Beyond the Fascist Century

Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin

Edited by
CONSTANTIN IORDACHI
ARISTOTLE KALLIS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Fascism at 100 (and a Bit)

Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis

In February 1928, the founder and president of the Fascist Institute of Culture of Milan (*Istituto Fascista di Cultura*) Dino Alfieri proposed to the PNF a retrospective exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary (*Decennale*) of Fascism. His proposal for an 'Exhibition of Fascism' (*Mostra del Fascismo*), approved by Mussolini, concerned an event that chronicled the events from the outbreak of World War I through the post-war crisis to the eventual 'victory' of Fascism and the forging of the Fascist state. Yet Alfieri's choice of location for the exhibition (the Castello Sforzesco in Milan) and preferred date (1929) divulged his intention to refract the historical narrative through the lens of Fascism's trajectory from agitation to power. Milan, as he put it, was the 'cradle of Fascism' and the source of the 'spiritual renaissance of the Italian nation'. As for the anniversary occasion, Alfieri considered the small meeting that took place at the Piazza San

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Sepolcro in central Milan on the morning of 23 March 1919 as the 'combative dawn' of the movement, setting in motion a chain of events that culminated in the 1922 March on Rome.[1]

The exhibition eventually took place—but not in the form, place or time that Alfieri had envisaged in 1928. The Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista was hosted in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni of Rome and opened its doors in 1932, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the March and not of the founding of the *Fasci di Combattimento* at Piazza San Sepolcro.[2] In the process, it also changed name, mutating into a *Mostra della Decennale* or the more widely used *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*—a shift that underlined the sense of revolutionary rupture that came with the seizure of power.[3] And yet the 1919 gathering very soon gained mythological status in the historical imaginaries of Fascism, as a gesture of audacious defiance and a rallying cry that was about to grow louder and stronger in the years to follow. To be known as someone who had attended the 1919 meeting bestowed the coveted honour of 'fascist of the first hour' (*fascista della prima ora*). Mussolini presented the meeting as the symbolic moment when a host of dissident nationalist groups—those who agitated in favour of *intervento* in 1914–1915, the Arditi, the legionaries, the national syndicalists, the Futurists—joined forces to launch fascism *avant la lettre*.

A century later, the conventional association of the San Sepolcro gathering with the idea of 'birth' of f(F)ascism has persisted in historical accounts and analyses.[4] To be sure, the event has been dissected and scaled down in significance. It barely registered on the national press at the time, with the exception of Mussolini's *Popolo d'Italia* and some staunchly nationalist journals.[5] Renzo De Felice described the meeting as

> [less] a real congress constituting a new political movement [than] a gathering of politically related people who vowed on that occasion to make their relations more stable and in practice agreed on a negative program, very loosely oriented … towards a "new order" that even they did not know yet how to figure out.[6]

This was no turning point in the fortunes of what became known as the Fascist movement either. The year that followed provided a harsh reality check for Mussolini and his hopeful followers in electoral terms.[7] Meanwhile many of the headline radical ideological pronouncements of the programme that Mussolini had announced in March 1919 were soon to

be abandoned or diluted beyond recognition.[8] No matter how Alfieri wished to present the history of Fascism in 1928, there was obvious no political path dependency from San Sepolcro to the March on Rome.

In his first major published work *The Nature of Fascism* (1991), Roger Griffin came to a similar conclusion about the significance of the March 1919 gathering that launched the Fasci di Combattimento.[9] When he revisited the event in his later work, however, he conferred fresh intellectual significance to it. In *Modernism and Fascism* (2007), he argued that it was

> intended as the first step to perpetuating the revolutionary momentum attributed by modernist nationalists to the war from the very beginning. The idea was to launch not a political party but what we have seen cultural anthropologists describe as an 'anti-structure', the embryo of the new communitas. … [Mussolini] intended the Fasci to form the cells of revolutionary national consciousness that were the first stage towards realizing his vision of the 'trenchocracy', a new elite infused with modernist resolve to inaugurate a new world, led not by a politician but by a 'healer' who would 'build the house again and start time anew'.[10]

In this respect, the San Sepolcro meeting mattered enormously for the history of f(F)ascism—not as a stepping stone to political success or as a 'disjunctive moment'.[11] Such moments tend to make more sense retrospectively, only once and if the extreme, dissident forces that they shaped and unleashed have gathered momentum through both agency and contingency. Disjunctions sustain mythologies of birth and rebirth, even as their direction or destination remains fuzzy, uncertain and rooted in a mirage of intoxicating collective agency that lies ahead.[12] In March 1919, Mussolini launched a daring bid to re-unite the disparate dissident nationalist forces of the *intervento* into a new protean revolutionary project that he—rather than the radical nationalists of the Italian Nationalist Association or Gabriele D'Annunzio—hoped to lead. The myth of rebirth—of the 'new blood that would regenerate' the nation and the state[13]—was to prove f(F)ascism's mighty mobilising premise of making history, endowing it with 'extraordinary affective and destructive power'.[14]

Aiming for the Sky: The Nature of Fascism (1991)

This volume aims at exploring the current state and prospects of fascism studies, a hundred years from its birth, using as a vantage point Roger Griffin's work on the topic and the numerous debates, additions and reformulations it stirred in the scholarly community. Born in 1948 and educated at Oxford University (Ph.D. in 1990), Roger Griffin is currently an Emeritus Professor in Modern History in the School of History, Philosophy and Culture at Oxford Brookes University. Griffin's research and teaching career on fascism has spanned over three decades. He has published four major books on fascism (*The Nature of Fascism*, 1991; *A Fascist Century*, 2008), modernism (*Modernism and Fascism*, 2007) and terrorism (*Terrorist's Creed: Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning*, 2012); edited major collections of articles on fascism (*International Fascism: Theories, Causes, and the New Consensus*, 1998; *Fascism, Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right, 2014*), two anthologies of primary and secondary sources (*Fascism*, 1995; *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, 2003), two concise introductions into fascism studies (*Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies*, 2018; *Fascism: A Quick Immersion*, 2020), and over 120 chapters and articles on fascism, extremism, religious politics, political religion, terrorism, radicalisation, populism, political modernism, identity, and the psychology of fanaticism.

Griffin made his entry into fascism studies in the early 1990s, at a time when a new wave of scholarship had already started engaging with fascism as an intellectually distinct and complex phenomenon. Back in 1979, Gilbert Allardyce's call to 'de-model, de-ideologize, de-mystify and, above all, de-escalate' the concept of 'fascism'[15] had provided a timely corrective to the over-extension and distortion of the term. Ever since it appeared in the political vocabulary of the 1920s, believers and foes alike had displayed an inclination to read something deeper, bigger, generic, and trans-/international in 'fascism'. Allardyce likened such an over-extension 'without conceptual boundaries' to the 'logic of a cancer cell'; he also doubted that even the use of more rigorous criteria of analysis could give the concept any heuristic utility whatsoever. For him, 'fascism' had no meaning outside interwar Italy and it could thus never be a generic concept; what is more, it possessed no distinct ideology either. 'Like the search for the black cat in a dark room', he argued, seeking a generic

fascism was an 'act of faith … pursued by reason' as it 'presumes that there is something to be found in the dark void'.[16] Allardyce was not the first to evince this critique. A decade earlier, writing about the abuse of the term in the context of the persisting 'social fascist' discourse, Theodore Draper had called it a case of 'extreme divorce between ideology and reality'.[17] At around the same time, Stuart Woolf had prefaced a comparative study of 'fascisms' in Europe with a call to 'ban' the term as 'it has been so misused that it has lost its original meaning'.[18]

What original meaning though? In a brief reply appended to Allardyce's article, Stanley Payne argued that 'historical understanding requires us to identify certain common features or qualities of new forces within a given period, if only to recognize and clarify their differences and uniqueness'. The need for a usable 'fascist [definitional] minimum' depended on one's perspective on the half-empty/half-full conundrum. Payne suggested an alternative reading of what Allardyce objected to, beginning with the observation that a series of radical nationalist movements with revolutionary aims that were at one and the same time anti-Marxian, anti-liberal, and anticonservative appeared in Europe between the world wars. Do they merit recognition as a category in some cautiously delimited and pluralistic schema for purposes of political analysis and classification? Or is it more accurate and satisfactory to emphasise their differences and perforce subsume them into some broader category of radical or revolutionary mass movements? This is a most difficult question of historical-political taxonomy; and, though the radically particularistic historian-interested only in the nominalist approach-may respond that for him the question does not apply, those interested in systematic, comparative analysis cannot elude it.[19]

In his reply to Allardyce's article, Ernst Nolte reached a similar conclusion that defended the methodological validity of his own approach to the analysis of fascism since the 1960s[20]: some form of generic concept of 'fascism' can be useful to historians by 'differentiating among the forms to arrive at a historical description that is as comprehensive as possible'.[21] Payne went on to give concrete shape to his typology of 'fascism'—a device of limited scope 'for purposes of comparative analysis' as he pointed out—based on a distinction between negations, goals, and style.[22] Other scholars tended to the same goal of 'taking fascism seriously' and treating it as some form of distinct generic phenomenon. They started from different assumptions and came to divergent conclusions about the origins, definition, and scope of 'fascism'; but they more or less

explicitly rejected Woolf's or Allardyce's calls to abandon the concept. Instead, they opted for more sophisticated definitional and taxonomical perspectives that promised to give 'fascism' substance without either over-extending or over-specifying it as a tool of generic analysis.

The Controversy Around the 'New Consensus'

In his recent sweeping and insightful overview of the historiography of fascism, David Roberts identified 1991 as the starting point of a new wave of scholarship on generic fascism.[23] The publication of *The Nature of Fascism* struck a chord not only in its fresh conceptual approach but also because of its clarity and succinctness. Griffin's definition of fascism as 'a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism'[24] did not purport to offer a refined taxonomy. Instead, it focused on the need to distil what was novel and distinct about fascism's multiple historical instances to the sort of ideological 'minimum' that Ernst Nolte had coined and Payne had defended in the 1970s. He sought to deduce a Weberian 'ideal type' for fascism with a more or less stable 'core' of critical 'ineliminable components' that Michael Freeden had proposed as the basis of his sophisticated approach to ideologies.[25] Griffin's approach gained adherents as well as critics at breakneck speed. Many historians, including some of those who adopted a critical stance at the time or later, conceded that it marked a compelling interpretation; some were prepared to describe it as a turning point in the historiography of fascism, encouraging further approaches that took fascism more seriously than ever; others criticised it for essentialism and a stifling adherence to a taxonomical reasoning that reduced the scope for making broader comparisons and analysing intersections.[26] But it was Griffin's subsequent claim, prefacing his second book-length publication *International Fascism*, that a 'new consensus' had finally emerged in the fray of fascism studies around a definition of the fascist ideological *minimum* centred on rebirth that proved the most controversial.[27] The ensuing polemic raged on for some time, leaving behind it a fair amount of supporting and dissenting literature.[28] Genuine methodological and interpretive differences escalated into polarities, sometimes as much personal as academic, overshadowing the more measured voices that attempted to take stock of the implications.[29] The 'culturalist' turn in fascism studies that Griffin's approach came to epitomise attracted some of the most scathing critiques, both for its potential neglect of other

dimensions of fascism (e.g. power or economy) and for its suspected moral relativism that could undermine historical understanding.[30]

Consensus or not, Griffin's interpretation of fascism provided a definitional heuristic *lingua franca* for an ever-expanding number of scholars engaging one way or another with the subject.[31] Even many of those who were sceptical about the approach or disagreed with it on methodological grounds, still used it as a point of reference, if only to suggest alternative interpretive perspectives.[32] The wide-ranging exchange of views hosted by the journal *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* in 2004 brought together diverse geographic/national, epistemological, and generational constituencies working on fascism in a dialogue that exposed both the reach of Griffin's interpretation and its contentious, even divisive nature. The discussion focused on a lengthy main article, in which Griffin restated his interpretation, repeated the earlier claim of an emergent 'consensus', revisited the always contentious place of National Socialism in the universe of generic fascism, reflected on the divergent paths between Anglo-Saxon and German scholarship, and articulated how his definitional scheme could provide fresh insights about the ongoing relevance of 'fascism' in the 'post-fascist' epoch. The volume, supplemented by a second round of comments by most contributors and a lengthy response by Griffin, produced mixed results. It is doubtful that it 'substantially moved [the debate] forward' or that its call for a 'vast collaborative project … to combat the constant and ever-changing assaults on society by ideologically articulated superstition, myths, and prejudice' was heeded. The tone of some of the exchanges (e.g. by Ernst Nolte or A James Gregor) was hostile, uncompromising, and personal. Most contributors stated their disagreements cogently but, courtesy to the author of the main article aside, appeared unwilling to move. In this sense, the 2004 volume marked the peak of the debate on the 'new consensus' and mapped productively the expanding terrains of fascism studies in their diversity and interpretive nuance—but it did little to generate more of a consensus about the 'new consensus'. Whether this was even Griffin's or the journal's intention in the first place when they embarked on the debate is a moot point.[33] In his response to the first round of the exchange, he reiterated that by consensus he meant the growing convergence of independent-minded scholars on the basis of an increasingly shared—but far from identical—analytical and definitional language. This was a language that could be invoked—in broad agreement or otherwise with his own idiosyncratic approach—to *talk* about 'fascism' without having to re-invent the

conceptual wheel every time. This more nuanced assertion was lost in the polemic headlines of the exchange, just like it had done in all its earlier iterations since 1998.

Griffin himself played a key role in extending the reach of his analytical schemes, publishing numerous works on topics ranging from Fascist culture, the relations between fascism and clericalism, political religion, and fascist temporalities, to the study of the post-war radical right.[34] A curated selection of this wide-ranging work came together in a volume under the title *A Fascist Century* in 2008. The title made deliberate reference to Mussolini's prophesy that the twentieth century was destined to become 'a Fascist century', eclipsing in historical significance the other major ideologies of liberalism and socialism that had dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively. In putting together the anthology of shorter pieces that Griffin had produced in the wake of *The Nature of Fascism*, the volume performed two tasks. First, it took stock of the extraordinary influence of Griffin's work on fascism as a catalyst for the 'maturation of a nascent discipline', namely fascism studies. Second, it offered a sweeping view of the multidimensionality, ongoing refinement, and expansiveness of his understanding of 'fascism' that had rendered his 1991 monograph so influential and provocative. Apart from gathering a series of articles and essays from various sources in a single volume, *A Fascist Century* offered an unexpected perk—a candid concluding interview with Griffin, in which well-known controversial aspects of his work were revisited in a less charged setting and the diverse aspects of his prolific work were more affectively contextualised.[35]

Expanding the Horizons

By the time the collection appeared, Griffin had published *Modernism and Fascism*. This book was at the same time a trademark Griffinite piece of intellectually expansive scholarship and a departure. Fascism was now defined as 'a revolutionary species of political modernism whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history … by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality … based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation'. The notably longer 'discursive definition' culminated in a more familiar revised statement of his earlier (and shorter) definition of fascism as 'a form of programmatic modernism that seeks to conquer political power in order to realize

a totalizing vision of national or ethnic rebirth'.[36] The familiar ingredients that had made Griffin's approach gain traction since the 1990s were still there, refracted through his subsequent appreciation of the power of myth, of Emilio Gentile's political religion, and of the 'revolutionary experience of standing on the edge of history'. But this was also a heuristic perspective that, in his own words, sought to 'integrate more and more fully within non-fascist aspects of modern history, … with a whole number of inter-related phenomena relating to modernity and modernism'.[37] The understanding of fascism as a revolutionary project of political modernism transformed the 'extreme syncretism, nebulousness, and contradictoriness characteristic of individual fascist ideologies which appeared to some historians as a 'ragbag' or 'hotchpotch' of ideas' from an interpretive conundrum into a central plank of what made fascism ideologically distinct and underpinned its affective power. In essence, the apparent contradiction between a fascism that 'resolutely affirm[ed] "the temporality of the new"' and a fascism that looked back in order to draw on 'the values of an idealized, largely *invented*, national past to regenerate the future' was reappraised and demystified. The protean flux of fascism encompassed both facets as complementary strategies of forging a new alternative modernity with the regenerated nation at its heart.[38]

Unashamedly 'culturalist' in its perspective, *Modernism and Fascism* even reached further than any of Griffin's previous books. In addition to his fluency in intellectual history, his 2007 monograph delved effortlessly into art and architecture, psychology and anthropology, cult and technology. In the final pages of one of his appendices, Griffin expressed the hope that his approach, while not discovering 'buried truths or triumphantly resolv[ing] issues that have baffled other experts', could open up 'new vistas of comprehension … into the mythopoeic mechanisms capable of turning the disorienting *experience* of modernity into a source of fanaticism both religious and secular'.[39] There was an unmistakeable cue here to his subsequent monograph *Terrorist's Creed*—a foray into the origins and drivers of extremist, fanatical violence and thus a notable departure from his earlier focus on fascism.[40] Nevertheless, *Modernism and Fascism* marked the beginning of a more eclectic intellectual journey into diverse histories of the last hundred years, ranging from the architectural production of fascist and right-wing dictatorships to an interest in Futurism to the study of modern-day extremism and terrorist impulses.

Griffin had never shied away from defending the intellectual and methodological validity of the approach to fascism that he had pioneered with his first monograph and subsequently refined and updated to reflect his own intellectual trajectory. He was equally intent, however, on not simply recycling his 'one good idea of about 20 years ago' but on extending it to new areas of enquiry. His prolific record of research in the past decade or so provides the strongest proof that, no matter how contentious among scholars of fascism studies, Griffin's perspective was useful and stimulating well beyond its field of knowledge. For his part, Griffin showed a higher degree of openness to creative adaptations and extensions of his interpretive scheme. His re-engagement with para-fascism and authoritarian dictatorships of the interwar period divulged his growing willingness to 'de-centre' fascism (a critique of the custom identification of Italy and Germany as exemplary historical cases) and to re-locate these otherwise difficult to categorise phenomena within the expanding and polymorphic sphere of fascism studies and political modernism. At the same time, his ongoing reflection on post-war and contemporary radical right-wing and populist phenomena underlined how his conception of 'fascism' was not confined to the Noltean 'epoch' of the interwar years but extended over a 'long' century of revolutionary projects of the right.

Less well-known than his earlier conceptual innovations but highly influential has been his idea of 'rooted modernism'. Although the trope of 'rootedness' pervaded his earlier work on modernism, it graduated into a standalone conceptual category long after the publication of *Modernism and Fascism*. In a 2016 article, he defined the term succinctly as the 'fascist bid to carry out the total renewal of [the nation] in the spirit of a heroic past'.[41] Two years later, the same term had grown in stature to feature in another article's title and received a more granular definition as an aesthetic language that was unmistakably modern … but whose aesthetic design deliberately evokes or implies a 'usable past', real or mythic'. He then added the following clarification about the term's significance:

> It is this hybrid of functional modernity with elements of conservatism and tradition (and not necessarily the nation's 'real' history) that embodies the ethos of a regime that sees itself as pioneering a new society and opening

> up a new future for its people, while simultaneously maintaining its continuity with, and rootedness in, the unique, 'eternal' genius of the nation as manifested in its cultural past.[42]

'Rooted modernism' was in many ways another expression of the familiar 'protean' trope that had always been central to Griffin's interpretation of fascism as palingenetic ultra-nationalism.[43] Understanding fascism as a syncretist, polyvalent, and supremely adaptable force underpinned his conceptual balancing act of reading into it both cultic and rational, traditional and futural impulses. In a similar fashion, the motto of 'rooted modernism' allowed him to claim convincingly that the deliberate fusion and simultaneity of past and future conferred upon the quest for radical rebirth a sense of intimate, familiar rootedness in its particular context. Going against the grain of deprecating the hybrid stripped-down classicism of Piacentini's or Speer's official regime architecture as cultural regression, Griffin's 'rooted modernism' rehabilitated them as legitimate, even eloquent expressions of a modernism with profound contextual resonance.

The Study of Fascism as an Ongoing 'Collaborative Project'

The last observation holds true of Griffin's lifelong approach to historical scholarship. An unapologetic aficionado of the 'bigger picture', he never shied way from going against the historiographical stream. Animated by a critical, supremely polemicist spirit, Griffin has been a driving force in the field, never missing an academic debate over cutting-edge research approaches and perspectives on fascism. A gifted scholar and a maverick, he did arguably more than anyone to transform fascism studies from a restricted, fragmented, and polarised specialisation into a field of international, polyvalent, and diachronic import. His conviction that only through methodological 'empathy'—an analytical approach premised on collapsing the distance from his historical subject by straying into the 'forbidden territories of psychology and anthropology' and 'taking seriously the worldview and psychology of [fascist] actors'[44]—could fascism's deeper impulses and attraction become excavated often exposed him to criticisms of moral relativism.[45] His penchant for thinking across borders and boundaries, along generic and universal lines, scales of minimum and maximum prompted criticisms of over-simplification and essentialism. Still

Griffin was always gifted with an eye for connections and convergence rather than dichotomies or particularism. His often derided 'missionary' zeal[46] belied an impatience with an empirical approach devoid of intellectual curiosity and sweeping imagination. If his case for 'consensus' in the late 1990s was couched in terms that proved controversial, divisive, and in the end counter-productive,[47] his underpinning motive was more akin to a call for unity-in-diversity. The ethical stance of methodological empathy enabled Griffin to take seriously the perspective and experiences of others—be they historical actors or colleagues in the field—and fuelled his cross-cultural encounters and exchanges, while informing his self-reflection and recognition of limitations. An avid traveller, Griffin took part in countless academic events, providing valuable insights and encouragement to starters in the field. In addition to being a prolific writer, Griffin also served as an inspiring and generous mentor of a new generation of researchers working on fascism in various countries situated in Western as well as Eastern Europe, from England, Spain and Portugal to the Czech Republic, Romania and Ukraine, to name but a few.

Griffin was explicit that 'there was nothing new or original about the definitional components at the heart of the consensus'. He was effusive in his praise of the work of scholars who had shaped his understanding of fascism—the under-appreciated Mosse, Payne, Sternhell, as well as Gentile and Eatwell.[48] In his own words, a key motive behind his 'programmatic' articles was his desire to accelerate the formation of a community of scholars in the humanities who could see themselves as 'involved in a vast collaborative project' based on 'conciliation and synergy' instead of taking 'refuge in isolated, polarized positions of hostility and disdain for other perspectives'.[49] His pleas for his version of unity-in-diversity was not received as positively by scholars who had already set out their own analytical stalls in the 1990s as he had hoped for. His attempt to demonstrate mischievously that there may be a divergence between how his staunchest critics were chastising the 'new consensus' and how they were actually conceptualising 'fascism' in their respective works did not curry much favour either. Away, however, from the imagined frontlines of scholarly historical controversies, a growing number of other scholars continued to 'annex' Griffin's understanding of fascism to their own work and then adapt and translate aspects of it for a wide range of intellectual pursuits. Without great fanfare and away from the jaded public debates about fascism or national histories, they helped clear the path for new perspectives on the multiple histories of 'generic fascism'. In different ways,

new scholarship on fascism has looked further afield and has displayed more creativity than the pioneers of fascism studies, Griffin included, could imagine earlier. More importantly, it has scaled barricades to trans-disciplinary, comparative,[50] transnational,[51] and 'ecumenical' research on fascism. The earlier *Hysterikerstreit* of fascism studies, as Griffin playfully called it back in 2005,[52] appears to have subsided, all for the better. Equally importantly, the prevailing larger impulses to overcome national historiographical boundaries and to explore the transnational dimensions of fascism at global level have been institutionalised in two recent collaborative initiatives: the establishment in April 2012 of the Open Access *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, published by Brill and hosted by NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam; and, in 2018, of the *International Association of Comparative Fascist Studies* (ComFas), hosted by the Central European University, Budapest-Vienna. The primary aim of these venues is to provide meeting grounds for comparatively minded scholars from various academic disciplines working on the transnational history of fascism and the radical right. To this end, they plan to stimulate the coordination of teaching and research activities on these topics, potentially leading to synergy in research and cross-national initiatives.

Structure and Content of the Volume

The volume brings together a plethora of critically minded historians of fascism who engage appreciatively, critically and creatively with Roger Griffin's work. The deliberately wide-ranging featured work (twelve essays in total) seeks to celebrate Roger Griffin's overall contribution to 'fascism studies' broadly conceived—in conceptual and definitional terms but also in advancing understandings of fascism—that have informed exciting related research agendas in a number of fields and directions brought forward by scholars across the world since the 1980s. The editors have sought to bring together a wide—yet by no means exhaustive or necessarily 'representative'—sample of such scholars, with as diverse expertises as possible and focusing on an exciting diverse range of topics that reflect their individual expertise, in a volume that both takes stock of Roger's input and looks forward in terms of current and future research agendas for 'fascism studies'. Broadly speaking, three 'generations' of fascism scholars, coming from a multitude of historiographical schools and traditions, are represented in the list of participating authors, offering

a combination of broad conceptual essays and contributions that are more focused to particular themes and particular geographic/chronological facets of fascism. The contributors have all had various levels of personal engagement with Roger Griffin and his work, as students, colleagues, partners in research project and or debating circles. The essays tackle a sum of key issues in the history of fascism, including its ideology and its relation to religion and totalitarianism, the theory and methodology of comparative fascist studies, the history of para-fascist authoritarianism, and the issue of neo-fascism. Their common aim is to evaluate Griffin's path-breaking contribution to the field and to highlight the impact and implications of his work for its present and future.

The essays are organised in mixed chronological and thematical order. The first part of the volume focuses on historiography of fascism with a focus on contested theoretical and methodological issues, such as palingenesis and totalitarianism (David Roberts), the praxeological approach to fascism (Sven Reichardt), ideational mobilities and para-fascism (Aristotle Kallis), and neo-fascism (Nigel Copsey). The second part advances new perspectives on specific case studies of interwar and post-war/contemporary fascism, from Italy (Emilio Gentile and Fernando Esposito) to East Central Europe (Raul Cârstocea and Jakub Drábik) to Spain (Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío), to Brazil (António Costa Pinto), and finally to the more recent Anglophone cultic neo-Nazi scene (Paul Jackson). The volume concludes with an essay on the comparative and transnational methods in fascist studies (Constantin Iordachi).

In the opening chapter of the collection, David D. Roberts revisits critically Roger Griffin's definition of fascism as 'palingenetic ultra-nationalism'. While reasserting the usefulness of this concept for understanding fascism, Robert also underlines the paramount importance of the concept of totalitarianism. He argued that a recast notion of totalitarianism around a new mode of collective action' is key to understanding the fascist political experiments in mass politics. In the end, Roberts suggests that totalitarianism and palingenesis are not mutually exclusive but two intertwined and complementary notions and should be employed in tandem in order to illuminate the fascist ideological core.

Sven Reichardt provides another overview of new trends in fascism studies, with a similar focus on the relationship between fascism and totalitarianism. He argues in favour of a praxeological approach to fascism on the counts that it enables scholars to merge microhistorical and macrohistorical research perspectives and to illuminate the processes of fascist

radicalisation and the adoption of political violence leading to war and genocide. In the end, Reichardt calls for additional research on the issue of exchanges and interactions among fascist movements and regimes in Europe and beyond it.

Aristotle Kallis engages creatively with Roger Griffin's concept of 'para-fascism' in order to shed light on the intricate relationship between fascism and interwar authoritarianism. Using the half-empty glass analogy, Kallis points out that authoritarian regimes resembled fascism so closely that they should be studied within the context of fascism studies. From this perspective, Kallis urges scholars of fascism to rethink the hybrid authoritarian regimes and to integrate them more firmly into the history of interwar radicalism, in the context of, rather than in opposition to, fascism.

Nigel Copsey embraces Griffin's plea for taking contemporary fascism seriously as a vital and influential political phenomenon and not as a pale reflection or decayed mirror-image of interwar fascism. His essay provides an informative history of the various forms and stages of neo-fascism in post-1943 Europe. To illustrate the metamorphosis suffered by contemporary fascism, Copsey focuses on three novel characteristics that were added to its palingenetic core: de-territorialisation, meta-politicisation, and historical revisionism. Without overestimating the mass character or the political importance of neo-fascism, Copsey points out that fascism remains a major challenge to democracy for the foreseeable future. In line with Griffin, Copsey urges scholars to pay greater attention to the heuristic value of neo-fascism and to trace its toxic influence on contemporary radical-right populism.

In the second part of the volume, Emilio Gentile explores the emergence of Fascism as a political movement in Italy in 1919. He points out that, at its origins, the Fascist political program was neither radical nor revolutionary but an amalgam of progressist demands about the post-war democratisation of society. Gentile identifies the roots of a cleavage between Mussolini, portrayed as a rather conventional leader interested in consolidating his position through negotiation and compromise, and the more radical grass-roots segments of the Combat Leagues, who advocated anti-establishment measures. For Gentile, the 2019 centenary of fascism is a 'false anniversary,' since Fascism of 1919 was qualitatively different from the latter, more radical forms of fascism. Gentile's essay underscores the fact that, as a political phenomenon, interwar Italian Fascism was a

'work in progress' and that some of its characteristics shifted as function of the socio-political context of the time.

Raul Cârstocea and Jakub Drábik explore the relevance of Roger Griffin's definition of 'generic fascism' for the study of Fascism in East Central Europe. In line with other works on the topic, Cârstocea focuses on three ways in which Griffin's concept of palingenesis is relevant for understanding the Romanian Legion of Archangel Michael: the movement's anti-Semitism, leading to radicalism and violence; the temporalities of palingenesis; and the importance of palingenesis for building affinities with other European fascist movements and regimes. Jakub Drábik explores the history of Czechoslovak fascism from the prism of the 'new consensus.' He highlights the benefits of applying Griffin´s methodological approach on generic fascism as a heuristic tool for studying Czech fascism. His main goal is to critically re-evaluate scholarly work on the subject and to reconceptualise the history of Czech fascism by challenging the prevailing view that it was a marginal, stagnant and irrelevant movement.

Building on Roger Griffin's theoretical perspectives on fascist temporalities and their intricate relationship to modernity, Fernando Esposito reviews a cluster of intertwined concepts that were central to the Fascist political language, namely revolution, the New Man, *bonifica*, and the myth of universal Rome. He pays particular attention to the institutionalisation of the fascist temporality and their vision of a "new age" in the new calendar adopted in 1926/27 and in the excavation of ancient Rome. Esposito argued that the Fascist temporality was based on a paradoxical combination between *Aufbruch*, the destruction of the past, on the one hand, and the myth of rebirth and of a new eternal order, on the other.

Griffin's definition of fascism has been instrumental in illuminating the history and profile of 'non-Western' fascism, as well. Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío explores the rise to power of the Falange Española, from a marginal fascist party under the Second Republic to a major party during the Civil War, and a single ruling party from 1937 to 1945. Peñalba-Sotorrío argued that this transformation was enabled by the dynamics of the Civil War but also by direct ideological transfers from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. She points out that, after 1937, the Falange played a pivotal role in the indoctrination of Spanish society and the construction of Franco's New State. On this basis, she argues that the Falange's political trajectory should not be easily dismissed as a failed attempt to instate a fascist dictatorship in Spain. In the end, Peñalba-Sotorrío reiterates the

fact that, in order to fully understand the post-liberal departure of the 1930–1940s, it is necessary to situate the Spanish case within a broader European context.

António Costa Pinto also engages with Griffin's concept of para-fascism, exploring its relevance for the institutionalisation of a wide range of dictatorial regimes in interwar Latin America. He points out that the heterogeneous spectrum of authoritarian regimes established in the region during the 'fascist era' met with various degrees of success, from very instable and poorly institutionalised to more consolidated ones. Costa Pinto focuses, in particular, on The New State established in Brazil by Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945), which he redefines as a paradigmatic case of a para-fascist regime. Costa Pinto provides new insights into the way in which domestic political actors look at institutional models of fascism and corporatism in 1930s Brazil.

Paul Jackson surveys Griffin's perspective on post-war fascism, as well, testing its heuristic usefulness for studying the history of the small but numerous and vivid neo-Nazi networks. He argues that Griffin's conceptual perspective enables scholars to illuminate the rhizomic, de-centred groupuscular neo-Nazi culture and its cultic milieu. Jackson focuses, in particular, on notions of scripted violence, lone actor terrorism, and the cross-border exchanges between British and American groupuscules, such as, mostly notably, the National Action in the UK and Atomwaffen Division in America. In line with Copsey, Jackson concludes that Griffin's theoretical framework on neo-fascism is key to understanding contemporary neo-Nazi groups and their adoption of political violence, often leading to terrorism.

Finally Constantin Iordachi argues that, although fascism studies are inherently comparative, the comparative methods have never had its momentum in the field. Iordachi begins by providing a thorough review of the field, revolving around Griffin's ideal-type definition of generic fascism. He highlights the advantages but also the limitation of the Weberian ideal-type definition of fascism. Taking stock of the new developments in fascism studies in the last decades, Iordachi identifies a new research agenda revolving around comparative and transnational approaches. He argued that new critical-minded interdisciplinary and global studies of fascism should carry the field to a new level of sophistication.

Overall, the range of scholarship presented here is intended as a testament to Griffin's pioneering, inspiring and multifaceted work on fascism.

This volume serves as an illustration of the new relevance of transnationalism, and its momentum in the discipline, also marked by the recent foundation of *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* and the *International Association for Comparative Fascism Studies* (COMFAS) (which Griffin also played a significant role in bringing about, as Consultant Editor, and founding member of its leading committee, respectively.

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