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Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Modern Italy by Christopher Duggan; The Cult of the Duce, eds. Stephen Gundle, Christopher Duggan and Giuliana Pieri; and In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy, eds. Roberta Pergher and Giulia Albanese

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not control, were reluctant to court popularity with voters, and were suspicious of party and parliamentary politics; they expected deference, not debate. As the suffrage grew, their appetite for politics diminished. Most of them were no longer of this world in 1912, when Italy adopted a broad franchise that spelled the end for old-style political paternalism.

Soper's study can be questioned on grounds of representativeness, an elusive concept both for a country as internally diverse as Italy and for a period of its history whose troubled national politics have attracted more attention than what was actually happening on the ground. While it is risky to generalize from the particular, as Soper does, it is also true that generalizations remain merely general without the kind of effective local testing provided by his stimulating and very readable study.

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Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy. By *Christopher Duggan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xxiv+501. \$34.95.

The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians. Edited by *Stephen Gundle, Christopher Duggan, and Giuliana Pieri*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013. Distributed by Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. x+286. \$110.00.

In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy. Edited by *Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher*. Italian and Italian American Studies. Edited by *Stanislao G. Pugliese*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp. x+252. \$90.00.

In volume 4 of his magisterial biography of Benito Mussolini (*Mussolini il duce I: Gli anni di consenso, 1929–1936* [Bari, 1974]), Renzo De Felice established the parameters that define the historiography of Fascist Italy to this day. As his work's subtitle suggests, De Felice asserted that by the late 1920s, Fascism had achieved a genuine and widespread popular consensus. Internal opposition had been quashed; Mussolini won admiration for the Lateran Accords of 1929, which resolved the decades-old dispute between the Italian state and the Catholic Church; and many Italians lent their moral support to the regime, enthusiastically participating in its rallies and rituals.

This argument challenged orthodoxies that had prevailed in Italy since 1945—namely, that the Fascist regime had been a brutal imposition on the Italian people and that the anti-Fascist Resistance had been the genuine expression of the national will. In subsequent decades, historians have inevitably had to respond to De Felice's provocative "consensus" thesis, whether positively or negatively. Social historians have sought to demonstrate the depth of popular support for the regime or, conversely (and especially on the left), to document working-class resistance and resilience in the face of Fascist coercion. Cultural historians have explored the regime's vision of the "totalitarian state," its use of aesthetics and ritual to manufacture consent, and its efforts to engineer a "New Man" and a "New Italy." Nor have these debates been confined to the academy; especially since the early 1990s, De Felice's work has been invoked by voices on the right seeking to portray the Fascist era in a more nostalgic and favorable light. Memories of the *Ventennio nero* (the twenty black years) continue to haunt Italian politics, culture, and society.

The three books under review here all respond to De Felice's challenge while at the same time problematizing, and in some instances transcending, his original framework. As noted by the authors of one volume, the Italian term *consenso* translates both as "consensus" (i.e., passive, shared agreement) and "consent" (active approval) (*In the Society of Fascists*, 4). In various ways, these works explore the space between these two poles, teasing out the diversity and ambiguities of Italians' support for Mussolini and his regime.

Christopher Duggan's *Fascist Voices (FV)* is the most ambitious undertaking of the three. As Duggan notes, De Felice's consensus theory was based more on the absence of active resistance to the Fascist regime than on a detailed interrogation of Italians' sentiments and attitudes. His is therefore an "intimate" history of Mussolini's Italy, exploring "how men, women and children experienced and understood the regime in terms of their emotions, ideas, values, practices and expectations" (*FV*, xi). His windows into this world are two main bodies of sources: memoirs and diaries, especially those housed at the National Diary Archive in Tuscany, and the so-called *sentimenti per il Duce*, letters to Mussolini written by ordinary citizens and archived by his private secretariat. Duggan proceeds carefully, recognizing the biases and limitations inherent in these documents. They tended to be written by the educated middle class; they often consciously appropriated Fascist rhetoric, whether to avoid suspicion or curry favor; and they were composed in the repressive atmosphere of a surveillance state.

Instead of making grand claims about their "representativeness," Duggan uses these sources to understand individuals' subjective responses to life under dictatorship. He highlights, for example, the pervasiveness of Catholic spirituality in many declarations of Fascist "faith." While other scholars (above all, Emilio Gentile) have made the case for Fascism as a "political religion," Duggan sees the values of the church and the regime as forming a single "emotional continuum" (*FV*, 198). Diaries and letters suggest that, for many Italians, being a good Fascist meant being a good Catholic, and vice versa. Similarly, the regime successfully invoked more traditional expressions of Italian patriotism (e.g., the Risorgimento and the myth of Rome) to attract the support of veterans, conservatives, and irredentists. Fascism's most powerful emotive force, though, was *Ducismo*—Mussolini's personality cult. Within the Fascist movement, Mussolini functioned as "an element of cohesion" (103), unifying divergent ideas and squabbling factions. For many women, he was the object of sexual fantasy, as attested by countless (and sometimes explicit) declarations of passion mailed to his secretariat. In peasant tales, he appears as both superman and everyman, "endowed with remarkable powers and yet . . . down to earth and unexceptional" (*FV*, 224). *Ducismo* also performed the vital function of deflecting criticisms of the regime. "Se lo sapesse il Duce" was the common refrain in complaints of Fascist corruption and inefficiency: "if the Duce only knew" what misdeeds were being performed in his name. Letters of complaint or denunciation invariably invoked a profound faith in Mussolini and his ideals, even when expressing misgivings about the regime's leaders and policies. Such glimpses into Italians' private thoughts are extremely compelling and help Duggan transcend top-down paradigms about consent and totalitarianism. Terms such as "enthusiasm," "conformism," "belief," and "doubt" become more important, often coexisting within the mind of a single individual. Emotions and attitudes proved to be volatile, swinging from adoration to profound disillusionment in response to personal experiences and shifting contexts.

Fascist Voices is vivid and engaging, especially when Duggan allows the sources to speak for themselves. To some extent, however, there is a tension between approaching this book as an in-depth study of emotions and attitudes under the regime and reading it (as the author intends) as a general history of Fascist Italy. It succeeds much more as the former than as the latter. Especially in the early chapters (on Fascism's origins and its rise to

power), Duggan presents a fairly conventional narrative that is occasionally peppered by quotations from his sources. The book ends with the fall of Mussolini in 1943 and therefore has little to say about the resurrected Italian Social Republic and the internecine conflict between partisans and Fascist loyalists from 1943 to 1945. Readers unfamiliar with the history of the *Ventennio nero* would therefore do well to complement their reading of *Fascist Voices* with a more straightforward account of actors and events. The intense focus on the relationship between the Italian people and the Duce also means that intermediaries—local leaders, party organizations, state institutions—are largely overlooked. For example, Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (the “after work” leisure organization) gets short shrift, despite the fact that it was arguably the regime’s most popular initiative. While Italians felt a passionate bond with Mussolini, it should be noted that their daily contacts with the Fascist state were far more likely to involve low-ranking officials, bureaucracies, and recreational activities.

Mussolini’s centrality to the Fascist project is explored further in *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians* (CD), coedited by Duggan, Stephen Gundle, and Giuliana Pieri. This volume is the result of a five-year research initiative supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, which also spawned three (highly recommended) documentary films, a website, and an exhibition in 2010 of anti-Fascist art. The editors’ introduction reiterates Duggan’s arguments about Mussolini’s affective power and, more significantly, paints the cult of the Duce in more variegated detail. It was manufactured by the Fascist Party but also spontaneously expressed by ordinary Italians; it was an emanation not only of political ideology but also of popular religion, consumer culture, and modern media; and it was expressed in a wide variety of settings, from cinema and portraiture to architecture and urban space. By surveying these manifestations, the editors argue, we can understand Mussolini as “the practical model” (CD, 6) of the modern dictator, a blueprint for the personality cults of leaders as diverse as Hitler, Perón, Ceaușescu, and Saddam Hussein.

The most compelling contributions to this volume are those that frame the cult of the Duce in relation to broader currents in Italian (and European) society and culture. Duggan surveys the “personalization” of politics during the Risorgimento and Liberal periods, when such figures as Giuseppe Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II were appropriated as symbols of the nascent nation-state. Gundle situates the Mussolini cult in terms of the birth of mass media (especially cinema and advertising) and traces the ways in which his representation drew upon new discourses about celebrity, fashion, and modern masculinity. Put differently, Mussolini’s peers included not so much Hitler or Franco as Charles Lindbergh, Mary Pickford, and P. T. Barnum. This analysis is reinforced by Alessandra Antola’s chapter on photographic portraits of the Duce. As she notes, Mussolini was “the first European political leader to be photographed” (CD, 178), and the regime devised a calculated media strategy that exploited this new technology to its fullest potential. Several contributions—Simona Storch’s chapters on biographies and monuments, Daniela Barattieri’s on Mussolini’s “inconvenient” first wife, and Pieri’s on portraiture—also demonstrate deliberate, “official” efforts to manufacture and manicure the Duce’s image.

Another set of chapters highlights the importance of space and place to the Mussolini cult. Eugene Pooley examines how the city of Rome provided a backdrop for *Ducismo* and how the regime used new construction (especially the Foro Mussolini athletic complex) to fix his presence in the urban landscape. Sofia Serenelli traces the transformation of Predappio—Mussolini’s birthplace—from a sleepy provincial backwater to the site of intense political pilgrimage. Giuseppe Finaldi looks at Mussolini’s “imperial incarnation” (147) in North and East Africa; his discussion of Ethiopian collaborators’ elegies to the Duce is especially fascinating. There is also a series of essays on memory and the afterlife

of the Mussolini cult. As Pieri notes, the sheer volume of Fascist material culture means that much of it survived the regime, thanks especially to obsessive (and usually nostalgic) collectors. Fascist visual culture today seems largely depoliticized and unselfconsciously celebrated for its bold innovations—though this aestheticization risks whitewashing a troubling history.

Gundle further elaborates the political and social factors behind contemporary “indulgent” (CD, 253) and nostalgic memories of the Duce and the Fascist era, now recalled as a “simpler, happier time” (CD, 250). As early as 1946, the Italian state issued a general amnesty for those charged with Fascist crimes and ended its (always halfhearted) attempts at political epuration. For the nation’s postwar Christian Democratic leadership, reconciliation and forgetting took precedence over an ideologically inflamed reckoning with the past. Vanessa Roghi’s chapter on representations of Mussolini in postwar Italian television also explores the “reconfiguration of the past” based “not on accurate historical research but rather on sympathetic journalism” (CD, 257). Today, the Duce tends to appear on-screen as a tragic, mythic figure, as much a victim as a perpetrator.

All these chapters are thoughtfully argued and, especially considering their brevity, well-grounded in empirical evidence. As with *Fascist Voices*, the tight focus on Mussolini in *The Cult of the Duce* means that other elements of Fascist culture are often overlooked. While, admittedly, these have been explored in detail elsewhere, it would have been productive to situate the Duce in relation to other ideological expressions like the cults of war, masculinity, and youth. It would also have been interesting to explore further the claim—reiterated in Richard Bosworth’s afterword—that Mussolini served as “a guide to dictatorial nature and behavior” (CD, 274). The cases examined here are exclusively and internally Italian, and there is no meaningful comparative or transnational dimension to the work. A chapter on Hitler’s appropriation of *Ducismo*, or on Mussolini’s resonance for other authoritarian leaders, would have added a fascinating new element to the discussion.

Whereas *Fascist Voices* and *The Cult of the Duce* foreground the intimate relationship between the Duce and the masses, *In the Society of Fascists* (SF) emphasizes the importance of intermediary structures and constituencies. In their introduction, the book’s editors, Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, engage De Felice’s consensus thesis head-on, arguing for a more nuanced approach that explores “the changing and conflicting relations between regime and people[,] . . . the balance between pressure and voluntarism, imposition and contestation, allegiance and evasion, high-flying rhetoric and grubby reality” (SF, 2). Mass organizations and collective mobilization “created new spaces and opportunities” (SF, 14) for participation in the construction of the New Italy. The Fascist project was never unidirectional: Italians not only responded to pressures “from above” but were themselves historical agents who shaped the course of the regime.

This is an ambitious and engaging argument that promises to deepen our understanding of Italy’s place in the story of twentieth-century totalitarianism. However, while often individually worthwhile, the ensuing chapters do not always follow through on the claims made in the introduction. The first two chapters, by Lorenzo Benadusi and by Albanese, respectively, address the role of violence and masculinity in the early years of the Fascist movement. Benadusi argues against the teleological “brutalization” thesis, which contends that the traumas of the First World War acclimatized Italians to political violence; rather, he surveys a wide variety of responses to the war experience, which was only later monopolized and homogenized by the Blackshirts. Conversely, Albanese seems to reassert the brutalization argument, claiming that “the perpetration of violence was . . . an instrument to rally returning soldiers and groups who were no longer accustomed to peace and wanted a continuation of war” (SF, 50). While there is a useful debate to be had here, neither chapter engages the other, and the connection between the two is far from clear.

Many of the subsequent chapters address the relationship between Mussolini's regime and various "fellow travelers." Historians have long recognized Fascism's base of support in the petty bourgeoisie, and Tommaso Baris elucidates this relationship further, drawing a spectrum that runs from passive consent to adherence to active mobilization. He emphasizes the crucial role of mass organizations like Dopolavoro in encouraging "participation in the Fascist totalitarian experiment" (*SF*, 80). Alessio Gagliardi explores the "alliance" or "authoritarian compromise" (*SF*, 111) between Fascism and the business community. Entrepreneurs were enthused by the regime's "disciplining" of class conflict, tended to share its nationalist sentiments, and frequently used Fascist rhetoric when pursuing their own priorities. The goals of government and industry converged over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, and it was not until the regime's final crisis in 1942–43 that oligarchic elites abandoned Mussolini. Eric Gobetti's essay on the occupation of Yugoslavia mines the relationship between the regime and the military leadership in similar fashion. While the two shared affinities and goals, the generals' conservative and monarchist allegiances often clashed with the more ideologically driven dictates of the Foreign Ministry; ultimately, in Yugoslavia Mussolini "entrusted the army to conduct a decidedly nineteenth-century imperialist policy, based on territorial conquest rather than political-economic hegemony" (*SF*, 199). Conversely, in her chapter on the historical profession, Margherita Angelini argues that while scholars did not necessarily express "unconditional acceptance of Fascist mass propaganda," their eagerness to collaborate with regime-driven institutes and initiatives "actively supported the ideology that initially created these bodies and subsequently legitimized their work" (*SF*, 224–25).

For its part, the regime attempted to solidify its grip on society through new agencies and bureaucracies. Matteo Pasetti challenges the conventional view that Fascist corporatism was "nothing more than a bluff, a demagogic smokescreen to mask reactionary policies" (*SF*, 87). While the corporatist state never achieved a wholesale transformation of the Italian economy, he argues, it did succeed in cementing ties between the regime and the nation's industrial leadership. Chiara Giorgi traces the development of Italy's social security system during the Fascist period, emphasizing that the regime's welfare programs must be understood as part of the larger project of consolidating popular support and maintaining social control.

While the aforementioned chapters provide a strong sense of Fascism's institutional intricacies, they provide less of a perspective into how these were experienced by ordinary Italians. There is little here "from below," despite the fact that the editors approvingly cite German *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday history) as a model for exploring the complex relationship between totalitarian states and society. Instead, the focus is very much on social and organizational aggregates or on elite actors (generals, industrialists, historians). The significant exceptions to this characterization are the chapters by Pergher (on the memories of Italian settlers in Libya) and Valeria Galimi (on reactions to the Racial Laws of 1938). In the former, Pergher draws on oral histories to explore colonists' "mixture of active participation . . . and covert resistance, evasion and resilience" (*SF*, 182). While many Italians enthusiastically signed up for the regime's colonial project, in practice they resisted the authorities' efforts to turn Libya into a model Fascist settlement—for example, by trading with the local Arab population, in violation of segregation laws. From this, she concludes—contra many of the other assertions in this volume—that "participation in state programs should not automatically be construed as an indicator of support for the regime" (*SF*, 180). Similarly, Galimi uses police informers' reports to gauge Italians' attitudes toward antisemitic legislation. She emphasizes the complex, often contradictory nature of these responses—sympathy for friends and acquaintances but also reluctance to protest and willingness to enforce discriminatory measures. Like Pergher, Galimi

stresses the “limited utility” (*SF*, 162) of consent in understanding popular opinion under Fascism.

Taken together, these three books contribute much to the scholarship of Mussolini’s Italy and, indeed, complement one another nicely: *Fascist Voices*, with its personal accounts; *The Cult of the Duce*, with its aesthetic analysis; and *In the Society of Fascists*, with its more expansive institutional perspective. While they do not necessarily redefine the terms of debate, they do suggest promising new directions for the field.

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Parallel Histories: Muslims and Jews in Inquisitorial Spain. By *James S. Amelang*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. Pp. xiv+207. \$25.95 (paper).

Parallel Histories tells the story of two important groups in Spanish history: Muslims and Jews. Rather than telling the story of medieval *convivencia*, when these two religions and Christianity lived together in something like uneasy forbearance, James S. Amelang begins on the eve of *convivencia*’s disintegration, in the late fifteenth century. This period was marked by the convert-or-get-out order of expulsion aimed at the Jewish population in 1492, which was quickly followed by similar edicts against Muslims. As a result, much of Amelang’s book discusses Jews and Muslims through the lens of conversion. It pursues the experiences of conversos and Moriscos—respectively, Jews and Muslims who had converted to Christianity and their descendants. The Spanish Inquisition was instituted near the end of the fifteenth century to grapple with the problem of conversos who were believed to be “backsliding” into the practice of Judaism; the Inquisition quickly began persecuting Moriscos as well, for backsliding into Islam, in the sixteenth century. By bringing the Inquisition into his book’s title, Amelang signals that Old Christians and their varied reactions to the Jewish, Muslim, converso, and Morisco populations in their midst are crucial to these histories.

Parallel Histories is arranged in a parallel structure: it consists of two sections, each dedicated to one of the titular subjects. The two sections comprise seventeen brief chapters in toto with a joint epilogue in which the parallel case studies are brought together for collective consideration. The chapters provide careful examination of converso and Morisco history on a multiplicity of levels: belief and practice, the problem of assimilation, construction of identities, cultural creativity, and the experience of exile, among others. The parallel structure is particularly effective because it enables the author to avoid eliding differences. Rather than being lumped together in an undifferentiated mass of “Otherness” by Old Christians, the experiences of conversos and Moriscos remain distinct, the unique trajectory of each shaped by a specific series of historical circumstances.

The first section of the book traces the experiences of Spanish Muslims following the conquest of Granada in 1492. The forced conversions that took place in the early sixteenth century were followed by efforts by the monarchy to erase all vestiges of Islamic culture in order to compel cultural as well as religious assimilation. Catholic and secular authorities evinced great skepticism about the genuine conversion of the Morisco population and lamented the failure of the Moriscos to assimilate. This section further traces anti-Islamic attitudes in early modern Spain and patterns of coexistence between Morisco and old Christian populations, ending with the eventual expulsion of the Morisco community beginning in 1609.