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Tiago Saraiva. *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016. 344 pp. $40.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-262-03503-3.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Lewis

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Commissioned by Sean Seyer

Fascist Pigs might seem at first to be a provocative or sensationalistic title for a serious academic work, but in the case of Tiago Saraiva's splendid analysis of the importance of hybridized wheat, select cultivars of potatoes, and meticulously bred pigs in the building of fascism in Portugal, Italy, and Germany, it turns out to be quite appropriate. *Fascist Pigs* is the rare academic work that manages both to set out an ambitious agenda for itself and then largely to realize this ambition. The heart of the author's purpose is to provide an analysis of fascism as an "alternative modernity" and in doing so to reconcile the different facets of fascism—its reactionary, populist rhetoric and its modernist approach—that scholars have found problematic or paradoxical. In Saraiva's view fascism was "an all-encompassing modernist social experiment with the purpose of inventing a new national community," one that had much in common with other modernist projects (p. 5). He supports this claim by expanding the idea of biopolitics under fascism, adding the important dimension of the political and scientific engineering of nonhuman organisms to the well-explored area of fascism and human biology. At the political level, domesticated animals and plant crops that had been subjected to rigorous scientific and technological interventions promised to help all three fascist states realize their objectives of self-sufficiency. At the bureaucratic level, the development and introduction of these modified "technoscientific organisms" helped build the fascist state.

The first part of the book details the utility of these organisms for the building of fascism domestically. Here the author's decision to take what was originally an analysis of Portuguese fascism and to make it comparative truly pays off, as Saraiva convincingly maps out a similar pattern in all three states. Fascist governments learned from World War I that the nation was utterly dependent on its own food resources and therefore made self-sufficiency a political and economic goal from very early on. All three states used the language of combat in their propaganda, presenting the food problem as a true crisis that could only be overcome through a heroic effort on the part of the people, linking the peasantry and small farmers to the state. They promised to provide farmers with scientifically modified crops and livestock that would allow the peasantry to improve yields and therefore make them partners in the struggle for economic self-sufficiency. More important than the propaganda, however, was the pattern by which "technoscientific organisms" spread from the laboratory/breeding station to the field. Governments selected the strains and breeds that promised to fulfill their goals, then

imposed these organisms on their populations through mechanisms such as registers and seed exchanges. However, these modified organisms typically came at a price, requiring fertilizers, special feeds, or very particular field conditions to prosper and realize their potential. Consequently, their significance came not from their actual impact on agricultural productivity or the well-being of the peasant, for these additional costs often drove small farmers into debt. Rather, the process of imposing these organisms integrated the peasants into a nationalist project, required the creation of bureaucratic/scientific bodies to manage the rural population, and strengthened the relationship between the state and the chemical companies and large landowners who were ultimately the true beneficiaries of the process. Judged from a purely rational or performative perspective, the results of these projects were mixed. Judged from the perspective of building fascism they were uniformly successful.

The second part of the book extends the analysis to fascist colonial projects. In this context animals (particularly karakul sheep, imposed on colonial lands in Africa), cotton (imposed by the Portuguese in Mozambique) and rubber substitutes (imposed by Germany as it ruthlessly colonized central Europe) were similarly useful for transforming the land and building fascism. Here the comparison between fascism and other modernist projects is most explicit, as the author notes the brutality and savagery of earlier colonial policies and affirms that fascist empires were "built on, and in reaction to, other European Imperial experiences" (p. 140). In both cases, the most violent dimension of political power was colonization, with the primary difference being that while most democratic states were reforming their colonial labor systems the fascist empires remained unrepentantly brutal.

The book also makes a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the experience of science during fascism by focusing on science as a producer of entities or objects (ontology) rather than science as a mode of knowing (epistemology). Scientists—and the organisms they modified—all existed before fascism; most had had both a scientific and patriotic interest in improving national self-sufficiency in foodstuffs before fascist regimes took power. (As Saraiva points out, all German adults in the 1930s, regardless of political views, had acute personal experience with hunger). Researchers, their labs, and their model systems all provided the new fascist governments with the tools that they would need to realize their ambitions. The governments, in turn, allowed researchers to continue developing systems in which they were already heavily invested. For example, in Italy the researcher Narenzo Strampelli had been experimenting with hybrid strains of wheat to increase yield since at least 1903, and he found a welcome partner in the Mussolini government. This raises the question of just who mobilized who—did the state mobilize scientists or did scientists mobilize the state to realize their long-term research goals?

Fascist Pigs is, with the exception of a somewhat opaque conclusion, well written and convincing throughout. The author's mastery of detail is meticulous, particularly his detailed reconstruction of scientific processes, such as his recounting of the practical challenges of hybridizing wheat (pp. 30-31). The book takes significant findings from the specialized literature on the history of science and technology, particularly the relationship between scientists and the Nazi state, and integrates them effectively into an international history of fascism. The attention to research detail is complemented by solid coverage of the relevant literature—the author's comfort with Italian, English, German, and Portuguese sources is admirable. On the whole *Fascist Pigs* is comparative history done well and warrants broad readership.

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