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Interpreting Fascism/Explaining Ritual

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Fascism as Political Idea

Defining the Undefinable

Parsimony eludes past and current exegeses of fascism. Attempts to theorize fascism have mined specific historical instances for generalities and yielded catalogs of characteristics.[1] Even a cursory reading of this scholarship suggests that it is impossible to generalize across cases and leaves the impression that Benedetto Croce was correct when he described fascism as a "parenthesis" in European history. Yet an analysis of the process of Italian fascist identity creation demands a conceptualization of fascism, no matter how provisional, as political idea.

Existing studies of fascism fall into two schools. The first tries to answer the "what," or definitional question. Frequently, this is articulated in a discussion of whether or not fascism is a "generic" concept or a national variation of historically specific political instances. Of those who try to define fascism, the central theme is the impossibility of definition. For example, fascism is the "vaguest of political terms"; and "a general theory of fascism must be no more than a hypothesis which fits most of the facts."[2] The second approach bypasses definition and tries to establish the characteristics of regimes and constituencies.[3]

Seymour Martin Upset's classic account of the class composition of fascist movements attributes fascism's success to the political disaffection of the middle classes. Juan Linz's approach to constituency formation starts from the premise that an independent "phenomenon" of fascism existed, defined as a "hyper-nationalist, often pan-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical, or at least, non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always equally emphasized: with a distinctive style and rhetoric, it relied on activist cadres ready for violent action combined with electoral participation to gain power with totalitarian goals by a combination of legal and violent tactics."[4]

Linz's definition rests on his assumption that fascism occupies a residual political field. As a latecomer to the political scene, fascism had to capture whatever "political space," in the form of ideological doctrine and political constituencies, was available to it. His argument is dependent on an analysis of the social bases of fascism's political competitors.[5] Linz recognizes the importance of national case studies, and the characteristics he outlines are applicable in various combinations to a broad range of fascist movements and regimes. In general, studies of institutions and constituencies display greater analytic precision than those that wrestle with definition.

Historian Gilbert Allardyce's frequently cited, and somewhat strident, analysis, published in 1979, appeared to have closed the question of "generic" fascism. Allardyce asserts that fascism had no meaning outside Italy and that it was neither an ideology nor a mental category. Comparing fascism to romanticism (and curiously obtuse about fascism's other ideological kin – modernism), he states that both terms "mean virtually nothing." Re-signed to the fact that "fascism [as a political term] is probably with us for good," Allardyce maintains that the proper analytic task is to "limit the damage"; he concludes: "Placing it [fascism] within historical boundaries at least provides a measure of control, restricting the proliferation of the word in all directions, past and present, and preventing it from distorting political rhetoric in our own time. Fascism must become a foreign word again, un-translatable outside a limited period in history."[6]

Fascism refuses to go away. Its death knell has not sounded cither in the real world of political practice or in the relatively cloistered world of academic discourse. Recent scholarship signals a resurgence of interest in fascism and conservative ideology.[7] Much of it appears similar to its predecessors. For example, Roger

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[1] The literature on fascism written roughly between 1945 and 1976 is as voluminous as it is inconclusive. My discussion is highly selective and makes no claim to completeness. *Fascism: A Reader's Guide,* ed. Walter Laqueur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), and Stanley G. Payne. *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), provide useful introductions to that literature.

[2] Payne, *Fascism,* 4-5; George L. Mosse, "Towards a General Theory of Fascism," in *International Fascism,* ed. George L. Mosse (London: Sage, 1979), I.

[3] Again, the literature is vast. Alberto Aquarone's study of the Italian fascist regime, *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario* (rpt., Turin: Einaudi, 1974), and Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship,* trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), serve as examples of the first category; in the second, see Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (rpt., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 87-179, and Gino Germani, "Fascism and Class," in *The Nature of Fascism,* ed. Stuart J. Woolf (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 65-95.

[4] Juan J. Linz, "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide,* ed. Laqueur, 12-13.

[5] Juan J. Linz, "Political Space and Fascism as a Latecomer," in *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism,* ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), 153-89.

[6] Gilbert Allardyce, "What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *American Historical Review* 84 (1979), 388.

[7] See, for example, Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology,* trans. David Maisel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), and Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: *St.* Martin's Press, 1991).

Griffin argues that the term "fascism" has undergone an "unacceptable loss of precision." He proposes a new "ideal type" of fascism based on the following definition: "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."[8] A revival of the "social interpretations" of fascism, particularly nazism, has also occurred.[9] Heirs of Lip-set's mode of analysis, these studies are less deterministic and grounded in a more nuanced notion of class and political action.

A central weakness in much of the writing on fascism, past and present, has been a failure to draw a sharp distinction between fascist movements and regime action, between fascism as ideology and fascism as state, between political impulse and political institution. In general, analysts elide the question of culture and ideology or simply deal with it in a descriptive manner. The forces that enable a political movement to assume state power are different from, but not unconnected to, the forces that define a new regime. During the 1920s and 1930s, virtually every country in Europe had a fascist movement, or a political movement that displayed the characteristics of the fascist impulse, but relatively few of them progressed to political regimes, that is, took control of the state.[10] Culture and ideology figure differently at both stages. In the movement phase, they act as powerful mobilizing devices that frame the political beliefs of committed cadres of supporters.[11] In the regime phase, they serve as conversion mechanisms to ensure the consent of a broad public constituency. This book focuses on the latter while not denying the importance of the former.

Totalitarian states are not necessary outcomes, and as my analysis suggests, they are as much fascist fictions as political realities. Mussolini declared that his regime was the first totalitarian state; and although recent historiography has shown that the fascist cultural project was highly fissured, the intention of, if not the reality of, coherence was a goal.[12] Hannah Arendt built terror into the definition of totalitarianism.[13] Her quasi-psychoanalytic approach to fascism, which paints a portrait of mass societies, mobs, and atomized individuals responding to the congeries of a police state, evokes the neo-nazis of Vicenza and the images of an Orwellian *1984*. Terror and violence as analytic frames may capture the political realities of Stalinist Russia and Holocaust horrors, but terror did not represent the quotidian experience of Italian fascism and distracts from historical and theoretical understanding.

In contrast to Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, the Italian fascist regime was relatively nonrepressive. Prominent socialist intellectuals did not farewell. Between 1922 and 1943, the regime banned politically dissenting groups and subjected the Italian population to an elaborate apparatus of social and cultural control administered by a state bureaucracy. Yet comparative reading of the historical evidence suggests that the social, economic, and even cultural practices of fascist Italy were not terribly different from those of other state bureaucracies during the 1920s and 1930s.[14]

Any pretext at democratic government was abandoned after the plebiscite of 1929. The regime instituted its racial laws in 1938 as a result of its alliance with Nazi Germany. Nonetheless, Italy for much of this period was a refuge for Jews fleeing nazism from other European countries. When the war started and the regime fell, the puppet government at Salo became extremely repressive. But the period of the Nazi occupation of Italy is a separate story from the one offered here.[15]

Scholars have argued that it should be possible to establish a "fascist mini-mum," by which they mean a set of criteria without which fascism could not exist.[16] Yet they have been reluctant to ascribe greater or lesser degrees of importance to the variables they view as characteristic of fascism. I believe a fuller understanding of the "old" fascism emerges when we analyze the cultural features of democracy that it rejected. Italian fascism was anti-socialist and anticlerical, despite its conciliation with the Catholic Church, but above all it was anti-liberal as liberalism was understood in early-twentieth-century Italy. The rejection of liberalism in Italy was deeper than a

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[8] Griffin, *Nature of Fascism, 26.*

[9] See Peter Baldwin, "Social Interpretations of Nazism: Renewing a Tradition," *Journal o Contemporary History* 25 (1990), 5-37; Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and the collection of essays in *Splintered Classes,* ed. Rudy Koshar (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990).

[10] For a summary of these movements, see Peter H. Merkl, "Comparing Fascist Movements," in *Who Were the Fascists,* ed. Larsen, 752-83.

[11] Recent developments in social movement theory that take the role of culture into account are useful for analyzing fascist movements. For a summary, sec Sidney Tarrow, "Mentalities, Political Cultures, and Collective Action Frames," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory,* ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 174-202, and Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 118-34.

[12] For accounts of die malleability of the regime's policies, see Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992);Mabel Berezin, "The Organization of Political Ideology: Culture, State, and Theater in Fascist Italy," *American Sociological Review* 56 (1991), 639-51; Gabriele Turi, *Casa Einaudi*(Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990); and Alexander De Grand, "Cracks in the Facade: The Failure of Fascist Totalitarianism in Italy, 1935-39," *European History Quarterly* 21 (1991), 515-35.

[13] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973) esp. 460-79.

[14] See Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[15] Interpretations of this period are highly contested among Italian historians. For a recent account, see Claudio Pavone, *Una Guerra civile* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991).

[16] Payne, *Fascism,* 196, citing De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism.*

rejection of the failures of the Giolitti regime.[17] A revision of previous discussions of fascism, and Italian fascism as a historical case, in light of the rejection of liberalism, suggests new and less restricting ways to think about fascism, by whatever name one chooses to call it.

The Rejection of Liberalism

Discussions of Marxism have confounded discussions of fascism. Simply positing that fascism is not Marxism, or is a form of "anti-Marxism," fails to address salient features of both ideologies.[18] Many fascists, including Mussolini himself, began their political careers as socialists. Few fascists (I cannot identify one) began their careers as liberals, and few liberals converted to fascism. What were the differences and points of confluence between fascism and Marxism which made the transition from one to the other possible?

The beginning of an answer lies in Zeev Sternhell's analysis of fascism as an "independent cultural and political phenomenon" representing a *"revision"* of Marxism. According to Sternhell, fascism was a political hybrid that rejected, first, the liberal ideals of rationalism, individualism, and utilitarianism, and second, the materialistic dimensions of Marxism. From Marxism, fascism borrowed a concept of communitarianism embodied in a new form of revolutionary syndicalism; and from liberalism, it borrowed a commitment to free markets.[19] Sternhell's contention that market economies are compatible with fascist ideology and regimes forecloses purely economic interpretations of fascism.[20] Sternhell's analysis lends support to the importance I ascribe to fascism's disavowal of liberal political culture, but it is too dependent on the writings of national, and sometimes obscure, avant-garde intellectuals to serve as a fulcrum for generating new theories of fascism.

Stephen Holmes's critique of nonmarxist communitarianism as a form of "anti-liberalism" is most congruent with the arguments I advance. Marxism is a form of communitarianism whose commitment to science identifies it as an Enlightenment ideology distinct from fascism. "Anti-liberalism" is a third form of modern political ideology which Holmes explicitly, although guardedly, relates to fascism. Anti-liberalism is a "mind-set" that Holmes identifies by what it is against: "individualism, rationalism, humanitarianism, rootlessness, permissiveness, universalism, materialism, skepticism, and cosmopolitanism." Anti-liberals long for the restoration of lost community, which liberalism destroys in the name of Enlightenment claims to science.[21]

Liberalism as political ideal was a product of the French Revolution's call for "personal security," "individual liberty," and "democracy." "Equality," the fourth feature of liberalism, was not a fundamental concern of its initial exponents. Holmes distinguishes liberalism as ideal from liberalism as political institution. Individualism and freedom are the liberal cultural ideals that democratic states institutionalize. According to Holmes, anti-liberals equate the failures of the democratic state with the failures of liberalism.[22]

Holmes is concerned principally with contemporary anti-liberals, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Roberto Unger, whom he is careful not to label fascists. He traces the roots of anti-liberalism to the eighteenth century and explicitly draws a connection between contemporary theorists and fascist intellectuals such as Giovanni Gentile.[23] Holmes's conception of anti-liberalism has greater theoretical cogency as a framing device than theories of fascism that are wed to early-twentieth-century Europe. His concept is transcultural and transhistorical. First, Holmes identifies anti-liberal communitarian ideology in diverse cultural and historical milieus from eighteenth-century France to the contemporary United States. Second, he posits no necessary connection between the form of state or political movement that follows this ideological persuasion. Among the authors he analyzes, Carl Schmitt became an architect of Nazi legal theory, Alasdair MacIntyre has become the cultural icon of groups seeking to revitalize American democracy, and Leo Straus has remained an esoteric figure known principally within the academy. History and culture, as well as

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[17] Roberto Vivarelli, *Il Fullimento del Liberalismo: Studi sulle origini del Fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981), attributes the rise of Italian fascism to the failure of liberalism. In this respect his argument is congruent with mine; he locates his analysis in the economic dimensions of Italian society, however, whereas I focus on the cultural climate. According to Vivarelli, Italy in 1922 was an agrarian society with a quasi-literate populace that did not generate the economic resources and social capital conducive to liberal government (see 33-36).

[18] Ernst Nolte's controversial interpretation of fascism as a "meta-political phenomenon" that manifests a "resistance to transcendence" begins as a form of "Anti-Marxism." "Transcendence" has a theoretical and practical dimension that, despite the highly abstract philosophical language, suggests an affirmation of the cultural dimensions of liberalism. "Theoretical transcendence" implies a capacity to imagine a world outside the local or the particular, a world outside the self; "practical transcendence" represents an ability to engage in multiple social relations or intersect with diverse networks. Transcendence is an overly abstract way of talking of universalism and impartiality, the core of liberal values and the hallmark of the democratic state *(Three Faces of Fascism,* trans. Leila Vannewitz [New York: New American Library, 1969], 537, 542).

[19] Sternhell, *Birth of Fascist Ideology*, 4-5, 7.

[20] Marxist scholarship has been the principal source of economic interpretations of fascism. For an empirical study of structures of production under fascism and nazism written from a neo-liberal perspective, see Charles S. Maier, "The Economics of Fascism and Nazism," in *In Search of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 70-120.

[21] Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 4-6.

[22] Holmes is writing a defense of liberalism and takes the position that the failure of the democratic state is not sufficient justification for the rejection of liberalism as a political ideal.

[23] Holmes, *Anatomy of Antiliberalism,* xii-xiii, 9.

opportunity for political engagement, have circumscribed, and circumscribe, the practical influence of these thinkers.

Liberalism, as ideal and political organization, institutionalized the central cultural chasm of modernity – the fractionalization of individual and collective identities into public and private selves.[24] Identity is an issue of modernity that is connected to an ideological conception of individualism. Individualism as well as fascism, to invoke my earlier reference to Vivarelli, "speaks Italian." Jacob Burckhardt suggested the modernity of individualism and dated it to the Italian Renaissance: "at the close of the thirteenth century Italy began to swarm with individuality."[25] From our vantage point, in which the Enlightenment division of subject and object is under scrutiny, Burckhart's observation is contestable. Nevertheless, it was a given of two hundred years of intellectual history and is the Archimedean point of eighteenth-century philosophy.

Liberalism incorporates a multiplicity of identities – political, social, national, gender; the list is potentially endless and subject to ever greater refinements. Public and private as a broad categorization schema captures all possible identities. As an analytic frame, it has an intellectual history that usually incorporates a discussion of the differences among the state, civil society, and the market. I advocate a slightly less conventional use of this distinction as a convenient shorthand for what we term private or "ordinary" life – family, gender, love, religion, arenas of deeply felt identities that are beyond the purview of the liberal democratic state.[26]

Democratic contractualism, which upholds the integrity of individualism and multiple identities, sometimes has a political effect that diverges from its theoretical intent. In his discussion of totalitarianism, Claude Lefort suggests the alienating potential of democracy when he notes, "Number breaks down unity, destroys identity." He locates the weakness of democracy in its desacralization of politics represented in its rejection of a sacred center, which the monarchy symbolizes in pre-liberal forms of government. Democracy leaves an empty symbolic space that totalitarian forms might fill: Democracy inaugurates the experience of an ungraspable, uncontrollable society in which the people will be said to be sovereign, of course, but whose identity will constantly be open to question, whose identity will remain latent."[27] Lefort's analysis suggests that the split between public and private self is the historical exception rather than the historical norm, a split that became structurally tenable in the caesura known as modernity. It is precisely this aspect of liberal democracy that communitarians reject, and it is the void that fascism attempts to fill when it repudiates the liberal democratic state.[28]

Italian fascism's rejection of the liberal bifurcation of identity made it similar to other forms of pre-Enlightenment social and political organization such as aristocracies and tribes. Fascism departed from older organizational forms in its attempt to re-create a public/private version of the self in the political arena, or the fascist community of the state. A. James Gregor argues, "Fascism as an ideology was a far more complex and systematic intellectual product than many of its antagonists (and many of its protagonists as well) have been prepared to admit."[29] According to Gregor, Giovanni Gen-tile, the Italian philosophy professor who was Mussolini's first minister of education and general cultural adviser, was the intellectual architect of the new "third way." Gentile's collected works fill many volumes, but the salient point of his political analysis was that the fascist citizen found his or her self in the community of the state.[30] Gentile's own words best capture the spirit of this argument: "The State is itself a personality, it has a will, because it knows its aims, it has a consciousness of itself, a certain thought, a certain program, it has a concept which signifies history, tradition, the universal life of the Nation, which the State organizes, guarantees, and realizes."[31]

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[24] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT, 1989) contains the paradigmatic statement of the genesis of the separation between the public and private and its relation to liberal democracy currently prevailing in social science discourse.

[25] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, vol. I (New York: Harper, 1958), 143.

[26] "Public/private" is a term used with more frequency than precision. Much of the cur-rent thinking on it derives, as previously mentioned, from Habermas, *Structural Transformation.* See for example, Margaret R. Somers, "What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? Toward an Historical Sociology of Concept Formation *Sociological Theory* 13 (1995), 115-43, and the essays in *Habermas and the Public* Sphere, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). But the distinction also has roots in legal and feminist theory. For one early example among many, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). For an overview of recent uses of the term, see Jeff Weintraub, "Varieties and Vicissitudes of Public Space," in *Metropolis,* ed. Philip Kasinitz (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 280-319, and Jeff Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction" in legal *and Private Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy,* ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a discussion that delves into the personal and comes closest to my sense of the distinction, see John Brewer "This, That and the Other: Public, Social, and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Shifting the Boundaries-Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private inthe Eighteenth Century,* ed. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter

[27] Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modem Society*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cam-bridge: MIT Press, 1986), 303-4.

[28] On the relative novelty and cultural particularity of democracy, see Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 16-26.

[29] A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 26.

[30] Ibid., 216.

[31] "L'organizzazione scientifica dello stato e l'istituto di finanza," in Giovanni Gentile, *Politica e cultura,* ed. Herve A. Cavallera, vol. 2 (Florence: Le Lettere, 1991), 86.

Gentile's conception of the "ethical" state represents an inverted Hegelianism that links, as it confounds, fascism and Marxism. Historian George Mosse notes, "At the turn of the century, the radical left and the radical right were apt to demand control of the whole man and not just a political piece of him."[32] A belief in community unites fascism and Marxism; a commitment to an Enlightenment vision of science unites liberalism and Marx-ism. Fascism rejected the social, cultural, and political dimensions of modernity while accepting its economic and technological features.[33] Anti-liberalism offers the most parsimonious theoretical frame in which to analyze the broad cultural issues that fascism as ideology poses.

Community, public/private self, identity, and citizenship are commonly invoked to discuss democratic practice but rarely to discuss fascism. I argue that the terminology of liberalism can be fruitfully employed to understand fascism as political ideal. Applying these terms to fascism as ideal and institution opens the black box of endless categorization and provides conceptual tools for making sense of what otherwise appears an inchoate mass of contradictory ideas and actions.

The Political Construction of Identity

Self and Culture

Identity and cultural meanings are intimately connected. Part of the cultural understanding of the self, identity is central to the participation in meaningful patterns of social action. We all have identities, no matter how narrowly construed, from the moment the infant realizes that a world apart from itself exists. Self and other, subject and object – the recognition of difference begins from earliest life. The self, embodied in the person, is neither wholly constructed nor wholly essential. Both these notions are under scrutiny today, but for purposes of this analysis I assume the idea of a self.[34]

Psychological theories of identity focus on individuals. Social theories of identity focus on the formal matrix of relations, or networks, in which individuals are enmeshed. Social identities are first steps to political identities and are customarily prior to political identities. In contrast to liberalism, which holds these identities separate, fascism tries to reverse or obliterate the boundaries between the two. Who we are, how we define and conceive of ourselves, how we recognize others who are one of us and who are not are connected to how we construct ourselves in public and private space.

[32] "Towards a General Theory of Fascism," 4.

[33] It is a truism that Italian fascists were attracted to technology. There is no study of Italy similar to Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For a comparative analysis of futurism, fascism, and technology, see Charles S. Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s,"*Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970), 27-61.

[34] For social science theories of selfhood, see the collection of essays in *The Category of the Person,* ed. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Political theorists tend to conceptualize identity in terms of difference. Anne Norton begins an essay on political identity with the aphoristic statement, "Meaning is made out of difference."[35] William Connolly maintains that "an identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity." Difference, as Connolly argues, implies "otherness" – a word that has distinctly negative connotations. Modern identities have a tendency to assume an essential and rigid character that appears as truth: "The maintenance of one identity (or field of identities) involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates. Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into other-ness in order to secure its own self-certainty."[36] Difference is a useful concept if one wishes to focus on groups that have been excluded from the polity because of constructed otherness. It is less useful if one wishes to understand the process of collective identity formation on which any political identity ultimately turns. Difference, as an analytic category, can be as rigid as the "truths" it legitimates.

Identity is an inescapable dimension of social life. Even Connolly admits that "each individual needs an identity; every stable way of life invokes claims to collective identity."[37] Identity may also be conceived in terms of similarities, or the communities of selves toward which individuals orient at their actions. The social construction of identities involves the specification of a web of social relations or communities which envelop the self and through which individuals feel themselves identical with others.[38] Theories of identity tend to share a focus on language and narrative as communicative vehicles of identity. Common language is the dimension of identity providing the discursive cues that direct likeminded subjects to each other.[39]

The philosopher Charles Taylor's nuanced definition of identity that includes conceptions of ethics and community is a useful starting point for an analysis of the political construction of identity.[40] Taylor argues: "To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to

[35] Anne Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 3.

[36] William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 64.

[37] Ibid., 158.

[38] Much of the current sociological discussion of identity has been carried out at the level of theory and not empirical analysis. For example, see the essays in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[39] See Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 13 (1994), 605-49.

[40] For a discussion of the utility of Taylor to sociological analysis, see Craig Calhoun," Morality, Identity, and Historical Explanation: Charles Taylor on the Sources of the Self," *Sociological Theory* 9 (Fall 1991), 232-63.

case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand." "Horizon" suggests an ethos that guides behavior, but it is not sufficient to structure identities or selves, "One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it." Identity without community is incomplete: "The full definition of someone's identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to defining community."[41] If we put aside the ethical component of Taylor's theory, an admittedly large putting aside, his conception of identity provides a theoretical entry to the fascist project.

Hierarchies of Identity

Social, political, and economic institutions, the organizational forms of modern community, serve as arenas of identity. Institutions organize identities.[42] A matrix of identities exist that may be categorized as public and private. Public identities principally include citizenship and work identities that are institutionally buttressed by the legal organizations of the modern nation-state and the market. These identities are based on a conception of interest and rationality. Private identities originate in their purist forms as biology or kinship relations. Whether or not we acknowledge the social ties of kinship, by virtue of our existence we are mothers, fathers, sons, daughters. Family, whether absent or present, provides the institutional supports for our biological roles. Kinship identities have never escaped the legal system; for example, the law defines the parameters of marriage and inheritance. Nature, and not interest, structures these identities.

But there are other forms of identities that are more fluid and not as easily located on a public/private continuum. Cultural identities – religious, national, regional, and ethnic – may be either public or private, depending on the political regime. Liberalism tends to legislate religious, regional, and ethnic identities out of the public sphere and to invoke selectively the affective dimensions of nationalism to support the nation-state.[43] All these identities are based on meanings – of religious practice, homeland, and race – and they generate powerful public emotions and militancy.

[41] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 17, 35, 36.

[42] For a discussion of how institutions create meaning, see James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 39-51; and Roger Friedlandand Robert R. Alford, "Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis,* ed. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), esp. 147-56.

[43] There is a burgeoning literature on nationalism. E. J. Hobsbawm's discussion linking it to the development of the nation-state is most congruous to the issues I am raising *(Nations and Nationalism since 1780* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 14-45).

Identities are neither essential nor purely constructed; they are multiple but not schizophrenic.[44] Individuals relate to and derive meaning from many communities of similar selves. This does not imply, however, that all identities carry equal meaning to those who participate in them. Many identities are, in Connolly's terminology, "contingent."[45] These identities are circumstantial and more or less given at will. Some identities are more vulnerable to contingency than others. For example, one's vision of oneself as politically engaged may have more to do with structural opportunity or immediate grievances than with any long-term commitment to social or political change. Similarly, certain private identities such as marital status or sexual orientation may likewise be subject to opportunity and interest as well as social reinforcement.

Identities belong to a category of objects Taylor has described as "hyper-goods," by which he means objects that are of relatively more value to us than others.

> Even those of us who are not committed in so single-minded a way recognize higher goods. That is, we acknowledge second-order qualitative distinctions which define higher goods, on the basis of which we discriminate among other goods, attribute differential worth or importance to them, or determine when and if to follow them. Let me call higher-order goods of this kind "hypergoods," i.e., goods which not only are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about."[46]

Identities are felt as hierarchies. There are some identities that we value more than others, that we experience as "hypergoods," and some we experience as essentially "contingent." The felt force of some identities is so potent that we might be willing to die for them. It is those identities that generate powerful emotions carrying political importance. Religious, national, and ethnic identities frequently fall into this category.

States and Identity

Political identities tread a difficult line because they require of their partisans a feeling that something exists outside the private self – the party, the state – that is worth dying for. War making, as Charles Tilly has argued, maybe a major activity of the modern state, but conscription alone does not create soldiers.[47] The modern nation-state is the ideal type of modern political organization and a vehicle of mass political commitment. "Nation-state" is a dual concept, and a discussion of state and identity formation, in either liberal democratic or totalitarian states, requires that we uncouple this dyad. The "state" part is in the business of rule and focuses on bureaucratic efficiency and

[44] Craig Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 9-36.

[45] Connolly, *Identity\Difference,* 173.

[46] Taylor, Sources of the Self, 63.

[47] See Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In,* ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Reuschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-87.

territorial claims;[48] the "nation" part is in the business of creating emotional attachment to the state, or noncontingent identities.

To borrow Benedict Anderson's familiar formulation, the modern nation-state is an "imagined community" that creates a spirit of "fraternity" that makes it possible … for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings." A principal goal of the nation-side of the equation is to create a feeling of "attachment" to the state in the form of "love for the nation." The "nature" of "political love"

> can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *Vaterland, patria*) or that of home *(heimat* . . .). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied. As we have seen earlier, in everything "natural" there is always something unchosen. In this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era – all those things one cannot help. And in these "natural ties" one senses what one might call the "beauty of *gemeinschaft*.[49]

The nation side of the nation-state dyad, though it appears to be the product of natural emotions, is highly constructed. The success of individual nineteenth-century nation-state projects lies in the strength of constructed emotion, and some were more successful than others. France is the paradigmatic case. As Lynn Hunt has shown, a repertoire of political inventions, symbolic practices, and images constituted the culture of the French Revolution; it was not until the nineteenth century that "peasants" became "Frenchmen" and the process of creating a modern French political identity tied to a nation-state was complete.[50]

Historical and theoretical accounts demonstrate that nineteenth-century nation-states did not just come together as a result of the elective affinity of compatriots. They were forged from wars, the reorganization of cultural institutions (principally education), and the standardization of language. National cultures were made at the expense of local and regional cultures. Though it is impossible to have any form of modern political organization without either a state or a nation, it is possible to have a nation without a state, or a state without a nation. The Arab-Israeli conflict may be construed as a problem of nations without states; the former Eastern European bloc countries and Soviet Union fall into the category of states without nations, which suggests why these states crumbled with the Berlin Wall.

[48] Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1978).

[49] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 7, 141, 143.

[50] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), and Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

The uncoupling of nation and state forces a reexamination of the concept of totalitarian states. If states are simply the organizational and technological side of the nation-state dyad, then states may be conceived of as relatively neutral formal entities. Nation, in contrast, is a highly specific cultural construct tied to historical context. The nation side of the dyad introduces variance to the concept of state.

Standard definitions of totalitarian states do not make these distinctions. For example, Linz summarizes the characteristics of a totalitarian state as (1) a monolithic center of power, (2) an exclusive ideology to which all must subscribe, and (3) mandatory citizen participation in the form of active and continued mobilization. He distinguishes between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes based on the instrumental versus expressive character of the state. He places Nazi Germany in the former category and fascist Italy in the latter.[51] What is lacking in Linz's formulation is any discussion of the etiology of the totalitarian state form.

If we accept historical accounts which suggest that nation-states are end products of a political process that bears greater resemblance to arranged marriage than to spontaneous coupling, we can think of totalitarian states as states without nations or states where the failure or weakness of the nation-state process has demanded a "hypernationalization" project. If we conceptualize fascism as a political ideal that denies the separation of the public and private self, then we can think of totalitarian states as the organizational form of that destroyed boundary. To the extent that all nation-states need to create citizens who will sacrifice some parts of their private selves to the state, whether their income in taxes or their bodies in war, then the terms "totalitarian" and "liberal-democratic" as demarcations of state forms start to appear as only differences of degree.

Totalitarian and democratic as nominal categories have limited capacity to elucidate the process of state identity formation, which requires a conception of agency. Colonialism, which evokes a strong nation-state's imposing of its identity on weakly bounded territorial groups or nations of lesser stature, provides a better approximation of the political processes involved in the Italian fascist project than the rubric of totalitarian/democratic. Timothy Mitchell's discussion of political identity captures the "normal" division between the public and private self. Mitchell argues:

> Political identity, therefore, never exists in the form of an absolute, interior self or community, but always an already-divided relation of self/other. Political identity . . . is no more singular or absolute than the identity of words in a system of writing. Just as the particularity of words . . . is merely an effect of the differences that give rise to language, so difference gives rise to political identity and existence. There are no political "units," no atomistic, undivided selves;

[51] Juan J. Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes," in *Handbook of Political Science,* ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Palsy, vol. 3 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 191-92, 275

only relations or forces of difference, out of which identities are formed as something always self-divided and contingent.[52]

Mitchell's analysis, influenced by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, would, carried to its logical conclusion, posit no difference between identity formation in a totalitarian state or in a democratic state. His analysis shifts when he takes up the issue of colonialism, however, and becomes congruent with my arguments about the Italian fascist project. According to Mitchell, colonialism affects identity by destroying the split between self and other, public and private: "Identity [under colonialism] now appears no longer self-divided, no longer contingent, no longer something arranged out of differences; it appears instead as something self-formed, and original."[53] The colonial or fascist state represents a noncontingent undivided form of identity.

Citizenship is the legal vehicle that codifies and solidifies national political identities. Citizenship, whether one accepts T. H. Marshall's definition of it as an attribute of persons living in a nation-state, or revisionist theories that view it as a boundary-making device or relational process, is minimally the mechanism that makes individuals feel as though they participate in the state.[54] Regimes, the constellation of political actors controlling the state at given historical moments, frequently resort to symbolic politics to orchestrate the affective dimension of citizenship. All regimes from democratic to totalitarian employ some form of symbolic politics. In democratic states, symbolic politics, practices, and objects are expressive entities that temporarily objectify the state; in totalitarian or fascist states, symbolic politics, particularly ritual actions, attempt to obliterate the distinction between self and other.

There is no necessary connection between the retreat to symbolic politics and its effects. The state fiction of totalitarianism should not be confused with the reality of totalitarianism. Representation captures the tension between fiction and reality. In Mitchell's analysis of colonial Egypt, colonialism by its existence defines reality – the world is the "exhibition."[55] Norton discusses representation:

> A representation preserves things in their absence. The representation – or the representative – presents something prior to itself. Each act of representation is a re-presentation, a presentation of something that has appeared before. It is repetitive. Yet each representation, occurring in a different con-text, attaches additional associations to the act or individual that is recalled, and disguises the significance of once-meaningful attributes. Thus representation shows itself to be at once endlessly repetitive and ever changing.[56]

My approach to representation borrows from, and significantly departs from, what might be loosely defined as postmodern approaches to the study of politics. What Mitchell and Norton are elaborating is the polysemic nature of representation or "exhibition." My analysis follows this feature of the postmodern approach. Where it departs is that I argue that, unlike Gertrude Stein's characterization of Oakland, there is a there, there – even if it is not always clear of what it consists. Returning to Norton, I contend, first, what is preserved in absence is by no means certain, and second, the meaning of the representation is reinvented with its repetition. Representations of ideological power do not equal realities of power.

Fascism as a political ideology and cultural program appears less protean if one redefines it as the fusion of the public and private self in the state. My redefinition suggests a rationale for the regime's reliance on public political rituals – the desire to create a new form of political community. The Italian fascist regime attempted to create a fascist political identity by merging the public/private self in public political rituals, or to create temporary communities of feeling in the public piazza in the absence of the democratic contractualism in the state. We now turn to those rituals.

Communities of Feeling and the Politics of Emotion

Nation-states may be imagined and felt as community, but the feelings and imaginings of national belonging are evanescent without an underlying structure of cultural institutions and symbolic practices. National languages and education systems as well as museums, monuments, and national anthems serve to keep the spirit of national belonging alive.

States, such as fascist Italy, that are engaged in what I have labeled "hypernationalization" projects need to institute immediate and drastic measures to foster feelings of national incorporation. The public political spectacle was the dramatic enactment of fascist community and the expressive crucible in which fascist identity was forged. Italian men and women did not become fascist in the public piazza. They became fascist to the extent that they assumed a fascist identity in the schools, Fascist Party organizations, and labor corporations. The public spectacle was an arena of political emotion, a community of feeling, in which Italians of all ages were meant to feel themselves as fascists.

Emotion is central to the politics of spectacle. Emotion obliterates identity. It fuses self and other – subject and object. The experience of public political spectacle is analogous to the experience of music, a comparison fascist functionaries did not hesitate to make. Music, in the words of Susanne Langer, is the "tonal analogue of

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[52] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 167.

[53] Ibid.

[54] T. H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," in *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall,* intro. Seymour Martin Lipset (rpt., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 71-134; Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Margaret R. Somers, "Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy," *American Sociological Review*58 (October 1993), 587-620.

[55] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt,* 7-15.

[56] Norton, *Reflections,* 97.

emotive life." Music is a highly articulate language without vocabulary.[57] Like music, emotion has a cognitive dimension.

As Clifford Geertz argues in his discussion of the Balinese cockfight, ritual display can serve as a kind of "sentimental education" in its use of "emotion" for "cognitive ends": "What the cockfight says it says in a vocabulary of sentiment – the thrill of risk, the despair of loss, the pleasure of triumph. Yet what it says is not merely that risk is exciting, loss depressing, or triumph gratifying, banal tautologies of affect, but that it is of these emotions, thus exampled, that society is built and individuals are put together."[58] Geertz's analysis, while pointing to the cognitive ends of emotion, is too close-ended as to ritual outcome. Ritual, by acting out emotion, includes indeterminacy.

Political ritual creates a "liminal" space in which new identities may form.[59] Emotion may obliterate the old self, but there is no guarantee as to what form the new self or identity might assume. The fascist "communities of feeling" aimed to create fascist community and fascist identity. "Community of feeling" is my adaptation of Raymond Williams's concept of "structure of feeling." According to Williams, "structures of feeling" are "social experiences *in solution*." In his attempt to articulate the nondiscursive elements of aesthetic emotion, Williams contrasts "feeling" with discursive elements such as "world-view" and "ideology," which are linguistic and textual in their import. His analysis diverges from Geertz's in that it suggests the indeterminacy of emotional politics: "We are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences."[60]

Scholars acknowledge the emotional dimension of fascist political practice and dismiss it as yet another feature of the politics of irrationality. Emotion as the basis of politics was not new. Emotion is the antithesis of modern political organization except when it is rigidly codified in the nation side of the nation-state dyad. Emotion is nonrational, but it is not irrational and it is intimately connected to the Italian fascist rejection of liberalism – the essence of political rationality.

Italian fascism rejected discursive prose or linearity. It repudiated the word and the text. Argumentation, explanation, the scientific method were all aspects of modernity and rational discourse that fascism replaced with the primacy of feeling and emotion.[61] The fascist emphasis on feeling and emotion was a celebration of the nonrational, not the irrational, since fascist feelings aimed to communicate belonging and solidarity. The distinction Karl Mannheim makes between conservatism and liberalism is instructive regarding this point.[62] He discusses conservatism as valorizing the "qualitative" and the experiential and liberalism as valorizing the "quantitative" or cognitive dimensions of social life. According to Mannheim, "quantitative" encompasses a range of liberal values such as social equality and the belief in norms as a guide to action, whereas "qualitative" espouses the primacy of being or essences and a view of events as end points of the past. Although Mannheim's primary focus is Germany, his arguments are applicable to the distinctions I am drawing in the Italian case.

Fascist propagandists, journalists, artists, and intellectuals generated torrents of words in fascist Italy. Yet they were words without referents. Ignazio Silone made this point in his parody of fascist politics, *The School for Dictators*. When asked what the fascist cry *eia eia alala* means, the author's persona replies:

> Nothing. It was a cry D'Annunzio invented during the war. You will find no trace of it in any language or dialect, and its own inventor gave it no rational meaning. . . . For the success of a fascist movement, such words are more valuable than any theoretical treatise on corporations. . . . The psalm-like chanting of incomprehensible texts has been a precious resource of mass religions in every age. Latin has never kept illiterate peasants format tending Catholic rites; on the contrary, it has always been a big help in attracting them.[63]

"Ideology" is a word I use in a specialized sense to connote the fascist cultural project. It is a convenient matrix for a set of political and cultural practices but not a body of discursive ideas. Fascists did not believe in abstract values such as liberty, equality, fraternity. They believed in action and style – ideas that specify means and not ends and that make the ends of fascist action extremely malleable. The fascist belief in style has derailed at-tempts to codify fascist ideology. Scholars' searches for doctrinal coherence have misread the issue of political style and drawn the incorrect conclusion that Italian fascism was inchoate.[64] The Italian fascist commitment to style and action makes ritual action an excellent venue for an analysis of the fascist project.

The rally and the parade have been interpreted as a sign of the destruction of the public sphere under fascism. I argue that public spectacle was there regime's attempt to create temporary fascist communities of emotional attachment that would create

[57] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Scribner's, 1953), 7.

[58] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973), 449.

[59] I borrow this well-known concept from Victor Turner.

[60] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 133, 132.

[61] Benedetti Croce makes this point in *A History of Italy, 1871-1915,* trans. Cecilia M. Adie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919): "During the early years of the twentieth century, both in Italy and elsewhere, a reaction set in against the cult of science, or positivism" (137).Croce attributed this "reaction" to "the influence of foreign thinkers, Germans who were once more speculating over the conception of 'values'" (238).

[62] Karl Mannheim, "Conservative Thought," in *From Karl Mannheim,* ed. Kurt H. Wolff(New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 132-33, 144, 166, 168-69. Croce's remark (see note 61) suggests that my evocation of Mannheim is not so far a field.

[63] Ignacio Salome, *The School for Dictators,* trans. William Weaver (New York: Athenaeum, 1963), 112.

[64] For an articulation of this position, see Adrian Lyttelton, introduction to *Italian Fascism from Pareto to Gentile* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 36.

bonds of solidarity which would last long after participants left the piazza. The public piazza was the cathedral of fascist culture, a nonliberal public sphere based on performance and not text. What these performances "meant" was indeterminate. Historian David Cannadine points to the difficulties involved in studying the relation of politics, emotion, and ritual with a felicitous simile: "Ceremonial is like the snow: an insubstantial pageant, soon melted into thin air. The invisible and ephemeral are, by definition, not the easiest of subjects for scholars to study."[65] The next section discusses my methodological approach to capturing the "snow," or specifying the indeterminacy of fascist public spectacle.

Fascist Ritual and Political Communication

Ritual and Representation

From Foucault's spectacle of the guillotine to analyses of the political culture of revolutions, studies of cultural politics assume that public political rituals, such as the events that proliferated in fascist Italy, are potent vehicles of political communication and meaning.[66] Public political ritual is performance; and performance, whether it occurs in the tightly bounded world of the theater or the more permeable social space of a public piazza, is a highly elusive entity because its effects are experiential.

The experiential or performative nature of ritual, coupled with assumptions about the efficacy of political ritual, drives the methodological retreat to "thick descriptions" of unique ritual events. Geertz's study of Negara, the "theater state," is typical of this mode of analysis. Geertz argues that the state in nineteenth-century Bali was pure spectacle and concludes, "The dramas of the theater state, mimetic of themselves, were, in the end, neither illusions nor lies, neither sleight of hand nor make-believe. They were what there was."[67] Textual exegesis of political ritual frequently fails to uncouple the relation between ritual activity and political meaning, thus leaving assumptions about political efficacy unchallenged. Such exegesis suggests that representations of power equal realities of power, or that, to paraphrase Norton, what is preserved in absence is the power of the state. The analytic and methodological discussion that follows is an argument for complexity in the face of the surface transparency of the fascist public rituals that form the core empirical section of this book.

Theories of ritual focus on questions of definition that are inextricably linked to issues of meaning. How we draw the parameters of ritual circumscribes the range of interpretive methodologies we apply to the study of ritual. Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* is the Archimedean point from which any theoretical study of ritual begins. Three features of Durkheim's analysis affected the development of theories of ritual: the equation of ritual with religion; the idea of collective representation, which pointed to the symbolic function of ritual practice; and the generalized classification scheme of sacred and profane.[68]

Although social scientists no longer treat ritual as necessarily bound to religious practice, they have retained their interest in the role of ritual symbols and the dichotomy between sacred and profane. The symbolic dimension of ritual encompasses a range of definitions and disciplinary orientations. Steven Lukes defines ritual as "rule-governed activity of a symbolic character." In *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, David Kertzer defines ritual as "action wrapped in a web of symbolism. Standardized, repetitive action lacking such symbolization is an example of habit or custom and not ritual. Symbolization gives the action much more important meaning."[69]

Anthropologists have criticized the sacred/profane distinction as a simplistic dichotomy that replicates the value system of the observer.[70] Such criticism suggests three problems that underlie the semiotic and discursive analysis of ritual events. First, this method continues to elide the distinction between participant and observer as separate interpreting subjects; second, treating ritual as a text contributes to its conceptualization as an object rather than an action; and third, it focuses attention on the content rather than the form of ritual.[71] A plausible account of the meaning of political ritual requires the resolution of each of these problems.

The distinction between observer and participant is not as simple as it would appear at first glance. Within the anthropological literature, the distinction is predicated on a fieldworker who is an outsider venturing into a "foreign" culture to observe the social or religious ritual behavior of the "native" insiders. Typically, fieldworkers conduct their observation of ritual in the present.[72] Analysis of political ritual presents a level of complexity missing in religious or social ritual because the categories of

[65] David Cannadine, "Introduction: Divine Rites of Kings," in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies,* ed. David Cannadine and Simon Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

[66] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 47-57. For example, Hunt, *French Revolution;* Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); James Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[67] Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 136.

[68] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* trans. Joseph Ward Swain(New York: Free Press, 1965), 17, 22, 26, 52.

[69] Steven Lukes, "Political Ritual and Social Integration," *Sociology 9* (1975), 291; David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 9.

[70] For example, Jack Goody, "Religion and Ritual: The Definitional Problem," *British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961), 143, 149, 152. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, "Secular Ritual: Forms and Meanings," in *Secular Ritual,* ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G.Meyerhoff (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), in a critique of Mary Douglas, argue that it is difficult to establish the boundaries of the sacred and profane independently of the cultural predispositions of the observer (19).

[71] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), emphasizes the distinction between ritual as action and as object (41).

[72] On the problems of contemporaneous observation, see Sally Falk Moore, "Explaining the Present: Theoretical Dilemmas in Processual Ethnography," *American Ethnology* 14(1987), 727-36.

observer and participant are multiple. Historical analysis offers the vantage point of distance in parsing these categories.

First, the social analyst in the instance of historical analysis of political ritual is not strictly speaking an observer; rather, he or she is the interpreter of the representations of multiple observers. I constructed my analysis of fascist political ritual from the representations of journalists, photographers, and regime propagandists. The citizens who lined the streets of Italy's cities and towns watching the fascists march by were observers whose voices go unheard. Second, the participant is not simply the person standing in the piazza forming part of the ritual display. Participants may be those who create or design the rituals, those who perform the political rites, or those who witness it from the outside. This last group might also constitute observers.

In the case of fascist ritual, the regime decided the scope and range of events, the local and national Fascist Party mobilized bodies to rally in the piazzas to perform the political rites, and the Italian citizens lined the streets for events that interrupted the daily rhythms of work, commerce, and leisure. An analysis of fascist ritual that simply read the text of the available representations, or described it as the sacralization of public space in the name of the regime, would fail to capture the meaning of the ritual to its participants broadly defined and would skim the surface of the official meanings of the event.

Ritual as Cultural Action

In the *Elementary Forms,* Durkheim did not ignore the action dimension of ritual. He distinguished between the "rite" and "belief" components of religion. Beliefs were the repository of representations or symbols, whereas rites were the locations of "determined modes of action."[73] Although analysts have tended to elide this distinction in their empirical research, actions are as salient as symbols in definitions of ritual.[74] Ritual is a form of "patterned" and "formulaic" action that establishes order against the indeterminacy of random temporal and spatial organization.[75]

In their discussion of secular ritual, Sally Falk Moore and Barbara Meyerhoff argue that the formal properties of ritual, such as staging, repetition, action, and stylization, are intrinsic to its message. They conclude: "Ritual is in part a form, and a form which gives certain meanings to its contents. The work of ritual, then, is partly attributable to its morphological characteristics. Its medium is part of its message."[76] Kertzer takes a similar stance: "Ritual action has a formal quality to it. . . . Ritual action is repetitive and, therefore, often redundant, but these very factors serve as important means of channeling emotion, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups."[77]

This sample of definitions lends support to two propositions: first, ritual is a form of cultural action; and second, ritual derives its distinction as a cultural entity from its formal characteristics. These propositions have implications that support my contention and evoke Norton's point that meaning is embedded not in the representation of action but in the experience of continued exposure to ritual representations, or the repetition of ritual action. By studying ritual as a type of cultural action, we can develop plausible narratives of how the citizens of fascist Italy received the regime's cultural messages. Reception includes assimilation, resistance, and in some instances reinvention. I argue that the form of ritual action is more important than the specific content, although my analysis does not ignore content. Form is what we recognize as implicit, whereas content is variable. Form is central to a politics of emotion that eschewed text.

Ritual action takes place in real time – it is diachronic as well as synchronic. By diachronic, I mean the repetition of ritual acts over days, months, years. Analysts tend to assume the synchronic nature of ritual time and focus on calendars and schedules and the breaking up of singular temporal units such as days or years.[78] Victor Turner's processual view of ritual incorporates time into the study of ritual and suggests that ritual meaning is located in the long, as well as short, ritual *durée.*[79] Turner argues that ritual activities are composed of social dramas that exist as single instances or sequential accumulations of events:

> Social dramas and social enterprises – as well as other kinds of processual units – represent sequences of social events, which, seen retrospectively by an observer, can be shown to have structure. Such "temporal" structure, unlike a temporal structure . . . is organized primarily through relations in time rather than in space, though, of course, cognitive schemes are them-selves the result of a mental process and have processual qualities."[80]

Social drama as an analytic frame brings time and historicity to ritual theory. In later work, Turner explicitly links these features to ritual meaning. He argues that meaning is the end of process: "Meaning is apprehended by looking back over a process in time. We assess the meaning of every part of a process by its contribution to the total result.

[73] Durkheim, Elementary Forms, 51.

[74] For example, Robert Wuthnow, *Meaning and the Moral Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 109; Lukes, "Political Ritual," 290; Bell, *Ritual Theory,* 69-93.Goody, "Religion and Ritual," notes that ritual applies to the "action" rather than the "belief" component of magic and religious phenomena (147) and defines ritual as "a category of standardized behavior (custom) in which the relationship between means and ends is not "intrinsic'" (159).

[75] Jack Goody, "Against 'Ritual': Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic," in *Secular Ritual,* ed. Moore and Meyerhoff, 33; David Parkin, "Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division," in *Understanding Rituals,* ed. Daniel De Coppet (London: Routledge, 1992), 18.

[76] "Secular Ritual," 7-8.

[77] Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power,* 9.

[78] See, for example, Ozouf, *Festivals,* 161-66.

[79] Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors," in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 13-59.

[80] Ibid., 35-36.

Meaning is connected with the consummation of a process – it is bound up with termination, in a sense, with death. The meaning of any given factor in a process cannot be assessed until the whole process is past."[81] Ritual action's formal characteristics, such as staging, permit us to identify its meaningful patterns.

Ritual patterns are powerful interpretive prisms and vehicles of political communication. First, they address the issue of regime intention, because they suggest that there was some deliberate political attempt to create the pattern; second, they address the question of citizen reception, because they display formal properties that a body of citizens might recognize over time. Patterns take ritual form and time into account and allow us to separate analytically the observer from the participant. In short, they permit us to formulate plausible and nondistorting narratives of political meaning.

Identifying patterns of ritual action over time in a specific historical con-text, such as Italy during the fascist period, enables us to establish what was ordinary, customary, and recognizable in fascist political ritual. The mapping of the familiar has the added advantage of allowing us to construct a story of political meaning that, first, does not conflate the observer and the participant and, second, holds separate analytically, if not empirically, the sub-categories of participation.

Intention and Reception

To capture the "meaning" of political ritual, in this case fascist ritual, we must distinguish two levels of meaning and sites of participation: the meaning of public spectacle to the regime – the creator of political ritual; and the meaning of spectacle to the citizens – the audience at whom these events were aimed. The first level of meaning involves questions of political intention.

Imputed intention does not imply that the regime could impose whatever meanings it chose. Fascist regimes, and the Italian fascist regime in particular, may be based on the politics of nonrationality, but they are not irrational. Political symbolism is useless if no one understands it. Although no regime can guarantee the effects of its aesthetic actions, some symbols are more likely to resonate with a public than others. How a regime goes about choosing symbolic actions that have a greater probability of resonance than others has to do with its ability to co-opt or create cultural practices that form recognizable or comprehensible genres.[82]

The problem as I am stating it may be recast in terms frequently applied to aesthetics, that is, as a problem of authorial intention and audience reception, or, in the language of ritual analysis, that of observer and participant. The case studies that follow explore the interaction between regime intention and citizen reception. I constructed them, to borrow the Comaroffs' metaphor, as a "conversation" between the colonizer and the colonized.[83] Ritual is a form of social action whose consequences may owe more to the cultural schema and resources, to invoke Sewell, that its designers have at their disposal than to any political meaning it seeks to convey, and whose principal consequences may be as unintended as intended. My central analytic argument is that the fascist meaning or identity which was created, which was understood and internalized, lies in the space between intention and reception.

Period and genre as analytic frames provide a convenient shorthand that lends terminological consistency to the case studies and structures the narrative construction of the interaction between intention and reception. Period, historically plausible time segments within which events can be mapped, suggests regime intention if we can link ritual events to political events. Genre, standard ritual forms, suggests audience recognition if we can establish their repetition. Period and genre are the scaffolding for the empirical study of fascist ritual that follows. History, the careful analysis of content and context, is the basis for these classification schemes.

Period

Because the Italian fascist regime lasted twenty-one years, it affords a methodological opportunity to trace changes and variation in fascist ritual. The years between 1922 and 1943 fall into five historically sensible periods in which diverse political events affected patterns of ritual action.[84] The first of the five, the Matteotti period, begins on October 28, 1922, the day Mussolini marched on Rome and took over the Italian state, and ends with the murder of the socialist parliamentarian Giacomo Matteotti on June 10, 1924. This political murder, which scholars ascribe to the fascist regime, ended the period during which Mussolini attempted to govern with some semblance of a political coalition.

The second period begins after the Matteotti murder and ends on March24, 1929, the day of the plebiscite when Mussolini received the highly orchestrated unanimous vote of confidence from the Italian electorate that consolidated his dictatorship.[85] The

[81] Victor Turner, "The Anthropology of Performance," in *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ, 1988), 97-98.

[82] For sociological accounts of the issue of recognition and resonance, see Wendy Griswold, "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture," *Sociological Methodology*14 (1987), 17-20, and Michael Schudson, "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols," *Theory and Society* 18 (1989), 167-70.

[83] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 199.

[84] The periodization follows standard historical works: Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (rpt., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), and Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini Il Duce: Gli anni del consenso, 1929-1936*, vol. 1 (Turin: Einaudi, 1974); and also fascist propaganda: *Il primo e secondo libro del fascista* (Rome: Partito Nazionale Fascista, 1941).

[85] The "plebiscite of 1929" was a highly rigged election in which Mussolini proposed a list of four hundred fascist names for parliament and the nation was asked to support them en bloc. Negative votes were discouraged with threats of violence and other less tangible forms of reciprocity. Denis Mack Smith reports that 98.4 percent of the Italian population voted

consolidation of fascist power characterizes this period. The regime focused on building a fascist infrastructure, consolidating its rule, and legitimating itself both nationally and internationally. The third period runs from the plebiscite to September 8, 1935, when Mussolini decided to invade Ethiopia. During this period of consensus, relative political and social stability prevailed within fascist Italy as the regime began to build the fascist state and develop fascist institutions.

The tranquility of the consensus period ended when Mussolini embarked on the building of a fascist colonial empire. The first step in this process was the Ethiopian campaign, and its culmination was Italian entry into World War II on the side of the Axis powers. This period of mobilization began in September 1935 and ended June 10, 1940, when Italy entered the war on the side of nazi Germany. The last period, the World War II years, is bounded by the end of the regime on July 25, 1943, when Mussolini was voted out of office at the Grand Council meeting. A puppet fascist government existed at Salo until the war ended in 1945, but the regime itself officially ended with Mussolini's fall.

Genre

The various forms of public political spectacle that proliferated in fascist Italy suggest discernible ritual genres. From among the numerous narratives and events I traced, I identified five genres: commemoration, celebration, demonstration, symposia, and inauguration. These genres were not pure types, and they frequently appear as a collage of various forms of ritual action. I use them not to reify ritual experience but to develop a classificatory vocabulary that suggests the aggregate characteristics of the multiple ceremonies and events that transformed the Italian physical and social landscape during the fascist period.

Commemorative events marked the anniversaries of significant events in Italian history, such as the Vittoria, which signaled the end of World War I, and in fascist history, such as the March on Rome. Public funerals for local fascist heroes or memorial services for national fascist figures also fell into the commemorative category.

The watermark of the commemorations was the past as embodied in dead events and dead persons. In contrast, celebrations reveled in the present and the future. They included visits of distinguished persons such as Mussolini, ongoing fascist events such as the *leva fascista* (the passage of fascist youth from one level of the party to the next), birthdays of living fascist heroes, as well as sporting and theatrical events. The visit of an emissary from Rome to Italian cities and towns was the principal symbolic vehicle that the regime and party used to draw the periphery to the center. Distinguished party members visited at both commemorations and celebrations.

In contrast to commemorations and celebrations, demonstrations were purely expressive events, usually rallies, held to display public emotion in support of fascism. As a genre of event, demonstrations were eclectic as to content. What set them apart as a distinct type was that they all claimed the appearance of spontaneous collective emotion and tended to be large rather than small events.

Symposia included national-level congresses and conventions as well as lectures and meetings at the Fascist Party headquarters. Inaugurations consisted of the initiations of public works, such as the opening of a new building or the laying of a plaque to honor a local hero. Symposia were bound to persons; inaugurations were bound to place, as they frequently entailed the dedication of new buildings.

Fascism, as political idea, is best understood as an ideology that fuses the public and private self. In the Italian fascist case, this fusion occurred de jure in the state and emotively in spectacles in the public piazza. The public ritual created a "community of feeling," a metaphorical phrase for the emotional fusing of the two dimensions of the self in public space.

Fascist political rituals did not necessarily represent fascist power, and the shape of ritual events must be addressed as an independent analytic category – the interplay of schematas and resources. We now turn to the historical context, or systems of cultural meanings, that provided the schematas and resources for fascist ritual production.

In: Berezin, Mabel. *Making the Fascist Self.* Cornell University Press, 1997. 11-38

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yes, although many probably did not bother to vote at all. See *Mussolini* (London: Granada, 1981), 191-93.