

culture that contrasts with past decades and constitutes a positive change with regard to technological-scientific knowledge given the wider population's interest in and less prejudiced attitude towards technology. Another novelty is that scientific topics seem now to be at the centre of public discourse and debate, even if they are often controversial, and they are discussed by those who previously neglected them, for example Marxist and Catholic intellectuals. In this way, the book concludes on an optimistic note regarding future Italian culture.

Antonello presents a complex subject in a comprehensible way and – despite a surfeit of typographical errors – the book reads well. In this sense Antonello achieves one of his basic aims: to write a work that can be understood by the non-specialist. (That said, some concepts *would* require preliminary knowledge in order to be fully understood, for example the difference between naturalistic and historical materialism.) He examines a wide range of explicit and implicit opinions with regard to the 'two cultures' issue, including the ambiguous position of Pirandello, who endorsed spiritualist ideas but employed epistemic solutions developed by contemporary science in his works, and the ideas of the Futurists, whose irrationalist programmes clashed with their public claims in favour of technology. The book also includes an illuminating analysis of twentieth-century Italian Marxism, with special regard to the efforts of Marxist intellectuals to justify with social science what could be more easily explained by natural science. In sum, this is a rich and interesting work.

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**Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy**, by Joshua Arthurs, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2012, xiii + 216 pp., \$45.00, ISBN 978-0-8014-4998-7

In this fascinating and meticulously researched work, Joshua Arthurs explores the meaning, purpose and consequences of *romanità* – 'romanness' – in Fascist Italy and the nature of the relationship between the regime and leading historians, classicists and archaeologists, particularly those connected to the influential *Istituto di Studi Romani* (ISR). Arthurs (rightly) argues that Fascism's obsession with *romanità* can only be properly understood within the context of its revolutionary and modernising project to transform Italy and Italians. In this sense, Arthurs firmly aligns himself with recent 'anti-anti-Fascist' revisionism, which sees Fascism as a set of ideas to be taken seriously, a genuinely revolutionary ideology based around the 'core myth' of national rebirth.

How could Fascist *romanità*, which concentrated almost exclusively on the glories and monumental remnants of ancient Rome (the history and architecture of the intervening centuries between the fall of Rome and the rise of Fascism were effectively ignored), serve revolutionary and modernist ends? As Arthurs shows, ancient Rome stood as an inspiration and model for the regime's plans for the modernisation of the capital and its broader ambitions to

remake Italians in its own image: '*romanità* was a program to be actualized, a history not to be venerated but to be made' (p. 27). From the outset, Fascism set out to 'purify' and 'disinfect' Rome of what Mussolini called 'all the elements that corrupt and sully it' (p. 27). To this end, the regime embarked on an ambitious programme of urban development and archaeological excavations designed to 'liberate' Rome's great ancient ruins from decadent, picturesque 'old Rome' (understood as anything built after empire and before Fascism), while simultaneously creating a 'new Rome'; in Mussolini's words, 'vast ordered, powerful, as it was during the first empire of Augustus' (p. 50). Unlike 'old Rome', *Roma nuova* would not be a museum, a reminder of Italy's past greatness, but a living, breathing, awe-inspiring 'marvel', able to stand comparison with the Rome of antiquity and testament to the transformative and regenerative powers of Fascism.

*Excavating Modernity*, however, is not simply an account of Fascist *romanità*, or of Fascism's aggressive remodelling of the Roman urban landscape. Arthurs is equally interested in how *romanità* 'was articulated, elaborated, and promoted ... from "below"' (p. 6). As such, Arthurs looks closely at the role and influence of key figures within the ISR, including its director Carlo Galassi Paluzzi and Giulio Quirino Giglioli, the driving force behind the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* (MAR) in 1937–1938. (The MAR itself is the subject of one of the longest chapters in the book.) The picture that emerges is of a scholarly community that was generally happy to accommodate, assimilate and develop Fascism's radical conception of *romanità*. The result (as Arthurs writes in relation to the MAR) was scholarship and public history/archaeology that was 'thoroughly imbued with a Fascist sensibility' (p. 119).

The mid-to-late 1930s marked the high tide of Fascist *romanità* as the regime sought to justify expansionism abroad and totalitarianism and the 'racial turn' at home with reference to ancient precedents. Defeat in the Second World War and the collapse of Fascism, though, ended notions of Rome as a revolutionary mobilising myth. In its stead, conservative Catholic Rome quickly (re-)established itself as 'the final realization of the Roman spirit' (p. 152) – with the ready support of many of the former 'producers' of Fascist *romanità*.

The centuries-old 'idea of Rome' as a source of inspiration and legitimisation died with Mussolini and Fascism. However, as Arthurs notes in his conclusion, the spirit of Fascist *romanità* lives on in the Italian capital: in buildings, monuments, statues and art; in the city's ancient ruins 'liberated' by Fascism (in fact, islands of antiquity imprisoned by Fascist-era thoroughfares); and even in some of its museums (the *Museo dell Civiltà Romana* is essentially the MAR stripped of its overtly Fascist elements).

Arthurs does neglect some topics. For example, he fails to mention the extraordinary excavation of Ostia Antica in the late 1930s. Yet this was a massive undertaking, intended to coincide with the opening of the *Esposizione Universale di Roma* in 1942 (the EUR was ultimately cancelled because of the war). Similarly, Arthurs does not discuss the extensive land reclamation projects around Rome, despite the obvious connection to *romanità*. These, though, are minor criticisms. This is an excellent book and deserves to be read.

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