeved button-front shirts of small blue checked pattern. I am unaware as to why this style of shirt was popular, but Fabio, one of the popular leaders of *Boys*, was never seen without one (figure 22). It is possible that his high visibility in Curva Sud inspired others to emulation.



Figure 47. AC Milan Ultra wearing a felpa and head covering. Bergamo. November 11, 2007.

The other leaders of *Boys* were fond of wearing official team gear of the New Zealand national rugby team, the All Blacks. Those with whom I spoke had some knowledge of the team, or at least the *haka* (a ceremonial Maori dance) which they performed before some matches, but none considered themselves fans of the team. Instead, the name referred for them to the *camicia nera* (black shirt) and general spirit of fascism (a popular refrain is “*ho il cuore nero*” - “I have a black heart”). Although it is beyond the scope of this project to dissect this appropriation, I can say that it was a rare example amongst AS Roma’s Ultras. Later chapters will discuss how the Ultras utilize

symbols of fascism and *Romanità* (a deep commitment to Rome and things Roman), but these are understood as being much “closer to home” for AS Roma’s Ultras, who deeply associate with both.

Contrary to De Biasi and Lanfranchi, I did not find that the political symbols used by the Ultras are devoid of their original meaning; when combined with their political agendas they are, to the contrary, entirely consistent with those meanings (1997, pgs. 87-104). If groups on the right displayed fascist and Nazi symbols during games, it was with explicit knowledge of the power of those symbols. Likewise the leftists, such as the Ultras of AS Livorno, displayed symbols of international socialism with the direct intent of displaying their own allegiance to those symbols. Even the aesthetics inspired by *A Clockwork Orange* hardly qualify as being “recontextualized,” as the political anarchism (and ethics of violence) of the “droogs” also made their way into the Mod Ultras (De Biasi and Lanfranchi 1997. Pg. 96).

It is possible to say that, generally speaking, AS Roma’s Ultras are highly conscious of style. Some use style as a way to maintain the traditions of the Ultras. Others use it to mark themselves politically. Still others use it as a means of camouflage against police detection. In each case, the mode of dress chosen by each Ultra links him or her with other Ultras in their group, and when at away games with AS Roma’s Ultras in general.

II. The Ultras *in Trasferta*²

Even a writer as quantitatively focused as Antonio Roversi has acknowledged “war” as the principle metaphor in the Ultras’ self-understanding (1990, pg. 70). Dal Lago agreed with this idea and applied it to the in-game theatrics of the Ultras. His study, *Descrizione di Una Battaglia* (1990), treats these theatrics as part of a larger cultural milieu in which symbolic plasticity and the

² At an away game.

movability of signs (such as the decontextualized political symbols adopted by the Ultras) bring the Ultras closer to the “festival” described by Georges Bataille.

Simply put, Bataille’s “festival” is an event in which prohibitions are transgressed and servility is contested, thereby limiting the distance between the profane and the sacred or forbidden aspects of human life. The festival is often violent and transgressions seemingly verge on the animalistic (Bataille, 1997, pgs. 248-252). When the festival, or moment of transgression, is completed, the boundary between the profane and sacred is shattered, thus giving life a deeper and richer course (Bataille, 1997, pg. 251).

According to Dal Lago, the Ultras understand soccer as a world strictly divided between friend and foe, and matches as a series of ritualized, and symbolic, confrontations between foes. The stadium, it follows, is transformed into a setting for these “festive” confrontations. I say “festive” because Dal Lago implies that this takes place in a “liminal zone” in which the overweening order of profane life is momentarily cast off, allowing the Ultras to discharge the frustrations inherent in that life (Dal Lago, 1990, pg. 143).

While maintaining the central thrust of Bataille’s understanding of the festival as a moment in which the forbidden is achieved and thereby enriches the experience of life, I question Dal Lago’s assumptions that this moment takes place in a location wherein Ultras leave behind, or unchain themselves from, their “daily” or profane lives (Dal Lago and De Biasi, 1994, pg. 77).

Instead, my research shows that the Ultras are Ultras because of an exaggeration, rather than a transcending, of the cultural systems that make up “profane existence.” In other words, the rivalries and oppositions that fill soccer with meaning for the Ultras are brought into the stadium from other arenas, be they political, mythical, geographical, or historical. It is their willingness to

live every day according to these rivalries (and other aspects of the *mentalità*- to be discussed at length below) that ultimately makes them Ultras and not just highly interested fans. Thus, we should not be surprised, as was John Foot, that two of the AS Roma Ultras arrested for getting the 2003-4 SS Lazio-AS Roma game suspended at halftime worked as a “cameraman and a financial consultant” (Foot, 2006, pg. 307).

Nevertheless, there is value in using Victor Turner’s theoretical constructions of “the liminal” to explain Ultra behavior. Certainly, the *trasferta* (away game) experience acts as a rite of passage through which an Ultra comes to be *ultra*. More than liminality, though, it is the idea of *communitas* made popular by Victor Turner that best explains something about the Ultras. *Communitas* is a form of “social anti-structure” through which persons who share biology, culture, or even extreme personal experience unite in opposition to the larger social structure to which they, nominally at least, belong (Turner, 1979, pgs. 237-238). Later in the dissertation the Ultras use of war, as an example of what I am calling their agonistic culture, will be demonstrated as the basis of their *communitas*. The extreme behaviors they share give them a rationale for severely limiting the scope of their altruistic horizons.

It is with this in mind that we now move to a description of Ultra behaviors before, during, and after away games. It is away from Rome that AS Roma’s Ultras are best able to play-out one of the central tropes of war, and the Ultra phenomenon: redemption through struggle and sacrifice.

A. The Away Game

One of the most simple but most common areas of Ultra behavior in which sacrifice is a guiding principle is their devotion to travel long distances and to overcome all obstacles to witness and participate in AS Roma’s games. One accrues special status among the Ultras if seen in the

guest sections of stadiums far from Rome. For example, at the end of the 2006-2007 season, AS Roma played a practically meaningless game at Palermo. Because the team's final standing in the championship was essentially already determined, there was no "sporting" reason to go to the game. However, for the Ultras it was an important opportunity to sacrifice and, more importantly, to suffer for the colors of the team and city.

After years of following AS Roma away from Rome the experience of doing so acquires a certain rhythm. The following sections describe some of the most important or meaningful aspects of the away game experience. Rightly, it begins the week before a game and the search for tickets. It continues through the travel to and arrival at the stadium, and concludes with the game and return to Rome.

i. Buying Tickets

Every away game begins the week prior with a hunt for tickets. Before the Amato Decree, a set of laws passed in the days following the February 2007 death of Officer Raciti which severely restrict the actions of the Ultras, those in the groups that received tickets from AS Roma merely reported to their leader or leadership council their desire to attend the game. Otherwise, one needed only go to an official AS Roma store with a ticket office to buy away game tickets. Even as identification papers were required, so that each ticket holder's name could be printed on each ticket, one person could carry all of the papers for his group and make a group purchase. Unless the game was of an importance that made availability an issue, one could easily acquire tickets to any AS Roma away game. However, after the Amato Decree, as a way to extinguish the ties between Ultras and the clubs, the latter were forbidden to sell tickets to away games; and tickets could no longer be sold in groups. Thus, acquiring tickets now requires Ultras to struggle and sacrifice, which they

see as “doing their duty to the Curva.”

The tickets for *Unione Sportiva Città di* (USC) Palermo are distributed by Ticket One, a service similar to America’s Ticketmaster. To buy tickets for the game, AS Roma fans could go to any locale serving as a Ticket One ticket office. However, it was normal to arrive at one of these locales, usually a bar or tobacconists, only to be told that, in fact, they had no blank tickets for USC Palermo and, therefore, could not sell tickets. Given that there would normally be only one or two designated ticket offices in Rome for each sporting club, it made purchasing tickets difficult.

Some teams, like the two teams from Milan, used Milanese banks as ticket offices. One or two branches in Rome would sell tickets to various sporting or cultural events. These banks, though, were notorious for refusing to sell tickets to Ultras. On one occasion, my wife and I purchased tickets to a game against Inter Milano. While waiting at a nearby bus stop an unfamiliar AS Roma fan asked us the location of the bank. Moments later he returned saying that he was told the bank did not sell tickets.

In other instances a team would use a local retailer as ticket office. Livorno’s team, for instance, used a perfume store on the northern edge of Rome. Others were linked to List Ticket, who had only one branch of Banca di Roma near the Termini train station that sold tickets. All told it took time and effort to buy tickets, especially from the banks, because, their prejudice against rowdy fans aside, their hours of operation usually prohibited anyone with a job from easy access. Difficulties buying away game tickets became regular conversation on Lorenzo Contucci’s *AS Roma Ultras* website in 2007. Anyone, myself included, who found a bank branch or otherwise that would actually sell them a ticket invariably posted that information online.

Because of the hardship suffered merely to buy tickets, the Ultras have incorporated this into

their conception of what one must do to be or become an Ultra. There is no distance here between the in-game behaviors and the mundane everyday life of the Ultras. If one does not sacrifice oneself during the week then it matters little what one does on game days. In the past, day-to-day sacrifice might have meant community service or being present at group meetings. Now it includes hunting for tickets, which they use as an example of the distance between themselves and normal fans.

The Ultras assumed that the state was making it difficult to purchase tickets to away games because it did not want them to travel. Instead of banning travel, which would be unconstitutional, the state would ensure that very few Ultras would make it to the games. Given the difficulties I faced in acquiring tickets, regularly having to travel from one side of Rome to the other in search of a vender who was willing or able to sell tickets, I feel confident in expressing the Ultras' idea of sacrifice as a part of the away game process. For most of my subjects, free tickets were a given until February 2007. Free tickets were replaced by a maddening system of confusion that might take someone two days to acquire one ticket.

Ticket costs were usually minimal, between 12 and 18 euros. This allowed access to the guest section, the only section an Ultra would enter. The premise of the away game is to be with one's group or friends, amassed in the small guest section against the superior numbers of the home fans. To be mixed with the home fans, as will be explained later, was seen as a sign of vulgarity and pointlessness.

ii. Transportation

After acquiring tickets, one must arrange transportation. Even though the Amato Decree has made this more difficult as well, the options available to most Ultras do not involve the state or the clubs but other Ultras. To make the trip from Rome to Palermo for a Sunday game starting at 3pm

takes commitment. To arrive by automobile one needs 9 hours. By train, almost 13 hours. To fly takes only 2 hours but one expects to pay around 200 euros. Because spending money is not considered a sacrifice, and because many Ultras refuse to spend great sums of money to follow their team, most travel by train or automobile. This is true even for Ultras who have jobs and disposable income.

Although it is more difficult today than in the recent past to take trains without paying, it is still part of the Ultras' form of life to travel for free. On numerous away trips I saw Ultras walking from one train car to the next, and back again, in a constant attempt to avoid the ticket checker. Another strategy was to lock oneself in the bathroom. I asked Giorgio, an Ultra of 13 years who was a founding member of *Romulae Genti* (the Race of Romulus) about the practice. "Our goal is to pay as little as possible to follow AS Roma. Money should never be a substitute for one's worthiness to be in the stadium," he explained before adding that in the 2006-2007 season he took a 17 hour trek to Milan by way of small regional trains because these very rarely have ticket checkers. He could have taken a highspeed train, as I did, and arrived in Milan within four hours. Upon learning that I simply went to the ticket counter and bought to ticket to Milan, he laughed and said, "you will never be an Ultra until you sneak aboard a train." "We never pay," he reiterated.



Figure 48. Ultras leaving Rome on a special train. 2003.

Therefore the idea of using airlines to travel to away games is generally ruled out unless the game is outside of Italy. Before the 2006-2007 season *Ferrovie dello Stato* (the Italian state railway, also known as *Trenitalia*) would organize special trains to transport large groups of fans to their destinations and back for free. However, this practice was outlawed, again by the Amato Decree, in order to curtail the movement of Ultras. It is still possible for Ultra groups to organize private buses. However, because they do so for profit, and because so few Ultras travel now, most buses are canceled in mid-week due to lack of interest. Hence most travel to and from away games these days takes place in automobiles.

For the 2006-2007 Palermo game, however, most Ultras chose to arrive by train. With the game beginning at 3pm on Sunday, they took the overnight train from Rome, leaving Saturday at 9pm in order to arrive in time. Being on a train with Ultras is a unique experience. One witnesses fandom, camaraderie, affection, aggression, horseplay, and an array of insults. The trip began as was usual during my time with the Ultras: with flags and scarves waved from windows and 20-minutes or so of songs (figure 48). Being unobserved by the authorities someone invariably made their way to the intercom and broadcast the performance to all of the train's passengers. After this trip's performance, the Ultras found seats and sleepers near their friends and group-mates.

On the train to Palermo were approximately 100 Ultras. Of these, I only saw 8 females, 4 of whom were traveling with *Fedayn*. The group of Ultras as a whole was typical of those that traveled long distances. There were many leaders from the most important groups in Curva Sud, along with the most committed of their members. Ages ranged from approximately 19 to 46, the age of Allesandro, a longtime leader of *Fedayn*.

iii. Mangiamo! (Let's eat!)

Within each group, or group of friends, there seems always to be someone who always travels with food. Each time I enquired about the food's origin, I was told "*mamma l'ha fatto*" or "*da mamma*" (mamma made it). Normally, when the group arrived at a stadium, the food carrier would open a backpack and begin distributing individually wrapped sandwiches to his friends. However, in Parma for a Coppa Italia game, I watched a small group of Ultras share a portion of perfectly sliced Prosciutto di Parma while discussing its merits relative to Friuli's Prosciutto San Daniele.³

Other times food is central to the post-game experience. Returning by train to Rome from Empoli, a small town near Florence, my hunger was sated by a young Ultra whom I had never met. He passed sandwiches to his friends and caught me observing intently. He asked me and my wife if we were hungry. She politely answered "no thank you" while I said "yes thank you." Seconds later we were eating a sandwich. Similarly, in one of the buses arranged by the city of Milan to transport AS Roma fans from the San Siro stadium to the Milan Central train station after a game against Inter, a group of friends devoured a sack full of sandwiches as a machine-gun toting Carabinieri observed. They laughed as someone asked his permission to eat.

³ Coppa Italia (the Italian Cup) is a tournament that runs concurrent that of Serie A and features teams from all four divisions of Italian professional soccer - Serie A, B, C1, and C2.

Water and beer act similar to food in being consumed communally. On the bus organized by *Boys Roma* to Milan for the second-leg of the 2006-2007 Coppa Italia final, there was constant circulation of water, chips, and cookies provided by whomever brought or purchased them. On this trip no alcohol was allowed. While it is prohibited by the state to consume alcohol in automobiles I was told that it is normal for Ultras' buses to be awash in alcohol. *Boys Roma*, however, does not allow anyone to drink during travel to away games as they demand strict order and discipline. The water consumed this day was pleasurable but on other occasions water seems an issue of life and death.

A large group of nearly two thousand Ultras went to Livorno in January 2007 - our last away game before the death of Raciti and the crackdown that followed - on a *treno orginazzato* (a special train organized by *Trenitalia*). From the station the Ultras were transported by special buses to the stadium. Once the buses entered the enclosed area beyond the guest section it was impossible to leave (figure 49). This is standard practice for away games, although Livorno took security especially seriously, given the political nature of the rivalry between AS Roma and AS Livorno.⁴ In these situations it is important to have your own food and drink, as there is no guarantee that one can find food either in the city or stadium. Even when the Ultras are not forced to go directly to the stadium, as in Udine, Reggio Calabria, and Turin, they normally arrive between 10am and noon on Sunday mornings when only a few snack bars and cafés are open for business.

⁴ This rivalry will be discussed below. It is one based entirely on extreme politics. AS Roma's Ultras are largely fascist and of the far right while those of AS Livorno are largely communist and of the far left.



Figure 49. Police in the guest holding area of Livorno's stadium. 2007.

The guest section of Livorno's Stadio Armando Picchi has only one concession stand that guests can reach only through a small hole in the back wall. Thankfully, Ultras cut this hole in the chain-link fence surrounding the concession, allowing one to hold out a handful of euros and retrieve the ordered items, trying not to get snagged on the ragged fence. On my two trips there, the concession either ran out of food and drink or simply closed well before half-time. This meant that one had at least an hour until the end of the game with very little to eat or drink. On top of this, it is also standard procedure for away fans to be held in their section until all home fans, especially opposing Ultras, have left the stadium area. This usually translates into an additional hour.

Once we were loaded on the buses after the game and post-game wait we faced another 25 minutes of driving to the station. In order to keep us separated from any *Livornesi* (inhabitants of Livorno), they drove us to a strip of land behind the station. When the doors opened we sprinted to the train cars in order to find seats (figure 50). Everyone laughed at the situation and cursed the police and *Livornesi* until the train pulled away from the station. It was only when we settled in for the 4-hour journey that we realized we were thirsty and had nothing to drink.



Figure 50. Ultras boarding a train in Livorno. 2007.

For most of the Ultras, lack of food and drink was just an inconvenience to be overcome, an example of their willingness to suffer in order to be present at the game. For two Ultras on the train, though, the situation seemed more serious. After singing and screaming themselves hoarse for the game's 90-minutes and now facing the prospect of a water-less journey back to Rome, these two almost reached the point of panic. At our first stop in Rosignano an attempt was made to exit the train, buy water from a vending machine, and re-enter the train. However, the fickleness of the machine left the Ultras scrambling back on the train without water just as the doors closed and minus 30 cents. Cecina offered no vending machine on our platform. This prompted the Ultras to cease from insulting the locals and begin asking politely for water. No results. Not at San Vincenzo, either. Finally, at Campiglia Marittima, an hour into our trip, a young girl handed up through the open window a partially drunk bottle of water. The two Ultras most desperate for water took excited sips and then handed the bottle to the person next to them, who passed the bottle not back to them but on to someone else.

iv. The Arrival

Returning to the Palermo trip referred to above, after we ate and everyone calmed down and settled in for the night's journey we arrived at the Naples central station to make our scheduled (11:15 PM) stop. Out came the flags and scarves. Then came the anthem of the *CUCS* and several rounds of "*Odio Napoli*" (I hate Naples).⁵ As we pulled into the station, the platform was populated by a handful of waiting passengers and perhaps one-hundred policemen. Beyond them, we could see and hear a small crowd of SSC Napoli Ultras, singing "*Romanista pezzo di merda*" (AS Roma fan piece of shit) and "*Roma Roma Vaffanculo*" (Rome go fuck yourself). Some of the AS Roma Ultras attempted to exit the train, but as expected were stopped by the police. The scene lasted approximately fifteen minutes. But after the initial exchange of insults there was only sporadic singing or yelling. The sizable police presence kept action to a minimum, despite the hostilities.

AS Roma has no such rivalry with Palermo. We faced no opposition from the Palermo Ultras even outside the Renzo Barbera stadium which lies west of central Palermo. The entrance to the guest section of the stadium was even opened this day to normal Palermo fans who sat above the section itself (normally a position advantageous for showering various objects upon the guests). Perhaps the police felt secure in this arrangement because they understood that only under extreme circumstances will Ultras engage in violence with non-Ultra fans.

⁵ The *CUCS* anthem: *Quando l'inno si alzerà, tutto il mondo tremerà, canteremo fino alla morte, inalzando nostri colori, che ci vien' dal profondo del cuore, alè alè, alè Roma alè!* (Sung to La Marseillaise)



Figure 51. Police inspect the possessions of AS Roma's Ultras upon entering the stadium. Palermo. 2007.

Or perhaps it was because they were interrogating on video every person who entered the section wearing *giallorosso* (yellow and red, the colors of Rome). They asked our names, what time and how we reached the city, and what time and how we were leaving. Then, another officer looked through knapsacks and backpacks, I assumed to search for bombs and flares, while another confiscated all flag poles. Anyone carrying a flag or homemade banner had them inspected and some were confiscated as well (figure 51).

v. Hold Your Colors High!

Upon entering our cage-like section, two more policemen waited to inform each and all that absolutely no colors would be permitted to be displayed. Therefore, no flags, no banners, no scarves could be held aloft. Many of the Ultras immediately removed their shirts just to carry the point further. Despite the protests of the leaders of *Fedayn*, *Boys*, and *Ultras Romani* a pile of flags and banners was created below us at field level and the officers stood guard over it throughout the game.



Figure 52. Police confiscate the colors of AS Roma's Ultras. Palermo. 2007.

To be interviewed on camera, so as to be identifiable on Closed Circuit cameras in the stadium, was unusual but sufferable. However, to be forbidden to stand behind and under AS Roma's (and Rome's) colors and the names and symbols of the Ultra groups was particularly stinging for the Ultras. Meanwhile, the detractors of the Ultras use the issue as proof that they are not true fans but only go to away games to be seen behind their banners. Far from being a mere vanity or truly the only reason they travel to away games, the banner is *the symbol* of the group.

English hooliganism developed the "taking of one's end" as the ultimate humiliation of one's opponents. This entailed raiding the "curva" of the opposing team and, after fighting or because of being uncontested, being able to stay there for a period of time. In Italy the Ultras were never free enough to move within a stadium as this action requires. Ever since the creation of Serie A in the 1920s, rivalries have been so heated as to warrant segregated stadiums (Foot, 2006, pgs. 302-324).



Figure 53. Enclosed pathway on exterior of Palermo's stadium. 2007.

Thus they stole opponents' banners as a similar humiliation. These would then be displayed and sometimes burned in the opposing curva during a game. The most common way for a group's banner to be stolen was during fighting before a game. However, since the death of Genoa Ultra Vincenzo Spagnolo at the hands of his AC Milan counterparts in 1995, the police have made a concerted effort to keep opposing Ultras separated before and after games (Mariottini, 2006, pgs. 111-127) (figure 53). The banners remain well-guarded nonetheless and, because of the unlikelihood of being stolen, highly sought-after.

The Ultras place so much value on having their banner seen because it is a form of validation of the energy expended going to and from away games. As Antonio of *Razza Romana* told me, he explained to the police in Palermo that, "we came a long way to be here to feel the pride of hoisting our colors above our heads in a stadium full of people who will hate us for doing so." Later that evening I asked him to elaborate. "Have you seen the *Boys* scarf?" he asked, referring to their latest model which reads "*odiati e fieri*" (hated and proud), "well, that sums up who we Romans are.

Everyone hates us because we are so proud to be Roman. Going to Palermo shows them that we will go anywhere and hold our colors high, with pride and dignity.”

I asked about hanging the banners. “The banners are only slightly different because they belong to the groups; and the groups are the ones who suffer to support *la Roma* (AS Roma). Yes, I may go or you may go, but we go as representatives of groups - friends, comrades, brothers, sisters. When I hang our banner in Palermo I do so for them, especially if they cannot come to the game.” I then asked him about sacrifice but he misunderstood me. “Exactly!” he said, “it is their sacrifice to miss the game. They might help me get here, as we help one another always, and I am only here because of them.” In that vein I asked about the prospects of getting his small banner stolen. “*Porco dio*,” he replied in classic Roman style, with the “por” exaggeratedly annunciated, “how could I face them? Sure, I would have to get a new banner made, but then the history, the kilometers, the blood and sweat that stained this one would be lost. If this banner is lost our group would probably fold. In this climate (post-Raciti) it would be too difficult to begin again. There is no way to remake the memories contained in this banner.” As we spoke he was keeping the folded banner in a backpack, which he held all the way back to Rome.

In Lisbon for a Champions League game between Sporting Portugal and AS Roma, I witnessed a fight between a former leader of *Opposta Fazione* and a well known “club fan” because the latter had placed his banner over that of the Ultra’s group *Brigata Caciara* (one of the small, away-game only groups). The “club fans” are the other form of *tifo orginazzato* (organized fandom) in Italy. Instead of being Ultras, they are social clubs, for example “*Roma Club Testaccio*,” and consist of older and more bourgeois fans. They are always present at away games and in Rome, occupying the Tevere grandstand, but do not share the Ultras *mentalità* or style of fandom (figure

54). Given the nature of the combatants, the fight was short, nasty, and ended with the ejection of the Ultra. Importantly, his banner remained.



Figure 54. AS Roma fans and Ultras intermingle. Lisbon. 2007.

The groups compete to arrive at stadiums earlier than the others so as to have choice of the best space to hang their banners. The glee of arriving early to find an empty section is matched only by the horror of arriving late and finding space for neither the banner nor the group (figure 55). This is one of the main reasons groups create alliances, to save space for one another at away games. For the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 seasons, the largest groups (*Fedayn* and *Ultras Romani*) worked together to save space, repeatedly elbowing out many smaller groups who hang banners away from Rome.⁶ In their mind, the hundreds standing behind the larger groups's banners outweigh the 3 to 5 standing behind a small group's banner. There would be no solution in a group hanging its banner and standing elsewhere as no one would want to stand behind a banner that was not their own.

⁶ There are groups, like the small and secretive *BRG* (whose meaning I was not told), which exist only at away games. They display no banner during home games, even as the group stands together.



Figure 55. AS Roma's Ultras display their group banners in Livorno. 2007.

Because most guest sections are small, holding less than one-thousand persons, the groups seek to accommodate one another by hanging smaller versions of their normal banners. To compensate, the group might carry more flags. *Ultras Romani*, early in the 2006-2007 season, was not following this protocol. They consistently carried their large banner, created for their space in Rome's stadium, and measuring approximately 20 feet across and 4 feet high. Leaving no space for the banners of other groups, this was interpreted as a provocation. *Boys*, *Fedayn*, and various smaller but still substantial groups first conspired to arrive at away stadiums before *Ultras Romani* in order to procure the most banner space. Eventually, *Fedayn* united (on only this issue) with *Ultras Romani*. Both agreed to save space for one another, with *Ultras Romani* carrying their smaller banner as part of the agreement.

The act of hanging the banner is a serious matter. Each group carries various forms of tape, twine, and rope in order to be best prepared. The banner is carried by only the most select members of each group. These are also responsible for having it hung properly. Unless there is no other

choice, a banner will never be visibly crooked or creased. Often, as in Parma, Messina, and Reggio Calabria, hanging a banner in the optimal space requires climbing and sitting on a 10 foot partition topped by jagged metal pieces designed to keep the Ultras from breaching their designated space (figure 56). In these cases, a human pyramid may form, which the hanger climbs in order to reach the top of the partition (figure 19).



Figure 56. Luigi of *Arditi* hanging banners in Parma. 2007.

For as long as it takes - in Reggio Calabria it took 40 minutes for *Razza Romana* to hang their banner in this manner - an Ultra will endure pain and fear to get the banner hung. If the situation is pathetic or comical enough, another group might offer to help. The most adept hanger of group banners in all of Curva Sud Roma is Luigi, the leader of *Arditi*. In Parma, he climbed the partition free-handed and proceeded to hang almost every present group's banner (figure 56). He also used his time atop the barrier to harangue opposing players, stewards, officials, photographers, and TV personalities. Upon returning to earth he was given a rousing ovation by the large contingent of AS Roma fans.

The cooperation between the groups while away from home gives us a sense of the spirit of camaraderie and brotherhood that develops amongst those who regularly travel to support AS Roma.

Arditi has been aligned with *Boys Roma* since its inception in 1992. In Rome, its leaders and members converse with a very small number of Ultras, almost exclusively of the right and well known in the Curva. Yet away from Rome Luigi, the group's leader, lends his time to anyone who asks. Similarly, *Fedayn*, whose members knew of my presence but were instructed not to take part in my survey, would ignore me in Curva Sud. Yet, away from Rome they would regularly interact with me and my wife. On two occasions, in Parma and in Milan, I was even commanded to wave one of their large flags. On the latter occasion, Filippo, a 28 year old veteran of *Fedayn* who was known to everyone in Curva Sud, or so it seemed because everyone was familiar with his flags, called to me over his shoulder, "American Boy vieni (come here)." I climbed down two rows to where he was waving his flag and he handed it over to me.

I met Filippo during my first away game, which happened to be a long trip by train up to Udine. He was amongst the *Fedayn* Ultras I approached about participating in my research. He said little, as Massimo, the group's leader told me they were not interested. However, after seeing me in Milan on a cold Sunday night, cheering on a historic win by AS Roma, and in various other cities, he began to warm to my presence. By the time that the Coppa Italia game in Parma occurred on a Wednesday night, he knew I did not take my presence among them lightly. That night I waved his flag and received the praise of the other *Fedayn* members (figure 57). A month later in Turin, he began calling me American Boy, in homage to the 1954 Alberto Sordi movie *Un'Americano a Roma*. It took months, though, for me to be accepted by Filippo. And, because accepted by him, I not only came to be accepted as a fixture amongst the select Ultras who travel to every away game, but I also came to understand that one did not enter their brotherhood without a sacrifice.



Figure 57. Me waving one of *Fedayn*'s flags in Parma. 2006.

Incidentally, as a way to explain their understanding of the away game, the week before Filippo Raciti was killed in February 2007, I received a text message from Filippo. He was again in Milan, this time on a snowy Thursday night to support AS Roma against AC Milan in the Coppa Italia. He asked where I was, having noticed my absence. My wife was ill, I explained, but told him I was watching on TV. “Can you see my flags?” he asked. “Yes,” I said. He then replied with apparent glee, “there are only 200 of us.” Filippo thought that only the most dedicated Ultras would regularly travel to AS Roma games. To have that dedication made someone a true Ultra. And, being present each week, Filippo and a few others knew the faces of their compatriots. They knew who was only at the games that were easily attended (in Florence on a Sunday at 3pm, for example). Thus, for the most committed of Ultras, it is not a mass phenomenon but one that involves the very few who are willing to sacrifice their time and energy to be present.

The Ultras know that the major press, as well as Ultra publications like *Fans Magazine* and *Ultrà Tifo*, will carry photos of the curvas, which they use for publicity but also as a way of measuring their worthiness and relative strength within this domain. The press and personal photos are also a form of memento of the occasion. Upon entering an Ultra office, or even the bedroom of committed Ultras, one finds less photos of players and game action than pictures of their group away from, and in, Rome. To go away from Rome and hang, and stand behind, the banner of one's group, is seen as a way of immortalizing the group. Someone somewhere will always have a photo.

Thus, to be seen and photographed in Palermo without colors was not only insulting for the Ultras but also demeaning and, in a way, tragic. To have the colors prohibited defeated what many had traveled so far to do. And, like many of the other laws passed and enforced after Raciti, the prohibition was interpreted as having less to do with maintaining public order than with eradicating the Ultras altogether.

vi. The Game

Along with the police in the guest section guarding over the pile of Roman colors, that day in Palermo was also hot. Unlike Rome's Olympic Stadium, Palermo's stadium has no awning covering all spectators. We suffered under the afternoon sun. After AS Roma scored to lead 2-0, the normal fans seated above and behind us began showering us with water and other drinks. Given the heat most did not complain. And even though by the 60th minute of the game many began thinking of the return trip that would follow, the Ultras were glad to be there.

They sang the entire first half. Like every game, whether home or away, the Ultras began with the anthem of *CUCS*. Then they sang various songs from their "songbook," a collection of songs now around 40, with two or three songs added each year. If the away game is against a rival

of AS Roma or Curva Sud the Ultras will spend most of the game singing against their opponent.⁷ In Palermo, with no rivalry in either case, they sang only to support AS Roma. Only occasionally did they sing “*Palermo, Palermo, Vaffanculo,*” (Palermo go fuck yourself) as they would in any host city (with that city’s name replacing “Palermo”). It is the goal of the Ultras to sing regardless of what is happening on the field; “*oltre il risultato,*” beyond the results, they say. Whether AS Roma is winning or losing is of no consequence. This goal is becoming more difficult to sustain, however, because of the spread of unaligned fans in the Curva.

The second half began as the first, but with less urgency for the Ultras. With AS Roma winning comfortably they began to feel the heat a little more. The small group of Ultras began singing songs against SS Lazio and for certain AS Roma players. *Fedayn* eventually began moshing (a form of gang “play fighting”) amongst themselves in order to reanimate the section. They formed a loose circle and began singing a Curva favorite called “*Tutti allo stadio*” (Everyone to the stadium). As the song progressed, they began pushing and shoving each other through the center of the circle in order to be pushed back from the other side.

Eventually Palermo scored, cutting AS Roma’s lead to one goal. This brought both sets of Ultras to full attention, and the game concluded in fiery fashion. They honored themselves and each other with many rounds of “*Curva Sud Alè*” (Come on Curva Sud) late in the second half. And following the game, the team honored them as well, with many players coming “*sotto la curva*” (under/below the curva) to throw their shirts and shorts into the crowd, the maximum show of respect from the players to the fans. The Ultras’ sacrifice, even without their colors, had brought the

⁷ Very rarely is there a distinction, but it can happen. Livorno, for instance, is a rival curva to Curva Sud but the team is no rival of AS Roma.

team glory.



Figure 58. *Fedayn* Ultras having completed their moshing in Palermo. 2007.



Figure 59. Ultras get in position to catch jerseys from AS Roma players. Palermo. 2007.

vii. The Return to Rome

The return trips to Rome are much the same as the trips to the game, albeit more subdued. Usually the Ultras are tired, thirsty, and hungry after a game. They want to find a comfortable seat, then eat and sleep. If the trip or game has been particularly nasty, however, this may be impossible.

An example was the trip to Florence to witness the AC Fiorentina-AS Roma game in 2008, when a line of AC Fiorentina Ultras attacked the AS Roma Ultras' cars with stones and bottles as they exited the enclosed and guarded guest section of the parking lot. Some Ultras had to drive for two hours in 40 degree (fahrenheit) temperatures without a windshield. I asked one of the Ultras who had to drive this way about the damage to his car. The driver said little, just shrugged his shoulders as if to say, it comes with the territory. I myself had been offered a ride back to Rome by an informant who did not want me journeying back into central Florence to catch a train because I would be unprotected.

As I will explain in Chapter 6, the act of going to an away game is warlike and militarist. The groups move "in formation," always looking out for attack. The singing is far more aggressive and negative than at home. And, it is only after returning to Rome that the Ultras relax and let down their guard. However, there is no relinquishing of their "liminal status" because the boundaries between Ultra and non-Ultra are never crossed. In other words, the *mentalità* and sense of life in terms of opposition and heroic struggle do not reign only on game-days. Still, there is a different feeling to games played in Rome. They are no less serious, but tend to be more festive.

III. The Ultras at Home

For AS Roma's Ultras, their greatest moments of solidarity and celebration of being Ultra and Roman occur in Rome. The safety of being at home, where there are no travel restrictions, and being amongst a large group of AS Roma fans, make home games less warlike than the away games. At home one might stand with friends who are absent away from Rome, and one's group will be more fully present. Nevertheless, the ritualization of violence is still present, and warring action still takes place, but these are more subtle, and meaningful only within the world of the Ultras. Two are

highly visible: the choreography - a coordinated display of color, image, message, and fireworks that is the ultimate expression of the Ultras' passion for the team, the game, and being Ultra; and the *striscione* - a long, hand painted banner with messages of various themes.

A. Game Days

Game days at home tend to begin only on game day. There is no need for the Ultras to buy tickets because they are, 100%, season ticket holders. According to AS Roma, Curva Sud has been sold out each season since the Olympic Stadium was restructured in 1990 (for that year's FIFA World Cup).⁸ Although home games are no less structured or ritualized than away games, they tend to unfold in a more solitary manner for many Ultras. Whereas the away game happens strictly in a group setting, the Ultra is more likely to arrive at the Rome stadium alone. This is more true for day games, though; Ultras often meet at the group's office or at a bar before going to the stadium at night.

i. Day or Night?

Night games tend to be reserved for more important and "TV worthy" opponents. Games against SS Lazio, FC Juventus, AC Milan, and Inter FC, the club's biggest rivals, are usually played on Saturday and Sunday nights. Aside from fans meeting beforehand to eat, drink, and be social, these games also carry with them the opportunity for violence. Ultra violence occurs in groups, as will be explained later. The groups will amass an hour before game time in one of three places: the River Bar along the Tiber across from the stadium; under the Mussolini obelisk in front of the stadium; or as close as possible to the fenced in guest section "holding area" near Curva Nord. There they simply await any groups of opposing Ultras that might come into their midst. If any do so, a

⁸ <http://www.asroma.it/List.aspx?Categoria=52>

group of AS Roma Ultras will run to them, prompting either shameful flight from the opposition or a quick skirmish of kicks, punches, and whackings with flag poles. If the police have properly contained the visitors and no one arrives, the Ultras come into Curva Sud. Today it is rare for inter-city violence to occur, but in the past, especially before the Spagnolo death in 1995, it was a normal part of coming to the stadium.

ii. Traffic

Oddly enough, an issue the Ultras face at home that they do not on the road is traffic. Because they usually have a police escort to away stadiums, they are unencumbered by the worry of arriving on time. This is always true when arriving by train and often so by bus or car. I arrived in Milan by bus with *Boys Roma* and our bus, along with many private cars, was made to stop outside town before being escorted to the stadium en masse. I was never able to learn how the police knew we were AS Roma fans, as no colors were visible from outside the bus. In Rome, however, the Ultras know to allot enough time for idling on the way to the stadium. The time I spent like this in cars with Ultras was passed listening to pre-game radio shows. However, the most common way to see Ultras before games is in pairs weaving through traffic on a motorcycle or scooter, with the Ultra seated behind the driver holding folded flags and banners. Once parked, the Ultras waste little time making their way to the stadium.

iii. Meeting the Group

Unless there were reasons to meet outside the stadium, such as the opportunity for violence or a structural issue like transporting props for the choreography (see below, Section B), most groups will meet under the Curva beyond the turnstiles. There, if the group sells merchandise, as do *Boys Roma*, *Ultras Romani*, and *LVPI*, they have a small display of items for sale. Coffee, water,

or beer is consumed along with sandwiches. Otherwise group members socialize and intermix, although only after the group's banner and flags have been put in place in the group's section.



Figure 60. AS Roma fans in traffic. Rome. 2001.



Figure 61. Another image of the Olympic Stadium's Curva Sud, this one showing proposed changes to improve security. 2008.

iv. Standing

Even as each seat corresponds to a specified season ticket, no one in the Curva uses their

assigned seat. Instead the Ultras consider the Curva to be a “general admission” area. In this way, the groups are able to claim and maintain sections for themselves, regardless of the seats they were assigned. It is up to the groups to maintain the boundaries of their respective sections. For the larger groups like *Fedayn*, *Ultras Romani*, *Boys Roma*, *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo*, and *Padroni di Casa* this is not a problem, as everyone in the Curva knows their territory.

For the numerous smaller groups, not to mention the myriad groups of friends who have been standing together for numerous seasons, the issue is pressing and addressed anew with each home game. Usually someone from the group will arrive early, approximately two hours before kick-off, and mark out the group’s section with newspapers or scarves (laid upon each seat). I witnessed a small 7-person group named *Romulae Genti* protect its territory on numerous occasions. Gabriele, the group’s leader, an Ultra of twelve years who was formerly a leading figure in *AS Roma Ultras*, once cleared the section of other fans just as a game was beginning (*Romulae Genti* had been outside at the River Bar and no one was free to “save the seats”) just by explaining that “this is where we stand.”

Despite now having no chance of finding room for ten to stand together for the game, the others vacated the area in question. I asked Gabriele about the incident. His response was a knowing smile (as if to say, “they know who I am”) and a simple explanation. “I have stood with my friends in [that] spot [five seats along three rows] for ten years,” he said, “We earned the right to be [there] by taking care of some bad situations.” From Giorgio, another member, I learned that they had fought another small group called *BVB Ultras* for part of their space. They did it during a game so that everyone nearby would know the victor and rightful holders of the space. The two groups are now friendly and share a porous border and numerous hugs when AS Roma scores a goal.



Figure 62. Game-day in Curva Sud Roma. 2007.

v. *Fare Tifo* (The act of being a fan)

There are now two basic elements of fandom in the Ultra style: singing and waving flags. In Curva Sud before the 2007 death of Raciti each of the large groups contained a person who handled a megaphone and directed songs to be sung by large numbers of Ultras at once. The groups traded turns directing the Curva as a whole. Since Raciti, however, megaphones have been outlawed - the 2007 Amato Decree (discussed in detail in later chapters) made “organized fandom” illegal and punishable by three-to-five years banishment from all Italian stadiums - and now each of the larger groups attempts to begin Curva-wide songs just by singing amongst themselves. When the Ultras are disciplined the system works well enough. Usually, the Curva has more than one song being initiated at the same time.

Coinciding with each song may be a coordinated pattern of claps. If not, many Ultras wave

flags or hold *stendardi* (banners or standards on two vertical poles in the style of the Roman vexillum). Flags are a part of the history of the many smaller groups in the lower section of Curva Sud (discussed in the previous chapter); the larger groups in the upper-Curva use them less (*Ultras Romani* aside). In the lower zone, flags of various shapes and sizes fly throughout the ninety minutes of a game, whereas elsewhere in the Curva, individual Ultras hold aloft their flags as the mood strikes them. Before Raciti, flares and powerful fireworks were also central to the Ultra style of fandom. Now, however, they have largely been relegated to history. There are two extreme forms of Ultra fandom remaining, however, the choreography and the banner.

B. Choreography⁹

Choreographies are large, Curva-wide demonstrations of coordinated fandom. Thematically they have focused on three topics since the inception of the Ultras: Rome, AS Roma, and Curva Sud. Since choreography celebrating these topics will be discussed in other chapters, I am discussing the structural aspects of making a choreography here.

For the SS Lazio - AS Roma game of 2006-2007 Curva Sud performed a choreography involving the entire Curva. From left to right the lower sections of the Curva were covered in sheets with the letters A, S, and R. At the edges of the Curva were small placards of either red, yellow, or white held aloft by the Ultras. The Ultras standing in the lowest part of the Curva held a long banner reading “*millenovecento venti sette*” (1927), the founding year of AS Roma.

⁹ Chapter Seven describes how *Romanità* influences the content of many Ultra choreographies.



Figure 63. Choreography before SS Lazio-AS Roma.
December 2006.

The choreography was the only one of its kind performed during my research period. It was a nice choreography, but one which some Ultras felt was inadequate. “There was no theme,” Federico of *Antichi Valori* told me. “There was no *Romanità* and the celebration of AS Roma was nonexistent. It was just a billboard,” he explained. In the days after the game, other Ultras echoed his critique. Even those who had been instrumental in its creation were unhappy. Fabio of *Boys Roma* was disappointed that “we had not enough time to make something memorable and special. But, given the state of the Curva (divided between the large traditional groups - *Fedayn*, *Ultras Romani*, and *Boys Roma* - and the smaller *Basso* groups over the question of merchandising among other issues) we were lucky to have done anything.”

Nonetheless, the choreography took days of planning and two thousand euros to create. The leaders of the large groups sent invitations to all the groups in the Curva by way of text messages to each group leader. They were asked to meet at a bar in Piazza Bologna on the Tuesday before the Saturday evening game. Only representatives of *Giovinezza*, *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*, *Brigata De Falchi*, *Arditi*, *Testaccio*, and *Irish Clan Roma* accepted the invitation. Once gathered, the Ultras,

led by Spadino of *Ultras Romani*, discussed first aesthetics, then how the Curva would pay.



Figure 64. Me beneath the choreography.
December 2006.

Throughout, Giacomino, the 41 year old leader of *Irish Clan Roma*, and 20-year veteran of the Curva, insisted that *Ultras Romani* and *Boys* pay for the choreography. “Your groups have all the money,” he repeatedly said, “because you sell scarves and hats to non-Ultras.” Because of his seniority, and because of the fact that *Boys* and *Ultras Romani* hear this criticism everyday from the other groups, no one responded in anger. Giacomino continued his assault. “There are groups who sent me here to insist that you pay for whatever we do. We all have jobs, families, and rent to pay. You have stores and employees who sell Ultras gear!” he exclaimed. Finally, having heard enough, Spadino agreed, saying that *Ultras Romani* would pay for the choreography, even if they had little money with which to do so. “If we are paying, we are designing. There is no need to continue this

meeting,” he said. At that it was abruptly adjourned.

Twenty-four hours later Spadino left sketches of what the choreography would look like with a print shop in Ostia. Each group in the Curva, Fabio of *Boys* explained, have their preferred printer, usually in the neighborhood of the group. These would create any large jobs, such as sheets for choreography, or custom printed *stendardi* (figure 8) and the banner of the group. The thousands of small colored sheets or the painting of message banners were handled by the groups themselves. For this choreography, *Ultras Romani* purchased approximately 11,000 sheets of colored 8.5 x 11 inch paper and paid to print the A, S, and R, as well as the 1927 banner. In the past the cost would have been divided equally amongst the groups.

For the merchant groups, money for choreography comes from the profits gained through merchandising. For the others, a collection is taken in the weeks before a choreography in order to cover the costs. *Striscioni* banners, discussed below, are paid for in the same way. Although these cost considerably less, involving only large rolls of paper and several cans of paint, the costs are divided between group members. In the occasions that a *striscione* banner is signed/created by multiple groups, the members of each group cover the costs. Ultras belonging to *AS Roma Ultras* were expected to pay between 25 and 50 euros per choreography, depending on its size and complexity. *Striscioni* banners of that collective tended to be paid through a fund, into which Ultras paid a few euros per week or month. While smaller groups find themselves priced out of choreography, any group is capable of producing *striscioni* banners. Further, many Ultras who are group members pay for their own flags and/or *stendardi*.

C. *Striscioni* (Banners)

While the massive choreographed displays have made the Ultras known beyond the realm

of fans, many remain unaware of the more subtle practice of unveiling banners with various messages of scorn or devotion. According to Stefano Pivato, the practice was adopted from the behavior of political protesters in the 1960s and 1970s who would march behind or demonstrate in front of the long message-filled banners (Pivato, 2000, pg. 173). The Ultras use the banners to “speak” on any issue on the mind of the writer. Typically, though, they are used to insult, to protest, to motivate, or to memorialize.

Historically, the most popular use of the banners has been to insult opponents and opposing Ultras. For instance, against the *Milanese* Inter fans in 2004-2005: “*È una questione di avi, noi legionari, voi nostri schiavi*” (It is a question of ancestry, we are legionaries, you are our slaves) (figure 65). This is also a good example of the way Ultras use Rome’s classical history as a means to aggrandize the present. Other “insult” uses of banners can be as simple as the Inter Ultras greeting Napoli fans in 2007-8 with “*Fogna d’Italia*” (Italy’s gutter).

The Ultras use *striscioni* banners to protest against *Calcio Moderno* and various political issues. Roma’s Ultras have attacked journalists as the agents of *Calcio Moderno*. In the semifinal of the 2006-2007 Coppa Italia against AC Milan, one banner asked: “*Scrivete al giornale, parlate alle radio, ma quando ci venite allo stadio?*” (You [all] write in newspapers and speak on the radio, but when do you come to the stadium?) (Figure 66). This banner was in response to accusations against the Ultras of destroying soccer by turning it into a war-zone unsuitable for families and children.



Figure 65. AS Roma's Ultras explaining ancestry to the *Milanesi*. March 2005.

In 2005 the *Decreto Pisano* introduced a set of laws designed to end “soccer violence” by improving stadium security, having electronically named tickets, assigning stewards to the curvas, and in making the prosecution of those involved in soccer violence easier and more severe. Although unenforced, the decree was used to keep AC Fiorentina Ultras from standing together with the same colored shirt (white) on the grounds that this represented an “unauthorized choreography.” In response, those Ultras displayed a banner reading “*Nessun decreto cancellerà le nostre tradizioni*” (No law will cancel our traditions) (figure 67).

AS Roma's Ultras use banners to help motivate the squad during an important game, or after having lost one. In the latter case, after a recent loss to SS Lazio, the Curva displayed a banner telling Francesco Totti, Daniele De Rossi, and Alberto Aquilani to “*Imparate da noi*” (learn from us) after having been less than impressed with the effort of the three Roman players during the loss. The Ultras wanted the players to put as much passion and hostility into the game as they themselves did.



Figure 66. AS Roma's Ultras asking the media from where they get their information. January 2007.

Finally, another popular use of these banners is in celebrating Rome and memorializing or monumentalizing Romans. One of the most succinct of these was created by *Razza Romana*, a small group in Curva Sud, for AS Roma v. Inter 2006-2007, which read, “*La nostra superiorità si chiama Romanità*” (Our superiority is called *Romanità*) (figure 68). This banner will be discussed in Chapter 7 as an expression of the Ultras’ feelings of devotion to, and responsibility for, Rome.



Figure 67. AC Fiorentina Ultras explaining the uselessness of laws against the Ultras. Florence. 2007.

Almost every week during my research period a group would raise banners to announce the death or birth of someone close to the group or the Curva. What the Ultras wished to accomplish with these banners was to keep the recipient of the honor alive in the Curva. They also hoped to make the readers aware of the issues surrounding the death of the subject, whether it be cancer, immigrant crime, driving while intoxicated, or, in the case of my last example, the dangers of playing soccer on improperly cared-for fields.



Figure 68. *Razza Romana* explaining what makes Romans special. 2006.

Alessandro Bini was a 14 year-old member of the Cinecittà team in a league sponsored by AS Roma. He was playing a league game on February 2, 2008 in Cinecittà when he fell violently upon a pipe used for irrigating the field. The impact to his chest caused a heart attack. He lost consciousness and could not be resuscitated. Given the proximity of Cinecittà to Quadraro, it was not long before both *Fedayn* and *Ultras Romani* delivered scarves and flowers to the scene. In the days following the death, the local news was full of explanations and demands for justice. It emerged that Bini's favorite player was a former AS Roma player named Vincent Candela. He was contacted in France and agreed to attend the child's funeral.

The funeral took place at San Giovanni Bosco in Quadraro and Ultras hung banners on all sides of the piazza. Among these were ones saying “*Ale piccolo angelo*” (Ale little angel) and “*Ora abbiamo 12 giocatori in campo*” (Now we have 12 players on the field). Luciano Spalletti, the head coach of AS Roma spoke, saying that Alessandro would always be remembered as a player of AS Roma. Vincent Candela wept openly. At the end of the memorial, William Spadino, leader of *Ultras Romani*, announced that the entirety of Curva Sud’s activities at the next home game would be dedicated to Alessandro. No one could remember such an honor being bestowed on anyone before.



Figure 69. Curva Sud Roma honoring Alessandro Bini. 2008.

When AS Roma hosted Reggina Calcio four days later everyone who entered the stadium was greeted with a banner hung in the hallowed space reserved normally for *Brigata Roberto Rulli*, a *Fedayn* banner which commemorated the founder of the first Ultra group in Curva Sud Roma, and one of the most sacred items in the world of AS Roma’s Ultras. The banner read, “*Nel tuo ricordo piccolo Alessandro. Il coro della Sud è tutto per te*” (In your memory little Alessandro. The chorus of Curva Sud is all for you) (figure 69). The groups did not hang their banners; instead each held one

aloft to honor Alessandro. *Fedayn*'s said, "Piccolo nuovo angelo lasci un grande ricordo. Ciao Ale" (New little angel you leave a big memory. Goodbye Ale.). *Ultras Romani*'s said, "Piccolo Ale nel cielo con gli angeli . . . fai vedere il campioncino che sei noi tutti tifiamo per te. Ciao" (Little Ale in the sky with the angels . . . you showed us the little champion you are . . . all of us "root" in your honor. Goodbye) (figure 70).



Figure 70. *Ultras Romani* honoring Alessandro Bini. 2008.

There were as many tears as smiles in the curva that evening. Two *Ultras* recounted to me how their mothers, who had watched the game and ceremonies on AS Roma Channel, hugged them sobbing upon their return home from the stadium. At half time, Spadino was allowed to exit the Curva to deliver flowers on behalf of Curva Sud to Alessandro's mother, who sat with the club's directors in the Monte Mario grandstand. In return Daniele De Rossi, an AS Roma player born in Rome to a former player and current coach on the team, delivered flowers under the Curva.

For the *Ultras*, honoring Romans goes beyond just a singular memorializing action. The act itself is full of meaning and reverence because the *Ultras* take being Ultra and being Roman so seriously. The honor given Alessandro Bini was not meant to end that day at the stadium. Thus, the

Ultras were instrumental in helping to establish the *Associazione Alessandro Bini per la Sicurezza nello Sport* (Alessandro Bini Association for Safety in Sport). Already by late-summer 2008 the organization was successful in having new laws for safety in sport for the Lazio region drawn up. The Ultras used their platform to ensure that no one forgot to act in honoring Alessandro by making Rome a safer city for other young soccer players.

IV. Conclusion

As we begin to move toward a deeper analysis of the Ultras' *mentalità* and the more extreme aspects of their behavior, it is important to appreciate the mundane aspects of being an Ultra: going to stadiums to take part in the games of AS Roma. After a brief section on style within Curva Sud, this chapter has shown that, while there are definitive features of Ultra attire, these tend to change over time and to depend upon the larger political and social context for meaning. To this end, the current Ultra trend of a head covered partially by hood and scarf was brought about by a desire to avoid detection by CCTV cameras inside, and news cameras outside, stadiums.

The *trasferta*, or away game, was then detailed. I believe the away game is the essence of the Ultra experience. Away from Rome, AS Roma's Ultras are far more aggressive and united as Romans or fans of AS Roma. While there is always time for play, as in transit to and from stadiums, and occasions for humor, the away game tends to be a serious affair. For one, until 2007 the Ultras experienced away games as veritable war zones, with the potential for violence existing at every moment. What's more, the away game has traditionally been the domain of only the hardest, most committed Ultras. The away game, then, fosters an elite within the Ultra phenomenon. These elite Ultras understand themselves as the quintessential Ultras, ready to sacrifice time, energy, health, safety, and more to support AS Roma in hostile territory. It is not by coincidence that most of the

Ultras surveyed for this project come from this group. In fact, it was only because of my willingness to join them away from Rome that my research was possible at all.

Back in Rome, the games are perhaps more grand and festive. The occasional choreography charges the air of the pre-game period, as does being with a large group of friends and cohorts. While the away game is given an electricity because of the hostility involved, in Rome it is the opportunity to be in Curva Sud that does so. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, however, being in the Curva is not without its conflicts and dangers, the more so because ideological differences are always present. Away from Rome, such differences largely disappear, as a more cohesive group forms. In or away from Rome, the Ultras support AS Roma in the same manner: with songs, flags, and occasionally flares, bombs, and choreography. *Striscioni* banners, the traditional voice of the Ultras, are also displayed in and away from Rome. However, these, like much of the Ultra in-stadium experience, are being policed into extinction by a government that is increasingly at odds with the Ultras' worldview.

CHAPTER FOUR: Ultra Practices and Their Consequences

In the last chapter I gave a sense of the emotional, temporal, and financial investments the Ultras make in being Ultras. Whether going to an away game or creating a choreography or banner for one at home, the Ultras are Ultras “*per tutta la vita*” (for their whole life) as they say. The language used in the chapter was designed to ease the reader into the discursive world of the Ultras, and into the “language regime” through which their *mentalità* is made real (Kroskrity, 2000, pg. 23). This was more obvious at the end of the chapter, which examined the creation of banners and the purpose they serve within the Ultra phenomenon.

The banners and game-day experiences inform the beginning of this chapter, which seeks to explain the most extreme forms of Ultra behavior and its consequences. I begin by introducing the Nietzsche of the Ultras, who will take center stage in Chapter 5, and explaining how the Ultras utilize what he called “monumental history.” This form of history promotes the creation and celebration of heroes, as well as strictly-defined codes of co-identification, wherein the race or nation are often diminished for the sake of more particular groupings. Finally, it allows the Ultras to bask in the importance of their every action, so that the act of following AS Roma away from Rome becomes a series of opportunities to define oneself and create one’s own value.

The chapter then describes in detail the events surrounding the death of SS Lazio Ultra Gabriele Sandri in November 2007 and how these relate to the period following the death of Filippo Raciti eight months earlier. This section takes the form of a newsreel so that the confusion, anxiety, anger, and compassion of those days predominate. It is written from the perspective of the Ultras, which I find valuable for presenting their understanding of what transpired.

The section demonstrates what Michel de Certeau (1984) theorized regarding the imposition

of textual and professional knowledge on the knowability and experience of everyday life. The Ultras resisted, in his terms, the “view from above” which painted them as terrorists, but in doing so became thoroughly ensnared in the language of the authorities aligned against them (de Certeau, 1984, pg. 13). Finally, the chapter uses the Sandri murder and subsequent Ultra violence as a way to introduce the Ultras’ war against *Calcio Moderno* (the business of football).

I. Ultra Practices

A. Monumentalism and Ultra Practices

In October 2007 *Boys Roma* elected a new leader. The group had been governed by a leadership council since the death of Paolo Zappavigna in June 2005. Instead of promoting from within that group, *Boys* decided to reward the loyalty and radicalism of a former hierarch under Paolo. His name is Maurizio, but the *Boys* Ultras call him Duce because of his physical resemblance to Mussolini and, now, because he is their leader. I had been invited to the office on the day of his election, but was asked to wait outside until the ceremony was completed. “We like you and we trust you,” said Fabio, my main contact with the group, “but you are not one of us.”

As I waited outside, my attention focused on the message painted on the front of the office: *Chi l’ha fatto, aspetta* (He who did it, expect [retaliation]) (figure 37). (The exterior of the office will be discussed in the next chapter.) Later that afternoon I asked some of the Ultras what they thought of it.¹ Maurizio, the Duce, said sternly (in English), “if someone messes with us, we gonna mess with them,” before smiling and asking if I liked his imitation of Robert De Niro. Of course I did, I said,

and then asked “this is central to the Ultras *mentalità*, yes?” He responded, “life is for the purpose

¹ It had been explained to me earlier in the year by Jean-Paolo. I will describe that explanation in Chapter 5.

of fighting. We search for enemies from history and the present, all the same.” I had witnessed in other Ultras the commitment to having long memories. Fading graffiti tags in Rome had been explained to me with enough venom to make me think the confrontation which prompted them had taken place yesterday instead of nine years ago. Locales along a train route were explained similarly, always in terms of rivalry, confrontation, and someone or some group acting heroically to avenge its honor.

Maurizio and the others made it clear that for the Ultras, the past is never dead. One must act unhistorically or suprahistorically in order to keep it alive, but in a city like The Eternal City this makes sense. The Ultras act unhistorically by seeking a present that changes only by way of the meanings and will of a highly subjectively understood past. Conversely, they act suprahistorically by being keenly motivated to maintain distance from others and proximity to their *mentalità* (Nietzsche, 1997, pgs. 59-123). In the second of Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations*, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” he distinguishes between three kinds of history: critical, antiquarian, and monumental. He implores his readers to “employ history only in the service of life” instead of “enslaving life” to a particularly modern (in his estimation, decadent) understanding of history (1997 pg. 116).

Critical history is of use to those who seek to cast off the burdens of the present. It is a history that judges and condemns the past for its role in creating the present. It is also a nihilistic history, in that it condemns all that lies beyond the “good” as being unworthy of life (Nietzsche 1997, pgs. 72-76). Antiquarian history is of use to those who aspire to familiarity. It is a history that preserves and reveres the past. But in doing so, it is Romantic and condemns the present for the sake of every past triviality. In both cases, life is mummified, because the preservation of life is valued

above the expansion of life (Nietzsche 1997, pg. 74).

Monumental history, by contrast, is useful for those who aspire to “greatness.” It takes its cues from heroes, grandeur, warfare, victory, and the value of battle (found in sacrifice, honor, duty, and commitment). It is a history that uses the past as inspiration to act in the present. Monumental history is less interested in the study of the past, or in the construction of models of causation. Instead, its interest lies in affect. It diminishes the “motives and instigations” of an historical act in order to fully monumentalize its affect “as something exemplary and worthy of imitation” (Nietzsche 1997, pg. 70). With such a focus on affect, history is made poetic and mythical, just as myth and poetry themselves become important sources of history. As Nietzsche says, “the past itself suffers harm” for the sake of those heroes, saints, and vistas that fire the blood of the present (1997, pg. 71). Monumental history, then, is a history alive in the present moment.

Nietzsche uses this conceptualization of history as a critical way to understand the relationship between history and culture. The “natural” relation between the two is always to serve life at the moment; it is never to undermine the present (Nietzsche 1997, pg. 77). The weakness of modern culture, he explains, is in part due to its lack of monumentality. In critiquing modernity through its uses of history, in its critical and antiquarian guises, Nietzsche seeks to make us aware of the dangers of consuming knowledge for its own sake and without purpose or affective base - in the mode of “culture-less” “career-minded consumers” (2004, pg. 139).

More powerful is the way Nietzsche explains this in *Twilight of the Idols*: that the modern West suffers from “atrophy of the spiritual instincts” because of its faith in, and celebration of, the universal and concurrent dismissal of the particular and unique (2005, pg. 188). This attack on the universal (and concomitant celebration of “spiritual instincts”) is the key to understanding the Ultras

in terms of their favorite philosopher, Nietzsche. For as the Ultras act against modernity, they do so primarily because they critique it (and what it promises) as a promotion of the universalization of modern-or-global-capitalism.

I discerned this same monumentalism in the banners displayed in the Curva and in the strong desire to display one's colors away from Rome. Because, as I explained in the previous two chapters, the displays of the Ultras are captured in film and published both online and in print, the Ultras have become cognizant of their ability to influence both public discourse and other curvas. The groups themselves hire photographers located in other areas of the stadium to take photos of their banners so that they are recorded for posterity.² Thus, there is always a sense amongst the groups that what they are doing is historical and creative, a marker of the Ultra *mentalità*. A good example of the monumental use of banners is those which attempted to honor Vanessa Russo.

On April 28, 2007, Vanessa Russo was attacked and killed by two female Romanian prostitutes while leaving the Metro at *Termini* (Rome's central rail station). After arguing in the subway because the Romanians thought she was looking at them, one, Doina Matei, 16 years old, jabbed the closed end of an umbrella in Vanessa's left eye. She died of a massive brain injury. The city was outraged. It was the first of what would be a long summer filled with accusations and attacks against Romanians and Roma for alleged criminal behavior (see Chapter 8). From the Ultras' own experiences they are highly aware of the media's power to criminalize (see below). Yet, it must be said, they are roundly uncritical about the same media's portrayal of Romanian and Roma immigrants as criminal.

² These are on display in offices and online. Two examples are the series of binders kept by *Boys* and the group photos on the *Ultras Romani* website.

The game following her murder was April 29: AS Roma - SS Lazio, the biggest game of any season for the Ultras and the city. Early in the day, a small group calling itself *BD Ultras Roma* (the meaning of BD is unknown) reached the staging area beyond Curva Sud's entrance. They carried a banner which said simply "Ciao Vanessa." As Sandro, the group's leader, later told me by telephone, it was meant to show Vanessa's family, and all the sisters, daughters, and mothers in the city that what happened to Vanessa would not be tolerated or forgotten.

"For me and my friends," he said, "the murder of an innocent Roman girl at the hands of [presumed] illegal immigrants was like a call to arms." However, the police would not allow the group to enter the stadium with the banner because it was unrelated to AS Roma or the game per the terms of the 2007 Amato Decree. The mood in Curva Sud that day was murderous. Hardly anyone followed the game. Ultras were on cell phones explaining to one another and others beyond the stadium what had happened to *BD Ultras Roma*. Giorgio of *Romulae Genti* roared, "If the government wants to destroy the Ultras, that is one thing. We are at war with them already. But to defend murderous *zingari* (derogatory term for Roma gypsies - plural of *zingaro*) by disallowing [the *BD Ultras*'] salute to Vanessa's family was treasonous." As word spread through both curvas, the AS Roma and SS Lazio Ultras united in protest against the banning of the banner. Both curvas began taking down all banners and colors. Neither curva displayed any *striscioni* banners, even though some Curva Sud Roma groups had been able to enter the stadium with their banners honoring Russo.

The protest of the state's treatment of *BD Ultras Roma* demonstrates an interesting aspect of how the Ultras use fandom. In order to do honor to something, in this case Russo, her family, or Roman women in general, the Curva creates banners announcing their sentiments and intentions, and then performs their unique form of fandom. Conversely, when the Ultras are protesting

something, usually their own treatment by the state, they will deny themselves the act of fandom. Because the Ultras act as fans for themselves, and for the eleven players on the field, there is no sense that they are denying the general public the thrill of the spectacle they create. Using history and creating history as an affective force, then, are inseparably linked, as the Ultras do not assume that the other fans seated in the Olympic Stadium comprehend their actions or worldview. The selection of history to use and to make, in other words, is done so to honor Curva Sud, Rome, and AS Roma, for the sake of Curva Sud and not the non-Ultra audience that may be watching.



Figure 71. Curva Sud Roma begins taking down their banners. AS Roma-SS Lazio. 2007.

B. The War for Sandri or The Sack of Rome

In the morning of November 11, 2007, Gabrielle Sandri, a 27 year old Roman fan of SS Lazio, and 3 friends were driving to Milan to support their team against Inter. Sandri was well known in Rome, and famous amongst Ultras, as one of the city's most respected DJ's. His parents

owned a men's clothing store in the Trionfale neighborhood which had supplied countless Ultras with the "casual" clothing that defined Ultra fashion since the 1990s. Through DJ-ing and his parent's store, Sandri was also well connected with several SS Lazio players. His entire family was involved in the Ultras and were fans of SS Lazio in some form.

Sandri had worked until 6:00 AM and was then riding to Milan for the 3:00 PM game. In an Autogrill parking lot near Arezzo he and his companions encountered a carload of FC Juventus fans and engaged in taunting and insulting them. The yelling alerted two local police officers assigned to keep the peace at the Autogrill, as these stops on the autostrade have become among the favorite meeting places for Ultras traveling to away games. As both cars were pulling away shots were fired. Moments later the car in which Sandri was riding stopped. He was dead, having been shot in the neck (figure 72).



Figure 72. Gabriele Sandri lies dead. Arezzo.
November 11, 2007.

Initial news reports said only that a young Roman had been killed in what appeared to be an accidental police shooting. As midday approached, reports were lengthened to say that the dead youth was an Ultra of SS Lazio. These reports said nothing about games being cancelled, but most

Ultras believed that Inter-Lazio would be postponed if nothing else.³ Then it was announced on the radio that Inter-Lazio would not happen but the other games of the Serie A calendar would start after a 15 minute delay (as a show of respect). Indeed, newly elected FIGC President Giancarlo Abete said on live television that Inter-Lazio could not be played but that “the other games will be played in order to avoid problems.” One had to assume he referred to “problems” with the Ultras.

i. In Milan and Bergamo

At the opening of Milan’s San Siro stadium at 1:00 PM (at that time the game was still going ahead), very few fans entered. The few that did sang songs against the police and Juventus. The most popular song in Italian curvas, perhaps the only one common to all, is against the Carabinieri: “*La disoccupazione, ci ha dato un gran mestiere, mestiere, di merda, carabinieri*” (Unemployment has given us a great profession, profession of shit, carabinieri [the militarized state police]). It is this attitude toward the police that truly unites, and creates, what could be called “the Italian Ultras.” Where otherwise the joys of agon and celebrations of local particularity override common values, ultimately hindering the Ultras’ ability to unite as a true social movement, the police act as a rare stimulus to unity (see Chapter 5).

Instead of entering the stadium directly, a group of Inter and Lazio Ultras sought to enter through the tunnel used by buses carrying the players. They went to secure a promise from the players that they would not play. When told the players had yet to arrive they left to amass under Curva Nord. It was there that they learned of the cancellation of the Inter-Lazio game.

Outside the stadium other Lazio and Inter Ultras joined together to smash the TV camera of a reporter who insisted upon filming their activities and to parade behind two banners. These read,

³ This was the early thinking among the Ultras with whom I spoke, trying to learn the fate of the AS Roma-Cagliari Calcio game to be played that evening.

“*Amato Dimettiti*” (Amato Resign) and “*Per Raciti Fermate il Campionato, La Morte Di Un Tifoso Non Ha Significato*” (For Raciti you stopped the championship, the death of a fan means nothing).⁴ They shouted “*assassini*” (assassins) and “*Un Saluto a Gabriele*” (a salute to Gabriele) as they marched behind the banners to the police headquarters on Via Novara. Once there, the group of approximately 400 launched bottles and stones against the office. Along with them was also a small group of Ultras of AS Varese, a small but historic team from the Milan suburbs who, like the Ultras of Inter and Lazio, are known to be far right politically.

Meanwhile, in Bergamo the Atalanta BC Ultras had a skirmish with the police before the game between Atalanta BC and AC Milan (around 1:00 PM). The Atalanta Ultras, among the most active and aggressive in Italy, first attacked a police jeep with rocks; those inside received minor head wounds. They then began a more serious engagement with the police amassing near the stadium, raining stones upon them. AC Milan Ultras attacked train guards at the Treviglio station (between Milano and Bergamo) and then evidently fought with Atalanta BC Ultras outside the station in Bergamo (figure 47).

In the 2:00 PM hour Atalanta BC Ultras outside their Curva Sud attacked the police with rocks and sticks. The police responded with teargas. Nearby the Milan Ultras engaged the police but most were already in the stadium. When they realized the Atalanta Ultras were fighting the police elsewhere they tried to exit the stadium but were charged by the police and constrained to stay inside.

⁴ Giuliano Amato former member of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and then Minister of the Interior. He authored the April 2007 *Decreto Amato* which outlawed many Ultra traditions.



Figure 73. Cristiano Doni approaches Atalanta BC's Curva Sud. Bergamo. November 11, 2007.

As game time approached the situation calmed, but the Ultras had already decided that under no circumstances was the game to proceed. As the game started they used a manhole cover to blast a hole in the partition separating the field from the Curva as an attempt to get the game stopped. The most popular video of the day is of them smashing a hole in the glass barrier, while Cristiano Doni and other Atalanta BC players pleaded with them to stay calm (figure 73). During the interruption the AC Milan Ultras exited the stadium and were escorted back to the Bergamo central station. At the announcement of the game's abandonment, the Atalanta BC Ultras gave a victory yell. After exiting the stadium, there were no serious incidents. The Atalanta BC and AC Milan Ultras, as much as it pained Claudio of *Ultras Romani* to say of their bitter rivals, "had done their duty."

ii. In Other Cities

There was Ultra activity in other Italian stadiums, as many acted with fury that the games had been allowed to go ahead as scheduled. In Florence, a small number of AC Fiorentina Ultras sang songs against the police, but were drowned out by the whistles and singing of the "other Ultras" (according to Mediaset's TG1 newscast). Lorenzo Contucci wrote on the website of *AS Roma Ultras*

that this news was actually saying that there are only 200 or so people in Florence worthy to call themselves Ultras.

Songs against the police were sung in Reggio Calabria and Siena. In Reggio there were no colors. In Turin the Torino Ultras left the curva in protest, followed in kind by the Catania Ultras. Initially the Torino Ultras decided against displaying colors in the curva. It was only after the game started that they decided to leave the stadium. They were joined outside by the Catanesi (people of Catania), where they too sang against the police.

In Parma, where Juventus was playing, there appeared a banner reading “*La morte è uguale per tutti*” (All deaths are equal). As the game began, the Juventus Ultras had all their banners turned upside-down (a common sign of protest among Ultras). Then, in accord with the Parma Ultras, both groups followed the game in silence (except to sing against the police).

The Ultras’ reaction was seen also in smaller cities. In Serie C, Taranto Ultras pelted the field and forces of law and order stationed under their curva with stones and other objects, thus bringing their game to a halt. The police responded with tear gas. In Potenza, six Brindisi fans were arrested for violence against a public official. In the Lazio *Lega Eccellenza* (amateur league) game between Boville and Latina, three Carabinieri officers were injured by a bomb thrown from the Latina curva. Otherwise the league’s games were played without incident.

After Raciti was killed in February 2007, I heard no Ultras say they were glad that a police officer had been killed. No one mentioned his death at all, except to acknowledge its role in the government’s subsequent crackdown on the Ultras. After Sandri was killed, however, the smoldering tension created by the months of what they saw as repression exploded into a spontaneous nationwide uprising. Although not in all cities were the Ultras’ actions violent, but there was still

a collective will toward expressing grief and frustration. A violent, militant, and militarist brotherhood, the Ultras' dedication to a radical anti-bourgeois worldview put them at odds with the police. Rather than uniting as oppressed victims of injustice, the Ultras exploded in rage because that was the logical way to express their anger and to honor the sacrifice of Gabriele Sandri. Likewise, there was no similar night of violence following Raciti's death. Instead, it was only after Sandri that cries of "1,000 Raciti's" could be heard amongst AS Roma's Ultras (figure 74).



Figure 74. Graffiti calling for 10, 100, or 1000 more police deaths. Rome. 2008.

Italian Football Association (FIGC) President Giancarlo Abete seemed completely dismayed at the violence in Bergamo, insisting repeatedly that what was happening had neither a connection with soccer nor the relationship between the police and some Ultras. He then said that it was not parallel with Catania, which, in his mind, involved a premeditated attack on the police. This death was just accidental, he repeated.

iii. Rome

By late afternoon, news began circulating of huge protest marches in Milan and Rome. In

Rome, AS Roma and Cagliari Calcio were scheduled to play at 8:30 PM. Ultras from SS Lazio and AS Roma were discussing ways to ensure that the game would be stopped. Word reached the media around 5:00 PM that the two curvas, Curva Sud Roma and Curva Nord Lazio, were uniting in order to force the game's postponement. (I was already aware that *Boys*, *Padroni di Casa*, *Ultras Romani*, and even *Fedayn* had pledged unity with the Lazio Ultras, come what may.)



Figure 75. Gabriele Sandri's family.
Rome. November 11, 2007.

Around 6:00 PM the game was officially postponed. In the minds of the Ultras, though, it was not abandoned out of respect for Sandri and his family, but out of fear of public disorder. Meanwhile, at 6:15 PM, Luigi Conti, the lawyer for Sandri's family, announced on RAI's TG1 newscast, along with Gabriele's brother Christiano, that the shooting could not have been accidental based on eye-witness accounts. He called it a murder and said that, based on early evidence, the shooting must have occurred "like target practice." Sandri, he vividly explained, was shot while seated in the backseat of a car that was leaving the Autogrill. At this time there were already SS Lazio fans arriving in Arezzo, shouting "*assassini*" outside the police station.



Figure 76. Ultras' shrine to Sandri. Arezzo. November 11, 2007.

a. A Guerilla War in Rome

As the sun fell on Rome, Skynews 24 was reporting that away games would be banned, possibly forever, as the Ultras were “holding the season hostage.” Accompanied by live scenes near the Olympic Stadium of Ultras throwing unidentifiable objects at police-lines and passing cars, Giancarlo Abete now said that the violence was proof of “structural hatred” of the police amongst the Ultras. The death of Sandri had sparked, he said, “a guerilla war in Rome.”

By 8:00 PM all Ultra websites were shut down. The Ultras use their own sites for news. The largest of these is Tifonet, which collates news from various curvas. It reads like an hourly update on the Ultra experience. The most important website for Ultras happens to be associated with Curva Sud Roma. It is that of the now disbanded *AS Roma Ultras*. Its webmaster, Lorenzo Contucci, is still involved in the curva, however, as he is one of the most important lawyers and advocates for the Ultras in Italy. The sites closed, asking for “*giustizia per Gabriele*” (justice for Gabriele). They also closed, I was later told by Federico of *Antichi Valori*, a close friend of Contucci, because the Ultras believe that the government monitors the sites for information just as do the Ultras.

The main body of Lazio Ultras marched to Piazza Euclide, but by 6:00 PM had already attacked one police station near the Olympic Stadium. According to *Il Messaggero*, the general battle was between Ultras with flares and bombs and police with teargas. As they marched, the face-covered Ultras torched scooters and trash bins, as well as a police bus and several cars (figure 7, 77).



Figure 77. A trash bin burns in the wake of the Ultras. Rome. November 11, 2007.

Elsewhere, twenty Ultras attacked police on Via Bosis, near the stadium, with bottles, bolts, and pieces of iron. One person from this attack was arrested. Then, the Ultras assaulted the headquarters of the Italian Olympic Committee (*Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano - CONI*), which is located next to the stadium in one of the buildings comprising the Foro Italico. Over one hundred Ultras broke into the lobby of the building. The unarmed security guards locked themselves in the offices while the Ultras destroyed the lobby. According to Skynews 24, after one group had entered the building, another group waited outside, seeking to draw-in the police. They refused the chase and the Ultras instead entered the building (figure 78).



Figure 78. The CONI headquarters after the Ultras attack. Rome. November 11, 2007.

They ignited a bomb which damaged the marble, destroyed the China Olympics countdown clock, all the windows, and a computer at the reception desk. After CONI, a group of Ultras entered the stadium (but did no damage). At this point the Ponte Duca d' Aosta (which spans the Tiber at the Mussolini obelisk that marks the entrance to the stadium) was barricaded with crowd control barriers and garbage bins. Many Ultras could be seen armed with iron bars and with their faces covered. They set about burning the trash bins at the mouth of the bridge before crossing it and moving out of the area (figure 79, 81, 82). Small groups formed and split from the main group of Ultras. Some of these smashed car windows and burned cars, scooters, and trash bins (figure 80). The largest group assaulted police stations.

The biggest attack on a police station occurred on Via Remi, near the Flaminio Stadium. Around two hundred Ultras amassed in front of the station. They set fire to a bus and a row of trash

bins. They then broke the windows of the station and attempted to set it afire with flares and bombs. The tactic was repeated elsewhere. The police station at Ponte Milvio and another on Via Flaminia were attacked with flaming trash bins, stones, bottles, bolts, and other pieces of iron.



Figure 79. Ultras rampage in Rome. November 11, 2007.

Around midnight, the bulk of the action stopped when the police pulled everyone out of the area for fear of reprisals. According to Alessandro Marchetti (Secretary of the *Sindacato Unitario Lavoratori Polizia Municipale* - the policeman’s union) the pull-out left the city in the hands of the “teppisti” (hooligans).⁵



Figure 80. Auto damage. Rome. November 11, 2007.

⁵ The Italian language tellingly does not translate Ultra as “hooligan,” as hooliganism is associated with rowdiness and vandalism - neither of which are general behaviors of the Ultras.

While walking far enough from the stadium area to find a bus to the center of town I met a young Ultra who admitted to throwing stones at a police-line and a few passing cars near the stadium. He was an AS Roma fan but had joined a group of SS Lazio Ultras as they crossed the Duca d' Aosta bridge. At that point he was advised by one of the Ultras leading the group that he was better-off not getting involved with them. He was only 16 years old and did not share the “hardened” appearance of most of the Ultras who were out that night. He stayed around the stadium to look for friends and, as he put it, “to see how [he] could help.” As we walked he spoke of his disgust at the news coverage that had replaced soccer for the day. “The Ultras are always [presented as] animals,” he said.



Figure 81. Ultras rampage in Rome.
November 11, 2007.



Figure 82. Ultras rampage in Rome.
November 11, 2007.

iv. The Media Responds

When I arrived home well after midnight the RAI24 news channel was wrapping up the day's events. They still called the shooting of Sandri accidental, but by now the shooting was a distant memory for the press. The real story was what happened in Bergamo and Rome. Various MP's had their say. Maurizio Gasparri and Ignazio La Russa of *Alleanza Nazionale* attacked Amato for not stopping all the games - if not out of respect then out of concern for public safety. *Forza Italia*'s Fabrizio Cicchitto seconded their thoughts, saying that Amato had the power and responsibility to keep the violence of Bergamo and Rome from happening. Giovanna Melandri stated her support for Amato's decision to cancel only Inter-Lazio and to start the others after "a moment of reflection."

Rome's mayor Walter Veltroni received news of what was happening while in Cracow. He said it was a terrible day for all of Rome, but that the situation again showed that violence of any sort has no place in a civilized society. Veltroni then asked a group of two hundred students visiting a synagogue in Cracow to perform a moment of silence for Sandri. Piero Marrazzo, president of the Lazio Region, said that work must be done amongst children in order to create a culture of sport that refutes all forms of aggression.

The next day, the press was universal in its condemnation of the Ultras. The major dailies sold in Rome (*Il Messaggero*, *Il Tempo*, *La Repubblica*, *Corriere dello Sport*, *Corriere della Sera*, *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, and *Il Romanista*) each carried a photo of either Rome or Bergamo. Two of them used NO as a headline, two others used BASTA (ENOUGH). As the night before, the reactions to Sandri's death were more prominently covered than his death. In the morning the name of the officer and details of the shooting were still undisclosed. By extension the jury was still out

on Sandri's culpability for what happened. The facts that were available seemed tame given the images of the previous evening: three arrests (of which one was a female), twenty policemen with minor injuries, and four policemen under medical supervision in a Rome hospital.

Most of the news consisted of negative moralistic profiles of the Ultras. A typical article in *La Gazzetta dello Sport* identified the Ultras as "misguided thugs with a warped reality . . . who show up to games hoping for trouble." The author added that the Ultras are "dangerous rabble with power over the peace-loving masses who just want to enjoy soccer."⁶ The Italian media used *teppisti* and even "hooligan" instead of "Ultras" when talking about Rome, understanding well the moral implications of the switch in descriptive terms.

At a café in Monteverde the morning regulars all spoke of the previous day and night. The vast majority parroted the press in the assumption that the events of the morning and the evening were unrelated. This assumption could only be made with no understanding of the Ultras' *mentalità*. The owner, who was aware of my involvement with the Ultras took me aside and explained to me in his best Italian (he usually spoke Roman dialect) that the Ultras were criminals who were killing the game. He suggested I come with him on Saturday mornings to watch his young son play if I wanted to see what was important in sports: sportsmanship, fun, innocence. The Ultras, he explained, with their "stupid rivalries and war against the police," had nothing to do with soccer.

The midday TG1 newscast on RAI1 led with an update on the shooting and the subsequent violence. The state news agency ANSA identified the police officer who shot Sandri as 35 year-old Luigi Spaccatorella of Arezzo. It was assumed that he would be facing charges of *omicidio preterintenzionale* (involuntary manslaughter). Through his lawyer he issued a statement calling the

⁶ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, Nov 12, 2007, pg. 1

shooting a terrible accident. According to the statement, a warning shot from two hundred meters was made, followed by an accidental firing as the gun came down. He said he was not aiming as he was running from two hundred meters.

But on the 5:00 PM broadcast, the Police Chief of Arezzo, Vincenzo Giacobbe, stated that numerous witnesses saw Luigi firing with both hands, apparently in the belief that Sandri's car had just robbed the petrol station at the rest area. The bullet (perhaps shot at the car's tires) hit Sandri in the neck as he sat in the back driver-side seat. Back in Rome, the police injury list reached forty, with the most serious being an officer assaulted with an iron bar during one of the station raids.

v. The Ultras Explain

Talk amongst the Ultras was much like that amongst non-Ultras. Everyone wanted to know what had happened and why. There was great disparity, however, in how the previous day was explained. Whereas the general public, politicians, and those involved in the business of soccer (including the media) spoke about Sandri's death as a tragic accident unrelated to soccer and of the Ultras holding the game and its fans hostage for the sake of their anti-social war against the police, the Ultras spoke about honor, sacrifice, commitment, brotherhood, and, indeed, warfare.

As I briefly explained above, the Ultras' *mentalità* utilizes a model of history that deploys and creates heroes. Monday evening, a large group of Ultras from *Boys*, *Ultras Romani*, *Fedayn*, and *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo* met at the Cutty Sark Bar near Piazza Bologna. Many of them were at the stadium the previous evening. They were reluctant to talk about anything, and more importantly, anyone they had seen. My presence at the gathering was because I had shown myself to be trustworthy and of no threat to them in the previous months. This was a group of older Ultras - those who had seen the Curva become not only more ideologically influenced and violent, but also

the prey of the police and various “governmental agendas.”

The Ultras feel that they are used not only to justify the creation of a police-state, but also the creation of myriad divisions and offices within the governmental bureaucracy that are charged with controlling soccer-related violence. The most vocal of those gathered allowed themselves the pleasure of being in the company of other Ultras. Unable to speak freely during their work day, they asked each other, among other things, “*cosa vogliono da noi?*” In other words, “what do they want us to do?” It was in situations like this that the hegemony of the state and media in control of the image of the Ultras was most telling.

Despite the Ultras’ attempts to create public awareness (through banners, choreography, websites, offices, and even radio shows), they were still an isolated minority. And despite their self-representation as an elite phenomenon, in the aftermath of the Raciti death and the killing of Sandri, what the media and state say of them is far more powerful than what they say of themselves. Instead of merely speaking past one another, however, the more the media described the Ultras as a violent mob which threatened the security of the state, the more the Ultras acted as a violent mob, albeit one incapable of threatening the state. For the Ultras present at the Cutty Sark, this was also apparent. “They speak, we act,” said Fabio of *Boys*, “and this shows their cowardice and our courage.”

The state of affairs also demonstrated that against the state, in the person of the police, the Ultras have an opponent that will at least confront them with arms, so to speak. It is never a fair fight when one battles with guns and teargas and the other with stones and bolts, but it is a battle nonetheless. Against the power of the media, dissident groups such as the Ultras find the rules of engagement far less equal, if no less consequential (Massumi, 1992, pgs. 104-105). Oddly enough, the Ultras are perfectly equipped to fight on both fronts. They will be violent, which suits the first,

and they understand imagery, ideas, and how they interact in the production of information (even if many of them are verbally unaware of the connection) which suits the second. Although the Ultras made it clear that they understood what happened the day before, and what was happening to them as a phenomenon, they were still incapable of making anyone beyond other Ultras listen to their position. This is because of the distance between their values and those of their opponents.

In the entirety of Italy, they said, there were only two groups who had acted honorably and nobly: us (the AS Roma and SS Lazio Ultras) and the *Atalantini* (the Ultras of Atalanta BC, the team of Bergamo). The Ultras in Bergamo had risked much to show their disapproval at the games being allowed to continue. They had acted not out of uncontrolled aggression but out of respect for Sandri, honoring his sacrifice with one of their own. It is rare to hear AS Roma Ultras speak positively of the *Bergamaschi*, as people from Bergamo are known, for the rivalry between the groups is deep, politically-driven, and violent. Despite both sets of Ultras being of the far right, those of Atalanta BC are also aligned with the Northern League. As the League has gained notoriety, so too has its vehement denunciations of Rome as a cauldron of corruption and southern backwardness. When the two curvas meet, no punches are pulled. But these AS Roma Ultras were sympathetic to their Atalanta counterparts because they acted beyond themselves and stood up to the greed and might of *Calcio Moderno*.

Not just the state, nor the police, but *Calcio Moderno*. As Fabio of *Boys* explained, “the games continued not to benefit the communities in which the games are played nor the youth or families, which the media claims are the true victims of our [the Ultras] behavior. They continued for SKY, Mediaset, Telecom Italia, and the other corporate sponsors of soccer on television.” And now, the Ultras, who understand themselves as the only true fans of the game, as well as the only

ones fighting (literally) to keep the game connected to its roots, expected to face a lengthy, perhaps permanent, ban from the stadiums.

Speaking in this way made them think, too, of their situation. They were certainly facing a lengthy stadium ban. Their response, though, was sobering. “*Macchi se ne frega un cazzo?*” (Who gives a damn?) Who cares about soccer or AS Roma when an Ultra was killed for doing nothing more than supporting his team? What does any of it matter when the game is in the hands of those who care only about maximizing corporate sponsorship and then making that sponsorship as profitable as possible? Thus, the Ultras echoed the cries heard in the media and from the offices of FIGC, although looking at the situation from an opposing point of view: we are witnessing the death of Italian soccer.

II. Consequences

A. Raciti and the Policing of the Ultras

i. The *Decreto Amato* and *Osservatorio*

To better understand the thoughts of the Ultras, we must return to the aftermath of Raciti’s death in February, 2007. Following the actions of the Catania Ultras, all of Italy’s Ultras were demonized. It was impossible to watch television, listen to the radio, enter a piazza or café without hearing someone speaking of the Ultras. There was no mention of the life devoted to honor, commitment, and sacrifice that I had come to know, but instead talk of criminals, hoodlums, and delinquents. I took it upon myself to wear a *Boys Roma* hat around Rome after the killing and was asked to remove it one morning by a barman at Tazza d’Oro (one of Rome’s most venerated cafés). Ironically, on January 31, 2007, just two days prior to Raciti’s death, and on an evening when AS Roma played AC Milan in the second-leg of the Coppa Italia semi-final, Curva Sud unfurled the

banner asking “You (all) write in newspapers, and talk on the radio, but when do you (all) come to the stadium?” (figure 66). Even before the media barrage surrounding Raciti, the Ultras understood themselves to be at war with the media.

More important than the press, the government post-Raciti was talking about the Ultras, making it clear that life as the Ultras had known it before was officially over. Not only, they were told, would organized travel to away games be outlawed, but also all of the performative elements of the Ultra form of life: bombs, flares, banners, and (certain) songs. Those speaking most vociferously against the Ultras were Giuliano Amato (Minister of the Interior), Giovanna Melandri (Minister of Youth and Sports), and Antonio Matarrese (President of Lega Calcio). While Matarrese spoke of cracking down on delinquency and making soccer safe for families, Melandri spoke of the ills of Italian sport (especially when compared to England’s policing of hooliganism) and of her desire to implement a *modello Inglese* (English Model) based on strict and aggressive policing, all-seated stadiums, and zero-tolerance of violence. For his part, Amato spoke of ridding soccer once and for all of the Ultras.

On Thursday February 8, Amato announced that he and the *Osservatorio Nazionale sulle Manifestazioni Sportive* (National Observatory of Sporting Events) had devised a set of amendments to *Legge 401* (Law 401 - the set of laws dating from 1989 that set the terms and conditions of policing and penalizing violent acts relating to sporting events). The Observatory is a governing body made up of various governmental departments, including the Ministry of the Interior, the police and the Carabinieri, as well as Trenitalia and Autogrill (restaurants and gas-stations located along Italy’s highways) that has advised policy and policing decisions for sporting events since 1999. Until 2007 it had only an advisory capacity regarding the reduction of “soccer-related

violence” but now was given the authority to change the face of Italian soccer. Autogrill was included on the Observatory board because, as violence was defeated in the stadiums, and organized travel to-and-from away games became more diligently policed, the Ultras began traveling in smaller numbers and using these highway stops as the setting for their conflicts.

The proposal motivated by Raciti’s death, quickly dubbed the *Decreto Amato* (Amato Decree), consisted of seven points:

1. Any act of violence against a public official will be punishable with a prison term of between 4 and 10 years. Any act resulting in grave bodily harm will be punishable of a prison term of between 8 and 10 years.
2. The displaying of any banners containing incitements to violence, racial, cultural, or bodily insults or insensitivity, will be punishable by expulsion from all Italian stadiums for between 1 and 5 years. Further, all banners must be pre-approved by the club hosting the event in question. Approvals are based upon the criteria set out by the Amato Decree. Displaying of unapproved banner will result in expulsion from all Italian stadiums for 3 years.
3. The “statute of limitations” for arrest after the event of soccer-related violence is extended from 36 to 48 hours.
4. Any stadium unable to reach the security plan set forth in the Amato Decree will be prohibited from hosting spectators. Included in this section is the prohibition of the selling of blocks of tickets (more than 4) to traveling supporters. Any club found to be doing so will face financial penalties and possibly criminal charges.
5. All tickets must include the holder’s name, location of purchase, and, if applicable, a *codice fiscale* (fiscal code - similar to American Social Security Numbers). Also included is the instruction that seat assignments must be respected and adhered to.
6. The creation of the designation DASPO (*Divieto di Accedere alle Manifestazioni Sportive* - Prohibited from Entering Sporting Events) assigned to persons prohibited from attending sporting events, including criminal charges that can result in prison terms (see 1).
7. The mandatory placement of one steward for every 200 spectators in a stadium, a move that subtracted seats from spectators in a stadium’s various sections.

Many Ultras, if not all of them, understood the Amato Decree as not having the intention of diminishing soccer-related violence, but of destroying the organizational bases of the Ultras. As Fabrizio of *Boys Roma* explained it, it was a declaration of war against the Ultras, done so with the conceptualization of the Ultras as hooligans - *maleducati* (ill-bred or bad mannered) hoodlums with no interest in soccer or cultural traditions, but only in causing trouble. When asked about the cultural traditions upheld by the Ultras he explained:

“The new measures seek to make everything illegal. No more political flags, songs, or messages in stadiums; no more flares, smoke bombs, or bombs; no more standing with your group - organized or of friends; no more songs against the other team. We are now to come to the stadium to buy overpriced beer and watch in silence as overpaid illiterates kick a ball around. Instead of the beauty that is ‘*il calcio*’ (soccer) we now get organized intermixing of ‘real fans’ in the expensive seats (*Il Romanista*, a local AS Roma-only newspaper, devised a scheme whereby AC Parma’s fans could sit in the Tevere grandstand intermixed with AS Roma’s fans), calls for changes to Italy’s culture, and a stadium experience that would seem like those of the United States in its sterility and anonymity.”

When I pressed him on what was in fact being outlawed, he answered “politics, theatrics, community, and fierce rivalry.” We talked some more about *la bellezza del calcio* (the beauty of soccer) and Fabrizio explained the Ultras as the encapsulation of what was greatest in Italian history. The country’s greatness was not cultural production (in his mind a material phenomenon) but “the unrestrained passion for, and celebration of, something greater than ourselves (indicating me and him).” This was not the first time one of my Ultra informants spoke in extreme terms about the importance of the Ultras, but it was the first that I heard this theme connected to a general model of Italian history.

I pressed him further, asking how the Ultras embodied this greatness. “There are two things,”

he said, “we live like children of an old mentality. For us the first thing is rivalry. I am Roman and for me Rome is the preeminent city in the world. I don’t give a damn about other Italian cities. And two, we dare to risk our lives every week for Rome. For this we are Ultras.” He continued a while, talking about Ancient Rome, Renaissance rivalries with Florence, the Lega phenomenon, and even the *Decima Flottiglia MAS*, a special forces division of the Italian Royal Navy. “In all these,” he said, “are the examples of how a Roman and how an Ultra is to live: daring, honorably, fearlessly, defensively, passionately and exaltedly.”

What the Ultras exalt, he continued, is not violence or drunkenness, as do hooligans, but “the willingness to suffer to defend the honor of Rome against the infidels. When they say that we can be adversaries and not enemies they are saying that our culture is dead. Do you understand? Italy’s is a history of rivalry, division, suspicion, indeed hatred. Why should we change what has made us so particular and beautiful?”

Fabio’s conceptualization of himself as an Ultra and a Roman matches the Ultras’ monumental use of history in that it operates selectively. For Fabio, the Ultras are connected to, as he said, the greatest things about Italian history. Rivalry and *campanilismo* aside, however, he made it clear that what is greatest about Italian history is Rome. Nor is Fabio alone to be enveloped in a world that simultaneously exalts Rome and the Ultras; all of the Ultras with whom I developed a relationship are. What became clear in the moments of crisis, after Raciti and Sandri, was that the Italian state was seen by them as an imposition which attempts to break the connection between Rome, or more specifically *Romanità*, and being an Ultra.

This of course would not be the case for an Ultra in Genova, for instance, but this points to the fractured and highly local nature of being an Ultra. For the Romans, the strength and courage

they speak so much about as central to being an Ultra is inspired by Rome. The state's attempt to destroy the Ultras is in essence the attempt of a modern, bourgeois nation-state to destroy something primal, a spirit of *Romanità*, which predates the state. In other words, the state is a foreign imposition seeking to impose its will upon the "true Romans," as they call themselves in song.

Federico, formerly of *Antichi Valori*, does not believe the state's desire to eliminate the Ultras is motivated by their violent proclivities. Mirroring the comments of Fabio concerning *Calcio Moderno*'s culpability in the death of Sandri, he argues, rather, that the Ultras are bad for business. "We are the last voices of freedom connected with soccer in Italy," he said via telephone in 2010. "We have been in the stadium since 1972 teaching the youth and anyone who could hear us about the evils of consumption and the joy of a pure connection between city, people, and team. We protest everything the new business of soccer attempts to do, be it foreign ownership, hyper-advertising, teams as commodities, and most importantly, fans as consumers. Besides," he concluded, "I used to fight every-other weekend, from 1999 to 2004, and often during the off season (he told an incredible story of some unsuspecting foreign tourists wearing AC Milan gear in Rome whom he and the rest of *Antichi Valori* set upon near Piazza Navona), but no one I know has been in a fight since. Ultra violence is over." "Because of the state?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "but more importantly because the Ultras who would fight are all outside the Ultras now. The state is fighting ghosts if it is truly fighting the violent Ultras."

Indeed, the Observatory's own documents show that violence related to soccer, at least in Serie A, is largely a thing of the past. During the 2004-2005 season, there were 35 games at which fighting occurred between fans. In 2005-2006 the number was reduced to 16, rising to 18 in 2006-2007. The total number of injuries occurring during these encounters was 51 in 2004-2005,

44 in 2005-2006, and 32 in 2006-2007. Injuries occurring to police officers fell from 117 in 2004-2005, to 15 in 2005-2006. They climbed to 48 in 2006-2007, the season in which the large-scale violence in Catania claimed the life of Filippo Raciti. Arrests have remained steady. In 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 there were 37 arrested. In 2005-2006 the number dropped considerably to 17. Despite consistency in arrests, the number of charges filed climbed from 143 in 2004-2005 to 176 in 2006-2007.⁷

At the halfway-point of the 2007-2008 season, CNIMS (*Centro Nazionale di Informazione sulle Manifestazioni Sportive* - National Center for Information on Sports Events) released a brief statistical summary showing the success of the Observatory in reducing fighting and violence (CNIMS, *Campionato 2007-2008: Girone di Andata*). Even as the numbers are higher than those quoted above, because these show all leagues from Serie A to D, it is clear that the Observatory was pleased by its efforts to regulate fan behavior. From the same period of the 2006-2007 season, games with fighting fell 35%, the total number of fan injuries fell 6.06%, injuries to police officers fell 45.26%, arrests climbed 3.2%, and charges-filed fell 28.29%. The document makes a special note that the use of teargas fell 62.5% (from 16 occasions to 6).

With the state's own statistics demonstrating a diminution of violence between Ultras and the police, it makes the stark measures and strong words aimed at marginalizing the Ultras after the deaths of Raciti and Sandri even more conspicuous. The deaths and the Ultras' responses to them were used by the state as excuses to repress the Ultras. The state even considered the violence of the Roman Ultras on November 11, 2007 to be an act of terrorism aimed at overthrowing the government (see Chapter 5). As preposterous as this sounded to the Ultras, such language served

⁷ http://www.interno.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/sala_stampa/documenti/2008/index.html

the purpose of legitimizing the crackdown on all forms of Ultra action, even those as benign as carrying flags and colors into a stadium. Similarly, any acts of coordinated Ultra action, such as manifestations against club malfeasance or potential foreign investment, are roundly attacked in the press.⁸ It is easy to conclude, therefore, that the state is using violence as an excuse to rid the business of soccer of the Ultras.

From personal experience, it is clear that policing methods are working to reduce violence at matches. In the approximately 60 games that I attended during 15 months of research (from October 2006 to January 2008) I did not witness any incident that could be called fighting by the Ultras or police. I saw posturing, heard insults, and occasionally felt menaced because I was at the mercy of home fans with a position of strategic advantage (to throw items into the guest section). Despite standing amongst the hardest of the most reviled Ultras in Italy (according to another Observatory document from 2002, AS Roma's Ultras were involved in 15% of all fighting in Italy, regardless of league) there was simply nothing to report in terms of actual violence (*Inserto Polizia Moderna* n.9, 2002, pg. 10). However, the attitudes toward violence I observed were another matter and will be examined below.

ii. Whistleblate

As the days passed after the February 2007 death of Raciti and the polemics and promises piled up, the Ultras were in limbo. They knew from past experience that tough talk was followed by little action and even less change. Still, they worried that this time it was not an Ultra who was killed, but one of the state's own, which might incite retaliatory action. This prompted a variety of actions. One longtime Ultra I met during the week when the games were cancelled (to plan for a

⁸ http://sport.sky.it/sport/calcio_italiano/2010/03/24/juventus_tifosi_protesta_contro_societa.html

soccer without Ultras as well as honor Raciti) was at once convinced that nothing would change and that the Ultras were now a dead phenomenon. He was not speaking thus because of the bankruptcy of the Ultras' *mentalità*, as some older Ultras had said, but because "the government will not allow us to be Ultras."

On February 11, 2007, the games recommenced. AS Roma hosted Parma FC, and because the Olympic Stadium had long ago implemented the electronic ticketing system with corresponding turnstiles, AS Roma was allowed to "host its public." Outside the stadium there were long lines waiting to enter Curva Sud. The police were frisking every entrant, as well as unfurling all flags and banners (figure 41). In Curva Sud there were a few more stewards visible than normal, but otherwise, nothing had changed. The fear that the groups would be destroyed *de facto* by an army of stewards enforcing seating assignments was, in the end, unfounded. If anything, the pre-game mood was festive. All the groups hung their banners and unfurled their flags. Friends hugged and laughed. Food was shared, and many beers.

It was just as the Curva is meant to be. Then something incredible happened. After the players entered the field to the stadium's singing of "Roma Roma" (the club's anthem) by Antonello Venditti, they gathered around the center-circle. It was announced that a moment of silence for Filippo Raciti would be observed. Within seconds, the Curva was awash in a cacophony of whistles - an act of supreme disrespect, and one which forced the rest of the stadium to clap for the minute, in the hope of salvaging the dignity of the occasion. (It is customary in Italy to clap during moments of silence, but the press claimed the authorities had hoped instead for stone silence in order to accentuate the solemnity and seriousness of the occasion.) After the game Francesco of *Fedayn* agreed that the whistles were disrespectful. They were meant, as he said, to match the disrespect

shown the Ultras by the state and media during the week. From my position in the Curva, I could tell the whistles began in the upper-left section occupied by *Fedayn*. However, according to radio reports of the whistles, they were begun by *Boys*. For their part, *Boys* silently turned their backs on the proceedings in another premeditated protest at their being forced to join in the commemoration of Raciti's death and the degradation of the Ultras.

The media described the Ultras as “disgraceful,” “stupid,” “idiotic,” “a minority of barbarity in a sea of gentility,” “ungrateful,” and, finally, “defeated.”⁹ Callers to post-game radio shows said the Ultras should be banned for life from attending games. At a meeting between some members of *Boys* and *Ultras Primavalle-San Lorenzo* in midweek, the discussion was dominated by the press reactions to what I was calling “whistlegate.” Matteo of *Primavalle* was dismissive, saying that “it was of no consequence to the Ultras what was printed in newspapers, as the journalists know nothing and invent what they write.” It was expected, then, that they would *strumentalizzare* (instrumentalize, or exploit for profit) any situation against the Ultras.

“The press,” Matteo said, “has an agenda, to promote the interests of *Calcio Moderno*, and to moralize against the Ultras. This happens all the time - well, anytime there is violence. We see the world from opposing vantage points: when they say virtue (*virtu'*) we say cowardice (*vilta'*), when they say moderation (*moderazione*) we say mediocrity (*mediocrità*).” Jean-Paolo of *Boys* agreed, giving me some examples of how the press “has sided with a form of life (*modo di vivere*) which seeks to diminish the hardness (*durezza*) and clarity (*chiarezza*) of the Ultras. Among other

⁹ http://www.repubblica.it/2007/02/sezioni/sport/calcio/serie_a/agente-morto-5/procura-fischi.html
http://www.gazzetta.it/Calcio/Primo_Piano/2007/02_Febbraio/12/tornelli.shtml
http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Sport/2007/02_Febbraio/19/bocci.shtml
http://iltempo.ilsole24ore.com/latina/2007/02/12/200290-calcio_curve_fischiano_polizia.shtml

things,” he said, “the press had been pleased that Prodi and his government of neo-liberals and communists had passed [sic] a law that forces the state to recognize gay marriages, while the nation was aghast at such a defeat of the holiness of the family.¹⁰ It had also been silent when three Italian women were gang-raped, stoned (intentionally to death), and buried alive in Cape Verde by the very people to whom it would willingly give the nation in an effort to show how multicultural and liberal it can be.¹¹ The same press had celebrated when Prodi was in India attempting to create more ways to import cheap fabrics from people that would hammer another nail in the coffin of [Italy’s] own legendary textile industry.¹² So it is only natural that the Ultras are the true enemy of the press,” Jean-Paolo said.

iii. Protesting *Calcio Moderno*

With the resumption of the season came the return to normal routines as well, except that the Amato Decree forced the closing of all but four stadiums expected to host games in Serie A. Even Milan’s famed San Siro was to be closed to the public for failing to install electronic turnstiles. However, around-the-clock work crews insured the stadium could at least host season ticket holders. AS Roma played four consecutive away games in empty stadiums as a result of the closings. The first of these, at Empoli, was attended by members of *Fedayn* and *Ultras Romani*, who hung their banners from a fence outside the stadium and listened to the game on a car radio. Their being outside the stadium was meant as a reminder to the players that, “*noi, non ti lasceremo mai*” (“we will never

¹⁰ In Chapter 8 I describe the Ultras’ responses to DICO, the bill seeking rights for cohabitating couples. The bill never reached the floor of the Upper House (Senate) of the Italian Parliament.

¹¹ For information see <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2007/02/10/international/i183542S09.DTL>

¹² For information see http://commerce.nic.in/PressRelease/pressrelease_detail.asp?id=1835

leave you,” as goes a popular song of Curva Sud Roma), and to Amato, the government, the police, the press, and the monied agents of *Calcio Moderno* that, despite the bans and laws, the Ultras were going nowhere. Lorenzo of *Ultras Romani*, present in Empoli, prophetically (considering the killing of Sandri nine months later) made the point: “they will have to kill us to be free of us. We risk everything for the things in our hearts and because of this we are dangerous to the system [of *Calcio Moderno*] that wants passive consumers.”



Figure 83. Curva Sud announces 15 minutes of silent protest. February 25, 2007.

Each home game in that 8-game span began with 15 minutes of silent protest by Curva Sud. The first was against Reggina Calcio, the team from Reggio Calabria. As the game began, the Curva was instructed to remain seated and silent for a protest by way of a banner reading “*15 min di silenzio ... sono urla di rabbia.*” (15 minutes of silence ... [as] shouts of rage). As no other sections of the stadium sing, cheer, or clap like the Ultras, it was noticeably quiet. Somewhere close to 10 minutes into the proposed 15 minute protest, however, groups of fans in Distinti Sud, the section next to Curva Sud, began to sing. Their songs were quickly met with derisive whistles and a barrage

of insults from the Curva. The Ultras were instantly as furious as I ever saw them in my time of study. Their derision began as whistles and yelled insults (destined to fall on deaf ears). It progressed into organized chants of “*Distinti, Distinti, Vaffanculo*” (Distinti, go fuck yourself), and then, “*Cantate solo quando volete*” (You only sing when you want) - the latter being an insult designed to show the bourgeois nature of those fans who do not support AS Roma as a duty. The Ultras ended the 15 minute protest with chants of “*Curva Sud Alè,*” (Let’s go Curva Sud).

The short scene captured many elements of the Ultra phenomenon. First, the Ultras understood that they were protesting the media and its ability to portray them in unflattering ways. They had been portrayed as expendable for weeks. What better way to show what they bring to the games than by remaining seated and silent? Second, they must be well-organized to get a section of 17,000 people to go along with a protest that was unannounced to the vast majority of those in the curva. Third, the distance between the Ultras and the “normal fans” was made apparent. The song sung against the Distinti section was designed to show them the vacuity of their singing only “when they want” instead of the Ultra-style of singing for the entire 90 minutes (and more) of the game. To sing at one’s leisure removes the sacrifice and commitment from the act. Fourth, the act of silence as protest is difficult for the Ultras. Contrary to how they had been portrayed in the press, their actions as fans are most dear to their movement, so much so that many long-time Ultras condemn anyone who puts political affiliations or ideologies above performance in the Curva.

III. Conclusion

The Ultras, as we are beginning to see, live and act within a distinctive form of life driven by a language of honor, sacrifice, glory, and daring - what they call “*antichi valori*” or a “*vecchia mentalità.*” They use a form of history that promotes the celebration of heroes and heroism while

at the same promoting the particular at the expense of the universal. Thus, Romans and Ultras are glorified and magnified while others are ignored or vilified. As we will begin to see, the Ultras' *mentalità* takes its clearest form as an understanding of the world in starkly oppositional or agonistic terms.

Their monumentalism keeps history alive and present in their every action as Ultras. Whether it is the memory of fallen Ultras, friends, and colleagues, the glory of Ancient Rome, or the long history of Italian intercity rivalry, the past plays a powerful role in the way they understand themselves. On the evening of Gabriele Sandri's death, when the Ultras of AS Roma and SS Lazio united to confront the police and rampage through the streets of Rome, they did so believing not only that Sandri's death deserved a violent response but also that they were making their own history in doing so. In other words, they would not have acted as Ultras if they stayed passively at home, nor would they have set a proper model to be emulated by later Ultras.

The night of what the media called the "sack of Rome" as well as the months following the February 2007 death of Filippo Raciti begin to make clear the relationship between the Ultras, the state, and media. The Ultras are adept at using the media for their own ends. The media coverage of performance of fandom, be it choreography, flares, smoke torches, or banners, is counted upon in order to gain notoriety for groups and curvas. For the same reasons it is also hoped that the media will acknowledge the Ultras' social initiatives and protests. However, there is a great distance between these and the expectation that the media will attempt to understand the complexity of the Ultras, their worldview, or their critique of modern bourgeois life. Likewise, the state had long accepted the Ultras and the small-scale violence they perpetrated amongst themselves. They made great shows of force in attempted to quell these, but made no moves to prohibit Ultras' access to

stadiums. However, after the death of a police officer and a night of what was also called domestic terrorism, both in 2007, the state finally moved to rid soccer of the Ultras. Although the media and state play peripheral roles for the Ultras, whose self-conception, while political, is so insular that the impossibility of being understood by non-Ultras is often assumed, they are critical in determining the discourse of being an Ultra and the freedoms thereby advanced.

In the coming chapters, the media's power to moralize situations will be analyzed more fully, as will the state's ability to determine which forms of violence are legitimate and which are markers of subversion. All the while, the Ultras, their agonistic culture full of the language of pre-modern warriors, and their connections with neo-fascism, Rome, and political philosophy will be examined. What emerges is a kind of cultural movement, very political and critical of modernity, also violent, and dedicated to preserving the traditions they feel sustain them and the people of Rome.

CHAPTER FIVE: Ultras, the State, and Violence

In the previous chapter I described some of the most extreme moments during my research period. The deaths of Raciti and Sandri became the bookends of this project because they brought to light so many elements of the Ultras: their *mentalità*; violence; and their relationship with the Italian state, soccer, and *Calcio Moderno*. In this chapter, I continue the discussion of their relationship with the state, this time focusing on the distance between the Ultras and the state and media. While the Ultras maintain an ethic that focuses on the virtuous and heroic aspects of violence that are said by Sorel and Nietzsche to lead one beyond the bourgeois form of life, the state and media combine to create and disseminate, against the Ultras, a counter-ethic that promotes the legitimacy of state violence and condemns instances of interpersonal violence. Because the chapter requires an examination of the discourses and moralities of violence I also explore the attraction of Nietzsche to AS Roma's Ultras.



Figure 84. AS Roma's Ultras call Inter's Ultras "servants of the state." Milan. August 2010.

I. AS Roma's Ultras and the State

In the Introduction, I explained that the state and media exist as meta-natural opponents of the Ultras for two reasons - they are not amongst the natural or soccer-related rivals of the Ultras, and they are able to comment upon and define the context of all of the Ultra rivalries. In order to best understand the contention between the Ultras and the state, it is crucially important to understand the ways in which the physical power of the state is bound up with the morality of bourgeois liberalism. Through both of these, the hegemony of the state is legitimized and maintained.

Sorel distinguished between the violence of a revolutionary proletariat and violence in the name of the state (1999, pg. xvi). Interestingly, Sorel includes the capacity of intellectuals and bureaucrats to act violently in the state's service. Given their feeble natures, they do so primarily through the wielding of morality and an ethic that condemns violence. What we find in Sorel, then, is an acknowledgment that morality is a tool used by the bourgeoisie against any eruptions that would seek to disturb the peace of the modern marketplace (1999, pgs. 231-238).

Agamben goes further in explaining the links between the state's monopoly of legitimate violence and the incorporation of the modern political subject into a system of protection and happiness. The modern state, he explains, is able to bring all of the "objects" that dwell within the state's confines to "subjecthood" by demanding that these (human) objects conform to the state's inclusionary/exclusionary model of humanity (Agamben, 1995, pgs. 8-12). As a corrective to Foucault's "bio-power," which proposed that the state lords over the care of the individual, Agamben says that in the modern state, the bare life, or natural life, along with morality and truth, coincides to the point of "irreducible indistinction" (1995, pg. 9).

Once the state makes a political issue of something formerly excluded from the political -

the bare life in the classical period, for example - it then has the right to decide in its interests and to bring these interests in-line with those of the state (Schmitt, 1976, pg. 7). The state then becomes the sole interpreter of a political meta-language which includes not only narratives of self but also “the ability to define ‘good and bad,’ ‘victim and aggressor’” (Sunic, 2007, pg. 125).



Figure 85. A police line below Curva Sud Roma. June 2001.

Within this system, which by definition is totalitarian - in that it offers promises of personal redemption and happiness, thus providing completely for the individual's well being, at the price of mere unthinking devotion to the bourgeois form of life (Agamben, 1995, pg. 10) - the state and individual are mutually affirming. What is good for the one is good for the other. However, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose that at the edges of modern states - if we momentarily conceive of their territoriality as a metaphor for zones of inclusion and exclusion - there are also marginal spaces or thinkers who offer cracks in the order and critiques of its functioning and systemic completeness. They call these “derelict spaces” because they are contiguous to every one of the state's spatial coordinates, yet offer sites of such unorthodoxy that they cannot be brought within the state's system of reality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pgs. 388-389). One of the most important of these spaces,

according to Brian Massumi, is the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, which he calls “an immanent outside,” because it signals a plane of exteriority to, or a moving beyond the realm of, bourgeois capitalist modernity (1992, pg. 105).

In thinking of the relationship between the state and the Ultras, Curva Sud Roma exists as a derelict space. The contiguous nature of such a space to the reality of the modern state is important because of the circularity of power and discourse that exist between the state and its dissidents (Wolf, 1999, pgs. 252-257). This circularity is predicated upon the state and its media having the ability to control the dissemination of knowledge about its subjects (Wolf, 1999, pgs. 44-45), who then respond with a counter-vision informed by their dissident status. For their part, AS Roma’s Ultras respond to the state and its bourgeois prohibition against violence with a discourse informed by Counter-Enlightenment philosophy that promotes the positive value of violence and aggression - precisely because of their opposition to bourgeois peace and security.

Not only is there a circular nature to the discourses of the state and the Ultras, but also of power and the use of force. According to Maurizio Stefanini, when the state began cracking down on Ultra groups following Raciti’s death in February 2007, there began an exodus of the hardest and most politically motivated fascist Ultras from the Italian curvas in order to act politically beyond them (2009, pg. 74). The same phenomenon was witnessed in Curva Sud Roma.

Because of the ability of the state to make life difficult for Ultras whose political affiliations threaten the state’s security, not all Ultras responded in this way, however. Many of the smaller or politically unaligned groups, shunned political commitments beyond the Curva or AS Roma, fearing danger to the future of the phenomenon. Those in *Boys Roma* and *Padroni di Casa* argue instead that the Ultras are threatening to the state regardless of political affiliation. Manuele, a 31 year-old

member of *Padroni di Casa* who works as a paralegal in a small industrial law firm, told me in 2010 that “the Ultras represent a ‘free space’ in Italy that calls into question the rationale of consumption and civic irresponsibility that is becoming the norm.” As the state closed in on that free, or derelict, space, bringing the curvas within the domain of its legitimacy, rightist Ultras felt compelled to act more aggressively in the outside world. This was the argument supplied by Fabio, one of the current leaders of *Boys Roma*. “Many of the previous generation of *Boys Ultras*,” he said, “didn’t bother coming back to the stadium after the policing increased in 2007. It was easier to go in the streets, or to join *Forza Nuova* or *Fiamma [Tricolore]*” - radical parties of the extreme right. “It is easier to be a political extremist in Italy than an Ultra,” he told me.



Figure 86. Police outside Rome’s Olympic Stadium after violence between AS Roma and SS Lazio Ultras. 2004.

What we see then, is that the state’s policing measures might open up spaces of possible Ultra action that are unintended but also more extreme and threatening to the state. It is too soon to tell. What is knowable, and what the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, is that the Ultras offer a form of life that is a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the modern state, even if they are so

without having (politically) revolutionary intent.

II. Violence, the State, and the Media

Each of the above theorists, Sorel, Agamben, Schmitt and even Deleuze and Guattari, have been influenced by Max Weber's understanding of the modern state. "A state," says Weber, "is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" (1958, pg. 78 - emphasis in original). The right to use force, he continues, is restricted to those authorized by the state to do so (Weber, 1958, pg. 78). Thus, Sorel says, true power is held by those authorized to use violence, and political subjects of the "dangerous classes" (i.e. proletariat and sub-proletariat, but in reality anyone who stands against the bourgeoisie) exist largely as those capable of being victims of violence (1999, pgs. 185-187). If we take this as a given, that the state exists as the sole right to legitimate violence, what are the consequences for groups like the Ultras who practice a form of violence, often against the police, that, when coupled with a critique of the bourgeois form of life, puts them at odds with the legitimacy of the state?

The Italian state has had an ambiguous relationship with the far right since the fall of fascism in 1945. Although fascism and its symbols have been outlawed since that time, the intellectual currents that flowed through the fascist regime and ideology remained. By 1969, when the international student movement formally identified with the summer of 1968 reached Italy, the far right was re-organized as bands of urban guerrillas and terrorists (Ferraresi, 1995, pgs. 16-50). Although the Christian Democrats, led by Giulio Andreotti, were firmly entrenched in control of Italian politics, this control was based on a shifting coalition of centrist parties of the left that came to include the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (Italian Socialist Party - PSI). In the early 1970s, however, the socialists' involvement was shaken by increased tension between unionized industrial workers

and the state, causing Andreotti to move temporarily to the right for coalition partners before turning back to the left in 1973 (Ginsborg, 2003a, pgs. 333-337). In this environment, guerilla groups of the far left and right (including anarchist groups that fit with neither) began exchanging terrorist acts in Italian cities, highlighted by the 1978 abduction and murder of Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro by the leftist Red Brigades (Ginsborg, 2003a, pgs. 383-386) and the 1980 rightist bombing of Bologna's central train station that killed 85 people (Ferraresi, 1995, pgs. 159-160). The rightist guerillas, however, were often aided, or at least not hindered, by the state, which sought to use the destabilized environment caused by domestic terrorism to shore up support for the Andreotti government (Ferraresi, 1995, pgs. 116-143).

It was in this milieu that the first groups of Ultras originated. Despite having groups in major cities being founded along extreme political lines (*Fedayn* and *Boys Roma* in Rome, *Fossa dei Leoni* and *Boys SAN* in Milan), the state did not conceive of these groups as a threat. Instead, the Ultras were allowed to thrive as soccer fans, seemingly at a remove from the political instability of the day (Stefanini, 2009, pgs. 11-16). However, that idyllic period came to an end when the Italian curvas began shifting from leftist or apolitical leanings toward the far right in the mid-1990s (Podaliri and Balestri, 1998, pg. 89). Ferraresi explains that, while the far right was able to thrive in the crisis years of the Christian Democrats, it has been seen as threatening to the stability of the rightist neoliberal regime of Silvio Berlusconi. Additionally, the right of the "years of lead" (1969-1980) had attempted to connect the right with a "movement ideology." The rightist radicals who developed in the 1990s instead sought a more extreme ideological form to which victory was less important than "being beyond" the state (Ferraresi, 1995, pgs. 190-194). It can be surmised that the state officials felt the Ultras belonged to this new form of the right, especially as Ultra violence became

endemic to soccer matches during the same period. And as the police presence at soccer games increased steadily from 1994 to 2004, so to did the tension between the Ultras and the police (Roversi and Balestri, 2002, pg. 43).



Figure 87. AS Roma Ultras throw flares onto the Olympic Stadium running track. 2006.

During this same period, organizers of Serie A, Italy's top professional soccer league, began to seek greater profits from the game. England's Premier League, the paradigm of modern, consumer based soccer (*Calcio Moderno* - discussed in Chapter 9) began in 1993 and reaped immediate financial gains by way of domestic and international television rights contracts. Serie A did in fact become the world's richest league by 1999, paying the highest player wages, as well as becoming a popular advertising vehicle for Italy's most important industries (Foot, 2006, pgs. 489-495). The Ultras, with their organized mob violence and manifestoes and protests against *Calcio Moderno*, appeared to be "bad for business" (Garsia, 2004, pg. 36); that they attracted more police attention in the 1990s could also be because they threatened the stability of soccer, Italy's most stable industry (Foot, 2006, pg. 7).

What is certain is that the interactions between the state and the Ultras have been defined by hostility. Returning to Weber's understanding that modern states must control the use of violence in their territories, Agamben (2005) argues that modern liberal states utilize states of emergency or a "state of exception" to strengthen the security of the state at the expense of individual liberties. During a state of exception, the "well-being of the state" is used to justify an increase in suspicion and surveillance of private individuals (Agamben, 2005, pgs. 32-40). For the Ultras, just such a state of exception exists. Each professional soccer game that takes place in Italy is a militarized zone, as the police make use of the "show of force" technique to enforce the peace. Surveillance is also a normalized part of the Ultras' experience of soccer, especially after the 2005 Pisanu Decree demanded that Closed Circuit Television systems be installed in all Italian stadiums hosting professional matches.

The consequences of this militarization of soccer games can be deadly, as both Raciti and Sandri attest. However, it is important to remember what it tells us of the state and its responsibility toward the Ultras - some of whom are professionals, students, and even fellow police officers. With soccer games being militarized, they are essentially states of exception. Therefore the Ultras, by definition, lie beyond the moral obligation of the state (Agamben, 1998, pg. 18). The state alone is able to define what is included and therefore excluded from its purview. In doing so it also defines the expectations of those who are excluded. As Agamben argues, the policing of any "agent of chaos" becomes part of the legitimation not only of state violence but of the state itself (Agamben, 1998, pgs. 17-29). In this way the physical repression of the Ultras comes to mirror the terms of their condemnation by the media (delineated below).



Figure 88. Ultras fighting amongst teargas. Rome. 2002.

Agamben was motivated to interrogate the liberal state in these terms by the juridical scholarship of Carl Schmitt regarding how the liberal state defined its enemies and violence. The state must be free, as sovereign, to determine who and what is the political and mortal enemy of its people (Schmitt, 1976, pgs. 35-36). What the Ultras question are these very definitions. By seeking hostility and extremely restricted modes of altruism, they challenge the basis of liberal consumer-based passivity and freedom (Sorel, 1999, pg. 216). In so doing, though, they also take exception to the state's legitimate power to maintain such a state of passivity amongst its populace.

Through the media, the state is able to maintain its hegemonic grip upon public (liberal) discourse on violence, inclusion/exclusion, and the enemies of the state. As Gramsci explained, it is not simply a matter of enforcing discipline upon the public, because the state's discourse of "the public good" is already based on a high level of consent within civil society (Spanos, 1993, pgs. 158-160). In other words, hegemonic ideas are already received as natural truths. But, when the hegemonic fabric is torn - when consent is withdrawn (as in the "derelict spaces" described above) - state policing is justified in maintaining hegemony over the main body of the public sphere (Spanos,

1993, pg. 159). The relationship between the state (and its repression of the Ultras) and the media (and its condemnations of the Ultras) is seemingly contradictory. If the press is in business to sell newspapers or gain viewers and listeners, then Ultra violence is conceivably “good” for the press. However, the press is also in business to maintain the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the “subaltern classes” who threaten its dominance of the “cultural and political” fields (Crehan, 2002, pg. 104).

In describing the circularity or mutually dependent nature of the discourse and violence of being Ultras with the media discourse about the Ultras, I do not intend to give the impression that the former’s self-understanding is merely reactive. Instead, their knowledge, and use, of the Counter-Enlightenment philosophies of Nietzsche, Sorel, and Evola demonstrate a high level of awareness of the image they project as well as the historical nature of what they are doing. The rest of this chapter will focus upon the discourses and ethics of violence and inclusion/exclusion that the Ultras and state utilize against each other.

III. Discourses of Violence and Morality

A. Sorel and Ethics of Violence

Just as Nietzsche provides a rationale for rejecting the morality of the modern world, Georges Sorel provides justification for maintaining a counter “ethic of violence” to that of the modern West. Countering the modern aversion to violence with the “cruelty ... [and] brutality of past times,” Sorel explained that, by example, the Roman celebration of strength and dominance was accompanied by “uprightness, sincerity, a lively sentiment of justice, [and] pious respect before the holiness of morals.” Instead, the modern democratic world is characterized by an extreme aversion to violence - so much so that any violators of passivity may be considered insane - but also by “lies,

duplicity, treachery, the spirit of deception, the contempt for property, [and] disdain for instinctive probity and legitimate customs” (Sorel, 1999, pgs. 187-188).

Sorel’s analysis stems from his considering violence only from the position of its “ideological consequences” (1999, pg. 178). Thus, the violence of the capitalist class, for instance, is justified, as is that of the proletariat. Elsewhere, he borrowed from Paul Bureau to relativize the modern aversion to violence. He explained that in Norway it was possible to find populations which subscribed to strict moral systems but who were also averse to passivity. “A stab given by a man who is virtuous in his morals, but violent, is a social evil less serious and more easily curable than the excessive profligacy of young men reputed to be more civilized” (Sorel, 1999, pg. 176).

Sorel’s examination of modern precautions and prohibitions against violence began, though, where the Ultras, like the fascists, based their critiques of modernity. Industrial societies, he said, are favored by modern thinkers over military societies, because peace, while being essential to consumerism, has “been considered the greatest of blessings and the essential condition of all material progress” (Sorel, 1999, pg. 175). Fascism condemned pacifism and neutralism as properties leading to the creation of “economic men” at the expense of “heroic men.” Thus, it praised the purifying effects of war and dynamism (Koon, 1985, pg. 3). The Ultras, likewise, understand that occasional violence can be useful in reducing the value of Italian soccer to those attempting to engulf it within *Calcio Moderno*. For the soccer of the Ultras is a soccer full of rivalries, hatred, aggression, and violence - the characteristics associated with the heroic life (Koon, 1985, pgs. 3-5).

Although the Ultras have shown an ability and willingness to think through the “ideological consequences” of violence, it must be remembered that violence is more useful to the Ultras as a salve of sorts against modern life. For this reason, Sorel and Nietzsche provide important lessons

on the possibility of violence to coexist within a moral-ethical system (like the Ultra *mentalità*) that is enmeshed in myth and narrative - significant when we consider that the Ultras reject the world of wealth, materialism, and consumerism.

B. The Moral Prohibition Against Violence

There are two intertwining elements that will alternate as the focus of this important section: one, the morality of the Italian political class and media which seeks a prohibition of violence; and two, the Ultras and their understanding of violence. Both of these combine to make knowable what I, following Sorel, am calling an Ultra “ethic of violence.” In other words, both sides of the opposition have developed ways of talking about violence. And, both of these distinct ways mirror the visions held by each side of the optimal state of soccer (and life in general): egalitarian and sporting for the one and hierarchical and warring for the other. Where one speaks of delinquency, the other speaks of *vivere pericolosamente* (living dangerously), contemptuous that modern life has been stripped of confrontation.

i. The Media and Violence

The Italian press has an ambiguous approach to the Ultras. On the one hand, they are presented as the color and excitement of soccer. Most broadcasts of games begin with a montage that include Ultras with flags and flares, even as the latter are now banned from stadiums. Additionally, journalists occasionally praise the social initiatives, and even the commitment to fandom, of the Ultras. However, these occasions are offset and rendered strange by press hostility toward the Ultras, which centers on its violent aspects. Past aggressions against one another and current aggression toward the police are frequent media topics.



Figure 89. A car burns after AS Roma's Ultras clash with police after AS Roma-SS Lazio. 2009.

That the media presents the Ultras negatively is not a concern for many Ultras. Indeed, many take responsibility for the image, entranced by the media attention they received in the 1990s. Most Ultras, at least those in the large cities or those of teams in Serie A, were conscious of the media and even strategized how best to make it into newspapers and news telecasts. The notoriety of many groups like *Boys Roma* or *Irriducibili Lazio* was established by media coverage, leading these groups, among others, to be revered and feared throughout the Italian curvas. The clippings from various newspapers of their history of violent encounters fill two notebooks at the *Boys Roma* office.

By focusing only on the aggression and violence, the media fails to understand or clearly present the Ultra *mentalità* or to specify their targets of enmity, which come across only as rationales for violence. In many respects, the Ultras are what the press makes of them: aggressive, violent, and driven by agonism and rivalry. Nor would they deny this. Where there is a glaring contradistinction between the Ultras of the media and the Ultras' self-understanding is in the press' moral oppositions to rivalry, violence, and aggression, and associated utopian vision of soccer - a vision without the Ultras. In the end, the media demonize the Ultras as a way to moralize against aggression, violence,

and conflict, leaving these beyond the legitimate concerns of Italy's liberal social subjects.

From the perspective of the Ultras, what the media wants is a world in which all are seated and clapping politely as 22 actors present an evening of entertainment; in which the peoples and cities of Italy and the world exist in perfect harmony; in which communities no longer appear homogeneous and teams are made up only of low-priced Africans and Asians; and in which games take place at times and places only designed for a television audience - in short, the world of *Calcio Moderno*.¹

The Ultras' understanding of the media's motivations is formed by the daily coverage of Ultra activity in the Italian press. For the purpose of brevity, only two periods of media coverage will be analyzed here: the immediate post-Raciti period of February 2007, and the period before AS Roma's Serie A meeting with SSC Napoli in October 2007 (just one week before the killing of Gabriele Sandri).

a. How To Cure A "Sick Culture Of Sport"

After the death of Filippo Raciti in February 2007, the press was united in condemnation of the violence which led to the officer's killing. As explained in the Introduction, many *opinionisti* (columnists) worried that Italy was suffering not only a hooligan problem but a generally negative culture of sport. Their view was supported by government ministers like Giovanna Melandri, Minister for Youth and Sports under both Prodi and Berlusconi. Melandri, a member of the left parties that emerged after the collapse of communism - *Democratici di Sinistra* (Democrats of the Left - DS) and subsequently the *Partito Democratico* (Democrat Party - DP) - was one of the most vociferous opponents of the Ultras' view of soccer (as a system of rivals and enemies) in the days

¹ Translated from notes taken by former *Antichi Valori* member Federico during an *AS Roma Ultras* meeting on the media and *Calcio Moderno* which ultimately produced the group's manifesto on the subject.

after Raciti's death. What she proposed in place of Italy's too extreme sense of *rivalità* (rivalry) was an "English model" of sport in which sportsmanship, tolerance, multiculturalism, and deterritorialization replace rivalry, discrimination, Italianness, and localism.²

In Rome, this attitude was championed most loudly by the local sports newspaper, *Il Romanista*. In a week's worth of editorials, the paper's director Ricardo Luna, a former editor with the center-left Espresso group (which includes *La Repubblica*, the leading center-left newspaper in Rome), made it clear that "rivalry was killing Italian sport." The tradition and cherished practice of vociferous "*tifare contro*" (rooting against) on the part of many Italians was "archaic in a world striving for oneness."³ Luna took up the theme of a "sick culture of sport" the day after Raciti's death. His answer to this problem (for no one in the media was asking if this was perhaps a positive element of Italian life) was "education;" not of the current generation of fans, which included the Ultras, but the next. "The next generation," he said, "should be made to see that '*si può essere avversario, non nemico*'" (one can be an adversary without being an enemy). A few days later Luna, buoyed by the positive response to his understanding of the problem, gave his vision of what could be done to facilitate this utopia.

First, rid soccer of the Ultras. For while Italy itself was sick, the Ultras were sickest of all. Second, fill the curvas with children. And third, close all guest sections and allow fans to intermix.⁴ While the first two were unlikely to be accomplished, the third was worth trying, according to Luna. For one week, *Il Romanista* promoted the idea of integrating fans. As the February 11, 2007 game

² *The Independent*, Friday, February 9, 2007, sec. C, pg. 1 "Neo-fascist suspected of killing that has thrown Italian football into chaos"

³ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 39. 9 February 2007, pg. 1, 4

⁴ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 35. 5 February 2007. Pg. 1

against FC Parma approached, Luna realized that AS Roma was powerless to change the Italian Football Federation's ticketing policies, so instead of insisting that the guest section be closed, he invited Parma fans to buy tickets in the Monte Mario grandstand as a demonstration of support for this new vision of sport and soccer in Italy.⁵ Although only a handful of Parma Ultras attended the game, standing in the designated guest section, it was reported that some of them did sit in Monte Mario.⁶ In the end these matters were overshadowed by Curva Sud having whistled during the moment of silence to remember Raciti.

ii. AS Roma-SSC Napoli: A Braccia Aperte (With Open Arms)

The AS Roma and SSC Napoli Ultras share a vehement hatred for one another. Although the games on the field tend not to manifest the aggression and combativeness characteristic of the derby games between AS Roma and SS Lazio, for the Ultras the rivalry with the *Napolitani* is more intense. Both sets of Ultras boast of provocation of, and victory over, the other; for AS Roma's Ultras Naples has value as the dark pole in a Manichean scheme. Indeed it represents or symbolizes the lowest value one can have and still be Italian. I asked Maurizio of *Romulae Genti* to clarify, especially as his father's family hails from a small town between Naples and Rome. "There are *zingari* (Roma or gypsies), *stranieri* (strangers or foreigners) like Africans and Muslims," he told me, "and then *Napolitani*. It is enough to be from Naples to be disliked."

⁵ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 37. 7 February 2007. Pg. 1, 4

⁶ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 42. 12 February 2007. Pg. 2



Figure 90. UC Sampdoria Ultras waving trash bags at SSC Napoli supporters in reference to the garbage collection crisis in Naples. Genova. 2007.

For example, the insults AS Roma's Ultras sing to other Italians tend to be structural or situational. The Juventus fans, whose team has long been owned by the Agnelli family (of FIAT), are insulted for being "slaves to the Agnelli." *Livornesi* (people of Livorno) are insulted for being communists. *Veneziani* (people of Venice) are insulted for living in a lagoon. *Milanesi* (people of Milan) are insulted for being Lombards and former Roman slaves. *Napolitani* are insulted, however, just for being from Naples.

Compared to other rivalries, AS Roma's Ultras are less articulate when explaining their opposition to the *Napolitani*. Whereas the songs they sing against the other fans point to the above mentioned specific reasons for rivalry, and whereas they speak with a sense of irony or playfulness against other cities, teams, and curvas, when asked about the *Napolitani*, many say matter-of-factly that they hate Naples and *Napolitani* and leave it at that.

So it was that the Roman Ultras were looking forward to hosting their biggest rivals and to opportunities to make the SSC Napoli Ultras pay for past disputes. The media treated the October

20, 2007 game as the biggest test yet of the post-Raciti security measures. The common assumption among the Ultras and the press was that the authorities would simply prohibit the SSC Napoli fans from traveling to Rome for the game. Although it is unconstitutional to ban travel itself, the government is able to ban ticket sales beyond the city or region hosting the game. They can also prohibit selling tickets for the designated guest section.

Il Romanista began covering the October 20, 2007 game against SSC Napoli on October 6, 2007. On that day, Felice Ferlizzi, the President of the *Osservatorio Nazionale sulle Manifestazioni Sportive* (National Observatory of Sporting Events - Observatory), was interviewed, saying in essence that AS Roma's Ultras had behaved impeccably in the young season's games, but that one misstep and AS Roma would face a stadium ban. This was because of their past reputation for incidents, in spite of previous promises by the Observatory that each team would begin the season with a clean record and that it would act only to punish current wrongdoing.⁷ A warning was issued that even singing racist songs would be considered grounds to close the Olympic Stadium or ban travel. Two days later AS Roma's Ultras traveled to Parma and caused no problems. Therefore, the next game against SSC Napoli was under no threat of being played entirely behind closed doors. The same day, though, Inter Milan's Ultras unfurled banners calling *Napolitani* "tubercolosi" (tuberculosis sufferers) and "colerosi" (cholera sufferers), which implied that Naples was a Third World city (figures 91 and 92).

⁷ (*Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 275. 6 Ottobre 2007, pgs. 8-9)



Figure 91. “Hi cholera sufferers.” Inter Milan-SSC Napoli. October 2007.



Figure 92. “People from Naples have tuberculosis.” Inter Milan-SSC Napoli. October 2007.

Normally *Il Romanista* devoted itself to AS Roma on the morning following an AS Roma game. On the morning of October 9, 2007 however, well before October 20th, the headline screamed “*Siamo Tutti Italiani*” (We are all Italians) and the banners from Inter Milan-SSC Napoli were displayed on the cover (figures 91 and 92).⁸ The tone of the issue was that the “anti-violence laws” enacted after Raciti were failing. There had been no fights in Milan, it is true, but this was because there had been no SSC Napoli fans. (Actually, there was a small group seated in the grandstands with SSC Napoli scarves and flags. They were obviously not Ultras but their presence in Milan was

⁸ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 278. 9 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 1

noted - as defiance of the travel ban - in the decision to ban the *Napolitani* from traveling to Rome.) Yet, the media had understood the banners as a form of provocation.

For the next two days the local media turned on the AS Roma Ultras who had gone from destroying train cars two years earlier (during a trip to Naples for a Coppa Italia game) to doing little more than eating and sleeping in them. Nonetheless, the Roman media, led by two center-left papers, *La Repubblica* and *Il Romanista*, went into attack mode. By October 11, 2007, Ultras were writing to *Il Romanista* saying they, as Romans and Ultras, were not to be co-identified with the *Napolitani*, and that they hated Naples. Finally, one Ultra wrote that if the *Napolitani* arrived in Rome the Ultras were prepared for WWII.⁹ Of course, normal fans wrote to say that hatred was abhorrent and that the Ultras were animals. For every opinion supporting the Ultras there were two opposing. The back page of the issue said simply, “*Sono Romanista ed odio nessuno*” (I am an AS Roma fan and I hate no one). The question of the day on the newspaper’s website asked if one hated Naples, to which more than 90% responded “no.”

Also on October 11, 2007, *La Repubblica* published an expose on politics in Italian curvas. According to the article there are 268 political Ultra groups in Italy and all of these share a common enemy: forces of law and order. It said that political extremism and its concordant violence are the biggest concerns of the Observatory and other forces of Italian law and order; and that extreme political parties like *Forza Nuova* seek fertile ground in the curvas today amongst young males between 14-16.¹⁰

⁹ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 280. 11 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 16

¹⁰ <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/cronaca/tifosi-morto-1/curva-eversione/curva-eversione>



Figure 93. Image of AS Roma and SSC Napoli fans exchanging flags in the 1980s. The photo was useful in media condemnations of the rivalry between the Ultras.

La Gazzetta dello Sport, the nation's most popular sports daily, joined in. On October 12, 2007 it announced that the "good times are over for the Ultras." It explained that the forces of law and order had begun a new strategy which ultimately bans away travel if the Ultras misbehave (by fights with Ultras or police, unfurling unauthorized banners, or singing offensive songs); or the game is considered too risky for fans. The paper also announced that this new state strategy, called *Operazione Curve Pulite* (Operation Clean Curvas), would keep the ten worst offending curvas in the country under constant surveillance. The Ultras of AS Roma and SSC Napoli were first and second on the initial list of 10.¹¹

The next day, October 13th, *La Gazzetta* explained the inclusion of the ten Ultras under surveillance. SSC Napoli was on the list because of the 15 or so of their fans who were at the Inter game, as well as an ongoing investigation into Curva A, the home of Napoli's Ultras, extorting

¹¹ http://archivistorico.gazzetta.it/2007/ottobre/12/dieci-tifoserie_nel_mirino_ga_3_071012009.shtml

tickets from the club. AS Roma was on the list because “it is a curva of the far right” (the same rationale that landed Serie C1 team Lucca on the list). It singled out *Boys Roma* as being the most violent group in Italy and cited as evidence that they turned their backs on the Raciti moment of silence back in February.¹²

Meanwhile on October 12, 2007, the Observatory decided that the game would take place without SSC Napoli supporters. Five days later, after conferring with Roman police authorities, it was decided to have only AS Roma season ticket holders in the stadium. As expected by the Ultras, this was met with disappointment by the media, who desperately wanted a mixed stadium with no guest section in order to show the world that Italy was a civilized nation.¹³ With this in mind, *Il Romanista* created an issue devoted entirely to distancing what it called “true fans” (the bourgeoisie) from the “delinquents” (the Ultras). On the cover was an open letter written by AS Roma’s beloved coach Luciano Spalletti.

Under a headline saying “we must unite to defeat the violent fans,” he wrote that the game should be a party and not an opportunity for partisanship. He asked all fans to help Italy move beyond the need to have police forces outside stadiums in order to keep the peace between the opposing fans. He concluded by saying that the only way forward for soccer was without any “divisions and barriers, either ideological or material.”¹⁴ Inside, one found two full pages devoted to fans pledging their allegiance to stop the Ultras from destroying the game with their violence. They were, as the headline said, “*tutti uniti contro i violenti*” (all united against the violent). For two

¹² http://archiviostorico.gazzetta.it/2007/ottobre/12/dieci_tifoserie_nel_mirino_ga_3_071012009.shtml

¹³ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 281. 12 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 8

¹⁴ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 282. 13 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 1

days Rome and Italy spoke in glorious terms of Spalletti's letter. He was "courageous," "correct," and "a real man" for having stood up to the Ultras and their "delinquency" (according to RAI's TG2 on October 15, 2007).

Then on October 16, 2007, *Il Romanista* allowed a counter-voice to the moralism against violence and published an interview with Giuliano Castellino, co-founder of *Padroni di Casa*. Castellino wasted no time in pointing out that the "*a braccia aperte*" (open arms) theme that the media had taken with AS Roma-SSC Napoli was not only utopian but also "*moralistico*" (moralistic). He said that *Padroni di Casa* was disciplined and organized and thus rarely involved in violence. But, he added, the 2001 game in Naples was "like Iraq" and included the mistreatment of AS Roma's Ultras by the police. Because of this AS Roma-SSC Napoli could never be contested as if the fans were "brothers." When asked about Spalletti's letter, Castellino chastised the manager for being manipulated by the media against the Curva, saying that "Spalletti should concentrate on training the team."

As for those who condemn the Ultras for being political, he explained, just as he would to me months later, that "life is political. Life does not end when one enters the curva but is more amplified. After all, *Padroni di Casa* loves Rome above all else and thus works to help Romans who are without homes or meals. Some come to the stadium and are enraptured for 90 minutes and then go home and do nothing. For us [*Padroni di Casa*], that energy remains throughout the week and it is used, along with the efforts of *Fiamma Tricolore* (Tricolor Flame - one of two popular movement-based neo-fascist parties in Italy, along with *Forza Nuova* [New Force]), to make Rome a better place for Romans and Italians to live."¹⁵

¹⁵ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 285. 16 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 5

Turning to the press, Castellino accused reporters of turning a blind eye toward the positive things that *Padroni di Casa* and other groups had done in various Roman neighborhoods, only to descend upon the Ultras, even when the only thing to report were whistles, as if they were criminals and “*mafiosi*.” He asked specifically why, although no one came to file a report after 15 armed leftists ransacked the group’s office, when four SS Lazio Ultras of the far right were caught with weapons the entire national press “*sono ai ferri corti*” (have their knives out).

As for the police, he said only that the Ultras are against any form of arrogance and overbearingness, whether it be by police or a fan who, for instance, insults someone in the presence of his wife and children. The Ultras, he said, are about being extreme, or “beyond” as he called it - beyond the law, beyond the state, and beyond the stadium. As for the whistles against Raciti, the Curva was protesting not Raciti but the moment of silence and the arrogance of a state which insults dead Ultras every weekend.¹⁶

The bourgeois fans exploded in indignation over the interview. The cover of *Il Romanista* on October 17, 2007 announced that, “the curva that had insulted the *Napolitani* [Inter’s Curva Nord] is closed for one game,” and that “the Ultra [Castellino] is no fan of AS Roma.”¹⁷ Both headlines were followed up inside with articles saying “clean up this shame” in reference to Inter Milan’s Ultras and “a chorus of ‘shut ups’ to *Padroni di Casa*.” An ex-police chief of Rome said that having people like Castellino in Rome was justification for closing the doors to the stadium for good - that way they could “keep the animals out.”¹⁸

¹⁶ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 285. 16 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 5

¹⁷ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 286. 17 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 1

¹⁸ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 286. 17 Ottobre 2007. Pgs. 3 and 4

Although one would have to turn all the way back to the emergence of Judeo-Christian morality in order to find the moment when it became hegemonic in the West, it is clear from the discourse on violence, rivalry, aggression, and hatred that enveloped the build-up to AS Roma-SSC Napoli in 2007 that there is a fundamental distance between how these are understood by the Ultras and the media. For as Nietzsche argues, there was a form of life and morality that pre-existed the morality of the modern West. Below I will demonstrate how the morality and ethics of the Ultras more closely resembles Nietzsche's pre-modern morality than the modern. What we must understand first is that the model of soccer and bourgeois life espoused by the media and private individuals who interacted with it through polls and letters is on the level of a "common sense" that cannot be separated from the practical, everyday behavior of modern bourgeois subjects (Crehan, 2002, pgs. 173-174). After all, Castellino had not demanded that all of Italy understand soccer as do the Ultras, only that the Ultras themselves be allowed to understand it this way. He had not defended the Ultras' right to violence, but instead their right to hatred and discrimination. In the end, this is exactly what *Il Romanista* and the media could not abide. As Riccardo Luna wrote, "there is no room in soccer for these kinds of 'prejudices'."¹⁹

C. Ultras, Violence, and Nietzsche

i. The Purposes of Violence

Although I am arguing, based on the evidence I gathered, that the ethic of violence employed by the Ultras is more prevalent than actual violence, it must be remembered that the history of the Ultras in all parts of Italy, but especially Rome, shows it to be a violent phenomenon. Returning to Sorel, who asks us to think of the purposes of violence, we see that the purpose of state

¹⁹ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 287. 18 Ottobre 2007. Pg. 1

violence against the Ultras is to maintain the state's monopoly of legitimate violence in the Italian territory. At the same time, and more mundanely, the state is violent against the Ultras in order to protect the monied interests of the business of soccer. In later chapters I will examine the diminution of soccer-related violence in recent years. For now, it is clear from public statements and actions that the state is intent to eliminate all forms of violence from soccer matches, and especially violence between Ultras and the police.

As with the statistical data on violence between soccer fans reported in the previous chapter, according to "*Campionato di Calcio 2007-2008 - Punto di Situazione*," a document produced by the *Centro Nazionale di Informazione sulle Manifestazioni Sportive* (National Center of Information on Sporting Events - CNIMS) in conjunction with the Observatory, violence between soccer fans and the police has lately been severely diminished. From 2003-2004 to 2007-2008 violence between fans and the police is down 79%. After reaching a high of 257 incidences in 2004-2005, by 2007-2008 the incidences of violence between police and fans was 53. In that period, injuries to police have also plummeted, from 181 in 2004-2005 to 22 in 2007-2008. However, while injuries to fans have also dropped, from 76 to 31, 2007-2008 showed more injuries to fans in violent encounters with the police than to police officers. Concurrently, arrests for acts of violence against police or other forces of law and order are up from 58 in 2004-2005 to 73 in 2007-2008. This has also happened as attendance has plummeted 23% in the same period.²⁰ In examining these statistics, the Observatory proclaimed that the state is winning its battle against soccer-related violence.

Returning to the purposes of violence, this time of the Ultras, we see the crux of the issue. The Ultras use violence just as Sorel proposed for the French sub-proletariat: as a way to maintain

²⁰ CNIMS, *Campionato di Calcio 2007-2008 - Punto di Situazione*, pgs. 1-11

the distance between themselves and the bourgeois form of life (Sorel, 1999, pg. 85). They use violence as a way to distance themselves from the state and its morality of peace, tolerance, and inclusion. But, because the Ultras have no revolutionary intent, that is, beyond the all important “hearts and minds of men [sic],” as *Antichi Valori*’s Mario told me, they remain too closely bound up with the state and the industry of soccer to be able to practice their ethical violence with impunity. As the examples above demonstrate, the media is as concerned with the Ultras conceptualization of soccer and their form of life as it is with their actual violent encounters.

ii. The Ultras’ Nietzsche

a. The Anti-Liberal Nietzsche

Through their politics and deeply ideological *mentalità*, the Ultras find themselves aligned with Nietzsche’s critiques of modernity and “the modern man.” Nietzsche’s place in this study is complex. Not only does he offer the researcher instruction for understanding clashes of morality, but he offers the Ultras a way to formulate and create distance between themselves and modernity. It is where these intersect that the affective power of the dissertation lies. That being said, Nietzsche plays an active role in how the more ideologically committed rightist groups understand the Ultra phenomenon. The leadership of *Boys Roma*, *Romulae Genti*, and *Padroni di Casa* all utilize a Nietzschean reading of the distance between the Ultras and the bourgeoisie. In the large groups (*Boys* and *Padroni di Casa*) these ideas are disseminated through volunteer study and discussion sessions which occur at the group offices. For *Romulae Genti*, the small size of the group (less than twenty people) and exclusive membership ensure that each member is already familiar with Nietzsche before joining. Some of these are former members of *Antichi Valori*, which used to read from *The Gay Science* in order to find inspiration. Beyond these groups, AS Roma’s Ultras acted

in accord with Nietzsche's philosophy, regardless of how deeply he was known by the mass of Ultras. Most fundamentally, AS Roma's Ultras' critique of modernity parallels that of Nietzsche. For the Ultras mentioned above, this is purposeful.

For Nietzsche, modernity was problematic because of three foundational features: the relentless process of democratization; the tendency to exalt compassion and pity; and a cult of facile painlessness. These three combined to act as corrupting agents turning European civilization into a rest home for sheep-like herd animals (Cate, 2002, pg. 472). To arrest the corrosive influence of modernity, Nietzsche attacked the moral and ethical system which he argued provided the intellectual, spiritual, and philosophical impetus toward mediocre standardization. He did so not to leave Europeans without value but in order to further the re-establishment of pre-modern values. These he consistently identified as strength, honor, discipline, spiritualism, hierarchy, distance, and veneration (among others) (Nietzsche 2001, pg. 241).

Because his critique was designed to destroy so as to create, Nietzsche proposed that the weakness promoted by modern life could be overcome in the present. Modern weakness he characterized by "indolent peace, cowardly compromise," preoccupation with triviality, extreme tolerance, and a desire to forgive all through "understanding" (2005, pg. 173). To combat these instincts of modernity, Nietzsche demands that one "thirst for lightening and action . . . to stay as far away as possible from the happiness of weaklings" (2005, pg. 4). Modernity, he explained, and its normalization of middle class mediocrity, has diminished the species and made "us" smaller. Our goal is now a soft life of comfort, with hands for mediocre work but unfit for making fists (Cate, 2002, pg. 440).

This reading of Nietzsche has been called "the political Nietzsche" by Appel (1999) and

Detwiler (1990). It is an area of his philosophy that is largely unknown amongst “Anglo-American” readers of a more “postmodern Nietzsche” (Appel, 1999, pgs. 8-12). While there is much to be gained from Nietzsche’s (postmodern) deconstruction via genealogy of modern hermeneutic concepts, his rationale for pursuing such a project is often lost when one ignores the political aspects of his motivations. Put somewhat differently, by ignoring Nietzsche’s “great politics,” wherein he distinguishes between higher, aristocratic and noble, and lower, democratic and cosmopolitan, forms of life and urges his readers to liberate themselves from the latter at any cost, writers are able to use Nietzsche to support the most liberal of projects which he himself would never have countenanced.²¹

Nietzsche’s works in Italian (published by Adelphi) are, in my view, much more consistent with the Cambridge University Press editions of Nietzsche’s works - which promote the political Nietzsche - than with the Modern Library editions translated by Walter Kaufmann. According to Appel, Kaufmann set out purposely to make Nietzsche incompatible with any forms of fascism, eclipsing the philosopher’s appreciation for having enemies and exercising violence against mediocrity (Appel, 1999, pg. 9). The gap between Kaufmann’s translations and the various translators for Cambridge University is most apparent in each’s explanatory notes. For example, in Kaufmann’s *Zarathustra*, he explains that the section “On War and Warriors” is a discussion of intellectual warfare, in which people fight “for their thoughts” and can revel in the triumph of truth even when their position is defeated. This, he says, is “far from fascism” and emblematic of

²¹ See the Bibliographic Appendix on Nietzsche for more on the various interpretations of Nietzsche.

perspectivism (Nietzsche, 1995, pg. 6). Meanwhile, Robert Pippin, commenting on the same section in his Introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Zarathustra*, focuses more on the Nietzschean fight against modernity's lack of desire in the face of decadence (Nietzsche, 2006, pg. xxiii).

Staying with *Zarathustra*, there is a telling section in the book's third part called "On Virtues That Make Small." The section addresses how modern Christian virtue has, by design, rounded the edges from the potential greatness of man - a greatness which requires harshness and scorn for pity and weakness. The small ones, the modern herd animals, desire modest virtues because these are the virtues that suit contentment. "At bottom," Nietzsche says, "these simple ones want one simple thing: that no one harm them" (Nietzsche, 2006, pg. 135). In the Adelphi Italian edition of *Così Parlò Zarathustra* the same line has similar meaning: "*In fondo alla loro semplicità essi non vogliono, prima di tutto, se non una cosa - che nessuna gli faccia male.*" (Nietzsche, 2003a, pg. 198). In the Kauffman edition, the line substitutes simpletons for simple ones and hurt for harm. Most important, Kauffman notes that Nietzsche was describing a "state of being" and not a "syllabus of behavior" (Nietzsche, 1995, pg. 149). In the Cambridge and Adelphi editions, the reader is free to discern for him or herself the literalness of Nietzsche's words.

b. Nietzsche, Ultras, and Conflicts with Fascism

The Nietzsche used here is hierarchical, violent, attacking, and demanding that one "live dangerously." This is the same Nietzsche that inspired both Gabriele D'Annunzio in his interventionist position on World War I and Mussolini in the formation of the pro-war fascist movement (Schnapp, 2000, pgs. 40-41). However, there is a current of elitism that runs through Nietzsche's philosophy that is at odds with fascism (2001, pg. 160). This is because his thought is presented primarily to individual readers and with a deep suspicion of mass-based political

organization.²² He demands readers who are able to cast-off the need for broad co-identification, especially in the terms of modern liberal politics. Thus, Nietzsche's ideas come at the cost of some level of social disengagement. Although I am unable to say whether it is the influence of Nietzsche that makes AS Roma's Ultras less inclined to unite with other Ultras or with the Italian political process, I can say that the Ultras mentioned above in connection with the study of Nietzsche are aware of the tension between his philosophy and mass politics.

Boys Roma might seem an awkward fit, as it is legendary as a fascist group and primarily concerned with Evola's neo-pagan version of fascism. However, I found the *Boys* leadership to be the most interested in Nietzsche as an intellectual influence on the Ultras phenomenon. It was one of them, Fabio, who suggested in our first meeting in October 2006 that I understand Nietzsche in order to best explain the Ultras - this despite the group's associations with organized fascism and the fact that Paolo Zappavigna, legendary leader of the group in the early-2000s, used to ask the most dedicated of *Boys* Ultras to read Julius Evola's *Gli uomini e le Rovine* (Men Amongst the Ruins - 2002) in order to be considered for leadership roles.

Then, at the December 2, 2007 Ultras protest against the killing of Gabriele Sandri and attempts by the state to remove the Ultras from soccer stadiums, held at Rome's Circo Massimo (discussed at length in chapters 8 and 9), the group *Romulae Genti* formed. This group of former *AS Roma Ultras*, *Monteverde*, and *Antichi Valori* members calls itself a "*Fascio Nietzscheano*" (Nietzschean band, but also in the sense of a fascist organization) in an attempt, as Federico, one of its founders told me, "to bridge the gap between Nietzsche's noble *superuomo* (superman) and the fascism of *Romanità*, order, hierarchy, discipline, and *squadrisimo*. In this way," Federico concluded,

²² See Part Three of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* for an example of how Nietzsche cultivates an audience of those who have, evidently, overcome their modern peers. Nietzsche, 2006.

“we have an Ultra [group] that is committed to Rome and to understanding the city as a site in the war against the modern world.”

A longtime acquaintance of Federico is Lorenzo, a 28-year old political science graduate of *La Sapienza* University who now works for a multinational consulting firm but spends many free evenings at the office of *Foro 753*, a fascist social-cultural education center on Rome’s north side. In January 2008 Federico and I met Lorenzo at a nightclub just off of Piazza Navona. Although Federico was there to celebrate his fiance’s birthday, he and I were able to speak with Lorenzo about the new group (*Romulae Genti*) and Federico’s conception of the Ultras as a form of the Nietzschean superman. However, where Federico understood the superman to have fascist possibilities, Lorenzo related the superman to a form of anarchism. “This is the man,” he told us, “that has overcome the morality of others and can create his own ideas and thus his own freedom.”

D. “Odio Napoli” (I Hate Naples)

Returning to the media build-up to AS Roma- SSC Napoli in October 2007, the Ultras of *Boys Roma* understood the situation, particularly the offensive between the press and the Ultras, as a war between a “moral regime” against the Ultras’ right to “*tifare contro*” (root against) and to “*odiare Napoli*” (hate Naples). In the offices and locales of these Ultras I heard one word above all: “moralismo” (moralism - a form of discursive control akin to “political correctness” in the USA). According to Jean-Paolo of *Boys*, “what is at stake in this battle is our rivalries, not our ability or willingness to throw punches, flares, or rocks at one another. What the media, and *Calcio Moderno* have always wanted,” he continued, “is a soccer without enemies.” To make sure I really understood, Melo, also of *Boys*, went further. “Just as the hyper-capitalists want an Italy without defense against foreign invasion or cultural destruction,” he said, “the soccer industry wants to be

rid of those who will defend the ‘old ways’ and ‘old times’ when being Roman and *Romanista* (fan of AS Roma) actually meant something.” Melo, so-called because of his love of the National Basketball Association and Denver Nuggets player Carmelo Anthony, is a typical *Boys* Ultra. He is 21 years-old, lives at home with his parents and older sister, and attends *La Sapienza*, majoring in history. He began going to games with *Boys* when he was 17 and was convinced to major in history by Paolo Zappavigna who told him “the only way to make the future you want is to know the past.”

When pressed to explain his comments about Rome and capitalism, he gladly did so. “Only last week,” he began, “there was a police raid on a Roma camp in which dozens of underage prostitutes were arrested and no one wanted to talk about anything but the Ultras.²³ Or that Muslim women are allowed to cover their heads because ‘we’ have to respect their difference.²⁴ Yet if we [Italians] respect ourselves we are racists.” The same, he said, was true for the Ultras. “We are now violent criminals if we hate Naples.”

On October 20, 2007, as AS Roma hosted SSC Napoli, the lower half of Curva Sud Roma, including *Padroni di Casa*, silently protested against the decision to refuse the SSC Napoli fans the right to travel to Rome. The other groups of Curva Sud decided not to protest during the game, focusing instead on the one thing that was being denied them: their hatred for Naples. In place of the silence of the lower curva, and the polite clapping for both teams by the bourgeois fans, the Curva sang “*Odio Napoli*” (I hate Naples) for most of the 90 minutes. They seemed exceptionally proud to sing and wave scarves with the same message. The most interesting aspect of the day was

²³ www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/2007-10-15_2387642.html

²⁴ www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/2007-10-15_127658332.html

that the Ultras were singing not to the *Napolitani* (SSC Napoli fans), because there were none, but to the rest of the stadium. The press and the people of Rome had two weeks to call the Ultras animals and delinquents. The Ultras had 90 minutes to be Ultras. After their game that same afternoon, AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti was asked by SKY about AS Roma's Ultras singing "*Odio Napoli.*" "It is a form of racism," he said.

IV. Conclusion

The Italian state is fighting a war with the Ultras over the right to the legitimate use of violence within its territory. It is in the interests of the state to limit the Ultras' aggression and opportunities for violence. Thus, the Ultras are increasingly prohibited from attending games away from their home stadium. This chapter utilized a narrative of events and statements surrounding the AS Roma-SSC Napoli game of October 20, 2007 as a way to demonstrate how the media disseminates a bourgeois "political meta-language that includes not only narratives of self but also the ability to define good and bad, victim and aggressor" (Sunic, 2007, pg. 125). It used the philosophy of Agamben and Schmitt to explain how the modern state reduces the lives of its citizens to "subjecthood" by demanding that they affirm its model of inclusion and exclusion. In this way the interests of the (bourgeois) individual are aligned with those of the state. Conversely, the Ultras of AS Roma were presented as the inhabitants of a "derelict space" in which bourgeois morality and ethic against violence are acted against. While the purpose of state violence is to protect not only the state's monopoly of legitimacy, but also the interests of the business of soccer, Ultra violence is associated with a space beyond the hegemonic force of the bourgeois form of life.

CHAPTER SIX: The Agonistic Form of Life of the Ultras: Opposition and Life as War

The preceding chapters presented various aspects of the Ultras, from the material and historical organization of Curva Sud Roma, to a description of how *Calcio Moderno* not only promotes radical changes to the temporal and spatial aspects of fandom by ascribing it value primarily within the terms of capital accumulation, but also invigorates the Ultras' will to counter the forces of global capitalism with an ideology of local belonging and a counter-modern ethic of violence.

This chapter continues the discussion of the Ultras' *mentalita`*, in order to explain the agonistic, or "oppositional" form of life of the Ultras. During research it became clear to me that, above all else, the Ultras' behaviors are guided by a warring form of life. Antagonism and contest, as I explained in the first chapter, play crucial roles in determining the mode of Ultra interactions with soccer. As such, the Ultras mirror the Italian tendency toward national ambivalence that is marked by the extreme localism called *campanilismo*.

Likewise, the Ultras engage globalization and other current political issues. These examples further the idea that division and discrimination are central to the Ultra experience. But these divisions are themselves better explained as products of the Ultra agonistic form of life, rather than as material stimulants of the form. To explain this crucial aspect of the Ultra phenomenon I will begin the chapter with an explanation of what I mean by agonism, then continue with a discussion of the moral basis of altruism, and the Ultra war against "modern man." Finally I will explain war and militarism from the perspective of the Ultras.

1. Agonism

As I noted in the introduction, I have taken "form of life" from Friedrich Nietzsche as a way

to describe the distinctive characteristics of the Ultra phenomenon. Nietzsche was not concerned with categorical precision when using the concept, so it is difficult to know the boundaries of a conglomeration designated a “form of life.” This is because Nietzsche understood forms of life as characteristics and, more specifically, characteristics of morality and ethics. As such different forms of life could exist within the same organism or phenomenon. Still, he did use “forms of life” to explain not only inter-cultural difference, such as between the Classical and Modern worlds, but also intra-cultural difference, such as between noble and common elements of the Modern West. “Forms of life” were based primarily in morality and were always at odds with other forms of life or morality (Nietzsche, 2002, pgs. 151-177). It is this aspect of the concept that I find most applicable to the Ultras.

A. Agonistic Form of Life

In his essay “Homer’s Contest,” Friedrich Nietzsche begins one of the most vital themes of his work, the distance between the Classical and Modern understandings of the world, or “forms of life.” He uses Hesiod’s explanation of *eris* (jealousy, envy, and grudge) and Homer’s battle scenes to demonstrate that the Greeks had a “trait of cruelty” which allowed the Greek world to “rejoice” over the excessively descriptive (to our modern mind) scenes of battle in *The Iliad* (Nietzsche, 2007, pgs. 174-5). That we find them disturbing where the Greeks found them elevating and exhilarating gave Nietzsche cause to reflect on what we can discern from a “form of life’s” view of battle and victory. He decided, ultimately, that, one, “forms of life” are separated largely by their conceptions of battle and victory, and two, that early ethics were derived from those conceptions (Van Boxel, 2005, pg. 72).

The Greeks, he explains, lived a life of “combat and victory” in which warring competition

and pleasure in victory were acknowledged and even colored their ethical concepts like *eris* (Nietzsche, 2007, pgs. 176-177). When there were no wars in which to take pleasure, physical contests between cities were arranged. It was the centrality of contest and strife to Greek life that prompted Nietzsche's calling it an "agonic form of life" (Nietzsche 2007 pgs. 174-181).

Living "agonically," the Greeks valued ferocity and strife. To battle was a means of salvation, not just for one's people or city but against the very chaos of the natural world (Van Boxle, 2005, pg. 72). Perpetual peace, a very modern utopia according to Nietzsche, would not have been desirable to the Greeks because their lives were given meaning by the struggles and victories associated with war and contest. Indeed, the "life affirming" qualities of the agonistic Greek "form of life," admired so by Nietzsche, were created, in his estimation, by agonic oppositions (Van Boxle, 2005, pg. 78). The very engagement of an enemy on an athletic or battle field, he said, was an act of strength and courage. The warring nature will seek resistance at every turn and through surpassing opponents, become even stronger. Thus one needed enemies and not mere adversaries (Nietzsche, 2005, pg. 82).

The value of enemies is another theme central to Nietzsche's work. As it was proudly put to me by *Antichi Valori* founder Federico, consciously paraphrasing Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, "*poter' essere nemico, già questo presuppone una natura forte*" (to be able to be an enemy already presupposes a strong nature). Thus, it is only those with a "strong nature" that are capable of engaging in agon. Although they did not put it in these terms, there was a sense after the death of Genoa Ultra Vincenzo Spagnolo in 1995 that the Ultras needed to commit themselves to a form of violence that did not necessitate killing (Roversi and Balestri, 2002, pgs. 47-48). Seeking a form of mutual engagement between equal powers is central to the Greek agon, as agonistic behavior must

take place in a setting that allows commensurable “strong types” to “project power outwardly, assertively, and affirmatively” (Johnson, 2010, pg. 70). Agon, in other words, is “life affirming” in that it does not depend upon destruction of the enemy but rather in engagement (Cox, 1999, pgs. 232-233). Nietzsche understands the agonist to compete or fight in order to elevate their self-status, and the status of their city. The fight may well be controlled and even symbolic but the rewards are nonetheless thought to be a form of salvation (2007, pg. 179). The life and well-being of the city, and culture, were dependent upon victory.

When the Ultras engage a particularly nasty rival, even if there is no literal intent to murder there is still violence involved. In many cases, violence is not directed at a person but at a city. Although it is impossible to properly entertain the idea here, the conflation of civic identities amongst the Ultras most likely makes the attack of a city block, for instance, congruous with attacks on a person. In other words, if it is impossible to attack an Ultra of AC Milan, destroying the light fixtures in a subway station will suffice. This form of violence was not a normal part of Ultra behaviors away from Rome, but it did occur. As I explained earlier, in 2006 AC Milan Ultras attacked a group of AS Roma fans, of which I was a part, being led on foot by a police escort from the San Siro stadium to the nearest subway station. After being restrained, and unable to engage the enemy Ultras, the AS Roma Ultras instead turned their aggression toward the light fixtures in the subway station. Once inside the subway car they further attacked the advertising and emergency bells.

It is this “will to transgression” in the Ultras that the state finds unacceptable. As Valerio, a ten-year veteran of the Curva and now of *Ultras Romani* explained, “it used to be that if we traveled and someone got arrested it was a good trip. Now if we go and no one gets arrested it’s

good. We used to go to harm and destroy; now we go only to be fans but we get in more trouble for that.” The Italian state has no choice but to see something sinister in even the most playful of Ultra violence, as if all Ultra violence were as violent as the Sandri uprising in Rome. This is because the violence of the Ultras serves no bourgeois purpose. While I am unwilling to speak of Ultra violence as Sorel does proletariat violence, which in the inter-war context was truly revolutionary, his understanding of violence against the bourgeois state is applicable here. Violence, he explained, seems to operate from a different, mythological, vantage than the strict rationality (or myth of rationality) that unites the individual to the state. It seems, then, to undercut or circumvent the motivating narratives of the state, leaving a void of responsibility between the perpetrators and victims of violence. One gets the sense that Sorel speaks of victims of violence with tongue in cheek, as it is the bourgeoisie that is the only possible victim of proletariat violence; the same bourgeoisie whose own violence is normally a tool directed at strengthening, instead of undermining, the state (1999, pgs. 16-20).

If the Ultras act violently without concern for the consequential breakdown of law and order, or state legitimacy, they must be dealt with as enemies of the state. As discussed in the previous chapter, the state is the sole purveyor of legitimate violence in the liberal order. Any violent individuals or groups are seen as a form of order breakdown. As Foucault demonstrated, the purpose of state violence is often coercive and is always dispersed throughout the institutions of the state (2000, pgs. 298-325). The most obvious institution of social coercion is the police, whose task he identifies with far more than mere “policing.” Simply put, the police “sees to the benefits that can be derived only from living in society” (Foucault, 2000, pg. 321). The police are charged with caring for the good of the body, soul, and economy of the state (ibid). What the police are policing amongst

the Ultras is exactly this idea of order and the bourgeois “good” that comes from the liberal state. What the state seeks, in other words, is to bring the Ultras within its own model of freedom.

When Dal Lago and De Biasi (1994) identified war as the dominant metaphor in the Ultras’ vocabulary (of fandom), perhaps they said more than they intended. Indeed, I have taken that metaphor much further and connected it with the overall *mentalità* and ethical structure of the Ultras. As war promotes the idea of an organic community united by commitment, suffering, and sacrifice, as I argue below, it is a threat to the system of rights which legitimizes and normalizes the relationship between state and individual, especially given the “peacetime” context in which Ultra violence occurs. From within, a group of Ultras standing their ground and refusing to show fear to a rival group looks poetic and romantic, like an elite legion defending the honor of Rome to the (symbolic) death. From without, however, it looks like two gangs of thugs attempting to break the social contract which maintains the order of the state.

Perhaps this is why I find the Ultras ambiguously concerned with the state. While they neither explicitly discuss the state, nor desire its overthrow, they still act largely outside its legitimizing embrace. Weber spoke of state domination by virtue of a general belief in the validity of legality and the obligations it presupposes in the liberal individual (1958, pg. 79). He also understood that the warrior castes of pre-modern Europe, with their honor codes, restricted halls of brotherhood, and heroic form of violence, would have been, and were, out of step with the state’s technologies of dominance and institutionalization (Weber, 1958, pgs. 257-259). Warrior coercion, as it was, became anathema to state coercion and its monopolization of violence and warfare, as did its codes of ethics (Weber, 1958, pg. 260).

It would be hyperbole to say that AS Roma’s Ultras are committed to a war against state

legality. However, they are at war with the obligations that legality imposes on the person. This is precisely because their ethics fall closer to the pre-modern warrior than the bourgeois individual. Thus, physical transgression may have major consequences for the Ultras even as it plays a smaller role than their ethical transgressions. But while two nights of violence in 2007 were the rationale to begin the state's suppression of the Ultras, it is the latter, ethical transgressions, I believe, that set the state against them to begin with, and the reason I have focused more upon the Ultras' ethic of violence than actual violence.

B. The Morality of Altruism

i. Progress Towards the Universal?

The Ultras' ethic of violence not only puts them at odds with the state's system of law and order but with the guiding ethical components of Western liberalism. The Ultras place little value on safety, security, peacefulness, in short, the values of the marketplace. Yet they are not mere hoodlums bent on destruction for its own sake, but are guided by reverence for a form of life that simply does not fear violent confrontation. Because of this, and because of the rarity of violence in the lives of bourgeois subjects, the Ultras are condemned as criminals.

However interesting is the criminalization of non-legitimate violence, I find more so the ways in which violence makes knowable the relationship between truth and morality. This relationship was central to Nietzsche's works and, oddly enough, has become a major aspect of the Ultras' conflict with the liberal state. This is because of the moralistic nature of the media's portrayal of the Ultras' agonistic form of life. As I demonstrated in the previous chapters, the Ultras seek to maintain a high level of rivalry and hostility in Italian soccer, primarily because these point to a form of interaction and experience that transcends the marketplace (Nietzsche, 1995, pgs. 17-


21). The system they call *Calcio Moderno*, however, seeks to mitigate enmity precisely because it destabilizes the marketplace, as well as the peace and well being of the bourgeois soccer fans.

For example, when AS Roma's Ultras explained their desire to "hate Napoli" and to sing "I hate Napoli" during the 2007 game between the two teams, they were condemned in the press as "racists" and as representatives of a non-evolved and not-quite-modern aspect of Italy's collective unconscious that the liberal cosmopolitan press found abhorrent (see Chapter 4). Seemingly as a consequence of the weeks of discourse around the AS Roma-SSC Napoli game of 2007, one of Italian soccer's major sponsors, Volkswagon, produced a pamphlet that was handed to those entering Italian stadiums during the tenth round of games on October 31, 2007 (two weeks after AS Roma-SSC Napoli) (figure 94). Called the "Handbook of the Good Fan," it consisted of ten points, among them to "go to the stadium 'armed' only with enthusiasm," to "never express joy in an aggressive fashion," to "never assume a racist attitude," to "appreciate the nice play of the adversary," (in other words, to clap for the opposition) and to "not imitate those who act in an 'incorrect' and 'miseducated' way."

Aside from cynicism about the intentions of a corporate sponsor seeking only profits from their involvement with soccer, the *Boys* Ultras with whom I spoke during the game understood the moral implications of the pamphlet. "The system," said Manuele, a lithe 23-year old member from the ancient neighborhood Testaccio (figure 16), "is telling children not to be Ultras, plain and simple. Each of the things presented as good are the opposite of what we do. The children are being told to live as good, modest, normal people." Fabio, standing next to us but facing the crowd and not the action on the field, as do most leaders so they may direct songs to their group, made the point more eloquently. "The children are to be good - that is enough to say multiculturalists, consumers,

and desirous of comfort, fun, and peaceful coexistence even with mediocrity. But they will discover, at least some will, that the promises being made [by the marketplace] pale in comparison to the traditional Roman life.” He then, referred to a list of Roman characteristics made by Evola that the *Boys* leadership had been discussing in the week prior to the game (discussed in Chapter 7).



Decalogo del Buon Tifoso 
 Figure 94. The Volkswagen Handbook of the Good Fan. 2007.

With the pamphlet of the model bourgeois subject converging, in one place, with the raging fandom of Curva Sud Roma’s Ultras, I again began to wonder about the relationship between truth

and morality, or more correctly, morality and altruism. I wondered how it made sense to the liberal world to propose ecumenicalism as a way to live a fulfilling life. As the bourgeois fans clapped politely, the Ultras supported AS Roma as partially as possible - as partisans. The distance between them was so great that Nietzsche and his understanding of the pathos, or great sensation, of distance came to mind. Forms of life, he said, were distinguishable, all things considered, by morality and valuation. This was certainly true of the distance between the Ultra and bourgeois forms of life; one seeking extremes of emotion flowing from a small cohort, and the other a steady mild stream of emotion flowing from a universal cohort.

Linguist Philip Lieberman (1991) sought to explain the relationship between valuation and altruism by discovering from where the two entered the human experience. Resulting from the biological development of the brain and supralaryngeal tools needed to produce human speech, a new type of cognitive capacity evolved. This was the human ability to construct linguistically-encoded behaviors such as those controlled by systems of morality and ethics (Lieberman, 1991, pgs. 22-35). “These developments enabled us to induce the modes of altruism that bond us together as groups. In consequence, ... in place of the genetic programs that regulate the behaviors of all organic species, we developed ... culture-specific programs by which our human behaviors - cognizing, affective, and actional - came to be . . . regulated” (Wynter, 1995, pg. 7).

Interestingly, this is the same conclusion reached by Nietzsche. After first exploring the link between language and consciousness, and concluding that conscious thought, that which takes the form of language, is the shallowest form of thought because it is designed only to connect one person to another, Nietzsche then seeks to understand how consciousness is connected to human social forms. “Consciousness,” he says, “belongs not to man’s [sic] existence as an individual but

rather to the community and herd-aspects of his [sic] nature; it developed only in relation to its usefulness to the herd. Consequently, we may only know ourselves through what is average and knowable from the herd's perspective. We know exactly as much as is useful to the human herd" (Nietzsche, 2001, pgs. 211-214).

Lieberman continues his explication of the development of altruism to demonstrate how technology has allowed the human to burst outward from its small (pre-modern) communities to populate every continent and harness the forces of nature. We have done so, however, having surpassed the still operational altruistic models of previous centuries (Lieberman, 1991, pg. 172). While slavery, for example, was once a universal component of human forms of life, it is now "universally outlawed" (thanks to our ever advancing moral and ethical systems). Race, the bane of one of its later variants, American racial slavery, is still "unconquered" (Lieberman, 1991, pg. 172).

In arguing thus, Lieberman demonstrates not only that ethico-behavioral systems were narratively driven, but that they continue to be. For nowhere in his book on the evolution of altruistic behaviors and their relationship to morality does he feel the need to quantify his own moral positions - nor his use of these positions to justify the idea that the species is progressing because of its moral-ethical aversion to slavery. Nor, obviously, does he need to explain that "racial prejudice" is abhorrent.

Indeed, language is not epiphenomenal to the social structures in which it acts, but a very part of those structures. Fernand Hallyn agrees, proposing that "frames of signification" organize "poetically," that is, through language and grammar, to provide, among other things, the boundaries and boundary markers between "us and them". He terms this process the "poetics of the *propter nos*" - the "us" on whose behalf "we" act (Hallyn, 1990, pg. 55).

Sylvia Wynter, herself utilizing a largely “epistemic” version of culture (focusing on systems of representation), explains the importance of the *propter nos* as the contextual basis of human altruism (Wynter, 1997). She explains the history of various “propters nos,” showing how categorial models, such as those that came to be disciplines in the modern Academy - geography, anthropology, psychology, ecology, economics, etc. - are often the barriers that must fall in order for altruistic advances to be made.

What drives this form of human advancement is intellectual revolution or “epistemic shifts” (Foucault, 1970, pgs. xx-xxvi). However, like Lieberman, Wynter assumes that progress is made only when our altruistic models become universalized, or universally inclusive. She proposes that the motivation of an epochal shift in human understanding (in our lifetime) should be the universality of our “nos,” wherein all forms of life are equally valid and valued, thereby conceptually cancelling discrimination between human “forms of life.”

ii. Or, Progress Towards the Extremely Restricted.

The Ultras represent instead another model of what we may call inter-altruistic co-identification - one which is exaggeratedly restricted. If the altruism of globalization is driven by a morality of total inclusion, wherein the universalization of women and men is made complete in a global market, the altruism of the Ultra is one of exclusion, exclusivity, and local particularity. These motivating forces will be made clear as the chapter progresses.

I have described Curva Sud as a “kingdom of the word” because there, at the center of the Roman Ultra universe, I found a place where language, rhetoric, and ideology was paramount (Koon, 1985, pg. 4). It is for this reason that I chose to use Sylvia Wynter and others who focus on the narrative element of human existence to explain the moral basis of altruistic behaviors. But

where the moral thrust of the West is more and more associated with liberal civic and social principles like peace, stability, comfort, happiness, and equality, those of the Ultra can be identified in the words of Counter-Enlightenment thinkers like Nietzsche and Evola, for whom liberalism's values lead to cultural degeneration (Sunic, 2004; Berezin, 2009).

“I brought a copy of *La Gaia Scienza* (*The Gay Science*, by Friedrich Nietzsche) to *Antichi Valori*,” I was told by Mario, a former member of the group. “In that book is Nietzsche's greatest lesson to the Ultra *mentalità*: that all good things come from oppositions. ‘*La guerra è la madre di tutte le buone cose*,’ (war is the mother of all good things) he said. Our *mentalità* was to practice this everyday - not through fighting but through understanding. By giving up aggression and rivalry we thought that the great and beautiful energy of life would wither away.” From Nietzsche, Mario went on to say, *Antichi Valori* learned to love hatred and have no fear of danger.

As if writing a description of the Ultra agonistic form of life, Evola explained that “what is needed is a new radical front with clear boundaries between friend and foe. The future does not belong to those of crumbling and hybrid ideas but those of radicalism - the radicalism of absolute negations and majestic affirmations” (2002, pg. 113). The idea of embracing “absolute negations and majestic affirmations” is accepted whole-heartedly by the leadership group of *Boys Roma*.

On a sweltering summer evening in late-July, 2007, I met this group of four, plus other members of *Boys*, to discuss Evola and the new government initiatives against the Ultras for the upcoming season. (Soccer season in Italy is from late-August to mid-May.) On this night, the topic of discussion was the opening section of Evola's *Imperialismo Pagano* (2004b), in which he dismisses the “petty aims” of the liberal state and its economic, military, and industrial foundations but without embracing European fascism as such. Instead he proposes a fascism based on the Roman

Imperium, an ancient right to rule based on spiritual superiority. This Imperium Romanum, he says, “can only be attained by those who have the power to transcend the petty lives of petty men and their petty appetites, national pride, values, nonvalues, and gods” (Evola, 2004b, pg. 62 - my translation). In a room of young, impressionable Ultras who considered themselves European style fascists, this was a bold choice of discussion. Fabio, second-in-command at *Boys*, explained to me beforehand that he hoped Evola would “decenter” the group’s understanding of fascism and even its affiliation with neofascists like *Forza Nuova*. “We must put Rome at the center, not fascism. I want our Ultras to be critical of the world but in a way that puts them and their future in focus. Roberto Fiore [founder and leader of *Forza Nuova*] might be a good guy, but *Forza Nuova* will always do right by him, not Rome. No, it is up to us to look out for Rome,” he told me.

Looking back, I missed a perfect opportunity to discuss the absence of the state and nationalism in the world view of a Roman fascist. At the time it just seemed obvious that Rome and the Romans would be the basis of the type of radicalization and political action the *Boys* Ultras were pursuing. As Michael Herzfeld described, Rome has a unique ability to (still) feel like the center of the world (Herzfeld, 2009, pgs. 1-12). To the Romans, especially those thoroughly imbued with *Romanità*, there is very little of value in the world beyond Rome’s walls. Ecumenicalism and the relativity of forms of life are recipes, I was told, for living without pride (see chapters 4 and 8).

David Nugent described the ways in which Peruvian peasants sought to diminish the racial categories imposed by colonialism in order to fully embrace, and be embraced by, the nation. As he called it, they “erased race to make the nation” (Nugent, 2002, pgs. 137-174). These Ultras were taking the opposite approach, openly embracing the idea of a Roman race, in order to disconnect themselves from the nation and the “empty promises of liberalism.” Indeed, it was not just *Boys*

Roma which was pursuing such a course. Two small political groups, *Razza Romana* (Roman Race) and *Romulae Genti* (The Race of Romulus), invoked the same ideal of the Romans and what it means to carry such a marker of identity today.

C. The Ultras - Being Made Hard

i. A Mass Amongst Warriors

In the third chapter I explained that the Ultras use a conception of history that places high value on myth and tradition. Their history is a monumental history, not only because they live closer to heroism and memorialization than other fans, but because it is highly selective. As Nietzsche explained, monumentalism makes use of neither objectivity nor linear narratives but instead picks and chooses aspects of history to celebrate and diminish (1997, pgs.59-123).

How the Ultras use history is exemplified by their in-stadium activities like unfurling banners or devoting the act of fandom to the honor of fallen Ultras or Romans. One can observe it, too, in their actions beyond the stadium, such as the 2007 mass commemorating the most important *capo* (boss) in the history of *Boys Roma*, Paolo Zappavigna. At this mass, which took place in the *Basilica San Lorenzo Fuori le Mura*, it was clear that the level of respect for the Ultra being honored went far beyond compassion. It was true veneration by those who were witnesses to the life lost.

After the mass for Paolo, I sat in a dingy San Lorenzo café as a cold rain poured outside, speaking to Augusto of *Boys Roma* and Marcello of *Padroni di Casa*. These were two Ultras I did not know well at the time. They stayed to speak with me for two reasons. One, it was raining too hard for their journey home by scooter to be comfortably made; and two, because “Duce,” the boss of *Boys Roma* had encouraged them to do so.

I revisited, with them, the respect and commitment I felt I had witnessed earlier as

approximately 100 tattooed, t-shirt and jean clad Ultras performed the mass. The ceremony had been standard until the priest said something about the excesses of youth which had misled Zappavigna into a dark period of violence - words that provoked the congregation to erupt with whistles and shouts of derision, just as a stadium might at a hard foul by an opposing player. The shocked look on my face was met with a shrug of the shoulders and a “*pezzo di merda*” (piece of shit) murmured by Filippo the long-time *Fedayn* member whose flags I waved in Parma and Milano.

After the mass the leadership of *Boys Roma* stood next to a photo of Zappavigna, accepting the hugs, kisses, laughs, and condolences of all who approached them. Fabio, my main contact in the group, introduced me to Signora Zappavigna, Paolo’s mother. She thanked me for being there to honor her son. I asked her why she had not spoken about her son, or stood with the Ultras after the mass. “These were his brothers,” she said. “They built something special together; so much that they organized this mass for Paolo to honor him - just like they do every Sunday” (the traditional game day for soccer).

Even to a relative outsider - although had I been a stranger I would never have been allowed in the church - the afternoon was emotional. As a researcher it was invaluable. In the ritually and emotionally charged environments of the stadiums, I knew them to be eager to sacrifice and suffer. But to see them come to mass to honor one of their own with the same passionate commitment that they show at the games somehow seemed more important. I was beginning to understand that being Ultra was not something to be experienced only on weekends.

Upon telling the Ultras at the café how impressed I had been with the mass, they explained to me that the Ultras are not normal people. They are given to extremes of emotion, being at home with both great love and hatred. These extremes alone, I suggested, did not fully explain the outburst

during the mass. “Certainly,” Marcello, a 34-year old baker and member of *Padroni di Casa* said, “each of us in the church today had either been in battle with Paolo, or grew up in an Ultras group hearing stories about him and his courage. He was fearless and never turned his back. When you went into battle with Paolo there was no chance of being left behind.” “*Restare indietro* (being left behind)?” I asked for clarification. “To be taken advantage of - by enemy Ultras or the police,” he continued. “We are warriors steeled by war. Therefore we understand the importance of the war. Otherwise, what the hell are we to do?”

The talk of war surprised me and they could tell. Augusto, a recently married 31-year old waiter at a nice pizzeria off Via Veneto and member of *Boys* broke in, “Five years in the Curva made me hard, especially at the end of the 1990s (when fights were a regular part of the Ultras experience).” “We have done and seen things that normal people would cower against,” he said. “As such there is an incredible distance between us and those outside the Ultras [phenomenon].” I asked if there was difficulty relating to those outside the Ultras. “Those who live that way are already dead,” answered Marcello. I asked if theirs was an extreme position. “Absolutely,” said Augusto, “we are perhaps most extreme, but all Ultras are extreme. That is why they are Ultras.”

“*Per essemplio* (for example),” said Marcello, a phrase that I would come to identify with him, “we in *Padroni di Casa* understand that the war of the Ultras is not one for the politics of the state, nor completely for the honor and security of the city or the Ultra movement. In a much bigger way it is ultimately for liberation from [bourgeois moralism]. We cannot be at the stadium everyday, but our experiences there prepare us for when we are not. *I padroni* (members of *Padroni di Casa*) are Ultras in all aspects of life.”

Marcello and Augusto went on to explain that the Ultra, the true Ultra that is, those like

Paolo Zappavigna who devoted their lives to Curva Sud, demand “unconditional sacrifice” from one another. In return the Ultra is united in confraternity with others who can be counted on in any situation. For many hundreds of Ultras, what happened at the mass was the culmination of times spent in defense of their brothers and sisters and in the protection of Paolo.

In exchanges like this, it was again made clear that I needed a way of understanding the Ultras that went beyond their merely being a subculture with its own values or characteristics. I wanted to find a way to understand how experiences in Curva Sud, the various cage-like structures comprising guest sections, and in Ultra dominated social settings, came to create and transform the ethics of many (Ultra) men and women (the few women who were, primarily as girlfriends, involved). The idea that oppositions are the driving force of the Ultra phenomenon was already clear. However, what I added to this during my time in the field was the idea that war played a crucial role. Not only does warfare need warriors, it also needs an ethical approach to conflict. The Ultras have both.

II. The Ultras: An Ethic Against Bourgeois Ideals

During my fieldwork, particularly the periods immediately following the 2007 deaths of police officer Filippo Raciti at the hands of Catania’s Ultras and Gabriele Sandri, Roma-born Ultra of SS Lazio, at the hands of Arezzo police officer Luigi Spaccarotella, the Ultras made it clear to me that they hated and were a direct contrast to “*il modo di vivere della borghesia*,” or the bourgeois form of life. From Evola and Nietzsche, as well as the contemporary far right, many Ultras have been given, in their minds, a clear understanding of the forces at work within the bourgeois phenomenon. Nota bene, however: the Ultra critique is hardly “class-based,” focusing instead, as does their critique of globalization, on “spiritual” issues.

A. The Emptiness of the Universal and Bourgeois

The Ultras' use of Nietzsche ultimately focuses on his critique of the forces of modernity, through which he demonstrated the "emptiness" of universal values and concepts such as equality and democracy. I found Nietzsche useful in thinking through the distance between universal and particular values and specifically how such a distance is maintained by the Ultras' critique of globalization.

Although the Ultras are against the economic and political aspects of globalization, at least those which impact upon soccer (in the form of *Calcio Moderno*), their revolt against this form of modernity is primarily against its "spiritual" or intellectual aspects, which they understood to be hedonism, multiculturalism, rights-based movements like Gay Pride, and universalist assumptions of culture based on the market (Sunic, 2007, pg. 155). It might be more clear to discuss these things under the rubric of postmodernity, as does Baudrillard, who explains postmodernity as a "glandular corpse" that celebrates "handicaps, weirdos, degenerates, and asocial persons" at the expense of the "heroes" of previous forms of life (Baudrillard, 2008, pg. 79). In the language of the Ultras, however, postmodernity hardly figures, although globalization is a big concern.

Instead of dismissing their rhetoric, I suggest that the Ultras, by focusing on the intellectual or epistemic aspects of globalization, point to a different way of understanding the phenomenon and how it impacts, or is understood to impact, local cultures. What the flourishing of American fast food would mean for Roman cuisine and culture is more upsetting to them than merely the specter of a McDonald's on every Roman corner.

Additionally, how they understand the issues connected to immigration and "minority rights" is not the vulgar racism, xenophobia, or sexism that many expect of them, but something closer to

issues of sovereignty and counter-modern writings on the degeneration of culture. In other words, the Ultra rejection of the form of modernity promised by globalization is not motivated by saying No, as some who study such phenomena assume, deploying labels like “parochialism,” “racism,” and “discrimination” (Cole, 1997, pg. 11; Sniderman et al, 2000, pgs. 34-39). Instead it is a Yes that is put into action by preferring and loving their own form of life, even if that means refusing and even hating the life forms of others.

The Ultra are opposed to a bourgeois life - that is, a life devoted to concerns of the market at the expense of spirituality, values, and ethics. According to Evola, the bourgeois type lives a life dominated by concern for safety, well-being, and material wealth (2002, pg. 193). In the inter-Ultra discourse on *Calcio Moderno*, one continuously hears laments that soccer is being made the domain of those who are unwilling to fight for anything - those who seek to purchase a connection to AS Roma, rather than getting their hands dirty or putting themselves in danger.

It is this part of the crowd, the consumerist bourgeois fans, that is referred to as just “fans” by the Italian media. According to Claudio of *Ultras Romani*, this “manipulation of our understanding of who is and isn’t a fan is another aspect of the game’s coming to be considered in the American style, as mere entertainment [without any ludic or even affective value]. One need only have money to be worthy of taking part.” The Ultras consistently speak of the normal fans, the bourgeois who live vicariously through the Ultras so long as there is no violence, and who castigate the Ultras at the first sign of unrest, as those “without spirit.” As Claudio explained, “these fans like the passion we bring to the stadium but they want us to have that passion only while the game is on and only in forms which conform to their morality. They want us to live *orizzontalmente* (horizontally) and *passivamente* (passively) as they do.” “This is strange,” he continued, “because

certainly they understand that our courage is foreign to them.”

B. Living Dangerously and Heroically

Claudio made it clear that the normal bourgeois fans lack courage because, from the Ultra perspective, they thrive only within an environment of neutrality. It could be said that they “swim in a sea of moderation, diluting their passion for life in the gently flowing current” (Cate, 2002, pg. 111). “If there is one thing we Ultras despise it is neutrality,” said Claudio, which they equate with a deficiency of conviction; or with a life devoid of what Evola called a “transcendent reference point” (Evola, 2004, pg. 11).

Months after we had originally spoken in the San Lorenzo café I met Augusto of *Boys Roma* outside the guests section in Livorno. We hugged and complimented each other for coming to an away game of the highest seriousness and symbolism for many of AS Roma’s Ultras. *AS Livorno Calcio* plays in the city of the same name. Their Ultras are fiercely of the far left, matching the political affiliation of many of the townspeople. The *Partito Comunista d’Italia* (PCI) was founded in Livorno in 1921 and the left has been entrenched there ever since. Naturally, the rivalry with AS Roma’s Ultras is intensified by the political right dominating Curva Sud. When the clubs meet, the chanting, flag waiving, and banners often have less to do with soccer than with political affiliation.

Indeed, without politics, the clubs have no relation whatsoever. AS Livorno has played in Serie A for only 3 seasons since 1949. Many non-Ultra fans of AS Roma know little of Livorno and care not for the rivalry, understanding it as an “Ultras thing.” For the Ultras it is a rivalry that defines the Ultra phenomenon. To get to Livorno in 2007, AS Roma’s Ultras filled a special train, three charter buses, and numerous cars. Two thousand of the most committed Ultras made the trip. Most of these, it seemed, went to chant “Duce! Duce! Duce!” for 90 minutes and then return to Rome.

When AS Roma scored, the Duce chants rang out in place of their various songs in devotion to Rome and AS Roma. There were several flags of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Italian Social Republic - the German-backed Mussolini government that opposed the “occupation” of Italy by American troops and Communist Italians in the last years of WWII [1943-1945]). A few of Nazi Germany also flew in the guest section. Additionally, sometimes clapping was replaced by Roman Salutes. These were countered in the Livorno Curva Nord with raised fists, chants of “Stalin Vive!,” flags of the USSR and PCI, and a large banner announcing that *Il nostro tricolore è con la stella rossa* (our tri-color [Italian flag] has a red star, in reference to the international symbol of communism) (figure 95).



Figure 95. Livorno banner celebrating a communist Italy. Livorno. 2007.

When I mentioned to Augusto that I never see him away from Rome and had not seen him since the mass for Paolo, he told me why. “Livorno is all or nothing,” he said. “For us fascists there is nothing like this game. You will see. This has nothing to do with soccer, just pure hatred.” I told him that it was the away game I had most looked forward to experiencing.

“Games like this,” he told me, “made Zappavigna the legend he is. He used to tell us ‘*Onore e nobilit  vengono da odium et bellum*’” (honor and nobility come from hatred and war - he used the Latin purposefully). Later he explained to me how, for many of the older members of *Boys*, this was a motto - something to keep in mind in violent and intense situations. I asked if he thought about it beyond his life as an Ultra. “That’s impossible,” he said. “The Ultras’ understanding of soccer is the Ultras’ understanding of the world. It makes sense when you use ‘strength, honor, rivalry, and *Romanit *’ to see how to live. Such values, he went on, had given him something for which to fight, and a willingness to do so, making him stronger and more “Ultras” than other normal people.¹



Figure 96. *Boys Roma* Ultras display Italian flags. Livorno. 2007.

Those who willingly commit their lives to a form of life that frowns upon rivalry and discrimination are seen as weak-willed seekers of comfort and coddling. What is worse, to the Ultras

¹ Just as *mentalit * is ubiquitous amongst the Ultras for explaining why they act as they do, so is Ultras as a way of explaining what it means to be an Ultra.

this bourgeois form of life seeks the diminution of exaltedness. Whether the Ultras reach those states in stadiums following AS Roma, in violent encounters, or through organized action in their communities is less important than their ability and willingness to seek occasions rich with meaning and seriousness. These moments are part of the Ultras' commitment to live a life "*a rischia il tutto per tutto*" (all or nothing).

For the Ultras, danger, adventure, and even pain are the most valid parts of life, for they require a commitment and resolve that most people would not consider worthy of our modern liberal societies (Nietzsche, 2007, pg. 66). Just as the Futurists and fascists of the early 20th century heeded Nietzsche's call to "live dangerously," the Ultras of today are using the same ideas to place distance between themselves and the bourgeois.

In his *Gay Science*, Nietzsche suggested that by living dangerously one would expand the horizons, or conditions of possibility, of existence. The modern world had made of life a struggle only to avoid struggle, strife, danger, pain, and discomfort. Conversely, by living with contempt for safety, security, and caution, one could re-invigorate life with commitment, bravery, and nobility (Nietzsche 2001, pgs. 160, 184, 199-248). As Mario, formerly of *Antichi Valori* and now *Romulae Genti*, explained to me, the love of hatreds and lack of fear of dangerous situations have set the Ultras apart from non-Ultras. "The days we live together, like going to a big game in Milan or going to Brescia (another of the political rivalries of Roma's Ultras), are deeply felt. None of us will ever forget these battles," he said.

As many journalists point out, attending soccer games can be dangerous. However, it was my experience that they are not exceedingly dangerous, and not dangerous at all for the bourgeois fans. Nonetheless, in comparison to spectating live sports in the United States, the Ultras experience

is downright frightening. While boarding a train, arriving at a “hostile” city, entering their stadium, and exchanging insults and projectiles with the locals, there is an element of the unknown that keeps one alert and tensed for contact. Add to that the aggressive nature of all interaction with those outside the group of AS Roma fans and after a handful of away games one begins to feel like a warrior marching into battle. It certainly amounts to very little compared to actual wartime experience, but it still offers considerable distance from passing one’s afternoon on Via del Corso (a popular shopping street in Rome).



Figure 97. *AS Roma Ultras* banner. “The friends of Bologna are our enemies.” Udine. 2004.

i. Evolan Heroism

In this environment, where one sings “songs in honor of hostility,” a feeling of heroism and virtue emerges (Nietzsche, 2006, pg. 79). Evola outlined the two foundations of heroism in *Men Among The Ruins*. The first is that “the measure of what one can demand of others is dictated by the measure of what one can demand from oneself”. The second is that “those who cannot be their own masters should find a master outside of themselves” (Evola, 2002, pg. 141). Both principles are

entrenched in the ideas of dedication, discipline, and sacrifice. They were presented to me by Fabio of *Boys Roma* as we drove to witness the *ritorno* (return game) of the Coppa Italia final in Milan.²

He explained that the groups that maintain themselves over time, such as *Boys* and *Fedayn* (both in existence since 1972), are aware that leadership is crucial. As a younger leader of *Boys* under Paolo Zappavigna, Fabio was given a copy of *Men Among The Ruins* and told to understand it if he expected to have more responsibility within the group. Paolo's sudden death prevented Fabio from being pressed on the contents of the book. Nonetheless, Paolo took Evola's varied messages to heart and continues to ensure that they are central to how the *Boys* Ultras understand their organization.

For other Ultras, though, there seems to be an unthinking devotion to the first of Evola's foundations of heroism. Their amount of self-mastery is measured in unflinchingly defending themselves and their group (and whatever group of AS Roma fans they are standing with at any moment). The Ultras most respected by other Ultras are those who have been witnessed standing their ground when under attack. Violence and the Ultras' ethic of violence were explained in the two previous chapters. As we saw then, aggressive oppositions occur only with great sacrifice and sense of duty toward other Ultras.

ii. Nietzschean Distance and Ultras at Away Games

The heroic principles are supercharged with value in Evola's work because they oppose the strict utility with which the "merchant class" approaches life. For Evola, the heroism of the warrior functions by way of deep interpersonal commitments and sacrifices, while the utility of the merchant

² Some competitions involve two games, one at home and one away, with the winner having the highest accumulative score. The *ritorno* is the second game of two.

functions only for vulgar self-preservation (Evola, 2002, pg. 142); those who live with a code of honor act from a sense of duty, responsibility, and “love of distance” (Evola, 2002, pg. 2). It was repeated often to me that the essence of the Ultras’ *mentalità* was the experience of the away game; there one felt an intense brotherhood with fellow AS Roma fans and an undeniable hatred for the enemy. Importantly, one felt hated by the enemy in return. “At away games there is only aggression. We sing against them and them against us. The people in the curva or tribuna (sideline seats) seem so far away from us. Like this, it is difficult to imagine what they think of us or the game,” Fabio of *Boys* explained.



Figure 98. AS Roma Ultra gesturing to Inter Milan fans. Milan. 2007.

Distance was one of Nietzsche’s favorite concepts, having used it to promote methodological clarity as well as separation of the noble form of life from that of the modern herd (Nietzsche, 2003, pg. 68). Within the noble form of life, lived with a feeling of distance from others, the duties and responsibilities spoken of above only apply to one’s equals: in the case of the Ultras, one’s group or other Ultras (Cate, 2002, pg. 464). This is important for the Ultras, as their form of inter-group

“nobility” cannot be earned by shirking one’s duties.

Nor can it be earned by avoiding conflict. This is where the distance between the Ultras and others is greatest. Their form of warfare, conceptual (in the form of the culture of opposition) or literal (in the form of violent encounters), is explicitly non-utilitarian. It is always in defense of some cherished values, even if these are applied after-the-fact. In this way, their rivalries are always moral endeavors - always involving an investment of moral energies (Leed, 1979, pg. 61). Loyalty, courage, and commitment are the demands made of Ultra upon Ultra. These are never more on display than when AS Roma’s Ultras are away from Rome.



Figure 99. AS Roma’s Ultras in Genoa. 2006.

It is away from Rome that the Ultras act in a particularly militaristic way; marching together, singing and gesturing menacingly, insultingly, and defiantly. There happens at these moments a form of cohesion built from the euphoria of fear, adrenaline, and pride. Away games unfold like “an education of the will” (Nietzsche, 2003, pg. 200). After years spent traveling together and facing down rival Ultras and police, as well as their own fear, a transformation occurs of which many

Ultras are aware but know little how to describe.

The *arditi* (assault infantry soldiers) and other soldiers of WWI became banded together in what Mussolini called a *trincerocrazia* (a union of the trenches). These were men bounded together by consciousness of war, not class. They were united by the experience of fighting, killing, and surviving together. Italy was divided, wrote Mussolini, “between those who were there and those who were not there; those who fought and those who did not fight; those who produced and those who were parasites” (Farrell, 2003, pg. 72). This feeling, and the *arditi* legend, are well known by many Ultras of the left and right, and is reproduced when Ultras, away from Rome, distinguish themselves, in knowledge and identity, from those who remain outside (Leed, 1979, pg. 36).



Figure 100. *Boys Roma* Ultras in the 1990s.

Brian Pronger updated the phenomenological understanding of embodiment by adding an ethical element in order to more fully explain not only the consequences of living within a form of life but also the possibility of moving between forms. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s explanation of

how flows of desire are affected by the reterritorialization of human energy (puissance) under capitalism, Pronger explained that one becomes conscious of one's body through what Merleau-Ponty called "means of representation." But, he added, those representations are actually creative of the body's reality, through not only description but inscription (Pronger, 2002, pg. 233). Thus, representation is not a deep enough concept to explain how profoundly we are shaped by not only material culture but knowledge systems as well.

In this way, the ethical aspects of behavior discussed above make their mark on the body. The Ultras, like soldiers or warriors, learn war not only from language but from immersion into war(like) events. Thus, the language of war, and talk of contestation, opposition, commitment, and sacrifice, becomes the reality through which their acts come to be understood as aggressive, ironic, or worthy of feelings of honor.

This process is experienced as an ethical transformation. Many Ultras associate and socialize only with other Ultras. This is because non-Ultras have no idea what "truly motivates or interests" them. With other Ultras there is no need to explain the experience of being an Ultra; one just is Ultra. Thus, they feel themselves as having been initiated into a new life, with the aggressive actions taken as a group acting as a "baptism of fire," much like a moment of conversion or illumination (Griffin, 2007, pg. 157).

Victor Turner explained such feelings of non-material *confraternita* as "communitas," a new existential community built from common passage through states of transition (Turner, 1995, pg. 126). Gabriele, an unaffiliated Ultra formerly of *AS Roma Ultras*, explained to me the "love of life" and exhilaration he felt every time he arrived in Milan's central train station with a large group of AS Roma fans. He said it was like going into a war knowing you were unlikely to be harmed, but

for which you still had to prepare mentally.

“Milan is interesting, he said, “because you arrive there with normal people who come to shop or whatever. And there we are, looking at the group of policemen advancing up the platform. Some of us would love to fight each and every one of them, but others just want to get to San Siro (the stadium). Regardless, we know that the police could attack us if they want, and, what usually happens, they could lead us to the *Milanisti* (the enemy Ultras) so they can beat on us. But we always expect an attack from someone. So when the train arrives, you have to be ready. We might sing when we get off the train, but otherwise we are usually quiet and intense.”

Later I asked Giorgio of *Padroni di Casa* about Gabriele’s awareness of the distance between the Ultras and the non-Ultras on the platform. “It’s true,” he agreed, “It’s very easy to think to yourself, who are these people and what are they doing with their lives? They speak of freedom but they seem like slaves.” Why do they seem like slaves, I asked. “Because,” he responded, “if you only do what is expected of you then you are not free.” Because of the particularity and extreme nature of such experiences, they are difficult to reconcile with a non-Ultra form of life. As Eric Leed explained, “the personality, once adapted to war, is incommensurate with civilian society” (Leed, 1979, pg. 2).

III. Life as War

“Antagonism between peoples or a state of war between them is in itself not the cause of a civilization’s collapse; on the contrary the imminent sense of danger, just like victory, can consolidate, even in a material way, the network of a unitary structure and heat up a people’s spirit through external manifestations, while peace and well-being may lead to a state of reduced tension that favors the action of the deeper causes of a possible disintegration” (Evola, 1995, pg. 56).

The Ultras clearly understand the Nietzschean correlation between veneration and despising. In short, to do away with strong oppositions is also to do away with strong love. As says one of the favorite shirts of AS Roma's Ultras (sold by curbside merchants near the stadium), "*Odio Tutti*" (I hate everyone). But, that same shirt also carries the message on its back-side, "*Aut Roma Aut Nihil*" (Rome or nothing). In other words, their hatred of others stems from the same motivation as their love of Rome.

The Ultras have chosen war as their normal mode of interaction with others. Through war, they feel a constant tension, or seeking of battles, and the thrill of engaging in hostilities with others - be they verbal and ironic, as is often the case with the Ultras mode of *tifare contro* (rooting against), or physical and violent.

Tifare contro (rooting against), as the preceding chapters have demonstrated, is the normalized mode of being a "fan" for the Ultras. Giovanni Francesio (2008) used the concept to describe the Ultras' in-stadium behaviors. However, he stopped short of using the concept to understand what it is in the Ultra phenomenon that buttresses those behaviors. As is clear, I am arguing that the oppositions for the Ultras do not end at the stadium but are only most obvious there. It is in the spaces and activities of the Ultras that are far removed from the stadium lights that the depth of the commitment to their form of life becomes apparent.

A. Commitment and Organic Community

Just as Eric Leed explained the idea of war held by many veterans of WWI, the Ultras employ an understanding of war and society which is romantic and non-economic (Leed, 1979, pg. 6). The romanticism of the Ultras' use of war is seen in two ways: their promotion of an organic community, and their devotion to honor, sacrifice, and suffering as markers of status and distinction.

The Ultras believe themselves to be an organic community. One particularity noticed by scholars of the Ultra phenomenon is its trans-class nature. As Roversi and Balestri explained, the Ultras have always welcomed the participation of all social classes, even in cities with large industrial workforces and working classes, like Turin or Bologna (Roversi and Balestri, 2002, pgs. 131-142). They explained this the way many do in Italian piazzas, by the overall level of passion for soccer that exists at all levels of society. My interactions with larger groups (with over 100 members) like *Boys Roma* and *Ultras Romani* supported this claim. However, it was made more clear by *Padroni di Casa*, which, while sharing the fascist ideologies of *Boys*, does not share their skinhead aesthetics.

I asked Daniele (a new member of *Padroni di Casa*) about the multi-class makeup of the group and the Ultras. “Who gives a damn about class stratification,” he responded, “We are fascists, therefore the bourgeois is a question of mentality. I have a little money, I went to the university, but above all I believe in a fascist life. We don’t think about money for money’s sake, no. Instead we think about a heroic and radical life.” Daniele’s attitude about the class composition of the Curva was seconded by others in *Padroni di Casa*, who told me one need not be poor to fight for fascism or the Ultras. Instead one needed “*le palle*” (“the balls,” or commitment and determination) and “*coraggio*” (courage). In 2010 Gianluca Iannone, the group’s co-founder, also addressed the seeming contradiction between the bourgeois economic status of most of *Padroni di Casa* and the critique of the bourgeois form of life at the group’s core.

Blending Mussolini and Amilcar Cabral, Iannone told me that “if one discounts the historical nature of the critique of liberalism - if one ignores the fact that Nietzsche, Evola, Pound, Sorel, Spengler, and all the others were professional academics or thinkers - then it might appear a form

of 'class suicide' is necessary in order accept that capitalism is leading us to an abyss. You are an American. I have seen that you benefit greatly from American imperialism and global capitalism. As an American you must know that, regardless of the destruction of other peoples so you may live in comfort, you too are being destroyed - turned soft and impotent."

According to materials I obtained in 2007, *Padroni di Casa*'s political agenda is not to fight against socialism and capitalism but against "what materialism and the marketplace do to humanity. The logic of profit and marketing destroy any community or culture that confronts them." I asked Iannone about the vagueness of the group's agenda. "We do not challenge the alienation inherent in any form of labor. Socialism does not solve this problem. What we concern ourselves with is the debasement of life that materialism proposes. We are all going to die. Our goal is to die with dignity, but also with a deep connection to our culture and civilization." I asked if that included small-firm capitalism. "Capitalism of this form was optimal here because Italians developed a culture of expertise, not because we wanted to lead the world in [flex-time]. A craftsman and apprentice were the basis of something noble, not just something profitable. Regardless, our concern is a revalorization of Italians. One can work in a store and still be strong, competent, cultured, and hard. Let the bosses take care of the work and we will take care of the rest."

Instead of a class-based critique of the bourgeois form of life, then, the Ultras believe themselves committed to a spiritual or cultural struggle. Being committed to something greater than oneself and one's personal gain is important because it demonstrates a move beyond the individualism that is inherently bourgeois. Primarily limited to the Ultras, AS Roma, and Rome, their commitment is shown in the willingness to fight and to stand against the will of others. It can be argued, as did Bromberger (1993), that the fighting and defending are merely symbolic or even

rhetorical. However, this critique would have to ignore the extraordinary value placed upon rhetoric and symbolism by the Ultras. To see the world through the eyes of an Ultra is to see “us against them” at every turn. They use this value to create of themselves a community whose basis lies beyond the material - in the realm of will, sentiment, volition (Leed, 1979, pg. 92). This is their *mentalità*.

B. Sacrifice and Struggle

Part of the romanticism of the Ultras is how they create and understand their community. Another is the basis of that community - the sanctity of honor earned through sacrifice and struggle. An extension of Evola’s ethics of the warrior, the nexus between sacrifice and warfare is explained by Allen Frantzen as a dominant theme not only of traditional Indo-European knowledge of warfare but also of the narratives of WWI veterans. In these narratives, the invocation of self-sacrifice as a path toward redemption is common (Frantzen, 2004, pg. 261). AS Roma’s Ultras use these narratives to create their very community, but more so to create a hierarchy within that community. They are a community of people who are expected to defend and fight for the things that are dear to them. The more accountable one shows oneself to be, the more “Ultra” one may be seen to be.

In other words, no one may buy their way to group leadership or to respect within the Curva. One must be worthy of these. It serves this model of “cultural capital accumulation” to have one’s actions be understood as sacrifice and struggle. As Mario of *Romulae Genti* told me as he waited tables in a center-of-Rome restaurant, “one has to be committed to be an Ultra. It is not something you can do once and then claim to be. The groups are too serious about this - if you come in as a tourist and then get caught talking about how hard you are, it can be trouble.” I asked how the groups might know. “We are everywhere in this city and we know everyone,” he responded wryly.

I asked Mario about the constant references to sacrifice amongst AS Roma's Ultras and how this related to how much fun the Ultras seemed to have. "Even though it is fun," he told me, "no one else will do it. [The bourgeois fans] will not sing, follow AS Roma away from Rome, and would never fight. Even though it is fun, there are many times when it is not. Look at Manchester," he said, referring to a 2007 Champions League quarterfinal game in which AS Roma lost 7-1 to Manchester United. There, "we had the humiliating defeat, hooligans seeking revenge on us for what happened in Rome [a number of English fans were stabbed before the first game between the clubs], and police on horseback that were more interested in beating us than protecting us. Singing that night was difficult, but by singing and supporting AS Roma we showed that we have honor. By standing up to the rushes of the hooligans we showed courage and that Romans are not to be trifled with."

In terms of performance, the act of singing even when AS Roma is losing is seen as sacrifice because one is acting when the "spirit" is unwilling. Traveling great distances is sacrificing because it takes considerable time and involves discomfort. Facing a group of *Carabinieri* with machine guns and a small tank is a sensation that other "normal" fans are unwilling to feel. Certainly facing another group of Ultras armed with bricks and bottles or police officers with night-sticks, and doing so with *coraggio* (courage) and in *sprezzo del pericolo* (defiance of danger), is beyond what others are willing to do in the name of Rome. Willingness to do these things is the root of honor. The unwillingness of others to do them is what creates the distance between Ultras and others.

IV. Conclusion

The Ultras understand that warfare is redemptive. Nietzsche explained warfare as the "father of all good things" because, as he said, it makes life poetic. It brings raw emotion and an affective sensibility to the fore (Nietzsche, 2007, pg. 90). The Ultras seem to understand the poetry of which

Nietzsche spoke, as they experience so much of life in states of euphoria or raging disgust. The Ultras life is extreme, as is made evident by their rivalries. From their perspective, the bourgeois life of safety and security, in which thrills are provided by consumerism, is a life castrated of its passion. In the years they were active in Curva Sud, *Antichi Valori* unfurled many banners which spoke of these ideas. One of the most concise, *Contro Tutto e Tutti* (Against everyone and everything), explained the Ultra *mentalità* perfectly. This refusal to reconcile or compromise was seconded by *Boys Roma*. Their 2004 banner reading *Sempre Schierati Mai Omologati* (Always in [military] formation, never homogenized/standardized) is a declaration of war against *Calcio Moderno* and standardization. It can also be read as a life of war, danger, and confrontation in defiance of the “homogenized form of life” that opposes the Ultras.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *Romanità* and the Ultras

This chapter examines the concept *Romanità*, an extreme identification with Rome and things Roman, and what Rome means to the Ultras. Through its history, culture, and cultural symbols, Rome is the main inspirational entity for the Ultras; it makes knowable their deep affection. Even in the nastier elements of their politics, witnessed in the preceding chapters, the Ultras are not motivated by a narrow, or parochial, fearfulness, but instead an intensely positive and prideful feeling of connection to place. Their discursive understanding of themselves and the rest of Italy and the world is filtered through Rome, and their relationship to the city's past, present, and future glory and greatness. This chapter examines the theoretical aspects of *Romanità* and then turns to examples of how the Ultras use and present their own vision of the intense connection between themselves and the city.

I. *Romanità*

A. *Romanità* as *Campanilismo*?

Campanilismo, or localism, is understood as an excessive attachment to one's town or birthplace (Barzini, 1996, pg. 13). It can lead to a particular identification and process of differentiation that can ultimately result in fragmentation and conflict (Poppi, 1992, pg. 81; Allum, 2000, pg. 43). Although generally used to describe the process through which many Italians interact with nationalizing trends, it is perfectly incorporated into the *mentalità* of the Ultras (Putnam, 1993, pg. 27). Thus, *campanilismo* could be used as an introductory element of a general *mentalità* of Italian Ultras, as the phenomenon is deeply linked with strong associations between glory, team, and town throughout Italy.

Romanità is a highly exaggerated version of *campanilismo*, for *Romanità* is at base a hyper-

identification with Rome and things Roman which causes fragmentation and conflict. I have already explained how extremely limited is the altruistic inclusiveness, or *propter nos*, of the Ultras and how this impacts their political ideology and behavior (Hallyn, 1990, pgs. 55-56). Based on my research and the behaviors of Ultras which I have witnessed, it is clear that a strong attachment to their city exists. Indeed, the national movement-based *Movimento Ultras* highlights “local particularity” as the primary aspect of soccer under attack by *Calcio Moderno*.¹

However, as connected as they might be, there is more to *Romanità* than *campanilismo*; there is also fascism. I demonstrated in previous chapters that Nietzsche and Evola, the two primary ideological influences of AS Roma’s Ultras, have given the Ultras an “aristocratic” sense through which they relish the distance between themselves and others. This “aristocratic” sense, I explained, also makes the Ultras improper fascists, in that there is little desire for unity (even amongst the Ultras themselves) or sense of being part of a movement. In other words, most of the Ultras are lacking a feeling of responsibility that would allow the phenomenon a truly political function.

There is a similar tension between Ultras, *Romanità*, and fascism among leftist groups, which also have a strong association with *Romanità*. This is because the leftist and self-described apolitical groups, themselves interacting with *Romanità*, acknowledge the role played by historical and current fascism in keeping alive not only Roman political discourse but also Roman self-conception.

Manuele, a founding member of *Fedayn*, explained *Romanità* to me in simple terms. “*Romanità*,” he said, “is the thing that makes AS Roma’s Ultras different from and superior to any

¹ *Movimento Ultras* is a loose confederation of various ultra groups across Italia. It was started in the mid-1990s after the death of Genoa Ultra Vincenzo Spagnolo at the hands of AC Milan Ultras. It released a manifesto and several press releases from 1996 to 2006 but has been quiet since. Federations of this type are unpopular amongst Roma’s Ultras because they presuppose an amount of unity with enemy Ultras that is often impossible to achieve. *Movimento Ultras* can be accessed at www.noalcalciomoderno.it

others. It links the Ultras with the past and future of the city, and our city is more steeped in glory and conquest, in veneration and honor, than any city in the world. Other Ultras love their cities, as they should, but when looking for glory, they have no choice but to envy us.” I suggested to Manuele how similar was his understanding of *Romanità* to that of Ultras on the right.

Like the Ultras, fascism sought to link itself with the past and future of the city through *Romanità*. It also understood Rome as a city of glory and conquest, as well as of honor and veneration - ideals that drove Mussolini’s project to transform, aggrandize, and render more fascist the center of Rome (Painter, Jr., 2005, pgs. 1-5). Indeed, Rome, as home to both the unification of Europe through imperial conquest and Catholicism, was for fascism a universal symbol (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, pgs. 90-91; Koon, 1995, pg. 7).

Manuele responded with brevity: “It’s true because fascism is also Roman,” an attitude that will be explained in the next chapter. However, there is an important distinction between the *Romanità* of the Ultras and that of fascism. Fascism utilized *Romanità* not only to lend legitimacy to itself by linking its rule with Imperial Rome, but also to undermine the power of *campanilismo* in the provinces. *Romanità* was to be the unifying narrative of the Italian fascist state. Thus, its universal aspects were highlighted (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, pg. 90).

Romanità motivates an inversion of the universal mission of Rome for the Ultras, being reserved, rather, as the rarified domain of Romans. It is not a universal phenomenon or mission, but what separates them from someone in Milan, for example, who can no better understand Rome than a foreign tourist. Nor is it a will to unity as part of Italian nationalism. Instead, fascist Ultras of AS Roma seek to make little more than Curva Sud fascist. I will now turn to a deeper explanation of the differences between the Ultra and other uses of *Romanità*.

B. Understanding *Romanità*

i. Liberal and Fascist Italy

Romanità is primarily studied and theorized by scholars of fascism and the unification of Italy. The study of the uses of Rome by fascism parallels that of the uses of Rome by the Ultras inasmuch as the Ultras understand themselves as a continuation of the fascist project of creating a Third Rome (Farrell, 2003, pg. 222). While this will be discussed in Chapter 8, it is important to note that the political project of AS Roma's Ultras is an attempt to replace the liberal bourgeois order of the present day with a recreation of the largely mythologized values of the warrior society of Ancient Rome.

Romanità was defined by Piergiorgio Zunino as a pre-modern and mythical (as opposed to historical) form of collective mentality best expressed in nostalgia for ancient Rome (Fugo, 2003, pg. 23). Claudio Fugo found this definition useful as he attempted to explain how an idea of Rome operated in the fascist understanding of history. Fascist history, according to Fugo, was structurally dependent upon a break with the past. He argued that fascism did not seek a continuation of Classical Roman identity within a fascist context. Instead, fascism sought to use Rome, through *Romanità*, to lessen the influence of a modern, linear view of history amongst Italians. In other words, fascism used a concept of history that aimed at diminishing the conceptual import of the meta-narratives creative of modern political subjects (Fugo, 2003, pgs. 20-23).

Tracy Koon, meanwhile, was less concerned about the functioning of history and historiography during the fascist era. Instead, he linked *Romanità* first with liberal *Risorgimento* thinkers and their desire to find a unifying discourse for all peoples of the peninsula. Secondly, he pursued *Romanità* through to the fascist period to show how then, as well, the greatness of Rome's

imperial power was glorified as a unifying discourse.

Thus, he presented *Romanità* as a discourse which, contrary to Fugo, created links between the Classical and modern periods. By focusing more upon Mussolini's speeches and the symbolic finery of fascism, Koon understood *Romanità* as a powerful tool in Mussolini's drive to create (via fascism) a Third Rome (after the Classical and the Papal). Indeed, part of the power *Romanità* was that it (as a discourse) demonstrated the supposed Classical origins of fascism (Koon, 1985, pg. 19).

By presenting identification with the past as a fundamental element of the creation of a new civilization, itself based on the values and historical successes of Classical Rome, fascism not only desired to universalize amongst Italians the celebration of their Classical origins, but also to make all actions, not matter how banal, historical (Koon, 1985, pg. 20). According to Koon, children in classrooms and *Balilla* (or, *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, the after-school and weekend youth groups which were intended to increase physical fitness and understanding of fascism) organizations learned the proper moral and spiritual value of their Roman heritage. Through the *Balilla*, the children were not only to learn valor and military discipline, but also that "Rome is alive" through each of them (Koon, 1985, pg. 21).

ii. Evola

Unsurprisingly, given his own uses of Rome as an idealized entity, Evola had much to say about *Romanità*. In *Men Among The Ruins*, he demonstrated that Rome is unique among cities because it can be used as a forceful affect (Evola, 2002, pg. 115). Rome, he explained, as might the Ultras, is an ideal. As such it demonstrates the fallacy of the political left's reduction of life and politics (one and the same for Evola) to the interests of economic class. Rome must be part of a form of life (and State) seeking to transcend the vulgar economic determinism of materialism. That the

previous generations of “conservatives” sought to defend their economic interests at all costs, even at the expense of “a higher right, dignity, and . . . legacy of values, ideas, and principles,” made them unworthy of being revered by the generation of “revolutionary conservatives” which Evola hoped to mold. Instead, it would be the traditions and principles of Classical Rome that would guide their war (Evola, 2002, pg. 114).

Evola was influenced by Nietzsche’s distinction between “acting unhistorically and suprahistorically” against the power of linear “modern” history to destroy one’s “will to life as art” (Nietzsche, 1997, pg. 115). Acting unhistorically allowed one to forget history by enclosing oneself within a bounded temporal horizon. Acting suprahistorically was, by contrast, a more powerful option and one that inclined practitioners toward the greatness achieved in all periods. The suprahistorical bestowed “the eternal” unto the actions and existence of the mortal (Nietzsche, 1997, pgs. 115-116).

For Evola, *Romanità* was a suprahistorical agent. He acknowledged that the radical left perpetuated an idea that *Romanità* was “antihistorical” in that it motivated attachment to ideology at the expense of commitment to class conflict, and was thus an example of irrational reaction to historical dialectical processes (Evola, 2002, pg. 181). Even as he used the concept “antihistorical” to attack the liberalization of the world, however, he described Rome and *Romanità* in Nietzsche’s terms. There are immutable principles, he said, that have been useful in creating ascending cultural forms. These principles can only be found by looking toward the past, toward tradition. “Tradition,” he said, “is neither servile conformity to what has been, nor a sluggish perpetuation of the past into the present. [It] is something simultaneously meta-historical and dynamic: it is an overall ordering force, in the service of principles that have the chrism of a superior legitimacy” (Evola, 2002, pg.

115).

Romanità had value, then, for Evola, because it does not seek to re-establish the institutions of Classical Rome, but the principles of which such institutions were expressions. Some of the principles to which Evola gave so much power were visible in the Roman cultural and psychological characteristics to be striven for in the present. These were self control, an enlightened boldness, a concise speech and determined and coherent conduct, a cold and dominating attitude; *virtus* (virile spirit and courage, not moralism); *fortitudo* and *constantia* (spiritual strength); *sapientia* (thoughtfulness and awareness); *disciplina* (love for self-given law and form); *fides* (loyalty and faithfulness); *dignitas* (studied and moderated seriousness); *religio* and *pietas* (respect and veneration for the gods); deliberate actions; realism as love for the essential, not the material; the ideal of clarity; inner equilibrium and suspicion of confused mysticism; love of boundaries; and unity in pursuit of higher goals (Evola, 2002, pg. 259).

In remembering, and desiring, all of these, one does not seek a teleological and transcendental law in which the past mechanically determines the present. Instead, one would seek only to properly distinguish subversive and degenerative cultural elements from those capable of sustaining greatness (Evola, 2002, pg. 181; Evola, 2003, pgs. 107-109). Evola's highly Nietzschean model was itself also highly modern. Emilio Gentile explains that the form of modernity sought by fascism was a mythologized modernity, in which a symbiosis between "art and life, culture and politics" would be made possible by adherence to an "activist conception of life" (Gentile, 2003, pg. 59). Fascist modernity's focus on vitalism, daring, faith, mythic thought - and its disaffection with reality - was designed to promote a moving forward while carrying a slightly heavier load than that demanded by other, more liberal forms of modernity. It also became the basis of its use of *Romanità*,

but in the form of myth dramatically celebrated by Sorel as a “spur” to courage and faith (Gentile, 2003, pg. 60).

II. Ultra Uses of *Romanità*

A. *Romanità* as Counter-Modern Discourse

Having just stated that *Romanità*, and its uses by Evola and fascism, is a form political modernism, I must make clear why I continue to call it counter-modern. As I explained in the Introduction, fascism is a complex mixture of political modernism and counter-modern, or Counter-Enlightenment, philosophy. In other words, it seeks to actualize a way of living that is an aggrandizement of the radical edge of modernity, with its fetishes for change, movement, industrialization, and efficiency (Gentile, 2003, pg. 60), while at the same time constructing a cultural core around a scathing critique of the intellectual bases of such social change, namely egalitarianism, marketization, and individualism (Sternhell, 1994, pg. 3). *Romanità* might be useful as a means of motivating the “actualization” of modern life, in the guise of political and social change, but in its championing of selected elements of Rome’s intellectual heritage, demonstrated above by Evola, it is essentially counter-modern.

To take the matter further, Evola explained his use of *Romanità* in terms that countered the metaphors of collective human aggregates found not only in the origins of liberalism (the people, the nation) but in Hegel (the state). Instead of these concepts, which subsume the individual human will to a system that counter-balances the potential for individual greatness, Evola proposed the Roman and Nordic systems of Tradition. These, he felt, “do not recognize the voice of the leveled multitudes, but instead beat down and mock these idols of clay, these modern ideologies, and organize themselves on the ... recognition of the irreducible differences among men, which define

themselves in the natural and dynamic relation of their intensity” (Evola, 2007, pg. 62). The idealized elements of Roman character, then, are not attainable for the multitude. As we have seen, the Ultras conceive of themselves in the same terms, as an elite element that is separated from the bourgeois masses by their own devotion to Evola’s ideals.

It was suggested in previous chapters that the Ultras’ *mentalità*, while containing aspects common to all Ultra groups in Italy, is better developed in AS Roma’s Ultras than in other curvas. It is, perhaps, no accident that the phrase “*mentalità Ultras*” was coined by the founders of *Commando Ultra Curva Sud* in 1977. This is because of the extraordinary depth of feeling they have for the city of Rome as well as the depth of historical and mythical narratives to be found in the city. Rome, its history and symbolic universe, confer upon Ultra thought and action a sense of “the eternal” or extreme importance.

In 2004 Vincenzo Patanè Garsia interviewed Ettore, one of the leaders of *AS Roma Ultras*. He spoke of AS Roma’s Ultras as “*rappresentati di Roma città, e di tutto ciò che vi sta dietro ... millenni di Storia e di cultura*” (representatives of the city and all which that entails ... millennia of history and culture). He continued to explain the pride and responsibility this conferred on the Ultras. “*Come eredi di un Impero, come figli della Lupa, come gente Romana, fieri e orgogliosi andiamo in giro [...] a sostenere i colori della nostra squadra e soprattutto della nostra città, la più bella del mondo*” (like heirs of an emperor, or children of the *Lupa* [*Capitolina*], or the Roman people fierce and proud, we go on tour to support the colors of our team, but above all the colors of our city - the most beautiful in the world) (Garsia, 2004, pg. 209).

While I was unable to interview Ettore for this project I met others who know him well. One of these was Federico, founding member of *Antichi Valori*, and former member of *AS Roma Ultras*.

He described Ettore as a “*bravo ragazzo*,” (good guy, one of us) one of those always present and one who never turned his back to the enemy. I asked about his statement, quoted by Garsia, hoping to understand the rarity of his love of Rome. Federico shrugged his shoulders and told me, “*ci sentiamo tutti così - è normale ... se qualcuno trovarsi così sia un Ultras*” (we all feel this way - it is normal - if someone is this way they are an Ultra). Sensing my next question he interrupted, “*anche se non si va allo stadio*” (even if one does not go to the stadium). In other words, not only is Ettore’s feeling for Rome and what it means to be Roman not unique, but it is enough to agree with him in order to be considered an Ultra by those who see themselves as the “keepers of the faith,” the most proud and fierce of the Ultras. Federico’s analysis points to an interesting question. If one may be an Ultra without going to a stadium, what is the purpose of the game of soccer within the Ultra phenomenon? And this raises the prior question of why soccer is important to the Ultras.

Why a sport is popular in particular time and place is often impossible to answer. Soccer holds a special place in any debate on the subject, as the United States, the taste-maker of the vast majority of popular culture in the West, is virtually bereft of passion for the game. Avoiding the psychological aspects of aesthetics or fandom, Markovits and Hellerman (2001) provide a social/material explanation for the popularity of sports in time and place. The main factor they identify is the presence of a sport for a long period, and crucially, at the moment of industrialization and the creation of mass society (Markovits and Hellerman, 2001, pg. 15). Another factor is that a sport must be played, and not just watched, by a large percentage of the population (Markovits and Hellerman, 2001, pg. 12). Finally, a sport should have enough media coverage that it becomes part of the “hegemonic sports culture” of the nation. It should be discussed long after the games are finished (Markovits and Hellerman, 2001, pgs. 10-12).

The popularity of soccer tends to be a given in countries where it is hegemonic. That it is hegemonic is demonstrated by the connection of national character with the playing style found in each nation. For instance, the Brazilians connect “beauty and art” with the ways their professional and national teams play (Williams, 2006, pg. xiv). Similarly, the Dutch want their teams to play beautifully rather than “doing anything” to win (Winner, 2000, pg. 60). The Italians, instead, seem to have always associated soccer with warfare. Simon Martin reports on the failure of Serie A to unite the peninsula, as Mussolini had intended, because of the extreme partisanship of local fans (Martin, 2004, pg. 27). Similarly John Foot summarizes the origins of Italian soccer by explaining the exacerbation of civic rivalries by the game (Foot, 2006, pgs. 1-41).

The Ultras and their understanding of soccer fit nicely within this understanding of soccer. The game was imported to Italy in the 1880s and became nationalized in the 1920s, meeting Markovits and Hellerman’s criteria. Likewise, Italians obsess over the game in midweek and it is no doubt the dominant sport in the country from a media point of view. And, every Ultra of AS Roma and every fan of soccer I met in Italy played the game in some form. Turning to the national character of the Italian game, the element of warfare and rivalry, as I have shown, is absolutely central to the Ultras as fans and as a unique social phenomenon.

But if soccer is important and available enough to be the sport of choice for the Ultras, what purpose do they see it serving? Following Allen Guttman’s research of Ancient Roman spectators, the Ultras are perfectly consistent with the purpose of Roman sports for their most passionate fans: as an opportunity for partisanship. Guttman uses ancient sources to explain that Roman spectators were extremely partisan, to the point that partisanship seems to have been the point, or at least the draw, of spectating sports in the ancient city. Pliny the Younger, Guttman tells us, had difficulty

understanding the passions of the masses for sports. If the masses would have had a genuine appreciation for the skills one needs to properly control a speeding chariot, perhaps he would have been more sympathetic to their passions. Instead, Pliny said, “it is the racing colors they really support and care about, and if the colors were to be exchanged in mid-course ... they would transfer their favor and enthusiasm. Such is the popularity and importance of a worthless shirt” (Guttman, 1981, pg. 11). Guttman continues, explaining that team loyalties were so deep that often a man’s funerary inscription would mention his partisanship (1981, pg. 12).

So deep were the passions for chariot teams that violence between sets of fans was common, with certain rivalries being so inflamed that the rival cities were prohibited from hosting games (Guttman, 1981, pg. 12). Further, identification as a fan of a certain team bound one to a common body that had political clout. Certain colors, as teams were divided by color, were historically affiliated to certain parties. This was true regardless of social rank. “Whatever differences in behavior and even social class there may have been,” Guttman explains, “partisans of both colors moved in much the same world” (1981, pg. 12).

During research in Rome it never occurred to me to ask the Ultras why they liked soccer. I never even asked myself why I like it, which for me, as an American male raised in a family of athletes of American football and baseball, was far less likely than Italian males who grew up playing the game. Later, however, when the research demanded an answer to the question, I contacted Federico of *Antichi Valori*. Predictably, he was stumped when I asked why he liked soccer. He had no answer, as if I asked him why he liked oxygen. When I explained what Markovits and Hellerman proposed, he seemed mildly interested but ultimately just said, “it makes sense.” However, when I told him about Guttman’s portrayal of Roman spectators, he was dumbfounded

that he “had never known this deep connection between [the Ultras] and the Romans.” He asked for Guttman’s sources so that he could find them in Latin, excitedly telling me “Rome amazes me almost everyday, even after 37 years.” Sociological theory was one thing, in other words, but Rome, and an Ultra’s connection to Rome, was something else entirely.

Sorel distinguishes between the “mere observation of facts” and the “inner reason of things” which is found in the myths that motivate “the will to act” (1999, pgs. 24-28). *Romanità* is attached to the latter. These types of myths, Sorel argues, are strong enough to safeguard utopias that have no just reason to survive, such as the French Republic (Sorel, 1999, pg. 29). Interestingly, Sorel also explains that myths are even capable of guarding against the “invasion of ideas and morals” of the “hostile” bourgeois class (1999, pg. 32). *Romanità* is certainly used by the Ultras as a bulwark against the bourgeois form of life.

Through Federico I was introduced to other former members of *Antichi Valori*. As I explained in Chapter 2, *Antichi Valori* are amongst the most dedicated of the Ultras - they are not completely fascist nor communist, but are dedicated instead to Rome. Unlike the imposing and rather menacing skinheads and ideologues of *Boys Roma* and *Padroni di Casa*, to be re-visited below, the four former leaders of *Antichi Valori* are “clean-cut” professionals and students. Their backgrounds are similar: they are well educated (each having achieved the *baccalaureato*, or bachelors degree), have steady jobs, steady girlfriends, and live at home with working parents. They spend as many hours together as possible during the week, often dining out or going to bars to play *calcio balilla* (table soccer). On summer weekends they go to the beaches near Rome, where table soccer is also widely played. In August they travel abroad or in Trentino.

What separates these young men from others (outside the Ultras phenomenon) is *Romanità*.

Integral to each of the activities that they undertake together is a sense of pride in being Roman and a sense of duty or responsibility to “defend her honor.” I knew from the history of *Antichi Valori* that they were extremely steeped in the history of Rome, but through passing time with them away from the stadium I learned just how deeply being an Ultra and living according to its *mentalita`* can impact one’s life.

For instance, discussing *Romanità* with Federico and Fabrizio (another of the founders of the group) in a Monteverde bar the day after AS Roma won the 2006-7 Coppa Italia, Fabrizio made it clear that it was only *Romanità* that made them different. I had begun by suggesting that willingness to fight was quite important in placing distance between them and non-Ultras. He explained to me that fighting was not a random exercise for the Ultras. Sure, he said, there are some who are “*fatto da ferro*” (made of iron) and just enjoy fighting but a true Ultra does not fight without cause (for more on this see Chapter 5).

“We only fight because of *Romanità*,” he said. “Fight as Ultras?” I asked. “Yes, fight as Ultras,” he replied. Federico interjected something I found most interesting. “We are sons of a *vecchia mentalità* (old/ancient worldview),” he said. “Fighting is a big part of being an Ultra because we seek a glory that is not provided by the modern world. Instead, we seek an old glory, one made with *virtu`* (virtue) like Nietzsche described (virtue free of “priggish morality” [Nietzsche, 2003, pg. 182]; also virtue that leads to the strength necessary to do difficult things [Nietzsche, 2003, pg. 176]).” Again, Federico, as had Ettore (of *AS Roma Ultras*) and Manuele (of *Fedayn*) invoked a *Romanità* that was prone to violence, a vision distinctly at odds with the Rome of neoliberal Italy.

Because of its unique history, *Romanità* is perfectly suited to sustain the Ultra *mentalità*. As a fascist discourse, *Romanità* was replete with a model of glory and tradition that made both of these

a function of aggression and conquest. The *Terza Roma* (Third Rome) of Mussolini was to be an imperial Rome, beginning with colonies in Libya, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. This Rome was an ideal to be made real by way of controlling the Mediterranean, or *Mare Nostrum*.

The Ultras have been more influenced by this form of *Romanità* than the Liberal nationalist form explained by Fugo. For AS Roma's Ultras Italy matters very little, except as a terrain of Roman conquest. From Rome, the Ultras are able to feel themselves heir to a culture and a system of traits (such as those described by Evola - above).

Returning to Federico's statement that the Ultras were "sons of an old worldview," it must not be understated how *Romanità* in this form acts to motivate behaviors. Even as the Ultras' love for Rome is often made known through creative acts such as choreographies and articles in fanzines (see Chapter 2), these are but the outward manifestations of a *mentalità* that coincides with the list of Roman traits given by Evola. Those traits were designed to celebrate a virile form of life that has been destroyed by the "effeminacy of modernity," and they are made natural to the Ultras through the Roman qualities appreciated by Evola and even Mussolini.

Choreographies and banners arise from the same energies and desires as do the fights and acts of aggression or disrespect derided by the Italian press. Maurizio of *Padroni di Casa* explained this best. "We are men who remember well the words of the Duce. For us Rome is the reference point of a victorious life, the myth that gives us hope for a life that is strong and wise (he is paraphrasing a Mussolini speech popular among Roman fascists for its discussion of Rome as the vision of a fascist Italy). It would be impossible, then, to live in fear of fights or of the police. Our Rome is that of the true Romans." In upholding aggression, honor, discipline, and the idea of glory through violence, the Ultras feel themselves upholding the *true spirit* of Rome.

One sees here a process similar to the theatrical politics analyzed by Kertzer. Theatrical and cultish politics, he explained, are functioning in modern societies just as they did in what were assumed to be “traditional” societies. These political forms are based on ritual practices and liturgies which attach great meaning to action. They are also based on mythical or ideational discourses, like *Romanità*, which “give meaning to the world around us” and provide the fabric of order in the face of chaos. Far from lulling their audiences to sleep, these discourses and narratives transform ideas into a lived reality (Kertzer, 1988, pg. 13). Or, as Mussolini said, “for us ideas are not abstractions but physical forces. When the idea seeks to become reified in the world it does so through manifestations that are nervous, muscular, and physical” (Duggan, 2007, pg. 350).

Returning to Sorel, who was one of Mussolini’s main intellectual influences, the value of an idea or myth is singular - in its ability to motivate action (Farrell, 2003, pg. 30). The provocation of thought is a function of which both knowledge and myth are capable. However, it is the domain of the latter to provoke action in the form of violence (Sorel, 1999, pg. 46). And, because of the bourgeois aversion to violence, when one acts violently (more clearly in a revolutionarily violent way), one is able to move beyond the form of life defined by liberalism. In thinking this way, Sorel revealed the influence of Nietzsche, whose own “new man,” the over-or-super-man, was to be born from a thorough rejection of modernity and its values.

B. *Romanità* as Inhibitor of Universal Altruism

Romanità is useful for the Ultras as a discourse that limits the scope of altruistic inclusiveness. It is apparent that the Ultras celebration of themselves as Romans is done at the expense of feelings of inclusiveness with others. Although many scholars, and what Luca of *Boys Roma* called “*giornalisti morali*” (journalists of morality), lament the Italian tendency to identify

with narrow altruistic scopes (hence the concept *campanilismo*), the Ultras understand this part of their *mentalità* to be entirely positive.

Luca, a thirty-three year-old member of both *Boys Roma* and *Forza Nuova* (the neo-fascist party led by Roberto Fiore) works for Ryanair, a low-cost airline with routes between Ireland and the continent. As such he speaks English with much enthusiasm, smiling while discussing topics that would make others grimace. He learned English at *La Sapienza* University (neither of his parents speak anything but Roman dialect) and enjoys reading certain titles in English literature. His favorites? “[Burgess’] *A Clockwork Orange*, [Easton-Ellis’] *American Psycho*, and [Palahniuk’s] *Fight Club*.”

“Almost too perfect,” I say. “Yes, it is,” he says, “knowing [English] allows me to know the subtleties of what is being said. For example, all three books understand that the prohibition against violence is just a [bourgeois] moral phenomenon.” Returning to the point, I asked, “just like the prohibition against *Romanità* and extreme rivalry in soccer?” “Exactly!” he replied. “Why would anyone have a problem with our love of Rome? Only if they feared being excluded.” I asked him to explain. “There are many people who believe that the world belongs to them *del tutto* (full stop) and that anywhere people build a wall against them is a sign of ignorance.” “And not pride or protection,” I interject. “We are not allowed pride. Our pride is what you (Americans) call racism.”

Having interviewed a handful of *Forzanovisti* (members of *Forza Nuova*) and many rightist Ultras, I was prepared for his understanding of the cultural politics of neo-liberal globalization. However, for the first time I asked, “do you find more *Romanità* in *Forza Nuova* or *Boys Roma*?” Without hesitation he replied, “In the Ultras there is far more *Romanità*. Fascists are mostly nationalists - they want a pure Italy while [AS Roma’s] Ultras want a pure stadium or a Roman life

that, for us, is much deeper than the American life.” We spoke for a few more minutes on the topic but finally he said something monumental. “At *Boys Roma* we talk about the Coliseum and how it was built. Do you know where the money came from to build it?” he asked before continuing. “Discover this and you will know why it is beloved by ‘true Romans.’ [The Coliseum was built by the Flavian imperial dynasty with riches taken from the sacked city of Jerusalem. As such it is perhaps the ultimate symbol of Rome being enriched at the expense of its enemies.] Anyway, with the fascists we do not discuss this so much. Fascism is important because without political struggle we are only consumers. But the Ultras are important because I am Roman,” he said, touching his heart.

Many Ultras share an active love, piety, and fidelity toward Rome. Its past and present, every wall, *porta* (door/gate), *via* (street), *vicolo* (small street), and *piazza* are venerated and revered. To be considered a “*figlio della Lupa*” (son of the she-wolf) is an honor that many celebrate like a working title.² It is not conferred upon them, but something they feel. For some groups that are well versed in the history, culture, and traditions of the city, like *Antichi Valori*, to be *figlio dell Lupa*, *un vero Romano* (a true Roma), or *un legionario* (legionnaire), was a particularly extreme mark of distinction - almost liminal. A young Ultra called a “true Roman” by a group leader was in essence being called legitimate and someone to be respected and regarded.

In this way, *Romanità* may be understood as a positive force. If it acts as a bulwark against the outside world, it is doing so to protect valued traditions. If it stems the influence of foreign peoples, it does so to prohibit cultural degeneration. Thus, for AS Roma’s Ultras, *Romanità* is a title

² The *Figli della Lupa* were elite fascist youth groups as part of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, the afterschool indoctrination and exercise camps of the Italian fascist state. The Ultras use the term in the same way, to distinguish themselves from others less aware of the history and traditions of the city (or of fascism).

for their mode of altruism. This is why the Ultra consider so much at stake when they protest against *Calcio Moderno* or a *Roma omologata* (Rome standardized, or brought within the sphere of globalization/multiculturalism). Their community is composed of and defined by their commitment to understanding Rome as the greatest accomplishment in human history.

Fabrizio, a longtime Ultra who has been in both *Monteverde* and *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*, lives in Monteverde. I saw him every morning at the Pulcini pastry shop, a neighborhood institution. Fabrizio sells small machinery to farmers just outside Rome. As such, his job takes him in the opposite direction of the many commuters who come into Rome's center for work. "I wouldn't have it any other way. I can't stand to be around the tourists who take our city to be a big playground or some kind of joke," he told me. The first week that we lived in Rome, my wife and I entered Pulcini during the morning rush. Fabrizio was there, and made a nasty comment about tourists invading even their neighborhood. He muttered "pieces of shit" in our direction as he left.



Figure 101. *Monteverde* Ultras tag on the Pulcini pastry shop. Rome. 2007.

It took another three months for us to go back to Pulcini. When we did, however, it was

every morning; often enough for us to be considered locals by the owners and other regulars. We were embraced by the local pharmacist, herbalist, shoe store owner, sunglass store owner, and so on. Eventually word reached Fabrizio that I was someone he should meet. After a cagey introduction by Luca, Pulcini's manager, Fabrizio and I met and talked every morning for one year. He admitted to being hostile to my presence in Monteverde and to assuming I was "just some tourist who was coming to treat [his] city as a toilet." His aversion to tourists and tourism allowed me to work this aspect of localism into our discussions on the Ultras. "Tourism," he told me, "is the most vulgar thing a person can do. These people come to Rome knowing nothing and they leave knowing nothing."

I spoke to him about tourism's impact on the Greek island of Skyros, which has seen tourism become the basis for what is presented as "traditional" in style of housing and products sold as artisanal, and has upset the traditional hierarchical relations with the land. To combat this, the local population of the island began to treat tourism as a necessary evil, whereas before tourists were treated as guests and "part of the family" (Zarkia, 1996, pgs. 87-109). "Rome has always been a tourist destination, even for the ancients. So it is hard to know what is ours and what is just a facade created to make tourists happy. The historic center [of Rome] is largely of the latter variety for us. We [he began speaking for Monteverde] want to walk our streets and hear our language, not the hysterical cackling of Americans and Germans." I asked him about the monetary influence of tourism in Rome, and the way the city caters to tourism. "When drunken Poles swim in the *Trevi* [fountain], or American students destroy Trastevere, the city is enslaved by them."

"There is nothing else for the Romans to do but open a shop or work in a restaurant selling horrible food to people who know no better," he continued. "Is this the equivalent of what happened

on Skyros?” I asked. “It must be,” he responded, “as we would never eat pizza for lunch or drink cappuccino in the evening. Yet, this is what passes for our food now. At least,” he added, “the [Roman] Forum is still ours. It is too abstract for the tourists so they do not spoil it for us. The rest of the center they can have, as it is just a shopping district now. All the history and *Romanità* have been stripped away.”

Fabrizio’s comments were clearly examples of tourism creating distance between the local populations of tourist destinations and the tourists who visit them. For an Ultra, though, this distance acted to increase the sense that Rome was under siege. Tourists have a high impact on the lives of locals, from overcrowding infrastructure to higher prices for food and housing, and Fabrizio lumped them in with immigrants as well (Pedregal, 1996, pgs. 45-62). “The economy can fail. I will have no problems when it does. What I worry about, and what *Monteverde* worried about, was the destruction of culture under the weight of these people,” he told me. I asked if he thought Roman culture was not strong enough to withstand a few immigrants and a lot of tourists. “Fair enough,” he said, “I should have more faith in my culture. It is just that we have seen so much of it change. Romans used to be proud but happy, even my parents were like this until recently. Now, we are proud and angry. We are defensive because we see that in a few more generations, the city might be more immigrant than Roman and more commercial than cultural. We’ve already lost political autonomy (because of the European Union) and the right to keep our city ours.”

I asked about his parent’s influence on his activities in *Monteverde*. “They loved *Monteverde*,” he responded enthusiastically, “for we were doing something they wanted to do but could not because of responsibilities. Truly, we were never violent, we just kept our neighborhood as we wanted it. Now, had there been tourists we would have spilled blood!” Fabrizio’s parents, he

went on, were part of a generation that saw Rome flourish as a tourist destination and that likewise flourished itself. However, his parents, like other Ultras' parents I encountered, became disillusioned with the price of the changes tourism brought. Especially given Monteverde's proximity to Trastevere, his parents often lamented that small restaurants and Roman butchers had closed shop to make way for "Indians selling postcards and gaudy t-shirts." Their desperation fed Fabrizio's passion for the Ultras, which he, like many others, saw as a way to connect with something Roman that was not tainted by the bourgeois form of life and to keep soccer from befalling the same fate as the tourist areas of the city.

The parents' desperation points as well to a process of "cultural dispossession," wherein the economic and political system is aligned with foreign interests that ultimately eliminate the options for local people to live in a locally meaningful way (Creed, 2011, pgs. 1-27). The sense of dispossession is strong among Romans, as Herzfeld (2009) has also discovered. Whereas the celebration of self-hood amongst Europeans is often unacknowledged before it is irrevocably under attack (Southgate, 2010, pgs. 124-131), there are other possibilities - most notably the experiences of post-colonial peoples who actually achieved peoplehood as a result of a struggle for cultural survival (Said, 1993, pgs. 97-111). Romans resemble the latter, in some ways, having long been keenly aware of not only their patrimony but also how their inheritance entitles them to feelings of distinction (Herzfeld, 2009, pg. 3). There is a birthright to Rome that Romans often feel is undermined by the city also being a world capital (Herzfeld, 2009, pg. 3). Instead of turning their backs on the intellectual and material heritage that comes to define being Roman, the many Ultras I met embrace it to the point of rejecting what Rome may mean to anyone else.

Neither their *propter nos* (the "us" on whose behalf "we" act) nor their ambitions are

indeterminate (Hallyn 1990. Pgs. 55-56). Like the Greek youths described by Nietzsche in *Homer's Contest*, the Ultras act for the good of their city (2007, pg. 179). They seek to aggrandize Rome through the means at their disposal: singing, choreography, colors, and violent encounters. The contest between cities may have changed but the *mentalità* that fueled their rivalries is maintained by the Ultras. For the Ultra, then, *Romanità* is an inspiration not to dwell in an enervating dead history but to be active in the present (Griffin, 2007, pg. 222). What *Calcio Moderno* threatens is not only the Ultra form of life, but the Roman form of life as well. By seeking to extinguish the Ultras, the “keepers of the faith,” it threatens the eternal timelessness of Rome.

III. The Ultras and Rome

A. Roman and/or Fascist Symbols

In the nervous and uncertain days between the death of Gabriele Sandri on November 11, 2007 and the beginning of the Ultra protest on December 2, 2007, there was news which brought other conversations to a halt in Ultra circles. On November 20, archaeologists found what they assumed to be the fabled *Lupercale*. The next day's *Il Romanista*, screamed from the front page, “*Romolo, Remo, e la Lupa: Trovata la Grotta*” and inside pages two and three were entirely devoted to the discovery.³ The *Lupercale* was the cave believed to be the spot on which the *Lupa* (she-wolf) fed Remus and Romulus. It was found 16 meters below the ground near the house of Augustus on the Palatine.

At dinner with a group of Ultras and their girlfriends and wives the conversation was about the cave. I proposed that the cave was more a shrine to the narrative of the *Lupa* than the actual cave in which the twins were saved and reared, adding that the shrine (obviously) had a long history but

³ *Il Romanista*, Anno IV, Numero 321, 21 Novembre 2007. Pgs. 1-3

probably served a more public purpose in Augustinian Rome than before. To which someone added, “Just as Augustus served a bigger purpose in fascist Rome than in other of Rome’s periods.” The Romans then began discussing the merits of the Richard Meier museum at the Ara Pacis, as well as the complexity of the Piazza Augusto Imperatore where it is found - the most fascist spot in Italy, I was told. Eventually the conversation turned toward Mussolini’s transformation of the city, including Monteverde -where the dinner and conversation took place.

i. *La Lupa Capitolina* (The Capitoline She-Wolf)

The three most common uses of Roman history by the Ultra each have fascist associations. The first is the *Lupa Capitolina* (figure 102). *La Lupa*, as she is affectionately known, along with the twins Remus and Romulus whom she suckled, is the symbol of the city. It represents an origin narrative that has been popular in Rome at least since the fifth century BC. The story of Remus and Romulus has approximately sixty variations, all of which conclude with Romulus founding the city upon the Palatine hill in 753 BC (Forsythe, 2005, pgs. 59-74). The symbol can be found all over the city, on statues, garbage bins, lamp posts, drainage grates, bridges, buildings, etc. It can also be found upon the shield (or crest) of AS Roma. The placing of the yellow and red shield “over the heart” on the AS Roma jersey signifies for the Ultras loyalty and dedication not just to AS Roma but to Rome. The *Lupa* was placed on many of the buildings, bridges, drainage grates, and statues by the fascist government. As part of Mussolini’s *Romanità* campaign, it became a crucial symbol linking the fascist era with Classical Rome. Through the *Lupa*, Romans and other Italians were transported to a period when the eternal ideals and values of Rome were the guiding forces of life. Thus, it was celebrated as a sacred symbol (Gentile, 1996, pg. 76).



Figure 102. *La Lupa Capitolina*. Rome. 2006.

For the Ultras the nurturing *Lupa* is the essence of the city. This is because of the historiography the *Lupa* promotes. As Fabrizio of *Antichi Valori* explained, “The gods established the city, true? Anyway, who the hell knows. It seems beautiful to me to believe the city is divine.” In other words, it is impossible to maintain the mystical and mythical bases of life when ecology is the narrative used to explain the city’s origins. The *Lupa*, though, is the product of a monumental history - one that has ebbed and flowed in the city’s long duration, and one that does not fail to understand the power of narrative in human behavior.

Coincidentally, SS Lazio’s symbol is the imperial eagle, another Classical Roman symbol - this time of military aggression, as the eagle standard was more popular amongst the legions than the *Lupa*. Likewise, it too was a symbol put to great use by fascism, leaving both sets of Ultra to revere symbols which link them with Classical and fascist Rome.

ii. *XXI Aprile 753 aC*

The “mystery of Roman continuity” is embedded in the second of the three Ultra symbols: the 21st of April. This date, *XXI Aprile 753aC*, records the moment when Romulus founded the city.

As noted in the second chapter, one of the longest running groups in Curva Sud (although today the group meets in the Tevere Grandstand) was *XXI Aprile 753 aC*. Each season, the game played in Rome nearest April 21st is celebrated like a birthday in Curva Sud. Banners from many or all of the groups are displayed, each with its own message of best wishes for the city. In 2006 the occasion was marked on April 22nd when AS Roma hosted UC Sampdoria from Genova. Messages like “*Buon natale Urbe Immortale*” (Happy Birthday Immortal City) dotted the Curva (figure 103). In the Tevere Grandstand, *XXI Aprile* laid a long banner for the duration of the game which read “*2759 Anni di Storia, Auguri Mamma Roma*” (2759 Years of History, Best Wishes Mother Rome).



Figure 103. Curva Sud Roma wishing Rome a Happy Birthday. April 22, 2006.

April 21st was made an official holiday in Italy by Mussolini beginning in 1926. It was the first fascist holiday, intended to replace May Day. April 21st was meant to symbolize the power of “work and discipline” (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, pg. 92). It was also meant to be a point of transition from the Italian (liberal) past of pacifism, cowardice, comfort, and peace to a future of aggression,

heroism, conquest, and struggle (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, pg. 91). The postwar period witnessed the re-establishment of May 1st as a national labor holiday and April 21st is mentioned only amongst the Romans as a day of celebration. For the Ultras, it is better this way. “For other Italians,” Giorgio of *Ultras Romani* explained to me, “the day is only an abstraction, if they are even aware of its significance. If they do not live the greatness of Rome everyday then they are undeserving of joining a celebration in its honor,” he said.

iii. *Giallo e Rosso* (Yellow and Red)

The third most common use of Roman history by the Ultra are the colors yellow and red. The two connote oil and wine, blood and gold, and the sun and the heart. In any case, they were the state colors of Classical Rome and are still the official colors of the city. And they are the colors of AS Roma. For the Ultras, they are sacred because of all three connotations.



Figure 104. The crest of AS Roma.

When AS Roma was founded in 1927, it was as an act of *Romanità*. Mussolini desired another squad, besides SS Lazio, to represent the city in the Italian championship. The name AS Roma and the *Lupa Capitolina* were chosen, as were the yellow and red colors, in order to deliberately invoke the links between fascist and Classical Rome (Martin, 2004, pg. 170).

IV. *Romanità* and Curva Sud Roma

A. www.asromaultras.org

It was no surprise for me to be confronted with Ultras impassioned by some aspect of the city's history. The website for *AS Roma Ultras* made it clear to all who visited it that the Ultras are benefactors of the glory of Rome. In the section titled "*Roma e Romani*," (Rome and Romans) the history of the city is presented from the particular *mentalità* of the Ultras. One is greeted by a quote from Stendhal's *Voyages en Italie* (1826): "*Il Romano mi sembra superiore sotto tutti gli aspetti alle altre popolazioni d'Italia. Ha più forza di carattere, più semplicità, e, incomparabilmente, più spirito. Dategli un Napoleone per venti anni e Romani saranno sicuramente il primo popolo d'Europa*" (The Roman seems to me superior by all accounts to the other peoples of Italy. [He] has more strength of character, more simplicity, and incomparably more spirit. Give them a Napoleon for twenty years and the Romans will absolutely be the finest people of Europe). One then proceeds through the 2761 years of Roman history, beginning with various versions of the city's origin narrative; the aggressive expansion of the city and civilization throughout Italy, Europe, and the Mediterranean; explanations of *SPQR*; and the uncertain origins of the *Lupa Capitolina*. The architectural wonders of the city are explained, from the Coliseum to the Pantheon.

The Classical period ends with an account of the Roman passion for sport which mirrors the analysis of Guttman (1981). The section is entitled "*gli Ultras dell'antica Roma*" (the Ultras in Classical Roma). Unsurprisingly, sport is presented as an extremely partisan affair, with the various zones and political factions determining for whom one was a fan. This interpretation is continued to explain the relations between Romans and other Italians from the Renaissance to today. Vignettes and quotes are provided which proclaim the superiority of Romans to all other peoples, and Rome as superior to all other cities.

Lorenzo, author of the website, including the section described above, was forced out of

Curva Sud when *AS Roma Ultras* collapsed. He now attends each home game in the Tevere Grandstand, where he uses his camera to capture the activities of the Curva. Even though he is not “*della Curva*” (in the Curva) he is still an intensively devoted Ultra. His life consists of family (he is married and has a newborn daughter - one of the few Ultras I met who has children) and the Ultras.

Professionally Lorenzo is an attorney who specializes in helping Ultras who are arrested as a result of Ultra-related activities. In years past - he began practicing law in 2003 - this involved advising Italian Ultras arrested for fighting and, especially, those arrested in foreign countries. These days, however, due to the crackdown on Ultra behaviors that followed the death of Raciti in February 2007, he strives to be a leading advocate of freedom of expression in Italian legal circles. When I asked him about the history presented on the website he said, “This is our city and our history. Nothing beyond my family means more to me than being Roman - and my family is Roman so it is equal.”

B. Fanzines and Choreographies

i. *Vecchie Maniere* (Old Ways) and History Lessons

This approach to the history of the city was extended to *Vecchie Maniere*, the “fanzine” of *AS Roma Ultras* as well (figure 105). Each month this group published a small periodical for distribution within the Curva. In addition to information on upcoming AS Roma games and travel options to away games, there was a feature called “*Roma Vrbs Nostra*” (Our City Rome) which detailed some aspect of the city’s “art, history and civilization.”⁴ The articles were written by Federico, one of the founding members of *Antichi Valori*. With no irony he explained to me that the

⁴ AS Roma Ultras, *Vecchie Maniere*, Martedì 18 Febbraio 2003. Pgs. 8-9

Vrbs Nostra feature was “just a part of being Ultra and Roman. They were not written to demonstrate our intelligence to those who did not know us, but because ‘*Roma è la luce*’” (Rome is the light).⁵



Figure 105. A 2003 issue of *Vecchie Maniere*, the fanzine of *AS Roma Ultras*.

Among fascist Ultras, it was common to find some, especially the group leaders of *Boys Roma* and *Padroni di Casa*, who spoke of fascism in the same emotive terms as they did Rome. It was common to hear these Ultras say that “Mussolini loved Rome,” or that “Mussolini built Rome.” This was explained to me during a bus ride to Milan with *Boys*. The acting “*capo*” (boss) sat next to me and explained that fascism was Roman and therefore to be cherished and respected.

Named Maurizio but called “Duce” by the *Boys* Ultras, not only because of his association with fascism but also his uncanny similarity in appearance to Mussolini, he is the most imposing and menacing Ultra I encountered (figure 106). He looks as if he could walk through a wall, having a

⁵ The saying comes from the film *The Gladiator*. Maximus, the main character, is asked what Rome means to him. He replies that, having seen that most of the world is brutal, crude, and dark, Rome, for him, is “the light.” The saying is popular amongst *AS Roma*’s Ultras.

thick muscular body and a large bald head. I never saw him without large aviator sunglasses and a t-shirt with a fascist-inspired message (All Blacks and 1934 World Cup being two examples). Conversely, he is generous with his time and resources, always making sure that his Ultras act with proper dignity and discipline.



Figure 106. "Duce," the leader of *Boys Roma*. May 2007.

Upon being told by Fabio (the second-in-command at *Boys* and one of my most informative contacts) that I was knowledgeable about the history of fascism and Rome, Duce insisted that I sit next to him for the 8-hour trip to Milan. He explained to me that Classical Rome as we recognize it today is only thanks to Mussolini and fascism, which sought to re-establish the greatness of *Roma Antica*. I talked to him as best as I could, considering he spoke only Roman dialect, about Mussolini's destruction of the medieval quarter that stood around Piazza Venezia and covered parts of the forums (Painter, Jr., 2005; Herzfeld, 2009). "He destroyed what was weak and decadent in our history," he added.

After a while it became clear to him that I was quite knowledgeable about many subjects that

he enjoyed - Nietzsche, current fascism, AS Roma, *la cucina Romana*. He began calling others to gather around us, explaining to them incredulously that I was an American who knew more about their history than they did. From that moment there was nothing happening in and around *Boys Roma* of which I was not made aware.

ii. Choreographies and the Use of *Romanità*

In Chapter 3 I explained that the Ultras employ a monumental form of history, in which linear history is less important than the myths and narratives of greatness that can be generated by history. The *Boys Roma* leader's explanation of Mussolini's Rome was an example of this approach. Vast stretches of Roman history are dismissed by the Ultras; Medieval, Baroque, Renaissance, and Liberal periods pale in relation to the Classical and fascist periods as sources of "their Rome." Augustus, Julius Caesar, and Horatius Cocles have all made appearances in Curva Sud in recent years.

a. Horatius Cocles

Horatius Cocles was the subject of a choreography created by *Boys Roma* for a game against SS Lazio in 2002. Horatius was a hero of early Republican Rome. He singlehandedly saved the city from an invading Etruscan army by defending and then setting fire to a wooden bridge across the Tiber. The Etruscans had already captured the Gianicolo hill and were making their way down toward the bridge to advance into Rome. As Roman soldiers deserted their positions, he took up his shield and sword, crossed alone to the far side of the river, and ordered the deserters to destroy the bridge. Alone, he faced the Etruscan forces, "one man against an army." After killing many of the enemy, he jumped into the Tiber and swam to safety (Livy, 2002, pgs. 118-120).

Boys depicted Horatius as a marble statue with the shield/symbol of AS Roma carved over

his heart (figure 107). Horatius was bathed in red and yellow as Ultras throughout the Curva held small cards with the colors aloft. Below the painting depicting Horatius were the words “*Oltre la Morte,*” beyond the grave (Cacciari, 2004, pg. 15). In other words, Curva Sud, acting in the name of Horatius, was ready to defend the city from foreign invasion. In doing so, the Ultras conflated themselves with Horatius, as heroes who were destined to sacrifice themselves in service to Rome.



Figure 107. *Boys Roma* choreography with image of Horatius Cocles. March 2002.

For that 2002 derby (as games between local rivals are called), AS Roma’s Ultra were determined to make it understood that they shared the city with no one. Hence, the reference to Horatius defending the city from foreigners. Since the 1999-2000 season, when SS Lazio won the Italian championship, SS Lazio fans had an increased presence in the city, or so it seemed. It became popular to speak of “the two *Capitoline* (Roman) teams” much to the chagrin of Curva Sud. There were many banners in the Curva that night which questioned the right of the Lazio fans to call themselves Roman. For instance, one read (in Roman dialect) “*Lazzià guardate la carta d’identità poi ce parli de Romanita*” (Lazio fans, check your identification cards and then speak to us about

Romanità).

b. Roma ai Romani (Rome for the Romans)

In 2000, SS Lazio were the defending champions of Italy. When they matched up against AS Roma, Curva Sud made a choreography depicting the seal of the city - a crowned red shield emblazoned with SPQR in gold flanked by the flags of Italy and Rome (Nini, 2007, pg. 42). Below was written “*Nome, Colori, Tradizione, Roma Resta Giallorosso*” (name, colors, tradition, Rome remains yellow-red) (figure 108).



Figure 108. Curva Sud choreography. March 2000.

Regardless of SS Lazio’s success, the city remained the property of AS Roma fans. The Ultras demonstrated this not from spite but because they believed that SS Lazio had no claim to the city. They were formed in 1900 as a regional team, 27 years before AS Roma, and had willingly chosen to ignore the colors and history of Rome when deciding on their own name. And anyone whose loyalty lies with the region or any other abstraction at the expense of Rome is considered a foreigner. The name, colors, and traditions of Rome were coterminous with those of AS Roma and

Curva Sud.

Still another year earlier in 1999, *AS Roma Ultras* presented another choreography that conflated Curva Sud with the Classical history of the city. With the Curva bathed from side to side in yellow, red, and white cards, the center section held aloft a painting of a centurion and ten legionaries marching behind shields adorned with “ASR” and under a standard of the *Lupa Capitolina* (figures 109). In the sky overhead, evoking the cross envisioned by Constantine, was the shield/symbol of AS Roma (Nini, 2007, pg. 43). Below this scene was written “*Tu Non Vedrai Nessuna Cosa al Mondo Maggiore di Roma*”(You will never see anything in the world greater than Rome). Not greater than AS Roma, but Rome. The choreography was the best example of the Ultra connection of city, team, Ultra, and glory.



Figure 109. Curva Sud choreography and detail. November 1999.

But it was not the only one. The 1995 derby fell on April 23rd, and to celebrate Rome's birthday Curva Sud was again a sea of yellow and red cards. Instead of a centralized image, however, the main elements of the choreography were spread across the entire bottom of the curva. Supported by a length of aqueduct were the arch of Constantine, the Pantheon, the dome of San Pietro, the Coliseum, Piazza Navona, and the temple of Hercules (Cacciari, 2004, pg. 31). Below this image was written "*Quanto Sei Bella Roma*" (Rome, how beautiful you are) (figure 110).



Figure 110. Curva Sud choreography. April 23, 1995.

In December 2000, Curva Sud presented a monumental choreography of hundreds of red and yellow *vessilli*, or standards. Group leaders held aloft *vessilli* bearing the name and symbol of the group. Other members held aloft either yellow cards or red standards with SPQR, the *Lupa Capitolina*, or "*Ave Roma*" (Hail Roma). The central image was set below a large striscione reading "*Urbs Nostra*" (Our City). It was of a large *vessillo* featuring the *Lupa Capitolina* in front of a red and yellow shield. Written below the *Lupa* were the words "*Gens Julia*," or Julian people, in reference to the descendants of Julius Caesar (Cacciari, 2004, pg. 35). Below the Curva ran a banner

saying “*Nel Nome di Roma si Innalzano i Vessilli dell'Impero*” (In the name of Rome, the standards of the emperor are raised) (figure 111). It was another opportunity to remind the SS Lazio fans that only *Romanisti* (AS Roma fans) were Caesar’s people. More importantly, it demonstrated that the Ultras understand themselves in those terms: as descendants of Classical Romans.



Figure 111. Curva Sud choreography. December 2000.



Figure 112. Curva Sud choreography, detail. December 2000.

On another occasion, Curva Sud chose to connect the eternal (Roman) law which guided the rise to dominance of Rome over all other Mediterranean cultures to the victory of AS Roma in the Italian championship of 2000-2001. During that season's game against AC Milan, the Curva held aloft the crowned SPQR shield which acts as the crest of Rome (Cacciari, 2004, pg. 16). Below, the Curva announced "*Legge Eterna di Roma Eterna...la Vittoria!*" (Eternal law of eternal Rome ... to victory!) (figure 113).



Figure 113. Curva Sud choreography. May 2001.

In case any *Milanisti* (AC Milan fans) might miss the point, *AS Roma Ultras* unfurled a banner just after the game started which read "*Siamo Noi Romani, Siete Voi Schiavi*" (We Are Romans, You Are Slaves). There is no contradiction or contradistinction between Rome, AS Roma, and the Curva. There is no level of abstraction that the Ultras justify by presenting the crest of the city as their own. Nor is there a contradiction in their having signed the anti-immigrant graffiti on Via della Lupa with the words *AS Roma Ultras* (figure 6 - to be discussed in Chapter 8).

The *mentalità* of AS Roma's Ultras was perfectly summarized in a banner displayed by

Tradizione Distinzione Roma during an unknown game. It connected the good of the Ultra and AS Roma with the good of the city. It enmeshed the classical glory of Rome with its own. It reveled in the agonistic form of life maintained by the Ultras, and connected it with the good of Rome, past and future (Garsia, 2004, pg. 1). It read simply “*Contro Tutto e Tutti. Gloria a Roma*” (Against Everything and Everyone, Glory to Rome). Again, not AS Roma, but Rome. The Ultras rarely, if ever, feel the need to distinguish between the two.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, it was shown how *Romanità* resembles and is distinguishable from *campanilismo* (extreme localism). Although it too is a discourse of localism, *Romanità* also has a history as a concept meant to unite the Italian nation, in both liberal and fascist contexts. For the Ultras, it is, instead, a discourse of localism, but one which incorporates the fascist period of the city’s history while promoting a critique of the universalist values of liberalism. More important than its discursive uses, though, are the ways in which *Romanità* is a salient feature of the Ultras’ general worldview. Not only is it prominently displayed in the choreographies of Curva Sud Roma but also in its use of Roman symbols like the *Lupa Capitolina*. These symbols are designed to promote “Roman values” in a way that distinguishes the Romans from all other peoples. In this light, their politics are given meaning as the positions and actions of a population who understands itself as under siege from forces that seek to diminish the value of Rome and being Roman.

VI. Coda: Three Songs of Curva Sud Roma

The most common means of expression for the Ultras is through song. Each Curva in Italy has its own songbook, featuring songs of devotion, insult, threat, irony, and scorn. Curva Sud Roma is no different. During any game the Ultras may perform between twenty and thirty songs, with the

higher number usually being reached by songs which insult specific teams. For reasons already made clear, AS Roma's Ultras sing many songs which insult SS Lazio, AC Milan, FC Juventus, and SC Napoli; but sing very few against smaller provincial teams and cities. Overall, the majority of songs performed by AS Roma's Ultras are of their devotion to the squad and city.

There are three songs created by Curva Sud Roma in recent years that demonstrate their understanding of Rome, *Romanità*, and themselves. In each of them the Ultras are above all else defenders of the city - either the actual city or its honor. The songs demonstrate how aware, and prideful, of the city's history and traditions are the Ultras, who, in addition, present themselves as a line of defense against those who would reduce its value to that of a marketplace.

Dai rioni, dai quartieri (From the districts and neighborhoods)
siamo venuti fino qua, (to here we have come)
siamo gli ultras della Roma (we are the Ultras of AS Roma)
onoriamo la città (and we honor the city)

Siamo gli ultras della Roma e fieri (We are the Ultras of AS Roma and fierce)
centurioni e cavalieri, a difendere la città (centurions and knights, to defend the city)
orgoglio della nostra storia (proud of our history)
Ave Roma, Roma vittoriosa, (Hail Rome, Victorious Rome)
com'è scritto nella storia (as it is written in history)
il vento gelido del Nord (the cold wind of the north)
non ci potrà fermare (cannot stop us)

Semo romani trasteverini, (We are Romans from Trastevere)
semo signori senza quatrini; (we are gentlemen without money)
er core nostro è 'na capanna (our heart is a mere hut)
core sincero che nun te 'nganna (an honest heart that does not seek to fool you)
si stai in bolletta noi t'aiutamo (if you are without money we will help you)

però da micchi nun ce passamo (but we are not to be considered stupid)
noi semo magnatori de spaghetti (we are spaghetti eaters)
de le trasteverine li bulletti (the cocks of Trastevere girls)
Roma bella, Roma mia (beautiful Rome, my Rome)
te se vonno portà via (they want to take you away)
Campidojo co' S. Pietro se vorebbero comprà (they'd like to buy Campidoglio
and St.Peter's)
qui se vonno comprà tutto, (and everything else besides)
pure er sole e l'aria fresca (even the sun and the fresh air)
ma la fava romanesca je potemo arigalà (but we can present them instead with a
Roman fava)

CHAPTER EIGHT: Globalization and Local Particularity

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how *Romanità* motivates the Ultras to celebrate the rich history, culture, and cultural symbols of Rome. It explained that the Ultras' self-understanding, as well as their understanding of the world-at-large, is filtered through Rome, producing an aggressive awareness of discourses of glory and greatness. This chapter continues these ideas, but applies them to the political ideology and actions of Ultras belonging to groups of the far right. The chapter is limited in this regard because of the nature of the research. As I explained in the introduction, it would have been difficult to deeply examine both the left and right in Curva Sud Roma. And, because the right predominates, I chose the latter.

Likewise, I was unable to witness the most extreme political actions of some Ultras, like the raiding of Roma camps or the storming RAI's studios. Instead, I witnessed Ultras talking about them. Because of this, much of what follows is rhetorical. I am not suggesting that discourse is apolitical, however; on the contrary, in the pages to follow, I present acts of thinking and speaking that they are presented as political actions. In instances where I was present, such as the MTV Day protest, Family Day, and the Gay Pride parade, what the Ultras had to say about what they were doing seemed more important than what they, in fact, did. By focusing on discourse, though, I was able to get a clear sense of how localism was used by the Ultras - not as a discourse, per se, but as a framework for interpersonal relationships and for understanding the postmodern present's right to expect or demand change in Rome. In other words, the Ultras' "local" was so glaring, and, as I will demonstrate, so permeated with ideas of classical and fascist glory, that change was understood as something that had to come from outside - something imposed upon the city by the forces of liberalism that they associated with globalization.

The chapter begins by demonstrating how *Romanità* operates as a discourse, inculcating the Ultras with a critique of modernity which aims above all at protecting Rome from the influences of postmodernity and globalization. I then discuss the impact of the organized far right on Curva Sud Roma before examining the political interests of the Ultras. To do so I detail Ultra protests against MTV, a Gay Pride parade, African immigration, and the presence of Roma in Rome.

I. Postmodernity and Globalization

Coinciding with the “liberalization” of many radicals of the 1968 generation, postmodernism marked a break with late-modernity. In the 1980s many Italian thinkers who had previously been anti-American communists found themselves arguing that America and Americanism were far from destructive but “all that is creative, modern, open, universal and liberated” (O’Meara, 2004, pg. 20). It became an act of intellectual and social duty to reject the stifling contours of “traditional European values.” These were now understood, without irony, not as core aspects of a collection of distinct “local cultures” (as non-Western, previously Other, cultures would be celebrated), but as racist and exclusionary. The call was to embrace the Third World, multiculturalism, and ecumenical visions of globalization (O’Meara, 2004, pgs. 20-22).

Lyotard explained the onset of postmodernity as an intellectual movement which destroyed the sanctity of the “grand narrative” in general, and in particular the Western civilizational narrative of universal well-being and material salvation through rationality (Lyotard, 1999, pg. 16). Seeing this model of salvation as mere narrative, and one amongst many at that, “progress, freedom, and objectivity” were de-sanctified as subjective and illusory (Connolly, 1993, pg. 10). Man, as a narrating subject, was cast out from his objective security into a world in which signification and representation are the rule, in which canons of knowledge are considered more exclusionary and

destructive than affective and creative.

Further, because all knowledge is held to be reflective and mediated, there can be no grand narratives but only myriad micro-narratives (O'Meara, 2004, pg. 22). This collection of micro-narratives operates as the new truth, which is itself a form of radical pluralism, reflecting the new array of relative identities possible to the postmodern subject; each with equal value and unable to critique the others. "For this reason, ... racial minorities, trance freaks, lesbian bikers, squatters, immigrants, and grunge rockers all register ... while Basque nationalists, Swiss Communards, and Lombard regionalists, whose communities are ancient and intergenerational, are generally suspected of being 'closed' or repressive variants of the [grand] narrative" (O'Meara, 2004, pg. 23).

This motley collection of perspectives, or the intellectual push toward their creation and celebration, is the new model of the universal human (Baudrillard, 1994, pg. 107). And just as the universal is given more economic value than the local, the global human outweighs the local, via the discourse of multiculturalism, with immigrants seen as the new model citizen in place of the pampered, scared, tired, and resentful (Western) native. And, through the explosion of communications technologies, and the "computerization [and] digitization" of humanity, placelessness and deterritorialization are becoming optimal states and are making of local particularity the domains of niche tourism and marketing (Naylor, 2007, pg. 23).

With this perspective in mind, one may begin to understand the conditions which guide the political interests and choices of the Ultras. Simply put, the Ultras come to know and interact with the political world through the intense narratives of the Ultra *mentalità*. Strength, honor, discipline, virtue, sacrifice, and loyalty are just a few of the themes contained in this worldview that I have described. These lead not only to a highly fascist interpretation of politics but also one that is

moralized. In the Curva the Ultras create a tableaux of local gestures and performances that directly challenge the homogenizing tendencies of *Calcio Moderno*. They give greater value to local particularity than to multi-national corporate interests and the understanding of the game as a televisual product. Beyond the Curva this same commitment to local particularity dominates, but here they are also able to expose the moral bases of the forces that they believe are aligned against them.

II. The Ultras and Politics

While the Ultras are intensely, aggressively, and radically political, the “political behaviors” to which they commit are largely extra-parliamentary. In other words, organizing, voting, holding office and campaigning for political parties is not what they have in mind when thinking or acting politically. Instead, Ultra politics is largely about putting the Ultra *mentalità* into action in a larger context than the Curva. In this, the Ultras’ use of politics mirrors the “ritual and cultish” aspects of other forms of Italian politics (namely the radical left and Italian Communist Party) (Kertzer, 1988, pg. 13). As David Kerzer explains, politics of this kind are not solely interested in transforming society, but also with acting strictly within the terms of the cosmological myths that buttress the movement in question (1988, pg. 13).

A. The Ultras and the Presence of the Far Right in the Curva

Nonetheless, the Ultras have contacts with, and are influenced by Italian political parties and movements. At this moment in Curva Sud Roma’s history, the far right is the most important of these. As explained in Chapter 2, AS Roma’s Ultras shifted from a mix of political ideologies at inception to being dominated by the far right in the early-1990s. This shift coincided with the general shift in the Italian working class from the left to the right, making it consistent with larger trends in Italian society (Ginsborg, 2003b, pgs. 17-35). The far right still dominates today, yet it is

difficult to ascertain why this is so from the Ultras.

According to Ultras from both the left and right, there is no mystery as to why fascism took over the Curva. “The right,” said Massimiliano, an Ultra of *Fedayn* who grew up in a family committed to leftist parties and concerns, “is the more powerful force in Rome’s history. If one looks at history, Rome has almost always been in their hands. The only Curva Sud I’ve ever known has been in their hands too.” I asked how his family resisted the rightist persuasion. “My father is from a small town in Campania between Rome and Campobasso,” he answered, “where everyone is Communist. I was born in Rome in 1979 and would hear many things in school about Communism and fascism. But for me it was just normal to follow my family’s understandings.”

“And in Curva Sud?” I asked. “*Fedayn* was the only strong leftist group when I began going to the Curva in 1996,” he said, “and I knew some of the guys from school. It was natural to go to *Fedayn*, even beyond politics in the Curva.” Like many of the leftist Ultras, Massimiliano is convinced that politics should have no place amongst the Ultras. “Ultras is a commitment to AS Roma, not to politics. The beauty of being an Ultra is the purity and focus it gives - there is only AS Roma!” he said with a smile.

Conversely, those on the right feel that politics is the central thrust of the Ultras. “To be a Roman is basically to be a fascist,” Stefano, a former member of the disbanded *Monteverde* explained. “But to be a proud Roman is absolutely to be a fascist. We Ultras did the same things that fascism is doing today. We had an office, we cleaned our streets (referring to the neighborhood cleansing of drug dealers, illegal street vendors, and Roma panhandlers mentioned in Chapter 2 for which *Monteverde* was notorious amongst the Ultras), we fought Communists in school and in the piazzas. Curva Sud was just an extension of that because it was our advertising. We could support

AS Roma but also demonstrate the joy of being a proud fascist and proud Roman.”

Similar to Massimiliano, Stefano’s household had a political outlook, but this time of the far right, “just as was the entire Monteverde neighborhood,” he said. And, similar to Stefano I had to prompt Massimiliano to discuss the place of the right in the Curva. “I found *Monteverde* here on my street,” he said, “so coming into the Curva as a fascist was something I never decided. I was an AS Roma fan and fascist just like my friends (in the group).”

It is unclear if anyone besides the Ultras and the fascists have made *Romanità* such an integral part of their politics or general world view. That the Ultras of the right equate fascism and *Romanità* begs the question whether an intermediate source of inspiration for their passions is available. In the years between the fall of fascism and the rise of the right amongst the Ultras, was there any movement or cultural element keeping the two alive? Certainly, Julius Evola comes to mind, as do scholars of fascism like Emilio Gentile, professor of history at Rome’s *La Sapienza* University. I have already demonstrated the prevalence of Evolan thought amongst the rightist Ultras but cannot do so for Gentile. However, his model of how fascism used *Romanità* is perhaps the most useful for fully explicating how the politics of the Ultras evolves from a love of, and desire to protect, Rome to a will to act violently in this regard.

B. *Romanità*, Ultras, and Fascism

According to Gentile, the fascist state was implemented with the idea that the human character is malleable, “as an expression of a historical tradition, of the customs, beliefs, and ethic of a whole people” (Gentile, 1996, pg. 96). The state, then, felt it could create the content of its subjects’ character. *Romanità* was central to this project. Fascism taught of a Rome that was “grounded in virtue, knowledge, and discipline, the secret of greatness” with the expectation that

modern Italians would become worthy heirs of their Roman forefathers by embracing these same ideals (Gentile, 1996, pg. 76). The metanoia, or change of feeling, amongst the Romanizing Italians would demonstrate that *Romanità* was an active agent in modern fascist Italy. “This was no idea petrified in this or that traditional form, but alive and in action - belonging to our own current awareness of politics and history” (Gentile, 1996, pg. 77). *Romanità* was a part of the mythologizing impetus of fascism, which saw no limits to the power of ideas and ideals to motivate behaviors. And it is this affective power that the Ultras have put to use. But, just as with the teachings of Evola, Nietzsche, and Sorel, and the legacy of fascism, the Ultras have made use of *Romanità* in a way that uniquely serves their purposes.

If Ultras on the left and right seemed to agree that fascism was just a normal part of their experiences of Rome and the Ultras, why was this so? The question was never adequately answered by my informants. However, Stefano (above) had alerted me to the correlation between Roman pride and fascism. I asked Federico, formerly of *Antichi Valori* and now of *Romulae Genti*, if he agreed with Stefano’s formula. “Absolutely,” he said, “but only because the fascists have always used *Romanità* as a way to legitimize fascism. And today, look at how *Forza Nuova* uses Rome and its imagery. It is no accident that the *Forzanovisti* (members of *Forza Nuova*) use the *Lupa* (Capitoline She-Wolf) and *Stadio dei Marmi* (stadium of marbles - created by the PNF for parades, sporting events, and other public displays, it is a small oval surrounded by hyper-masculine neo-Classical statues) in their publications, as well as celebrating April 21st (as noted above, the birthday of Rome). Aside from us (AS Roma’s Ultras) the fascists make the most use of *Romanità*.”

“Is that why the fascists dominate the Curva?” I asked. “I think so,” he said, “but also because when I and others of my generation became active in the Curva, the left was discredited in

the wake of the wall (the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989). At school the fascists had the only critique of capitalism that we felt had not been discredited. It may have been defeated in war but it was not discredited as ideology. Plus,” he continued, “*Boys Roma* and *Opposta Fazione* were the best Ultras and they were the best fascists. When we looked for the one, we saw the other.”

It was most interesting that when the Ultras discussed fascism they did so in ways which mirrored their political consciousness as Ultras - in terms of ideology, history, and *mentalità*. Conversely, when the media discuss fascism in the Italian curvas it is normally a discussion of parties. Interestingly, of all the Ultras in today’s Curva Sud who openly discuss fascism, the two most important and influential groups - *Boys Roma* and *Padroni di Casa* - have deep connections to fascist political parties. More importantly, though, they demonstrate how fascism preexisted the fascist political parties in the Curva.

Boys Roma has been a fascist-based Ultra group since 1972, although for long periods, with no official links to parties. *Padroni di Casa* has only been in Curva Sud since 2007, but their pedigree reaches back to the rightist-oriented *Opposta Fazione* and then *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*. Here too this was without any outward connection to political parties. Today, however, both have open connections to the two dominant parties of the Italian far right: *Forza Nuova* and *Fiamma Tricolore*.

C. The Parties of the Far Right and Today’s Curva Sud

Even though these parties, both of which understand themselves as movements, are of the right and share a similar critique of communism and liberalism, they each consider themselves an enemy of the other. Those from *Forza Nuova* speak of those in *Fiamma Tricolore* as something akin to *zingari* (slur for Roma) who are compromising the spirit of fascism - and vice versa. *Fiamma*

Tricolore was started in 1995 by members of *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) who refused to compromise their radical credentials by participating in the move of the more moderate successor party, *Alleanza Nazionale*, toward the center. *Fiamma Tricolore* is active at the community level in most of Rome's working class neighborhoods, and through its leader Luca Romagnoli it also seeks parliamentary legitimacy and influence.

Forza Nuova, by contrast, seeks no parliamentary power. Its actions are movement-like in that they focus on community presence and local organization via a series of offices. *Forza Nuova* was founded as an organic extension of Roberto Fiore's *Terza Posizione* organization which was outlawed in Italy after being associated with the 1980 bombing of the Bologna Central railway station. Its Roman members understand themselves entirely as radical activists and many seek opportunities to confront others, whether in "*la piazza*" (dialogue and outreach) or in "*la strada*" (violent attack).

Of the two, it is *Forza Nuova* which has the most influence in today's Curva Sud. This is difficult to ascertain, however, because both *Forza Nuova* and *Fiamma Tricolore* have members in the various Curva Sud groups. When *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* disbanded in 2007 it was because some members, including its founder Gianluca Iannone, desired to spend more time outside the Curva. The new group they founded, *Padroni di Casa*, was immediately associated with the political right, specifically *Fiamma Tricolore*.

On the day that *Padroni di Casa* introduced themselves to Curva Sud, I was with *Boys Roma*. The leadership of *Boys* was comprised of three men at the time, two of whom are actively involved

in *Forza Nuova*.¹ The other is of *Fiamma Tricolore*. Some within the group speculate that the current inability of *Boys* to prosper as in the days of Paolo Zappavigna is due to this crucial rift. That day in the Curva, one of the leaders affiliated with *Forza Nuova* watched derisively as *Padroni di Casa* entered the curva as a group just after the game had begun. He leaned into me and said only, “*sono da Fiamma*” (they are [members] of *Fiamma Tricolore*).

Since that day in February 2007, *Padroni di Casa* have twice switched their party allegiance - first to *Forza Nuova*, and then, several months later, to start the now nationwide movement *Casa Pound Italia*. Named in honor of the fascistic American poet Ezra Pound, *Casa Pound Italia* seeks to be a new type of fascist movement - one that is just as active in acculturating as in activism. At *Padroni di Casa*'s office *Casa Pound*, the original office of the nationwide movement, weekly lecture, film, and cultural events are held. They have affiliations with Roman futurist artists and poets, Evolan and Nietzschean students, and a host of fascist Romans of various professions.

The movement's ultimate goal, according to its leader Gianluca Iannone, is to become an autonomous voice of “truly radical fascism in a way that the post-war fascists have been unable to maintain.” He explained that fascism had to take the beauty and passion of the Ultras and apply them to the piazza. On 3 November, 2008, three gentlemen identified as members of *Casa Pound* stormed the studio of RAI 3, Italy's main left wing television network, as the program *Chi l'ha Visto* was preparing to air a video of the previous day's violent encounter between activists on the far right and left in Piazza Navona.² The fight was related to ongoing polemics and street battles due to the left's

¹ These Ultras have been discussed in previous chapters. One of them, Fabio, was one of my key informants. These three were later replaced by the man known as “Duce.” Fabio now acts as his second-in-command.

² http://www.ilmessaggero.it/articolo.php?id=34023&sez=HOME_SCUOLA

protests of proposed school reforms. *Casa Pound Italia* released a statement saying it would no longer tolerate the violence against fascist activists by their leftist counterparts. Two days later *Il Messaggero* linked *Casa Pound Italia* to *Padroni di Casa*, as the founder of both, Iannone, was among those arrested for the assault on RAI 3.³

Neither representatives of *Fiamma Tricolore* nor *Forza Nuova* admitted to using the Ultras as a site for recruiting. During a brief conversation with a *Fiamma Tricolore* contact provided me by the third member of *Boys'* leadership, it was explained that *Fiamma Tricolore* does not officially enter the Italian curvas. Any shared membership between the two, Ultras and fascism, is coincidental, he explained. "In the past, though, the curvas were fertile ground for the organized right, and many Ultras became involved in *Fiamma Tricolore* through being Ultras - myself included," he told me.

A longer conversation at the Piazza Vescovio office of *Forza Nuova* was similarly dismissive of the Ultras. I was told by Martin Alvaro, a well-known *Forza Nuova* activist, that the Ultras are of no interest whatsoever to their movement. Even though some members of *Forza Nuova* hailed from both SS Lazio's Curva Nord and AS Roma's Curva Sud, the Ultras, he said, had never been a large part of *Forza Nuova's* recruitment scheme. When asked why, he explained that the curvas were unreliable, being more full of hedonists than fascists. Whatever the position of *Forza Nuova* on the Ultras, my research pointed to deep cross-overs between their form of political activism and that of the Ultras. These connections will be explained in the two following sections.

In contrast to what Martin Alvaro told me, that there are only coincidental members of both the Ultras and *Forza Nuova*, I can attest to there being a number of AS Roma Ultras who follow the

³ http://www.ilmessaggero.it/articolo.php?id=34150&sez=HOME_INITALIA

actions of *Forza Nuova* closely. While these persons did not speak of Fiore or other national leaders of *Forza Nuova*, they all knew of those who were attached to “Piazza Vescovio,” as *Forza Nuova* was called (because of the location of their Rome office). On the rare occasions when I was with Ultras and *Forza Nuova* members away from a strictly Ultra related activity (such as an AS Roma game or an office of one of the groups), neither the Ultras nor soccer were discussed. For the Ultras this is rare, as it would be hard to converse with an Ultra for five minutes without the discussion turning to either the Curva or AS Roma.

One can conclude, therefore, that the parties of the far right and the Ultras of Curva Sud Roma are two overlapping constituents that intersect without necessarily uniting. While issues that concern these parties are certainly important to the Ultras, from alleged immigrant crime to the national trade deficit with China, it is most likely that the large majority of Ultras have become devoted to these concerns without the intervention of the organized far right. There are certainly Ultras who are active in organized fascism, as will be made clear below, but there seemed to be many more who consider themselves fascist without being dedicated to the fascist parties. As I said above, it was common to speak with Ultras like Federico, Mario, or Gabriele of *Romulae Genti* who knew Martin Alvaro of *Forza Nuova* and the goings on of that party but who otherwise never made serious contact with organized fascism.

That Ultras like them were dedicated to the ideology of fascism and were familiar with leading Roman fascists but never committed themselves to *Forza Nuova*, for instance, might play a role in the ways my contacts in the extreme rightist parties disparaged the Ultras. Meanwhile, odd as it seems, the Ultras in the post-Raciti/Sandri era are castigated in the media more severely than the fascists. It could be that the fascist parties have chosen to distance themselves from the Ultras

given their present conflict with the state. Nevertheless, even without formal connections to the parties, the rightist Ultra groups operate with fascism in mind, adopting *squadristo* (action in the form of fascist paramilitary squads), an ethic of violence that celebrates engagement and aggression, pageantry as a form of political action, and a critique of modernity. It could be said, then, that the Ultras are another form of fascism.

III. The Ultras as Political Actors

A. MTV Day

In the early Fall of each year, MTV holds a one-day festival in Rome called MTV Day. In 2007, it was held in Piazza di Porta San Giovanni and was attended by a group of 30 Ultras belonging to *Padroni di Casa*. They were there along with a sizable contingent of Roman university students belonging to *Forza Nuova*'s student wing, *Lotta Studentesca*. The purpose was not to enjoy the festivities but to protest them. They marched into the piazza behind a banner reading “*Boicotta MTV*” (Boycott MTV). Behind the banner the Ultras distributed handbills explaining their presence:

MTV completes ten years? Ten years of brainwashing millions of children. Ten years of dishonor, relativism, materialism, and hedonism! In the media society that shapes how we think, MTV has for years influenced the ideas and style of life of the young, promoting a process of homogenization that annuls particularity and identity. *Lotta Studentesca* and *Padroni di Casa* retain the right to our own characteristics and the differences between these and a society that is becoming more Americanized by the day. For this we have entered the piazza today, to contest the ever-present Americanized media, and to stimulate a desire amongst the youth to desire and hold dear our true identity and traditions of our people. To be revolutionary today is to love Tradition.

The terms of the protest were typical of the Ultras' understanding of globalization and what

is at stake in its triumph. MTV is perhaps the greatest purveyor of American values on Italian television. It is a 24 hour-a-day promoter of what the Ultras called leisure, avarice, and vulgarity. As in the US, its shows like “Cribs,” “Pimp My Ride,” and “The Fabulous Life Of ...” present a constant stream of, as said the *Lotta Studentesca/Padroni di Casa* leaflet, “relativism, materialism, and hedonism.” Through its original shows like “Buzzin’” and “Nabari,” MTV Italia promotes the idea that Italy is a multicultural and multiracial society in which all groups share friendship and understanding despite their differences. Black Africans, burkha wearing Muslim girls, and Italian teens share experiences and interests. On other shows, like “A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila,” Italians learn of the thrills of bisexuality and sexual promiscuity. *Padroni di Casa’s* banner and handbills expressed outrage at this cluster of messages.



Figure 114. Fascists at MTV Day 2007. Rome.

B. Family Day and Gay Pride

The Ultras’ protest against MTV Day showed a highly moralized understanding of the terms of globalization. The protection of institutions and traditions, however they are defined - in this case as the bulwark of “particularity” against “homogenization” - is not a goal for the sake of the Italian state, but instead is part of a moral issue against multicultural-and-globalization-based change -

change imposed either from without or from the perspective of liberal or modern “progress.” In either case, the Ultras understand both as a shameful flight from their own culture. These were also the terms with which they engaged Family Day and the annual Roman Gay Pride parade.



Figure 115. *Alleanza Nazionale* poster against DICO. Rome. May 2007.

Family Day was the Church-organized day to protest *Diritti e doveri delle persone stabilmente convivente* (DICO - Rights and Obligations of Permanently Cohabiting Persons), the bill proposed by members of the 2006-2007 Prodi government which sought rights for cohabiting couples, including homosexuals. Held on a warm May day in Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, the rally brought together hundreds of Catholic organizations from all around Italy. The far-right parties were there as well, with *Alleanza Nazionale* urging all parties to carry no colors so as not to risk making the family seem a “political object.”



Figure 116. Family Day. Rome. May 2007.

Concurrently in Piazza Navona there was a rally in support of purely secular government (figure 117). Here, demonstrators sought to keep the church from being involved in political issues. At the time of these demonstrations “Ratzinger” (as most Ultras called Pope Benedict XVI) was in Brazil proclaiming the need of the church to be unconcerned with the political issues of the day.⁴ The irony was not lost on Federico, the former member of *Antichi Valori* with whom I attended Family Day. Even though he grew up in the shadow of The Vatican, worked in its museums as a tour guide, supported Family Day, and approved of Ratzinger, he noted that it made sense for the Pope to say this in Latin America, as the conservative elements in the church had struggled to eradicate that continent’s Liberation Theology since the 1960s. For Federico, the Church was and is extremely political. It is not always that he, and other Romans, agree with the Church’s politics, but on this occasion, he said, he and many others did.



Figure 117. Newspaper discussing “Family Day: Italy in two piazzas.” Rome. May 2007.

The Ultras who attended Family Day did so for much the same reasons other Ultras had attended MTV Day. At the latter, they were protesting a celebration of turbocapitalism, hedonism,

⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/07/world/americas/07theology.html?_r=1

and hyper-materialism; at the former they joined a celebration of tradition, idealism, and protectionism. Thus, the events were two sides of the same coin. The Ultras talked about Family Day not as an anti-gay statement, but as an opportunity to show the Prodi government that his will to make of Italy one grand market, as the US and UK are understood, is opposed by Italians. It was explained to me that the problem of the Italian left is that it is always too ready to undermine Italian traditions in order to please the international community. “They attack proud and strong Italians on behalf of immigrants and silly pleasure seekers,” Federico told me.

The Pope pronounced on the issue in the week before Family Day. Where the Ultras spoke of tradition, he spoke of sin. Nonetheless, there was little distinction between their arguments. The materialist philosophies, Capitalism and Marxism, had torn away our ability to be more than vulgar matter, he said.⁵ When secularism is embraced, a wholly abstract human follows. Ratzinger did not continue in this way for long, but I mentioned it to the Ultras for a reaction. I was told by Mario, now of *Ultras Primavalle* but formerly of *Monteverde*, “[not to] worry about traditions collapsing in Rome. The rest of the world lives without tradition because their history, culture, existence itself, are not real. But here in Rome, the past is so important that you cannot even live in it. We have a perpetual present (*il presente permanente*) that stretches back 2700 years.”

Mario’s statement demonstrates the depth of the Ultras’ commitments to Rome as a place in which history, culture, and existence (to use his words) operate differently than elsewhere in the world. *Romanità* is more than just a weekend-only ideological dalliance for the Ultras. Instead, it acts as the basis for their understanding of cultural and historical processes. It ensures that culture and history form a visible and knowable “web of significance” through which the mundane everyday

⁵ For information on the Pope’s lecture see <http://www.catholicsocialscientists.org/CSSR/Archival/2009/Burke%20-%20Article.pdf>, accessed January 2010.

is made knowable. As he said, the past is important in Rome because there really is no past - all is lived presently and immediately. Mario assumes that this does not happen elsewhere in the world, because beyond Rome, culture and history are not real - playing no true role in how people live.

I was reminded of Michael Polanyi's struggle to justify the forms of knowledge generated by zealotry, through which violence and terror are given fuel. Borrowing from Hannah Arendt, he explains that revolutionary education is designed to abolish the line between truth and fiction, thereby making every knowable thing a "statement of purpose" (Polanyi, 1974, pg. 242). Leaving aside his epistemology (and political aversion to extremism), his understanding of knowledge serving a purpose but also being pliable is reflected in Mario's statement. And, there is no mistaking that this devotion to Rome is a form of extremism. Rome's visibly multi-layered history makes the city's historical importance a constant reminder of what is "at stake" for the Ultras. In effect, their feelings of proprietorship are manifested in every evening stroll they take.

The church was less at issue on Family Day than was taking a stand against the liberalization of Italian society. The media coverage of Family Day made it an issue of "gay rights" and the "*grettezza*" (close-mindedness) the "traditional Italian" that keeps Italy from "making progress." For the Ultras, Family Day was less about these immediate concerns than with an opportunity to take exception to the very idea of the liberal, rights-based human to begin with. Nietzsche wrote about "breeding strength" as an ideal for his radical aristocratic nobility. Strength, like nobility itself, was to be achieved through struggle and hardship. It was to oppose the very idea that "man" is given value by virtue of his ability to participate equally in a marketplace (what Nietzsche called "mechanical virtue") (Nietzsche, 2003, pg. 176).

Strength, instead, was to be created through isolation (Nietzsche, 2003, pg. 166). Elsewhere,

Nietzsche explained that one can only maintain what is one's own by maintaining adequate distance from one's neighbors (2006, pg. 42). The Ultras have used this formula to great effect against other Ultras and fan bases, but it also motivates their oppositions to globalization. The adoption of more liberal and secular understandings of the human is not a problem unless it is being imposed, or being popularized due to the influence of what they see as degrading elements within society. Certainly MTV Day, and MTV in general, was singled out as an insidious influence on Italians. In seeking distance from the form of life being promoted by MTV the Ultras also make arguments for an organic understanding of society.

The idea that the state is an organism that thrives and declines in conjunction with its population is central to Counter-Enlightenment thought. Although the fascists saw in this a material rationale, and thus promoted the general health of the population, Sorel, following Nietzsche, was more concerned with how the weakness of a political class - one ashamed of ruling - leads to a toleration of weakness that ultimately effects the policy decisions of a state (Sorel, 1999, pg. 182). Michael O'Meara has discussed the implications of such an idea amongst those who are opposed to liberalism today. Far from the biological justifications for nation-or-people-hood, the organic state idea hinges upon "common heritage and tradition" for relevance and survival (2004, pg. 104). Tradition, he proposes, functions as a skeleton upon which peoples constitute themselves. While modernity and rationalism propose that traditions are contextual, and thus fluid and less valuable as markers of human behavior, O'Meara counters by explaining that tradition, like history, is more about the present than the past. Thus, one can act through a market-driven, homogenizing liberalism or one can act through something else. That something else, the Ultras believe, is their "own Roman culture." I asked a group of five *Ultras Romani* Ultras if the state or the Church could be considered

part of this culture. They responded, only the Church.



Figure 118. Family Day banner. “Without God the family does not exist.” Rome. May 2007.

The Church was also at the center of discourse surrounding the Gay Pride parade. And, like DICO and Family Day, the issue was around “rights,” pitting the Prodi government against the Pope. It was not surprising that this was so. Along with the family, the Church is often presented by scholars and journalists as reason for Italy’s notoriously weak state (Ginsborg, 2003b, pgs. 129-134). Because of its ability to act as a political sovereign, the Church was historically able to control understanding of the issues that, in the summer of 2007, were in danger of becoming the domain of “rights.”

It seemed Italy was struggling to accept that the state was actually to be responsible for defining the family. The family as a legal and material entity was something different from the family as the basis of human life. The sanctity of the family, said the Church, came from God; the impositions of a secular state were out of place in relation to an institution given the species by its creator.



Figure 119. Anti-Gay graffiti. “Homosexual, for you no rights.” Rome. June 2007.

The days leading up to the June parade were contentious. On June 15 the *Northern League* continued to agitate against Prodi, as their 22 MPs stormed the Lower House, demanding the government clear out. This was part of Fini, Bossi, and Berlusconi’s new initiative against Prodi in the wake of vast rightist victories in regional elections, as well as the consequence of uninterrupted bickering, disunity, and indecision within the Prodi coalition. The latest flare up was caused by the government’s decision to allow various ministers to march in the Gay Pride parade. Catholics within the government were outraged as the parade was set to embrace calls for rights of gay marriage, adoption, and even assisted fertility.

The right was quick to expect a full assault on the Church’s control of public discourse on the family (an issue that had been debated since DICO was unveiled in February 2007), while the left said it must support any demonstration calling for greater secularization and bans against discrimination. Leftist MP’s had even called for more rights for Chinese immigrants, after a number of them attacked police in Milan upon being ticketed for illegally unloading trucks in a public street.



Figure 120. Anti-Gay graffiti. “Gays to the ovens.” Rome. June 2007.

Saturday morning, in Piazza Bologna, Piazza Vescovio, and Piazza Dalmazia (near Mussolini’s former residence at Villa Torlonia), were found fascist graffiti against the march (and gays as well): “Gays, Rome does not want you,” “Italy needs children, not gays,” “Gays, no rights for you,” and the particularly nasty, “Gays to the ovens” (figures 119 and 120).

The parade was more disputatious than had been Family Day and its counter demonstration in Piazza Navona. The paraders aggressively condemned the Church and the Pope. They rode on floats laden with men in drag, transsexuals, and nudity. They called for an end to discrimination against gays. Commentators noted that Italy was far behind other Western countries in its attitudes toward homosexuality and in addressing equal protection issues.

This time with twelve *Padroni di Casa* Ultras, I witnessed only a few minutes of the parade. The group of Ultras met with a large group from *Forza Nuova* on Via Cavour. Aside from occasional slurs against gays, the meeting was mostly to complain against Prodi and the “rights seekers” who were attempting, it was argued, “to hold Italy and its history, honor, and traditions

hostage for their own benefit.” The left, they said, had, as usual, aligned itself against anything of value or tradition, anything Italian, in order to shame the country into “keeping up with some universally defined progress.”



Figure 121. Gay Pride parader. Rome. June 2007.

The Ultras attacked the paraders within the terms of their general attack on liberalism and globalization. “Who were these people,” asked Luca, a 38-year old veteran of *Tradizione Distinzione Roma* who now was well-respected in *Padroni di Casa*, “to make demands on the Pope? What had they done to be worthy of insulting a Roman institution?” “On whose behalf, and to whose benefit, did they expect Italy to change? If things were better for them in other parts of Europe, why not leave?,” he asked.



Figure 122. Gay Pride paraders. Rome. June 2007.

The other Ultras answered angrily, showing their disgust that Italy now had “minority” issues. Luca spoke of “spineless weaklings who made demands without having made themselves worthy of demand.” They complained bitterly that Italy had not been like this before the European Union. But now, it was changing life for the worse. Two things were especially interesting about their complaints: their continual questioning why policy makers were dismissing what Italians wanted; and their anger at the assumptions driving “minorities” to demand “their rights.”

When I proposed to them that plurality is demonstrative of progress in liberal societies, Luca told me in response that “*gli Ultras sono i veri subalterni*” (the Ultras are the true subalterns). “It seems that one can be anything in Italy except an Ultra. And you are telling me that these people bring more to Italy than us? We want Italy to be strong, virile, and proud but instead we get an Italy determined to be a cesspool,” he said. Poetically, on the same day as the Gay Pride parade it was announced that soccer-related violence had fallen dramatically after Raciti’s death, showing the value of the crackdown on the Ultras. As already noted, attacks on police were down 93%, while violent encounters between fans were down 44%.⁶

Luca insisted upon driving me back to Monteverde as evening fell. While driving, he identified three crucial “political enemies” of the Ultras: American-based popular culture, “which celebrated above all vulgar materialism and ignorance;” the Italian state, “which, in the hands of the left was intent on making Italy a melting-pot, diminishing the value of Italian culture and history at every turn;” and the European Union, “which debilitated culture for the sake of a free market that demanded consumerism and inclusiveness from all.” The EU would be center stage in the true bane of Ultra politics, immigration and the Roma.

⁶ *Il Romanista*, Anno IV, Numero 136, 16 giugno, 2007. Pg. 2

C. Immigration and the Roma

i. Perspectives on Rome and Immigration

In November 2007, Massimo D'Alema, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, was in Turkey to demonstrate the Italian government's support for that country's entrance into the European Union. When asked in a press conference about his position on the issue, he did not use a cultural-historical argument. Instead, he chose multiculturalism as rationale for Turkey being a part of Europe. While others in Europe were debating Turkey's cultural and historical connections to Europe, D'Alema chose to put the onus on Europe itself to be worthy of Turkey. As he put it, Turkey must be admitted "out of a commitment to creating a Europe based on inclusion and tolerance."⁷

His words stung the ears of Curva Sud's Ultras. For again, the idea of tolerance and inclusiveness were being wielded against those who saw in Europe something worth protecting from dilution. That same week, I walked in the neighborhood south of The Vatican called Borgo but which the Ultras who live there call Gregorio Settimo (figure 16). The area, like other established Roman neighborhoods, is a self contained universe. It has a fresh market, wine bars, small restaurants, cafés, clothing stores for men, women, and children, pastry shops, *gelato* shops, banks, and insurance offices. Almost every corner is covered in Ultra graffiti and the area's Ultras walk the streets with a sense of pride (figure 123). Most of them know everyone, from the merchants to the men and boys standing in front of each café or mechanics shop. In two hours, one might only walk two blocks, as the Ultras stop and converse with their neighbors.

⁷ <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1195732921.61/>



Figure 123. *Antichi Valori* graffiti in Borgo. “The Ancient Values rebirth in me!” Rome. 2006.

The neighborhood is also home to a recent addition, a kebab stand. Typically associated with Turks, kebab stands are opening throughout Rome. The owners of this particular stand are not Turks but Indians. The first time I encountered the stand with Ultras there was derision and a dismissive silence. The only comment made was that “a few years ago there were no kebab stands in Rome. Now they are everywhere.” I asked if anyone had eaten kebab and they acted as if I had suggested cannibalism.

A few weeks later I received a call from Danillo, one of the dismissive Ultras. Danillo, a 29 year-old waiter in a restaurant near Campo dei Fiori, lives in Gregorio Settimo with his mother and father. His aunt lives in the same building several floors below. His girlfriend lives on the next block and they are usually inseparable. They met when she was a student in need of a Latin tutor. (Being in the same neighborhood both sets of parents knew of the other; thus, hers were aware that Danillo might help their daughter learn Latin.) Now they work together in her family’s small restaurant. She even occasionally attends games with him now that he is no longer affiliated with *Fedayn* but

attends games in the Tevere Grandstand. According to Danillo, “the Curva is no place for women because it is dangerous.” He often chastised me for taking my wife to games.

He was never a member of *Fedayn* because he didn’t live in the *Quadraro* neighborhood, but was close friends with many in that group, and thus stood behind their banner. Danillo is not a fascist, per se, but is well versed in the history of fascism, especially as it pertains to Rome. He is interesting for his proximity to *Fedayn* (a formerly leftist group but now only mildly political) and for his less-than-zealot ideological commitment to fascism. Like Federico of *Antichi Valori*, Danillo’s parents are extremely proud Romans, even going so far as to show me their modest collection of antique espresso cups adorned with images of Rome at the turn-of-the-century.

Danillo told me that he had eaten kebab from the stand after a recent game (as no restaurants were open at the hour on a Sunday night). He had enjoyed the kebab and said the people were friendly. He was quick to add, though, that this did not signal a change in his negative attitude toward the proliferation of kebab stands in Rome.

“Rome,” he said, “is opening up to foreigners because the government and the EU are forcing it to do so. [The Roman people] are left to lament the changes in their neighborhoods and an influx of people who neither speak our language nor take an interest in our culture. How do these people have the right to come here and do very little to be accepted,” he asked, “and those who have been here for generations, who can trace their Roman heritage seven generations (as he could, his mother proudly told me) have no right to defend the form of life that we have created in that time.” He went on to say that Rome was his city, not theirs. He would never dream of going to another country to set up shop. Such a move would be “the most vulgar (form) of materialism.” I asked him what he feared in the presence of the Indians. “The eventual destruction of Roman culture,” he said.

Danillo, like Luca and so many others, was exaggeratedly aware of the sanctity of Roman culture. He had been given a responsibility toward Rome as a birthright from his parents and family, but also from the Ultras. The most common mode of discussing Rome amongst the Ultras with whom I had the most contact was in terms of pride, protection, honor, and sacrifice. From Ultras of various ages and numbers of years of involvement with Curva Sud, as well as from various neighborhoods, I heard self-descriptions as “*cavalieri*” (knights). Lorenzo of *AS Roma Ultras* explained that it comes from an old *CUCS*-era (1972-92) song that speaks about proud knights in defense of Rome’s honor. The Ultras seemed to have taken to heart this message and earnestly see themselves in these terms. Danillo made clear his commitment. “I would be an honor to die serving Rome but I don’t give a damn about Italy,” he said.

Regardless of the effect this kind of sentiment has on the Italian military, Danillo’s comment points to the ongoing predominance of *campanilismo* in the Italian worldview. In fact, it would be difficult to find anything more to an Italian world view than an extremely local, or at best regional, focus. Allum and Diamanti point out that the anti-Italian views of those involved in the *Northern League* are barely enough to unify that party across the regions of the north. Instead, there is the sense that, while Italy is bad for the people of the north, the *Northern League* might be too broadly focused to truly promote the best interests of all northern peoples (Allum and Diamanti, 1996, pgs. 152-154).

Although not to the same extreme, one even senses regionalism amongst the chapters of *Forza Nuova*. Despite a missive from Roberto Fiore, national leader of the party, proclaiming the solidarity of “*Forzanovisti*” (members of the party) and explaining the lack of need, therefore, for regional or local chapter websites (as all news could be coordinated through the main *Forza Nuova*

site), members have still created local websites devoted to their activities. These, such as the members of “*Forza Nuova Roma*,” often use blog sites which operate free of charge and slightly under the radar of the party bosses.⁸ Even amongst the nationalists, then, there is a strong undercurrent of regionalism and localism.

Anthropological studies on prejudice against immigrants in Italy rarely present the justifications of natives in terms that would be coherent to those natives. Sniderman and Peri, for example, explain that refugees are struggling for acceptance in Italy because of “skinhead violence” and the “extreme prejudice” of marginalized Italians (2000, pg. 4). They spend considerable time redefining “prejudice,” taking it from a psychological model to one that incorporates the creation and dissemination of discourses of difference. They wanted to know, in the end, what made otherwise intelligent people succumb to the idea that immigrants are somehow different from them (Sniderman, et al, 2000, pgs. 8-11). In the end, the issue was more about intolerance than prejudice. Some Italians, they argue, were being made intolerant of others because they were manipulated to be so by the media and far right parties. Those parties had used manipulated statistics to fan flames of fear against immigrant crime and a specious argument against cultural dilution to rally honest Italians to their cause (Sniderman, et al, 2000, pgs. 91-119).

Elsewhere, Jeffrey Cole studied the attitudes of Sicilians toward African “new immigrants” in the 1990s. Like the Sniderman and Peri study, Cole views the intolerance of “new racists” on the far right as evidence of ignorance and manipulation. However, he presents a more accurate model of Sicilian interaction with immigrants and immigration than do Sniderman and Peri. This is because he explains how attitudes change depending on place and economy. His research shows that

⁸ <http://forzanuovaroma.blogspot.com/2007/10/forza-nuova-roma-news.html>

bourgeois merchants and college students think most favorably about immigrants, both being influenced by “market rationality” (Cole, 1997, pg. 92). Unfortunately, neither of these studies leave space for attitudes toward immigration such as those of the Ultras.



Figure 124. AS Roma Ultra with a smoke candle. 2004.

The Roman Ultras I met showed no signs of being xenophobic. In fact, their justifications for desiring stability in cultural form showed the emptiness of xenophobia as a concept. They had no fear of outsiders, others, or foreign cultural traditions. Their fear, instead, was that Rome was to become a cosmopolitan multicultural “*guazzabuglio*” (mishmash). Even as a great number of the Ultras of Curva Sud could be assumed to be children of a previous generation of migrants, more than likely from the Italian south, there is, interestingly, no discursive awareness of the fact in their self-understandings. While the city was not an industrial center, as were Milan, Genoa, and Turin, there was enough money (in tourism, service employment and shop keeping) and cultural allure (in *La Dolce Vita*) to make Rome a viable option to Southern provincial life (Zamagni, 2000, pgs. 55-61). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Rome’s population was swelled by one-third with migrants from

around Lazio (the region of which Rome is capital) and the Southern regions (Ginsborg, 2003a, pg. 220).



Figure 125. AS Roma Ultra with two flares. 2004.

Nonetheless, the overwhelming cultural identifier for AS Roma's Ultras is Rome and "being Roman." While there could be a process of "invention" here, whereby an artificial community is created through narratives that promote the cohesion of disparate groups (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, pgs. 1-12), I suspect it is the "truth" of *Romanità* that renders the ideology of Roman greatness and the "the Rome of the Ultras" nearly isomorphic - so much so that one's pre-Roman genealogy is less relevant than one's current commitment to Rome and Curva Sud. The "inventedness" of memory (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5), or, its metaphorical and monumental form, often allows for omission and invisibility in specific areas (usually associated with some form of moralism - as in truth and reconciliation) (Crapanzano, 2004, pgs. 156-157). Just as the Ultras discriminate between the various strata of Roman history, they often willingly ignore their personal sundry backgrounds.

Romanità is a feeling, another *mentalità* to be sure, but it is also something material and recognizable in the physiology of the Ultras. These are often men of the hardest order, with muscles,

tattoos, and extreme self-discipline, who will shed tears while gazing upon Rome from the Gianicolo Hill. As a caveat, however, I must say that having a deep Roman pedigree is extremely important to those who have it. The Ultra with the longest Roman genealogy I met, Danillo of *Antichi Valori*, boasted seven-generations, but only through his mother's line. His father is a migrant from Campagna. Even so, Danillo stakes his claim to Romanness on his *Romanità* and years of service in Curva Sud, as he says, "*per difendere l'onore di Roma*" (in defense of the honor of Rome).

With regard to the Ultras' militarism, explained in Chapter 6, their actions "in defense of Rome" are more determinant of Romanness than their respective backgrounds. To sacrifice and, potentially, suffer for Rome's honor, is considered heroic, and, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the conferring of "Roman" status is of the highest seriousness. That being said, Ultras must demonstrate their willingness to "be an Ultra" for an extended period before being honored thus.

The "Ultra" honored with "Romanness" was myself. My being American was an issue in that it gave my new status even more *gravitas* (seriousness, weight). But the Ultras used my Americanness to make points to me that might not otherwise ring true. One was their use of "melting pot" to explain the distance between their Rome and the Rome of the rest of the modern world. With no melting pot ideology of their own, the Ultras wondered why the liberal world expected them to open their arms to anyone who wanted to set up shop in Rome. Their identification with Rome was something to be admired, they said. Their identification with Rome was their model for how other peoples should interact with their cities.

Luca (introduced above) and a group of 16 Ultras at *Padroni di Casa* were dumbfounded when I explained that it was not part of being American to have strong connections to where we were born or lived. On their behalf (metaphorically), Luca asked (in my favorite moment as a

researcher amongst the Ultras), “*come si puo vivere cosi, a testa in giu*” (how can one live like this, with one’s head down). For them, to live was a matter of pride; so much so that it seemed never to have occurred to them that others might not feel about their place of residence the way they do about Rome. Further, the idea of “hanging one’s head” conjures images of shame, weakness, and defeat - the antithesis of what the Ultras form of life is about.

For them, the issue of immigrants had little to do with rejection of others through ignorance but of protecting something they cherish from diminution. Again, they wanted to know “how many immigrants came to Rome because of their undying passion for Rome and to become Roman.” I relayed numerous stories about American students proudly displaying their ignorance of Rome, its history and topography, on the 8 tram from Trastevere. The Ultras were not surprised. “Trastevere is ruined. It’s no longer Roman but full of foreigners,” I was told dismissively.



Figure 126. A tourist bathing in the *Trevi* fountain. Rome. 2007.

On other occasions I was also told what Trastevere was like as little as 20 years ago. Needless to say, their understanding of Trastevere, even if driven by nostalgia, mirrored their

understanding of the rest of the city. Romans who still lived in the neighborhood suffered everyday at the hands of unfeeling and mobbish tourists and immigrants, Daniele of *Giovinezza* said as we walked the area on a summer evening. Again, with my being an American a focal point of conversation, he wanted me to “tell the world” that grandparents and elders who were the nobility of Roman society were now just victims of rowdy American students and vulgar immigrant merchants.

ii. African Immigrants

The two types of immigration of most concern to the Ultras are the arrival of African illegal immigrants to Lampedusa and the legal immigration of Roma from Eastern Europe. While they are ambivalent about the Africans, they are downright hostile to the Roma. Despite having ample opportunities to witness Ultra hostilities to African immigrants, I saw none, aside from the instance described in the Introduction. Migrants from Africa were most commonly encountered in Rome as sidewalk salesmen of counterfeit purses, CDs, and DVDs. Perhaps because they tended to be seen in the *centro storico* (historical center) and not in other neighborhoods, the Ultras had little to say to them. That being said, they often wondered aloud why they had come to Rome. The only answer they knew of was “*da fare soldi*” (to make money). To make money was the worst answer they could have come up with. For the Ultras ask of each and all the same that they ask of themselves - not to diminish ourselves by reducing life to a series of opportunities to make or spend money. This critique of life as a marketplace was clearly consistent with their critique of *Calcio Moderno*.



Figure 127. Typical image of African immigrants arriving in Lampedusa. 2007.

For all of the ambivalence of how the Ultras interacted with African immigration in Rome, there was little sympathy for those arriving in Lampedusa, an island off the southwestern coast of Sicily. From early-spring to late-fall, it was normal to read daily in the morning papers or to see on television that a boat or raft carrying Africans had made its way to Lampedusa (figure 127). According to ANSA and Istat, 20,450 Africans made their way to Lampedusa in 2007. Through 9 October, 27,417 had arrived there in 2008 (since 1998, roughly 265,000 Africans had arrived in Italy by boat).⁹ Coming in from 25 to 450 at a time, the Africans were seen literally as a flood by the Ultras. And, with each arrival, the left and right politicians argued publicly about how to properly handle the situation. Predictably, the left sought the more compassionate approach, saying that not only would denying the Africans entrance be inhumane, it would be illegal. In March 2007, Romano Prodi even went so far as to commend his government for having “an open door policy on

⁹ <http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news-detailed.asp?newsid=11409>

immigration.” Immigrants, he explained, were “a true blessing for businesses, for less skilled workers and in helping care for the elderly and disabled.”¹⁰



Figure 128. Clandestine immigrants being held in Lampedusa. 2007.

Even as it was illegal to deny asylum seekers the right to a hearing, the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development announced that, while legal aliens were arriving in Italy and Europe in record numbers - 31,000 in Italy in 2005 alone - those applying for asylum had dropped to 15% of total arrivals.¹¹

The most extreme gesture in support of the Africans was reported by the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, which covered the plans of *Amani*, an Italian nonprofit, to erect a monument in Lampedusa commemorating those Africans who died at sea attempting to illegally enter Italy. According to officials at *Amani*, the thousands of Africans who seek to reach Lampedusa and other European ports each year are “victims of unscrupulous human traffickers who pocket hundreds of

¹⁰ <http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news-detailed.asp?newsid=100307>

¹¹ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-06-25_12574215

euros to take them on rickety boats unfit for the journey.”¹²

The right rejected the economic and humanitarian discourses, choosing instead to focus upon the cultural and social affects of immigration. Jole Santeli of *Forza Italia* accused Prodi of ignoring the feelings of Italians on the issue. He explained that the presence of immigrants was causing tension in Italian cities, as even few immigrants give the impression that the country is changing beyond recognition.¹³ TNT Sofres, a French research institute, found that the majority of Italians feared immigration because of the cultural change it must entail. While they were less concerned about the economic impact of immigration, 50% of 4900 respondents saw immigration as a threat to the country’s cultural identity. According to the same survey, 75% saw illegal immigration as an important problem, 57% said that there were too many foreigners living in Italy, and 53% said failure to assimilate was the fault of the immigrants.¹⁴

In response, Interior Minister Giuliano Amato, author of the Amato Decree (see chapters 3 and 4), said that it would be dangerous to put limits on immigrants. Thanks to an extremely low birthrate (1.23 children per woman), Italy’s population was in steady decline, and immigrants were an important source of labor. The real worry, he said, were “ideological prejudices” against immigration, as had been witnessed in Holland, where the native population demanded that immigrants speak Dutch and show knowledge of Dutch culture and history.¹⁵ The Ultras were as incensed over these comments as they had been over the Amato Decree.

¹² <http://www.spiegel.de/fotostrecke/fotostrecke-32554.html>

¹³ <http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news-detailed.asp?newsid=100307>

¹⁴ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-10-15_115115731

¹⁵ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-10-15_115115731

“How,” I was asked by Giulio, a 28 year-old Monte Testaccio nightclub bartender and unaffiliated Ultra formerly of *AS Roma Ultras*, “could someone feel no unease about selling-out his culture and history in order to appease multinational businesses and mercenary foreigners who only want to exploit our country?” According to Mabel Berezin, when exogenous threats to national or cultural identity arise, most people will turn to the state or to “law and order” as allies against the *xenos* (stranger) (Berezin, 2009, pg. 34). The Ultras and others on the right had no such ally in the center-left government of Romano Prodi. This was not only because of policy decisions that aimed at more fully connecting Italy to the global marketplace, but because the Prodi government readily adopted the neo-liberal language of immigration justification couched solely in terms of demographic decline and economic benefit (Berezin, 2009, pgs. 30-31).

iii. The European Union, Immigration, and the Roma

In the summer of 2007, the European Parliament consistently utilized a neoliberal understanding of the world as a marketplace, saying that it would be tantamount to suicide if Europe closed its doors to immigrants. Being chaired by the Italian Socialist Lili Gruber, the European Parliament urged the European Union to make immigration easier, rather than more difficult.¹⁶ Romano Prodi made similar comments soon after, arguing that “protectionism” of any kind was suicidal. “Italy is not afraid to open its borders,” he said.

Speaking about successful cuts to Italy’s 18.6 billion euro trade deficit, Prodi explained that it was only due to embracing globalization that the country was re-establishing itself as an economic power. Being competitive was the biggest challenge and biggest responsibility, he said.¹⁷ This came

¹⁶

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B03E6DA1231F934A1575AC0A9619C8B63&scp=1&sq=european%20parliament%20immigration%20wanted&st=cse=>

¹⁷ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-21-12_111214815

weeks after the European Union lamented Italy's budget deficits. With Stability Pact budget limits set at 3%, the European Parliament urged the Prodi government to make drastic cuts to services and to make the bureaucracy more efficient. Despite having debts totaling 105% of GDP, Italy was expected to have zero deficits by 2010. The only way to achieve that goal was by cutting expenditure on services and applying tax revenues to the debt.¹⁸

It was particularly galling for the rightist Ultras to hear Prodi and representatives of the European Union speaking to Italians about globalization and immigration. "It is the will of these forces," Fabio of *Boys Roma* told me, "that Africans and Muslims praying in mosques be the face of Italy." Of Prodi, little more was expected, despite his being Italian. "He is a communist," he said, despite Prodi having been a former member of the center-left and right Christian Democrats. The European Union, though, had become an enemy in ways that few expected. The economic hardships of membership had been expected by many in Italy. As a country that had historically used currency devaluation to stem the onset of inflation, Italy was now at the mercy of the powerful French and German economies. Inflation figures were reported each evening on RAI's TG1. 2.4% was the norm for late-2007 (a three-year high). Pasta and bread prices had increased 300% in one year.

While waiting for a table in a Monteverde pizzeria, Luca of *Padroni di Casa* and I glanced at the news on the pizzeria's bar area TV. It was the week before Christmas, 2007. The only news, it seemed, was bad news. The Ultras were still on strike following the Circo Massimo protest (see Chapter 10), Italian soldiers were dying in Afghanistan, and the alleged Roma crimes were prompting popular cries for their deportation to Romania. At that, Luca sneered, "that will never happen." I agreed that it would be difficult, assuming they were Romanian in origin, given

¹⁸ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-10-10_110128137

Romania's member status in the European Union. "Exactly," he told me, "we have lost our sovereignty to these people." "Which people - the European Union or the Roma?" I asked. "Well, the European Union," he laughed, "although I guess one could say both. Anyway, we have lost the right to defend ourselves."

In 2007 four high-profile crimes committed by Roma captured the public's attention. The first was the April 2007 murder of Vanessa Russo by two Roma prostitutes. The second was the murder of four Roma children by their parents near Livorno in August 2007. The third was the October 2007 brutal rape and murder by beating of Giovanna Reggiani by a Roma with a history of violent crime. And the fourth was the rape of a Roman woman in December 2007. The response to each was similar. Romans, not just Ultras, were outraged. They wanted the Roma out of Rome and without haste.¹⁹

The government's responses were less uniform, there being little it could do initially. There was no legal precedent for expelling the Roma, it was said, now that Romania, home country to most of the Roma in Italy, was a member of the European Union. A hastily drawn decree after the Reggiani rape and murder was held up to the public as proof that the government was aware of public demands that something be done to rid the country of Roma. But, because the authors of the decree had also included measures to decrease crimes against homosexuals, President Napolitano refused to sign it into law. After the rape and knifing in December, a new version of the bill was drafted which allowed for the deportation of violent immigrants, even if they had come from European Union countries.

Walter Veltroni, then mayor of Rome (before leaving the post to form the American-style

¹⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-492802/Savage-murder-brought-backlash-Italys-migrants--laws-expel-them.html>

Partito Democratico (PD- Democratic Party in 2008), addressed public outrage by claiming that “in the first seven months of 2007, 75% of arrests for murder, rape and robbery [had] been Romanian Roma.” “Roma committed 76 murders in the last year and a half - a record which surpassed the 48 committed in a similar time-frame by Albanians a decade ago. In the same period, from January 2006 to June 2007,” Veltroni explained, “almost half of rapes were committed by Roma. They also topped the statistics for people trafficking and forcing women and girls into prostitution - while they were second to Senegalese nationals for robberies.”²⁰ Police began sweeping *campi nomadi* (Roma camps) nationwide soon after. Arrests were made of Roma without proper identification or proven criminal records either in Romania or Italy.

On 1 November, two days after Giovanna Reggiani had been found clinging to life in a ditch near a Roma camp along the Tiber, six to eight men (and perhaps one woman) with metal bars, knives, and chains attacked a Roma camp near Tor Bella Monaca, a suburb on the eastern outskirts of Rome.²¹ The same camp had been the target of a *Forza Nuova* manifestation in October.

Even earlier there were raids against other Roma camps in Rome. On consecutive nights in late September 2007 a camp near Ponte Mammolo was attacked by young Italians with not only knives and metal bars but also Molotov cocktails. The camp had been burned but no one was injured (figure 129). One arrest was made.²² It was revealed by *La Repubblica* five months later that the arrested youth was an AS Roma Ultra.²³ Raids of camps in Milan and Naples also occurred.

²⁰ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-11-01_101110104

²¹ www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/04/italy.johnhooper

²² *Il Romanista*. Anno IV Numero 260. Venerdì 21 Settembre 2007. Pg. 11

²³ <http://roma.repubblica.it/dettaglio/Roma-condannati--assaltano-il-campo-rom/1657490>



Figure 129. The Roma camp near Ponte Mammolo burns after a fascist raid. Rome. September 2007.

The extreme action of the raiders was condemned by the media, the government, and by charitable organizations. *La Repubblica* a center-left newspaper based in Rome, published a series of appeals for reason and tolerance as well as condemnations of hatred and violence.²⁴ Representatives of Veltroni's government expressed solidarity with the victims of the raids, saying that peace and tolerance was the true face of Rome, not violence and xenophobia.²⁵ A *Rifondazione Comunista* party member, Massimiliano Smeriglio, was horrified that "racist Romans" were attempting to eradicate from their communities "rom, migranti, lavavetri, e prostitute" (Roma, migrants, squeegee men, and prostitutes).²⁶

²⁴ <http://roma.repubblica.it/context-nav/nomadi?excludeId=1370835>

²⁵ <http://roma.repubblica.it/context-nav/Jean+Leonardi+Touadi?excludeId=1370837>

²⁶ <http://roma.repubblica.it/dettaglio/Roma-cittadini-giustizieri-assaltano-il-campo-rom/1370805>

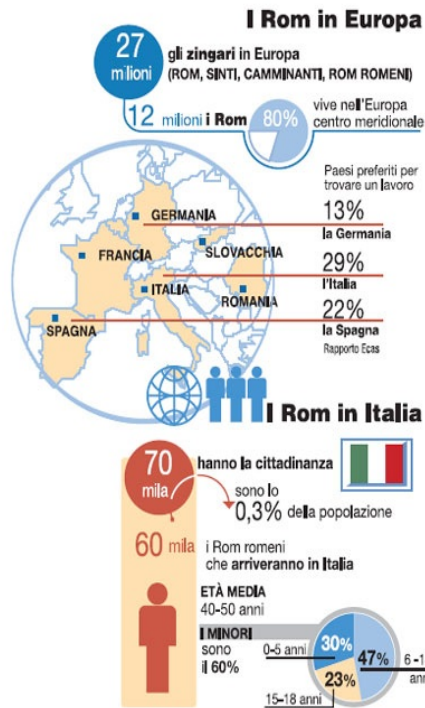


Figure 130. *Il Messaggero* graphic on Roma in Italy. 2007.

An immigrant rights group called EveryOne said that, as usual, Roma were the victims of racism, while only one man had been guilty of murdering Reggiani.²⁷ In December Linda Laura Sabbadini, the head of Istat, addressed the Global Forum on Gender Statistics. Speaking on the issue of Roma crime in Italy, she explained that the perception of Roma as criminals was due more to stereotype than fact. In fact, Roma only committed 10% of the rapes in Italy, she said.²⁸ She failed to relate that number to their percentage of the population, however, which, according to *Il Messaggero*, a center-right Roman newspaper, was 0.3% in 2007 (figure 130).²⁹

²⁷ www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/11/06/18458552.php

²⁸ http://www.lifeinitaly.com/news/news/H/2007-12-10_101210105

²⁹ http://www.ilmessaggero.it/articolo.php?id=133286&sez=HOME_INITALIA&ssez=POLITICA

Not only were the Ultras not impressed by the discourse of tolerance and peaceful coexistence; they were, in some cases, openly committed to ridding their communities of Roma, prostitutes, squeegee men, and migrant workers, as Smeriglio had said. From the perspective of the Ultras, it is difficult to interpret the responses to Roma crime as being motivated by prejudice, xenophobia, or racism. They desired to maintain strong connections with their communities, with their narrowly defined altruistic co-identifiers. A failure to do so seemed a form of self-abasement in the name of a multiculturalism that could promise them nothing but the diminishment of their form of life.

IV. Conclusion

AS Roma's Ultras are a political phenomenon. Within the Curva, the themes and scenes of their aesthetic displays often invoke the fascist and ancient past of Rome. Beyond the Curva, they are sometimes involved with the leading neo-fascist parties in Italy. Even when unaligned with these parties, however, the Ultras make use of a critique of the contemporary world that puts them at odds with the political issues of neoliberal globalization as well as the concurrent morality of pluralism and inclusion that globalization promotes.

In this chapter, I demonstrated that the Ultras are politically active. More importantly, I explained that these activities are buttressed by a world view that links *Romanità* with protectionism, a will to violence, and a vision of society based upon the narrow confines of their altruism.

The deep affection for Rome carried by AS Roma's Ultras links them with fascism and the uses to which it put *Romanità*. According to members of both Ultra groups and neo-fascist parties, it is the former that promote a use of *Romanità* in the present. As such, the political concerns and actions of the Ultras are given meaning by the devotion to Rome. Their protest against MTV, their

presence at Family Day, and their opposition to Rome's Gay Pride parade each showed a concern more for the modernization of Rome in neoliberal terms than an aversion to the constituents whose rights were being advanced.

Likewise, the Ultras take an oppositional stance to immigration. Clandestine Africans arriving in Lampedusa are the most visible examples in the Italian media. More locally, it is the Roma that have become the symbol of anti-immigrant feeling. However, as I demonstrated above, it is less the xenophobic aversion to the Roma that drives Ultra opposition but a sense of helplessness in the face of systemic obstacles to removing the Roma from Rome.

The chapter was a critique of anthropologists who assume that prejudice, xenophobia, and resource competition fully explain the interaction between locals and immigrants. Moralistic assumptions about the local benefits of immigrants are, I suggested, often connected to an unquestioned belief in the neoliberal economic model that promotes flexible cheap labor and hyper-consumption. In place of these assumptions, I allowed the Ultras to speak for themselves, using the terms that are coherent in their local context.

CHAPTER NINE: Circo Massimo and the Ultra War Against *Calcio Moderno*

In the third and fourth chapters I described responses by the State and the Ultras to the deaths of Filippo Raciti and Gabriele Sandri. The government, riding a wave of popular outrage at the violent outbursts of the Ultras, implemented policing measures that seem more suited to ending the Ultra phenomenon than the violence associated with soccer. The Ultras, for their part, acted to protect themselves, their movement, soccer, and the honor of their cohort from the repression of the state and from incursions of *Calcio Moderno*.

This chapter continues the discussion of Chapter 4, as well as those in-between, acting as a crescendo of the various aspects of the Ultras, from *mentalità* to their political commitments and actions. The chapter focuses on the Circo Massimo protest of December 2, 2007, which was a protest not only against the killing of Gabriele Sandri but also the highly moralized war against the Ultras that had been escalating since the killing of Raciti in February 2007. It then discusses the changes to the game and to fandom that have occurred in Italy and other European countries as a result of the explosion of the televising and marketing of soccer.



Figure 131. Ultras sticker demanding freedom for the Ultras, no pay television, and no games on Saturday. 2007.

I. Il Perché di Una Protesta (Why We Protest)

Lorenzo Contucci's *AS Roma Ultras* website announced a *sciopero* (strike) by Curva Sud's Ultras on the morning of 29 November, 2007. Instead of attending the upcoming game against Udinese Calcio, the Ultras would gather at Rome's fabled Circo Massimo. The notice reflected their dedication to a form of life at odds with the bourgeois ideals of the Italian state which, as the protest unfolded, came to be talked about as an "*avvento vuota della vita Italiana*" (a coming emptiness of modern Italian life). In it we see how the Ultras understand the interstices between justice (and injustice), the media, and the new interests in soccer that are moving the game away from its attachments to local populations and cultural forms.

Fan of AS Roma, Ultras of Curva Sud, simple customer of this industry of calcio, or deluded and romantic supporter of an ideal (and style) of life, to you we write this notice in order to explain why next Sunday, when AS Roma hosts Udinese, Curva Sud will remain empty of people and passion. The death of Gabriele Sandri is already being forgotten, exceeded by and buried under a system which safeguards its own interests and disregards those of others. All that happens will be distorted, destroyed, or reconstructed with the objective of being made instruments for the powerful. This is what is happening, now as always.

In a country where "the law is equal for all," but all are not equal before the law, we are once again spectators of a new injustice. We see ourselves for the umpteenth time the targets of a public opinion manipulated by the press, the mass media, and the instruments of power. The Ultras are being destroyed because the *curve* are oases of free thinking and spaces counter to the increasing homogeneity of a lobotomized society devoid of values. They are lands not yet standardized and directed by the usual binaries of the interested - lands not made comfortable with those in control.

Once upon a time, there were choreographies, colors, flags, and banners. These are characteristics of how the *curve* had always been. But because of today's repression they will become only faded memories.

At this moment, in light of our reflections and above all our consciences, we must leave and remain outside the Curva but also this state of affairs. We ask each of you to reflect, to remember, and to begin to behave more justly, in these decidedly delicate times.

You will not find us outside the gates of Curva Sud this Sunday because then others would be able to say that it is only our bullying that has kept the Curva empty. The only possibility we have

of saving our dignity and rights is that each of us, as both accomplices and victims of this situation, chooses to leave behind that which is designed to ensure our extinction.

The appointment is for Sunday [2 December 2007] at 14:00 in the Circo Massimo. Come with scarves and flags united with the thoughts, passions, and ideals of being *Ultras della nostra Roma*.

The spectacle has begun, but without us.

The Groups of Curva Sud¹

The document was signed in deference to the spectacle that would take place on the field, referring to the feeling of sacrifice being made by those who would choose to attend the protest instead of supporting *their* team. Indeed, the proprietorship of soccer was the main issue of the protest. Was it to be the soccer of the fans and locales where it was played or the soccer of television and global capitalism?



Figure 132. Curva Sud choreography, part 1, “The Curva that [the state] would like.” AS Roma-SS Lazio. 2009.

In the days between Sandri’s death and the decision by the Curva to protest, the Ultras had learned that they were banned until further notice from travel to away games. The Observatory (National Observatory of Sporting Events) would announce each week which games would be

¹ Translated from an original document in the collection of the author.

available for guests. Given the media's incessant speculation on the matter, there was no surprise. On the radio and television, journalists and private individuals directed rhetorical questions at the Observatory. There seemed to be a campaign against allowing the Ultras to continue to be a part of the game. Unsurprisingly, the Ultras wondered aloud at the rationale of the decision.



Figure 133. Curva Sud choreography, part 2, "This is Curva Sud!" AS Roma-SS Lazio. 2009.

At the *Boys Roma* office as the group decided on participating in the protest, I was surrounded not only by Ultras of varying ages, members of the leadership of *Boys* and *Ultras Romani*, members of *Fiamma Tricolore*, but also the widow and son of Paolo Zappavigna. Conversations were focused on how exactly the Ultras could defend themselves against the press and the police. What purpose did banning away-travel serve? How were away games related to the actual killing of Sandri? "Do the police blame us to the point that they cannot help themselves killing us if we travel to see a game," Simone, an animated and outspoken *Boys* Ultra asked. Fabio answered, "The riots were not because of away games - they were because the state killed an

innocent person and then did nothing to honor the victim.” “Therefore, why not close rest-stop restaurants or keep the police from having guns?” Flaminio of *Ultras Romani* added. They decided that banning away-travel was irrelevant - unless the real crime was that Gabriele was where he was when the bullet was fired because he was an Ultra.



Figure 134. Ultras near the Olympic Stadium. Rome. November 11, 2007.

Fabrizio, a well-respected *Boys* leader, at 38, the oldest Ultra in the room, who had once proudly shown me his *Fiamma Tricolore* membership card, stressed that they analyze how the media was operating to bend public opinion. “On the same day that we learned of the elevated charges we also learned that the group of SS Lazio Ultras were armed and that away games were banned,” he said. He was referring to the news of November 15, 2007, on which it was announced that the charge against Luigi Spaccatorella (police officer who shot and killed Gabriele Sandri) had been elevated to voluntary manslaughter, and that knives were found in the possession of the SS Lazio Ultras amongst whom “Gabbo” was traveling.²

2

<http://www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/cronaca/tifosi-morto-2/omicidio-volontario/omicidio-volontario.html?>

“The media want so desperately to blame Gabriele’s death on Gabriele and the Ultras,” Fabrizio explained, “that they shamed themselves in front of the entire nation with the claim [on 17 November 2007] that Sandri was found with rocks in his pocket.” Sandri’s brother held a press conference to say that the accusation was “insane” and that what was found was the type of limestone pebbles and residue used for aging denim.³ Fabrizio finished with a copy of *Il Romanista* in his hand. “The media,” he announced while rifling through the pages, “had even succeeded in making martyrs of themselves and the ‘civil mass of true fans who are the true victims of the actions of the Ultras’.”⁴

As the leaders decided what action to take regarding the proposed protest, many reiterated Fabrizio’s idea that the media were making criminals of the victims, and martyrs of the criminals. Even as there is incredible distance between the Ultras and those beyond the realm of their narrow altruistic bonds, it did not take a zealot to understand that words like *rabbia* (rage), *compassione* (compassion), *impegno* (commitment), and *onore* (honor), that play such a large role in how the Ultras explain the world, have less value for the general public. “In getting the games stopped and attacking the police, we and the Atalanta Ultras acted with [these things], while the teams and the league acted only to benefit SKY and its advertisers,” Fabio said.

After the meeting, a few Ultras walked to a bar for a beer. Among them were Fabio of *Boys* and Adriano of *Ultras Romani*, both of whom I knew were present near the Olympic Stadium the night of Sandri’s death. Both were model Ultras - always present away from Rome, always ready to confront any opponent, always generous to fellow AS Roma Ultras. In other words, they acted

³ <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/sport/calcio/tifo-violento/berizzi-tifosi/berizzi-tifosi.html?>

⁴ *Il Romanista*. Anno IV, n. 301. 16 Novembre 2007. Pg. 1, 3

in accord with the *mentalità*, were therefore widely respected, and could speak for their groups (and really the entire Curva Sud) without fear of reprisal.



Figure 135. Police-line near the Olympic Stadium. Rome. November 11, 2007.

As I have already demonstrated, the Ultras are serious about, and protective of, their *mentalità*, the various components of which have been outlined above. Most of these can be summed up in a short statement that graced the shirt of an unknown AS Roma Ultra at a game in Empoli. “Our *mentalità* knows only hatred and rivalry,” it said (figure 32). Another aspect of the *mentalità*, especially applicable to my research and the point I was making about Fabio and Adriano, is summarized in a piece of *Monteverde* graffiti: “Our *mentalità* is called silence. Death to spies” (figure 136). One acts with hatred and rivalry, then keeps quiet about it so as to keep the state from obtaining evidence. A short explanation of “acting in accord with the *mentalità*,” is somewhere between these two sentiments.



Figure 136. *Monteverde* Ultras graffiti. “Our *mentalità* is called silence. Death to spies.” Rome. 2008.

I asked Fabio and Adriano, given the state’s argument that Gabriele was killed without his identity as an Ultra being known, and that, therefore, it was an incident unrelated to soccer (which, moreover, did not warrant the cancelling of the day’s games), whether there was any action the league or state could have taken that would have prevented the uprising in Rome. “Nothing,” Adriano said. Certainly, I added, those making the decisions knew how the Ultras would react. “They know us because they are experts on the Ultras,” Adriano said sarcastically. “They know us as criminals, vandals, or mindless fascists made so by the infiltration and goading of political extremists. One would think that having us together, physically and emotionally, all over the country, would be the last thing they wanted.” Was he suggesting that the state wanted a violent reaction from the Ultras? “The state should have cancelled all games immediately and pleaded hat in hand for peace.”

I asked about the targets of the Ultras during the fighting. “To attack police stations and the offices of CONI [*Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano*, the Italian Olympic Committee, a standing body which has authority over all organized sport in Italy] showed that they knew what they were

doing. They were not hooligans,” answered Fabio, slyly distancing himself from the perpetrators. Finally, I asked, half in jest, if the Ultras were terrorists. An unnamed Roman prosecutor had been quoted by ANSA saying that the Ultras, by “attacking three police stations, were trying to wrest control from the state.”⁵ “We cannot even buy tickets, travel to and stay in a different city, or go in a stadium to sing for 90 minutes, yet the world is at our command?” Fabio bellowed. “Now the Atalanta Ultras are banned from their own stadium for four months, only for protesting the *‘vergogna dello stato,’* (shame of the state) and we are attempting to take over? No! *Non siamo terroristi ma neanche proviamo vergogna per sentirci onore*” (We are not terrorists but neither do we feel shame for our honorable actions). He continued talking about the Ultras in Bergamo. “Because there is one thing for certain: the only people in Bergamo who acted with dignity, honor, compassion, respect, and anything else the opposite of shame were the Ultras who got the game stopped. The players and the Lega [Calcio] acted with absolute shame, and the country now follows their lead, blaming this whole affair on us.”

II. December 2, 2007: Circo Massimo Roma

The idea behind the protest was to give the authorities what they wanted: soccer without the Ultras (figures 132 and 133). Organizers thought that if they showed the country what “modern soccer,” without the passion and pageantry of the Ultras, looked like, Italians would be more cautious in demanding their removal from the game. Because the Ultras live in a world dominated by other Ultras and all things Ultra, it struck me on numerous occasions that they were at once incredibly aware, and also unaware of the distance between themselves and other people and fans. In this case, their intended audience was the mass who have chosen to watch games on television

⁵ <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/sport/calcio/tifo-violento/berizzi-tifosi/berizzi-tifosi.html?>

rather than at stadiums; that mass of “good fans” who are perfectly suited to *Calcio Moderno* because they consume, rather than participate in, the game.



Figure 137. Curva Sud Roma during AS Roma-Udinese Calcio. The groups amassed instead at the Circo Massimo. Rome. December 2, 2007.

As I explained in Chapter 6, the *tifosi buoni* (good fans) as they are often called in the media, are the consumerist bourgeois fans that see the game as an entertainment, who cheer politely for the home team, who value sportsmanship over partisanship, who disavow racism in all its forms, who accept what happens on the field with humility, who experience the joy of fandom minus the aggression, and who cheer only in a way that displays education and bearing (figure 94). In other words, the “model fan” is as far removed as possible from the Ultras.

The Ultras, in being denied the right to travel to support AS Roma, decided in meetings like the one at *Boys Roma*, that if they could not be a part of an AS Roma game, they would martyr themselves and not watch it at all. At least that way SKY and its advertisers would not benefit by their absence from stadiums. It was almost romantic, then, that the Ultras thought they could gain

a measure of public acceptance by removing their voices and colors from the stadium.

Approximately two hundred Ultras representing various groups amassed near the Ostiense Station in Testaccio before heading together to the Circo Massimo. The leader of this group, “Spadino” of *Ultras Romani*, spoke about what could be expected during the day, as well as what protocol was expected from the protest’s organizers. “Under no circumstances,” he said, “are we to engage the police. We will sing and gesture against them, but that is all.” Someone asked what would happen if the police invaded the Circo. “They will not do so,” he said, relaying to us what he had learned from a police source. We were told to expect many journalists and photographers. Again, the directions were to have no contact with them. We were free to insult them in song, but action against them would not be tolerated.



Figure 138. Ultras gathering at the Circo Massimo. Rome. December 2, 2007.

“The Circo is a public space, so the public will be present: police, media, tourists, and Romans. It is up to us to show who we are. We will give them nothing, but the media will *strumentalizzare* (exploit) our actions to suit their needs. There will be many Ultras there, even from

rival groups and from groups long-dead. However, the day is about unity,” he said, “and any group choosing to participate will be honored in return. Because,” he concluded, “the protest is also an opportunity to show how great Curva Sud Roma can be.”

We entered the Circo around 1:00 PM. There was little going on except greetings and eating. Some group members climbed the Aventine-side wall of the Circo in order to place their banners on the ground (figure 142). Within an hour, the central core of the Circo was full of Ultras. There were few, if any, normal fans present, but only the most committed and hardened Ultras, like one would see at a risky away game (like Juventus, Fiorentina, or Livorno). These numbered approximately 6,000. Instead of the agitated state in which one finds these characters away from Rome, there were only hugs, smiles, and well-wishes.



Figure 139. Young *Fedayn* Ultra. Circo Massimo.

Some of the Ultras brought their children to the Circo. They could be seen standing with their battle-hardened fathers carrying and waving flags of *Boys*, *Fedayn*, and even the disbanded fascist

group *Tradizione Distinzione Roma*. Later in the day, the *Fedayn* child “representative,” a girl of approximately 7 years, waved the group’s flag as the current members encircled her and sang the *Fedayn* anthem (figure 139). Given the group’s “silence” I dared not ask who she was. Frankly, I felt that taking her photograph was the most dangerous thing I did amongst the Ultras.



Figure 140. The protest begins. Circo Massimo.

10-minutes before game-time, *Ultras Romani* called everyone together, using one of the megaphones now banned from stadiums. The Ultras began singing, and a long banner was unfurled at the base of the Aventine wall, but only after a series of bombs exploded and smoke candles and emergency flares were lit to announce to all that the day’s activities (and festivities) were beginning (figure 140). The banner was held aloft for the gathered media and Ultras with cameras and cell phones to plainly see and capture. “*Questa è l’ora de mostra’ quanto valemo,*” (This is the time to show how much we are worth) it read (figure 141). Not only was it part of the chorus to famous Roman singer Lando Fiorini’s beloved song *Forza Roma*, which celebrated AS Roma’s Championship of 1983-1984, but it was also a perfect encapsulation of the goal of the protest.

The list of current groups participating in the protest was a who’s who of Curva Sud Roma.

Arditi, Ultras Romani, Tor Bella Monaca, Razza Romana, Ultras San Lorenzo-Primavalle, Fedayn, Boys Roma, Giovinezza, LVPI, Casa Albertone, Padroni di Casa, Roma Casual Firm, Irish Clan Roma, and a dozen smaller groups all placed banners on the Aventine or held flags with the intent that their contribution be noted by those present (figure 142).



Figure 141. The protest's theme: demonstrate our worth. Circo Massimo.



Figure 142. Journalists watch the protest. Note the banners on the Aventine wall of the Circo Massimo. Rome. December 2, 2007

As game-time approached, groups began forming around those with portable radios and cell phones (with radio service) so as to follow the action. As if on cue, the sky turned dark and rain began to fall. Only a few Ultras had been prescient enough to bring umbrellas. A few of them, along with the media, sought cover under the trees on the Palatine side of the Circo. Most just ignored the rain and kept following the game. And they sang. Just as if at the stadium, the Ultras began singing at the kick-off and continued to do so until the first half ended.

Throughout the first half I walked around the Circo, getting a sense of who was there and who was not. Some in the Curva, who call themselves Ultras, were against the protest because they were against the participating groups. As I explained in Chapter 2, for some of the smaller groups that inhabit the lower areas of the Curva, the anti-commercial dimension of the *mentalità* is so sacred that to join with “merchant” groups in anything is a betrayal of being an Ultra. Even with their absence the Ultras filled the central island of the Circo. The distance between Ultras and non-Ultras is palpable in stadiums, but in the Circo, although a stadium, the distance was heightened to the point of surreality. Along the edges of the mass of Ultras, tourists looked on curiously with no way of knowing what they were seeing and local Romans jogged or walked their dogs without being bothered.

To follow the second half, one of the most respected Ultras in Curva Sud, a longtime member of *Fedayn* named Giorgio, used a megaphone to announce to all within earshot what was happening. Giorgio is covered in tattoos ranging from the Lupa Capitolina to the AS Roma logo to a message about being an Ultra and carrying Rome in his heart. He speaks in an unmistakable gravelly voice that sounds impossible to be human. Before the megaphones were banned by the Amato Decree in February 2007 he carried the *Fedayn* megaphone used to coordinate their singing. In December 2006

AS Roma played in Turin against Torino FC. After this somewhat memorable game Giorgio regaled the entire section of AS Roma fans with jokes and songs, one of which became instantly famous in Curva Sud. Titled “*Bastardo Steward*,” it begins with a hummed bar of the Police Academy movie’s theme song.

The less-than-optimal conditions for following the game were noted with pride by all with whom I spoke. Standing in the rain and awaiting bursts of cheering or swearing from those closer to a radio was seen as far superior to watching the game on television. Many vowed that they would never watch a game on television - only at the stadium or on the radio, just as their parents and grandparents had done. As always with the Ultras, there was a longing for purity that made sense of many of their actions, from *squadristi* raids to acting as the self-proclaimed “conscience” of soccer. In previous chapters I discussed the idea of sacrifice that is an important aspect of their worldview. Standing in the rain listening to distant voices describe a game in which one would normally play an active role certainly falls into the category of sacrifice.

Just as in the United States, radio produced “voices” that were inseparable from one’s experience of the teams. In the case of AS Roma, the voice of the team is a Roman named Carlo Zampa. Most Ultras prefer following games with Carlo because he is an obvious partisan. There is no attempt to be diplomatic, professional, or even decent when Carlo Zampa broadcasts. His job as the public address announcer for AS Roma’s home games ended in 2004-2005 because he used the PA to insult a Juventus player who had demanded a “transfer,” or trade, from AS Roma the previous season. Partisanship was one of the guiding principles for which the Ultras in Circo Massimo were protesting.

All told, the Circo protest was the most important event during my time doing field research,

even as it occurred in December 2007, my last full month in Rome. Not only did it afford me the opportunity to meet and speak with the most important and influential Ultras in Curva Sud, it also gave me credibility and a high level of acceptance amongst the Ultras. Before the Circo there were Ultras whom I had seen at away games and in Rome who were reluctant to accept my presence. Many of these barriers were diminished that day. It was explained to me that they and I had faced the same choice. I, with little to gain by associating myself with the hardest and most committed of Ultras, nor from actually choosing to miss an important game, had nonetheless done so.⁶



Figure 143. Ultras in the Circo Massimo.

I had stayed under the rain with no umbrella and participated in a protest that meant, in their eyes, the survival of the Ultras and of, as Stefano of *Padroni di Casa* explained it, “*libertà al’ Italia*” (freedom in Italy). Indeed, none of them knew that many of my closest allies and friends beyond the Ultras had passionately voiced their displeasure at my decision to attend the protest instead of the

⁶ I had presented myself as a fan of AS Roma, which I was, knowing that without a sincere devotion to what they hold most dear, I would have been seen as just another interloper attempting to make a name off the Ultras.

game. It was made clear to me by many in Monteverde that those at the Circo were not fans, that they only went there to bate and hate the police, that they have ruined the Curva, once open to all fans and even the opposition but now exclusionary, and that their silly hatred was killing the game. In the end, I had chosen the Ultras over AS Roma.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in addition to giving me legitimacy and credibility amongst the Ultras, this decision also prompted some of the leaders of *Boys* and *Padroni di Casa* to proclaim me a Roman. This romantic move was made with a simple but affectionate hug by Giulio of *Boys* midway through the game's second half. In the weeks after, though, word must have spread because I received text messages from more than 20 Ultras wishing me well and sending me off into the world as a Roman.



Figure 144. Ultras in the Circo Massimo celebrate AS Roma's victory.

From a distance, the Circo probably looked like a party. At the final whistle of the game which AS Roma won 2-1, it was full of song, emergency flares, bombs, and smoke candles. Members of *Ultras Romani* created a large mosh-pit, and the assembled crowd began pushing and shoving while singing. The groups who brought flags spread out along the base of the Aventine and

“put their colors in the wind.”

From within the Circo, it was in fact a party. The flares and smoke candles blanketed the evening sky with an otherworldly red and yellow glow. Smoke was thick and so was the singing. The *Ultras Romani* mosh-pit poured forth to a song from 2002-2003: “*Siamo gli Ultras della Roma; e fieri Centurioni e cavalieri; A difendere la città; Orgoglio della nostra storia; Ave Roma, Roma vittoriosa; Com'è scritto nella storia; Il vento gelido del nord; Non ci potrà fermare.*” (We are the Ultras of Roma, fierce Centurions and Knights, we defend the city, glory of our history, Hail Roma, Victorious Roma, As history has shown, the cold northern winds cannot stop us.)



Figure 145. Ultras in the Circo Massimo as dusk falls.

The flags, smoke, bombs, flares, and songs were manifestations of the soccer that the Ultras are determined to save. But they are only the physical manifestations of their *mentalita`*. As the words to the *Centurioni* song make clear, there was more going on in the Circo than partying and creating a spectacle. Just to make sure that the media and less-than-committed Ultras understood the importance of the day and how it represented the triumph of the Ultra *mentalita`*, at the end of the

protest, in the late-dusk light, group leaders appeared with trash-bags and the Ultras cleaned the area they had inhabited of any trash that they or others had been so careless to drop. “The city is ours,” cried Adriano of *Ultras Romani*, “show anyone who comes here how to care for it.”



Figure 146. Ultras in the Circo Massimo with flares and flags.

For many Ultras the Circo was the culmination of 40 years of Ultra history. It was an acknowledgment of from where the Ultra had come and to where they were going. This was evident in the respect given to the older and extinct groups who attended. One of these was *CUCS*, which was represented by its founder Stefano Malfatti. After a touching ovation, he held court with an umbrella and a megaphone during the first half. Malfatti, with his gray mop of hair and slight build, looks nothing like today’s hard-edged Ultras. Nor does he look like he ever could have. Courageously he urged the Ultras to change, saying that they need to end the war against the police, as it is a war they cannot win. He would never have been harmed or shouted down in that environment but he still took a position unpopular on the day.

He said that violence had always been a part of the Ultras, but that before they made war on

other Ultras, which the police were happy to accommodate. He concluded by saying that one is born Ultra and one dies Ultra, and that both of his children will be in the Curva when they are old enough. Malfatti affirmed the Ultras' form of life, making it clear that it is a way to live with honor, values, and dignity. He seemed to understand his role as a father figure to most of those present. For it was the *CUCS* that created the idea of a “*mentalità Ultras*” that Curva Sud Roma was still bound to protect and serve.

In addition to Malfatti I heard various active Ultras speak. Amongst these were members of *Padroni di Casa*, *Fedayn*, *Boys*, *Razza Romana*, *LVPI*, and *Primavalle-San Lorenzo*. By the end of the game, I had compiled a list of themes which they used to explain the current aims and attentions of the Ultras. The list became the basis for this dissertation. I divided what had been said to me and to those near me into two categories: either affirmation or negation. The affirmations outweighed the negations, which even if unintentional, perfectly promotes the “life affirming” nature of the Ultras. For even the “protest” was more a celebration of being Ultra than a negation of what they do not want to be.



Figure 147. An Ultra with a freshly lit flare. Circo Massimo.

The Ultras in protest at Circo Massimo said Yes to: flags (*bandieri*), banners (*striscioni*), bombs (*petardi*), smoke candles (*fumogeni*), flares (*razzi illuminati*), love (*amore*), enemies (*nemici*), loyalty (*fedeltà*), hatred (*odio*), aggression (*aggressione*), honor (*onore*), rivalry (*rivalità*), commitment (*impegno*), sacrifice (*sacrificio*), laughter (*riso*), tears (*lacrime*), romance (*fascino*), strength (*forza*), virtue (*virtù*), brotherhood (*confraternità*), adventure (*avventura*), conquest (*conquista*), danger (*pericolo*), discrimination (*discriminazione*), passion (*passione*), tradition (*tradizione*), glory (*gloria*), war (*guerra*), and, finally, Rome.

By contrast, they said No to: egalitarian soccer (*equalitario*), standardized soccer (*standardizzato*), moralized soccer (*moreggiato*), soccer only for the selling of advertising (*da fare pubblicità*), soccer without particularities (*senza particolarità*), soccer without connection to place (*senza rapporto di posto*), soccer without passion (*senza passione*), soccer for consumers (*da consumatori*), and soccer for a TV audience (*dal pubblico di TV*).

III. Calcio Moderno and the Business of Football

A. Origins

Calcio Moderno is the postmodernization of fandom and commoditization of soccer. It seeks to diminish the primacy of the live audience in order to focus on the television audience, and to make of the game a marketable commodity, so as to generate advertising revenues. The concept itself began appearing in the Italian curvas in the late-1990s. The first organized protest against it that involved AS Roma's Ultras was in 1999.⁷ It was prompted by changes to the format of UEFA's Champions League competition that went into effect for the 1998-1999 season, giving the impression of UEFA being desirous of creating a TV based European "super league." Why this idea

⁷ www.asromaultras.it/manifesto.html

was particularly threatening to the Ultras will be explained below. First I will detail some of the recent trends that have combined to make soccer more important to many as a business than as a cultural experience.⁸ This section focuses mainly on the English Premier League (EPL) and how it has led to far reaching changes in the English experience of the game. I will make use of the information given here in the following sections as well, which will depend on comparisons between English and Italian soccer for clarity. These comparisons are important because the monied interests of European soccer (including Italian) see the EPL as the model that will best insure profits and minimize crowd trouble (Andrews and Ritzer, 2007, pg. 40).

The idea that the game was becoming more overtly commercial began with the International Federation of Football Associations' (FIFA) decision to have the United States host the 1994 FIFA World Cup. Given its history as one of the few countries without a discernable "soccer culture," as well as its position at the forefront of the globalization of consumer culture, warnings of the game's demise, or at least corruption, are rampant in literature from the period (Giulianotti and Williams 1994). English tabloids decried the "Coca-Cola-ization" and "media-ization" sure to follow the game's grandest stage being erected in a country with "more world renowned serial killers than footballers" (Giulianotti and Williams 1994, pg. 9). The feeling was that FIFA had made a final greedy move to take the game's popularity and presentation to a new level.

This is not to suggest that soccer was not already associated with advertising, celebrity, and multinational corporations. However, even at that late date, the game was far more locally based, even given its broad international popularity, than American sports had been since the late-1950s

⁸ Although it is not part of this dissertation's scope to describe the relationship between the English language media and the particular understanding of the game in English-speaking countries, the discussion that follows is largely based on English examples and statistics, because these issues are being explained by English language scholars.

(Markovits and Hellerman, 2001, pgs. 128-161). The fears of many seemed to be realized when, with the purpose of making the 130 year-old game more charming to the uninterested US market, FIFA proposed using 25-minute quarters to appeal to advertisers and, in a bid to attract American viewers, making the goal size larger to promote higher scores (Giulianotti and Williams 1994, pg. 7).

Given the audacity of these proposals, which rendered the game a malleable form of entertainment rather than a deeply ingrained aspect of local cultures, it was a short slippery-slope to envision its further Americanization (Sandvoss, 2003, pg. 161). The most extreme form of the expected transformation was a lowering of the game's topophilia (deep connection with place). From Britain and Europe, scholars and fans saw in the US experience of sport a lack of symbolic fixity. This was evident in the football, baseball, and basketball teams (not to mention players) that had moved from city to city; sometimes, as with New York's baseball Giants and Brooklyn's Dodgers, leaving behind devoted fans and historic stadiums in order to seek higher profits thousands of miles from where the teams began. With this lack of connection to their surroundings, American sports was seen as the domain of mere franchises which lacked the depth of memory that had made football clubs synonymous with the populations of which they were a part.

B. The Bosman Ruling

Almost 15 years removed from the 1994 World Cup, British and European football is not the freak-show many envisioned, but neither is it the game it once was. FIFA, UEFA, and the European Union have combined to set in motion a system which many see as damaging the local particularities of the game. The first two began working together (and with member nations) in the late-1990s to amend citizenship requirements and taxation statutes in order to make transfers of players less

cumbersome - in effect, to ensure their legality. They did so in order to synchronize international transfers, or player moves, with the 1995 European Court of Justice's Bosman Ruling. According to "The Bosman Rule," soccer transfers are subject to the same rules as Article 48 of the European Community Treaty, which states that no European national (provided they are a citizen of an EU member state) can be prohibited from working in any member state. In other words, soccer players must be considered part of the free movement of labor between states. The ruling also declared illegal (because discriminatory) any attempts to place quotas on the number of foreign players in a given club, league, or nation.⁹

C. Global Clubs

In Europe, it is the clubs that have the most to gain and lose from globalization. Although the majority of Europe's clubs remain attached to a fixed locale, relying upon the loyalty of fans and local businesses to provide enough profit to stay in business, there is a noticeable trend wherein certain clubs have gained tremendous stature and power, thus placing their connections to place in jeopardy. These are the so-called "global clubs," those which rely on a global, as opposed to local, fan base and globally recruited players.

There are seven truly global clubs: Manchester United and Liverpool of England, Internazionale, AC Milan, and Juventus of Italy, and Real Madrid and Barcelona of Spain.¹⁰ These clubs formed the core of the G14, a group of the largest clubs in the world, which united with the intent of lobbying FIFA and UEFA collectively for restitution from national associations in the event

⁹ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=61993J0415

¹⁰ Recent changes in the ownership and spending power of two other clubs have lead to their having "global" aspirations. These are Chelsea FC and Manchester City FC (both of England).

of player injuries occurring on “international duty” (when the player is playing for his national team).¹¹

Soccer in this context is understood as big business. This has rendered community focus, not to mention community ownership (which had been a part of the English experience until the second-half of the twentieth century), as counter-to-progress. Of the teams mentioned above, four are owned by foreigners. Indeed, of the 20 teams which played in the English Premier League (EPL) in 2007-2008, 7 were owned by foreigners. Two of them, Manchester United and Liverpool, are owned by Americans (Malcolm Glazer and Tom Hicks and George Gillett, respectively) who acted through investment banks to gain sufficient funds for their purchases. Chelsea FC is owned by Roman Abramovich, a Russian oil magnate. Manchester City was owned until September 2008 by Thaksin Shinawatra, the former Prime Minister of Thailand. At that time it was bought by Abu Dhabi United Group, a private equity company of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the royal family of the United Arab Emirates.

There are no foreign owners in Italy’s Serie A. In May 2008 American hedge-fund manager George Soros reportedly had his bid to buy AS Roma turned down and in August 2008 an American group of investors which had attempted to buy FC Bologna also failed in its bid. However, Giancarlo Abete, president of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), has often stated that the EPL is the ideal model to move Italy’s soccer into the 21st Century. Foreign investment, in the form of ownership and players is key, but more so, according to Abete, is a “professionalization” of the

¹¹ G14 disbanded in early-2008 after winning their battle against FIFA and UEFA. The 14 were, in addition to the seven noted above, Marseilles and Paris Saint-Germain of France, Ajax and PSV Eindhoven of Netherlands, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund of Germany, and Porto of Portugal. In 2002 the G14 expanded by 4: Arsenal of England, Valencia of Spain, Lyon of France, and Bayer Leverkusen of Germany.

Italian league, and a changing of Italy's "culture of sport."¹² Leaving aside, for the moment, the question of culture, the English league has ascended to the top of European soccer by focusing on profits. These are made primarily through television rights, merchandise branding, and through winning the UEFA Champions League.

D. The English Premiere League and Television

The EPL has changed the experience of soccer for English, and worldwide, fans. The EPL was formed in 1991 in order to revolutionize English soccer, which at the time was seen as "suffering" from old stadiums, dwindling attendances, and widespread hooliganism. The impetus for the EPL was the 1989 Taylor Report, a governmental investigation into the causes of a 1988 stadium riot and stampede that left 96 Liverpool supporters dead (Armstrong, 1998, pgs. 5-9). Lord Taylor of Gosforth concluded that the deaths resulted from poor stadium design and limited supporter policing inside the Hillsborough stadium.

The "problems" of the English game at that time are regularly cited to describe today's Italian soccer. It is not lost on the Ultras that they are the only ones at the games. Just considering AS Roma, game attendance data show significant drops in every year since 2000-2001. In that year, AS Roma averaged 59,402 spectators. By 2007-2008, AS Roma's average was 37,276. Serie A's attendance from 2004-2005 to 2007-2008 fell from 9,421,549 (an average of 26,098 per game) to

12

<http://www.repubblica.it/2009/08/sport/calcio/arbitri-collina-divisa/arbitri-collina-divisa/arbitri-collina-divisa.html?>
<http://www.repubblica.it/2003/h/rubriche/spycalcio/tv-contro-spezzatino/tv-contro-spezzatino.html?ref=search>
<http://www.repubblica.it/2003/h/rubriche/spycalcio/cinque-anticipi/cinque-anticipi.html?ref=search>
<http://www.repubblica.it/2003/h/rubriche/spycalcio/roma-blindata/roma-blindata.html?ref=search>
<http://www.repubblica.it/2003/h/rubriche/spycalcio/allarme-rifiuti/allarme-rifiuti.html?ref=search>
<http://www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/cronaca/tifosi-morto-1/campionato/campionato.html?ref=search>

8,575,314 (an average of 23,887 per game).¹³ In that time, attendance figures for Curva Sud remained stable at 19,000 and then 17,000 in 2007-2008 per game (the maximum number of seats).¹⁴

In other words, Curva Sud is completely full for every game.

What lies behind the decrease in soccer attendance is debated in every café, piazza, and newspaper in Italy. The reasons given range from structural to behavioral, but always include 3 things: Ultra violence, TV, and stadiums. For their part, the Ultras agree that the explosion in popularity of televised soccer and the horrible state of many Italian stadiums are factors contributing to diminished attendances.

The most important aspect of the EPL is that it negotiates its own television deal. Thus, it is financially separated from the five (lower) associated levels of the EFA, which are home to hundreds of local small town teams across England. The first EPL television deal was signed in 1992 with SKY for 191 million pounds over 5 seasons.¹⁵ The latest was signed with SKY and Setanta, a Scottish broadcaster, for 1.7 billion pounds over 3 seasons.¹⁶ When combined with highlights permissions and international rights, the total television related income for the 2007-2010 EPL will be 2.7 billion pounds (an average of 45 million pounds per team per year).¹⁷

In 2003, Rupert Murdoch created SKY Italia as a way to compete with Berlusconi's Mediaset for Italy's untapped television potential. Until the 2003-2004 season, RAI and Mediaset

¹³ <http://digilander.libero.it/stadiapostcardsdgl/attendance.htm>. Overall attendance given from 2004 to 2008 because Serie A's increase from 18 to 20 teams in 2004 increased the attendance figures from 2003, even as most team's per-game-average fell.

¹⁴ Statistics from an official AS Roma document in the collection of the author.

¹⁵ http://corporate.sky.com/about_sky/timeline.htm

¹⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6273617.stm>

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premier_League

combined to televise a handful of games on free television per week. The larger teams had satellite distribution contracts with Telepiu` and Stream. It was these companies that Murdoch purchased for 600 million British Pounds.¹⁸ By September 2008 SKY Italia had between 5 and 7 million subscribers. These pay between 30 and 50 euros per month (adding up to between 300 and 500 euros per season) to watch all of the games of their favorite team, the Champions League, other European soccer leagues, and special programming such as AS Roma Channel, which broadcasts news, training sessions, and other activities within the club.¹⁹ Meanwhile, a season ticket for Curva Sud, ensuring entrance (plus the right to purchase the same seat for Coppa Italia and Champions League games) to 19 Serie A games, cost 155 euros for the 2008-2009 season.²⁰

In order to hasten the creation of EPL-style profits, in 2008 the state agreed to the collective selling of broadcast rights beginning with the 2010-2011 season. It is estimated that such a deal will cost someone (either Murdoch or Berlusconi) approximately 900 million euros.²¹

E. The EPL and Merchandising

American-style merchandising is another way EPL clubs are seeking to increase profits. When Tom Hicks was introduced as co-owner of Liverpool FC, he told a Sky audience that besides the UEFA Champions League, he would use merchandising to make Liverpool the “richest club in the world.” To do so, he explained, Liverpool would be made into a brand that would produce its

¹⁸ <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/7-30-2003-43651.asp>

¹⁹ www.sky.it/abbonamenti

²⁰ <http://www.asroma.it/Doc.aspx?Categoria=131&Documento=9166>. 155 euros was the cost to renew. For a non-renewing subscriber the cost was 235 euros. However, the Curva, as every year, sold out during the renewal phase of As Roma’s season ticket campaign.

²¹ <http://italian-calcio.blogspot.com/2008/01/gov-approves-collective-tv-rights-sale.html>

own line of football and sports related merchandise and attract the highest caliber of corporate sponsorship. The model for such a venture, he continued, was Malcolm Glazer's Manchester United, whose superstore was selling literally thousands of Manchester United related items, while AIG paid 56.5 million pounds over 4 years for its sponsorship logo on the player's jerseys and Nike paid 302.9 million pounds over 13 years to supply the team's uniforms.²² By contrast, AS Roma's income from the Turin-based Italian sportswear firm Kappa is 5 million euros per season.²³

F. The EPL and Champions League

Because of their income from television and sponsorships, EPL teams have recently dominated the third avenue of revenue increase: the UEFA Champions League, whose competition runs concurrent with the domestic leagues of Southern and Western Europe. It consists of the champion of each UEFA affiliated nation's highest professional league, plus finishers from second to fourth position in the most difficult leagues (i.e. Italy, England, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal).

The EPL placed three teams (Manchester United, Chelsea, and Liverpool) in the final four of the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 Champions Leagues. Even as Italy's AC Milan won the competition in 2006-2007, its victory did not keep Italy from falling further behind the English in terms of profiting from "the business of soccer." According to Deloitte's "Football Money League," Italy's Serie A is worth 40% less than the EPL based on overall club revenues. According to the 2007-2008 list, released each season with details of the previous season, six of the 14 wealthiest

²² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4882640.stm>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/1005794.stm>

²³ <http://www.laroma24.it/index.php?show=article&artid=10616>

clubs in the world are in the EPL.²⁴ That includes Newcastle United, which finished the corresponding EPL season in 13th position.

There is no set prize money. Instead, a club will receive an increased share of the income generated by independent national television rights agreements, pay-per-view, and internet pay-per-view. When AS Roma reached the final-eight during the 2007-2008 competition, they received approximately 35 million euros.²⁵ Manchester United, winner in 2007-2008, expected revenues of 85 million pounds. Runner-up Chelsea FC expected to receive 35 million pounds. The same article explained that the final, played in Moscow, was expected to be a financial boon to more than the two competing clubs. The betting industry, bars and restaurants, travel, consumer goods, and supermarkets hoped to benefit from approximately 210 million pounds in revenue (consumption increases comparable with the NFL's Super Bowl in the United States).²⁶

With this kind of money to be made, the EPL was quick to rid itself of the “problems” it had inherited. The game experience until the Taylor Report has been described as “chaos” (McGill, 2001, pg. 8). Urination in the stands, pushing, shoving, drinking, smoking, and singing were ritualized behaviors one expected to encounter at soccer games. The attendance of women and young children was rare (McGill, 2001, pg. 7). The political voice of the working class was historically galvanized at soccer matches. Political songs and occasionally banners spoke of local identities through tales of pride and defiance (McGill, 2001, pg. 7). Fireworks, field invasions, and fighting were also common. While many sociologists, most notably Eric Dunning, have studied the

²⁴ http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/press_release/0,1014,sid%253D2834%2526cid%253D191865,00.html

²⁵ <http://www.asroma.it/NewsDoc.aspx?Categoria=ITArchivioNews&Documento=7980>

²⁶

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/2301097/Champions-League-victors-to-take-home-andpound85m.html>

violence and general mayhem associated with English soccer fandom, and concluded that such behaviors are due to a failure in the “civilizing process” of the English working class, others look back on the days before the Taylor Report and the EPL longingly (Dunning, 1999, pg. 48).

One of these is Dave Boyle, one-time president of the Football Supporters’ Association (FSA), an organization that campaigns for fan representation on club boards as well as fans’ rights such as the right to stand during a soccer match.²⁷ Boyle maintains that soccer has abandoned its original (and still core) supporters. He says that fans are now understood “merely as consumers with a ceaseless thirst for all things football related.” The FSA, he explained, was against the FIFA/UEFA model of big clubs and leagues operating for the benefit of corporate sponsors and spectacular television (McGill, 2001, pg. 11). What the FSA seeks, then, is a return to a time when local fans were the driving force behind the game’s popularity.

G. AS Roma and *Calcio Moderno*

According to SKY News, AS Roma was the tenth richest club in the world as a result of the 2006-2007 season, making 106.1 million British Pounds. 70.3 million of that came from broadcast revenues.²⁸ With so little money being generated locally (the club brought in less than 3 million euros from the sale of Curva Sud season tickets during the same season), and with so much of *Calcio Moderno* focusing on the financial and business aspects of the game, it is no wonder, say the Ultras, as self-proclaimed “protectors of the game” (by which they mean its deep connections to place), that clubs are seeking profits rather than public approval. The close relations between the Ultras and the clubs (which the 2007 Amato Decree destroyed when it went into effect) were designed to keep

²⁷ The FSA merged with European bodies of similar design in 2007. It is now known as the Football Supporters Federation.

²⁸ http://money.sky.com/money/loans/3909210_Football_Rich_List_-_AS_Roma.html

pressure on the clubs to keep in mind their constituents at all times. The two most recent and damaging large-scale Ultra eruptions (before Raciti and Sandri) were not only attacks on *Calcio Moderno* (by disrupting broadcasts and making the game too risky for investment/advertisement) but also on clubs which had been seen as taking the Ultras for granted while pursuing only the commercial interests of the game.

Despite AS Roma's position amongst the wealthiest clubs in the world, and despite it regularly fielding a team that includes foreign players, the Ultras still feel that the club is an organic part of Rome's locality. As I explained above, foreign fans can be accepted into the legion of Ultras through their display of loyalty to the Ultras, Rome, and AS Roma. Likewise, foreign players who "play for the shirt" are given a type of "honorary Roman" status, not unlike that granted to me. In this way, the Ultras negotiate the contradiction between supporting a financially successful "modern" club and the desire to have AS Roma all to themselves. Although the long-standing (until 2007) relationship between AS Roma and the Curva provided the Ultras a way to actually influence the running of the club, thus promoting the feelings of proprietorship that guided such a relationship, it can be argued now that the war that the Ultras are fighting against *Calcio Moderno* and the destruction of localism in soccer, is over.

If so, and the Ultras have been "culturally dispossessed" of AS Roma, then they may be entering the last phase of their history (Creed, 2011, pg. 3). After all, there is little-to-nothing that is compromising in their make-up, and, as Andrews and Ritzer have argued, within global capitalism, cultural forms that are "generally indigenously conceived, controlled, and comparatively rich in distinctive substantive content are a virtual impossibility" (2007, pg. 41). What we might see instead is the shifting of Ultra behavior to other areas of social and political life (to be examined in

the concluding chapter).

IV. Issues of Football and Globalization

The disconnection between long-time local fans, the business of football, and what some perceive as FIFA and UEFA's vision for the game is consistent with other responses to postmodernity and turbo-capitalism. In essence, what is being experienced is the deterritorialization of fandom (Sandvoss 2003, pg. 12). Deterritorialization is a process first theorized by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. It occurs when an "event" (thought or action) is detached from its original environment (of meaning or location) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Postmodern theorists use the concept most consistently to explain the radical changes to the experience of space since the onset of postmodernity. The deterritorialization of space through geographical mobility and inconsequentiality (via the internet and global capital systems), coupled with flexible labor processes and markets, not only de-territorializes the individual but also re-territorializes him or her within a meaning system designed to accommodate radical increases in consumption (Castells, 1996, pgs. 1-14). Fandom is impacted similarly.

The features of deterritorialized fandom are multifarious, impacting the non-local fan, the clubs, and the local fan. For the fan who is part of the global audience, deterritorialized fandom allows him or her to actually be a fan. Indeed, the act of consuming the game demonstrates the sometimes positive affects of deterritorialization, namely the reterritorialization of the event as a personal experience full of meaning and value. As Deleuze explains, each act of deterritorialization is concurrently destructive and constructive. While the local context is negated, such an act of negation also opens new "conditions of possibility" (Deleuze, 1995, pgs. 30-31). The process here is entirely subjective, even as it occurs as a benefit of recent communication technologies (LaFeber,

2002).

It is possible to explain reterritorialized fans as a “third culture.” Mike Featherstone explains “third cultures” as practices and knowledges that are independent of nation-states and particular locales (1995, pg. 114). Internet and satellite television make it possible to engage in fan activities for events occurring anywhere in the world at any moment. While this fan is not yet the norm, it is the target of UEFA’s Champions League. Part of the Champions Leagues approach to transnational marketing is the use of the “global clubs” discussed above and de-and-re-territorialized fandom.

The disconnection of clubs from their local contexts makes them ripe for the polysemic narratives so necessary to the promotion of transnational consumption (Sandvoss 2003, pgs. 28-30). The creation of identities around such consumption is a must if the game is to be experienced worldwide. For their part, fans now have an unlimited number of choices regarding which club or clubs to support. “Third culture” fandom thus may include an expansion of knowledge, as the deterritorialized fan may possibly gain awareness of places and political processes otherwise unknowable (Featherstone 1995, pg. 117). “Third culture” fans might also develop, or enhance, their appreciation of the game - its strategies and aesthetics - through ever-improved televised images of the players’ skills.

While for the non-local or global fan, the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, or of globalization, are experienced positively, it is clear that for others these processes can be negative and quite destructive. For many clubs, the processes damage not only their financial viability but also their cultural worth. Smaller clubs, those without the following or resources to position themselves within the global flow of capital and information, are often rendered superfluous.

If a club is unable to compete at a level that allows Champions League qualification, and their local constituents are able and willing to follow, through the television and internet, a larger or even “global” club, they eventually find themselves playing to empty stadiums and without the ability to support themselves financially. This has happened to numerous clubs in Italy. Most recently, in 2008, FC Messina, club of a small Sicilian city, was declared bankrupt and disbanded. The club’s history began in 1900 and survived depression, migrations, and earthquakes but it was unable to compete financially in *Calcio Moderno*.

Many fans in the United Kingdom (as well as the Ultras of Italy) fear that globalization will render their clubs contentless. As they lose their symbolic connectivity to place and particular fans, clubs become the empty signifiers that are thought (and sought) to generate consumptive desires, but they lose what made them important in the first place (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, pg. 4). The language of placelessness and contentlessness forms part of the discourse of deterritorialization. It argues that experiences of culture are losing their connectivity to space, time, and place, wherein the local is subsumed by global identities and processes (Hardt and Negri, 2000, pg. xiii).

The decimation of cultural worth occurs as local particularities are replaced by the new postmodern universals: consumption, multicultural identities, psychology, and increasingly, genetics. Behaviors are motivated by, and meanings are sought in, the most ecumenical and bourgeois explanations available (Lipovetsky, 2005, pgs. 29-71). For Europe, the most telling example is the changing relationship of the two clubs of Glasgow Scotland: Celtic FC and Glasgow Rangers FC. As Celtic has begun positioning itself as a “global club” it has been forced to distance itself from the very thing that has made it an institution in Scotland: its identification with Catholicism. More specifically, Catholicism against the Unionism and Protestantism of its biggest

rival Glasgow Rangers FC.

Since the 1880s, Celtic has been an institution among Catholic Scottish and Irish soccer fans. It became a symbol of these communities at an early date, after Rangers became the team of choice for Scotland's Protestant majority. Celtic has no prohibition against Protestant players, but until recently it focused on fielding a team entirely of Scottish players. For their part, Rangers enforced an un-written rule of not fielding Catholic players. The first openly Catholic player to sign, and play, for Rangers was Mo Johnston in 1989.

Both clubs, known collectively as the "Old Firm," are now actively engaged in fighting sectarianism amongst their fans. Sectarian songs, flag waiving, and aggressively religious support is now banned in both of the clubs' stadiums. Celtic has launched numerous campaigns aimed at calming sectarian passion amongst its fans. One, called Youth Against Bigotry, was an educational initiative for the promotion of respect for "all races, all colours, all creeds."²⁹

Not coincidentally, it is playing in the Champions League that has prompted Rangers to police its supporters. Rangers fans were accused of sectarianism by UEFA after a 2006 match against Spanish club Villarreal and the club was ordered to pay a fine as well as to make public address announcements against religious or nationalist singing or display. They were specifically ordered to make announcements prohibiting the singing of the song "Billy Boys," which honors Billy Fullerton, the leader of a 1930s Protestant gang in Glasgow.³⁰

V. The Ultras and the Spiritual Attack on *Calcio Moderno*

The example of the Glasgow clubs brings us closer to what is driving the Ultras' critique of

²⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/1593970.stm>

³⁰ <http://www.uefa.com/uefa/Keytopics/kind=512/newsId=413276.html>

a globalized, modern, soccer. While the influx of money into the game has made it harder to win without money, it is more so the sterilization and standardization promoted by *Calcio Moderno* on which the Ultras have declared war. Simply put, it is the encroachment of a vision of globalized modernity on the particularities of, in this case, the Ultra (and Roman) form of life. It is, then, a spiritual, rather than economic, issue.

What is at stake for the Ultras is apparent in the shrinking of the earth by televisual technologies. It is apparent when Joseph Maguire explains that the local and the global are more interconnected and interdependent now than in the 1970s. Or that the world is “compressed” via a world economy, global technology, transnationalism, and global division of labor (Maguire 1999, pgs. 13-14). It is interesting to consider Anthony Giddens’ proposal that social relations are now world-wide, revealing multidimensional links between local happenings and universal understandings (Giddens, 1990, pg. 64). However, theorizing such a development cannot prepare us for the force with which universals destroy particularity, nor for how this destruction is experienced (Harvey 1990, pg. 117).

Just as Italy’s economy is deemed “structurally unsound” and “uncompetitive” because its productivity is low and production costs are high, so too is its soccer explained by neo-liberals to be “uncompetitive.”³¹ As competitiveness has become a universally valid concept to explain and justify global capital and production flows, it has also become the mantra of the upper-echelon clubs seeking “global” status and success in the Champions League. When it was reported that the vast majority of Italians support the imposition of some form of quota on the number of foreigners able

³¹ “Addio, Dolce Vita: A Survey of Italy” in *The Economist*. Volume 377, Number 8454, Nov 26-Dec 2005. Pg. 6

to be fielded by sporting teams, it was suggested in the English press that this was a “step back in time.”³²

The same article explained the folly of the Italian attitude, saying that “a plan to make all clubs field at least six footballers from their own country, a cap if you like, [is] completely against the laws of the European Union. It would restrict movement, personal freedom and the currents of globalization.” The anonymous author notes that Italy’s Serie A is still, at this juncture, composed of 64% Italian players. The Ultras think this compares favorably with England’s Premier League, which is dominated by foreign players (60%) and coaches (50%). However, the author explains that the predominance of Italian players in Italy is indicative of the country’s backward attitude or xenophobia. Without an end to racism and a gain in foreign investment, the article concludes, the Italians will be unable to compete with the English clubs.

But this form of competitiveness is not the concern of the Ultras, except as a corruption of the game. There is no question that AS Roma’s Ultras would like to see the team win all of its games in Serie A and in Europe. They are, after all, fans of AS Roma. However, the issues that a globalized *Calcio Moderno* celebrates, be it competitiveness due to television contracts, foreign investment, or the creation of “third cultures” of reterritorialized fans of global clubs, are understood as too damaging to how the game is experienced as an Ultra to have any value.

Under a banner reading “*Non Omologati, Non Omologabili*,” (Unstandardized, Unstandardizable) *AS Roma Ultras* presented their manifesto against *Calcio Moderno* in 1999. It contained much of what is still argued today. That *Calcio Moderno*, as an element of globalization, seeks to render all life in its path standardized, moralized, egalitarian, multicultural, passionless, and

³² http://www.channel4.com/sport/football_italia/aug6h.html

consumerist. *AS Roma Ultras* proposed that they coordinate with other Ultras and anyone else to disrupt the televised product of soccer. They suggested that, in order to do so, the Ultras violate every limitation placed on their potential behavior by any authority.³³

The manifesto explained the future proposed by *Calcio Moderno*. “Soccer fans must understand,” it begins, “what is being established by the television industry, FIFA, UEFA, and the various national leagues: the creation of a European championship open only to the biggest clubs on the continent. This is being done for the sole purpose of creating profits for those involved. It is being done with the largest clubs in mind because these are the ones with television followings. Smaller clubs, those without large television audiences, will be sacrificed. The fight is, thus, between the television audience and the local aspects of calcio including those at the stadium - which are destined to disappear in the future.”

“The industry of soccer,” the manifesto continues, “works in conjunction with local authorities, bringing in hundreds of police officers to help subdue those at the stadium. No flags, banners, or songs that may offend anyone in the world-wide audience will be permitted, nor will the voicing of criticisms of society. The future has already been promised to the moderate, standardized fan - those who watch from home and are ready to purchase what is being sold - always a multinational product and never one that is local and artisanal.” It concludes by saying that the industry promoting *Calcio Moderno* misunderstands the Ultras as a fringe that can be eliminated from soccer. “Instead,” it says, “the Ultras are a faith, for whom the symbols of their cities and teams are tattooed on their bodies, and for whom their cities are worth defending at all costs.”

VI. Conclusion - *Calcio Moderno* v. The Ultras’ Form of Life, Illustrated

³³ <http://www.asromaultras.it/manifesto.html>



Figure 148. The bourgeois fan consumes the game in the comfort of his own home ...



Figure 149. ... while the Ultra suffers and sacrifices such comforts in order to support his team.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

“Che importa soffrire se c'è stata nella nostra vita qualche ora immortale”
(What does suffering matter if there were some immortal hours in our lives?)
Curva Sud Roma



Figure 150. Curva Sud Roma with flags and flares. AS Roma-SS Lazio. October 2007.

2007, the year which formed the core period of research for this project, was marked by the deaths of police officer Filippo Raciti and SS Lazio Ultra Gabriele Sandri. The period between these two deaths, the first in February and the second in November, was tension-filled for the Ultras of AS Roma, as the Italian state took a “zero tolerance” approach to the Ultras. Despite years of conflict between the Ultras and the state, it was seemingly Raciti’s death that exhausted the state’s patience with the Ultras and their violent and antagonistic form of life. As the state began implementing laws and policing measures that banned the Ultras’ style of fandom from Italian stadiums, the Ultras turned inward, becoming more introspective about “being Ultras.” The major groups of Curva Sud Roma decided to continue attending games of AS Roma in whatever form the

state would permit. If they did so without flags, flares, and bombs, at least they demonstrated that the Ultras themselves were going nowhere. However, after the death of Gabriele Sandri and the night of extreme violence that followed, those same groups began to think more critically about their involvement with the industry of soccer that was determined to rid itself of the Ultras. Thus, the Ultras began a 4-week strike period with the protest at Rome's Circo Massimo described in the previous chapter.



Figure 151. *Fedayn* presages its return from strike. AS Roma-UC Sampdoria. December 22, 2007.

By removing their voices and their passion from the stadium, AS Roma's Ultras were not only seeking to give the state, media, and bourgeois fans a vision of soccer without the Ultras, as was explained above, but were also self-abnegating in an attempt to preserve what is most dear to them. By withholding their performances, they were also preserving the right to be Ultras in the sense that the state was removed from any position of authority over them. In other words, the Ultras decided to remove themselves by their own accord rather than allow the state the power to have

them removed. In this way, their silence preserved the integrity of the Ultras phenomenon rather than have it dispossessed by the state.

It was the state's and the Ultras' actions in this period of open hostility that formed the basis of this dissertation. Perhaps oddly, considering the amount of discussion (on both sides) about violence, there was little physical contact between the Ultras and the state during this time. It can be said that one death on each side is far too many, and rightly so. However, the lack of physical confrontation made the discourses of violence being employed by the state and the Ultras that much more important. To the greatest extent possible I sought to use statements from the Ultras as empirical data. And, because the Ultras utilize an ethic of violence purposely at odds with the hegemonic aversion to violence in the modern West, I sought to avoid a sort of paralysis in the face of their statements that would be generated by my own ethical position. An anthropologist who claims complete objectivity and detachment from their subjects is being disingenuous given the creative act of ethnographic writing. This is especially true when the subjects of study stand outside the bounds of our comfortable notions on violence, morality, and altruistic inclusiveness.

That being said, I have let my subjects "speak for themselves," even going so far as to use philosophical and theoretical sources that they themselves use to understand the Ultras phenomenon. In writing the dissertation this way it made for an interesting slippage between their voices and those of Nietzsche, Evola, and Sorel. Actually, the Ultras of *Boys Roma* and *Antichi Valori*, two of the most influential groups in Curva Sud Roma's history, had made their use of Nietzsche and Sorel clear to me before Raciti's death in February 2007. It was only to become more evident after his death to what extent the other Ultras of Curva Sud acted in a way that could be called Nietzschean or Sorelian.

It also should be remembered that I presented myself to the Ultras as a fan of AS Roma. Without having done so (or having been so) I feel that the research would have been impossible to conduct. The Ultras were simply too guarded and conscious of being exploited by the media to allow a stranger deep access to themselves, or knowledge of why they act as they do. It was only after they saw my emotional involvement with the games at hand that I gained their trust, particularly after seeing me amongst them at away games played far from Rome or in less than perfect meteoric conditions. However, because the research was not about soccer itself, I feel that my emotional involvement with AS Roma was of no consequence to the outcome of this project, the aforementioned benefit aside.

Having presented AS Roma's Ultras as a highly ideological and ideologically committed phenomenon, one that blends an understanding of itself as a form of life with elements of a cultural movement, all the while linked with fascism and political extremism, I will now make some conclusions about the Ultras that place them in a larger context than their own curva and city. Looking toward the future, I offer a few more details about the recruitment tactics of the Curva Sud groups. I then revisit these groups' hostility toward the Italian state, placing it in the wider context of the Ultras in general. Finally, I ponder the possible outcomes of the state's current war against the Ultras. First, however, I will place my work in relation to other research on the Ultras and in the context of current anthropology.

I. This Work in Context

A. Studies of Ultras, Hooligans, and Fans

Up to now there has been no study of Italian Ultras in the English language, that blends ethnographic data collection with a commitment to using "native" sources of critical assessment. In

fact, there have been no dissertation or book length studies of the Ultras in English, minus the journalist Tim Parks' *A Season with Verona* (2002). Italian sources do include several book-length studies by renowned scholars such as Roversi (1990), Dal Lago (1990), and Mariottini (2006). While benefitting from each of these texts, none of them was devoted to a particular curva or to deeply connecting the Ultras to a form of life and a critique of contemporary politics as in this study.

In English there has been only one ethnography with similar aims. Gary Armstrong's *Football Hooligans* (1998) is the result of a long research period amongst the hooligans of Sheffield United Football Club. Like this study, Armstrong sought to understand the rationale behind his subjects' actions. He rejected the Leicester School arguments about inferior civilizational forces among the English working class, instead focusing on what the hooligans said about their violent behaviors. What he learned was that violence was thrilling to his subjects, not only in a pubescent, hyper-masculine way but also as a break with the mundane world of post-industrial England. The hooligans' deep affection for their soccer clubs worked in a similar way. In a deteriorating physical environment undergoing demographic and economic change, Sheffield United represented to the hooligans a link to the Sheffield of their fathers.

Armstrong was not researching his subjects' political involvements, nor did he find them overtly concerned with the changes being made to the English game that ultimately became the template for *Calcio Moderno*. Nonetheless he demonstrated that ethnography is capable of making knowable not only their worldview, but also the world in which they move. Anthropology must continue to think and act locally, even as anthropologists are forced to expand the context of interaction to a global field. Because of this, I believe that this project has more in common with Michael Herzfeld's recent (2009) ethnography on the inhabitants of the Roman neighborhood Monti

than with Armstrong's study of the English hooligan phenomenon. And because of its subject matter, this project has more in common with surveys of political extremism (Ferraresi, 1996; Holmes, 2000; O'Meara, 2004;), extreme political ideologies and modernity (Griffin, 2007; Kertzer, 1996; Lipovetsky, 2005), the imposition of globalization upon indigenous populations (Featherstone, 1995), and the rise of a western television-based mono-culture (LaFeber, 2002; Naylor, 2007; Sandvoss, 2003), than with studies of sports spectators (Guttman, 1981 and 1986; Murphy, et al, 1990; Wann, et al, 2001).

B. Theory Sources and Research Subjects

Even as this study presents several challenges to anthropology (see below), the biggest challenge it poses is methodological. I knew that ethnography was a set of methodologies that would allow my subjects to fully explain themselves. However, I was skeptical that anthropology, as a discipline in the American academy, would actually allow them to do so. After all, the Ultras with whom I was embedded are of the far right and they are prone to violence. These were two crucial strikes against them in an academic climate that tends to discount the legitimacy of fascism and condemn the perpetrators of violence.

In choosing methodology and theory, then, I had to move beyond an approach to fascism that would fail to let it speak on its own terms. Likewise, I needed a way to understand violence that did not psychologize the Ultras or attempt to explain it away via socialization. A common theme in the anthropology of violence (see below), is that its adult perpetrators tend to be violent as children (Plesset 2006; Strathern and Stewart 2006; Merry 2009). Regardless of how the Ultras might have accorded with such a model, it was irrelevant to the *uses* they put to violence. That violence can also lend itself to courage, strength, and rites of passage is largely lost to current anthropology. To solve

these problems, I went to sources that were not only used by the Ultras themselves, but that were also well beyond the proper sources of most anthropological theory.

Indeed, without having done so it would have been impossible to convey the clash of moralities and forms of life between the Ultras and the bourgeois state - a critically important addition to the study of the Ultras (and of fascism). My political reading of Nietzsche, one which put him, as Fredrick Appel (1999) said, “contra democracy,” was necessary because it allowed the Ultras’ critique of modernity and its impingement of what they know as their traditions, to flow forth. Similarly, I am unaware of anthropologists having used Evola as a way to understand the uses of history and tradition. Yet, his works on the destruction of valor, strength, and honor - the Roman values - by the forces of modern liberal politics, gave a true sense of what the Ultras despise about globalization and *Calcio Moderno*. Finally, Sorel’s theory of “ethics of violence” allowed me to think and explain the ways in which bourgeois morality could be highlighted as well as contradicted. Once properly embedded with the Ultras, it became difficult not to see our fear of violence in almost every human action.

This use of “native” philosophy and theory took me far beyond our scholarly traditions and normalized interpretative frameworks. Nietzsche and Evola were read alongside the Ultras’ own words. By engaging all three together, I found similar criticisms posed to all three - they promote division, discrimination, violence, and a frightening vision of the world. These criticisms had to be overcome in order to study the Ultras. Had I not done so, however, it would have been impossible to create this ethnography. The challenge it poses, then, is to study, to engage our informants, and allow them to make sense of their world - all without laying over them a “web of significance” that does not belong. In essence the challenge is to let anthropology be just that.

C. Anthropology of Violence and Politics

Given the obvious ways in which this work expands the purview of the study of sports fans, be it through its focus on thought, ideology, and violent behavior or the political depth of fans' in-stadium behaviors, it seems an understatement to call it a work of sports anthropology. That being said, it is neither a representative piece of an anthropology of violence, nor an anthropology of politics. While sport, violence, and politics are all well represented in this project, it does not belong to any one of them exclusively. Soccer is buried under the political dimension of being an Ultra, as is violence. Yet neither politics nor violence would make sense in their form of life without soccer. This is complicated even further by the discourses of *mentalità* and *Romanità*, themselves loaded with the aims and affects of Counter-Enlightenment philosophy and fascism, that provide the ethical content of Ultra behaviors.

I feel that an anthropology of sport can benefit from having this work amongst its canon merely as an example of the type of knowledge that can be generated by ethnographic research. Further, I did not focus upon the game of soccer, nor strictly the Ultras' acts of fandom, but sought to contextualize these within their overall, if highly political, form of life. In doing so, I have, perhaps, given those seeking to work ethnographically with sport a way to expand the study of sport into the heretofore hidden spaces of extreme fandom in a way that is still intelligible to the extreme fans themselves.

i. Anthropology of Violence

The idea of expanding the anthropology of sport in ways that make violence and politics able to be incorporated is not applicable to the anthropology of violence. However, this work is no less a challenge to the study of violence. First and foremost, this challenge comes in the form of my

having “reinvested language with value” (Weaver, 1984, pg. 4). Although it has been important since the late-1960s to study not only the physical act of violence but also the “assaults on personhood, dignity, and value” (i.e. symbolic violence) that come in its wake, the anthropological study of violence is still largely indifferent to discourses and ethics of violence as subjects of study (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004, pg. 1). The “value” I have given Sorel’s “ethics of anti-bourgeois violence” is inconceivable within the current focus of anthropology on (the victims of) war, terrorism, and gender violence (Strathern and Stewart, 2006, pgs. 1-7). Likewise, the Nietzschean ideal, taken up by the Ultras, of using violence (and a repudiation of the ethics of benevolence) as a way to create distance between themselves and the modern bourgeois form of life, would be dismissed as “barbaric and unsustainable” by scholars such as Douglas Fry, recent author of *The Human Potential for Peace* (2005, pg. 168).

And yet, the “meaningful world” is “fluid and ambiguous, a mosaic of narratives,” even when those narratives are discomfiting to our own bourgeois assumptions about the content of theory and the values of our research subjects (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, pg. 3). I have placed ethnographic writing in this context as well, being forced to contend with sources and ideas that are beyond the bourgeois norms of the American academy. Valentine Daniel explains that violence is difficult to study because it cuts to the heart of objectivity by way of creating victims with whom we readily co-identify. Violence, he explains, is, by nature, “morally illegitimate” (Daniel, 1996, pg. 8). As an American reader, it is obvious that violence is something of negative value. Daniel himself begins his study of Sri Lankan political violence with a discussion of identity and difference, seeking to place violence within the context of an always-constructed reality. He does so in the hopes of diminishing the vitriolic arguments of essential difference between Tamils and Sinhallas. His role

as an anthropologist, then, goes beyond attempting to understand native conceptions of violence, seeking instead to establish the grounds for a cease-fire of sorts.

By understanding the Ultras' justifications for violence, I was forced to acknowledge their awareness of both Sorel and the concept of revolutionary violence. Later, when mild instances of violence occurred in my presence, or in the aftermath of the 2007 killing of Gabriele Sandri, I was able to comprehend both it and the "imaginative horizons" made knowable by their complex statements on violence (Crapanzano, 2004, pg. 2). While studies by Crapanzano (2004) and Strathern and Stewart (2006) point to the terror done to "various intra-personal fields" - including the imagination - of the perpetrators of violence, the Ultras seemed instead fully aware of the implications of their actions and competent in the ways they understood them.

While this in no way is meant to dismiss or demean the victims of "wife beaters, sexual abusers, and torturers," (Plesset, 2006; Merry, 2009) it does point to a void in the acceptable subjects of research amongst anthropologists. While Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois invoke Malinowski and his denunciation of the imperial legacy to remind us that we carry a heavy responsibility against racism and the "imperial gaze," there seems to be less of a concern to unpack the equally culture-specific and epistemological tendency to create victims and be aghast at violent behavior (2004, pg. 7). In other words, there seems to be a lack of critical awareness of our operative bourgeois ethic against violence amongst many scholars working within the anthropology of violence. This work demonstrates that, while the words, thoughts, and actions of our research subjects may frighten or dismay us, they are more coherent and complex when evaluated on their own terms instead of ours.

ii. Anthropology of Politics

While the anthropology of violence suffers from an inability, or unwillingness, to leave aside

the altruistic co-identification with victims (of violence) given us by the moral and ethical systems of the modern West, thereby leaving inconceivable and unknowable the motivations of even the politically violent, those working in the anthropology of politics seem much more aware of the creative act of ethnographic writing and the range of assumptions we bring to the study of politics. As Edward Schatz explains, through participant observation, the researcher is “completely immersed” in the world of a cohort; and ethnography is designed to “glean the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality” (2009, pg. 5). Therefore, the challenges this work makes to such an anthropology are less methodological and philosophical than those made to the anthropology of violence.

According to Jonathon Spencer, the incorporation of the study of politics and political systems into anthropology has not only given ethnographic depth to the study how humans live under, and with, political regimes, but also undermined the stability of certain anthropological concepts like culture (2007, pg. 2). In particular, the awareness of how people conceive of, need, and protect “their own culture,” studied either under the guise of multiculturalism or nationalism, has forced a reexamination of the breadth and durability of culture and cultures (Spencer, 2007, pg. 6). In this way, anthropology has been made to value the study of other peoples’ politics. Although my work is a challenge to the dominance of both multiculturalism and nationalism as avenues into political awareness and action in the age of globalization, it does work from the same assumptions as Spencer. The idea of protecting Rome from the forces of globalization, be they social, political, economic, or moral, is critically important to AS Roma’s Ultras. I have demonstrated the need to understand the native inhabitants of European cities (or nations) in their own terms when it comes to issues of globalization, immigration, and multiculturalism.

I am reminded of a quote attributed to Jean-Marie Le Pen in which he equated Europeans to Native Americans in the contemporary process of demographic relocation. Although extreme, the idea points to a shift in moral/altruistic identification in an argument that usually forces Europeans to defend themselves against charges of racism and xenophobia from those speaking on behalf of non-European immigrants. This study does not assume the Romans to be natives as much as people with something to lose in the process of globalization. Too often, the neo-liberal economic assumptions that immigration is a positive force for the West creep into our anthropological studies of the situation, which argue not only that the West has a democratic responsibility to the Third World but also a demographic opportunity (Vincent, 2002, pg. 9). Again, as I have demonstrated, while the Ultras may shock and disturb, they are far from mindless proponents of racism and hatred.

In this context, I hope to be part of an expansion of knowledge on the process of globalization. Transnationalism, ethnicity, multiethnicity, nationalism, development, and the politics of the nation-state, certainly make globalization and current politics knowable, but they are not enough. Economic, social, and political processes - including world systems - point to a “cultivated and structured” knowledge of the world (Vincent, 2002, pg. 7). However, there is another knowledge of an entirely different sort that can give us a more complete picture of these processes; namely, the goals, perceptions, and conceptions of receiving populations. Through these we may also be faced with a knowledge that forces us to return to a host of our anthropological notions for re-evaluation.

What is more certain is the challenge to the “pure reason and enlightened self-interest” found in 19th Century (Enlightenment) philosophy posed by the Counter-Enlightenment sources of political philosophy used in this project. Nietzsche, Sorel, Evola, and others like Carl Schmitt combined to form a useful critique of modernity and the bourgeois form of life, not only for me but also my

research subjects. These thinkers questioned the value of egalitarianism, democracy, the prohibition of violence, and a life without (political) enemies. Any such vision amongst modern men and women can be studied on its own terms without their being castigated for noncompliance with our bourgeois multicultural ideals.

I am aware that these are extreme positions and demands, but anthropology has an opportunity to make knowable a deep and theoretically sound body of subjects that, like the Ultras, are of a mind to value and protect what they understand as their “own culture and traditions” - ideas which already present a challenge to how anthropology studies forms of life. These subjects, among them the European New Right, the more radical elements of the Italian Slow Food movement, and, of course, the nationalist neo-fascist organizations of Western and Eastern Europe, are unknowable without being allowed to speak for themselves.

II. Curva Sud Roma Ultra Groups

A. Recruitment Amongst Ultra Groups

Continuing in the light of the biographical details given above, we may return to the explanation of the Ultra groups presented in Chapter 2, paying particular attention to their recruitment practices. For groups in Curva Sud Roma that maintain offices, like *Boys Roma*, *Ultras Romani*, and *Padroni di Casa*, recruitment largely takes place at their offices and thus away from the stadium. For the groups without offices, such as *Fedayn*, *Ultras San Lorenzo-Primavalle*, and the smaller groups of the lower-curva, recruitment is more organic, with potential members making their presence known at the stadium over the course of several games.

In the offices, the groups take advantage of their surroundings to not only impress, but also attempt to get to know, a prospective Ultra. At the *Boys* office, the history of the group and its

relationship with fascism is plastered on every wall and stuffed upon every shelf. One gets the sense of entering a shrine to the Ultras of the far right. The office is quiet, without music or television, and was dominated by the discussions taking place amongst the group members. Outside the office, on Via degli Equi in the San Lorenzo neighborhood, Ultras would congregate to smoke and talk, so that upon arrival at the office one was often sized-up before entering. Just as the groups without offices desire to see an Ultra at the stadium on multiple occasions, an Ultra would need to be present at the office over a period of time before membership would be discussed. This type of soft recruitment occurred in the Curva as well, although it was not expected that one would stand in the *Boys* area unless one were already a member of the group. Instead, it was expected that a prospect would come to the *Boys* area before or after a game to say hello or ask questions about the group, the game, or an upcoming game.

For *Padroni di Casa*, the situation is different. Like *Fedayn*, which is a closed group in the sense that membership is restricted to those in the Quadraro neighborhood, *Padroni di Casa* is largely inaccessible at the stadium. Their section in the lower part of Curva Sud is difficult to reach as it is not bounded by an aisle. To reach them one would have to leave the aisle and negotiate the other groups that stand between it and *Padroni di Casa*. Each of these smaller groups is highly protective of their territory, so that a stranger coming amongst them would be assumed to be stealing a place to stand from one of their members. Thus, potential members of *Padroni di Casa* are far more likely to meet the group at its office, *Casa Pound*, which stands in sharp contrast to that of *Boys Roma*.

Because it serves as an office for the Rome chapter of *Casa Pound Italia*, a fascist social movement, it resembles a political party headquarters. There are multiple desks, crisp overhead

lights, numerous telephones, and a large flat-screened television that is always tuned to either SKY News or RAI 24 (both CNN-style 24 hour news channels). There is no Ultra memorabilia and nothing of Mussolini's fascism as one finds in the *Boys* office. Instead, the posters of various *Casa Pound Italia*, *Forza Nuova*, and *Fiamma Tricolore* initiatives line the walls. As I explained above, the group was affiliated with both *Forza Nuova* and *Fiamma Tricolore* before being involved in the founding of *Casa Pound Italia* in 2008. Because of the close connections between *Padroni di Casa* and *Casa Pound*, one is essentially joining one when joining the other.

Whether in *Boys*, *Padroni di Casa*, or in groups without offices, the process of becoming an Ultra was no more difficult than showing a commitment to the group. But because the large groups are somewhat selective (*Boys* attempts to avoid problems with alcohol amongst their members, *Padroni di Casa* is averse to thuggery, *Fedayn* is open only to those living in Quadaro) they have created a process of initiation so that they may become familiar with an Ultra before he or she enters the group. And to be accepted into a group, the Ultra needs the approval of the group's leader or leaders. In the case of *Boys*, it was enough that one of the four leaders vouched for an Ultra that he or she be admitted. When the current leader came back into the group in mid-2007, he assumed responsibility, but also relied on the other hierarchs to approve potential members. In *Padroni di Casa*, one had to demonstrate an aptitude with the political platform of the group and *Casa Pound Italia* in order to be accepted. This was an informal process that usually occurred over coffee or in discussion groups at *Casa Pound*. Once accepted in the group there are no set dues, yet members are asked to help pay for any choreography and banners the group displays.¹ Members are also

¹ The other large group in Curva Sud, *Ultras Romani*, is a dues paying group, so that one may join merely by paying the group 10 euros.

expected to travel to away games with other members. In the case of *Boys*, this often means on a chartered bus at a cost of between 50 and 60 euros.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, leaders sometimes move between groups. Although this did not happen during research, it is clear from past examples that it is a process that can put on display the hierarchy amongst the groups in Curva Sud. The best example is of William Betti's establishment of *Ultras Romani* with the backing of *Boys Roma* leader Paolo Zappavigna (described in Chapter 2). However, when a new group is not being formed by the leader of an established group I expect that the process would be much simpler, requiring only an agreement between the groups in question.

There is another variable in the process of becoming a member of an Ultra group and that is to regularly be seen at AS Roma away games. As I explained in Chapter 3, the *trasferta*, or away game, crystalizes the Ultra experience of soccer. It combines all the elements that make the Ultras what they are: antagonism; aggression; feelings of sacrifice, commitment, and militarism in the name of Rome; and the sense of "being present" in the face of local hostility and potential danger. The Ultras who regularly travel to away games - and there are less than 1,000 who can claim to be at any and every game AS Roma plays - consider themselves the elite of the phenomenon. As I explained in Chapter 4, these Ultras believe themselves to be part of something that truly distances them from the bourgeois form of life. To be in this elite class and be unaffiliated with a group is rare, as these types of Ultras tend to make the best group members. According to Filippo of *Fedayn*, "the always-present are the only true Ultras, for we are dedicated, disciplined, brave, and just crazy enough to follow [AS] Roma anywhere. For us," he told me, "there is no enemy too ferocious, no distance too far to travel, and no game that we cannot influence."

It was my being part of this elite group of Ultras *in trasferta* that led *Boys Roma* to attempt to recruit me into their group. Having been to Milan with the group, and having stood with them on numerous occasions, I was familiar with their leaders and with how the group was organized. In conversation on the return trip from Milan, “Duce,” the newly established leader, presented me with a t-shirt of the group. He told me that from what they had seen of me in the stadiums and in interviews and social occasions at the group’s office, they (in particular Fabio, my most important contact at the group) knew I was “a true Ultra and someone who is reliable.” I accepted the shirt as a gift but explained to them that I was leaving Rome in the near future, so my being a member would be superfluous. “No problem,” he told me, “you’ll be a member until you leave and an honorary member afterward. You are *Boys Roma* now and no one can touch you.”

This form of membership did allow me access to the group that, while available before, was more comfortable to achieve and negotiate. I was forced to explain that, as far as research went, I was in Rome to study *Curva Sud Roma*, not only *Boys Roma*, but even in doing so, I was embraced in a way that allowed me to understand the camaraderie and belonging that the groups provide. However, it also allowed me opportunity to see the level of commitment the groups expected of their members.

At the Circo Massimo protest in December 2007, the former members of *Antichi Valori* and other former members of *Monteverde* and *AS Roma Ultras* formed *Romulae Genti*. This group also asked me to participate, which meant little more than providing English editions of some Nietzsche texts. I talked to the *Duce* of *Boys* about my involvement with two groups in order to better understand how they interacted. “This group [*Romulae Genti*],” he told me, “contains some people that were very hostile to us [*Boys Roma*] at an important time in our history. If you tell me these are

your friends and that no banners will be displayed against *Boys* you can do whatever you want with them.” I explained that I could not be responsible for what the group did after I left Rome. He seemed not to remember my imminent departure. With his memory prodded, he loosened up and I asked him about how the situation would be handled had I been Roman (and thus not leaving). “There are two options,” he told me. “You would be forced to decide with which group to stand. After all, you cannot be at two places at once.” “Duce” referred to where I would stand during games. Where one stands is where one’s allegiances lie. If one is a *Boys Roma Ultra*, to stand behind another group’s banner is an act of treason. “The first option is you being dismissed from *Boys* and having your obligations to and from the group cancelled. The other option is only reserved for important members. In this case we would have attempted to merge the groups with you as an important person in both.”

In the past this type of group blending took place as a way to expand a group’s profile and to gain protection from larger groups. *Monteverde* had once been aligned with *Boys* in this way, but they ended their relationship with *Boys* in order to join *AS Roma Ultras*. In the current curva, *Arditi* acts as a satellite of *Boys*. Knowing that the members of *Romulae Genti* would never accept this proposal, I asked what the options of the new, smaller group would be. “If they are not hostile,” he answered, “probably no trouble would develop. You would be out of *Boys*, that is for sure. However, if hostilities did develop between the groups, you would be in trouble with us. But,” he added with a smile, “after we beat up you and your friends, you, as a good Ultra, would be asked to rejoin our group.” “And the others?” I asked. “Those *Antichi Valori ‘scemi’* (idiots) would be risking much to ever return to the curva. We [*Boys*] have a reputation to uphold and they would have confronted us twice.”

B. Maintaining Ultra Groups

With no set method of recruiting Ultras, the groups might seem difficult to maintain over the course of years. After all, they do not go to college campuses or set up booths in piazzas on Saturday mornings as do the Italian political parties. Instead, the Ultras advertise themselves in the stadium. Every banner and choreography is a way of attracting attention to the group. Even the fights before and after games, or the neighborhood sweeps committed by *Monteverde*, act as a way of attracting attention amongst potential members. This works in conjunction with the ubiquity of soccer in Italian society. Despite the Ultras' war with the media, they can still be seen during every telecast of soccer in Italy. Broadcasts of rivalry games are especially incomplete without repeated camera pans of the opposing curvas. Amongst AS Roma and SS Lazio fans, many derbies, or games between the two clubs, are distinguished by the choreography presented by each curva.

As I explained in the fourth and fifth chapters, the media plays a central role in the state's plan to remove the Ultras from Italian soccer. The traditional media universally condemns the Ultras' aggression, rivalries, and violence. Yet, there is a belief amongst the groups that the children being courted by the industry of soccer to consume the game without aggression (see Chapter 6) will be enamored enough with the Ultras and their form of life that they will reject the bourgeois model. They believe this because the same thing happened to them. 90% of the Ultras who responded to my survey began attending AS Roma games with their parent or parents. When old enough, i.e. between 13 and 17 years of age, that same 90% began attending games in Curva Sud either alone or with friends. From there, these teenagers were a step away from becoming Ultras.



Figure 152. Ultras in Bari protest the government's crackdown on Ultras. The signs read "One does not ask permission to be free. Bari. 2007.

This points to the amorphous nature of the Ultra phenomenon, despite its being based on organization and discipline. While the groups are easy to find, the Ultras themselves are sometimes elusive. Even though the groups do not actively recruit in piazzas as do political parties, the Ultras are in piazzas. The groups do not enter the schools, but the Ultras are present in large numbers in the schools. When boarding a train for Milan to take part in a 2007 game between Inter Milan and AS Roma, I purposely wore my *Boys Roma* scarf as I approached the platform. As expected, I was stopped by the police and asked for identification, game ticket, and tickets for the journey to and from Milan. As I dutifully handed over my information, the 15 *Boys* Ultras with whom I was traveling, and amongst whom no AS Roma colors were to be seen, walked by the police and onto the train. It is this type of cat-and-mouse game that the Ultras have gotten used to when dealing with the Italian state. However, the post-Sandri position of the state has changed significantly, with away-

game travel being suspended for all but the most benign of games.

III. AS Roma's Ultras and Italian Ultras in General

As I explained in the introductory chapter, there has been only one ethnographic study of Italian Ultras published in the English language. That was the research conducted by Antonio Roversi (1994) amongst FC Bologna's Ultras in the early-1990s. Demographically there was very little difference between what he discovered in Bologna and what I discovered in Rome. Age, gender, and employment data all coincided with only slight variation despite the distance of almost 20 years and the different social contexts (see Chapter 1). At the end of that study, Roversi acknowledged that similar studies were needed in other Italian curvas because of the highly local nature of the phenomenon (1994, pg. 147). Other scholars of the Ultra phenomenon have made similar claims while also noting the few universals amongst the Italian curvas. Amongst these, Carlo Podaliri (with Balestri, 1997), Carlo Balestri (with Roversi, 2002), and Rocco DeBiasi (with Lanfranchi, 1997) have published numerous articles in English about the importance of distinguishing between Italian curvas.

This study certainly supports their assertions, as it is so deeply rooted in the world view of the AS Roma Ultras that it might not make sense to Ultras in other Italian cities. The Ultras are much like the songs they sing. Even though various curvas might share the melodies of popular Italian songs from the fascist hymn "*Faccetta Nera*" to Pooh's "*Chi Fermerà la Musica*," they all change the lyrical content to match their context. What's more, the curvas will also borrow liberally from the folk songs of their city, such as Curva Sud Roma's singing of popular Roman songs "*La Società dei Mangaccioni*" and "*La Canzone di Testaccio*." Clearly, the content is more important than the melodies borrowed.

That being said, there are foundational and elemental characteristics that are shared by Italian Ultras wherever they are found. Maurizio Stefanini (2009) has identified these broadly as *identità* (identity), *politica* (politics), and *violenza* (violence). Instead, using the language already established in this study, I identify these broadly as performance or style of fandom, agonism, and politics. It is with these three groupings that I will place AS Roma's Ultras in the context of Italian Ultras in general.

A. Performance

The Ultras' in-stadium performances act as a framing device that demarcates the curvas they inhabit from the other parts of the stadium. This is because there is no reason that the other fans do not participate in their revelry and rivalry - other than that they are not Ultras. It is the songs, bombs, flares, smoke candles, and flags that separate the Ultras from the non-Ultras. As we have seen, every curva in Italy, at least until the death of Raciti, was marked by incessant singing, occasional bombs, timely flares (such as during pre-game rituals like AS Roma fans singing "*Roma Roma*," the club's anthem), smoke candles, and constant flag waving.

Bromberger (1993) was one of the first anthropologists to study Ultra performances. Being a structuralist he discerned in them an entire cultural universe of meanings and oppositions. His most vivid case study was the dichotomy between the northern, modern, and efficient FC Juventus of Turin and the southern, pre-modern, and artistic SSC Napoli of Naples. Not only did he contrast the fans and their devotion to either modern rationality (Juventus) or pre-modern superstition and faith (Napoli), but also the playing styles of two teams were said to match the characteristics of the fans.



Figure 153. AS Roma Ultra in Milan. His scarf reads “I hope that God strikes you all with lightning.” Milan. 2007.

Instead of a structuralist reading of the Ultras’ style of fandom, I probed the rationality of their choices, linking them to the context that propelled them. For the Ultras of AS Roma this meant studying banners and the content of choreographies. It meant, more occasionally, studying the content and history of songs. Armstrong and Young studied soccer chants and songs as “a collective expression of social and cultural identity” that often takes the form of a new poetry or folklore (2000, pg. 180). Aside from deriding the occasional “racist” content of the songs, the Italian media is fond of referring to them as a form of folklore. Indeed, I frequently heard the same Romans of Monteverde who chastised me for involving myself with the Ultras humming and signing the songs of the Curva while they worked. As Armstrong and Young determined, the songs from the stands become just as integral to the experience of the game as the play on the field.

In the highly policed stadiums of 2007-2008, songs were used to insult or intimidate the

opposing Ultras in a way that pre-game fights or shows of aggression would have done in the past. For the big rivalry games of AS Roma, Curva Sud would spend more than half of a game's 90 minutes singing against the opponent. In special cases, like the AS Roma-SSC Napoli game of 2007 (described in Chapter 5), the curva sang against Napoli and Naples for the full 90 minutes. For AS Roma-SS Lazio of that season, the curva debuted a new anti-Lazio song, a reworked version of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" called "*O Bastardo Bianco-Blu.*" The Ultras sang this song for a full 20 minute stretch of the game. Afterward, Augusto, an SS Lazio Ultra who worked in a Monteverde pizzeria, told me how incensed Lazio's Curva Nord had been by the song and the length of uninterrupted singing by Curva Sud.

For less important games, Curva Sud Roma, just like other curvas, might use standardized songs against their opponent. These include stating the opposing city's name and "*vaffanculo*" (go fuck yourself), or stating "*Odio*" (I hate) and the city's name. Sometimes these became synonymous with certain cities, like "*Odio Napoli*" or "*Roma Roma Vaffanculo*," so that every curva would sing them even when not facing SSC Napoli or AS Roma.

The bombs used by Italian Ultras are usually homemade, or made by a few people in each curva and sold amongst their peers. They take the form of a pipe bomb although they are made with cardboard and paper. They are long and skinny tubes filled with blasting powder and have a long fuse. The flares used in each curva are quick burning emergency flares that are purchased online at fansshop.eu or in auto supply stores. The smoke candles are also purchased online, normally from fansshop.eu, and can be procured in a wide variety of colors (whichever are appropriate to one's team). The point of each of these is to create a spectacle that will shock, awe, and intimidate outsiders (see figure 28). The bombs, flares, and smoke candles, however, were also used as

weapons during fights with the police, which is why the state banned them in the wake of Raciti's death.



Figure 154. Ultras amongst flags and flares. Rome. 2006.

Each Italian curva will also have a measure of flags, representing either individual groups, the team, the curva, the city, or now the region. In Curva Sud Roma, group, team, and city flags dominate, each one predominantly yellow and red, the colors of both AS Roma and Rome. In Milan, one sees flags of the teams (red and black for AC Milan and blue and black for Inter Milan) and the red and white cross of Saint Ambrose, the patron saint of Milan. Amongst other intra-city rivals this is not the case. Neither FC Torino nor FC Juventus display their city's flag. In Genova, only Genoa CFC displays that city's flag which is identical to Milan's. Because the flag is incorporated into the crest of Genoa CFC, the city's other team UC Sampdoria does not display it during games. In Rome, SS Lazio's Ultras are never seen with the Rome city flag for similar reasons. In Lega Nord cities like Verona, Brescia, and Bergamo, the curvas are often full of that party's flag.

Likewise, the materials used in Ultra choreographies are similar from curva to curva. 8.5" by 11" colored paper or cardboard squares often suffice to turn a curva into a backdrop for the

message of a choreography. This portion is usually printed or painted onto large industrial roles of paper. As I explained in Chapter 2, designs are discussed and finalized by the group or groups paying for the choreography. Each group would then be responsible for producing their portion of the design, which is either created by the group members themselves or by neighborhood design shops. Perhaps it is an industry driven by Ultra and political activism, but each Roman neighborhood seems to have an abundance of print shops. Certainly, Monteverde has its fair share. It is rare for curvas to display choreographies that involve props or materials beyond paper and cardboard.

If the songs, bombs, flares, and flags are the frames by which Ultras are distinguishable from non-Ultras and these are removed, then what remains? If the Ultras are dispossessed of soccer, yet still amass in piazzas are they still Ultras? Stefanini (2009) points to Ultras' style or mode of sociality as the template for radical political actors like the anarchist Black Block and All Whites (*Tutte Bianche*), yet these cannot be said to be Ultras. On one level this points to the importance of the *mentalità* as it allows an identifiable essence of "being Ultra." However, it also leads us to wonder about the future of the Ultras. If they are dispossessed of the stadiums, is remaining together in the form of a movement enough to have any relevance as Ultras?

The importance of soccer to the Ultras must not be underestimated. If the Ultras take their performances out of the stadiums do they still have the same importance or impact? If they amass at Campidoglio and sing hymns to the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius or to Castor and Pollex would this suffice? In fact they have done so, most recently following AS Roma's victory over AC Parma to clinch the 2001 Italian Championship. But this merely underscores the fact that their performances beyond the stadiums are still motivated by momentous AS Roma victories and thus by soccer. It should be clear by this dissertation that I am arguing that the Ultras are far more than

their in-stadium performances. In turning now to agonism and politics I will demonstrate why.

B. Agonism

Just as with performance, the form of Ultra agonism I explained in Chapter 6 I believe to be common to all of Italy's Ultras. It is the content that differs from place to place and curva to curva. Dal Lago and De Biasi studied the Ultra phenomenon as a single cultural entity, but struggled to find many unifying cultural elements. The one they did identify was a world view centered on "war" (Dal Lago and De Biasi, 1994, pg. 85). It was with this in mind that I identified agon and agonism as the central elements of the Ultras' form of life. Not only does agonism incorporate both the natural, territorial, soccer-based rivalries of the Ultras, but also and meta-natural rivalries made of the state and the media.

The idea that soccer is interconnected with the political and social contexts in which it is played is common to Italy's Ultras. Although the media and the bourgeois fans of the game are intent to have it be somewhat displaced from the regional and political divisions so important to Italian society and history, the Ultras make of these the very rationale for their involvement with soccer. Just as AS Roma's Ultras have a visceral hatred for the Ultras of SSC Napoli, AC Livorno, Inter and AC Milan, SS Lazio, FC Juventus, Brescia Calcio, and Atalanta BC, these clubs' Ultras return that hatred for AS Roma. Some of these rivalries are local and historical, like SSC Napoli and SS Lazio, and others are more recent and political, like AC Livorno, Brescia Calcio, and Atalanta BC. These latter teams are based in Brescia and Bergamo, two centers of support for the *Lega Nord*. The two Milan-based clubs are hated for different reasons. AC Milan is hated because their Ultras killed AS Roma Ultra Antonio De Falchi in 1989, and Inter Milan is hated because they are a sister club to SS Lazio. Each of these teams have a long standing political rivalry with AC Milan, which

is traditionally a club of the political left. And so it continues, until the Ultras make of soccer a web of rivalries and hatreds.

As figure 90 demonstrates, these rivalries are also marked by the current social and political topics of the day. In that photo, UC Sampdoria Ultras wave trash bags at the SSC Napoli supporters on the other side of the stadium in reference to the ongoing problem in Campania with trash collection. Otherwise, the “*tifare contro*,” or root against, aspect of Ultra agonism will pick up on a local enemy of the team being played. For instance, when AS Roma played at FC Messina in 2006, the AS Roma Ultras sang “*Messinese Sei un Catanese*” (person of Messina you are of Catania) at the Messina crowd, not only playing on Messina’s biggest soccer rivals but also Catania’s status as the “Other” of Sicily (figure 155).



Figure 155. Written in Messina’s San Filippo stadium: Person from Messina you are of Catania. Messina. January 2007.

What is distinctive is the content of the altruistic associations with agonism. For each curva

there will be a concordant “propter nos,” or people on whose behalf they act. I argue that the purpose of the agonistic form of life is to promote a narrowly defined people or in-group. For Curva Sud Roma, that people is obviously Roman. In Brescia, by contrast, it may be limited to Brescia or it might be moving to incorporate the surrounding Lombard region or more fully “the North.” For certain, though, it does not include Rome and the Romans. Likewise SSC Napoli’s Ultras have an extremely limited range of altruistic co-identification, being restricted to the city itself. I have been told that the other small teams of the Campania region despise SSC Napoli as do the Romans.

In Chapter 7, I explained *Romanità* as a central element of the AS Roma Ultras’ world view. That chapter also addressed the applicability of *Romanità* to *campanilismo*, the form of extreme localism that is still a powerful socializing force in Italy. From the perspective of the Ultra phenomenon in general, *Romanità* is a local Roman form of *campanilismo*. From within the concept’s own history, though, it is far more compelling as a political discourse that outweighs the other forms of Italian localism. Nonetheless, the point here is that, while I identified *Romanità* as a crucial part of the experience of AS Roma’s Ultras, it would be unknowable to other city’s Ultras in the same terms. For instance, whereas AS Roma’s Ultras use *Romanità* to attack their *Milanesi* counterparts as the former slaves of Rome, the *Milanesi* would not use their relative status under Roman rule against another curva, say that of Vicenza or Venice.

In any event, this dissertation points to the importance of understanding not only the performance but also the content of the Ultras’ rivalries; in fact, it has focused upon the Ultras’ rationales for rivalry. The two areas of performance that did receive critical attention were the choreography and the *striscione*, or long hand-painted banner with a personal, political, or soccer related message. These two forms of performance, though, were discussed more as they relate to

Ultra agonism than as the performance elements listed above. This is because their content is the basis of their being enacted, as well as the basis of their meaning. In these respects I have gone beyond the performance studies of Ultras.

An additional area that distinguishes this work is the identification of the media and state as rivals of the Ultras. This allowed me to consider the political ideologies and the political and social environment of the Ultras in relation to their conceptualization of agonism. It became clear during research that the Ultras had proper reasons to be hostile toward the media and Italian state. Often these reasons went beyond the treatment they themselves received by both. As I found myself deeper in the world of the Ultras than I perhaps needed to be for research I also became more closely affiliated with group leaders on the very far right politically. It was among these leaders of *Boys Roma* and *Padroni di Casa* that I became aware of the deep moral divide between them and the bourgeois press and state. In time, like them, I began to see the conflict between the Ultras and the media (especially) as a conflict between two competing moralities. This consciousness of morality came from their readings of Friedrich Nietzsche, who understood morality is the basis not only of peoples but also of millennia.

It is impossible to say if Nietzsche is a popular theoretical influence on other Italian curvas. I can say that the bourgeois modern world he describes, in complete contradistinction to the warrior-based pre-modern forms of life that preceded it, makes sense well beyond Curva Sud Roma. In Juventus' Curva Sud, for instance, the main groups are *Viking* and *Drughi*. Both groups are of the right and, while the first is an obvious reference to the Nordic anti-Christian raiders of the Middle Ages, the second is taken from a violent gang in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*. Both of these sources of inspiration are easily transmuted into the language of Nietzsche's moralistic

political philosophy.

Aligned with the dominant and Ultra moralities are competing ethics of violence. In Rome, amongst the leaders of the rightist groups, Sorel's understanding of violence as a force of change is combined with Nietzsche's understanding of violence as a way to transcend the meddling bourgeois morality of modernity. It thus acts as a tool for understanding the Ultras as a phenomenon outside or beyond the bourgeois form of life. Again, I cannot say if Sorel is studied by other Ultras. I can say that both the government and the Ultras believe Curva Sud Roma to be the most violent curva in Italy (see the Observatory documents sited in chapters 4 and 5). That is not to say, however, that AS Roma's Ultras are the only violent Ultras in Italy. They are all violent to some degree, enough so that each of the book-or-essay-length academic sources on the Ultras used in this study is either devoted entirely or in-part to Ultra violence. I will now turn to the issue of violence, especially as it relates to the conflict between the Ultras and the state.

C. Violent Politics

In the early years of the Ultra phenomenon, the 1970s and 1980s, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to describe a single unifying political characteristic of Italian Ultras. While some groups were born of the left and right, either from offshoots of the student movement or the postwar fascist parties, others were apolitical and genuinely benign (Foot, 2006, pg. 197). Those on the political edges, though, were organized in a time of political extremism and domestic terrorism perpetrated by both sides (Ginsborg, 2003a, pg. 107). Even as the leftists were weary of state repression and the fascists were weary of the state in general, neither set of Ultras was known to attack the police as became common in the mid-to-late-1990s - and as was witnessed in Rome the night of Gabriele Sandri's death (Stefanini, 2009, pgs. 132-136). So it is that most scholars who

search for the origins of violence between the Ultras and the police begin their surveys between 1994 and 1996 (Mariottini, 2006; Roversi 1994; Stefanini 2009).

Although neither Mariottini nor Roversi point to specific instances that triggered the now-20 year war between the police and the Ultras, relying instead on Leicester School assumptions that the origins of social violence lie in the psyches of the perpetrators, Stefanini lays the blame clearly upon the police. “Whenever there was the smallest of incidents between Ultras,” he says, “the police would come on the scene as hard as possible, with batons crashing down upon t-shirt clad soccer fans until all movement in the danger zone ceased” (Stefanini, 2009, pg. 132). He goes on to list a series of beatings into states of irreversible coma and even death by the police - deaths that became the organizing principle in Brescia and Perugia, whose curvas were re-named after the victims of police brutality. Amongst the victims he lists 32 year-old Alessandro Spoletini, an Ultra of AS Roma beaten into a coma by police in Bologna in 2001. The following week, he says, AS Roma’s Ultras attacked the police on guard at a Champions League game between AS Roma and FC Liverpool (Stefanini, 2009, pg. 135). He continues in this way, up through the G8 Summit in Genova 2001, where Carlo Giuliani was killed by a Carabinieri officer. As a result the Ultras developed what he calls a “ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards) syndrome,” and began to engage the police before the police engaged them (Stefanini, 2009, pgs. 131-134).

The relationship between the state and the Ultras was hard to define during my research. As I said above, there was very little violence to speak of between the Ultras and none between the police and Ultras. The Ultras were, in my estimation, well-policed, in that when they arrived in opposing cities by train they were met with a large contingent of machine gun wielding Carabinieri. When they arrived by car they were often stopped on highways and driven en masse with police

escort to the stadium. In Rome, the police were visible in large numbers both inside and outside the stadium.



Figure 156. Messages written inside Florence's Artemio Franchi stadium. Florence. 2007.

Because of this, I turned my attention to the ethics and discourses of violence being deployed by the Ultras and the state. What became clear is that both the state and the Ultras have a purpose behind their violence. As I said above, AS Roma's Ultras, at least at the leadership level, are committed to using violence as a way to create and maintain distance between themselves and the bourgeois form of life. That, however, is manifested at the interpersonal level. As a group or curva, their violence is an attack on the forces protecting the industry of soccer from those who wish the game to return to its communal roots. It was thus that *Calcio Moderno* was invoked by AS Roma's as a rationale for violence.

Calcio Moderno is the Ultras' moniker for the globalized, deterritorialized, and super-

profitable soccer that now defines the game in the industrialized world. “*No al Calcio Moderno*” has become a rallying cry for Ultras in all parts of Italy and it is the one example of a unified political agenda or model amongst the Ultras. In Rome, the experience of *Calcio Moderno* - of globalization as a destructive force for soccer clubs and fans - politicized Ultras in ways that moved them far beyond stadiums and the world of soccer. It was also at the core of their ethical aversion to the bourgeois form of life. Again, the details of other curvas’ involvement with this discourse and agenda are unknown to me. I have, however, perused numerous websites and facebook pages devoted to a rejection of *Calcio Moderno* and have read words very similar to those I heard in Rome.

Elsewhere, the extreme political actions of the Ultras, like raiding Roma camps, were witnessed in Campania. In one instance an SSC Napoli Ultra was implicated, but never convicted, for taking part in an attack. In Palermo I saw Ultra graffiti against African immigrants and in Milan I saw Ultra graffiti proclaiming Lombardy a separate nation. Thus, I can assume that Ultra politics take the form of issues that are closest to home.



Figure 157. Juventus fans against *Calcio Moderno*. London. 2008.

In Rome, *Calcio Moderno* meant not only a world where money and the global marketplace counted more than the interests of localized Romans, but also a world in which the morality of that marketplace was hegemonic. Multiculturalism, anti-racism, tolerance, immigration, and the American tropes of democracy and freedom were to be resisted as much as foreign ownership of soccer clubs. In Rome and in Curva Sud Roma's rightist Ultras, one also finds a long tradition of extreme right politics. I cannot say if *Forza Nuova*, *Fiamma Tricolore*, and *Casa Pound Italia* are as popular elsewhere in Italy as they are in Rome - or at least amongst Rome's Ultras. But in Rome, as I was told by a leftist *Fedayn* Ultra, "fascism is in the air one breathes, and in the cobblestones that we walk [upon]. Almost every building is fascist and even the monuments to the 'real Romans' are fascist." It was the normalcy of fascism in Rome, at least amongst the Ultras, that I hope to have made clear in the previous chapters.

Returning to the violence of the state, above I used the work of Giorgio Agamben to explain the "state of exception" that defines the state's interaction with the Ultras. These exceptional states, or states of emergency, are always militarized and place a high value on state security at the expense of individual liberties. I also used Max Weber's template of state monopoly of the legitimate use of violence to explain how the rather inconsequential violence of the Ultras can be construed to be a threat to the state. These theorists, combined with Schmitt, Wolf, and Gramsci, helped me see how the bourgeois ethics and morality of the state are legitimized and disseminated by the liberal press. Against all this, I described the Ultras as inhabiting what Deleuze and Guattari call a "derelict space," beyond the hegemony of the bourgeois form of life. Interestingly, Stefanini described the Ultras' curvas as "Indian reservations, or spaces where the sovereignty of Italy does not reach" (Stefanini, 2009, pg. 127).

Regardless of city or region, the relationship between the Italian state and the Ultras is the same. The Italian media made it clear during my research that violence amongst soccer fans in any form would not be tolerated by the state. Regardless of the fascists in Rome's curvas, as both AS Roma's and SS Lazio's Ultras are dominated by the far right, or the communists in AC Livorno's Curva Nord, the state with its troops of *Carabinieri*, and the media with its ability to define, signaled after the death of Raciti that the derelict spaces or Indian reservations would no longer be allowed to exist.

IV. The Future of the Ultras

In Chapter 5 I asked the question, as I did above, what will become of the Ultras if they are dispossessed of their role in Italian soccer. Returning to AS Roma's Ultras, it is difficult to say. There are three discernable possibilities, each of which is problematic from the perspective of the Ultras.

One, the Ultras are hoping that a change of regime will loosen some of the restrictions put in place by the government of Romano Prodi and since strengthened by the Berlusconi government. This seems unlikely, as having virtually banned away-game travel and effectively banned Ultra in-stadium traditions, the state has finally rid itself of a large part of its problems with the Ultras.

Two, there is a strong enough political consciousness among the rightist Ultras that an Ultra-based social movement might be possible. However, as I wondered above, how relevant would being an Ultra be to a social movement if soccer is removed from the equation? Fascist Ultras already mirror the earliest manifestations of the fascist movement begun by Mussolini in 1919. The *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (The Italian Fighting League) was a small group of *arditi* (Italian infantry storm troopers), Futurists, and anti-communist agitators that violently engaged communist and

passivist organizers in and around Milan (Farrell, 2003, pgs. 97-103). The rightist Ultras share the same passion for anti-liberal politics, *squadrisimo* (political action in the form of fascist bands), and a similar ethic of violence and critique of modern morality. It seems unlikely in any case that the Ultras, as Ultras, would seek a role in parliamentary politics, as so much of their critique of modernity rests on a critique of the liberalism at its foundation.

Three, the Ultras have an inordinate amount of faith in their *mentalità* and form of life as a viable alternative to the bourgeois form of life and its consumerist pleasures. It is possible that they could maintain the *mentalità* outside the stadiums with little damage occurring to either its forcefulness or relevance. Similar to Slow Food, the movement for a return to Italian culinary habits and traditions in the face of the Americanization of local cuisines and eating practices, the Ultras offer a passionate critique of the changes to traditional life being demanded by globalized free-market capitalism. Resisting globalization, much as it is resisted in the developing world (Falk, 1999, pgs. 1-27; Prempeh, 2006, pgs. 14-39), may be, in my view, their most productive and sustainable option. However, it presupposes a high level of commitment to the political aspects of being an Ultra that a large number of Ultras reject.

There is a fourth possibility and that is that the Ultras will be policed out of existence. Based on my experience, the current generation of Ultras is defiant enough that the state will be forced to kill far more Ultras than the public is willing to accept in order to make them extinct. I am convinced that in the immediate future the Ultras will continue to wait and to play a game of cat and mouse with the state. “Think” said Federico of *Antichi Valori* and *Romulae Genti*, “of how many governments we have seen come and go in Italy, just since I entered Curva Sud in 1995 [there have been ten governments since 1995]. Think of how many seasons we have seen, how many players

and coaches come and go. Through it all there has been Curva Sud Roma.” Although Federico ignored the internal strife within the curva during that same period, his point was made nonetheless. With stadiums in growing disrepair (according to the Italian Football Federation [FIGC]), attendances dwindling, the number of low-priced foreign players rising, and the hegemony of soccer as a television commodity, the Ultras are the one constant in Italian soccer.

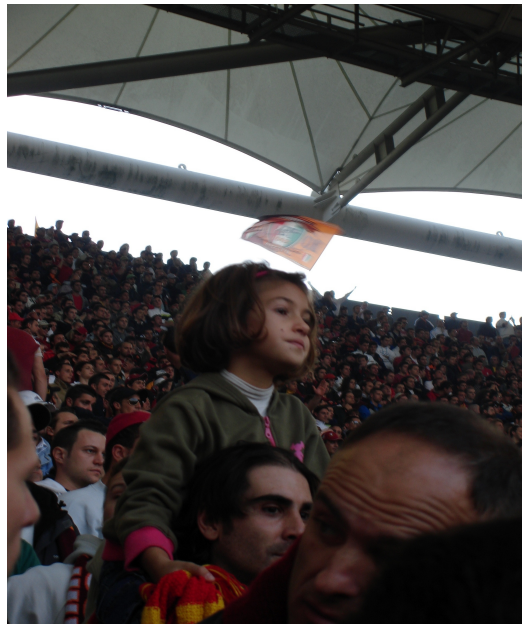


Figure 158. *CUCS* Ultra with a future Ultra. AS Roma-Catania Calcio. Rome. November 2006.

Each of these scenarios is based on the Ultras being stripped of their ability to perform in soccer stadiums. Because I propose that what is essential about the Ultras is their commitment to their *mentalità*, which entails a particular critique of modernity and the bourgeois form of life, I believe that they can continue to exist in some form after the stadiums are closed to them. As said *CUCS* founder Stefano Malfatti at the Circo Massimo, “one is born an Ultra and one dies an Ultra.” Having stripped away the frame of stadium performances, Malfatti answers the question posed

above. Not surprisingly, as he was one of the first to use the term, the “*mentalità Ultras*” remains when the stadium disappears. However, and it is a perhaps fitting conclusion to this project, if that occurs, and the Ultras are in fact dispossessed of their experience of soccer, what they will lose is the joy of being an Ultra. Rivalry and hostility will remain, but the unbridled thrill of an AS Roma goal or victory will be lost. In the end, if the Ultras are able to move beyond the relative safety of the stadiums and into a more active engagement with political extremism, the state may wish it had allowed them their fights, flares, bombs, songs, and flags. That the state fails to do so points instead to another of this project’s conclusions, that the war against the Ultras is ultimately a war against their world view and critique of modernity. As said Andrews and Ritzer, cultural forms that are “generally indigenously conceived, controlled, and comparatively rich in distinctive substantive content are a virtual impossibility” in the realm of global capitalism (Andrews and Ritzer, 2007, pg. 41).

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Bibliographic Appendix on Friedrich Nietzsche

The division between interpretive models of Nietzsche's oeuvre can be seen in the following works. My interpretation, which I do not deem more correct but more useful, is of the "political" Nietzsche - that of "aristocratic radicalism," and an extremely acerbic critique of modernity - that the following works (as well as the works of Nietzsche quoted throughout this dissertation) support:

Appel, Fredrick, 1999, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy*. Cornell University Press.

Cate, Curtis, 2002, *Friedrich Nietzsche*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press.

Conway, Daniel W., 1997, *Nietzsche and the Political*. London: Routledge.

Detwiler, Bruce, 1990, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*. University of Chicago Press.

Ludovici, Anthony, 1909, *Who is to be Master of the World?* Introduction by Dr. Oscar Levy. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Stone, Dan, 2002, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race, and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain*. Liverpool University Press.

The other, more liberal and postmodern, reading of Nietzsche is apparent in the following works:

Bittner, Rudiger, 2003, "Introduction," to *Writings from the Late Notebooks*. Edited by Rudiger Bittner. Cambridge University Press. Pgs. ix-xxxiv. Bittner makes of Nietzsche "an Enlightenment writer" (pg. xv) who "had nothing important to say" on the nation-state or the creation of modern peoplehood (pg. xv) and whose transvaluation of values was a confusion of the purposes of morality with the effects of human metaphysics (xxiv-xxviii). He suggests ignoring the collection he introduces and focusing on what Nietzsche wrote as a student in order to properly understand him (pg. xxxiii).

Cameron, Frank and Dombowsky, Don, ed., 2008, *Political Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, an Edited Anthology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Cameron and Dombowsky announce in their introduction (pg. 21) that Nietzsche was, in fact, a liberal, as he took advantage of democratic freedom of the press to critique political liberalism.

Owen, David, 1995, *Nietzsche, Politics, and Modernity*. London: Sage. Owen makes of Nietzsche an agnostic who denies the basis of truth via his perspectival understanding of the distances between forms of knowledge and the truths that bring them into being. He suggests one simply ignore what Nietzsche had to say about rank order (pg. 171).

Strong, Tracy B., 1996, "Nietzsche's Political Misappropriation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Edited by Magnus and Higgins. Cambridge University Press. Strong says only those on the far right "take seriously" Nietzsche's radical, transformative views of hierarchy and rank (pgs. 128-129).

Warren, Mark, 1988, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*. MIT Press. Warren argues that the "bloody" (political) side of Nietzsche can be ignored to benefit the gentle (spiritual) side. We must do so, he says, to make any use of him (pg. 211).

Young, Julian, 2010, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. Cambridge University Press. Young ignores Nietzsche's love of hierarchy, distance, and transvaluation of values to interpret Nietzsche as a "liberal communitarian" who sought to expel "violence, brutality, and barbarism" from existence (pg. 549).