

JULIA ADENEY THOMAS
AND GEOFF ELEY
EDITORS

VISUALIZING FASCISM

THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY RISE OF THE GLOBAL RIGHT



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JULIA ADENEY THOMAS AND GEOFF ELEY, EDITORS

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The Twentieth-Century Rise of the Global Right

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INTRODUCTION

A Portable Concept of Fascism

JULIA ADENEY THOMAS

Gustave Courbet's painting *Burial at Ornans* caused outrage when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1850–51 because it depicted ordinary people at an ordinary funeral. Instead of using artist models in sentimental, allegorical, or heroic guises, Courbet (1819–77) had persuaded the mourners attending his own great-uncle's burial to pose for his monumental ten-by-twenty-two-foot canvas. Aghast critics recognized a revolution when they saw one, and Courbet proved them right—not only artistically by overturning Romanticism for Realism, but also politically by playing a leading role in the Paris Commune of 1870, an action that led to his imprisonment and ultimate exile to Geneva.¹ As Courbet's notoriety shows, in the nineteenth century the mere act of representing common people had a radical edge allied with liberal democratic, socialist, or anarchist movements. However, by the twentieth century the assumption that “the people” and “the Left” might be rough synonyms in art and in politics crashed against a new form of right-wing populism that claimed the people for itself. As historian Peter Clarke observes, “the novelty of Fascism was to politicize the masses from the right.”²

Right-wing populism's novelty created a problem when its proponents tried to promote their politics visually. Fascism upended the Left's exclusive claim to represent the people, but rejected its artistic experiments with form

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and subject matter. It discarded the traditional Right's elite aesthetic tastes, but required a glorious vision of the nation. In short, fascism awkwardly visualized itself as neither avant-garde nor traditional, while poaching from both camps. It therefore confronted an unprecedented challenge when it came to self-depiction. It needed to create a new visual repertoire that avoided the leftist taint of high modernism and socialist realism without seeming to capitulate to a rarified culture borne aloft by old aristocratic or new oligarchic tastes. How fascists around the world met—or, indeed, failed to meet—this aesthetic challenge is the focus of this volume.

This book approaches the question of how fascism was visualized in two complementary and connected ways: as a global phenomenon and as an aesthetic phenomenon. Both themes are interwoven throughout the essays. Here in the Introduction, I explore each theme separately before introducing my synthesis of the two—a portable concept of fascism. I then go on to delineate specific traits common to the global practice of visualizing fascism and end by underscoring the novelty of the twentieth-century rise of the global Right, a phenomenon impossible before colonial capitalism, socialism, and nation-states emerged.

Global Fascism

In arguing for fascism as a worldwide phenomenon, our work explores the rise of the Right during the interwar years as it emerged transnationally. This global approach is now possible because of new scholarship on interwar and wartime Asia, particularly Japan, that begins to balance previous research weighted heavily toward Europe.³ Indeed, until very recently fascism may have seemed European simply because Europe was the place historians studied most intensively (outside their home countries), not only in the United States, Canada, and Britain but also in Japan.⁴ Our deepening understanding of Japan and its Asian imperialism is critical to grasping the transnational nature of the rise of the Right.⁵ It is now possible to argue, as literary scholar Alan Tansman does, that “Japan’s confrontation with modernity was coeval with Europe’s.” As Tansman observes, “the social, economic, and cultural conditions that gave birth to European fascism were also shared by Japan, and the solutions, through the state’s imposition of mythic thinking that extolled natural bonds of blood and demanded devotion and sacrifice of the individual to the state, nation, or lineage, backed by coercion at home, in the name of domination of peoples of poorer bloodline abroad, made Japan

one among other fascist nations.”⁶ In this volume, then, Japan figures prominently alongside the other Axis powers.

As Asia comes more sharply into focus, it also becomes clear that fascism is not best understood by creating particularistic models that focus on single nations or by abstracting a Eurocentric version of the populist Right and applying it elsewhere. Three reasons support this contention. First, the forces of capitalism and imperialism operated globally. As Ethan Mark argues, envisioning the Second World War as a conflict among European nation-states and excluding Asia has created a “pervasive scholarly blind spot” about the degree to which “fascism was itself determined within a broader, long-term global context of competing imperialisms.”⁷ The excesses of capitalism, resting on uneven relations of power within and among nations, dissolved the bonds of communities at all levels and sowed despair and resentment around the world. Everywhere this led to similar reactions, including fascist tendencies.

Second, better communication and faster travel increased the speed at which desires, discontents, and, especially for our purposes, aesthetic repertoires were shared. For instance, modernist designs deployed by artists in the Soviet Union and in liberal democracies also figured on the cover of Shanghai’s fascist monthly *Qiantu* [The future], as Maggie Clinton shows in chapter 1. Beginning in the 1920s, regular airmail routes carried letters, publications, and news of all sorts, spreading ideas and innovative graphics like wildfire. People traveled more, too. By 1937 Britain’s Imperial Airways advertised its flight from Hong Kong to London as taking a mere ten days as opposed to a month by sea, although only the very rich could afford such dizzying velocity. Most ocean-crossing travelers still embarked on ships, as did a mission of Italian Blackshirts who visited Japan in the spring of 1938.⁸ A year earlier, Nazi film director Arnold Fanck (1889–1974) had also made the journey to Tokyo. So impressed was Fanck by actress Hara Setsuko (1920–2015) that he teamed up with Itami Mansaku (1900–1946) to cast her as the star in their coproduced film *The New Earth* (the Japanese version was titled *Atarashiki tsuchi* and the German version, *Die Tochter des Samurai*). The film ends with a celebration of Japan’s takeover of Manchuria. Such collaborations would obviously have been impossible a few decades earlier. Speed and connections were central to developing fascist visual tactics.

Along with the forces of capitalism and communication, the third factor that compels a new understanding of global fascism is the key role colonies played as sites for producing right-wing populism. The importance of this

factor has emerged only recently, in part because of revised understandings of German and Italian colonialism.⁹ Work on Japanese colonialism has also heightened awareness of these “offshore” arenas for negotiating nationalism. Particularly in Asia, where Western and Japanese colonialism clashed, these negotiations became murky and complex. In some cases—such as that of Indian leader Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945), who allied himself with the Nazis and the Japanese against British imperialists, or Indonesian leader Sukarno (1901–70), who briefly allied himself with the Japanese in opposition to Dutch imperialism—the fascism of the colonized was opportunistic, a means to obtain national independence.¹⁰ In other cases, the fascist vassals willingly mimicked their overlords. As Bertrand Metton demonstrates in his essay on Slovakia, after the Nazis colonized Eastern Europe, Slovaks created organizations and publications that paralleled German counterparts: the Hlinka Youth organization for the *Hilterjugend* and magazines including *Nová Mládež* for the New Youth, *Slovenská* for girls, and *Vlca* (Wolf Cub) for boys. As in Germany, Slovaks produced a vibrant national myth to replace stale right-wing conservatism.¹¹

In still other cases, colonies served as places where settlers developed their own iteration of fascism. Examples include the fascination with whiteness in Namibia, which Lorena Rizzo explores in chapter 6, and greater support for the fascist party in the Dutch East Indies than in Holland, as Ethan Mark shows in chapter 8. Likewise, in the 1930s, fascist ideas and institutions were fostered in Manchuria and then exported from this colony back to Japan, as Paul Barclay argues in chapter 2, building on the work of historian Janis Mimura.¹² These three factors—capitalism, modern communication, and colonies—generated the pulsing, angry networks that propelled fascism globally.

In short, fascism did not have a single place of origin—not even Italy. Its birth certificate is held in the archives of many nations, and it grew up as a transnational traveler, a denizen of late-night railroad stations and neon-lit hotels. Historian Reto Hofmann rightly describes it as emerging through “a complex interplay between ideas both local and global.”¹³ Thus the essays here extend beyond Italy, Germany, and Japan to Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, China, and Indonesia in the East, and to Holland, Spain, Slovakia, southern Africa, and the United States, in order to suggest that the allure of the Right was almost universal.¹⁴ Fascism was a transnational phenomenon.

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Aesthetics of Fascism

In order to show fascism as a global phenomenon, this volume emphasizes its aesthetic strategies. I approach fascism as an aesthetic phenomenon both in the sense of using beauty to mask modernity's pain and in aestheticism's root sense of "perception." How is it possible for something as immaterial and invisible as "the nation" to be seen as the fount of all truth? Looking at photography, the graphic arts, monuments, architecture, and cinema can help answer this question.¹⁵ It may at first seem eccentric for historians, as most of us are, to abandon analyses based on texts alone and focus instead on the changing visual repertoires of fascism, but this approach provides several benefits. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat notes, "The visual not only communicates in ways written documents cannot; it can also enrich the field of historical research by leading us to new subjects and lines of inquiry that often have scant traces in the written and oral historical records."¹⁶ The visual also helps liberate us from mired national debates by revealing how easily aesthetic styles and modes of public commemoration slip across borders. Awareness of this aesthetic dynamism undermines the conventional geographical boundaries that persist among historians and that have truncated our understanding that fascism's heightened nationalism was a product of globalization.

A further value of *seeing* fascism in action is that using visual evidence shows just how permeable the borders were not only among right-wing movements and nations, but also between fascism and antifascism. Visualizing fascism is part of visualizing mid-twentieth-century mass society in general, no matter what sort of politics that society claimed. The final essays in this volume, by Nadya Bair (chapter 10) and Claire Zimmerman (chapter 11), demonstrate how anti-fascist work made during the war was recast from a different perspective afterward. The shared aesthetic repertoire of fascist, communist, and liberal democratic states becomes truly apparent only when viewed transnationally and across time. In other words, by actively *looking* at the rise of the global Right, we can perceive just how powerfully visual sensations can bind people to nations, but also how fragile the alliance between any artistic style and any particular politics became by the 1930s. I will return to the question of defining fascism's aesthetic later. My point here is that this volume's global and visual approaches reinforce one another as we strive to see the rise of the interwar Right in all its complexity. Some studies have stressed the global nature of fascism and others have concerned themselves with the aes-

thetics of fascism in a single nation. This volume is the first to fuse global and visual approaches to propose a new way of understanding fascism's strategies.

Five Propositions toward a Portable Concept of Fascism

The result of combining the global and the visual is a concept of fascism that is no longer confined to any particular nation. Nor is it restricted to the decades after World War I with its particular crisis of capitalism. This volume argues instead that the fascist ideologies and visualizations that emerged during the interwar period are maverick enough to reemerge in similar circumstances whenever people become alienated not only from the traditional Right but also from liberal democratic and left-wing alternatives. When understood in this way, fascism—defined primarily by its ideological energies rather than by parties and institutions—remains a danger. I call this a “portable concept of fascism.” It travels across space and time and is useful in analyzing places where fascist movements failed as well as places where fascist regimes were established. This portable concept of fascism is the volume's primary theoretical contribution. It rests on five propositions, outlined below, that culminate with fascism's use of visual culture.

First and foremost, fascism cannot be safely consigned to the past. It is not the antiquarian phenomenon that Hugh Trevor-Roper insisted it was when he told us that fascism “began in 1922–23 with the emergence of the Italian fascist party . . . came of age in the 1930s when ‘fascist’ parties sprang up throughout Europe . . . [and] ended in 1945 with the defeat and death of two dictators.”¹⁷ I wish Trevor-Roper had been correct. If fascism could be confined to those actions and those years, it could be dispensed with as an unfortunate but discrete episode. Like hoopskirts, it would have no contemporary allure. However, as my coeditor Geoff Eley rightly argues in *Nazism as Fascism*, the reason for studying fascism is, “above all, to help with the urgency of our present discontents.”¹⁸ Today's “political dynamics easily threaten the kind of crisis where a politics *that begins to look like fascism* might coalesce.”¹⁹ Our current discontents are manifold and magnified most especially, I think, by the pressures of climate change creating refugees and of transnational neoliberalism producing ever-greater inequality. Fascism defined by heightened nationalism, perpetual warfare, and reactionary fear of enemies—real or imagined—cannot be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Second, fascism is the product of *political crisis in modern capitalist states*. All three terms—“modern,” “capitalist,” and “political”—are important. The

modernity of fascist states used to be disputed, but most scholars now agree that neither “backwardness” nor “late development” nor a “feudal mind-set” explain the energetic assertion of organic unity between a regime and its people. Premodern regimes were manifestly uninterested in including “the people” as active agents within the polity; only with the rise of modernity does this change. In fact, the consensus today is that Italy and Germany did not become fascist because they were *not* modern states; they became fascist because they were.²⁰ The same is true for Japan.²¹ Ethan Mark and historian Rikki Kersten have elegantly summarized the debates over whether Japan was fascist, ultimately siding with Japanese scholars such as Yoshimi Yoshiaki who are committed to the rubric of “fascism.” They do so because it places developments in Japan within global history rather than treating them as *sui generis* outliers, as Japan’s nationalist ideologues like to claim.²²

To this shared modernity must be added capitalism or at least a strong capitalist sector within the economy. Along with many others, sociologist Mark Neocleous argues point-blank that fascism is “generated by modern industrial capitalism.”²³ Here too the Japanese empire is not an Oriental outlier. Although its economy weathered the 1929 economic collapse better than the European and American economies, growing at a rate of 5 percent throughout the 1930s, tensions in its dual economy between tenants and landlords, and between industrial workers and large corporate conglomerates called *zaibatsu*, echoed economic struggles elsewhere. Finally, there is the issue of politics. Producing fascism required not only a crisis of capitalism but also political disarray. Leadership proved timid and self-interested.²⁴ In Eley’s words, “fascism prospered under conditions of general political crisis, in societies that were already dynamically capitalist (or at least possessed a dynamic capitalist sector), but where the state proved incapable of dispatching its organizing functions for the maintenance of social cohesion.”²⁵ It took colossal political failure to clinch the deal, enabling fascist regimes to emerge from fascist movements.

These three factors—modernity, capitalist crisis, and political ineptitude—all existed in Italy, Japan, and Germany where the state became fascist. But fascist movements could emerge without all three factors being present. Surveying the interwar world, Reto Hofmann argues, “Recognizable fascist movements were springing up seemingly everywhere, its members donning a rainbow of shirts—white in Syria, green in Egypt, blue in China, orange in South Africa, gold in Mexico. Politically, Hitler took office in Germany in 1933; in China, Chiang Kai-shek launched the New Life Movement (1934) to

counter socialism, liberalism, and democracy; two years later, Spain's Francisco Franco staged a military coup with the support of the right-wing Falange movement."²⁶ To understand the rise of the global Right, both fascism's victories and its defeats need to be brought into focus. This volume considers places where fascism flourished—China, Holland, and Namibia—as well as places where it triumphed.

The third proposition of my “portable concept of fascism” is that violence is key to propelling the dissolution of civility and governability. Words become blows. Yet, as Ruth Ben-Ghiat notes, “after an initial period of public violence meant to close off other political options and frighten people into submission, fascist governments often sent those agents of violence off-stage.” They turned to other means for subduing dissent and interpolating the fascist.²⁷

Fourth, as Mark Neocleous argues, “fascism is first and foremost an ideology.”²⁸ For some, fascist ideas lack systematicity and should therefore be dismissed, but an ideology need not be logical or even coherent to be effective. Among fascism's main targets, after all, are rationality and the conception of politics as the arena where clearly articulated positions can be expressed and differences negotiated with the help of political parties and representative state structures. Indeed, fascism's success seems to stem largely from its ideological vagueness and mystification of power. Amorphous evocations of national spirit inspire people precisely because they lacked rigor and form, and therefore they cannot be countered by reasoned appeals or expert analysis of probable consequences. Emotions such as wounded pride and resentment can be channeled against “enemies” within and without, bringing new meaning to life and to sacrificing that life for the nation. Gender politics is central to fascist ideology. As women gained a faltering toehold in the public sphere, reactionary fear and a sense of emasculation was assuaged by bouts of manly chest-thumping and by relegating women to the roles of wives and mothers. Compelling ideological gestures pointing to the vitalist energy of youth, the comforts of naturally sanctioned belonging, and the necessity of righteous wars in a hostile world helped mask the paradoxes and tensions of economic and political failures at home. As Eley indicates, it is “vital to reinstate the importance of fascist ideology, not just as the critical dissection of fascist ideas in the programmatic and philosophical senses, as interpretative readings of key texts, or as the analysis of the fascist outlook, but by studying the nature of the fascist popular appeal.”²⁹

Fifth and finally, visual presentations of fascist ideology were crucial pre-

cisely because the “message” of the graphic arts, images, collages, movies, monuments, and pageantry was elusive and emotive. Stylized typefaces on magazine covers could gesture toward a vibrant future without specifying policies. Posters depicting the tender love of a mother for her child could evoke traditional gender roles and the warmth of “home” while deflecting questions about military deaths, missing neighbors, and raining bombs. Photographs of Hitler at the Berghof in the Bavarian Alps or paintings of an incandescent Mount Fuji floating against a red sun celebrated nature while obscuring the military’s depredations on natural resources. Although the visual was vital to fascism, our essays show that fascist aesthetics had no essence, no exclusive medium, and no invariable set of visual tropes. The elusive and emotive qualities of fascism’s mystical message coalesced no more in visual form than in philosophical form. In some ways this is a disappointment. If all we had to guard against were black shirts and mass rallies illuminated by the anti-aircraft searchlights of the 1934 Nuremberg rally, resistance would be far easier. We find instead an array of visual efforts to bind the national community and to heal history’s wounds. Fascism’s visual tactics were effective because they were diverse, opportunistic, and incoherent.

Many of us associate fascism with the “spectacle” so prominent in Walter Benjamin’s analysis. We think immediately of Mussolini’s March on Rome, Hitler’s Nuremberg rallies, and Japan’s 1940 celebration of the supposedly unbroken 2,600-year reign of the imperial family. Such orchestrated public rallies are central to Eley’s essay in chapter 3. But spectacle was not the only, or even the most crucial, way in which fascism tried to abolish the distance between the state and its subjects. Images of particular leaders whose heightened presence (and even their incantatory absence) made them magnets for popular desire were important as well; these photographs served almost as a form of mesmerism, replacing democracy’s painstaking processes.³⁰ The challenge of portraying a leader was to make him simultaneously transcendent and yet accessible, which is a difficult thing to do, as Lutz Koepnick makes clear in his analysis of Heinrich Hoffmann’s photographs of Hitler as an outdoor reader posing in the mountains (chapter 5). In chapter 4, Ruth Ben-Ghiat explores not only films focusing on Mussolini but also those moments at mass rallies when the camera turned to capture the crowd’s response. As Ben-Ghiat observes, when the crowds appeared stone-faced and silent, sounds of cheering were added, using the roar of acquiescence to blot out the vision of passive resistance. Viewers were encouraged to see enthusiasm with their ears. Finally, as the majority of our essays show, fascism

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was most often brought home at the level of the people's everyday activities through photographs, photomontages, etchings, and graphics in magazines and tourist pamphlets, and through the architecture and monuments intended to glorify the dead from Amsterdam to Manchuria. The most striking feature of most fascist art in many of these formats is not its ecstatic hyperbolism but its banality.

In short, fascism brought into view mass spectacle, awkwardly posed leadership, and people's daily lives, but these visual tropes never added up to a coherent aesthetic. Fascist art was caught in its own paradox. On the one hand, like the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, it sought to "redistribute the sensible" (in Jacques Rancière's phrase) across society, and yet unlike the avant-garde, it also sought to contain and control the sensible within the purview of the nation.³¹ The result was often hackneyed—thin whitewash with a dash of menace.

Fascism's Counter Aesthetic

Fascism in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s never crystallized a defined aesthetic. In the brief heat of that quarter-century, fascism's aesthetic tactics were driven by political necessity rather than concern for art-making per se. Moreover, fascism resisted drawing attention to modes of *representation* either in politics or in the arts precisely because it wished to *present* the unity of nation and people as unmediated. Indeed, the new Right's attack on the traditional Right, liberalism, and the Left unmoored it not only from political and philosophical history but also from art history. Embedded in no particular lineage and without a past, fascist aesthetics had no reservoir of visual gestures and subject matter to draw from. Without an idiom of its own, it operated as magpies do, stealing bits and pieces for ragtag presentations. The result, I argue, was a counter aesthetic constituted primarily in opposition to tradition of all kinds, to individuality, to universalism, and even, it could be said, to art itself as a mode of representation. Let me expand briefly on each of these three reasons—functionality, resistance to acknowledging representation, and being unmoored from the history of art and design—to explore why the fascist aesthetic is so incoherent and yet so effective.

First and foremost, the visual manifestations of fascism vary *because* they were functional. Fascist visuality was instrumental, manipulative, and "propagandistically" conceived. Under the watchful eyes of movement activists and regime censors, its primary purpose was to promote unity, sup-

press individuality, defend hierarchy, model discipline, and still dissent. If we understand the aesthetics of fascism not as an ontological category with a particular style, medium, and subject matter, but instead as a dynamic *function* dedicated to producing heightened and uncontested allegiance, it makes sense that fascist aesthetics would be flexible, varied, and changeable. It had to respond to the immediate needs of the movement or regime. In Italy, for instance, during the long years under Mussolini, the film industry, which had initially celebrated the glories of the new state with hard-hitting political messages, gradually accommodated light entertainment and even domestic comedies.³² In Germany, in preparation for the 1933 election, as Lutz Koepnick shows, Hitler's official photographer Heinrich Hoffmann (1885–1957) altered his presentation of Hitler from the wildly gesticulating leader of the famous 1927 series to the empathetic, morally upright man presented in the 1932 *Hitler wie ihn keiner kennt* (The Hitler nobody knows). In the Japanese empire, as Paul Barclay demonstrates, memorial towers to the “loyal dead” from the turn of the century were made to look like ones built in the 1930s, despite their different styles, through “etchings, magazine illustrations, tourist brochures, and postcard renderings that made them look ‘all of a piece’ as the Japanese state sought to impress loyalty upon its subjects.” Fascist aesthetics slipped from grandeur to sentimentality, from monumentality to kitsch, from the classical to the futuristic, calibrated for immediate circumstances. Instead of visualizing a fascist essence, the essays herein visualize fascism's operations within the body politic.

But the variability, shallowness, and opportunism of fascist aesthetics arise not from its propagandistic function alone. Fascism also resisted one of the core concepts of artistic and political practice: representation. I discuss this further in chapter 7, but let me make the case briefly here. The act of representation in philosophical terms rests on the understanding that a gap, however small, exists between the entity anterior to cultural and political formations and that entity's appearance within them. Political theory proposes rule-governed representative government as a means to give people a mediated voice in decision-making. Fascism, on the other hand, insists that the tedious political operation of representing and negotiating interests can be discarded since national unity leaves no gap between the people and their nation. In a similar manner, fascism mistrusts concern for artistic representation. This is one reason why fascist governments were leery of modernist aesthetic theories and experimentation, discrediting them as decadent precisely because they were self-reflective. Artistic fascination with the relationship

between artifice and reality spawned heady debates over how art might represent reality. For instance, cubists experimented gleefully with various ways of suggesting light, speed, and point of view. Their defiance of old conventions heightened the viewers' perception of the canvas as an aesthetic interpretation of the world. Surrealists investigated how landscapes of the psyche could be made visible. Modernists, such as photography critic Ina Nobuo in Japan, insisted that even the camera, far from producing an exact copy of the world, transformed it through framing, exposure, and printing techniques. In other words, attention to the constraints and possibilities of representation made clear that art was not an automatic act of mimesis.

Fascism resists acknowledging that representation lies at the heart of politics and art because representation is an act of mindful artifice always open to reexamination. There is nothing natural about it. As such, it raises the specter of competing forms and interests that might not dissolve in the lukewarm bath of ethnic unity and national greatness. To acknowledge representation is to admit the necessity of reflecting on means and ends. In this regard, it is intriguing, as Lutz Koepnick tells us, that “no photograph ever shows Hitler looking at photographs”—an act at once too self-reflexive and too indexical.³³ Fascism, in short, committed itself ideologically to overcoming all forms of alienation; it promised not a *better* form of representation but unity and natural wholeness without the need for mindful mediation. Its antirepresentational drive was part of its claim to authenticity.

The third reason why fascism never achieved a positive aesthetic was this: it was unmoored from a genealogy of aesthetic production. Defying all that came before and yet rejecting conscious aesthetic experimentation, fascism was reduced to stealthy borrowing from many periods in order to clothe its menace in visually palatable forms. Fascist images referenced many ancient worlds—from classical Greece in the opening moments of Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 *Triumph of the Will* to Jōmon-era (10,000–300 BCE) artifacts shared between Korea and Japan.³⁴ Etruscans, Romans, and Vikings adorned the mausoleum that avowed Dutch fascist Johan Bastiaan van Heutsz Jr. erected for his father, who had been governor-general of the Dutch East Indies. The fascist faction of the Chinese Nationalist Party combined the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE) military emblems of archer and chariot with modernist lettering to convey their appreciation of Confucianism as the basis for class-harmonious nationalism without any of Confucianism's “feudal remnants.”³⁵ With this sort of artistic and ideological mishmash, fascism attempted to forge a past that would anchor its claim to a glorious future while simulta-

neously obliterating history as a resource for understanding difference and change.

But the borrowings were not only from ancient repertoires. Bourgeois ideas of art, such as pictorialism (a photographic idiom mimicking painting), and avant-garde elements usually associated with Soviet realism and constructivism were also wielded in fascism's favor.³⁶ In envisioning the present and the future, fascism's counter aesthetic emerged in a number of ways. The desire to annihilate individuality (despite lauding heroes) turned people into "ideal national types" such as "the youth" depicted on the cover of the December 1941 issue of *Nová Mládež* in Slovakia and in subsequent issues of that journal, as Bertrand Metton explains in this volume. Another ideal type was "the nurse," which was found on the cover of Japan's July 1938 *Shashin shūhō*.³⁷ Foreign elements, places, and people figured only within the hierarchies dominated by the home nation and not as equal yet distinctive elements of a common humanity. Finally, a deep-seated misogyny sentimentalized women's traditional roles and depicted motherhood in the service of the state, although femininity retained culturally specific aspects, as shown in historian Andrea Germer's comparison of visual propaganda in *Nippon fujin* (The Japanese woman) and *NS Frauen-Warte* (NS women's outlook), the major Nazi women's magazine.³⁸ In short, fascist artists, designers, architects, stone carvers, and photographers sought to build a visual bulwark against "history's disquiet" without having a visual history to draw upon.³⁹ The result was a grab bag of incoherent styles.

The end of the war did not clarify the relation between artistic styles and political ideologies. At the end of this volume, we turn the question of visualizing fascism on its head and ask how antifascism was visualized and what became of it when hostilities ceased. As the essays by Nadya Bair on photographer Robert Capa and Claire Zimmerman on American architect Albert Kahn demonstrate, wartime work that was resolutely antifascist could lose its political charge by being reframed. Bair argues that Robert Capa's intensely left-wing political photography in Spain during the 1930s was reinterpreted as apolitical humanism by the 1950s and as "concerned photography" in the 1960s—a legacy that lingers today. This transformation produces a paradox. On the one hand, Capa is crucial to our understanding of the Spanish fight against fascism, and on the other, because his work has been depoliticized (in part by his own self-promotional activities), Capa's legacy obscures our understanding of fascism. The result with Capa's work, as with the famous *Family of Man* exhibition curated by Edward Steichen at MOMA and travel-

ing the world from 1955 to 1963, is that what had been explicitly political art, at least at its inception, was reduced to an anodyne humanism that rejected politics as part of the human condition.

An even more dramatic fate befell the legacy of Albert Kahn (1869–1942), who had inspired modernist architects in Europe and worked for America’s war effort until his death. After the war, architectural historian Henry Russell Hitchcock transformed Kahn’s industrial buildings. Originally conceived as enlightened, welcoming places of work, Kahn’s modern egalitarian spaces were recoded by Hitchcock as “retrograde, obsolete, and developmentally stunted” bureaucratic monuments akin to the Nazis’ public buildings.⁴⁰ This transposition of Kahn’s architecture from the cutting edge of democratic hope to emblems of dark, despotic power was achieved, Zimmerman argues, through the power of photography. During the postwar period, the camera remediated these buildings, placing them in a completely different visual history. Kahn’s buildings, like Capa’s photographs, no longer served as examples of politicized, antifascist art. Not only were the visual repertoires of left and right remarkably fungible during the war, but politically committed art could be stripped of its politics quite quickly and inserted into alternative narratives, as Bair and Zimmerman show.

Conclusion

Pankaj Mishra’s recent *Age of Anger* attempts to give fascism—and contemporary discontent—a deep history. “A particular *climate* of ideas, a structure of feeling, and cognitive disposition” centered on resentment can, he claims, be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the eighteenth-century critique of the Enlightenment.⁴¹ Anger due to the unmet promise of individual and collective empowerment emerged, suggests Mishra, over 250 years ago. According to Mishra’s narrative, this anger links malcontents, from the alienated Genevan author of *The Social Contract* to Gabriele D’Annunzio (the Italian ultranationalist) and ultimately to 9/11 terrorists and beyond. What Mishra misses by casting his net so widely is the extraordinary novelty of mass right-wing radicalism in the early twentieth century.⁴² The particular form of anger that in this volume we call “fascism” arose not two and a half centuries ago but rather only after World War I, when the partial failures of liberal democracy and capitalism became globally apparent. The equality of political and economic opportunity promised to men had not entirely materialized, yet some women were beginning to enjoy marginally improved

conditions. Wealth was being created through capitalism, but was distributed unequally. This toxic combination of political, economic, and male humiliation became politically potent when opportunistic leaders cultivated grievances to fuel their rise to power and deliberately added national humiliation and fear to the mix. Instead of a modernity founded on individualism and egalitarianism, a new modernity of ecstatic unity was promised, one resting on political and gendered hierarchies, autarkic economies, and national pride regained through aggression.

As these essays show, the media tactics this novel form of politics deployed were aesthetically underwhelming because their shallow functionality lacked both historical resonance and theoretical concern for representation. The result was a visual hodgepodge, both traditional and futuristic, local and international. In the first half of the twentieth century, as Clinton observes, “fascist symbolics emerged from place-specific struggles while also applying globally circulating tropes.”⁴³ By contrast, in the nineteenth century, when Courbet painted the townspeople at his great-uncle’s funeral, he was speaking both within and against an artistic tradition that had institutional and theoretical backing within European, and particularly French, culture. In Courbet’s day, this specific aesthetic history allowed *Burial at Ornans* to be seen as radical, as he wished it to be seen: elevating ordinary people against established elites and replacing Romantic glory with dignified ordinary reality. Seventy years later, Courbet’s revolution was reversed. Ordinary people would be radicalized from the Right and glory asserted in defiance of reality. Fascism, constituted primarily through negation, lacked a single visual rhetoric of its own, but that lack of aesthetic distinctiveness was not a detriment to its utility. Indeed, right-wing populism seems to have been all the stronger for its undisciplined eclecticism of style and its grab bag of motifs. Its protean qualities made opposition all the more difficult, and it could travel the world more freely. Indeed, it could be argued that fascism’s visual farrago perfectly matched its political requirements.

Notes

- 1 For a full treatment of Courbet, see T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
- 2 Peter Clarke, “The Century of the Hedgehog: The Demise of Political Ideologies in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Future of the Past: Big Questions in History*, ed. Peter Martland (London: Pimlico Press, 2002), 116.
- 3 The richness of this English-language scholarship is indicated by the following far-from-complete list: Annika A. Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-*

Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo (Vancouver, BC, Canada: UBC, 2013); John W. Dower et al., *The Brittle Decade: Visualizing Japan in the 1930s* (Boston: Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 2012); Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); David C. Earhart, *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2008); Andrea Germer, “Visible Cultures, Invisible Politics: Propaganda in the Magazine *Nippon Fujin*, 1942–1945,” *Japan Forum*; Andrea Germer, “Visual Propaganda in Wartime East Asia—The Case of Natori Yōnosuke,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 9:20 (2011), <https://apjif.org/2011/9/20/Andrea-Germer/3530/article.html>; Andrea Germer, “Artists and Wartime Agency: Natori Yōnosuke—A Japanese Riefenstahl?,” *Contemporary Japan* 24, no. 1 (2012): 21–50; Christopher Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School and Co-Prosperity* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Christopher Goto-Jones, *Re-Politicising the Kyoto School as Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Christopher P. Hanscom and Dennis Washburn, eds., *The Affect of Difference: Representations of Race in East Asian Empire* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016); Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Daniel Hedinger, “Universal Fascism and Its Global Legacy: Italy’s and Japan’s Entangled History in the Early 1930s,” *Fascism* 2 (2013): 141–60; Daniel Hedinger, “The Spectacle of Global Fascism: The Italian Blackshirt Mission to Japan’s Asian Empire,” *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 6 (2017): 1999–2034; Peter B. High, *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years’ War, 1931–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Reto Hofmann and Daniel Hedinger, eds., “Axis Empires: Towards a Global History of Fascist Imperialism,” special issue, *Journal of Global History* 12, part 2 (July 2017); Reto Hofmann, *The Fascist Effect: Japan and Italy, 1915–1952* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Eri Hotta, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); Rikki Kersten, “Japan,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. R. J. B. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 526–44; Yuko Kikuchi, ed., *Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007); Masato Kimura and Tosh Minohara, *Tumultuous Decade: Empire Society, and Diplomacy in 1930s Japan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Barack Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006); Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Janice Matsumura, *More Than a Momentary Nightmare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); John D. Person, “Between Patriotism and Terrorism: The Policing of Nationalist Movements in 1930s Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 43, no. 2 (2017): 289–318; Kenneth J. Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: Wartime Celebration of the Empire’s 2,600th Anniversary* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, eds., *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History*, vols. 1 and 2 (Lanham, MD:

Rowman and Littlefield, 2011); Chris Szpilman, “Fascist and Quasi-Fascist Ideas in Interwar Japan, 1918–1941,” in *Japan in the Fascist Era*, ed. E. Bruce Reynolds (London: Palgrave, 2004), 55–62; Alan Tansman, ed., *The Culture of Japanese Fascism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Alan Tansman, *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Max Ward, “Displaying the World View of Japanese Fascism,” *Critical Asian Studies* 47, no. 3 (2015): 414–39; Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009); and Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Four contributors to this volume have added to our understanding of Asian fascism: Paul Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire: Japan’s Rule on Taiwan’s “Savage Border,” 1874–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017); Maggie Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism: Fascism and Culture in China, 1925–1937* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Ethan Mark, “Translator’s Introduction,” in *Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People*, ed. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, trans. Ethan Mark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); and Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). This work builds on important earlier contributions such as those by John Dower, Andrew Gordon, J. Victor Koschmann, Gavan MacCormack, Ryūichi Narita, and Yasushi Yamanouchi.

- 4 For studies of historians’ geographical commitments, see Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt, “It’s a Small World after All: The Wider World in the Historians’ Peripheral Vision,” *Perspectives on History* (May 2013), <http://www.historians.org/perspectives> (accessed August 22, 2014); and Julia Adeney Thomas, “Why Do Only Some Places Have History? Japan, the West, and the Geography of the Past,” *Journal of World History* 28, no. 2 (June 2017): 187–218.
- 5 Not all scholars of interwar Japan call it “fascist.” Angus Lockyer, for instance, makes the interesting argument that the elements of a fascist culture within Japan do not add up to it being a fascist state. See Angus Lockyer, “Expo Fascism? Ideology, Representation, Economy,” in *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, ed. Alan Tansman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), especially 279. For other examples of those who dispute this characterization, see endnote 3 in chapter 7 of this volume.
- 6 Tansman, *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, 8.
- 7 Mark, “Translator’s Introduction,” 8.
- 8 Hedinger, “The Spectacle of Global Fascism.”
- 9 See, for instance, Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sebastian Conrad and Sorchá O’Hagan, *German Colonialism: A Short History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Volker Langbehn and Mohammad Salama, eds., *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent*

- Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2014); Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley, eds., *German Colonialism in a Global Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); and Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- 10 On the Dutch Indies, see Ethan Mark, this volume.
 - 11 Bertrand Metton, this volume.
 - 12 See the chapters by Rizzo, Mark, and Barclay in this volume. Janis Mimura, in *Planning for Empire*, makes the important argument that fascism developed first and foremost in Japan's colonial hinterlands.
 - 13 Hofmann, *The Fascist Effect*, 3.
 - 14 This list could be expanded to include all regions of the world. For antipodean fascism, see, for instance, David S. Bird, *Nazi Dreamtime: Australian Enthusiasts for Hitler's Germany* (London: Anthem Press, 2013). For South Asian fascism, see, for instance, Benjamin Zachariah, "Global Fascisms and the Volk: The Framing of Narratives and the Crossing of Lines," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 608–12.
 - 15 Painting, literature, fashion, film, and the performing arts provide equally interesting vantages on the question of visualizing fascism. Limitations of space and the excellence of already existing work argued against including them here. As for film, two of our contributors have written in-depth studies: see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); and Lutz Koepnick, *The Dark Mirror: German Cinema between Hitler and Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). See also Erica Carter, *Dietrich's Ghosts: The Sublime and the Beautiful in Third Reich Film* (London: British Film Institute, 2004).
 - 16 Ruth Ben-Ghiat, this volume.
 - 17 Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Phenomenon of Fascism," in *Fascism in Europe*, ed. Stuart Woolf (London: Methuen, 1981), 19.
 - 18 Geoff Eley, *Nazism as Fascism: Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany 1930–1945* (London: Routledge, 2013), vi.
 - 19 Eley, *Nazism as Fascism*, 200. Italics in the original.
 - 20 See especially David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics Nineteenth Century History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
 - 21 As with Blackbourn and Eley for Germany, Harry Harootunian has worked since the 1960s to overturn the trope of prewar Japan as "backward." See his oeuvre, from his earlier essay, "Comment on Professor Matsumoto's 'Introduction,'" *Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan* 5, nos. 2–3 (1967), 315–30, to *Overcome by Modernity*.
 - 22 Kersten, "Japan"; and Mark, "Translator's Introduction," esp. 2–5. For a review of the discussions about fascism among Japanese scholars, Alan Tansman's "Intro-

- duction: The Culture of Japanese Fascism,” in Tansman *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, is excellent.
- 23 Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Buckingham, U.K.: Open University Press, 1997), xi.
 - 24 Geoff Eley, “What Produces Fascism: Pre-Industrial Traditions or a Crisis of the Capitalist State?,” in *Marxist Perspectives on the Weimar Republic and the Rise of German Fascism*, ed. Michael Dubkowski and Isidor Wallimann (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), 89; emphasis in the original.
 - 25 Eley, “What Produces Fascism,” 88.
 - 26 Hofmann, *The Fascist Effect*, 64.
 - 27 Ben-Ghiat, this volume.
 - 28 Neocleous, *Fascism*, xi. Neocleous argues that this ideology centered on “war, nature and nation.”
 - 29 Eley, *Nazism as Fascism*, 207–8.
 - 30 For an analysis of the power of rendering a leader invisible, see Lutz Koepnick’s illuminating discussion of Hoffman’s photographs of Hitler’s audience; the leader himself is not in the images. Lutz Koepnick, “Face/Off: Hitler and Weimer Political Photography,” in *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Gail Finney, 214–34 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). For the case of Japan, see Masao Maruyama’s analysis of the emperor as an empty center: Masao Maruyama, “The Theory and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism,” in *Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. and trans. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1963] 1969), 1–24.
 - 31 For an excellent discussion of the aesthetic revolutions of avant-garde movements from Italian futurism, Russian constructivism, surrealism, muralism, the Situationist International, the American neo-avant-garde, and the Neue Slowenische Kunst movement, see Aleš Erjavec, ed., *Aesthetics Revolutions and Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Movements* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
 - 32 See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Envisioning Modernity: Desire and Discipline in the Italian Fascist Film,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 1 (autumn 1996): 109–44. Lutz Koepnick, this volume.
 - 34 E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
 - 35 Maggie Clinton, this volume.
 - 36 For Japanese use of Russian constructivism and Socialist realism, see Andrea Germer’s work on *Front*, Japan’s photography magazine for overseas consumption: Germer, “Visual Propaganda in Wartime East Asia.”
 - 37 Ken Domon, “Nurse, Red Cross Hospital, Azabu, Tokyo 1938,” *Shashin*, July 8, 1938. *Shūhō* is on the cover.
 - 38 Germer, “Visible Cultures, Invisible Politics.”
 - 39 See Harry Harootian’s elucidation of this point in *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) and in *Overcome by Modernity*. Neocleous not only stresses

the counter-revolutionary impulses, reactionary modernism, and ideology of fascism but also argues that “fascism obliterates history from politics and fills the space with nature.” Neocleous, *Fascism*, 11. I have discussed nature in relation to Japanese fascism in *Reconfiguring Modernity* and in comparison with Germany in “The Cage of Nature: Modernity’s History in Japan,” *History and Theory* 40, no. 1 (February 2001): 16–36.

40 Claire Zimmerman, this volume.

41 Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2017), 27.

42 Mishra includes everyone from “Maxim Gorky, the Bolshevik, Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-advocate of ‘pure’ Islam, Martin Buber, the exponent of the ‘New Jew,’ and Lu Xun, the campaigner for a ‘New Life’ in China,” along with Brexiters and ISIS. Mishra, *Age of Anger*, 30.

43 Clinton, this volume.

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