mobility, affluence and atomization, but inhibited them from seeking a serious Grundrisse for an alternative to nation-state market capitalism as the basis of the just society. And in the end the pragmatism that Favretto clearly admires must tend to merge into a new dogmatism that worships neo-imperial globalization for its own sake.

Some aspects of the analysis leave one wondering. The emphasis on the pursuit of ‘modernization’ by the pragmatists of social democracy leaves unexplored the dynamics of the pursuit of office: the personal is entirely subsumed in the political. One would have wished, too, for a closer scrutiny of the interface between ‘socialist’ and ‘nationalist’ elements in the internal and international debates of the Left parties considered.

More importantly, only a brief passing reference is made to the variety of Italies that still exist, in particular to the characteristics of the political economy of the so-called ‘third Italy’, which, despite (or perhaps because of) its mixture of decentralizing and anti-corporatist trends, and their political and social correlatives, remains the enduring motor of the economy as a whole. It is always misleading to aggregate the population of the Italian peninsula into a homogeneous whole—historically the variations have always been at least as important as the commonalities—and it may even be the case that substantial portions of the population have already found their own ‘third way’, at the margin of market capitalism, to a civil and political society capable of generating a post-modern socialism that combines social solidarity with unflagging enterprise (think of the archipelago of industrial districts clustered in Tuscany, Emilia and the Veneto).

The book’s apparatus is substantial but could have benefited from more stringent editing—thirty pages of notes and fifteen of references hint at the text’s origin as a doctoral thesis, but there is no clear distinction between the two categories; the notes are references rather than clarifications, and many of the ‘references’ appear neither in the text nor the index. There are also pages where a jargon-laden original Italian text has produced a paragraph whose meaning is totally lost in the English version (e.g. p. 161).

Notwithstanding these blemishes, Favretto’s book poses significant questions and provides a wealth of material that contributes to establishing them in several useful perspectives; the protean capacity of the ‘socialist idea’ to navigate its defeats and setbacks, the convergence of the neo-liberal and the neo-socialist responses to late capitalism, the functionality of social democracy as a way for capitalism to survive its contradictions. Favretto puts it well in her final remark: ‘The neo-revisionism in which the major parties of the Left are currently involved may well help to guarantee them another hundred years. The question then remains: at what price?’ (p. 177).

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Renzo De Felice (1929–96) is without doubt the best known Italian historian both within and outside Italy. His notoriety, as Emilio Gentile points out in chapter 1, is due not so much to his monumental biography of Mussolini as to the immense furore created by his 1975 Intervista sul fascismo (Laterza, Rome–Bari), subsequent radio, television and newspaper interviews, and the publication in 1995 of Rosso e nero (Baldini & Castoldi, Milan), another interview in book form. The initial cause of the commotion concerned De Felice’s distinction between ‘Fascism as movement’ and ‘Fascism as regime’. In itself, this was neither a new nor a particularly startling proposition, but De Felice added an important twist. Against long-standing interpretations that saw Fascism as deriving its mass base from reactionary sectors of the crisis-ridden petty bourgeoisie, De Felice averred that the ‘movement’ consisted of the up-and-coming middle classes, whose revolutionary aspirations represented a ‘guiding thread’ running through the history of Fascism. He further proposed the need to distinguish between Fascism and Nazism since the former was rooted, in his view, in the French Revolutionary tradition and was forward-looking in its endeavour to create the ‘new man’; Nazism, on the other hand, looked to the past and was inherently reactionary. Moreover, as it followed from this that national cases of Fascism had to
be understood on their own terms, general theories of the phenomenon were. De Felice increasingly claimed, untenable. The press interviews in the 1980s argued for a rewriting of the Italian Constitution deprived of its ‘anti-Fascist prejudice’ and of its dispositions banning the reconstitution of the Fascist Party in Italy. Finally, in Rosso e nero, and in the last volume of the Mussolini biography, De Felice redrew the Italian anti-Fascist resistance of 1943–45 as a minority movement to which the vast majority of the population remained indifferent.

Gentile gives an at times moving reconstruction of the personality of De Felice, arguing that his increasing introversion (and even bitterness) as the polemical years went by never backfired on his students or colleagues. One wonders, however, how far Gentile’s book positively contributes to the debate surrounding the De Felice’s role in Italian historiography. Like De Felice, whose Mussolini biography increasingly tended to exclude from its secondary references the works of all but his own close circle, Gentile makes little if no mention of De Felice’s critics. We learn that objections existed (pp. 15–16), and what the most radically deprecative of these were, but not who made them or where. A quotation from philosopher Norberto Bobbio (p. 16) informs us only that he was in favour of giving De Felice’s views a fair hearing, not what his significant differences with De Felice amounted to. It is only towards the end of the book (p. 159) that a bibliographical reference is given for Guido Quazza’s claim to the effect that De Felice’s ‘calculating philologism’ and ‘objectivist empiricism’ generated a methodological school which rehabilitated Fascism, whereas Gentile claims that no such De Felicean school has ever existed. For the rest, an examination of footnotes reveals references to Rosario Romeo, Federico Chabod, A.J.P. Taylor and Francesco Perfetti—illustrious names, to be sure, but whose presence only underlines the absence of scholars whose opinions are a lot less easy to reconcile with De Felice’s method and findings.

A composite summary of the various points raised against De Felice’s approach might be as follows. De Felice fell back on the prestige and ostensibly scientific method of his Mussolini volumes in order to diffuse, via the press, what were highly provocative but largely undemonstrated affirmations. It is claimed that, taken in their entirety, De Felice’s various statements amounted to a rehabilitation of Fascism and its leader while contemporaneously undermining the significance of the anti-Fascist resistance and its codification in the postwar Constitution. It is further argued that De Felice too one-sidedly interpreted mass passivity as consent for the regime, and that he downplayed Mussolini’s role in the savage repression of resistance in Libya and Abyssinia. Further criticisms include his undiscriminating acceptance of the documentation of Dino Grandi for his reconstruction of Italian foreign policy in the lead-up to the Second World War, and his grave underestimation of Italian Fascism’s role in the Holocaust. Even the form of the biography does not escape comment. It has been opined that amid the myriad declarations, counter-declarations, lengthy quotations, comma-riddled sentences and interminable chapters, the general lines of the Fascist phenomenon become incoherent and effectively disappear. Finally, it has been pointed out that, while not a few of these critiques have been hard-hitting, they have, with few exceptions, been academically loyal, and certainly deserving of answers. De Felice, on the other hand, never actually dealt with them in the correct academic manner, limiting his rejoinder, rather, to dismissing the alleged prejudices of what he termed the ‘conventional’ or ‘official’ historiography of a vulgata antifascista. Gentile’s assessment of the Mussolini biography in chapter 1 is overtly critical of that work’s overall unreadable character, but he does not link this critique of form to a discussion of the issues of ideological content that have been raised in relation to it. He also concedes in chapter 8 that De Felice’s line of argumentation regarding Mussolini’s responsibilities for the 1938 racial laws, the alliance with Hitler and Italian intervention into the Second World War might not be altogether convincing. But he once again fails to furnish a reference for, say, Enzo Collotti who, without resort to personal gripes or accusations, seriously questions the De Felicean interpretation of Fascist foreign policy for the period between 1922 and 1939. Other De Felice critics include historians such as Roberto Vivarelli, Giuseppe Galasso, Denis Mack Smith, Nicola Tranfaglia, Gianpasquale Santomassimo and Giorgio
Rochat (to name but a few), whose varying research interests, methodologies, political culture and degrees of linguistic pungency are difficult to compress into a concept of ‘official’ historiography or *valgata antifascista*. Yet with the exception of Tranfaglia, who edited the book from which Quazza’s aforementioned statement is taken, none of these authors is cited. Instead, Gentile resorts to what becomes a tedious repetition of the presumed ‘schematic’ and ‘ideological prejudice’ informing the method over against which De Felice’s place in the ‘new’ Italian historiography is positively defined.

A re-evaluation of important De Felice theories certainly occurs in Gentile’s chapters 6 and 7. These include De Felice’s reluctance to define Fascism as totalitarian, a view which he supported with reference to the fact that, unlike the Nazi Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, both of which predominated in the state structure, the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* dissolved into the state. Gentile has shown in his own studies that this reconstruction of events quite simply does not stand up to serious scrutiny. The point, however, is that this critical exposition outlines weaknesses in De Felice’s interpretation of Fascism which have subsequently been dealt with by Gentile himself. This laudable and convincing exegesis only highlights once again the fact that a similar treatment is not afforded to one or two of the previously mentioned critical authors.

In chapter 9 Gentile discusses the anguish of De Felice in confronting what he saw as the crisis of national identity and sense of common history in post-Second World War Italy. Hence his notorious definition of 8 September 1943 (the day when the Italian state broke with Germany, when the King and the High Command fled to Bari, and when spontaneous armed popular resistance to Fascism emerged) as the ‘death of the Nation’, an event which, in his view, initiated the ‘long defeat’ still manifest in post-war political divisions. As Gentile shows, De Felice’s sense of his own historical mission to rectify this cleavage meant that he shared more than just an office in the University of Rome with his friend Rosario Romeo. Yet already in chapter 2 Gentile had dealt with De Felice’s transition away from a Marxist methodology towards a ‘historicist’ approach under the influence of Federico Chabod and Delio Cantimori. This involved a rejection of what were deemed to be the tendencies of some historians, especially Marxist ones (but the odd liberal also got his knuckles rapped), to make their analysis of history conform to pre-existing ‘schematic’ propositions, and to impose ‘value judgements’ on the documentary evidence. Following Chabod and Cantimori, De Felice insistently on the need to invert this methodological trend by beginning from the ‘specific’ rather than the ‘general’—that is, from the ‘concrete’ in the form of ‘precise data’. Thus history was to be ‘told as it really happened’, with particular stress being placed on unpublished archive documentation which was to ‘speak for itself’ without the interference of the historian. Viewed in relation to the analysis of chapter 9, the conclusion which surely needs to be drawn is, first, that the archival documents failed to ‘speak for themselves’ (to quote De Felice’s frequent claim), and secondly that De Felice’s interpretation of important components of that documentation was informed by an ideological affinity with Romeo coupled with an overbearing sense of self-appointed national mission. If there was mass consent for Fascism, if it was not as bad as Nazism, if the choices Mussolini made were not intrinsic to its nature and in fact contradicted his real intentions, then why now remain divided over it? In other words, despite his own claims to the contrary De Felice’s analysis contained a strong component of the *deus ex machina*. Ironically, indeed, in the preface to the first volume of the Mussolini biography (p. xviii) none other than Cantimori argued that precisely the historical judgements which pervade the volume appeared to hold together only on account of de Felice’s contorted ‘periphrasis’ and ‘circumlocutions’. Otherwise, avowed Cantimori, one judgement completely contradicted another, and this irreconcilability would have been easily exposed if De Felice had presented his case in a more straightforward manner.

Again in chapter 9 Gentile insists that nobody can doubt De Felice’s negative assessment of Mussolini and Fascism, and he backs this up by providing a number of quotations from De Felice himself. However, the sincerity of De Felice’s repeatedly declared anti-Fascism is not questioned by his more serious critics. Clearly what drove De Felice forward was not a conscious project to rehabilitate Fascism but,
as Gentile convincingly argues, a profound and passionate intellectual curiosity, visible in a colossal editorial output which goes well beyond the Mussolini biography. What is in question, nevertheless, is the political effect of the way De Felice aestheticized the Fascist phenomenon, and of his tendency to conduct his side of the ‘debate’ through the press and to simplistically label other scholars, accusing them of practices of which he himself was a master. For all his insistence that history-writing was not to be politically informed, the fact remains that no Italian historian has ever used his or her interpretation of Fascism for the massive political ends to which De Felice put his.

One senses from this book an Emilio Gentile who wants to draw a line between himself and the De Felicean school which, in his ‘Epilogo’, he actually claims does not exist. Particularly significant in this regard is his eagerness to underline the fact that De Felice gradually accepted his (Gentile’s) findings on Fascism. But if De Felice really had been the person who emerges from this book, it would be difficult to understand why his work has created so much ado. Indeed, although distinguishing between what he terms the ‘legitimate critical dissent’ and the ‘factious ideological disdain’ raised by De Felice’s work (p. 16), Gentile ascribes too much importance to the latter and in so doing winds up caricaturing and to all intents and purposes ignoring the former, thus reinforcing the picture of De Felice created by his account. Given the ground-breaking results that Gentile has provided in his own increasing autonomy from Renzo De Felice, this book must, sadly, be considered something of a missed opportunity.

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Francesco Germinario’s new book offers an interesting contribution to the literature on Italian anti-semitism through a detailed examination of the Fascist-era writings of Julius Evola (1898–1974). Evola is known as one of Fascist Italy’s most prolific racist writers, but is also considered an eccentric, peripheral character. Germinario insists that Evola be understood as ‘an intellectual internal to Fascism’, with an important voice in the development of the more radical, totalitarian ideology that Germinario identifies as ‘mature Fascism’ (p. 22). A detailed analysis of Evola’s views is essential for the reconstruction of the ‘theoretical and cultural debate’ on race which, Germinario argues, was an essential part of the intellectual history of late Fascism.

Germinario focuses in particular on Evola’s writings on German National Socialism and on Nazi racial ideology and policy. This approach serves Germinario well not only in charting the development of Evola’s complex engagement with Nazism, but also in highlighting the particularities of Evola’s own positions. Germinario shows for example how Evola’s rejection of Nazi ‘biological’ racism, to which he opposed his own so-called ‘racism of the spirit’ derived from Evola’s radical ideology of ‘Traditionalism’. By the late 1920s, Evola had found in racism and especially anti-semitism a kind of lynchpin for his broader ideology of counter-revolution. He called for ‘revolt against the modern world’ and a return to the values of hierarchy, aristocracy, and ‘Tradition’. For Evola, the definitive rejection of the values of the Enlightenment required the destruction of the concept of ‘humanity’ itself—that idea of the essential equality of men on the basis of which the modern world’s assault on order, aristocracy and ‘quality’ had been launched. The destruction of the ideal of equality required as its philosophical opposite, an ideology of inequality—racism. By smashing the concept of ‘humanity’, racism was not a political ploy, but a philosophical breakthrough, an ideological starting point for the counterrevolutionary work of the restoration of Value and Tradition.

Evola attacked the crass, plebian character of Nazi ‘blood-racism’ from this perspective. Nazism, he believed, defined the Aryan race at once too broadly and too narrowly: by making the race coextensive with the entire German Volk, Nazism offered the noble title of Aryan to even the most lowly members of the national community. This also made the mistake of locating legitimacy with the masses, rather than