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*TOTalitarian ARTs. The Visual Arts, Fascism(s) and Mass-society*, ed. by Mark Epstein, Fulvio Orsitto and Andrea Righi, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, £63.99 Hardback, 470 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4438-2874-1

The dust jacket says it all: a soup can, half red and half white, with the same colours and design of the Campbell’s soup immortalized by Andy Warhol’s pop art, but with the words TOT and ART on it; and emerging from behind two fasces (the ancient imperial Roman symbol and the symbol of Mussolini’s regime in 20th-century Italy), one from each side, like horns of a bull, this aggressive bull that is totalitarianism. The book explores the relationship between visual arts, fascist regimes, and mass society. It has twenty chapters and touches on various periods and forms of fascism: proto-fascist aesthetics and myths in late 19th- and early 20th-century Europe; between-the-wars regimes such as Mussolini’s and Hitler’s; dictatorships that lasted beyond or were born much after WWII, such as Franco’s in Spain or the military one in Uruguay; and the subtle and pervasive forms of totalitarianism that today people experience in capitalist societies. These varieties of fascism(s) are considered here through the lenses not much of politics, but rather of visuality: indeed, if there is a common thread running through almost all of these essays, this is visuality: from mental and literary images found in utopian thoughts and realist novels, to posters, lithographs, paintings, sculptures, and architectures, to comics, newsreels, documentaries, films, YouTube videos and avant-garde performances, all kinds of images used to instil, spread, oppose or analyse the fascist ideology, as well as their construction and effects on the viewers, are investigated here. This is one of the most interesting aspects of the book: the variety of objects it presents. It is precisely this variety that allows the reader to reflect upon the innumerable ways in which the Protean monster of fascism has been shaping people’s lives and views. Of course, as it happens, dealing with so many different objects makes it not easy to organize them into coherent groups. The book is divided into six parts, whose titles are sometimes misleading. Part I, “Totalitarian Environments: Spaces and Images,” deals in fact only with Mussolini’s regime: Silvia Boero looks at Eugenio Baroni’s sculptures in Genova between 1924 and 1938; Maria d’Anniballe cogently analyses the refashioning of the Palazzo della Provincia in Verona in a medieval style and the negotiations between national visions and local narratives; Amanda Minervini discusses representations and juxtapositions of St. Francis of Assisi and Mussolini; and Pierluigi Erbaggio shows how Mussolini featured as a celebrity in American newsreels. True, these four first essays do deal with spaces and images of fascism, but perhaps a section title signalling that these spaces and images are only from Mussolini’s Italy would have helped. Section II, “Totalitarianism, Italian Cinema and Beyond,” has Mark Epstein addressing Pasolini’s reflections on fascism, Angelo Fàvaro first comparing Alberto Moravia’s novel and Bernardo Bertolucci’s film *The Conformist*, and then analysing the film’s treatment preserved in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome; the two parts of Fàvaro’s essay are in effect two chapters, one after the other, by the same author, which gives a bit the sense of an imbalance. This section is closed by Fulvio Orsitto, interestingly illustrating the depictions of Nazi-fascists in Films from WWII to the present; his essay only in part focuses on Italy, so it seems the one representing the “beyond” in the section title; but non-Italian cinema is also addressed in other sections, which again makes this section title not very perspicuous. Part III, “Totalitarian Aesthetics and Politics,” deals more precisely with what it announces: Ana Rodríguez-Granell analyses the links between 19th-century irrationalism and fascist aesthetics in Germany; Gaetano DeLeonibus considers French proto-fascist and fascist discourses by Charles Maurras and Drieu La Rochelle; Sean P. Connolly shows telling examples of the visual culture during the regime of Vichy in France in 1940-44; and Anna Vives discusses Salvador Dalì’s controversial relationship with surrealism and involvement with fascism by focusing on *The Enigma of Hitler* (1938) and *Equestrian Portrait of Carmen-Bordiu Franco* (1974). Part IV, “Totalitarian Geography,” has the most generic title: in it, we find Daniel Arroyo-Rodríguez discussing Pedro Lázaga’s film *Torrepartida* (1956) and its significance in the history of Franco’s dictatorship; Isabel Macedo, Rita Bastos, and Rosa Cabecinhas considering dictatorship as represented in Portuguese cinema; and Claudia Peralta addressing the dictatorship in Uruguay through four recent documentaries. Part V, “Contemporary Forms of Totalitarian Representation,” deals with performances, comics, and YouTube videos: Arina Rotaru looks at the historical remembrance of fascism in contemporary Germany particularly through the work of the Turkish-born German actor and performer Serdar Somuncu; Maria Stopfner analyses political comics of the far and extreme Right, also in Germany; and Mattias Ekman provides an overview of more than 200 video clips distributed through YouTube by five Swedish extreme-right groups. The last part, VI, “Comparative Reflections on Totalitarian Worldviews,” has a second essay by both Mark Epstein, who this time discusses “Totalitarian Trends Today,” and Matias Ekman, who looks again at video activism and fascism, but now from a more theoretical stance. The section, and the whole book, is closed by Andrea Righi, who discusses Deleuze’s and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* in terms of theory of fascism. As one can see from this illustration of the single chapters, of the countries investigated in the book, Italy is certainly the most prominent, followed by Germany and France, while Spain, Portugal, Uruguay and Sweden have only been specifically addressed in one essay each. In much the same way, video productions (especially films, but also documentaries and YouTube clips) are the most analysed forms of visual art, while comics, performances, and the other arts are much less prominent. Despite these imbalances, the book addresses important areas of the fascist presence both in the past and today. One last remark: since the editors have also authored some essays, their names and bios should have appeared inside the book as well, in the list of contributors, not just on the back of the dust jacket.