This book examines the work of several modern artists, including Fortunato Depero, Scipione, and Mario Radice, who were working in Italy during the time of Benito Mussolini’s rise and fall. It provides a new history of the relationship between modern art and fascism. The study begins from the premise that Italian artists belonging to avant-garde art movements, such as futurism, expressionism, and abstraction, could produce works that were perfectly amenable to the ideologies of Mussolini’s regime. A particular focus of the book is the precise relationship between ideas of history and modernity encountered in the art and politics of the time and how compatible these truly were.

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Italian Modern Art in the Age of Fascism

Anthony White
For Anne and Joseph
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1 Introduction
Modernism, Fascism, and Cultural Rebirth

Two naked men are walking along a path which leads away from the viewer (Figure 1.1 and Plate 1). A lone figure in the background, who provides the only relief within the otherwise stark and overheated landscape, bears witness to the progress of the painting’s protagonists. As they advance into the dark chasm at the center of the composition—which seems to draw everything toward it magnetically—the men turn to look over their shoulders. One, who embraces his torso as if to protect himself from the elements, wears an expression of pain and displeasure. The other lifts his arm in a gesture of leave-taking and grins excitedly or perhaps hysterically. Painted in 1930 by the Italian artist Scipione, and exhibited at a gallery in Rome which had been inaugurated that year by Benito Mussolini, The Men Who Turn Around depicts figures who move forward while looking backward and display conflicting responses to the nature of their journey.1

In the years leading up to the creation of this work, Italy emerged from the catastrophe of a global war and, following years of social and political instability which led to the downfall of the liberal democratic order, granted power to Mussolini’s Fascist government. In the realm of the arts, following a brief period at the beginning of the 20th century which saw the ascendancy of such novel artistic styles as divisionism, symbolism, and futurism, after World War I artists began to draw upon examples provided by much older artistic traditions indigenous to Italy. This phenomenon, which affected artists across Europe and came to be described as the “return to order,” saw artists turn away from the international avant-gardes toward a more familiar visual vocabulary drawn from regional folk cultures and the national monuments of antiquity and the Renaissance.2 Among the many artists to reengage with the past in this manner was Pablo Picasso whose “neo-classical” figure paintings from 1917 had an enormous influence across the continent. Scipione’s work, which makes explicit reference to familiar icons of historical art—in particular Masaccio’s fresco Expulsion of 1425—can be identified with this broader European interest in traditional painting, not only in its theme but also in the rendering of the torsos and lower limbs of the central figures wherein the academic techniques of chiaroscuro and foreshortening have been used to create a convincing illusion of three-dimensional form and space.

At the same time Scipione also relied upon an approach to painting based upon the work produced by avant-garde artists just prior to World War I—such as the German-born Otto Dix during his expressionist phase—visible in the monochromatic dark red tone which unifies the figure with the landscape, the crudely depicted, mask-like details of the facial features, the evident marks of the pigment-loaded paintbrush as it made contact with the canvas, and the scratches created by dragging the handle
of the brush across the paint while still wet. In this way, although Scipione belongs to a generation of artists who were deeply inspired by the national traditions of ancient and early modern art, he did not simply acquiesce to the artistic conservatism promoted by many of his peers in the 1920s and actively encouraged—if not literally mandated—during the 1930s by officials in the Italian Fascist regime. Rather,
like many of the artists examined in this book, he also continued to explore the innovations pioneered by artists belonging to European avant-garde movements such as futurism, expressionism, and abstraction, who repudiated conventional artistic skills, focused on the impact of modern industrialization, and destabilized inherited concepts of identity. If, as the Italian art critic Giuseppe Marchiori observed in a monograph on Scipione published in 1939, there is “a contrast, an incoherence of language” in this work “between the expressionist character of the faces and the normal, even academic drawing of the nudes,” Scipione’s painting embodies a conception of art’s relationship to history that rejects any simplistic opposition between backward-looking conservatism and progressive radicalism.3

The artists who form the principal focus of this study, Fortunato Depero, Mario Radice, and Scipione (Gino Bonichi)—who were born in 1892, 1898, and 1904, respectively—were aligned with a tendency that has been recently identified by several art historians working on the history of 20th-century art. Contrary to earlier theories explaining any modern artist’s recourse to the past as a form of cultural regression, historians like Devin Fore have argued that artists and writers who returned to more traditional forms in the interwar period “did not reiterate previous paradigms naively, but rather invoked them self-consciously.”4 As is evident in the work of artists like Picasso, Giorgio de Chirico and many other artists in this period, this return to pre-existing visual cultures was far from constituting an uncritical veneration of the past. On the contrary, it could take the form of an iconoclasm which worked to de-realize the national traditions of the past rather than merely continue them.5 Moreover, as Antonio Del Guercio has argued in The Future Behind in relation to the art of this period,

If a general discourse of “restoration” circulated throughout Europe, the figu-rative re-articulations that occurred—beginning with those in Italy—not infre-quently avoided the most regressive impulses of that environment to reveal in one way or another significant facts about the human condition in the modern world.6

Drawing upon the past as a source of inspiration, and as a standard against which to measure the present, did not necessarily mean a rejection of the contemporary moment of history in which artists found themselves.

The picture we obtain of modern art between the wars in Italy from work like that by Scipione therefore differs significantly from dominant accounts of 20th-century European art.7 The relationship between past and present embodied in these works is not grounded in the idea of a historical forward march toward ever more radical positions and thus refuses the stark opposition between traditionalism and modernism. At the same time, as I argue throughout this book, these works also resist the synthesis of tradition and modernity that historians like Roger Griffin and Mark Antliff have observed as one of the defining features of art produced during the 1920s and 1930s in societies under the sway of fascism.8 Although these Italian modern artists engaged in no outward opposition to the dominant political ideologies of their time, they produced artworks that ran counter to what much official cultural policy promoted in the realm of fine art between the wars. Furthermore, the disjunctive way in which these artists’ works are both of their own time and yet redolent of other times forces us to rethink the periodizing and qualifying terms like “Fascist art” that are used to explain the history of 20th-century European visual culture. As part of this rethinking process, the present
study—which examines artworks produced or exhibited prior to, during, and after the years of Fascist rule in Italy—stresses that “the age of Fascism” began well before Mussolini’s rule over Italy and has cast a long shadow over that country since the end of World War II. In so doing, it deals with the broader historical questions involved in understanding the complex interconnections between art and ideology.

**Italian Modern Art and Politics between the Wars**

One of the questions this book sets out to answer concerns the relationship between the formal qualities of the art works that form the subject of the study and the broader socio-political context of a period dominated by the rise and fall of fascism after World War I. After 1945 it was commonly assumed, particularly by left-leaning art historians, that avant-garde artistic movements such as geometric abstraction—which were disdained by the Nazis and publicly vilified in exhibitions such as “Degenerate Art” of 1937—must be inherently antifascist. In 1975 the Italian historian Umberto Silva, for example, argued that the accusation by hardline Fascist writers during the 1930s that all modern art is communist was correct because “there is no real art which is not revolutionary, and there is no modern revolution that is not Marxist.”

It is now clear that this approach has little validity for a study of Italian art between the wars. This is not principally the case because it is a negative rather than positive definition of art’s relationship to politics, nor even because it can be more readily applied to Germany than to Italy, but rather, and most significantly, because works of avant-garde art such as futurism, expressionism, and geometric abstraction were constantly on display throughout the Fascist period in Italy at both private and official exhibitions and were frequently acquired by state collecting organizations. Clearly, a more sophisticated and less essentializing method is required to fully understand the connections between modern art and Fascism in this period.

An alternative approach involves examining the individual political choices of artists. This also presents difficulties because there are many cases of ambiguous political positioning on the part of individual artists in this period, including compliance, opportunism, resistance, and collaboration, sometimes shifting back and forth over time, or even manifesting at the same time. Furthermore, in some cases, archival records are (sometimes deliberately) incomplete or inaccessible and evidence connecting artists to political beliefs is not available. In isolated instances, we may look to individuals like Carlo Levi, who was a known anti-Fascist and declared his art to be such, for information about the political content of his images, but the existence of others working in a similarly expressionist vein who were politically pro-Fascist such as Mario Sironi, makes that approach problematic (Figure 1.2). Information about individual political allegiances can certainly provide a useful background to the works, but in the majority of cases, it alone does not yield a deep understanding of how the visual characteristics of the art relate to the political context. The reason for this is that the works’ ideological valency is a distinct question from the artists’ precise political allegiances. The lives of the creator and the art work, while connected, are inevitably separate, which means that the author’s presumed intention has to be weighed against how the work’s meaning can exist outside and beyond that. Another way to approach the issue of modern art’s relationship to politics in this period, one less fraught with difficulties, is to ask a more limited question—what was the art’s relationship to official cultural policy?

In 2003, the then Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, was quoted as saying that “Mussolini never killed anyone. Mussolini used to send people on
vacation in internal exile.\textsuperscript{12} Such comments are a reminder that the task of the historian remains an important one, particularly given the rise of neofascist movements during the 21st century, both in Italy and elsewhere. To set the record straight, according to one reckoning the list of atrocities committed under Mussolini includes at least 100,000 Libyans who were deported to concentration camps where they were left to starve, 10,000 Slovenes who were ethnically cleansed, and 7,500 Jewish people who were killed.\textsuperscript{13} Did such appalling statistics have their parallel in the cultural domain? The truth is that Fascist policy toward art during the 1920s and 1930s, like that toward certain other domains of Italian society, was multifaceted. For many years after World War II, it was argued that Fascism embodied a total and extreme form of intolerance not only to political and human diversity but also to the kind of cultural freedom associated with the historical avant-gardes.\textsuperscript{14} Over time this picture began to change as historians began to stress the degree to which Fascism was a rather ill-defined movement. Historians like Adrian Lyttelton began to argue in the 1970s in favor of Fascism’s open-ended character at an ideological and cultural level.\textsuperscript{15} Certainly the period just prior to and just after Mussolini’s 1922 appointment as Prime Minister of Italy can be characterized as relatively eclectic at an artistic level. Multiple different movements coexisted, with some following preexisting forms of 19th-century academicism, others—including the futurists—continuing prewar avant-garde tendencies, and yet others investigating historicist forms of neoclassicism. To a degree this plurality came to characterize the fine arts

under Fascist rule. Antonio Maraini, an important official in the cultural hierarchy of the regime, argued in 1936 that all manifestations of art in their most sane forms were encouraged by the Fascist government, and that Fascism neither took sides in regard to artistic tendencies, nor imposed its wishes. If such statements reflect an ideologically motivated interpretation of Fascist liberality toward the arts, for more recent commentators, the idea of defining a Fascist style nevertheless remains fraught because of the heterogeneity of approaches that have been described or promoted as Fascist culture. As Richard Golsan argues for the case of literature, “writers associated with fascism include both traditionalists and modernists,” and in the artistic domain, many exhibitions promoted fundamentally opposed aesthetic tendencies, including both iconoclastic dynamism and somber classicism. An associated idea that there was simply no policy with regard to artistic style has been influential and, in the writings of Jeffrey Schnapp, has led to a view that the “unstable ideological core” of Fascism was compensated for by an “aesthetic overproduction” whereby contradiction at the level of policy and attitude toward artistic styles and approaches became a positively “productive principle.”

What this latter view of Fascist cultural policy tends to underemphasize is the extensive system of inducements encouraging artists to work for and with the Italian state. Prizes, competitions, state exhibitions, commissions, and other schemes invited artists to devote their practice to the government’s wishes. Beyond this, there were also significant coercive dimensions to Fascist policy toward the fine arts. By the 1930s, in Italy political parties had been abolished, there were secret police investigating individual political allegiances, a monopoly on education had been created, and there was no free press worthy of the name. Furthermore, closer to the cultural domain, even if many artists worked in their own style and exhibited independently, in the late 1920s the government set up a series of provincial Fascist Art Unions to which artists were asked to belong in order to earn the right to participate in regional art exhibits and receive official patronage. Union members were expected to demonstrate “good political and moral conduct,” and those who spoke openly against the regime were punished by being disciplined, sent into exile, or imprisoned.

One of the effects of the Fascist Art Union system, as Simonetta Fraquelli argues, was that it “stifled any free associations of artists... [and] it all but destroyed the nascent art marketing gallery system.” This strongly tethered professional artists to the prerogatives of the centralized national government. Moreover, there were certain aesthetic constants in officially declared theories of Fascist art, even if these were frequently contested and not consistently adhered to. One of the most pervasive of these—the doctrine of “plastic solidity,” first promulgated by Mussolini in 1926 in a speech given at the first exhibition of the tradition-oriented novecento movement, and later by such important cultural officials as Giuseppe Bottai—explicitly characterized Fascist art in stylistic terms as a figurative painting or sculpture, with clear outlines and solid volumes, which was reminiscent of the autochthonous traditions of Italian art. As Fernando Tempesti argued in 1976, the works produced by the Milan-based novecento movement, which, for a brief period in the late 1920s, embodied the kind of art envisaged in such a formula, were not defined by their political content. Rather in his discussion of the movement, he stresses “the adherence of much art to the intentions and the reactionary quality of the Fascist regime through strictly formal modes.” In view of this, the work of historians stressing the pluralism and incoherence of Fascist cultural policy have accordingly been contested by scholars who view the apparent diversity of artistic production under Fascism within the broader context
of these more prescriptive dimensions of Mussolini’s attitude toward visual art. After all, to insist on the lack of an official style in Fascist art runs the risk of making Italy look relatively liberal and benign, particularly in comparison with Germany during Hitler’s reign, when the reality was quite different.24

Nevertheless, the story of art under Fascism in Italy is not as simple as an authoritarian model of a top-down enforcement of aesthetic paradigms. Rather, as Günter Berghaus has maintained, under Fascism one party of artists, for example the traditionalists, was played off against another, for example the modernists, with both being given sufficient power to criticize each other and keep each other in check, thereby relieving the state of the necessity of exercising open suppression or brutal discipline.25 The strategy was to support a traditional approach to art at an official level in order to prevent a more progressive one from attaining ascendancy rather than to eliminate the latter altogether. Marla Stone has pursued this line of thinking further and argued that there was a deliberate policy of “hegemonic pluralism” in which the Fascists pursued consent, not by insisting on one or other style but by endorsing a variety of aesthetic languages, thereby encouraging participation from a broad swathe of artists—who were induced through various exhibiting and purchasing opportunities—and thereby preempting the creation of an artistic underground.26 Similarly, Ruth Ben-Ghiat, while acknowledging that mainstream discussions of cultural affairs in Italy under Fascism were characterized by an elusiveness that avoided openly dictating the political role of art, also argues that freedom with respect to such views was accompanied by a push to achieve ideological unity by dialectically overcoming opposing views into a grand synthesis.27

A recent and influential account of fascist culture, one which seeks to move beyond the pluralism thesis and identify precisely what form such a grand synthesis would take, has been proposed by Roger Griffin in a series of articles written over the last 20 years and his 2007 book Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler. Griffin’s thesis is that fascism, far from being a politics without an ideology, was a form of “palingenetic hypernationalism”—an alternative political form of modernism. He argues that since their origins in the early 20th century both modernism and fascism promoted an ideal of cultural rebirth or national renewal, which would resist the forces of decadence in modernity caused by such forces as materialism, secularization, and “disembedding.”28 Both fascism and modernism, in Griffin’s view, shared an interest in achieving a sense of transcendent meaning that would overcome the deleterious cultural and social effect of such phenomena.29 He explains that the large variety of different aesthetic styles and ideologies which found themselves in sympathy with fascism can be explained neither by opportunism on the part of artists nor by the idea of creative paradox. Rather, because fascism, like its aesthetic and literary counterparts, was not represented by any particular style but was deeply invested in the idea of a cultural rebirth—involving a simultaneous rejection of the recent past and a mythic appropriation of a more distant past conceived as a source of regeneration—it could take many different, even apparently opposite forms.30

Griffin’s argument offers a powerful explanatory model for reconciling some of the apparent contradictions within both fascism and modernism and helps to explain how the work of certain Italian modernists active in this period could find common cause with fascist ideals. From the early 1920s, artists such as Ardengo Soffici—the erstwhile futurist who became an ardent supporter of the Fascist regime—argued that art should not choose between reaction and revolution but aim to “reunite in itself the experience of the past and the promise of the future.”31 There is certainly evidence to suggest that Fascism drew upon and only slightly modified conceptions of history and
Introduction
culture, such as early 20th-century primitivism, which had been previously adopted by the historical avant-garde. As Giuliana Tomasella has argued, directly after World War I and well before Mussolini’s rise to power, an “epochal upheaval” had taken place among erstwhile avant-garde artists, which led to a reversal of existing terms:

Progress and future become palingenesis and origin, while the subversive primitiveness of African idols makes way for the recognizable and noble remains of an autochthonous past. It is a short step from here to the rehabilitation of classicism.32

This return to an indigenous past took many, often contradictory forms in Italy, informing for example the critical writing of art historians during the 1920s such as Roberto Longhi and Lionello Venturi, who for all their differences, were equally invested in a rehabilitation of Italian trecento and quattrocento painting while taking an intense interest in modern art.33 Artists who were affected by this broader tendency include the aforementioned Mario Sironi whose expressionist canvases of the 1920s emulated the primordial qualities of Byzantine art, and the sculptor Fausto Melotti, who explicitly connected the formal purity of his mid-1930s geometric abstract sculptures to the highest achievement of the classical past (Figure 1.3).34

Figure 1.3 Fausto Melotti, Sculpture n. 21, 1968 (reconstruction of 1935 original). Steel, 55 x 35 x 35 cm (21.65 x 13.78 x 21.65 inches), Museo del Novecento, Milano. Copyright Comune di Milano—tutti i diritti di legge riservati. © Fondazione Fausto Melotti.
However, the capacity of Griffin’s paradigm to account for the specific aesthetic strategies adopted by artists in this era is limited. There are two reasons for this. First, as Andrew Vincent argues, Griffin’s argument for “a common core of ‘palingenetic ultranationalism’ at the heart of fascism” does not surmount “the internal deep tensions within the various fascist arguments.” Second, Griffin engages in almost no detailed analyses of individual artworks. This is a problem because if we accept the basis of Griffin’s argument even provisionally, it is still necessary to test the hypothesis by demonstrating how particular aesthetic features of individual works fit into the more general definitions of both modernism and fascism he proposes. The most significant attempt to do this has been Mark Antliff’s 2007 book *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilisation of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909–1939*. Antliff extends Griffin’s arguments about how modernism and fascism are related to a discussion of specific artworks and artistic techniques. Using examples of art largely taken from the Italian and German contexts, he outlines five areas where modernism and fascism can be shown to share concerns: ideas of cultural regeneration, avant-garde techniques of montage, notions of secular religion, primitivism, and anticapitalist ideas of time and space.

Antliff’s analysis is a useful summary of some of the commonalities between specific works of modernist or avant-garde art and fascism. When it comes to analyzing specific artworks however, his argument still raises more questions than it resolves. I would question for example identifying Soffici’s work of the 1930s or that of the contemporary German painter Ferdinand Staeger with modernism except in the most qualified way. Their paintings of rural peasants and military laborers—with their reproduction of academic routines of modeling the human figure modified by a relatively superficial layer of broken brushwork borrowed from impressionist painting—are a far cry from the more radical dimensions of modernist or avant-garde aesthetics in a stylistic sense. His discussion of the pro-Nazi, German expressionist painter Emil Nolde is certainly important as a case study of the connection between modernist primitivism and fascism. What seems most significant however, as Antliff points out, is that Nolde failed to gain approval from prominent right-wing critics for his borrowings from Oceanic art, as the primitivism favored by fascists did not celebrate difference in anything like the way proposed by other modernists such as Pablo Picasso. Furthermore, contrary to the impression the author gives, there were many types of avant-garde or modernist art produced during the birth and ascendancy of the Fascist movement in Italy that did not conform neatly to the definition of cultural rebirth that Antliff adopts from Griffin. Rather than aiming for a transcendent realm beyond the profane, everyday character of modernity wherein a golden past meets an ideal future, several artists deliberately produced aesthetic forms of temporal disturbance that ran completely counter to the idea of cultural rebirth.

Just as there were many who resisted the official Fascist doctrine of “plastic solidity,” for every artist who claimed to reinvent the future on the basis of the past, there was another who could be defined as a decadent, or as deliberately mired in precisely the disembedding, materialist, and secular society that the Fascists were supposed to abhor. Another option available to artists, one overlooked by both Griffin and Antliff, was to suggest more or less openly that the ideal of cultural rebirth was deeply problematic or even dysfunctional. A model for how this might be manifested artistically was provided by a work produced by Carlo Carrà in 1919. Around this time Carrà—who would play a significant role in the Italian art world during the 1920s and 1930s as both artist and a critic—put his earlier futurist work behind him
and critiqued the idea of progress dear to earlier generations of avant-garde artists. Returning to the idea of what he called “The Italian idea of the originary solidity of things” he began to emulate the archaic style of the Italian trecento painter Giotto. In his idiosyncratic painting *The Daughters of Lot* of 1919 Carrà chose a subject that referred to the sexual intercourse of a father with his own daughters (Figure 1.4). In this work, which was severely criticized by the artist’s colleagues for its excessively “archaic” quality, the artist suggested that a future for modern painting could be assured by what Jennifer Ruth Bethke has characterized as “unnatural, incestuous borrowing from the past.” Contrary to his constant calls for the renewal of modern art through a restorative return to the old masters, in this anomalous painting Carrà problematized a straightforward or recuperative return to tradition.

This type of relationship to the past has a corollary in the approach I perceive as central to several artists working in the 1920s and 1930s. Although the work of Depero, Scipione, and Radice may seem, at first glance, to be in line with Antliff and Griffin’s definitions of fascist modernism, I argue in this book that they strongly resisted many of the formulations linking modernism and fascism in such accounts, and in particular the concept of cultural rebirth. Before commencing my analysis of these three artists’ works, I will elucidate my remarks by analyzing the work of a painter who loomed large over this period of Italian art—Giorgio de Chirico.

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Figure 1.4 Carlo Carrà, *Lot’s Daughters*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 111 × 80 cm (43.7 × 31.5 inches), The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto, Collezione VAF-Stiftung. Further reproduction in any medium is prohibited © Carlo Carrà /SIAE. Copyright Agency 2019.
Giorgio de Chirico: Rivalry and Difference

De Chirico has remained a puzzling figure within the history of 20th-century art. The Greek-born Italian artist’s “metaphysical” paintings of 1911–1919, distorted scenes of deserted piazzas populated by classical statuary, faceless manikins, and mundane objects were lauded by artists belonging to avant-garde movements such as the French surrealists. When de Chirico began to emulate Renaissance, baroque, and romantic styles of painting in 1919, however, he was summarily expelled from the movement. Since that time, his reputation has been subject to several shifts: once hailed as the originator of avant-garde forms of modernism, he was redefined during the 1980s as the archetypal postmodernist. What is interesting for our present purposes, however, is the precise meaning behind the works he created in 1919 wherein he produced faithful copies of existing works by old master painters.

In mid-1919, de Chirico went to the Villa Borghese in Rome to copy paintings, a new thing for him at that time. Pitching himself against the most significant European artists throughout history, including Durer, Raphael, Rubens, and Renoir, de Chirico sought to embody and demonstrate the superiority of the inherited traditions of western culture. By choosing, in his copies after Raphael and other artists, to openly reproduce the works of well-known, highly respected but not living artists, de Chirico

Figure 1.5 Giorgio de Chirico, The Mute Woman, 1920. Oil on canvas, 65 × 47 cm (25.6 × 18.5 inches), Private collection. Mondadori Portfolio/Walter Mori/ Bridgeman Images © Giorgio de Chirico/SIAE. Copyright Agency 2019.
paid his respects to the past and emphasized the importance of traditional and outmoded painterly craft. Contemporary responses to this unusual exhibition were scant; some were favorable, while another described de Chirico as “a mediocre collector of antiques.” However, as Jennifer Mundy argues, while other contemporary Italian artists were looking to the past as an inspiration for their work during this period, in works of 1920 such as The Mute Woman, de Chirico’s decision “to make and exhibit exact copies” constituted a strange new form of originality (Figure 1.5).

Rather than a straightforward assertion of technical competence, I argue that de Chirico was engaging in a creative misreading of Raphael’s work as a means of assuaging what the American literary historian and theorist Harold Bloom once described as the “anxiety of influence”—that insignificance authors sometimes feel in the face of the “terrible splendor of cultural heritage.” In a 1920 article discussing the Urbino artist’s work at some length, de Chirico argues as follows in regards to Raphael’s portraits:

From the cranial sphere, down through the folds of the clothes and drapery, to the hands and the angles of the volumes where the figure sits like a statue on its pedestal, there is a static, immobile, and intense quality, which makes us think about the eternity of matter. The painted figure seems as if it existed even before the painter had created it. This is perhaps why, when we are faced for the first time with certain works of genius, we find ourselves asking with amazement: “But where have I seen this before?” “Where have I caught sight of that face?” And we remain disturbed, as when in life, we do something or see someone already featured in a dream.

This important passage in de Chirico’s writings requires a close analysis. He argues that Raphael’s paintings give the impression of something solid and eternal, like a statue. So far, this is similar to contemporary art theory in Italy by artists like Carrà who stressed the solidity of the forms and the timeless quality of their art: a commonplace of what came to be known as the “return to order” movement of the 1920s.

But then the text takes a peculiar turn. Raphael’s painting seems to have existed before the artist painted it, clearly an impossibility—except in so far as the work is itself an emulation of a prior model. To the extent that the latter is true, the artist, and here de Chirico means Raphael specifically, comes belatedly to the work, is not the work’s originator. Moreover, the painter is not actually the author of the work but repeats something seen before, somewhere else, which predates the work itself. The artist, particularly when that artist is a genius, paints something that is not new, which resembles something which came before and which the viewer has seen before. Raphael, in other words, is a plagiarist. In this sense, de Chirico’s view of Raphael cannot simply be described as a straightforward homage to a master who, possessed of a sense of absolute originality, is necessarily superior to de Chirico, the latter being viewed as his belated epigone. Nor should this work be understood, as Albert Barnes argued in the 1930s for de Chirico’s later paintings, simply as an attempt to give “a new and fuller meaning to the Florentine form as found in Raphael.” Rather, by invoking Raphael through a copy while simultaneously arguing that Raphael himself is an artist who evokes a sense of déjà vu in the viewer, the artist’s work can be identified with a tendency that Devin Fore has described as “an active and deliberate strategy to expropriate the capital of the ‘cultural heritage’.” De Chirico relegates the master’s
paintings to the status of copies of other images, experiences, and paintings—just as
his own work faithfully reproduces Raphael. As Alexander Nagel and Chris Wood
have argued for early modern Europe in their landmark study *Anachronic Renais-
sance*, and which I maintain is an important dimension of de Chirico’s works of 1920,
at certain times in history there has been an “apprehensiveness about the temporal
instability of the artwork,” which leads artists to produce objects that engage in a
“re-creation of the artwork as an occasion for reflection on that instability.”51 In de
Chirico’s model, works of art—both his own and that of the Renaissance master—
are caught between two incompatible time zones, both reproducing a lost past while
instantiating their own present. Repudiating his metaphysical paintings of distorted
urban landscapes in the 1920s to embark upon a seemingly heedless pastiche of his-
torical styles, de Chirico resisted modernism’s obsession with newness and ruptured
the concept of an unproblematic return to the past.52

**There Is No One Time of History**

Within publications claiming to provide a general overview of the history of modern
art, the work produced in European countries governed by totalitarian administra-
tions between the wars is frequently overlooked. Although there are several studies of
individual artists working under dictatorships, and a number of histories of “totali-
tarian art” during the interwar period have been published, leafing through broader
surveys of 20th-century art we search in vain for a proper account of important artists
working closely with fascist regimes such as Arno Breker in Germany or Mario
Sironi in Italy.53 Whatever the rationale for excluding such figures, be they aesthetic,
political, or otherwise, the narrative told about the art of the previous century is con-
sequently distorted. One of the difficulties for contemporary scholars is that history
went in a completely different direction than someone living during that time might
have anticipated. As Mussolini and many of the cultural policies his government
promulgated were disavowed in the wake of World War II, the aesthetic ideologies,
and attitudes to history which Fascism embodied became a dead end or a tributary
rather than the direction in which things would go. Much of the art produced during
the era of Fascism would not belong to the tradition of the victors, of those who wrote
the dominant narratives of history.

Rather, the entire period was characterized as a parenthesis, as in the famous de-
scription of Fascism put forward by Benedetto Croce after World War II.54 The atti-
dute to the past embodied in many works produced during the 1920s and 1930s was
relegated to the status of an exception, and an earlier model belonging to liberal de-
mocracy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was restored, in which a continually
sustained linear evolution was presumed as a given. For a brief period in the 1980s at
the height of postmodernism, it seemed that the conventional assumptions about the
relationship between modern art, the historical past, and stylistic innovation was in
abeyance.55 However, today the historical continuity created by suppressing a greater
part of interbellum artistic production largely remains in place, lending a false pedi-
gree to postwar art and overlooking the various ruptures which radically intervene in
that narrative. Among such ruptures are the fact that forms of modernism lauded in
the postwar moment as culturally progressive such as geometric abstraction had been
instrumentalized as Fascist propaganda, as happened in the case of Mario Radice; or
that certain cultural phenomena invented and promoted by Fascism continued after
the war including the many touristic celebrations of folk culture which still take place today in Italian cities.\textsuperscript{56} Furthermore, continuities at the level of discourse between the postwar period and the disavowed Fascist era were also submerged. For example, as Kris Ravetto has argued, similarities between postwar aesthetic debates—in which the unassailable moral purity of avant-garde practices was pitted against a traditionally inspired figuration viewed as corrupt and outmoded—and the doctrines of absolute purity versus abject decadence within Fascist discourse were completely overlooked.\textsuperscript{57}

Although the parallels that can be drawn between the ideas underpinning Fascism and modernism perform a rupture within dominant histories of modern art, it is important to recognize, contrary to Griffin's thesis, that modernism is not simply congruent with Fascism, whether considered inherently or in a historically specific sense. This is not because of the continuity of a liberal democratic point of view, which safely brackets and relativizes that period and argues that examples of modern artists collaborating or even believing in Fascist ideology should be seen as misguided aberrations, examples of opportunism or accommodation. Rather, it is because many works of modern art produced during the Fascist era, and in particular the ones examined within this book, are sites of contestation which disrupt conventional narratives about the advancement of history away from a dark past toward an enlightened future as well as the ideal of a return to a golden age.

In making this argument I have drawn upon Walter Benjamin’s thinking about historiography in his \textit{Arcades} project composed during the early to mid-1930s. In “Konvolut N” of that text, he maintains that a truly critical history writing would involve the “rescue” of historical phenomena, not however from “the ill repute and contempt into which they’ve fallen, but from the catastrophic way in which they are very often portrayed by certain forms of transmission, by their ‘value as heritage’.” As Benjamin concludes, such phenomena can only be properly rescued “by the demonstration of the fissure in them.”\textsuperscript{58} Against a view of history as continuous progress, which he associates with catastrophe, with the endless continuity of an already existing state of affairs, Benjamin insists on “the points at which the transmission breaks down... The roughness and jaggedness that offers a hold to someone wishing to get beyond those points.” With such arguments he advocated a theory of historiography that would unravel the inevitability of time as a process leading from “a legendary beginning” to a “legendary end of history.” By focusing on those seemingly “fruitless, backward, extinct” parts of any historical period and on the moments where cultural transfer through time is interrupted, he hoped to bring a halt to the seemingly inexorable forward thrust of linear development and focus on those historical moments, encapsulated in rejected objects and practices, that harbor a revolutionary promise for a world hurtling towards what he saw as a catastrophic end.\textsuperscript{59}

In the spirit of Benjamin’s methodological speculations, this study seeks out those caesuras in the historical record, those works that interrupt the smooth evolution of the history of 20th-century art. In the process I concentrate on works that reveal the parallels between Fascism and modern art as well as the breaks, those instances where modern art did not find itself in harmony with Fascism as it was defined in the period. To the degree that the paradigm of cultural rebirth can be seen as defining for the Fascist ethos and in particular for identifying what modernism shares with Fascism, this can only make sense on the understanding that the paradoxical, and incongruous dimension of such a rebirth be acknowledged. And to do this, to acknowledge that
dimension, is to question the very concept of rebirth itself. If taken literally, the idea of a past fully realized in the present—embodied in the Italian Fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile’s theory of actualism in which history is made in the present rather than reconstructed retroactively—is an impossibility similar to the idea of actually returning to the past, or that of completely surpassing the present moment. After all, the idea of being reborn, of fully realizing the glories of the past in a hitherto decadent present, depends upon an impossible suspension of disbelief. One can no more go back and redo one’s birth than one can, having already been born, be born again. The first implies an acuity or power beyond the human; the second constitutes a cancellation of something absolutely fundamental to human experience, the memory of things past. By the same token, the idea that a person or nation can under no circumstances be “reborn,” that one can simply never return to the past and reanimate it, denies the fact that individuals and communities continually live in and through the past, inventing and reinventing tradition through fiction, art and other cultural forms at every living moment. As Elena Pontiggia points out, in this period of an apparent “return to order” within the European artistic community of the 1920s and 1930s the past was not considered to be a “closed chapter, but an alive magma of events, voice and figures still in becoming.” Additionally, “the conception of a past ‘in becoming’ induced the reformulation of the concepts of newness and originality.” In this sense, every birth, whether of an individual or an artwork, is a rebirth, a reiteration. Equally, what distinguishes one idea of cultural renewal from another is whether that rebirth is considered a synthesis fully realized in the present or an artifact, a rhetorical strategy, a trope modeled on a paradoxical sense of disjunction.

The ideal of cultural rebirth does inform many of the artworks that were produced in the period covered by this book. However, in the examples I have chosen to focus upon in each chapter, this rebirth appears not as a seamless synthesis of past and future, but as a more or less open recognition of its impossible or implausible character, at least in the manner in which it was theorized within Fascist doctrine. There is a tension in the idea of palingenesis in these works which leads to a radical instability of the concepts of time by which that idea is underpinned. In tracking down this instability throughout the chapters that follow, I have drawn inspiration from a concept Aby Warburg invented during the 1920s as a critical alternative to the ideology of rebirth: Nachleben or survival. As the German art historian argued, traces of the pagan cosmological struggle between Saturn and Jupiter in Albrecht Durer’s Melancholia demonstrate that in 1514 the great humanist artist of the early modern period “has yet to break quite free of the superstitious terrors of antiquity.” In a similar fashion—to paraphrase George Didi-Huberman’s account of Warburg’s challenge to conventional art history—I argue that the artists in this study worked to “anachronize” time and render it impure. They did this by undermining the idea of a coherent zeitgeist through which any work may be exclusively understood and by problematizing the idea of one consistent and triumphant or golden past that any artwork or era may seek to restore. These artworks show that any historical period, but particularly one dedicated to the concept of cultural rebirth, embodies multiple, contradictory ideas of temporality.

As I argue in Chapter 2—which focuses on the period between World War I and the mid-1920s when the Fascist movement was emerging and triumphed as a political force—Depero appropriated long-standing textile production techniques, and made frequent references to rural or folk-art contexts, as part of a futurist practice, which
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also celebrated the mechanization characteristic of modernity. In so doing he enabled the viewer to measure the new industrialized world of the 20th century against its primitive predecessors in such devices as the marionette or mechanical toy. Rendering the image of the machine in artisanal, handcrafted techniques did not reflect the artist’s incapacity to fully commit to the futurist program but rather his resistance to a mechanistic teleology which would preset the destiny of art and humanity. Scipione’s overheated and troubled scenes of the urban landscape of Rome, as well as his apocalyptic paintings dealing with religious themes, as I maintain in Chapter 3, questioned the palingenetic ideology that was foundational for a great deal of thinking about the role of art and culture under Fascism. In opposition to a broader tendency to assert the seamless continuity between the glories of the ancient world and the achievements of 20th-century Italian modernity at a time when Mussolini had consolidated his dictatorship, in 1930 Scipione counterposed the image of a corrupted Italian capital, which symbolized a deeper spiritual decline—one which Fascism was not helping to resolve but was, in fact, exacerbating. In Chapter 4, which opens at the high point of Mussolini’s power leading up to and during Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–1936, I demonstrate that Radice’s abstract geometric works from 1935 were aligned with those ideologies of the Fascist movement which promoted the integration of the individual with society, the artwork with its broader context, and the present with the past. At the same time, alternative understandings of Radice’s geometric compositions suggest that the fit between Fascist ideology and abstraction was an uneasy one. As critical interventions both before and after World War II—as well as more recent installations and reconstructions—have made visible, the principles of openness within his geometric structures, which allowed the individuality of his work to be subordinated to a higher purpose, also permitted counter readings which were both starkly opposed to, and yet in some cases ironically reinforced, Mussolini’s political program.

Before moving to discuss each of the three artists in earnest a note on the selection of artists and works examined, and on the scope of the study, will help to clarify the overall purpose of the book. Rather than a comprehensive overview, which runs the risk of superficiality, or a single-artist study, which achieves deeper knowledge at the expense of a broader history, this book accounts for Italian modern art in the age of Fascism by examining three significantly different “positions” within it—futurism, expressionism, and abstraction. The book does not aim to produce a representative survey: rather it is a study of exceptional works, which, although not necessarily representative of a widespread tendency, nevertheless oblige us to rethink conceptions of historical time in 20th-century Italian art. The methodology of the study is to identify a relatively small number of these key works and to probe their meaning in depth, thus paying tribute to their uniquely nuanced and complex character. The fact that the artists and works studied are starkly different from one another in style, medium, and content demonstrates that art before, during, and after the period of Mussolini’s rule over Italy was by no means homogeneous, either stylistically or in terms of its relation to time and history.

As for the book’s scope, although the focus of the discussion in each chapter is on the relationship between visual art, concepts of history and the politics of Fascism, the discussion often ranges beyond the strict temporal boundaries of Mussolini’s rule over Italy between 1922 and 1943. The analysis of Depero’s work, for example, shows how the period during and just after World War I is integral to understanding
the later emergence of Fascism, and highlights the impact of that political movement on art by focusing on the connections and discontinuities between the artworks produced before and after Mussolini’s ascension to power in 1922. The analysis of Scipione’s work, by contrast, addresses art’s relationship to the politics of the period by looking at an artist whose entire career was encompassed by the Fascist years and yet not entirely determined by the dominant artistic and political discourse of the time. In the process of investigating the works Radice produced during the 1930s, this book also examines post-World War II interpretations and reconstructions of them, the object being to reveal how the “afterlife” of these geometric abstract works has affected their meaning for us today. The study’s broader project of resisting linear or progressive accounts of history, of which the works themselves are foremost examples, is complemented by a methodological approach which pushes against the chronological limits of any defined historical period. The investigation of historical events and artworks which lie outside the boundaries of the 20 years of Italy’s Fascist government is an embodiment of the larger examination of time and history in which this book is engaged.

Notes

3 Giuseppe Marchiori, Scipione (Milan: Hoepli, 1939), 22. All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.
4 Fore, Realism after Modernism, 10. See also Green, Art in France: 1900–1940, 216–217. For the regression hypothesis, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting,” October, no. 16 (Spring 1981), 39–68.
5 Diane Daval Béran, “‘D’APRES’ ovvero i grandi maestri riveduti e corretti,” in Il futuro alle spalle, 124.
9 Umberto Silva, Ideologia e arte del fascismo (Milano: Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, 1975), 110.
10 See Benzi, Arte in Italia tra le due guerre, 247–260.
11 On Carlo Levi, see Benzi, Arte in Italia tra le due guerre, 260–261. For a discussion of the political complexities of style in fascist Italy see Guido Armellini, Le immagini del fascismo nelle arti figurative (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, 1980), 152.
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16 Antonio Maraini, “Italian Art under Fascism,” The Studio CXII, no. 525 (December 1936), 297.


19 For a comprehensive study of these initiatives, see Sileno Salvagnini, Il sistema delle arti in Italy: 1919–1943 (Bologna: Minerva Edizioni, 2000), 13–126.


21 Philip V. Cannistraro, La fabbrica del consenso: fascismo e mass-media (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1975), 31–38.


26 Stone, The Patron State, 65.


29 Griffin, Modernism and Fascism, 116.

30 Griffin, Modernism and Fascism, 232.


32 Giuliana Tomasella, Avanguardia in crisi nel dibattito artistico fra le due guerre (Padova: Cleup, 1995), 121.

33 See André Breton, “Le surréalism et le peinture,” La Révolution Surréaliste 2, no. 7 (15 June 1926), 4.


Benjamin, “N (Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress),” 22, 27, 4.


1 Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan, *Il Duce’s Other Woman* (New York: William Morrow and Co, 1993), 317. Many citations listed in this chapter were sourced directly from the press clippings archive of the Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (MART) wherein full publication details, including page numbers, were frequently not available. All such publications cited here are followed by a number in square brackets corresponding to the archive’s referencing system.


6 For more on Rosetta’s important role in the creation of the works, see Franca Zoccoli, “The Applied Arts and Photography: Rosetta Depero, Gigia Corona, Bruna Somenzi, Luce and Elica Balla, Wanda Wulz,” in The Women *Artists of Italian Futurism – Almost Lost to History*, eds. Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997), 140–141.


13 See Neuland-Kitzerow, Joram, and Karasek, eds., *Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present*.


16 The original Italian title of this work, *Guerra = festa*, can be—and sometimes is—translated as *War = Party*. I have preferred the English phrase *War = Festival* to render the meaning of the title as I believe this best embodies the broader significance of Depero’s work. This is also the translation used by Christine Poggi in *Inventing Futur-
24 Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 238–239.
26 Luigi Russolo, “Arti e Lettere: La Mostra futurista Depero,” La Borsa, 9 March 1926 [Dep.8.1.2.71].
29 “Evviva la faccia loro...: Divagazioni sul secondo Rinascimento artistico,” Il Piccolo Martedì, 1925 [Dep. 8.1.1.324].
30 Lista, Ricostruire e meccanizzare l'universo, 290.
31 Lucia Re, “‘Barbari civilizzatissimi’: Marinetti and the Futurist Myth of Barbarism,” Journal of Modern Italian Studies 17, no. 3 (2012), 357.
34 Juliet Koss, Modernism after Wagner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 213.
35 Among the most significant sources on Depero are Bruno Passamani, Depero (Rovereto: Comune di Rovereto, Musei Civici, Galleria Museo Depero, 1981); Depero, exh. cat., Museo Provinciale d'Arte di Trento (Milano: Electa, 1988); Gabriella Belli, La Casa del Mago: Le Arti applicate nell'opera di Fortunato Depero 1920–1942 (Florence: Charta, 1992); Gabriella Belli, DeperoFuturista (Milan: Skira, 1999); Maurizio Scudiero, Depero: L'uomo e l'artista (Rovereto: Egon, 2009); and Lista, Ricostruire e meccanizzare l'universo.
36 See Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 151.
40 Depero, “Il teatro Depero: Principi e applicazioni,” 11. Reprinted in Lista, Ricostruire e meccanizzare l'universo, 63. Depero’s marionettes bear comparison with the contemporaneous puppets by Sophie Tauber-Arp, which were produced around the same time and reached the stage in September 1918.
43 Fortunato Depero, “Brindiamo,” 1914–1916 [Dep.4.2.3.1].
44 Fortunato Depero to Rosetta Amadori Depero, 16 July 1915 [Dep.3.3.1.4.5]. Quoted and translated in Selena Daly, Italian Futurism and the First World War (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016), 56.
45 Fortunato Depero, A passo romano: lirismo fascista e guerriero programmatico e costruttivo (Trento: Edizioni di credere obbedire combattere, 1943); Belli, La Casa del Mago, 286–287.


Giacar, “I balli plastici al Teatro dei Piccoli,” Il Giornale d’Italia (Rome), 16 April 1918 [Dep.8.1.1.32].

Cipriano Efisio Oppo, “I balli plastici al ‘Teatro dei Piccoli’: l’esposizione di pittura,” L’idea nazionale (Roma) 15 April 1918 [Dep.8.1.1.49].

Walter Vaccari, “Balli plastici,” Il secolo XX (1918) [Dep.8.1.1.108].


See Juliet Bellow, Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde (Farnham: Ashgate: Ashgate, 2013), 93.


Enrico Settimelli, “I balli plastici al teatro dei Piccoli,” publication unknown, 15 April, 1918 [Dep.8.1.1.44]. Published in French in SIC 3, no. 34 (1918), n.p.


72 For a discussion of Jentsch and Freud in relation to Depero, see Lista, *Ricostruire e meccanizzare l’universo*, 261.


75 Fortunato Depero, *Fortunato Depero: nelle opere e nella vita* (Trento: Editrice Mutilati e Invalidi, 1940), 255.

76 See also Manlio Belzoni, “Della mostra d’arte di Rovereto, e d’altrre cose,” *La Gazzetta del Turismo e dello Sport* [Dep.8.1.1.120].


79 See also Valentinelli, “La Mostra d’Arte della Venezia Tridentina,” September 1922 [Dep.8.1.1.194].

80 See M., “Visitando la Mostra d’Arte—Fortunato Depero,” unknown publication, October 1922 [Dep.8.1.1.126].

81 G. Stoffella, “Un principe del colore,” *La Liberta* (Trento), 19 July 1922 [Dep.8.1.4.34].


83 See also Scudiero, “Two Decorators,” *L’Idea Nazionale*, May 1923 [Dep.8.1.1.237].

84 Michele Biancale, “Problemi d’arte decorativa,” unknown publication, May 1923 [Dep.8.1.2.118].


86 My reading of Depero’s work here is indebted to Ara Merjian’s writing on Giacomo Balla. See Merjian, “A Future by Design,” 121–146.


90 Sabatino, *Pride in Modesty*, 112.


93 Oppo, “Due decoratori”; Stoffella, “Un principe del colore.”
109 Fogu, “Futurist mediterraneità,” 27.
113 Kakru [Guido Bertoldi], “Fortunato Depero a Monza,” *La Liberta*, 22 February 1923 [Dep.8.2.8.30].
114 Ort., “Note d’arte. La mostra di Depero,” Unknown publication, March 1921 [Dep.8.1.1.159].
115 See Belli, *La Casa del Mago*, 162.
122 Roberto Papini, “La mostra delle arti decorative a Monza,” *Emporium* 57, no. 341 (1923), 282; Sarfatti, “L’arte decorativa a Monza,” unknown publication (May 1923) [Dep.8.1.1.181].
123 Biancale, “Problemi d’arte decorativa.”
126 See the caption to the image published in *Rovente* 7–8 (1923), 49.
129 Recchi, “Scenografia italiana a Parigi”.
132 As Vivien Greene has argued, the futurists were engaged with Richard Wagner’s idea of the gesamtkunstwerk in this period. See Vivien Greene, “The Opera d’Arte Totale,” in *Italian Futurism: 1909–1944: Reconstructing the Universe* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2014), 211–213.
140 Jannelli, “I futuristi italiani all’esposizione Internazionale di Parigi.”
143 Koss, Modernism after Wagner, 209.
144 See Roberts, The Total Work of Art, 29.
151 Tiffany, Toy Medium, 37.
155 Daly, Italian Futurism and the First World War, 83.
156 Daly, Italian Futurism and the First World War, 83–84.
162 Fortunato Depero, Futurism and Advertising (La Jolla: Parentheses, 1990), n.p. See also Karen Pinkus, Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising under Fascism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 107.

1 See the letters collected in Scipione: Carte segrete (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1982), 99–112; Cesare G. Marchesini, “Il pittore Scipione,” Corriere Padano, 23 November, 1933; Gaia Bindi, “Scipione poeta e pittore,” Bollettino dell’arte 81, no. 96–97 (1996), 135–170. Several publications cited in this chapter, particularly newspaper reviews of the artist’s work, were sourced directly from the press clippings collections of a number of archives in Rome, including the Archivio dell Scuola Romana, the Archivio bio-iconografico at the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, The Falqui Archive at the Biblioteca Nazionale...
Centrale di Roma, and the Archivio Biblioteca della Quadriennale. In such cases full publication details, such as authors, titles, and page numbers were often not available.


6 Fagiolo dell’Arco, “I pittori della ‘terza saletta’,” 41.


10 Bottai, “Risultanze dell’inchiesta sull’arte fascista,” 61.

11 Scipione to Renato Marino Mazzacurati, February 1929, in *Scipione: Carte segrete* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1982), 44.


14 Scipione to Renato Marino Mazzacurati, February 1929, in *Scipione: Carte segrete*, 44.

15 Pavolini, “Artisti giovani al ‘Convegno di Roma’.”


27 See for example Roberto Farinacci, “Ma che basta!” Il Regime Fascista, 1 June 1935, quoted in Emily Braun, Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 177.
28 Scipione to Renato Marino Mazzacurati, February–March 1931, in Scipione: Carte segrete, 60.
29 See Alessandra Borgogelli, ‘Scipione e la riscoperta del seicento,’ Scipione e la Scuola romana, 142. For the differences between Sironi’s expressionism and that of the contemporary “Corrente” movement, see Adrian R. Duran, Painting, Politics and the New Front of Cold War Italy (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 16–20.
31 Curzio Malaparte, “Commemorazione del Seicento,” Valori plastici, 3, no. 4 (1921), 84.
47 Whitney Davis, Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6–7.

54 Scipione, letter to Enrico Falqui, 24 November 1931, in Appella, Scipione: Lettere a Falqui, 39.


60 André Breton, Nadja (London: Penguin, 1999), 23, 24, 32 and 86.


64 Kallis, “‘In miglior tempo…’,” 63.

65 Baxa, Roads and Ruins, 64.


69 A drawing reproduced in Appella, Scipione: Lettere a Falqui, 180, shows workmen demolishing a building close to where the figure in The Roman Courtesan (1930) is shown to be standing, as does a photograph from October 1930 published in Italo Insolera and Alessandra Maria Sette, Roma tra le due guerre: Cronache da una città che cambia (Rome: Palombi Editore, 2003), 79.


72 For example Andre Breton, Man Ray, Max Morise, Yves Tanguy, Exquisite Corpse (1926). I owe a debt of thanks to Romy Golan for this comparison.


87 Candido e Eliseo, [title unknown] Quadrivio 14 April 1935.
90 The undated text was first published, posthumously, as “Scipione e Il Greco,” Primato 2, no. 23 (December 1941), 19.
95 Scipione, “Scipione e Il Greco,” 19.
98 See letter from Scipione to Renato Mazzacurati, February–March 1931, in Scipione: Carte segrete, 60.
103 Philip V. Cannistraro, La fabbrica del consenso: fascismo e mass-media (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1975), 31–38.
104 Scipione to Renato Marino Mazzacurati, February 1929, in Scipione: Carte segrete, 44; Scipione, et al., to Alfonso Silipo, undated postcard (c. Easter 1930), and Scipione to Enrico Falqui, 3 April 1933, both published in Appella, Scipione: Lettere a Falqui, 161 and 106, respectively. See also the discussion in Benzi, Arte in Italia tra le due guerre, 257.


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138 Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy*, 81–82.
140 Baxa, *Roads and Ruins*, 133.
152 Tempesti, *Arte dell’Italia fascista*, 150.
159 Mezio, *Quadrivio*.
166 Bindi, “Scipione poeta e pittore,” 149.


185 Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*, 27.

186 Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*, 40–41.

187 Rivosecchi and Trombadori, *Roma appena ieri nei dipinti degli artisti italiani del Novecento*, 70.

188 Oppo, “Mafai e Scipione alla Galleria di Roma.”


1 See Osvaldo Licini, “Natura di un discorso,” *Corriere Padano*, 9 October 1937, 3. Several publications cited in this chapter, particularly newspaper reviews of the artist’s work, were sourced directly from the press clippings collection in the Mario Radice archives of the Musei Civici in Como. In such cases, full publication details such as authors, titles, and page numbers were often not available.


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33 See Golan, *Muralnomad*.
38 See “La pittura murale e la scultura decorativa,” in *Quinta Triennale di Milano, Catalogo ufficiale* (Milan, 1933), 65.
40 Roberto Papini, “La V Triennale a Milano. Ispezione alle arti,” *Emporium* (1933), 351. See also “La pittura murale e la scultura decorativa,” in *Quinta Triennale di Milano, Catalogo ufficiale* (Milan, 1933) 65.
52 Benito Mussolini, “La festa del lavoro” (21 April 1934), in *Scritti e Discorsi di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 9, 50.
54 Mussolini and Gentile, “Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism,” 63.
57 See Griffin, Modernism and Fascism, 235–236.
60 Mussolini and Gentile, “Foundations and Doctrine,” 47.
61 Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” 27.
64 Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” 6, 11.
68 See Caramel, “Le decorazioni di Mario Radice a Marcello Nizzoli per la Casa del Fascio di Como di Terragni,” 78–89.
70 Benito Mussolini, “Sintesi del regime” (18 March 1934), Scritti e Discorsi di Benito Mussolini, vol. 9, 42–43.
73 Falasca-Zamponi, Fascist Spectacle, 121.
76 Marinetti, “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” 23.
81 Tomlinson, The Culture of Speed, 35–36.
82 Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903), quoted in Tomlinson, The Culture of Speed, 37.
83 Cattaneo and Radice, “Progetto di Fontana,” 1.
86 Cattaneo and Radice, “Progetto di Fontana,” 2.


131 Maria Vittoria Capitanucci, “Mario Radice: Retrospettiva,” Abitare, no. 426 (March 2003), 158.

132 See Caramel, Radice: Catalogo generale, 131.


134 For a photograph of the reconstructed mural see Painting in Italy 1910s–1950s, ill. 117.


136 Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?” 117.

137 See Archipittura: Interrelazioni fra le arti a Como nell’eta del razionalismo, exh. cat., Pinacoteca comunale di Como, Como (Lipomondo: Cesarenani, 2005).

138 Archipittura, 92.

139 Sergio Beretta, email to author, 17 January, 2018.


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13 An example of such an exhibition, which opened as the writing of this book was in its final stages, was provided by Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics: Italia 1918 – 1943 (Milan: Prada Foundation, 2018).

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