

As Spini had discovered, despite the involvement of a sequence of major English political figures, including Lord Shaftesbury, Palmerston and Gladstone, the missionaries' attempts to convert Italians not surprisingly met with little success and often provoked violent resistance. Insisting that it was the intent that mattered, Raponi then devotes two chapters to foreign policy that relentlessly catalogue the often extreme anti-Catholic and anti-papal credentials of British statesmen and diplomats. The intent is well mapped, but as with the missionaries the practical consequences fall well short of the guiding thesis. Time and time again British governments shrank away from interventions that might make them openly complicit in depriving the pope of his temporal powers, for reasons that have been well explored in the literature on the Roman Question, and which in Britain's case were in addition complicated not only (and always) by Ireland, but also by Malta and, as Miles Taylor has shown, by the growing Catholic presence in many different parts of the empire (Taylor 2000). Struggling to keep the thesis afloat Raponi concedes that religion played a 'predominant' role in British policies towards Italy in the late 1860s and 1870s. Few would disagree, but this is a far cry from the thesis from which the book sets out, as is the curious and seemingly disconnected claim that the British had been right all along and that Italy would have been a better place had the Protestant reform project succeeded.

Raponi does a thorough job of documenting the religious convictions, passions, hatreds and fantasies that fired British anti-Catholicism and anti-Popery and the constant connections between the Irish and the Italian Questions, although with 1,308 notes, 61 pages of footnotes and a select bibliography that omits secondary sources, this is not a reader-friendly text. It is unfortunate too that it is burdened by a mono-causal thesis that over-simplifies the complex relationship between intent and political action and is not supported by the cases it explores. Notwithstanding the strength of British anti-Catholicism, public opinion and foreign policy simply did not march single-mindedly to the lockstep of a shared discourse. On this Elena Bacchin gets the balance right, as did Giorgio Spini.

## References

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**The Third Rome, 1922–43: the Making of the Fascist Capital**, by Aristotle Kallis, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, £65.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-230-28399-2

'The term *Fascist architecture*', wrote Terry Kirk in his 2005 study of twentieth-century Italian architecture, 'has little meaning at all' (Kirk 2005, 68). Kirk's point was a simple one: Fascism lacked a clear, distinctive and coherent architectural style; under the dictatorship, 'aesthetic pluralism' was the order of the day across the high arts, architecture included. Of course, what this tells us about the nature of Fascism depends on how one perceives Fascist ideology. Until the

‘culturalist turn’ in Fascist studies in the 1990s, orthodox ‘anti-Fascist’ historians saw the regime’s encouragement of rationalist, historic modernist, neo-classicist and monumentalist architecture as confirmation (if confirmation were needed) of its ideological vacuity. ‘Fascist culture’ was an oxymoron: Fascism was at best acultural, its interventions in the cultural sphere shaped by its desire to buy consensus (through generous patronage of the arts), isolate its critics (through its control of professional associations), and at least give the impression that ‘besides having faith and muscle it also has a brain’ (Roberto Farinacci). Since then, of course, ‘culturalist’ readings of Fascism as a modernising, active ideology centred on the core myth of national palingenesis have tended to read Fascist aesthetics in very different light: Fascism was a ‘way of life’ rather than a fully elaborated philosophical system; as such, Fascism *had to* express itself visually.

*The Third Rome* is located firmly within the ‘culturalist’ understanding of Fascism. For Kallis, Fascism was a totalitarian ‘political religion’ that sought the revolutionary transformation of the individual and society and the regeneration of the nation. Rome occupied a central role in this process, ‘as one of the primary sources of, and inspiration for, the regime’s rich mythopoeia of regeneration’ (p. 16). Consequently, ‘Italian Fascism sought to appropriate the city of Rome and present it as the “sacred” locus of its status as a *national* political religion’ (p. 16).

Kallis identifies two distinct phases to Fascism’s interventions in and around Rome. During the first phase, 1922–1932, the regime pursued projects and plans whose provenance often stretched back well into the preceding Liberal period. The regime’s ‘piecemeal but dazzlingly fast’ transformation of the city had to wait until the second decade of the *ventennio*. From 1932 to 1942, Rome resembled a huge construction site, where ‘[re]storations, demolitions, spatial reconfigurations and new additions’ saw the established urban palimpsest ‘broken up, edited and reassembled’, investing the eternal city ‘with a new overriding Fascist signification’ (p. 14). Kallis explores both phases in forensic detail, charting the fortunes of rival architectural schools, the often bitter arguments over what constituted an authentically ‘Italian’ style, and, from the mid-1930s, the regime’s shift from a pluralist conception of ‘Fascist’ architecture to the restrictive orthodoxy of the ‘*stile littorio*’ – the pared down, classically-inspired monumental style that characterised the E42 exhibition city, the last and most ambitious Fascist building project in Rome. At the same time, Kallis guides us through all of the major Fascist interventions: the ‘liberation’ of major ancient monuments involving extensive demolitions in the historic centre; the construction of new suburbs and even new towns to house Rome’s expanding population as well as those displaced by the demolitions in the city’s old quarters; and the grand ‘signature’ *ex nihilo* developments on the outskirts of the old city. Kallis, though, is equally interested in what the Fascists didn’t build: hugely ambitious projects such as the 600-metre-long Arco Monumentale at E42, the 400,000 capacity Arengo delle Nazioni and the 85-metre-high ‘Statue of Fascism’ at the Foro Mussolini, and the landmark Palazzo del Littorio, the new national headquarters of the Fascist Party, originally earmarked for the historic centre close to the Colosseum and the Roman Forum, but subsequently redesigned and relocated to the Foro Mussolini, where it remained unfinished until after the war. These projects reveal as much about what Fascism aspired to be as they do the limits and shortcomings of the regime as it really was.

For those readers familiar with the already extensive literature on *Roma Mussoliniana*, including Kallis’s own previous work on the subject (five articles since 2011), *The Third Rome* contains little in the way of new evidence. Where Kallis excels is in his interpretation of the facts. According to Kallis, Fascism’s physical, spatial and symbolic appropriation of the Italian capital was not only a means to invest Fascism with a *national* historical importance; in the 1930s, the city was also increasingly seen by the regime ‘as the “sacred” centre and spiritual capital of an international F(f)ascist political religion’ (p. 16). A regenerated Fascist ‘third Rome’ would

oversee the transformation of western civilisation under Fascist leadership in much the same way as imperial and papal Rome had done. To begin with, Kallis argues, Rome was seen by the regime as a means of confirming Fascism's *political* leadership of the international fascist movement. The rise of Nazi Germany, however, soon put paid to such political ambitions, forcing the regime to change tack; Rome now became the basis of its claim to the *spiritual* leadership of a universal fascism.

Third Rome was intended as a eutopia, 'a place of realised perfection' (p. 45). In fact, as the 1930s progressed, Fascism's major *ex nihilo* projects such as the monumental 'cities' of the Foro Mussolini and E42, and the new peripheral suburbs and new towns of the Agro Pontino, represented heterotopias, 'other spaces' that 'captured and simulated a Fascist alternative future order in fundamental difference to their surrounding space and time' (p. 163). Nowhere was the gap between idealised space and reality more pronounced than at E42. Intended as the last word in Fascist Rome's claim to universalism, E42 became 'a space of pure desire ... an unreal and alien simulacrum of an "imagined" Rome, contrived to entertain the supposed international triumph of Fascism that was quickly slipping away' (p. 244).

One might quibble with the balance of the book (do we need such a lengthy discussion of the debates on urban planning and architecture?), and the pedant in me cannot resist pointing out that it was Renato, not Corrado, Ricci (p. 165), who was the driving force behind the Foro Mussolini. Such minor criticisms, however, should not detract from what is a very fine book.

## Reference

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**Crafting Design in Italy: from Post-war to Postmodernism**, by Catharine Rossi, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015, 304 pp., £70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-7190-8940-4

*La grande arte è un mestiere piccolo (Great art is a little craft)* (Ivano Fossati)

Students tell me that it must have been so difficult 'before you had technology'. And in this naïve and relativist statement, I know they are talking about the contemporary haptic tools they constantly touch and swipe and probe. And I can guess that they are unaware of the lineage of these communication tools; they have no use for the knowledge that their 'device' is only the most recent in a long line of tools and technologies that stretch back through the quilting circle, the town crier, the smoke signal.

But this also reminds us that these students' engagement with their phones places them as a vital component in a much larger, though at times evanescent, system. And it has been ever thus. Consider the book. Developed and resolved out of the adaptation of existing technologies, the book is the size it is because our hands are that size (and yes, also under consideration of certain