"To have what was mine": Reclaiming Surnames in Trieste

Maura E. Hametz
Old Dominion University

Throughout the twentieth century, modification of surnames through voluntary action or official coercion formed part of the communal landscape for the population of Trieste. An examination of the experiences of two men—Paolo Marz and Emidio Sussi—demonstrates how the historical processes of surname changes affected members of the population in the city once a part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire and now near Italy's border with Slovenia. Depending on the political circumstances, individual perceptions of identity clashed or coincided with state expectations and ambitions. The experiences of the Marz and Sussi families from 1918 to 1993 illustrate how overlapping ethnic affiliations persisted and how patterns of surname modification and recovery served to articulate the borderland identity.

Introduction

In the preface to a whimsical collection of Italian surnames Giampaolo Dossena (1994, 7) urges Italians to scrutinize their names carefully, to understand the humor and absurdity of their names by "looking them in the face" and "paying attention to what they *vuol dire*," or 'would like to say'.[1] Dossena's suggestion derives from his wish to make Italians chuckle at their surnames. His approach relies on the assumption that names are used primarily for semantic reference and act as signifiers divorced from their original meanings or implications. From this perspective, close inspection of names inspires humor. Yet, while the etymological origins of names might be forgotten, overlooked, or ignored, names as signifiers are by no means devoid of meaning in a social or historical context.

From a linguistic perspective, naming marks "a perceptive field in reference to a given world." Names, including those referring to inanimate objects, confer "an identity" as well as "a title" (Morot-Sir

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1995, 75, 86). Proper names go further; they hold various familial, psychological and cultural connotations that are understood in particular political and societal contexts. Surnames, in particular, indicate "how people are integrated into a social group" (Stahl 1998, 89). Renunciation or voluntary modification of a family name reflects a conscious decision to alter or escape an identity, be it an identity linked to civil status in the case of a marriage or divorce, an ethnic or social identity, or an identity with undesirable associations such as a nefarious past.

Italian laws uphold surnames as immutable and sacrosanct (De Felice 2000, 11). Family names form the bedrock for administrative control and oversight of individuals and family groups by the state. Military service rolls, electoral lists, tax registers, and judicial proceedings all rely on the identification of individuals according to their names, and the law requires that each citizen conduct business with the state under an officially sanctioned name. The Italian criminal code proscribes the deceptive "substitution of person" or misrepresentation of identity (Martini 1998, 206-7). As most other western European states, the Italian state protects the sanctity of a name as an expression of personality based in inviolable rights of individuals and social groups. The presumption of the sanctity of surnames promotes social stability and offers protection of the family as a unit, helping to preserve the right of individuals in social and civil terms. Due to the state's overwhelming interest in the maintenance of names, permission to change a name is generally considered a privilege granted by public authorities, more a "favor" than a "right" (Jacob and Horn 1998, 9).

The stories of two men living in the easternmost region of Italy, a region that was once a part of the Germanic Habsburg Empire and now borders on Slovenia, demonstrate how particular political priorities and aims can override the state's conservative attitude toward the alteration of names. The "*vicende cognonomastiche*" (Marz 2000) (a phrase meaning 'surname alterations' but conveying a sense of 'perambulations') of Paolo Marz and Emidio Sussi illustrate the struggle of those living in the borderlands. Both sought to carve out an identity conforming to the state's expectations for nationalist and ethnic affiliation and, at the same time, consistent with personal affinities.

Setting

The Marz and Sussi families have lived for generations in Trieste. The families' geographic stability of habitation has not, however, been matched by political stability in the city. National sovereignty over

Trieste, located at a crossroads of the Italian, German, and Slavic (Slovenian and Croatian) worlds, changed five times during the course of the twentieth century. In 1918, a victorious Italy annexed the city in the wake of the collapse of the Austrian Habsburg Empire. Trieste remained a part of Italy through the Fascist *ventennio* or 'twenty years', to be severed from the Italian State in 1943 by the Nazis, who incorporated it into the German Reich as the capital city of the Adriatic littoral. Upon liberation in May 1945, the city passed into Yugoslav hands for a renowned "Forty Days" of communist leadership prior to its assignment to the Free Territory of Trieste under Allied military control. The city remained under international oversight in Zone A of the Free Territory, controlled by the Americans and the British, until a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1954 gave control to Italy. The agreement of 1954, only provisional from the juridical standpoint, served as the basis for the final settlement to the problem of sovereignty over the city, achieved finally in October 1975 with the Osimo Accords between Yugoslavia and Italy. The accords of 1975 ended the post-World War II territorial dispute over the city, but ethnic tensions remained a part of local life. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of the independent states of Slovenia and Croatia on Italy's doorstep sparked renewed interest in minority issues and ethnic policies affecting populations in the upper Adriatic.

Official statistics recording the linguistic affinities attributed to the population offer little clarification of the ethnic identity of Trieste's inhabitants. Transitory borders and political machinations make official findings inconsistent and contradictory. Italian has generally been considered the *lingua franca* of those living in the city. Yet prior to the end of the 19th century, this fact reflected its use as a common commercial and social tongue and was not a reliable indicator of ethnic affiliation. The Austrian census of 1910, which used mother tongue as the criterion for evaluation, recorded the region to be 52% Italian, 28% Slovene, and 1% Serbian and Croatian. It counted imperial citizens living in the city and its hinterlands. The first Italian census, taken in 1921, focused on the city of Trieste, excluding outlying districts. The Italians recorded the population to be 85% Italian and only 8% Slovene. They identified no Serbs or Croats in the city's population. No doubt the Italian census purposefully excluded the large Slavic populations of the areas surrounding the city. But the difference in the figures could also be attributed in part to the inclusion of long-time residents who had held Italian rather than Austrian citizenship (Sator 1945, 40, 42).

Willingness to conform to nationalizing legislation or to adopt national traditions articulated by Rome after 1918 served to affirm the multi-ethnic border population's allegiance to Italy. From the era following the First World War to the 1990s, the dynamism of the form taken by names, in particular surnames, perceived as markers of ethnic or national origin, illustrated the clash or coincidence of personal allegiances with state expectations. For members of both the Marz and Sussi families, official naming practices and policies combined with personal decisions to encode ethnic identities that overlapped but were by no means coincident with national state affiliations.

Triestines, like the inhabitants of other border communities, grappled publicly and privately with complicated questions of the relationship of citizenship, nationalist sentiments, and personal identity. In their professional careers, both Paolo Marz and Emidio Sussi explore the complexities of the frontier region. In Marz's work, issues of national affiliation and ethnic identity form a transparent background. His research focuses on the Habsburg military, in particular on the role of Austria in the upper Adriatic during the 18th century. Sussi's sociological studies center on the contemporary influence of the borderland on human relations in Trieste and the lands of the upper Adriatic. Both men are intensely aware of the problematic history of ethnic relations in the region; in the 1990s, they both considered reclaiming surnames that were not ethnically Italian. Marz did so; Sussi did not.

Naming Policies Under the Italian Administration

Since World War I, Italian authorities' tendency to tolerate or even force the alteration of surnames in the northeastern border province of Trieste has revealed the depth of apprehensions regarding ethnic politics and national allegiance in the frontier region. Officials' nationalist-based fears outweighed normal trepidation related to the effects of the administrative disruption and the potential for social instability inherent in name alteration campaigns. In Trieste, surnames became tools used by authorities to demonstrate Italian cultural and social hegemony and to evidence the cultural conformity of the borderland region with the rest of the Italian state. Italian officials paid close attention to what surnames "meant to say." Nationalist policies requiring or encouraging the modification of surnames intruded into individuals' lives, affecting the ways in which they "imagined," to use Anderson's (1983) oft-quoted phrase, themselves fitting within the parameters of the Italian national

community. The adjustment of anthroponyms in Trieste reflected efforts to subvert or gloss over the cosmopolitan character of the city developed as a commercial entrepôt for the Habsburg Empire, a city noted for its heterogeneous population and international character. Campaigns to alter surnames as part of nationalization or "Italianization" efforts were designed to promote domestic consensus and garner support for domestic and international policies—important issues for all national governments and primary goals in particular for Italian Fascist authorities. They fit in with broader Italianization schemes that aimed to erase all traces of domination by prior non-Italian regimes.

The local adoption of Italian names began as soon as the region was annexed to Italy after World War I. In 1919, Via Massimiliana or 'Maximillian's Street' was rebaptized Viale della III Armada, 'Avenue of the Third Army', in honor of the unit which fought against the Austrians during the First World War in Friuli and Venezia Giulia (Trampus 1989, 610). Via Nuova or 'New Street', called Via Maria Teresa in memory of the Habsburg Empress for a brief time during the First World War, was transformed to Via Giuseppe Mazzini in honor of the hero of Italian unification (Trampus 1989, 381). In 1920, the city's Via Acquedotto or 'Acqueduct Street' became Viale XX Settembre or '20 September Avenue' to commemorate the 1870 breach of the Porta Pia and the incorporation of Rome into Italy (Trampus 1989, 659).

Political priorities changed even under Italian rule, and some street names altered during the immediate postwar period were changed again by the Fascist government. For example, Via del Teatro or 'Theater Street', so-named in the 19th century, was rechristened Via Gabriele D'Annunzio in 1922 in honor of the poet-patriot's action in the seizure of the city of Fiume (Rijeka). The same road was called Via degli squadristi, a tribute to the Fascist black-shirted squads, in 1940. The Allied Military Government restored the street to its original name Theater Street in 1946 (Trampus 1989, 605). As Meron Benvenisti (2000, 14, 45) and others have shown, the assertion of an "administrative toponomy" through the alteration of place names helps to establish and justify claims to political proprietorship. Marking individuals with names reflective of the extension of a state's power is more complicated.

After World War I, Italian authorities extending their authority over Trieste received petitions from local inhabitants who sought to mark themselves as Italians through personal name changes. The vast majority of requests dealt with the alteration of surnames and came from individuals who already bore Italian given names. Some petitioners, like

Antonio Grablovitz, asked authorities to standardize their names in an Italian form. Grablovitz claimed to want to eliminate the confusion caused by the varied spelling of his name, written alternately as Gabroviz, Grablovich, Gabrovich, etc., on official documents. Carlo Butazon sought a modification, asking for Buttazzioni because it corresponded better "to the rules of spelling" and to the way the name was "written in city documents" (AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG, 1919, busta 82).[2]

Italian nationalists proved eager to demonstrate their loyalty to the new reigning power. Carlo Battistig asked to be able to drop the *g* from the end of his name. Claiming he had "always been of Italian sentiment," he explained that fear of being victimized by "the horrible monarchy" had held him back from making the change earlier. Enrico Feriancich petitioned to have his surname altered to the Italian form *Feriani* to bring his name in line with his political sentiments and to eliminate its "exotic" sound so that it would not "offend the national character of the city." In his request to have his surname modified to *Alberti*, Rodolfo Albrecht offered a declaration that he had been labeled politically disloyal by the Austrian authorities (AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG, 1919, busta 82).

Others admittedly sought political gain. Enrico Wittkopp asked that his name be altered to *Vitoppi* "in view of the changed political conditions." Gino Brandenburg sought a change to *Brandi* because he did "not want to carry a German name." Oscar Goldschmiedt admitted to economic considerations. He feared that his position at an Italian shipping firm might be jeopardized if he did not modify his name to *Gorelli* (AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG, 1919, busta 82). His anxieties were not unfounded. Italian authorities were pressuring firms to hire unemployed Italian workers in place of those thought to be German.

Some seeking alterations of their names were simply political opportunists. The Civil Commissioner in the region cited one case of an individual seeking an alteration to his given name as characteristic. The man approached Italian authorities in the wake of World War I claiming that the "nefarious Austrian government" had persecuted him through the alteration of his surname. Italian officials contended, however, that such had not generally been the practice of Austrian officials. Closer investigation in the files revealed that the individual had gained permission from Habsburg officials in 1915 during the First World War to change his name due to his claim that *Italo,* reminiscent of Austria's enemy, was potentially "offensive." After Austria's defeat, seeking to

take advantage of the political situation, he approached Italian authorities with a copy of his birth certificate begging to have *Italo* restored (AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG, 1919, busta 97).

Although several hundred people did come forward to have their surnames altered in the wake of World War I, the movement to modify surnames was not widespread; rather, it resulted from sentiment on the part of individuals in the local community. Members of the Marz and Sussi families were not among those who came forward. Evidence indicates that members of the population felt no official pressure to alter their surnames during this period. Still, although the military government in charge of Trieste from November 1918 to July 1919 handled requests for name changes liberally, by August 1919, the new civilian authorities began to question the need for and wisdom of granting modifications (AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG, 1919, busta 97). The Italian Civil Commissioner Antonio Mosconi warned that the encouragement of widespread Italianization through name changes was liable to cause disruptions. He feared it would create instability and tensions similar to those experienced by the Hungarian government when, after the Habsburg compromise was reached creating the Dual Monarchy in 1867, the Hungarian authorities encouraged Magyarization of Slavic and German names (AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG 1919, busta 97). By 1921, Mosconi succeeded in adopting stringent guidelines making name alterations difficult.

By the time of the Fascist takeover in Italy in 1922, the pressure for name modification in the city of Trieste and throughout the new border province had subsided. Yet, the Fascists were loathe to ignore the prevalence of foreign-sounding names. A decree of March 1923 forced the alteration of all toponyms to reflect Italian political proprietorship (Salvemini 1934, 7). Legislation compelled the exclusive use of the Italian language in all public functions including in the courts, and by the end of the 1920s, all children in Italy were educated in Italian irrespective of their mother tongue (Salvemini 1934, 10-11). Measures passed in 1926 in Trent and extended in 1927 to cover all of the territories annexed to Italy after World War I provided for automatic rectification of surnames deemed "originally Italian or Latin, but translated into other languages or deformed by foreign spelling or the addition of a foreign suffix." It also provided for the translation of names "of toponymic origin, derived from places from which names have been translated into other languages or deformed by foreign spelling" and names derived from "noble titles translated or converted

to a foreign form." Names considered to be of foreign origin could be corrected on the request of the individual (Pizzagalli 1929, 33).[3]

Given names came under attack in Trieste under a disused Austrian statute renewed by Italian royal decree in March 1928. The law prohibited the granting of names "ridiculous, immoral, or offensive to religion and to national sentiment." Officials used this statute to prevent parents from giving newborns non-Italian names, to force the children in schools to relinquish Slavic names, and, in some cases, to compel the rechristening of adults (Salvemini 1934, 10).

In the northeastern borderland, with its capital at Trieste, surnames were officially "corrected" by Fascist authorities who, using the legislation of 1926 and 1927, issued decrees informing Triestine citizens of the rectification of their surnames. New Italian forms were assigned according to specifications laid out on a list compiled by a Consulting Commission appointed by the Prefect. This committee, composed of academicians renowned for their nationalist Italian sentiments, and Fascist officials worked for twenty months to compile by 1930 a list of over 2,000 surnames to be rectified.[4] An extensive administrative infrastructure was set up to promote the educated and disciplined enforcement of these onomastic measures. Some modifications included alterations of spelling to conform to Italian orthography; for example, the changes from *Arko* to *Arco*, *Battalia* to *Battaglia*, and *Klima* to *Clima* (Pizzagalli 1929, 127-8, 141). Many alterations simply eliminated or modified elements indicating foreign influence, most often Slavic, Germanic, or Hungarian suffixes. In this manner, *Bresciak* became *Brescia*; *Clemenz* became *Clementi*; *Damianich* became *Damiani*; *Fallig* became *Falli*; *Gutty* became *Gutti*; *Marinschegg* became *Marini*; *Michelzhizh* became *Micheli*; and *Pernat* became *Pernetti* (Pizzagalli 1929, 130, 132, 134, 137, 145-6). Other names were translated. *Golob*, meaning 'dove', became *Colombi*, *Starec* with its root in 'old' became *Vecchiet*; *Vodopivec*, *Vodopivetz*, *Vodopivez*, and *Wodopivec*, became *Bevilacqua* 'Drinkwater' (Pizzagalli 1929, 136, 156, 159).

Families bearing surnames that shared common derivations or orthographic characteristics were often given the same Italianized form. *Bacic*, *Bacich*, *Baic*, *Baicich*, *Baitz*, *Baiz*, *Bass*, and *Bassich* all became *Bassi*. *Gregorcic*, *Gregorcich*, *Gregoric*, *Gregorich*, *Gregorig*, *Gregoritsch*, *Gregorovic*, *Grgic* and even *Hregorovich* became *Gregori*. The Italian *Giani* was assigned to families named *Jamcich*, *Jamseg*, *Jamsek*, and *Janzhik*, while the form *Gianni* (with two *n*'s) was applied to families named *Ianak*, *Janki*, *Jankovich*, *Jansa*, *Janz*, and *Janza*

(Pizzagalli 1929, 128-9, 137-9). Not only was each family's non-Italian ethnic heritage erased as was the intent of the nationalizing campaign, but distinctions that identified individuals as tied to particular family trees were eliminated as well.

The campaign for onomastic alteration did not only affect those whose names appeared on the officially-generated list. Those bearing "foreign names" or "names of foreign origin," not subject to modification by administrative fiat, could petition under the legislation to Italianize their surnames (Pizzagalli 1929, 34). These requests for surname modification could be truly voluntary, but in many instances petitioners clearly pursued changes at the behest of or under coercion by the Fascist administration. Civil servants, teachers, and other public employees were among the first to come forward asking for "rectification" of their names (AdS(TS)-PPT/DI-11419, 1926-1943).[5] They faced the possibility of dismissal if they were judged insufficiently dedicated to the regime. For those in the private sector, a foreign-sounding family name could restrict economic opportunities in the carefully scrutinized and controlled marketplace.

For changes requested to names not appearing on the list, strict guidelines governed the decision of the form allonyms were to take, circumstances for alteration, and specific documentation to be filed. Functionaries noted civil information including name, address, parents' names, place of birth, and occupation on modification requests. Officials of the local Questura or Police Headquarters certified citizenship, residence, and civil status (single, married, widowed) and checked for criminal activity (AdS(TS)-PPT/DI-11419, 1926-1943). The Consulting Commission laid out specific examples of acceptable changes which could be made to these surnames. Aldo Pizzagalli, at the head of the Commission, saw the ability to appropriately modify names as an art. Simple guidelines provided for the rearrangement of consonants or the addition of a vowel to form the euphonym, eliminating names with "hard sounds or combinations of consonants" atypical of the Italian language. As far as possible, numbers of syllables in a name were to remain consistent. Foreign suffixes were dropped. *Carli* was therefore substituted for *Cral* and *Tordesalvi* for *Terdoslavich*. But the "most elegant" changes were translations taking into account Latin and Italian forms. In this manner, the calque or translated name for the German *Kleinschuster*, meaning 'little shoemaker', literally *piccolo calzolaio* in Italian, was *Sutorini*, based on the addition of the Italian diminutive *ini* to the Latin *sutor* or 'shoemaker' (Pizzagalli 1929, 56-59).

In the interest of maintaining state control and consistency, specific rules and circumstances restricted the practice of onomastic art. Officials were instructed to avoid altering names of national renown. Neither could names be altered to match a name famous in Italy or a noble name. For example, Pizzagalli warned against the translation of *Cral* 'king' to *Re*. This caution and forethought would avert a situation in which the first name of the petitioner might be Vittorio making the name match that of the reigning Italian monarch (Pizzagalli 1929, 59-60). Not all names "sounding" foreign could be changed. Those with roots in local dialects including Venetian and Triestine variants on Italian were deemed already Italian and therefore unalterable. Names derived from the Rhaeto-Romanic dialect of Friuli, a vestige of the Latin of ancient Roman control, were also considered inviolable.[6] Modification was prohibited as the maintenance of these names testified to the endurance and vitality of Italian culture and signalled that officials were accepting of the diverse manifestations of Italianness. In conformity with the onomastic legislation between 1927 and 1943 the surnames of as many as 100,000 people were modified in the border province of 350,000 to 400,000 (Parovel 1985, 28).

The public memory of forcible Fascist nationalization campaigns begun in the 1920s led Paolo Marz, Emidio Sussi and hundreds like them to believe that the Fascist government had robbed them and their families of their rightful identities. This suspicion prompted Marz and Sussi in the 1990s to seek to rediscover and acknowledge, through the recovery of disused surnames, identities that had been shed in the public sphere but had remained embedded in personal "imaginings."

Paolo Marz

Professor Paolo Marz began his life as Paolo Marzari. In 1993, he changed his name to Paolo Marz, resurrecting the family name of his grandfather and generations preceding the Fascist Italianization campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s. (The origin of *Marz* is unclear; possible sources are mentioned below.) Marz said that he sought to recover his family name and change the name by which he had been known for nearly fifty years not for "political or polemical reasons" but simply to "have what was mine" (2000). In 1933, the surname *Marz* had fallen to the Fascist pen, placed in the category of names subject to automatic rectification based on the contention that they were Italian or Latin in origin and altered by regimes hostile to Italy. In February 1933, Marz's grandfather received the official notice that the name of the family was

altered to *Marzi*. The single line entry on the list of names, "*Marz* in *Marzi*," '*Marz* into *Marzi*', condemned the family's name to erasure (Pizzagalli 1929, 146). The addition of a final *i* rendered the name *Marz* more Italian-looking and more Italian-sounding. The orthographic change did not eradicate the root, but the alteration served to erase whatever links the name *Marz* provided to specific ethnic origins or affiliations. Personal attachments to the name were to be officially forgotten.

Paolo Marz's family, like many others in Trieste, recognized as spurious Fascist claims of Italian or Latin roots for their surnames. Marz asserts that the Fascist choice to correct his family name represented "nothing other than an arbitrary and forcible transformation" (2000). Nonetheless, in the oppressive political climate of Fascist Italy, most felt powerless to protest the flurry of name "corrections." Marz's grandfather did not blatantly challenge Fascist-inspired Italianization, but he did summon the courage to protest the specific modification to *Marzi*. On 27 March 1933, he filed a petition "fervently begging" the Prefect's office to grant his family an alteration to *Marzari* in place of *Marzi*, a name which he declared, "the entire family found displeasing" due to its unfortunate connotations (Marz 2000).[7] Fascist officials proved accommodating. In May 1933, three months after they had executed the modification to *Marzi*, officials annulled their own decree and extended the family the right to call themselves *Marzari*, a form considered appropriately Italian and more agreeable to the family.

While the intervention of Marz's grandfather in the Fascist proceedings and his willingness to try to negotiate with Fascist officials might seem rather daring, it was rare but by no means unprecedented. Records indicate that as long as petitioners were upstanding citizens and seemed willing to conform to the "rules" and "spirit" of the Italianization campaign, Fascist officials were willing to accommodate them (AdS(TS)-PPT/DI-11419, 1926-1943). Accommodation on the part of authorities offered an opportunity to present alterations as voluntarily sought rather than administratively coerced. On the basis of Marz's grandfather's intervention, the decree of February 1933 aimed at the Marz family and bearing the change to *Marzi* was moved from the files of names "rectified" by administrative fiat to those "corrected" at the request of a petitioner. The name alteration was then filed with the second group of documents pertaining to individuals who had requested adaptation.[8]

Examining these files in the aggregate and not on an individual basis gives the impression that more people participated willingly and eagerly in the nationalizing campaign than was actually the case. According to Paolo Marz, his grandfather would have kept his name had it been possible. Yet, Fascist officials were able to cast the family's Italianization as emanating from a spontaneous desire to conform to national standards. This desire was portrayed as common among populations in the borderland, supporting contentions that the regime was engaged in promoting consensus rather than enforcing oppressive measures.

From 1933 *Marzari* remained the family's surname, passed on to all descendents, until Paolo Marz came forward in 1993 to restore it to its pre-Fascist form. Marz's personal quest to recover his family name was matched by his professional desire to set the historical record straight and right the wrongs committed by overzealous nationalists, "dilettantes impassioned by history" who enforced policies based on "profoundly anti-historical and anti-cultural" tendencies. Marz urged that his action not be interpreted as "an eruption of anger" but rather as a measured reaction to express his "profound regret for the calculated ignorance of power, an ignorance artfully created for reasons that do not appear noble to me" (2000).

His opportunity to right "historical" wrongs came not simply as a result of spontaneous desire and action, but as a result of changes in legislation. Shifts in nationalist politics in Europe precipitated by the collapse of the iron curtain and the emergence of Slovenia and Croatia as independent states in 1991 had prompted a reassessment of local nationalist affiliations. The explosion of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia had particular implications for the Italian territory of Venezia Giulia and its capital city of Trieste located practically at the border with the new Slovene State. It forced Rome to recognize the oppression suffered by minority populations throughout the upper Adriatic. In response, on 28 March 1991 the Italian government enacted measure number 114, the "Act for the reinstatement of names and surnames modified under the Fascist regime." The law recognized the right of individuals to restore names "assumed or assigned" under the Fascist decrees. On 14 May 1993, Marz filed a petition to recover the surname of his grandfather. His request was granted on 27 May (2000). Through the adoption of his grandfather's surname under the auspices of this law, Marz was able as a loyal Italian to come forward and publicly affirm his non-Italian ethnic heritage, wrested after more than half a century from the memory of Fascist oppression.

Emidio Sussi

The experience of Emidio Sussi offers an interesting contrast to that of Paolo Marz. The changing political circumstances and laws of the early 1990s also prompted Sussi to consider altering his surname. In the end, he chose against initiating the legal proceedings to do so. He believed that his surname, *Sussi,* resulted from Fascist machinations. Indeed, the name *Sussi* figures prominently on the list of names forcibly modified and it was the Italian form assigned to families named *Sussich*, *Sussig*, and *Susig* (Pizzagalli 1929, 156).[9] Convinced of the Slavic heritage of his family, Professor Sussi found to his surprise that documentation held in the archives indicated his family's name of record prior to "Italianization" was a German one. Perhaps, he suggested, his grandmother had adopted the Germanic form when she fled Habsburg Trieste for interior lands in Austria proper during the First World War (Sussi 2000). The effective "loss" of the original surname believed to be of Slavic origin indicates that unlike the Serbs in Romania, for example, the Slavs of Trieste did not carefully preserve separate names for official and private use (Dimitrjevic-Rufu 1998, 61-62). Instead, Italianized identities were internalized to the extent that they became the only names borne by the population. The 1991 Italian legislation allowed only for the reinstatement of names altered according to the 1926 statute. Sussi had no wish to reclaim a German name, and so *Sussi* he remained.

Sussi's consideration of the possibility of recovering his family name reflected a desire to in some way bring his public identity, shaped by the policies and practices of Italian officials, into line with memories and associations he believed had been buried or repressed. His interest in restoring the name to a Slavic form indicates that for his family, association with a Slavic heritage had remained salient despite public pressure for Italianization and anti-Slavism and in spite of the assumption of a German family name by one of his ancestors. Sussi's inaction or inability to act can be interpreted as an "anthroponymic strategy of compromise name and naming behavior." The volatility of the political and social situation encouraged "naming patterns and practices of name use" that aimed "to steer an unconflicting [or compromising] course" (Konstantinov and Alhaug 1995, 54-55). Over the course of decades spent in the city, Slavic associations were internalized as external indicators of membership in the Slavic community were repressed, but

the psychological and internal understanding of ethnic difference remained important. It manifested in the maintenance of the minority ethnic identity in the personal and familial context despite the change of the surname.

The subsistence of separate state and familial or social identities fits well with the historical experiences of those living in Trieste. Ethnic affiliation became a primary marker of national identity in the context of a politically defined state only in the era of the First World War. Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points assumed that state borders could be drawn "along clearly recognizable lines of nationality." Point nine called specifically for the "readjustment of the frontiers of Italy" on the basis of this principle (Wilson 1918). In the upper Adriatic, as in regions along the peripheries of new states emerging from the ashes of multinational empires throughout Europe, such determinations were complex if not impossible to make.

Italianization, promoted by the state as coincident with the desires of the population of Trieste, served to affirm the justice of the international choice to assign the territory to Italy. From the state's point of view nationalist policies promoted a kind of practical self-determination that in turn testified to the wisdom of the peace-makers' decision. For those in Trieste who, like the Marz and Sussi families, were accustomed to acting as imperial subjects in a city under Germanic Habsburg rule in which Italian was the *lingua franca*, the insistence on Italian ethnicity as an exclusive component of Italian identity and as coincident with Italian citizenship proved difficult.

The elimination of the possibility for ambiguities in ethnic identity in the climate of enforcement of national citizenship in the wake of World War I and postwar Italian antipathy for Germans help to explain the erasure of the memory of the Germanic surname from Sussi family lore. The German name was simply dismissed as transitional. It corresponded neither to the family's state affiliation nor to its ethnic background.

More difficult to explain is the continued association with Slavic culture. The campaigns launched against Slavs, viewed as a racially inferior minority group with subversive socialist tendencies are well-documented (Salvemini 1934; Apih 1966, *passim*). Anti-Slavism on the part of Italian authorities has been a source of contention in Trieste since Italy gained sovereignty over the region in 1918. Tolerance of anti-Slav

violence in the period immediately following the First World War gave way to outright persecution and denationalization during the Fascist era. Slavs bore the brunt of persecution in Fascist Trieste prior to the passage of the racial laws aimed at Jews in 1938, but the onomastic legislation of 1926 and 1927 was, in a sense, non-discriminating. Such popular writers as Louis Adamic, a Slovene immigrant to the United States, did much to popularize the vision of the Slavs as the primary victims of Mussolini's onomastic policies. Adamic suggested that the deprivation of Slovenes of their surnames had caused some to begin "to disintegrate almost visibly . . . within themselves as human beings" (1942, 74). Yet, the legislation eliminated traces of all elements considered foreign. It was extended to cover minority populations in the northeast only after it had been enacted in the Germanic provinces of the north. The Sussi family took for granted that the Fascists had taken aim at their Slavic heritage. Instead, Emidio Sussi found that they had in fact eradicated a German name.

During the Second World War, a short interval of cooperation against Nazi occupation interrupted Italian-Slav antagonism, especially among socialist groups. But, after the war, the emergence of the Cold War and Tito's communist Yugoslavia on the borders of the Italian state fueled the frictions between ethnic Slavs and Italians. Ethnic tensions became part of a broader conflict between East and West and communism and capitalism on this southern fringe of the iron curtain. Unlike Jews and others persecuted by the Nazis and Fascists after 1943, Slavs, oppressed since the annexation in 1918 and especially after the rise of Mussolini to power in 1922, were forced to live with injuries visited upon them. Post-World War II decrees restored Trieste to its pre-1943 legislative status rather than its pre-Fascist status. Surnames assigned by the Fascists remained an integral part of public life.

As part of the general campaign to expunge evidence of Fascist rule, the Allied Military Government in control of Trieste from 1945 to 1954 allowed for the reclamation of names altered by the Fascists. Very few in Trieste took advantage of this opportunity, however. Of those who came forward to seek name restoration under the Allied Military Government, many were Jews who had embraced assimilation and Italianization in the 1920s and early 1930s. In Trieste, many Jews had demonstrated loyalty to Italy through participation in irredentist and nationalist Italian circles prior to annexation to Italy in 1918. In Europe,

where Jewish names served as "marks for stigmatization," branding their bearers as outsiders (Bering 1992, 209, 221), Jews in Trieste had taken the opportunity offered by the legislation of 1926 and 1927 to adopt Italian names as a sign of allegiance to the Italian nation. Like Jews elsewhere, they resorted to the adoption of nationalized identities to escape the effects of anti-semitism and prejudice (Bering 1992, 27*ff*). These assimilated Jews remained enmeshed in broader Italian culture until the initiation of the racial campaign in 1938. Anti-semitic measures specifically required Jews who had changed their names "to re-assume" their original surnames (Staderini 1940, 136), stripping them of their Italianized identities. After the Second World War, many sought to re-inter their foreign roots by reverting to Italian forms granted in the early years of Fascist rule.

While the end of Fascism signaled an end to official persecution of Jews, the onset of the Cold War increased tendencies toward persecution of Slavs, making the reversion to Slavic forms of surnames politically undesirable. The elimination of overlapping or ambiguous associations in favor of bi-polar conceptions of identity after the Second World War gave rise to a "value shift," a response to political exigencies similar to that associated with the behavior of minority groups in other states. Like the Pomaks who chose to accommodate the interests of the Bulgarian state rather than assert their ties to Turkish and Islamic culture (Konstantinov and Alhaug 1995, 40-41), Triestines of Slavic descent acquiesced to official Italianization.

The divide between East and West during the Cold War meant that few sought to revert to Slavic sounding names that held "lower prestige value" (Konstantinov and Alhaug 1995, 49). Slavic associations held traditional connotations of eastern "barbarism," inferiority or primitivism associated with the Balkans. On a political level, attachment to or assertion of a Slavic identity was automatically suspect as evidence of a clandestine sympathy for Communism and support for Yugoslavia. It demonstrated a readiness to accept an identity viewed as non-Western, anti-modern, and even potentially dangerous to the Italian state.

In the post-1945 world, German origins too were eschewed as they held associations with the Nazis, German occupation, and German aggression. The impact of this reluctance to associate with Germany remains clear in the cases of both Paolo Marz and Emidio Sussi. Marz suggests that the precise origin of his surname is unknown. "From what

I know, it was never Italian (according to some it would be Slovene, according to others Hungarian)" (2000). On examination, however, the orthography of *Marz* suggests German as one of the possibilities of its origin. *März* is the German word for the month of March, corresponding to *marzo* in Italian. Paolo Marz did not even present German as one of the possibilities of his name's origin.[10] Sussi too, readily rejected the legitimacy of a Germanic family name. Despite the fact that the German name appears on official records, he identifies with Slavic roots.

International authorities, national leaders, local representatives, and even much of the population at large therefore contributed to the maintenance of Fascist standards for Italianization with regard to family names for the entire period of the Cold War. By the end of the war, many Italianized names had been established for nearly twenty years. Perhaps more importantly, political circumstances were not propitious for the reclamation of foreign sounding names. It was not until 1966 that the constitutional ban on granting foreign names to children was repealed and the right of linguistic minorities to express their names using diacritics typical of the alphabet of their own languages was affirmed (Martini 1998, 208). While the assertion of non-Italian ethnicity through the granting of first names remained illegal, affirmation of associations with "foreign" minorities, particularly with Germans or Slavs, through the restoration of a pre-Fascist surname was no doubt inexpedient.

Conclusion

The collapse of the iron curtain in 1989 and the emergence of the new states of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 allowed individuals to redefine themselves. As the political divisions of the Cold War began to dissolve, former ethnic identities, particularly those of Slavs, began to be recovered. Northern Yugoslavs were rehabilitated as western-oriented Slovenes or Croatians, firmly ensconced in Central European rather than Eastern European networks. Long buried Slavic identities became a source of overt ethnic pride, sparking individuals' interest in retrieval of the past.

While in the international arena Italy tended to be suspicious of the increasing attention paid to the new states and wary of the role native Slavs played in Trieste, the State proved eager to take advantage of opportunities offered by the transnational affiliations of Trieste's

inhabitants. Italy's ambivalent stance encouraged those who felt that somehow their names did not fit who they actually were to take action to bring their public personae into line with their personal predilections. In Sussi's case, the end of the Cold War and the opening up of the Slavic world along Italy's northeastern border after 1991 should have offered the opportunity to reclaim an ethnic heritage through re-adoption of a disused surname. Yet, the official form of his surname prior to Fascistization coincided with neither his national citizenship nor his personal ethnic proclivities nor his family's memory. The legislative framework and the nature of the Italian state's assumptions precluded the recovery of a name salient to his current conception of his identity. Despite liberalizing attitudes and legislation, Sussi's experience demonstrates that those in the borderlands inhabiting the space between states remain caught by the vagaries and the compromises of identity.

Alterations of surnames cut to the core of personal identity. Both Marz and Sussi recognize, at some level, that their surnames represent tags staking out familial identities in cultural and political terms. Both were spurred by the political changes unleashed by the collapse of the iron curtain and opening up of eastern Europe to unlock memories of their ethnic origins that had been veiled for half a century. Both looked to the recovery of a surname to affirm their links to an ethnic past defined outside, but not in opposition to, the dominant ethnicity of the state in which they reside.

Notes

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1. The Italian verb phrase *vuol dire*, typically translated 'to mean' is literally 'would like to say'.

2. These petitions are held at the Archivio di Stato (Trieste) in a series of *buste* or envelopes marked *cambiamento cognomi* 'change of surnames' in the files of the Commissariato Generale Civile per la Venezia Giulia, Atti Generali, 1919-1922, hereafter and in parenthetical citations referred to as AdS(TS)-CGCVG, AG.

3. Pizzagalli (1929, 32-35) gives the text of the statutes of 1926 and 1927 in their entirety.

4. Pizzagalli (1929, 127-61) reprints the official list of surnames in Trieste subject to automatic restitution according to the provision of January 1926.

5. Records relating to all name modifications enacted under the Fascist legislation can be found in Prefettura della Provincia di Trieste, Divisione I: Riduzione Cognomi Trieste, No. 11419 (1926-1943), hereafter and in parenthetical citations referred to as AdS(TS)-PPT/DI-11419.

6. Some linguists consider Friulian a separate language of the Romance family rather than a regional dialect.

7. The word *marza* in Italian means 'graft' in biological terms. *Marzaiola* means 'garganey', a kind of duck. In dialect, it is an epithet denoting something imitative.

8. The files remain divided between these two categories today. One block contains administrative "corrections" filed alphabetically according to the original name on the decree. The other block, labelled "on request" and also filed alphabetically according to the name before any alteration was made, includes records altered on request as well as those modified automatically which required any extraordinary or subsequent administrative consideration.

9. Not only were several names changed to *Sussi,* but the closest Slavic name, *Sussich,* appeared on the list of the first 5000 names changed to the forms *Succi* and *Suzzi* (Pizzagalli 1929, 320), further blurring the lines of transmission of names.

10. In 1933, Fascist authorities did not make the association with German, either. *Marz* was not translated to *Marzo;* it became *Marzi.*

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