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# Mussolini's 'Third Rome', Hitler's Third Reich and the Allure of Antiquity: Classicizing Chronopolitics as a Remedy for Unstable National Identity?

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## Abstract

While it is generally acknowledged that fascist movements tend to glorify the national past of the country in which they arise, sometimes, fascist regimes seek to resurrect a past even more ancient, and more glorious still; the turn towards ancient Greece and Rome. This phenomenon is particularly marked in the case of the two most powerful and indisputably 'fascist' regimes of all: Benito Mussolini's Italy and Adolf Hitler's Germany. The author suggests that this twin turn towards antiquity was no mere accident, but was rather motivated by certain commonalities in national experience. By placing these two fascist regimes alongside each other and considering their seduction by antique myths in tandem, it is argued that – without putting forward some kind of classicizing *Sonderweg* – we can better appreciate the historic rootedness of this particular form of 'chronopolitics' in a complex nexus of political and social causes, many of which lie far deeper than the traumatic events of the Great War and its aftermath.

## Keywords

Greece – Rome – Nazism – Fascism – *romanità* – Philhellenism – chronopolitics

While it is generally acknowledged that fascist movements tend to glorify the national past of the country in which they arise, sometimes, fascist regimes seek to resurrect a past even more ancient, and more glorious still – a phenomenon which has been ascribed to the search for 'distant models'; the turn towards ancient Greece and Rome. This phenomenon is particularly marked in

the case of the two most powerful and indisputably ‘fascist’ regimes of all: Benito Mussolini’s Italy and Adolf Hitler’s Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Previously, the ‘appropriations’ or ‘abuses’ of antiquity perpetrated under Fascism and National Socialism have tended to exercise a rather morbid fascination upon classicists and ancient historians,<sup>2</sup> whilst remaining relatively overlooked by modern historians and scholars of fascism.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is only relatively recently that the Fascist and National Socialist dictatorships’ recourse to such ‘distant models’ has begun to receive serious attention in historical scholarship, rather than being dismissed as superficial legitimatory window-dressing.<sup>4</sup> Even in the wake of the so-called ‘cultural turn’ in fascist studies, classicizing ideology and propaganda has all too often been given short shrift for being a merely ‘reactionary’ or ‘anti-modern’ element of fascism, rather than constituting a genuinely modernizing impulse.<sup>5</sup> Instead, it is

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- 1 Cf. e.g. Robert O. Paxton, ‘The Five Stages of Fascism,’ *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1998): 1–23, and Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), which characterize Italian Fascism and National Socialism as the only two fascist regimes to have endured through all ‘five stages of fascism’, from intellectual exploration to the achievement of power to eventual radicalization or entropy.
  - 2 For a brilliant and highly convincing analysis of this phenomenon, see Katie Fleming, ‘The Use and Abuse of Antiquity: The Politics and Morality of Appropriation,’ in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 127–137; for an example of it at work in practice, see Michael Biddiss and Maria Wyke, ed., *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).
  - 3 Two classical scholars, Volker Losemann and Mariella Cagnetta, provided the first, undeniably ground-breaking studies of classics and ancient history under the Nazi and Fascist regimes respectively: Volker Losemann, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike: Studien zur Entwicklung des Faches Alte Geschichte 1933–1945* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1977); Mariella Cagnetta, *Antichisti e impero fascista* (Bari: Dedalo, 1979). The first major edited volume covering both regimes, Beat Näf, ed., *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Mandelbachtal: Cicero, 2001), which contained an extensive number of useful essays, as well as a comprehensive bibliography of relevant items published before the turn of the millennium, was also fundamentally an initiative by classical scholars. Meanwhile, many of the most seminal histories or handbooks on fascism mention classical appropriations barely, if at all: e.g. Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945* (London: Routledge, 2003); Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*; and Richard J. B. Bosworth, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
  - 4 Cf. Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 2–5.
  - 5 Cf. e.g. Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); for further discussion of this problem see Joshua Arthurs, ‘The

treated simply as a more extreme version of that inherent and indiscriminate ‘passatism’ or longing for palingenesis which besets all fascist regimes in some form or another.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the shared peculiarities of this particular preference for the classical past in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany have rarely been considered, nor have the deeper roots of this predilection been disinterred systematically and analyzed comparatively; in general, Mussolinian *romanità* has received the lion’s share of the scholarly attention.<sup>7</sup>

In this article, I aim to remedy this state of affairs by putting forward two, interconnected, strands of argument. Firstly, I wish to propose that, rather than being linked specifically to the dictates of fascist ideology or the traumas of the First World War and its aftermath, the twin phenomena of *romanità* and Nazi Hellenophile classicism have equally deep roots in their respective national cultures; in order to appreciate their significance fully, we need to look back far beyond the twentieth century, beyond Italian and German unification, and even beyond the Napoleonic Wars. Relatedly, I wish to suggest that the similarities between these classicizing phenomena can in part be explained by the historical difficulties inherent in constructing stable national identities

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Excavatory Intervention: Archaeology and the Chronopolitics of Roman Antiquity in Fascist Italy,’ *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 1 (2015): 44–58, especially pp. 45–47; also Roger Griffin, ‘Fascism’s Modernist Revolution: A New Paradigm for the Study of Right-Wing Dictatorships,’ *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 5 (2016): 105–129, especially pp. 126ff, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00502002>.

- 6 See the classic account of fascism as ‘palingenetic ultranationalism’ in Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*; also Roger Griffin, ‘Fixing Solutions: Fascist Temporalities as Remedies for Liquid Modernity,’ *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 1 (2015): 5–23.
- 7 For recent treatments of *romanità* by historians, see Emilio Gentile’s comprehensive study of Mussolini’s attempt to cast the Italians as the ‘Romans of modernity,’ *Fascismo di pietra* (Bari: Laterza, 2007); also Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, and several notable contributions by Aristotle Kallis and Jan Nelis: e.g. Aristotle Kallis, ‘“Framing” *Romanità*: The Celebrations for the *Bimillenario Augusteo* and the *Augusteo-Ara Pacis* Project,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 4 (2011): 809–831; Aristotle Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922–43: The Making of the Fascist Capital* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jan Nelis, ‘Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of *Romanità*,’ *Classical World* 100, no. 4 (2007): 391–415; Jan Nelis, ‘Back to the Future: Italian Fascist Representations of the Roman Past,’ *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 3, no. 1 (2014): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00301001>. On National Socialism and antiquity, see most recently Johann Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans: How the Nazis Usurped Europe’s Classical Past* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016). Meanwhile, Katie Fleming’s handbook entry, ‘Fascism,’ in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Craig W. Kallendorf (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 342–354, provides an extremely concise (yet telling) example of the benefits accrued by examining Fascist and National Socialist attitudes to classical antiquity from a comparative perspective.

in Italy and Germany, due to the long-fractured nature of their polities, and the discontents of late unification in both countries.

The intention here is not to put forward some sort of essentializing classical *Sonderweg*, or to peddle simplistic historical parallels, but rather to suggest that identification with an idealized and imaginary ancient Greece and Rome played an analogous function in helping first to create, and then to strengthen, national identities at similar junctures in German and Italian history.<sup>8</sup> Nor should this be taken to suggest that other aspects of the more straightforwardly national past – the *Risorgimento*, for example, or the exploits of Bismarck and the Wars of Unification – were unimportant in Fascist and National Socialist myth-making (indeed, it would be perfectly possible to write a history of Fascist Italy or of Nazi Germany without mentioning their classicizing predilections at all).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, this is arguably still an important and deeply-rooted cultural trope which – as recent scholarship has begun to indicate – merits serious investigation in its own right.

In what follows, I shall begin by providing a brief outline of the relevant spheres of historiography which have informed this essay's approach, situating my discussion within the current debate on fascist 'chronopolitics'. I will then proceed to delineate the ways in which Mussolini's 'Third Rome' and Hitler's Third Reich variously appropriated and functionalized classical antiquity. Finally, I will analyze the rootedness of Nazi philhellenism and Fascist *romanità* within their corresponding historical contexts, exploring their respective roles in the formation of German and Italian national identities from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

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8 The negative *Sonderweg* thesis sought to locate Germany's 'special path' to modernity, and in particular its recourse to Nazism and subsequent genocide, in the failure fully to realize democratic impulses prior to unification, especially during the revolutions of 1848; this paradigm implicitly (and at times explicitly) contrasted Germany unfavourably with other longer-standing Western democracies, especially Britain, France and the USA. The argument presented here, by contrast, does not seek to cast judgment upon German and Italian classicizing chronopolitics *per se*; nor does it rule out a further application to many other countries whose identities were similarly in a state of flux, albeit for different reasons. Prime examples might include not only Metaxas' Greece, but also the United States (my thanks to Rebecca Futo-Kennedy for raising this point).

9 cf. e.g. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg, ed., *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Robert Gerwarth, *The Bismarck Myth: Weimar Germany and the Legacy of the Iron Chancellor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 128.

## 1 Fascist Chronopolitics and the Temporal Turn

As Christian Goeschel has noted, it is now increasingly rare for scholars working on Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany to engage seriously either with the historiography of the other country in question, or with the more theoretical literature on generic fascism.<sup>10</sup> In this article, I aim not only to engage in a genuinely comparative endeavour, but also to draw on – and draw together – a number of diverse historiographical strands which, despite the connections which may exist between them, rarely interact with one another: namely, scholarship on the classical tradition, on fascism, and on Italian and German national identity more broadly. That such interactions across historiographies can be extremely fruitful may be exemplified by Goeschel's latest survey of publications which consider aspects of Italian and German history from a comparative perspective; however, there are many fresh insights still to be gained.<sup>11</sup>

However, the most significant recent historiographical development concerning the argument put forward here is undoubtedly the new interest in 'chronopolitics'. Ever since the publication of Reinhard Koselleck's *Futures Past* in 1979,<sup>12</sup> there has arisen a growing fascination with the historical conceptualization of time and temporality – a phenomenon which, in an analogy with the 'spatial turn' of the 1970s and early 1980s, has now been dubbed the 'temporal turn'.<sup>13</sup> More recently, the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships' attitudes towards temporality have received sustained analysis in their own right, rather than merely benefiting from fleeting observations about fascist tendencies to view

10 Christian Goeschel, "Italia docet"? The Relationship between Italian Fascism and Nazism Revisited,' *European History Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 480–492.

11 Christian Goeschel, 'A Parallel History? Rethinking the Relationship between Italy and Germany, ca. 1860–1945,' *The Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 3 (2016): 610–632, provides a comprehensive review of recent comparative literature on Italy and Germany. Earlier works also include Reinhard Elze and Pierangelo Schiera, ed., *Italia e Germania: Immagini, modelli, miti fra due popoli nell'Ottocento: il Medioevo / Das Mittelalter: Ansichten, Stereotypen und Mythen zweier Völker im neunzehnten Jahrhundert: Deutschland und Italien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1988); Richard Bessel, ed., *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Oliver Janz, Pierangelo Schiera, and Hannes Siegrist, ed., *Zentralismus und Föderalismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Deutschland und Italien im Vergleich* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000).

12 Reinhard Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), newly translated by Keith Tribe as *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

13 Cf. Christopher Clark, 'Time of the Nazis: Past and Present in the Third Reich,' in *Obsession der Gegenwart: Zeit im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Alexander C. T. Geppert and Till Kössler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 156–187.

the past cyclically, or to efface the enormous expanses of time which lie between the glories of the historical (or mythical) past and the triumphs of the revolutionary present.<sup>14</sup> It is in this context that Claudio Fogu has popularized the term 'historic present' – in a metaphorical rather than a strictly grammatical sense – to describe the Mussolinian temporal *Weltanschauung*.<sup>15</sup> In general terms, Nazism and Fascism are portrayed as constructing 'hybrid' temporalities, seeking to (re)create a mythical and eternal 'new era', in order to obliterate all the evils of that historicist temporality so beloved of liberal and Marxist modernity.<sup>16</sup>

While it had previously been a commonplace to assert that fascist movements aimed to attach themselves to any convenient historical myth which could provide historical legitimation and continuity in a time of uncertainty, rooted in the discontents of rapid modernization and the traumas of the world's greatest hemoclysm to date, recent research on this particular type of chronopolitics has also stressed the fundamental importance of '[taking] the temporal dimension of each fascism's unique vision of its revolutionary mission' seriously.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the editors of a recent special issue of the *Journal of Modern European History* (dedicated exclusively to the topic of 'fascist temporalities') have also argued for the importance of investigating the 'family resemblances' between Italian Fascism and National Socialism in terms of their 'futures past' – a subject which I explicitly aim to address in this essay.<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, I also wish to suggest that the distinctions which have often been proposed between Nazi and Fascist chronopolitics, which generally represent the National Socialist variant as simply embodying what Christopher

14 E.g. Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary*; Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum, ed., *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Roger Griffin, "I am no Longer Human. I am a Titan. A God!" The Fascist Quest to Regenerate Time, in *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3–23; Kallis, "Framing" *Romanità*, 823ff. For an example of the more superficial type of engagement, see Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right* (London: Routledge, 2002), 121.

15 Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary*; also Claudio Fogu, 'To Make History Present,' in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 33–49.

16 Fernando Esposito and Sven Reichardt, 'Revolution and Eternity: Introductory Remarks on Fascist Temporalities,' *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 1 (2015): 20–43, esp. pp. 40–42; Arthurs, 'The Excavatory Intervention'; also more broadly Fernando Esposito, *Mythische Moderne: Aviatik, Faschismus und die Sehnsucht nach Ordnung in Deutschland und Italien* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2011).

17 Griffin, 'Fixing Solutions,' 21.

18 Cf. Esposito and Reichardt, 'Revolution and Eternity,' 25.

Clark has termed an 'ahistorical, racial continuum-time',<sup>19</sup> and which focus on the racialized aspect of Nazi temporality to the exclusion of all else, still tend to ascribe too great a degree of 'primitivism' or indiscriminate eclecticism to the Third Reich's temporal politics.<sup>20</sup> Hence, it seems crucial not only to 'place the fascist politics of time within a context that extends back at least to the early pivotal years of high modernism, the 1880s and 1890s' (as Fernando Esposito and Sven Reichardt have suggested),<sup>21</sup> but also to appreciate the degree to which the Nazi racial mythicization of antiquity merely represented a transformation of previous cultural trends which had been present in a less virulent and Aryanizing form not just for decades, but even for centuries, beforehand.

In effect, the recourse to classicizing 'distant models' in both the Italian and the German case reflects the fact that both of the antique myths in question represented the culmination or radicalization of pre-existing and venerable national traditions. Indeed, this should scarcely surprise, given the paramount importance of cultural heritage in shaping nationalism, of which fascism generally constitutes an extreme and distorted, yet recognizable, form.<sup>22</sup> Fascism appropriates the ideas and traditions which it finds ready to hand in the nationalist canon, creating a kind of 'fascist national vernacular' – a phenomenon which one might usefully compare with the nationally distinct, yet stylistically related, manifestations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century romantic nationalism found in figurative art or classical music. Nor, given the salience of classical antiquity in providing states with a uniquely authoritative and 'usable' national past, offering a symbolic repertoire of exceptional power and flexibility (particularly when it comes to the justification of revolution or the construction of empire), should it be surprising that two such self-avowedly imperialist dictatorships should find classical models so attractive.<sup>23</sup>

19 Clark, 'Time of the Nazis,' 186.

20 Arthurs, 'The Excavatory Intervention,' 47; cf. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 257. Further examples of this tendency include Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary*; Griffin, 'Fixing Solutions,' 15; the phenomenon is also discernible in Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*.

21 Esposito and Reichardt, 'Revolution and Eternity,' 26.

22 Cf. e.g. A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 71, 84; Aristotle Kallis, 'The "Regime-Model" of Fascism: A Typology,' *European History Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2000), 77–104.

23 Cf. e.g. Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia, ed., *Classics and National Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20–21; Andrea Giardina and André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma da Carlo Magno a Mussolini* (Bari: Laterza, 2000), 126.

In order to pursue these connections further, I shall begin by delineating the relationship between Italian Fascism and the ancient Roman past – otherwise known as *romanità* – before moving on to examine the relationship between Nazism and classical antiquity.

## 2 Mussolini, Fascism and the Myth of Rome

Despite Mussolini's earlier antipathy to the very idea of Rome as Italy's capital – he notoriously thought the city a squalid metropolis, fit only for 'shoeshine boys and prostitutes' – it was later claimed (not least by his mistress and biographer Margherita Sarfatti) that he had idolized ancient Rome since his boyhood.<sup>24</sup> It is generally supposed that the 'myth of Rome' provided Mussolini with an establishment-friendly means of cementing Fascist power, whilst simultaneously removing propagandistic autonomy from his rebellious *ras* [squad leaders], who still regarded '*porca Roma*' as an ill-fated haunt of anti-Fascist reaction, and would far rather have transferred the seat of Fascist government to Milan.<sup>25</sup> In the words of Emilio Gentile, it was at this point that 'the lictorial fasces became the symbol of the Fascist party's ambition to gain a monopoly on political power and on its identification with the nation.'<sup>26</sup> Certainly, Jan Nelis's comprehensive analysis of Mussolini's writings on the theme demonstrates that, following the end of the First World War, ancient Rome was to become a constantly recurring exemplar in the Duce's thought – not least in terms of race ('The Romans of antiquity were incredible racists') and the pursuit of power in the Mediterranean.<sup>27</sup>

Once Fascism had gained power, the glorification of ancient Rome was rarely absent from Mussolini's rhetoric – or from his far-reaching plans for the Fascist future. This glorification took many forms – from the declaration of Rome's 'birthday' as a national holiday (replacing the socialist May Day celebrations) to the pronouncement of a resurrection of the Roman Empire on Rome's 'fatal hills' following Italy's victorious colonial exploits in Ethiopia.<sup>28</sup> However, as far

24 Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 212–213; Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 31, 57–60.

25 Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 53, 66–68. On modern anti-Romanism more generally, see Joshua Arthurs, 'The Eternal Parasite: Anti-Romanism in Italian Politics and Culture since 1860,' *Annali d'Italianistica* 28 (2010), 117–136.

26 Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 63.

27 Nelis, 'Constructing Fascist Identity,' 400–401.

28 Cf. Luisa Quartermaine, "'Slouching Towards Rome": Mussolini's Imperial Vision,' in *Urban Society in Roman Italy*, ed. T. J. Cornell and Kathryn Lomas (London: Routledge, 1995), 203–215. Epic films set in the ancient Roman past, such as *Scipione l'Africano* (1937), also provided a more popular form of propagandistic legitimation for such classicizing

as the Duce himself was concerned, it manifested itself most particularly in two ways. Firstly, the salvific qualities and, increasingly, the statuesque gravitas of a Roman emperor were ascribed to Mussolini; secondly, at his behest, the archaeological and architectural fabric of the city of Rome was utterly transformed – like Augustus himself, Rome’s twentieth-century ‘Dux’ wished to transfigure the city which he had triumphantly conquered from prosaic stone to magnificent marble.

While contemptuous foreigners and anti-Fascists might dismiss the Duce as a mere ‘sawdust Caesar’ whose antique pretensions deserved only ridicule, Mussolini himself took such comparisons with the utmost seriousness.<sup>29</sup> He was said to keep a bust of Julius Caesar on his desk, lionizing him as ‘the greatest of all men who have ever lived’ (or, depending on his interlocutor, the greatest after Jesus Christ).<sup>30</sup> Yet, given the short-lived nature of Caesar’s rule, and his violent and brutal death at the hands of conspirators, this model was bound to be superseded once the ‘new Rubicon’ of the March on Rome had been left behind. Especially once the perquisites of empire seemed to be within his grasp, the ascension of Octavian and his transformation into Augustus Caesar seemed to provide a more fitting model for Mussolini’s own ambitions.<sup>31</sup> For the ‘Dux’, the fall of the Roman Empire had apparently only been temporary, as pictures of him posing magisterially on horseback in Tripoli – accompanied by literal Libyan ‘lictors’ in antique costume, bearing ‘authentic’ reproduction fasces – were clearly intended to imply.<sup>32</sup>

Even Augustus’ subsequent deification seemed to find its mirror in those propaganda images of Mussolini which portrayed him as more statuesque and

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parallels. See further Arthur J. Pomeroy, ‘Classical Antiquity, Cinema and Propaganda,’ in *Brill’s Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, ed. Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 264–285.

29 George Seldes, *Sawdust Caesar: The Untold History of Mussolini and Fascism* (New York: Harper, 1935); cf. Maria Wyke, ‘Sawdust Caesar: Mussolini, Julius Caesar, and the Drama of Dictatorship,’ in *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity*, ed. Michael Biddiss and Maria Wyke (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 167–186.

30 Wyke, ‘Sawdust Caesar,’ 169; Alexander Demandt, ‘Klassik als Klischee: Hitler und die Antike,’ *Historische Zeitschrift* 274 (2002): 281–313; here, p. 285.

31 Ann Thomas Wilkins, ‘Augustus, Mussolini, and the Parallel Imagery of Empire,’ in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 53–65; cf. Fleming, ‘Fascism,’ 344–345.

32 Gerald Silk, ‘“Il Primo Pilota”: Mussolini, Fascist Aeronautical Symbolism, and Imperial Rome,’ in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 67–81, esp. pp. 79–80.

godlike than merely human (the dictator was known to practise what he considered to be suitably ‘Roman’ martial poses – chin jutting forward, back ramrod straight – in order to facilitate the creation of such iconography).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Mussolini risked becoming ever more enthralled with his own myth and apparent apotheosis, not only adapting Augustus’ own *bons mots* for his own ends, but also buying into the flood of hagiographic encomia which claimed that he had equalled or bettered not only Julius Caesar and Augustus, but also Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Trajan, and all the rest.<sup>34</sup> It was no coincidence that, after the Duce had been deposed, popular graffiti mocked both his Roman pretensions and his headlong fall from pseudo-divine grace: ‘*Voleva essere Cesare, morì Vespasiano*’ [‘He wanted to be Caesar, but died Vespasian’].<sup>35</sup>

Yet it was Mussolini’s Augustan attitude to the physical fabric of Rome which has left behind the most telltale traces of Fascism in present-day Italy. The Duce’s personal interest in Roman archaeology, and his desire to efface the remnants of the ‘backward’ medieval, baroque and Renaissance past, led to the literal ‘disembowelling’ of the city in order to ‘liberate’ ancient Roman monuments, whilst modern new thoroughfares and classicizing architectural settings were simultaneously constructed in order to showcase them appropriately.<sup>36</sup> The most famous of these endeavours include the restoration of the Ara Pacis and the transformation of the Circus Maximus, as well as the creation of the Foro Mussolini (now Foro Italico) and the Via dell’Impero.<sup>37</sup>

The culmination of these grandiose programmes for remaking Rome’s urban space can still be seen today, in the form of the buildings on the intended

33 Silk, “Il Primo Pilota”; Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 133, 221.

34 Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 253; Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 137.

35 Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 274; Joshua Arthurs, “Voleva essere Cesare, morì Vespasiano”: The Afterlives of Mussolini’s Rome, *Civiltà Romana: Rivista pluridisciplinare di studi su Roma antica e le sue interpretazioni* 1 (2015): 283–302. As Arthurs points out (page 286), this was ‘a double insult, since not only was Vespasian a lesser emperor, but *vespasiano* is [also] slang for “urinal”’.

36 Cf. Borden W. Painter, *Mussolini’s Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); John A. Agnew, “Ghosts of Rome”: The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy’s Capital City, *Annali d’Italianistica* 28 (2010): 179–198; Paul Baxa, *Roads and Ruins: The Symbolic Landscape of Fascist Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Aristotle Kallis, “The “Third Rome” of Fascism: Demolitions and the Search for a New Urban Syntax,” *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 1 (2012): 40–79; Kallis, *The Third Rome*.

37 Cf. P. Aicher, ‘Mussolini’s Forum and the Myth of Augustan Rome,’ *The Classical Bulletin* 76 (2000): 117–139; Aristotle Kallis, ‘The Factory of Illusions in the “Third Rome”: Circus Maximus as a Space of Fascist Simulation,’ *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 3 (2014): 20–45, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00301002>; Kallis, “Framing” *Romanità*.’

site of the EUR/E42 global exhibition ground – including the monumental stripped classicism of the ‘quadratic coliseum’ which was to serve as the Fascist ‘Palace of Roman Civilization’. Linking the Fascist Empire’s future maritime base at Ostia and the heart of the ancient city, the exhibition village also provided the perfect showcase for the grandeur that would be the new Rome. Although many of the quarter’s planned buildings were never completed, the area nevertheless remains a forceful monument to the regime’s classicizing vision.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, as Joshua Arthurs has rightly emphasized, it was not Mussolini alone who propagated the myth of Fascism’s freshly-recreated and eternal Rome. Countless scholars, teachers, architects, artists, archaeologists and intellectuals of all stripes responded to the Duce’s antique vision, building a consensus ‘from below’, and lending credence, expression and propagandistic power to the cult of *romanità*. Despite the fact that Roman images dominated the Fascist visual imaginary, from the fasces and the Roman she-wolf to the eagle-topped battle-standards and the ubiquitous legend *SPQR*, the pursuit of *romanità* was by no means a mere ‘directive issued by a totalitarian monolithic state’. Rather, it was the product of ‘complex negotiations . . . between the regime and the academy . . . and between intellectual currents that ranged from anticlericalism to Catholicism, modernism to historicism, nationalism, and universalism.’<sup>39</sup>

To take just one example of this phenomenon, which has only recently been brought to light by the pioneering work of Han Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse, the Fascist accession to power heralded an unprecedented explosion of Latin-language literature, ‘ranging from lyric odes in praise of Mussolini to prose orations extolling the new regime, from epics on Italy’s martial exploits in Africa to Latin inscriptions on monuments old and new.’<sup>40</sup> Of course, some of these efforts were promoted officially, such as school texts, the Fascist teacher association ANIF’s ‘Concorso Dux’ competition for the best Latin poem in honour of Mussolini, or the *Codex Fori Mussolini*, a messianic depiction of Fascist history which, painstakingly copied onto parchment, had been buried

38 Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 183–195.

39 Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 6; Marla Stone, ‘A Flexible Rome: Fascism and the Cult of *Romanità*,’ in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, ed. Catharine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 205–220; See also Romke Visser, ‘Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the *Romanità*,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (1992): 5–22; and Andrea Giardina, ‘The Fascist Myth of Romanity,’ *Estudos Avançados* 22 (2008): 55–76, esp. p. 73.

40 Han Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse, ‘Lingua Lictoria: The Latin Literature of Italian Fascism,’ *Classical Receptions Journal* 8, no. 2 (2016): 216–252, quotation from p. 217.

under a marble obelisk in the Foro Mussolini in order to astonish future generations thousands of years hence.<sup>41</sup>

However, other manifestations of this new fervour for *Latinitas* simply represented the unforced efforts of individual schoolteachers, intellectuals and academics who were keen to present Latin as ‘the perfect expression of the new spirit of Italian Fascism’.<sup>42</sup> Similar collaborations also characterized the gargantuan *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* [Augustan Exhibition of *Romanità*] celebrating the emperor’s bimillenary, which represented a concerted attempt to assimilate the Age of Augustus and the Age of Mussolini in the eyes of the public, yet which was also the product of enthusiastic cooperation between scholars and museum staff, as well as government officials.<sup>43</sup> And, while more populist manifestations of *romanità* – advertisements for viscose starring the Dea Roma, or modern mosaics featuring tennis-players or lorries of club-bearing *squadristi* – might seem to us the height of kitsch, they were clearly seen at the time as effective ways of ‘marketing’ the idea of Fascist Rome’s antique modernity to the Italian populace at large.<sup>44</sup>

The effectiveness of all this may at least partially be suggested by the popularity of Romanizing names such as Romano, Romolo, Remo, and Littorio (or even Natale Romano!) in christening records during this period.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, purists might decry the classicizing tat that decorated local Fascist headquarters, including ‘incredible painted wall decorations, horrible tinted-chalk busts in every corner [...and] gilt stucco lictor’s fasces that look to be bundles of kindling’, or curse the Fascistizing flood of knick-knacks and bric-a-brac in the form of fasces-shaped lamps, desk accessories, jewellery, and children’s toys – yet all of these were clearly popular in their day.<sup>46</sup>

All in all, ancient Rome seemed to provide a perfect – and infinitely ‘flexible’ – paradigm for Fascist dominion and conquest, as well as for the re-

41 Cf. Han Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse, *The Codex Fori Mussolini: A Latin Text of Italian Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

42 Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, ‘Lingua Lictoria’, esp. p. 232.

43 Cf. Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, Ch. 4. Collaboration of a similar kind also occurred in the state-sponsored Istituto dei Studi Romani (*Ibid.*, Ch. 2).

44 See the illustrations in Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 102, facing page 183, and in Lazzaro and Crum, *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, 19.

45 Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 240.

46 Claudia Lazzaro, ‘Forging a Visible Fascist Nation: Strategies for Fusing Past and Present,’ in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 13–31, p. 16; the quotation is taken from Giuseppe Bottai’s comments in the 15 February 1927 edition of *Critica Fascista*, translated in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, ed., *A Primer of Italian Fascism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 235.

gime's internal political order.<sup>47</sup> Whether it was being used to validate 'back-to-nature' nostalgic ruralism and land reclamation projects, to promote 'Roman virtues' such as strength, courage and martial prowess,<sup>48</sup> to justify the deconstruction and reconstruction of the architectural fabric of Italian cities,<sup>49</sup> or simply to furnish the Fascist hierarchy with a sufficiently symbolic and imposing repertoire of images and political vocabulary, the myth of Rome seemed to have become 'perhaps the most pervasive . . . belief in Fascism's entire symbolic universe'.<sup>50</sup> It was not for nothing that, in a speech proclaimed shortly prior to the March on Rome, Mussolini had proclaimed '*Civis Romanus sum*'.<sup>51</sup>

### 3 Hitler, Nazism and Antiquity

For Hitler, no less than for Mussolini, Roman history provided an ideal *Lehrmeisterin der Zukunft*, an eternal blueprint for securing and immortalizing imperial dominion – a fact which undoubtedly had a considerable impact on the Führer's own self-conception, both as an architect and as a military commander.<sup>52</sup> To Hitler's mind, Rome represented the perfect paradigm for acquiring and securing the modern trappings and infrastructure of imperial power – untiring legions, colonial Autobahns as straight and efficiently-designed for military transport as any Roman road, and monumental architecture on a scale that was deliberately intended to dwarf Mussolini's puny efforts.<sup>53</sup>

47 Cf. Stone, 'A Flexible Rome.'

48 Giardina, 'The Fascist Myth of Romanity.'

49 Cf. e.g. Ray Laurence, 'Tourism, Town Planning and *Romanitas*: Rimini's Roman Heritage,' in *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity*, ed. Michael Biddiss and Maria Wyke (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 187–205.

50 Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism as Political Religion,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 2/3 (1990): 229–251; here, p. 244.

51 *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 21 April 1922, in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 18, ed. E. and D. Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1956), 160–161.

52 Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 230; cf. Volker Losemann, 'The Nazi Concept of Rome,' in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, ed. Catharine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 221–235; John T. Quinn, 'The Ancient Rome of Adolf Hitler,' *The Classical Bulletin*, 76 (2000), 141–156. On Hitler's attitude to antiquity in general, see also Pierre Villard, 'Antiquité et *Weltanschauung* Hitlérienne,' *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* 88 (1972): 1–18; Demandt, 'Klassik als Klischee.'

53 On the competition between Hitler and Mussolini over classicizing architecture, see e.g. Kallis, "'Framing" Romanità,' 828–829; also Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 147; Kallis, *The Third Rome*, 13; Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 73–76, 364; Moritz Föllmer, '*Ein Leben wie im Traum*': *Kultur im Dritten Reich* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2016), 134, 146–147.

Yet, when it came to finding a fitting paradigm for the ‘anthropological revolution’ which the Führer envisioned, ultimately, the ‘Greeks of modernity’ appeared more apposite than the Duce’s latter-day ancient Romans. When searching for a model for artistic, cultural and social life, or even for long-term colonisation, it was to the ancient Greek world – and not least to the martial simplicity of Lacedaemon – that Hitler and many of his hierarchs turned with most fervour. Once imperium had been obtained with Roman legionary precision, the Spartiate-helot dynamic still remained the favoured ideal for National Socialist dominion over the conquered Eastern territories of the ‘Thousand-Year Reich’.<sup>54</sup>

Certainly, in the regime’s highest echelons, very few apart from Himmler were interested in glorifying the exploits of the ancient Germans – not least given Hitler’s obvious contempt for their cultural ‘achievements’. As the Führer allegedly pointed out with irritation when Himmler’s obsession with resurrecting the culture of the ancient Germanic tribes became too prominent, the Athenians had built the Parthenon at a time when Germanic tribesmen were still stuck in mud huts; hence, ‘if anyone asks us about our ancestors, we should continually allude to the ancient Greeks.’<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, in no less influential a work than *Mein Kampf*, Hitler claimed that the struggle for supremacy which Germany was currently waging ‘unites the millennia, and embraces both *Griechentum* and *Germanentum* together.’<sup>56</sup> It was not for nothing that one of the most prominent floats in the processions celebrating ‘2,000 years of Germanic culture’ at the *Tage der deutschen Kunst* in Munich boasted a gigantic bust of the ancient goddess Athena, accompanied by acolytes in pseudo-Greek robes.<sup>57</sup> In the National Socialist worldview, the ancient Greek and the Germanic were often inextricably intertwined.

Hence, the National Socialist ‘new man’ generally took the form of a young Greek Adonis, as petrifically personified in the heroic neo-Grec nudes of an Arno Breker or a Josef Thorak; he was to undergo an ideal ‘*paideia*’ in the new Nazi ‘*gymnasion*’, which would provide him with a genuine fusion of physical

54 Ben Kiernan, ‘Hitler, Pol Pot, and Hutu Power: Distinguishing Themes in Genocidal Ideology,’ *The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme Discussion Papers Journal* (2009), 19–31, pp. 22–23.

55 Werner Jochmann, *Adolf Hitler: Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944* (Hamburg: Knaus, 1980), 214.

56 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943), 470.

57 Föllmer, ‘*Ein Leben wie im Traum*,’ 112–116; cf. Stefan Schweizer, ‘*Unserer Weltanschauung sichtbaren Ausdruck geben: Nationalsozialistische Geschichtsbilder in historischen Festzügen zum ‘Tag der deutschen Kunst’*’ (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 143–144.

and intellectual education, just as in ancient Greece;<sup>58</sup> and he would reach the acme of attainment whilst competing in a new Olympic Games, whose tangible connections with the glories of ancient Olympia made manifest that consanguinary destiny which inexorably linked the present-day Germans with the ancient Greeks.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, when the German invasion of modern Greece began in April 1941, the Wehrmacht were encouraged to perceive the campaign as a mere 'return' to safeguard their own 'ancestral' land – an age-old belief in a mystical Greco-German kinship was forged anew in the fires of chauvinism and racial determinism, so that the spirit of that greatest of philhellenes, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, was even enlisted as the campaign's spiritual patron.<sup>60</sup>

Yet the Greek city-state which functioned most superbly as an avatar for the Third Reich's own aspirations ultimately had to be Sparta.<sup>61</sup> It was not only that Hitler's *Schwärmerei* for Sparta had always been particularly pronounced – for

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- 58 Helen Roche, "Anti-Enlightenment": National Socialist Educators' Troubled Relationship with Humanism and the Philhellenist Tradition, *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 82, no. 3 (2013): 193–207.
- 59 Klaus Wolbert, *Die Nackten und die Toten des 'Dritten Reiches': Folgen einer politischen Geschichte des Körpers in der Plastik des deutschen Faschismus* (Gießen: Anabas, 1982); Daniel Wildmann, *Begehrte Körper: Konstruktion und Inszenierung des 'arischen' Männerkörpers im 'Dritten Reich'* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998); Ingomar Weiler, 'Zur Rezeption des griechischen Sports im Nationalsozialismus: Kontinuität oder Diskontinuität in der deutschen Ideengeschichte?' in *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Beat Näf (Mandelbachtal: Cicero, 2001), 267–284.
- 60 Esther Sophia Sünderhauf, *Griechensehnsucht und Kulturkritik: Die deutsche Rezeption von Winckelmanns Antikenideal 1840–1945* (Berlin: Akademie, 2004), 344–352; cf. Christopher Meid, *Griechenland-Imaginationen: Reiseberichte im 20. Jahrhundert von Gerhart Hauptmann bis Wolfgang Koeppen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), ch. III.3.
- 61 Cf. Helen Roche, "In Sparta fühlte ich mich wie in einer deutschen Stadt" (Goebbels): The Leaders of the Third Reich and the Spartan Nationalist Paradigm, in *English and German Nationalist and Anti-Semitic Discourse, 1871–1945*, ed. Felicity Rash, Geraldine Horan, and Daniel Wildmann (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 91–115; also Elizabeth Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 342; Volker Losemann, 'Sparta in the Third Reich,' in *The Contribution of Ancient Sparta to Political Thought and Practice*, ed. Nikos Birgalias, Kostas Buraselis and Paul Cartledge (Athens: Alexandria Publications, 2007), 449–463; Volker Losemann, 'The Spartan Tradition in Germany, 1870–1945,' in *Sparta in Modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture*, ed. Stephen Hodkinson and Ian Macgregor Morris (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2012), 253–314; Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 214–228.

the Führer, she would always remain the ‘purest racial state in history’.<sup>62</sup> Rather, there was much in Spartan history itself – the gruelling, warriorly training of the state’s youth; the putative eugenic policies; the obsession with heroic death, as embodied by King Leonidas and the three hundred – which seemed uncannily to mirror the Nazi state’s deepest aspirations.

Many outside observers – from France to Britain to Soviet Russia – commented on the eerie similarities which they discerned between Sparta and the Third Reich, and not only because they had been convinced (or bamboozled) by the regime’s own rhetoric.<sup>63</sup> Unsurprisingly, all of these correspondences were exploited a thousand-fold by the Nazi leaders themselves, some of whom even made private pilgrimages to Sparta. Thus Goebbels declared, when he visited Sparta in 1936, that he felt ‘just as if he were in a German city’,<sup>64</sup> while Education Minister Bernhard Rust was often to be heard proclaiming ominously (and with great emphasis) that the Third Reich must ‘rear a race of Spartans, and any who are unwilling to espouse this Spartiate community must relinquish forever their claim to be citizens of our state.’<sup>65</sup> Indeed, Reich Agriculture Minister Richard Walther Darré was so impressed with the Lacedaemonian example that, in 1933, he drew up a new entailed-estate law based explicitly on Spartan legislation.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, as World War II progressed, it became impossible to avoid the grotesque characterization of the German forces’ catastrophic encirclement at Stalingrad as a modern Battle of

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- 62 Speech at the NSDAP party conference, 8 August 1929, cited in Klaus Lankheit, ed., *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, Band III Teil 2* (Munich: Saur, 1994), 348; cf. Adolf Hitler, *Hitlers Zweites Buch* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1961), 56–57.
- 63 Cf. e.g. Henri Lichtenberger, *L’Allemagne nouvelle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1936), ch. 5; Stephen Hodkinson, ‘Sparta and Nazi Germany in mid-20th-century British Liberal and Left-Wing Thought,’ in *Sparta: The Body Politic*, ed. Anton Powell and Stephen Hodkinson (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2010), 297–342; Losemann, ‘Spartan Tradition,’ 284.
- 64 Athenian Embassy Report, 30 September 1936, quoted in Hagen Fleischer, ‘Die “Viehmenschen” und das “Sauvolk”: Feindbilder einer dreifachen Okkupation: Der Fall Griechenland,’ in *Kultur – Propaganda – Öffentlichkeit: Intentionen deutscher Besatzungspolitik und Reaktionen auf die Okkupation*, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Gerhard Otto (Berlin: Metropol, 1998), 135–169, p. 135; cf. Goebbels’ diary entry from 26 September 1936 in Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, Teil I, Band 3/II* (Munich: Saur, 2001), 194: ‘Nothing from antiquity remains to be seen . . . but just to know the place where Sparta once lay is thrilling.’
- 65 Bernhard Rust, ‘Rede des Preuß. Kultusministers Rust bei der Einweihung der landgebundenen Hochschule für Lehrerbildung in Lauenburg (Pommern) am 24. Juni 1933,’ in *Deutsche Erziehung im neuen Staat*, ed. Friedrich Hiller (Langensalza: Julius Beltz, 1935), 45 (both types of emphasis are in the original).
- 66 Volker Losemann, ‘“Ein Staatsgedanke aus Blut und Boden”: R.W. Darré und die Agrargeschichte Spartas,’ *Laverna* 16 (2005): 67–120.

Thermopylae – a propaganda conceit orchestrated by Goebbels, and performed on air with the utmost verve by Goering, Hitler's heftiest henchman, in his *Appell an die Wehrmacht* (30 January 1943).<sup>67</sup>

Once again, one did not have to look far to find enthusiastic appropriation of these ideas by academics, teachers, students, artists and intellectuals, as well as the commercial endorsement of such Spartan aspirations by firms marketing new products such as 'Sparta-Crème' (a brand of sun cream distributed by a well-known *eau de cologne* manufacturer).<sup>68</sup> Moreover, one certainly did not have to believe (as Hitler apparently did) that the Spartans were indubitably blood-relatives of the simple peasants of Schleswig-Holstein, due to their shared predilection for 'black broth', in order to hail the Third Reich as a totalitarian *Sparta rediviva*.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it was under just such a rubric that the members of the White Rose resistance group castigated the regime in one of their leaflets, before their activities were brought abruptly to a cruel and untimely close.<sup>70</sup>

Of course, none of this is to say that the German past was considered unimportant under Nazism, or to deny that models from other nations and cultures, such as the British Empire, the United States or Japan, had an important role to play.<sup>71</sup> Nor is it to suggest that this 'philhellenism in a new key' was expressed in anything other than an Aryanizing mode, conditioned by racist assumptions.<sup>72</sup> However, it does seem that there is more at stake here than a simple mythicizing 'Aryanization' of the entirety of Greco-Roman history, without precedent or preference.<sup>73</sup> Rather, where the history of the ancient world had

67 Roderick Watt, 'Wanderer, kommst du nach Sparta': History through Propaganda into Literary Commonplace,' *The Modern Language Review* 80, no. 4 (1985): 871–883; Stefan Rebenich, 'From Thermopylae to Stalingrad: The Myth of Leonidas in German Historiography,' in *Sparta: Beyond the Mirage*, ed. Stephen Hodkinson and Anton Powell (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2002), 323–349; Anouschka Albertz, *Exemplarisches Heldentum: Die Rezeptionsgeschichte der Schlacht an den Thermopylen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006), 293–308; Helen Roche, 'Wanderer, kommst du nach Sparta oder nach Stalingrad? Ancient Ideals of Self-sacrifice and German Military Propaganda,' in *Making Sacrifices: Visions of Sacrifice in European and American Cultures*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Gregor Thuswaldner (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 66–86.

68 Losemann, 'Spartan Tradition,' esp. pp. 278–279.

69 Picker, *Tischgespräche*, 101 (4 February 1942).

70 Losemann, 'Spartan Tradition,' 295.

71 Cf. Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 523.

72 The quotation is taken from Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 343.

73 Pace Chapoutot, who appears to subscribe to this view throughout.

of necessity to be considered in something approaching its entirety – in history or classics lessons in schools, and in academia – or when the search was on for suitable historical examples of racial rise, decline and fall – then the whole of antiquity would be mined and presented in racialized terms.<sup>74</sup> But when a specific model from antiquity was being sought for the *society* which the Third Reich desired to construct, then that model was taken neither from Germanic nor from Roman history, but from Greece. Perhaps most tellingly of all, it was the Spartan paradigm with which the future leaders of the Third Reich were inculcated so assiduously at their elite boarding-schools, the National Political Education Institutes (NPEA) and the Adolf-Hitler-Schools.<sup>75</sup>

#### 4 German Philhellenism, *Romanità*, and the Discontents of National Identity

But should this seeming surfeit of Nazi philhellenism and phillaconism surprise us any more than Mussolini's lust to recreate the grandeur that was Rome? In what follows, I will argue that the German recourse to ancient Greece and the Italian recourse to ancient Rome performed a somewhat analogous function, in the context of a long period of fractured national identity preceding a process of national unification which was often perceived, both by nationalist contemporaries as well as by external observers, as 'belated' and problematic.<sup>76</sup>

74 Helen Roche, 'Blüte und Zerfall: "Schematic Narrative Templates" of Decline and Fall in "völkisch" and National Socialist Racial Ideology,' in *The Persistence of Race: Change and Continuity in Germany from the Wilhelmine Empire to National Socialism*, ed. Lara Day and Oliver Haag (Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 65–86; Helen Roche, 'Classics and Education in the Third Reich: *Die Alten Sprachen* and the Nazification of Latin- and Greek-teaching in Secondary Schools,' in *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, ed. Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 238–263.

75 Losemann, 'Spartan Tradition,' 280–281; Helen Roche, 'Spartanische Pimpfe: The Importance of Sparta in the Educational Ideology of the Adolf Hitler Schools,' in *Sparta in Modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture*, ed. Stephen Hodgkinson and Ian Macgregor Morris (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2012), 315–342; Helen Roche, *Sparta's German Children: The Ideal of Ancient Sparta in the Royal Prussian Cadet-Corps, 1818–1920, and in National Socialist Elite Schools (the Napolas), 1933–1945* (Swansea, Classical Press of Wales, 2013).

76 The literature on German national identity and its discontents is vast, and only a few pointers can be given here. John Breuilly, ed., *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking and Remaking of a Modern Nation-State* (London: Longman, 1992); Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770 to the Present Day* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000),

Of course, neither the German pursuit of philhellenism nor the Italian relish for *romanità* went uncontested; still less were they unanimously approved – indeed, from the later nineteenth century, those Germanophiles were legion who would have preferred to forget the classical past altogether and to concentrate upon the Teutonic past alone, while anti-Romanism remained a long-standing feature of Italian political discourse, both before and after the city was crowned the national capital.<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, the veneration of ancient Greece and Rome as a means of bolstering and potentially stabilizing national identity can clearly be discerned in both cases, even if the German variant seems more extreme, inasmuch as it attempted to elide ruptures not only across time but across space as well. Yet, as Brian Vick has noted, it is in some measure precisely this captivation ‘by

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and Stefan Berger, *Germany: Inventing the Nation* (London: Arnold, 2004), collectively provide a comprehensive overview of many of the issues at stake; see also the classic article by James J. Sheehan, ‘What is German History? Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography,’ *The Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 1 (1981): 1–23. Brian Vick’s monograph *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) gives a clear account of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, while Pieter Judson’s essay, ‘Nationalism in the Era of the Nation State, 1870–1945,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 499–526, provides a lucid summary of the state of affairs after German unification (see also footnote 79 below). Regarding the even greater problems inherent in the construction of Italian national identity (not least due to the intense antagonism and mutual incomprehension between the ‘North’ and ‘South’), Christopher Duggan’s *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2008) provides an excellent overview; other synoptic works include Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press, 2009), and Adrian Lyttelton, ed., *Liberal and Fascist Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On national identity more specifically, see (for example) the edited volumes by Gino Bedani and Bruce Haddock, *The Politics of Italian National Identity: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Ascoli and Henneberg, *Making and Remaking Italy*, and Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall, ed., *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); also Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

77 On anti-classicizing Germanophilia, see e.g. Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, ch. 5; on anti-Romanism, see e.g. Adrian Lyttelton, ‘Creating a National Past: History, Myth and Image in the Risorgimento,’ in *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 27–74; Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra*, 25–27; Arthurs, ‘The Eternal Parasite.’

images of both nationality and Greek antiquity' which can usefully offer 'a fresh perspective on certain problems of German national identity'.<sup>78</sup> It is in this spirit that we shall proceed to investigate the relationship between German philhellenism and nationhood, and between Italian nationhood and *romanità*, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

The problems which beset the potential path to German unity were considerable, despite the grand narrative of historical inevitability which nationalist historians such as Treitschke would have their readers believe – ranging from the utter lack of congruity between state borders and linguistic and cultural boundaries (and the attendant rift between *großdeutsch* and *kleindeutsch* visions of the German nation) to the later tensions inherent in integrating a populace which often bore far greater allegiance to ingrained local and regional loyalties than to the newly-formed nation state.<sup>79</sup> Although the Holy Roman Empire might in some measure deserve the designation of a 'weak German proto-state', it was nevertheless (to quote Stefan Berger) 'a motley collection of hundreds of largely autonomous dukedoms, principalities, free cities and clerical fiefdoms which lacked any strong central authority [and incorporated] many territories where the majority of people did not speak a German dialect.'<sup>80</sup>

In the absence of any firm geographical boundaries within which to encompass a putative nation-state, the small minority of nationalist intellectuals who desired the unification of Germany in some form or another not only developed a highly cultural form of nationalism, but also engaged in what Harold

78 Brian Vick, 'Greek Origins and Organic Metaphors: Ideals of Cultural Autonomy in Neo-humanist Germany from Winckelmann to Curtius,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 3 (2002): 483–500, here p. 483.

79 John Breuilly, 'The National Idea in Modern German History', in *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking and Remaking of a Modern Nation-State*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Longman, 1992), 1–28; also the literature listed in footnote 76 above. On the centrifugal effects and relative strength of regional identities even after unification, and the difficulties inherent in creating a viable *kleindeutsch* national identity, see the seminal studies by Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), and Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); as well as Glenn Penny's more recent observations on German 'polycentrism': e.g. H. Glenn Penny, 'German Polycentrism and the Writing of History,' *German History* 30, no. 2 (2012): 265–282.

80 Berger, *Germany*, 1.

James has termed 'the promiscuous construction of a national image, a national identity, and a national mission. They went to classical antiquity as a guide; and they seized models and examples supplied by foreign countries', using them as 'building blocks'.<sup>81</sup>

One of the most seminal of these construction blocks was undoubtedly the turn towards Greek antiquity, initially presented as a paradigm which could satisfactorily trounce the Roman pretensions of the French and their Napoleonic Empire, whilst at the same time endowing Germany with a superior sense of culture and a civilizing mission. In this fashion, Goethe's exhortation to seek out the land of the Greeks with one's soul might seem to be a perfectly legitimate response to the nationalist poet Arndt's despairing cry 'What is the German's fatherland!?' Just as Greece had held her uncouth conqueror captive with her cultural virtues, just so would Germany triumph over French tyranny and find her place upon the world stage. While ancient Rome was often considered too French, too Popish, and too universalist to hold true sway over the German imagination, and while the Germanic past might still seem unpromisingly unrefined to any but the most enthusiastic adherents of *völkisch* nationalism, for many Germans (especially among the middle and upper classes), emulating Greece genuinely did seem the most effective route to cultural, artistic, and ultimately national greatness, as Winckelmann had once proclaimed.<sup>82</sup> This held true just as much in Prussia, the haunt of Wilhelm von Humboldt, doyen of humanism, as it did in Bavaria, the home of Hellenophile King Ludwig I and his son Otto, the first ever King of Greece.<sup>83</sup>

Even after unification, national prestige projects such as the large-scale archaeological excavations which took place in Greece and Asia Minor towards the end of the century were largely framed in philhellenist terms.<sup>84</sup> Despite the growing popularity of more essentialist notions of what 'being German' might consist of, and an increasingly virulent campaign against the monopoly of humanistic *Bildung* (with which Kaiser Wilhelm II clearly sympathized when he accused the *Gymnasium* system of turning out 'young Greeks and Romans' rather than 'nationally-minded young Germans'),<sup>85</sup> movements such as the

81 James, *A German Identity*, 6–8.

82 Glenn W. Most, 'On the Use and Abuse of Ancient Greece for Life,' *Cultura Tedesca* 20 (2002): 31–53; Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 159–160; James, *A German Identity*, 19–21, 44–49.

83 James, *A German Identity*, 44–46.

84 Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, ch. 3.

85 Wilhelm II, 'Eröffnungsansprache zur Schulkonferenz 1890,' in *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte seit 1800*, ed. Gerhardt Giese (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1961), 196–197.

*Lebensreformbewegung*, the *Jugendbewegung*, and even the nudist *Freikörperkultur*, were keen to bolster their neo-Greek and neo-Spartan credentials, sometimes even affirming themselves publicly as 'Deutsch-Hellenes'.<sup>86</sup> Philhellenism might have been only one of the many models available to Germany in terms of creating a serviceable national identity, but the idea of the existence of a mythic Greco-German elective affinity or *Wesensverwandtschaft* ran deep, and possessed an extraordinarily broad appeal, not least because it had been extolled by so many of the towering intellectual figures of the past century-and-a-half, from Winckelmann to Schiller and Herder, and from Goethe to Wagner and Nietzsche.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, the paradigm was an extremely malleable one, encompassing not only the glories of Greek art or the freedoms of Athenian democracy, but also the martial prowess and strict discipline of the Spartan state – a model which had always been particularly favoured by the Prussian military establishment.<sup>88</sup> And, as racial theories began to proliferate from the fin de siècle onwards, it did not take too much imagination to reconstitute the 'elective kinship' as a literal kinship, justified by anthropological theories of mass migration which postulated that the Dorian race had originated in deepest darkest Thuringia (or thereabouts).<sup>89</sup> The Nazified forms of philhellenism sketched above had certainly not sprung fully formed from Hitler's fancy, like Athena from the head of Zeus. Rather, their gestation had been long, arduous, and influential, and although the existence of such ideas could never be said to have predestined or predetermined the use which National Socialism made of them, it was unlikely that the regime would ever have seen fit to ignore them entirely, given the enormous cultural capital which they had accrued hitherto.

During the course of the long nineteenth century, Italy also faced a not dissimilar (though arguably rather harder) struggle to forge a culturally-mediated national identity from an astonishingly disparate array of linguistically, culturally, and infrastructurally divergent states and kingdoms, in the face of

86 Sünderrhauf, *Griechensehnsucht*, ch. III; Losemann, 'Spartan Tradition,' 259–273.

87 Cf. the classic studies by Eliza Marian Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935); Walther Rehm, *Griechentum und Goethezeit: Geschichte eines Glaubens* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1936); also Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, ch. 1.

88 Helen Roche, "Go, tell the Prussians...": The Spartan Paradigm in Prussian Military Thought during the Long Nineteenth Century; *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies* 7 (2012): 25–39.

89 Cf. Fleming, 'Fascism,' 348.

seemingly intractable practical and political problems.<sup>90</sup> Not only was the vast majority of the population indifferent to any loyalty beyond the local municipalism of the *'piccola patria'* – to the extent that onlookers in Naples or Sicily regarding the cheering crowds hailing Italian unification in 1860 could ask bemusedly and without the slightest irony, 'What is Italy?' or even jump to the erroneous conclusion that 'La Talia' must be the King's wife.<sup>91</sup> Rather, the patriotic intellectuals who had conjured up and ultimately realized the idea of a united Italian nation also had to contend with the enmity of the immensely influential – and still temporally powerful – Roman Catholic Church, whose virulent opposition to the unified Italian state was so great that the Vatican did not even acknowledge its existence officially until 1929.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps most disturbingly of all, the gulf which existed between the wealthy, rapidly industrializing North and the desperately poverty-stricken, brigand-haunted agrarian South was so great that (predominantly Northern) politicians would frequently liken the Mezzogiorno to some hideous disease or disfigurement, and compare its lack of civilization unfavourably with that of barbarian Africa (sometimes even inflicting violence of quasi-colonialist brutality on its unruly and immiserated inhabitants).<sup>93</sup>

Thus, the burning question 'Where then is Italy? What does it consist of?' was as pressing for Giuseppe Ferrari and his compatriots in 1848 as it had been for Arndt's non-existent 'Germany' in 1813, yet the problem of 'multiple Italies' was by no means resolved even once the state had finally been unified over a decade later (albeit due more to coincidence and external intervention than the exercise of 'the Italian will').<sup>94</sup> Italy might have been made – but how was one satisfactorily to 'make' the Italians?<sup>95</sup>

90 For an interesting comparison of the Italian and German paths to unification, see Oliver Janz and Hannes Siegrist, 'Zentralismus und Föderalismus- Strukturen und Kulturen im deutsch-italienischen Vergleich: Einleitende Bemerkungen,' in *Zentralismus und Föderalismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Deutschland und Italien im Vergleich* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000), 9–17.

91 Lyttelton, 'Creating a National Past,' 27; Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 211.

92 Alice A. Kelikian, 'The Church and Catholicism,' in *Liberal and Fascist Italy*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 44–61.

93 Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 226–228.

94 Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, esp. page 91; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*; Krystyna Henneberg and Albert Russell Ascoli, 'Introduction: Nationalism and the Uses of Risorgimento Culture,' in *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 1–23.

95 Cf. Bedani and Haddock, *Italian National Identity*, 3; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 36.

To many of Italy's leading political figures, the legacy of Rome seemed to provide a crucial piece in the puzzle of how to reform a reluctant and nationally apathetic populace into a united nation of patriots. Even prior to unification, many of the key architects of the Risorgimento, such as Gioberti, Garibaldi, and Mazzini, had carried a torch for past Roman glories. Each believed in the symbolic potency of ancient Rome, not least because the last time that the Italian peninsula had been united had been under the Roman Empire, some 1,400 years earlier.<sup>96</sup> While Garibaldi was particularly taken with the idea of dictatorship (in its original Roman sense), Mazzini dreamed of a future 'Third Rome'; he famously proclaimed that: 'after the Rome of the Caesars, after the Rome of the Popes, there will come the Rome of the people.'<sup>97</sup> Count Cavour, somewhat more prosaically, also saw Rome as the best choice for the contested national capital, for it was the only city which possessed a memory greater than the merely municipal.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, it was Francesco Crispi, the self-styled 'Italian Bismarck', who first used the Roman Empire as a model for Italy's ill-fated attempts to cut herself a slice of the colonial pie – resurrecting the idea of '*mare nostrum*' decades before Mussolini, and claiming that the greatness of Rome would always demand that Italy possess a proper empire rather than a little kingdom.<sup>99</sup>

The House of Savoy also perceived the myth of Rome as a useful tool for furnishing the young kingdom (and its somewhat controversial Piedmontese ruling dynasty) with a prestigious past – hence such Romanizing monuments as the Vittoriano, or the official archaeological excavations and exhibitions which were devised in the service of *romanità* during the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>100</sup> While the fasces and the Roman she-wolf had been familiar iconographically at least since the Risorgimento, the idea that classical history could form a seamless conjunction with Italian national history was imbibed enthusiastically by a whole generation of scholars and intellectuals, many of whom would later see no incongruity in furthering the Fascist 'cult of *romanità*' along similar lines.<sup>101</sup>

96 Cf. Philippe Foro, 'Romaniser la Nation et nationaliser la romanité: l'exemple de l'Italie,' *Anabases: Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité* 1 (2005): 105–117; Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 128, 130, 156.

97 Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 128, 177; Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 169–172.

98 Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 186–187; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 42ff.

99 Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 196; Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 381; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, ch. 6, 66.

100 Foro, 'Romaniser la Nation,' 106–107; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, ch. 3.

101 Lazzaro, 'Forging a Visible Fascist Nation,' 16; Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine,' 7–8. In this context, Emilio Gentile has argued that Mazzini sought to establish a new 'political religion'

Thus, the necessity of both living up to and, in some sense, recreating the ancient Roman past gradually became part and parcel of the educated Italian's mental furniture, and the disappointments and failures of the Italian parliamentary state in the decades prior to the First World War merely led nationalist activists such as Gabriele D'Annunzio to bemoan the extent to which the ancient ideal of Rome had been betrayed.<sup>102</sup> If Mussolini could overcome the 'missed opportunities' of the Risorgimento and resurrect Rome more truly, then, in the view of many observers, that was surely a development to be welcomed.<sup>103</sup> From this perspective, the equation of ancient Rome with Italian national redemption possessed just as venerable a history as that of German philhellenism, and one which, without causing any unconscionable ruptures with the recent past, Fascism could just as easily exploit to the full.<sup>104</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

As this brief sketch has demonstrated, there are undoubtedly salient differences as well as significant parallels between the ways in which these two classical models were deployed. For instance, the 'cult of *romanità*' appears (at least at first glance) to have been imposed in a more top-down fashion by the ruling classes, whereas philhellenism seemed to encompass a broader church – perhaps in part because 'ancient Greece' itself was such a multifarious historical phenomenon, providing a more varied selection of polities and *mores* which could cater to all tastes, from the aspiring Social Democrat to the Platonic pederast to the laconophile Prussian general.

Nevertheless, I hope to have shown that considering these two classicizing phenomena side by side can prove illuminating from a number of perspectives. Firstly, it seems obvious that we do indeed need to treat the antique pretensions of both Mussolini's 'Third Rome' and Hitler's Third Reich with a suitable degree of seriousness, acknowledging their not insubstantial

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centred around Rome, which later found its most virulent expression under Fascism; cf. Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1993).

102 Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 177, 351–352, 375.

103 Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine,' 8–10; Foro, 'Romaniser la Nation,' 113–116.

104 While the Nazi and Fascist regimes' take on ancient Greece and Rome usually boasted a strongly and (more or less) officially propagandistic element, which, in the case of the Third Reich, was particularly overlaid with the rhetoric of race, there still exist clearly discernible continuities with the discourses employed in pre-Fascist *romanità* and philhellenism respectively.

intellectual pedigree, and siting them within a far broader timeframe than has often been considered,<sup>105</sup> rather than ascribing them merely to the national trauma experienced in the aftermath of World War I (as Johann Chapoutot has most insistently proposed in the German case).<sup>106</sup>

Relatedly, it seems necessary to acknowledge that, in both instances, this turn to antiquity never *merely* represented a stock manifestation of the fascist response to modernity by glorifying any old mythic past, but rather represented the nationally-specific, fascistizing incarnation of a pre-existing claim to classicizing national identity, constructed in the absence of a more satisfactory national past, due to the discontents of fractured statehood and late unification in both the German and the Italian case. Thus, we should consider this phenomenon to be neither wholly reactionary nor wholly modern – and certainly not wholly fascist. Yet, at the same time, the recourse to ‘distant models’ which had long held such high prestige value throughout the Western world was arguably based upon a desire to attain to an authority which extended beyond mere nationalist particularism.

Of course, Greece and Rome never constituted the sole content of the Nazi and Fascist historic imaginaries. However, we might at the very least suggest that they formed dominant themes in the symphony of Fascist and National Socialist historical resonances. Moreover, as Andrea Giardina has noted, the twin models of Sparta and Rome have more in common than one might initially suppose – both glorifying an antidemocratic paradigm of antiquity which was fundamentally opposed to the Athenian exemplar, and both privileging similarly bellicose virtues – all of which could chime very naturally with fascist sensibilities.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, we might close by suggesting that, in both the Italian and the German case, the turn to Rome and Greece aimed to create an ‘alternative modernity’ which was fundamentally futurist.<sup>108</sup> Ultimately, rather than representing some form of ‘reactionary modernism’, Fascist and Nazi classicizing chronopolitics transfigured the humanistic cultural tropes of the past into a new form of ‘classicizing modernism’ which was Janus-faced, utilizing the familiar power of the Greek or Roman *exemplum* to fuel an extraordinary leap into the confidently-imagined fascist future.

105 See Fleming, ‘Fascism,’ for endorsement of such an approach.

106 Cf. Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, esp. p. 5.

107 Cf. Giardina, *Il mito di Roma*, 124.

108 cf. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 31, 222–223, 244; David D. Roberts, ‘Myth, Style, Substance and the Totalitarian Dynamic in Fascist Italy’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2007), 1–36, esp. p. 22.