

Introduction:  
The Culture of Japanese Fascism

■ The essays in this volume examine the relationship between culture and fascism in Japan in the decades preceding the end of the Pacific War in 1945. Gathering the evidence of a culture of fascism that was not always so named, the authors are more concerned with the diffusion of fascism as ideology and representation than with its origins and consequences as a political movement or regime.

Though a number of essays offer definitions of fascism and explore how Japanese culture and thought in the interwar years can profitably be understood as fascist, the volume as a whole does not present a unified definition of “fascism,” or even a uniform picture of Japan in these years. Indeed, some contributors resist applying the term and concept to Japan, even as they find areas of congruence with fascist states and cultural forms elsewhere. As a whole, however, the volume does argue for the presence of a fascist culture in Japan and for the presence of fascistic ways of healing the crisis of interwar modernity. It is an assumption of most of the essays, and of the conception of the volume itself, that to understand the Japanese inflection of fascism, we would benefit more from observing its marks on culture than from comparing political details in the hope of finding a kind

of fascism that fits a generic definition across societies. As Mark Neocleous reminds us, focusing on the actual content of policies “obscures the common ideological prescriptions behind them.”<sup>1</sup> Kevin Doak sets the tone by examining fascism in the 1930s not as an established political system, but as an ideology that sought to intervene in culture as the first step toward the eventual control of political institutions and ideology.

Until fairly recently, scholars of Japanese history and culture, both inside Japan and out, generally treated the question of fascism in its political manifestations. The debates among these scholars over the very applicability of the term to the Japanese state (was it fascist the way Italy and Germany were?) dampened the possibility not only of analyzing Japan’s fascism (if it wasn’t fascist like Germany and Italy, then it wasn’t fascist), but also of examining its cultural manifestations (if Japan wasn’t fascist, it couldn’t have had a fascist culture).<sup>2</sup>

There have been exceptions to this rule, of course. It seems that as insistently as American scholars have asserted that Japan should not be considered fascist, Japanese scholars have applied the term more freely—perhaps because, having lived through the 1930s, many of them knew in their bones how the regime differed from other regimes.<sup>3</sup> The groundwork for this understanding of Japan as fascist was established by such scholars, journalists, and writers who lived through fascism and who were attuned to the sphere of culture and language.<sup>4</sup>

According to Richard Torrance’s essay in this volume, by the time of Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the terms *fascism* (*fuashizumu*), *fascist* (*fuassho*), and *fascistization* (*fuasshoka*) had already been in circulation and were “supported by a body of political theory that seemed to correspond to Japan’s social, political, and cultural realities.” For the Marxist philosopher Tosaka Jun, in 1937 the debate over the existence of fascism in Japan was over.

Tosaka was perhaps the most penetrating and sustained prewar analyst of the relationship of fascist culture to politics in Japan. He described Japanese fascism as a response to the contradictions of capitalism, suffusing politics, culture, and daily life, generally accepted and experienced by a great breadth of people, knowingly or not, across educational and class lines, including students, politicians, the petite bourgeoisie, farmers, and laborers. Tosaka argued that there was no ideal form of fascism with intrinsic qualities, and that with some differences its inflection in Japan was of a kind with other fascisms in the world.<sup>5</sup> Fascism in Japan may have differed from that of Italy and Germany in its intellectual roots and in its having

been imposed from above rather than associated with a mass movement from below, but even those differences were fast disappearing as fascism gained momentum. The term itself was important to Tosaka because it allowed him to insist on Japan's kinship to European fascism; to call the Japanese case too "special," he argued, could result in losing the sense in which it was indeed part of global fascism.<sup>6</sup>

Tosaka's understanding of the relationship of culture to fascism was prescient. In his essay "Against the Nazi Control of the Arts" (1937), he likened the silencing of critical thought in Japan to that in Nazi Germany. Central to Japan's fascism, he argued, was the worship of beauty and the government ban on critique.<sup>7</sup> At the heart of fascism, that is, lay the manipulation of representation and language. Tosaka noted that when not only movements such as the antifascist *Jinmin Sensen* (People's Front), treated extensively by Richard Torrance in this volume, but also the use of the term *people's front* itself, were banned because they were seen to damage the national essence (*kokutai*), problems of language had reached the level of law, and a theory of grammar had become a theory of political control. In "Nihonshugisha no bungakka (Japanism into Literature)" (1937), Tosaka took on the culture critic (*bungei hyōronka*) Kobayashi Hideo, the kind of thinker Tosaka considered fundamental to the functioning of fascism, and whom Harry Harootunian in this volume reveals to have attempted to mystify everyday life by the appeal of the auratic, timeless, fascist moment. Dominating Japanese letters in 1936, critics such as Kobayashi lent their work to smoothing over the economic, political, social, cultural, and class conflicts that wracked Japanese society. To Tosaka, it was no coincidence that such ideological work was being done by literature, and it was particularly dangerous that it was being done so, because literary ideas, he argued, easily became "ideologies of literature (*bungakushugi*)" that rejected positivism and logic and then served up aesthetic models for the social world. The fruit of such literary thinking was "Japanism," by which Tosaka meant the ideology of Japanese fascism. Tosaka saw that "Japanism," first laughed away in the realm of social thought, had worked its way back to society through the realm of literature, which could easily accommodate its mythmaking capacity. Literature thus came to serve the authorities as a "troop of trumpeters" unifying ideology. Tosaka called these literary intellectuals "critics writing in the mode of love and devotion (*aijōteki hyōronka*)." They made fascism palatable to liberal-thinking people who did not like fascism as a "mode" of being or thinking but found it attractive when associated with words like "love," "art," or "tradition."<sup>8</sup>

Tosaka was describing a situation in which private languages became bound, through the combined force of censorship, inculcation, and the threat of punishment, to the words of the state. Fascism was thus the product of an atmosphere seeded by purveyors of culture and also of the inculcation of that atmosphere through official channels. The “culture of fascism,” Tosaka argued, was, like atmosphere, there to be sensed, even if denied by those who created it.<sup>9</sup> The government understood how to work atmosphere all too well. It employed what one censor called a “tacit pressure (*mugon no atsuruyoku*)” to have ideology accepted “naturally” by “creating atmosphere (*kūkizukuri*).”<sup>10</sup> It was this spell of the atmosphere of fascism—functioning “like the gears of a giant opaque machine,” in the words of the critic Aono Suekichi in the 1930s—that the antifascist writers of “the spirit of prose” (discussed by Richard Torrance) warned their readers to guard against.

In the 1930s, Tosaka Jun was already well on his way to discerning the aesthetic dimension of fascism. The general use of the term *fascism* in the 1930s in its transliterated version preserves the etymology of the word, which is to “bind.” That original meaning helps us understand the “fascist aesthetic,” which reduced messy variety to timeless uniformity. If modernity meant social abstraction resulting from increased urbanization and industrialization, threats of civil strife and economic uncertainty, and the dreadful consequences of mass consumption and commodification, then a discourse of harmony appealed to a timeless culture as an anchor of community and offered a restoration of cultural wholeness by poeticizing fractured daily life into a harmonious, timeless, artistic space untouched by modernity—a mythic space evoked, for example, in the writings of the novelist Kawabata Yasunari, which Nina Cornyetz reveals in this volume to be doing the work of the “fascist aesthetic”—an aesthetic that, in Susan Sontag’s description, glorifies surrender, exalts mindlessness, and glamorizes death.<sup>11</sup> Fascist aesthetics attempted to resolve the conflicts of modernity itself, calling for a complete submission either to absolute order or to a violent, undifferentiated, but liberating moment of violence, or what Angus Lockyer here calls an “epiphanic abolition of . . . distance.”

Tosaka Jun’s work in the 1930s provided one possibility for seeing through this atmosphere. This was a possibility for years left behind. Building on Tosaka, Maruyama Masao began in the late 1940s to analyze Japanese fascism not as a state structure but as a movement. Maruyama, the most influential postwar Japanese analyst of Japanese fascism, argued that what differentiated Japanese fascism from European fascism was that it took hold gradually, as military, political, and bureaucratic forces were stimu-

lated from below by outbursts of radical fascism. The fascist movement from below was then absorbed into the totalitarian transformation that was taking place above, until, finally, the international situation required absolute unity.

To Maruyama, these outbursts from below, inaugurated by intellectuals such as Kita Ikki, who called for constructing a revolutionized Japan, were “movements close to fascism in the true sense of the word.”<sup>12</sup> What Maruyama called “radical fascism” became active after the Manchurian Incident in 1931—the unauthorized attack on and seizing of a Chinese garrison by the Japanese field army, leading to the conquest and pacification of Manchuria and the creation of the Japanese puppet state, Manchukuo—eventually resulting in assassinations and attempted assassinations of government officials. Yet, Maruyama argued, the idealism of Japanese fascism never allowed it to develop into a large-scale party capable of concrete action and political control. As for radical fascism “from below,” it came to an end in a failed coup by imperial loyalists in 1936, fueled by the thinking of Kita Ikki and intended to effect a spiritual reformation of Japan by restoring the Imperial Way of government.<sup>13</sup>

By seeing fascism in Japan through the prism of European fascisms, and by localizing it in radical fascist groups, Maruyama may have set the stage for its later conceptual dismissal, even as his emphasis on fascism as a movement suggests a shift to the cultural sphere, to the realm of consciousness and belief and, by extension, to representation. Yet as much as Maruyama helps us move in this direction, he does not take us far enough in seeing Japan’s fascism as a local inflection of a global, cultural phenomenon—precisely what Tosaka had uncovered.

By 1960, Japanese scholars easily used the word, but more as a talismanic signifier of the bad recent past than as an analytic term. Emphasis was given to the particularity of Japan’s fascism, to “Japanese-style fascism (*nihongata fasshizumu*)” or “emperor-system fascism (*tennōsei fashizumu*).”<sup>14</sup> Analysis of the “emperor system” as the force behind the mass mobilization that led to war was first articulated by Maruyama and others in the postwar years. The emperor system, it was argued, monolithically imposed obedience in the name of the mythology of national cause. It was the product of the Meiji government’s ideological machinations, in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, to mystify the nature of the state, and it made the people submissive to the goals of the state through internal psychological inculcation and external force.<sup>15</sup> For Irokawa Daikichi, the emperor system was a “spiritual structure” control-

ling people from within, a perfectly functioning ideology, for “once within its confines, the corners of the box obscured in the darkness, the people were unable to see what it was that hemmed them in.”<sup>16</sup>

Though the analysis of the emperor system would seem to imply an understanding of Japan as having partaken of global fascism while inflecting it through its own idiom, in fact greater emphasis was given to the emperor side of the phrase, while fascism remained relatively unanalyzed, merely signifying Japan’s past of repression and colonialism.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the use of the figure of the emperor system displaced fascism as a lens through which to understand the workings of a more global ideology. It has preserved (among Marxists and non-Marxists alike) a particular category for Japan, rather than seeing it as an inflection of a global phenomenon.

It is an analysis of the cultural sphere that allows Japan to be seen as one of a number of modern, fascist nations in the years between the ends of the two world wars.<sup>18</sup> This is because culture is where fascism gathers its ideological power. As Slavoj Žižek writes, “The ideological power of fascism lies precisely in the feature which was perceived by liberal or leftist critics as its greatest weakness: in the utterly void, formal character of its appeal, in the fact that it demands obedience and sacrifice for their own sake.”<sup>19</sup> In recent years, analyzing fascism in its cultural form has become less uncommon than it once was. Making a link between regime and culture during the interwar years in Japan, Leslie Pincus has noted a “fascist turn in cultural discourse.” Harry Harootunian has described a “fascist temperament” in the 1930s that fueled a language of renewal and harmony and attempted to recover a spiritual state of culture in order to heal social fissures. This aesthetic discourse aimed at poeticizing everyday life by offering the myth of a harmonious social order and by appealing to a timeless culture and community in the face of a fracturing mass culture of consumption.<sup>20</sup>

Once one’s eyes are adjusted by the lens of culture, the terms used to describe European fascism come to work for Japan, as well. Fascism, in Roger Griffin’s phrase, converts cultural despair into passionate purpose. It draws its inspiration from the past, not merely in an act of nostalgia, but as a means of providing a this-worldly cure to malaise and anomie by regimenting people’s lives and creating consensus through propaganda, indoctrination, repression, and terror directed at internal and external enemies. The “core myth” of fascism provides the possibility for an experience of immediacy and unity that counters the alienation and fragmentation of the modern individual.<sup>21</sup>

We can add to this core myth Neocleous’s analysis of the common ide-

ology of fascism that runs through Italian, German, and Spanish fascisms, despite local differences, and that applies to Japan, as well. According to Neocleous, fascism emerged as a reaction to the threats of social and political divisions created in the crisis of capitalism in the years following the First World War. In particular, it was a reaction to the threat of modernity in its political forms, whether Marxism or liberalism. Based on earlier romantic philosophies, fascism promised an end to class division by evoking a myth of a state and a nation unified by the natural bonds of its people through their blood and spirit. Fascism wanted cohesion and offered it in a language of faith that appealed, through images and myths, to feelings rather than ideas, sentiments rather than rational thoughts. It called for a unity that is “natural,” like a family’s, in which individuals might gain a spontaneous, intuitive grasp of their relationship to a more powerful entity and a feeling for their calling to a higher spiritual unity. Fascism elevated the will to an ideal, praising the intuitive act over the intellectually self-reflective act. In this way, it was an assault on Enlightenment values of rational positivism.<sup>22</sup>

Fascism was, then, an ideology for molding and controlling the masses to nationalize them—or to nationalize them to mold and control them—in the name of a myth of nature—of a “natural” nation with no history but is timeless, like myth, made of individuals connected through bonds of nature.<sup>23</sup> In place of history, fascism emphasized nature; in place of politics, it evoked beauty. In his essay in this volume, Harry Harootunian argues that the cultural critic Kobayashi Hideo partook of the language of fascism by replacing the lived time of history and politics with the timeless space of eternal beauty.

Fascism found a solution to alienation and exploitation not in a radical change in economic systems, but also in policies and rhetoric ostensibly meant to beautify work, the workplace, and everyday life. Such an effort lay behind the proposal for reforming school dormitory life by Japan’s largest and most influential folk art organization, the *Mingei Kyōkai* (Folk-Craft Association), analyzed here by Kim Brandt. Though published in 1941 and never realized, the proposal was, according to Brandt, an exemplary and “recognizably fascist effort to employ aesthetics as a means of increasing industrial productivity for total war”:

In Japan as well as in Germany or Italy or France, one of the central goals of fascist thinkers and policymakers was to create a beautiful new society in which individuality could be both exalted and sublated by the

exquisite discipline of national unity and sacrifice. This vision had very concrete uses in mobilizing national subjects and resources for wartime labor and privation, but it was also held out as an end in and of itself. The ideal of “one hundred million hearts beating as one,” as one of the most often quoted slogans of wartime Japan put it, was presented as a source of aesthetic gratification, as well as of virtue and strength.

Ultimately, fascism, argues Neocleous, is the culmination of a conservative revolutionary tradition, with roots in Nietzsche and Bergson and intellectual branches that reached across national boundaries, encompassing modern and modernist writers such as Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis in the United States and England, Gottfried Benn in Germany, F. T. Marinetti and Gabriele d’Annunzio in Italy, Georges Sorel in France, and Ernesto Giménez Caballero in Spain. Fascism thus cannot be separated from modernism. An exchange of ideas—both modernist and fascist ideas—across Europe aligned Nazism with Italian fascism, though each employed different ideological mechanisms and styles of rhetoric according to its own traditions.

Japan was part of the same conversation. Japan’s confrontation with modernity was coeval with Europe’s, and Japanese intellectuals maturing in the 1920s were as likely to know European texts as much as Japanese. By the 1920s, the background of any educated Japanese encompassed modern European literature and philosophy as much as—often more than—Japanese traditions of philosophical and political thought. Modernism and fascism were the lingua franca spoken fluently in Japan and in Europe and, combined with local traditions and European letters, they fueled the organicist thought and rhetoric that underpinned fascism. The social, economic, and cultural conditions that gave birth to European fascism were also shared by Japan, and the solutions, through the state’s imposition of mythic thinking that extolled natural bonds of blood and demanded devotion and sacrifice of the individual to the state, nation, or lineage, backed by coercion at home, in the name of the domination of peoples of poorer bloodline abroad, made Japan one among other fascist nations.

### Japan’s Crisis of Modernity and Fascist Mobilization

In the 1930s, the 1920s ideology of cosmopolitan liberalism and its ideal of the integrity of the free individual were already losing ground to a political ideal of communitarianism and a rhetoric of authenticity that called for re-



storing a sense of true “Japaneseness.”<sup>24</sup> Intellectuals argued for the abandonment of the belief in individuality—an abstract, modern notion that festered at the core of the crisis—and searched for an identity grounded in native culture and life or mediated through absolute identification with the “people (*minzoku*)” and the state.<sup>25</sup> The individual was viewed not only as selfish, but also as an inadequate source of meaning, while the “people” and the state became idealized as the sources of meaningful action and identity. Intellectuals critiqued modernity as an insufficient vehicle for either national or personal identity: it had led to a dead end that needed to be overcome.<sup>26</sup> The revolt against modernity registered by writers was a revolt of writers betrayed by modernity’s promise.

The earthquake that destroyed Tokyo in 1923 left in its wake dramatic physical evidence of the power of destruction, particularly of the fragility of the modern metropolis, feeding both the anxiety and the hope that the city and culture that had been destroyed could be invented anew.<sup>27</sup> During the next decade, unemployment in the cities, fear of starvation in the countryside, right-wing assassinations, military coups, and the creation of a Japanese puppet state in Manchuria suffused Japanese life, through government propaganda, popular culture, and the media, with an atmosphere of imminent, dramatic transformation that lent various new ideologies meant to “overcome the modern,” as the 1941 symposium of intellectuals was named, a tone of crisis. From 1932 on, this was termed by the government and media a “state of emergency (*hijōji*).” The rhetoric of “emergency” transformed Japan into a place of eternal crisis, thus providing the atmospheric backing needed, in the name of national survival, to increase the power of the military, rationalize Japanese hegemony over East Asia, and eliminate dissent at home.<sup>28</sup>

This sense of crisis laid the groundwork for a “politics of despair,” which Fritz Stern described as fundamental to the growth of fascism in Germany. The mood of the times was encapsulated by the catch phrases “overcoming the modern (*kindai no chōkoku*)” and “malaise (*fuun*).” *Malaise*—the emotional correlative of the political “emergency”—entered everyday language as a result of the 1934 translation into Japanese of Lev Shestov’s *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: The Philosophy of Tragedy* (1903), which sold thousands of copies and provoked a flurry of essays by intellectuals who saw in it a statement of their own disillusionment and anxiety. In 1933, the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi had associated Shestov with the word “malaise,” which to him meant a vague sense of crisis. Miki cited Martin Heidegger as the philosopher of

malaise par excellence and likened the spiritual crisis in Japan—which he said had begun in 1931 with the conquest of Manchuria—to the one that overtook the Europe of Heidegger and Andre Gide.<sup>29</sup>

Only a drastic cure could heal the “confusion of everyday life, the futility and blindness of cultural life,” despaired Hirato Renkichi (1893–1922), the translator of F. T. Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto* in 1921. The cure, according to Hirato, would take the form of a musical moment of wholeness and the binding together of all things: “the musical condition of Futurism develops into an absolute symphony of the spirit and the skies, a freedom that allows all things to flow into one another, a magnificent orchestra that binds all things together in an organic relationship.”<sup>30</sup>

Eight years after Hirato made his pronouncement, the Japanese Dadaist Tsuji Jun (1885–1944) expressed a feeling of creative despair: “Realism, Naturalism, Romanticism, human socialism, bourgeoisie, proletariat, Expressionism, Dada—it makes my head ache just hearing their names. Naturalist novels, Symbolist poems, Romantic dramas, literature awakened to class-consciousness—they should all just do as they please.” Whereas Hirato could still envision an escape from modern alienation, Tsuji had lost any sense of authority outside the self, and thus any set of objective ethical or aesthetic values. “Gods, Buddhas, humanity, society, freedom, the nation” were nothing more than a “changing of idols.” To Tsuji, all Japanese culture was beyond repair: “the age rushes along, the flow of the currents of thought surges upon us and is greedily sucked up by the fresh minds and the instincts of the new age. Stemming the tide through base and absurd methods is even more pathetic. One might better surrender, helmets removed, the rotting bourgeois castle. It is a great pity that one’s eyes only open when the fire is in one’s own storehouse.”<sup>31</sup>

I quote a Futurist and a Dadaist not to imply any necessary connection between their aesthetics and fascism but to remind us that the “fascist” response to cultural crisis took place across the spectrum of participants in culture. Avant-garde and Futurist artists were as disturbed by the increasing abstraction of language as were neo-traditionalist writers. For both the right and the left, as Harry Harootunian has argued, the task was to overcome the division, disunity, and fragmentation that contemporary society was experiencing. Such cures to the crisis of modernity’s fragmentation were laid out in arguments, or evocations, of timeless communities, arts, or artistic practices that aestheticized history and social life by imagining an organic community, apotheosizing the “folk,” and waging what the cultural critic Kobayashi Hideo often referred to as an assault against abstraction.

The assault was felt in the shocks of economic depression, military expansion, repressive government intervention in social conflicts (between labor and management), right-wing terror, cultural malaise, and fear of the Anglo-American powers; these provided the context for state-controlled mobilization for what the state called a “holy war (*seisen*)” under the banner of harmony and order at home and expansion and control abroad. This reached a climax in Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro’s outline of a “New Order” in 1940, which, through the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, glorified the national body and called for military hegemony and the creation of an autarchic economic empire. The intellectuals in Konoe’s brain trust, the Shōwa Kenkyūkai (Shōwa Research Center),<sup>32</sup> spoke a language close to that of European fascist thinkers and promoted a political structure akin to that found in Italy and Germany, attempting to take charge of all aspects of economic, political, and cultural life and striving to unite “the masses” in an attitude of reverence for one quasi-divine figure (in this case, the emperor). These intellectuals, like their fascist counterparts in Europe, argued for a new society to heal the ills of a crisis in society and saw control of freedom as part of that cure, for through control would be won a higher form of freedom.

The government mobilized collectivism, war, and expansion and promoted a new culture it deemed befitting Japan’s history and ethnicity. A combination of restrictive laws and the creation of local organizations set up to repress dissent and inculcate state values on a mass scale was orchestrated by the government’s “National Mobilization (*kokka sōdōin*),” whose ultimate goal was to “extinguish oneself through service to the state (*messhi hōkō*).”<sup>33</sup>

The ideological underpinnings of inculcation were kept abstract enough to be flexible—Japanese ideologues could fill fascism with a wide variety of content. The reach of the state extended throughout the realms of education, cultural expression, entertainment, and the media, casting an oppressive pall over expression and action through surveillance, mass propaganda, and censorship, and backed by police repression.<sup>34</sup>

The government attempted to rationalize all aspects of life. How one nurtured the spirit (in worship), trained the body (in exercise), celebrated life’s progress (in weddings), created one’s image (through clothing or hairstyles, which would match the national spirit and essence), and nurtured one’s body (with food and sport) and senses (in the arts) would reflect the directives of centralized organizations. The material side of life was to be restricted and focused throughout the nation, in local control organiza-

tions and centralizing forces such as the draft.<sup>35</sup> Appeals would be made to modify the “people’s lifestyle (*kokumin seikatsu*)” to invigorate the “people’s health (*kokumin kenkō*),” and to limit the more frivolous pleasures of life, summed up by the phrase “erotic grotesque nonsense (*eroguronansensu*).” National mobilization meant the beginning of the end of the pursuit of material comfort and pleasure—the end, that is, of the fun of urban life.<sup>36</sup> The time for play was over, except, perhaps, for spiritual play. Through a reading of the detective fiction of Edogawa Ranpo, James Reichert explores how this impulse to homogeneity and purity represented a stay against the modern mess, against the pleasure of the erotic, grotesque, and nonsensical, and that mess’s threatening transgression of fascist ideals. Keith Vincent’s examination of the detective novel *The Devil’s Disciple* (1929) examines a dizzying narrative of paranoia that displays a desire for the demands of fascist binding even as it exposes and resists it:

If the modern detective novel finds such clean closure indispensable, its precondition is to be found in another impossible project, described famously by Hirabayashi [Hatsunosuke] in an earlier essay as “the maintenance of the national order through a complete (*kansēi sareta*) system of written laws.” The use of writing to “complete” a system of laws and to bring a novel to a single closural point is among the most cherished fantasies of modernity. In a culture of fascism it becomes an obsession. The fact that it is a fantasy is a knowledge that most detective and legal fictions work to suppress. Their chronic failure or principled refusal to do so are symptoms of and resistances to a culture of fascism that seeks to cure itself through the production of increasingly implausible fictions.

At the state level, the “cure” for the messiness and harshness of material reality was to come through the elevation of spiritual values. The attempted reach of the state into the realm of the spirit was manifest in the new configuration of labor organizations, organized through the concept of “labor-capital fusion,” referring to an ideal unity of purpose, fusing worker and manager with the emperor as one mind and one spirit.<sup>37</sup> (Even baseball was played as a spiritual venture in novels of the time.)<sup>38</sup>

Having a Japanese spirit meant having the authority of Japanese purity. Aaron Skabelund shows how Japanese bureaucrats, with the help of private enthusiasts, projected notions of Japanese purity onto the Japanese dog, then used that dog as a tool of indoctrination. The myth and representation of Hachikō, he argues, “played a prominent role in the culture of fascism as experienced in Japan.” The Hachikō phenomenon struck the liberal anti-

fascist critic Hasegawa Nyozeikan (1875–1969) in 1935 as sentimentalism gone awry and as an example of “fascism from below”; the public, “influenced by a swirl of rumor, sensational media reports, and theories,” had entered a “self-hypnotic, collective psychotic” trance that allowed them to believe things that they had not experienced and that they could not rationally explain. This tendency, Hasegawa worried, “might result in similar delusions about weightier social and political issues with more dangerous consequences than those created by the fervor over Hachikō.”

### The Representational Vacuum

Fascism converted cultural despair into passionate purpose, providing a cure to malaise and anomie by regimenting people’s lives and creating consensus through propaganda, indoctrination, repression, and terror directed at internal and external enemies.<sup>39</sup> The state’s control of language, thought, and behavior created a vacuum that the cultural work of fascism filled. The cultural work of fascism was formed in this representational vacuum. It was through censorship codes that language was mediated for Japanese listeners, viewers, and readers. Although censorship of all media began as early as the beginnings of the modern state in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with a tradition going back two centuries, in the mid-1930s it went even further toward creating an expressive vacuum. After 1937, the producers of newspapers, radio broadcasts, magazines, books, songs, comic books, films, and photographs were all subjected to strict codes, or subjected themselves, out of pragmatic necessity, to self-censorship. Left-wing political organizations and journals were squelched, and language thought to deter from the war effort and the unity of a citizenry behind it came under harsh review. As certain kinds of language were shut out, other kinds were pumped up. National organizations responsible for the dissemination of information or for the content and style of popular entertainment, such as the Jōhō Inkaï (Information Committee), formed in 1931, worked with the industries themselves in the censorship of ideas and language.<sup>40</sup> The hand of propaganda went so far as to reach into the imagination itself.

Beginning in 1937, and increasingly after 1941, popular songs uplifting the spirit of national unity were promoted, while those that did not were controlled. Sensitive to the affective power of aesthetic form, censors assumed that, when censoring songs, they were to focus not on lyrical content but on singing style.<sup>41</sup> In 1936, for example, the pop tune “Wa-

suretewa iya yo! (Don't Forget Me!)” was considered dangerous because of the singer's lascivious lingering on the final note in the title's phrase. The song's exclamatory “yo!” could, when rendered skillfully, make all too visible the sexualized body of the singer—and along with it a whole world of suppressed, tantalizing, erotic decadence.

In the film industry, as in the other media, censorship intensified in direct proportion to the medium's access to an ever growing audience. Between 1926 and 1934, the film audience, for example, increased by 60 percent—as many as 35 percent of the total moviegoers were fifteen and under, an audience primed for the “decadent” messages of popular culture and for fantasies of foreign lifestyles, as well as, on the opposite extreme, to new state propaganda. Control extended to the lyrics of popular songs thought to corrupt the national language (*kokugo*) with foreign phrases and expressions. Words themselves were subject to the force of direct ideological pressure. Loan words once written in the phonetic script that could transparently transliterate foreign words would now be changed to Japanese ideograms.<sup>42</sup> So suffused with the marks of twisted truths and of formulated propaganda were the languages absorbed by reading, listening, and watching that it would be no exaggeration to say that all thought and expression were squeezed and molded to fit into state-imposed forms.

The administration of aesthetics meant to make people support war and be willing to persevere stoically in dire conditions as war continued.<sup>43</sup> This effort was dubbed a “war of ideas (*shisōsen*).” From the time of the failed coup by imperial loyalists in 1936, imperial thought dominated the language of propaganda in phrases such as “eight corners of the world under one roof (*hakkō ichiu*).” From 1937 on, catch phrases like this one replaced news of casualties on the front. Language prevaricated, or simply lied, and was xenophobic. The new language conjured images of blood and race and heroism, creating what Tsurumi Kazuko calls a “halo of sanctity.”<sup>44</sup>

As interventionist as they were, it is worth noting that artistic propaganda policies never attained the level of elaboration they had in Italy, Germany, and even Spain.<sup>45</sup> It is no coincidence that the essays in this volume that treat the visual work of fascist aesthetics are less at ease with the appellation “fascist” than those that examine matters of language and thought. Michael Baskett, for example, shows that the cultural interaction among the Axis powers led to imperfect and sometimes failed results and “did not lead to the successful creation of a collective ‘fascist’ identity,” even though they had goals in common, “including an obsession with the discourse of

racial purity and imperialist expansionism, as well as a belief in the ability of the medium of film to create (or destroy) national prestige on a mass level.” Aaron Gerow argues that, although the Japanese did produce films meant to inculcate a citizenry with the ideals of the state, and although there was “a discursive framework for the production of stylistically fascist texts,” neither a national cinema nor a national cinematic audience ever developed that could effectively “contribute to the formation of common Japanese imaginaries, fascist or not, or to the effective aesthetic expression of the nation.” In part, he argues, this was because of the very hybridity of Japanese film, and in part because of limitations on material resources and the state’s unwillingness to nationalize (or lack of interest in nationalizing) mass entertainment.

In the case of architecture, Jonathon Reynolds concurs with Baskett’s argument against the existence of a fascist style. The Diet building in Tokyo shared design elements with those of non-fascist states, and, more to the point, architecture and design were not used in Japan as they were in Italy and Germany. Japan never built monumental works capable of transforming urban space on a grand scale.<sup>46</sup> The state was not very interested in architecture and, moreover, lacked materials to execute it on a large scale. Reynolds argues that any political message the Diet building could carry was disrupted by the divisive issue of what Japanese-ness meant, the availability of building materials, and arguments over the relationship between style and national identity: “the building was unable to meet the unrealistic demands placed upon it. The Diet building emerged from the war as an unhappy reminder of failed military adventurism and ineffectual political leadership.”

In her discussion of the national state-sponsored competitions to choose the best designs for memorial tablets commemorating Japan’s war dead, Akiko Takenaka concurs with Reynolds that there was no distinctive fascist design. But Takenaka goes on to show that the design itself, and the successful building and dissemination of actual statues, were less important in the creation of a national aesthetic than was the very process of the competition itself:

The *chūreitō* [lit., “tower to the loyal spirits”] functioned like an icon in the civic religion of fascism, which, according to George Mosse, draws “its strength from an already present consensus.” . . . Mosse’s argument is confined to the visual expressions of fascist culture; the *chūreitō* project, however, helped create political consensus through its process

of creation, even more so than through its actual appearance. That consensus, fostered through education and mass culture, placed ultimate value on one's sacrifice through death to the emperor and was demonstrated not by the physical appearance of the memorials, but by individuals working throughout the process of design and construction.

Angus Lockyer also examines an aborted attempt at aesthetic management (the Japan World Exhibition to commemorate the two thousand six hundredth year of the Imperial Era, planned for 1940) and finds that no unified aesthetic program could be produced, because as the planning "confronted the lessons of experience, . . . the exhibition entered the world of trade-offs, accounting, and interest." Lockyer is interested in how fascist culture can explain how and why aesthetics and ideology could become regime and suggests that fascist regimes "were distinguished by the extent to which the production of culture became the work of the state, rehearsing these tropes in an attempt to yoke subject to regime." Spectacle, therefore, is "one point at which to connect fascist culture to fascist politics." In this regard, according to Lockyer, Japan was lacking: "it is hard to find such a spectacle in Japan, however."

In his response paper included at the end of the volume, Alejandro Yarza argues that fascist consent in Spain was forged not by a totalizing state project but through diverse means, including the dissemination of Franco's personal film projects; the inner contradictions that weighed down the cultural policies of the various national fascisms did not prevent the powerful forging of such consent, which was effected by what he calls Francoist kitsch and its politics of time. Yarza's description of the Spanish situation resonates with the Japanese, in which consent did not necessarily depend on a unified vision emanating from the state.

For Takenaka, Baskett, and Gerow, it was the very process of attempting to forge a national aestheticizing project—which some in this volume call "fascist"—more than the aesthetic objects themselves that had a political effect. They imply that insisting on seeing fascism only in its relationship to the works of regimes may occlude seeing fascism in its discursive or aesthetic forms. Also potentially occluding our vision of fascism are the ways in which fascist discourses can partake of non-fascist and antifascist discourses or even overtly disavow their own fascism. The folk-art theorist Yanagi Sōetsu, discussed by Noriko Aso, was a cosmopolitan humanist "spreading the message of a beautiful . . . way of life for all people, everywhere." Yanagi made explicitly antifascist arguments: "recently there has



been a trend to imitate fascism (*fuassho*). How pitiful that even lovers of the nation (*aikokushugisha*) must learn from the West. No one has a greater unpatriotic sensibility than the Japanese fascists (*fuashisto*). It is disconcerting that Japanese learn the meaning of patriotism from Mussolini.”

Japanese nationalists, Yanagi goes so far as to say, have been a cancer responsible for recent troubles. Nevertheless, despite his antifascist claims, Yanagi’s aesthetics could be inflected fascistically.<sup>47</sup> Aso finds “striking similarities . . . between his folk-craft discourse and fascist aesthetics of the wartime era.” More broadly, his “discursive ambiguities suggest points of articulation between mid-twentieth century humanist and fascist discourses that made slipping from one to the other all too easy for many Japanese intellectuals at the time.” Such slippage lay behind the work of cultural fascism. In Isaiah Berlin’s words, “Few things have played a more fatal part in the history of human thought and action than great imaginative analogies from one sphere, in which a particular principle is applicable and valid, to other provinces, where its effect may be exciting and transforming, but where its consequences may be fallacious in theory and ruinous in practice.”<sup>48</sup>

Cognizant of such slippage, we can be aware of the appearance of fascism in cultural (or political) work that does not speak fascism’s name. In her discussion of the fascist aesthetics of the beautiful fiction of Kawabata Yasunari, Nina Cornyetz writes, “I would go so far as to argue that, even were there no texts by Kawabata that literally voiced support for Japan’s ‘mission’ in Asia, the theoretical analysis of the *signifying system* that underpins Kawabata’s aesthetics . . . will reveal aspects shared by the various and different political forms of fascism.”

Such slippage, and the fact that fascism need not be so named to do its cultural—or political—work, may account for the political and cognitive motivations for the fascist disavowal of fascism, which plays an important structural role in the working of fascism itself and in the postwar forgetting of Japan’s fascist past. This forgetting has been aided by the assumption that fascism is so particularly imposing an ideology that only the most concrete and unambiguous of evidence might sufficiently prove its presence.<sup>49</sup> While reading the evidence given in this volume for the fascism of Japanese culture and thought in the interwar years, we should keep caution against interpreting an ideology’s lack of *complete* success as evidence of its weak effect. Imperfect penetration is no guard against a culture’s (or even a regime’s) work—fascist or otherwise. As Hannah Arendt remarked, “It

is quite obvious that mass support for totalitarianism comes neither from ignorance nor from brainwashing.”<sup>50</sup>

The essays in this volume are arranged according to broad generic categories. Part I, “Theories of Japanese Fascism,” opens with two essays that examine how fascism was understood in Japan in the 1930s. In “Fascism Seen and Unseen: Fascism as a Problem in Cultural Representation,” Kevin M. Doak discusses two early influential theorists of Japanese fascism: the Marxist Tosaka Jun and the liberal Christian Imanaka Tsugimaro. In “*The People’s Library: The Spirit of Prose Literature versus Fascism*,” Richard Torrance continues this discussion from the perspective of the antifascist literary group centered on the journal *Jinmin bunko* (The People’s Library). Both essays keep in focus the centrality of culture to the theorization of fascism. In “Constitutive Ambiguities: The Persistence of Modernism and Fascism in Japan’s Modern History,” Harry Harootunian analyzes the discourse of the everyday in the writings of Tosaka Jun and Kobayashi Hideo, revealing their differing solutions to the “issues of capitalist modernization and the resulting aporias of representation.” Kobayashi here emerges as a master fascist re-enchanter of the everyday for both the 1930s and the postwar years.

The essays in part II, “Fascism and Daily Life,” reinforce the notion that fascism’s solution to alienation and exploitation was found in efforts to beautify work, the workplace, and everyday life. In “The Beauty of Labor: Imagining Factory Girls in Japan’s New Order,” Kim Brandt discusses how such an effort lay behind the Japanese government’s use of the ideas of the Japanese Folk-Craft Movement to create a culture of daily life infused with the beauty of preindustrial Asian objects and practices; Noriko Aso’s “Mediating the Masses: Yanagi Sōetsu and Fascism,” analyzes how Yanagi’s humanist discourse of daily-life amelioration bled into a fascist aesthetics. The government’s efforts to instill daily life with an ideology of beauty and purity is shown also in Aaron Skabelund’s “Fascism’s Furry Friends: Dogs, National Identity, and Purity of Blood in 1930s Japan,” which describes how the symbol of a loyal dog acquired pedagogic force for promulgating values of racial purity and national essence.

Daily life was molded by public entertainment and spectacle, the focus of part III, “Exhibiting Fascism.” In “Narrating the Nation-ality of a Cinema: The Case of Japanese Prewar Film,” Aaron Gerow describes how the formation of a fascist cinema was limited by the conflicts over the very formation of a national cinema. Michael Baskett shows the difficulties—both

ideological and commercial—involved in Japan’s forming a unified filmic aesthetic with the other Axis powers, in “All Beautiful Fascists? Axis Film Culture in Imperial Japan.” The same check on the creation of a singular fascist aesthetic can be seen in the memorial design competitions discussed in Akiko Takenaka’s “Architecture for Mass-Mobilization: The Chūreitō Memorial Design Competition, 1939–1945,” and in “Japan’s Imperial Diet Building in the Debate over Construction of a National Identity,” where Jonathan M. Reynolds argues that the Diet Building’s symbolic value fell short of what could be called fascistic. Angus Lockyer takes this point further in “Expo Fascism? Ideology, Representation, Economy,” in which he argues that the plans for a 1940 exhibition, while displaying some qualities of a fascist aesthetic, could not in the end be deemed fascist. Finally, Ellen Schattschneider, in “The Work of Sacrifice in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Bride Dolls and Ritual Appropriation at Yasukuni Shrine,” reveals how a newly renovated military history museum in Tokyo might be read as an illustration of fascist aesthetics but also as an example of a resistance to such an aesthetics.

If the essays on visual forms of display argue for the heuristic limits, or complications, of the concept of fascism for the Japanese case, the essays in part IV, “Literary Fascism,” have little difficulty locating the fascist aesthetic in the work of language. In “Fascist Aesthetics and The Politics of Representation in Kawabata Yasunari,” Nina Cornyetz analyzes the aesthetic discourse of timeless harmony and its relationship to a fascist politics of violence in the writing of Kawabata Yasunari. In “Disciplining the Erotic-Grotesque in Edogawa Ranpo’s *Demon of the Lonely Isle*,” Reichert reads the detective fiction of Edogawa Ranpo to explore how the fascist impulse toward homogeneity and purity represented a resistance to the threatening confusions of modern culture. Such threats belonged to what Keith Vincent calls a culture of paranoia, which he explores in “Hamaosociality: Narrative and Fascism in Hamao Shirō’s *The Devil’s Discipline*,” a novel that reveals the workings of, and against, the drive toward fascism.

While we are interested in how aesthetics of Japanese fascism worked within texts and artifacts, we also want to know how they penetrated real life. James Dorsey’s “Literary Tropes, Rhetorical Looping, and the Nine Gods of War: ‘Fascist Proclivities’ Made Real,” makes the connection between culture (as rhetoric) and life (as violence) explicit by showing how true stories about Japanese submariners circulated around various modes of mass entertainment and became a model of action for flesh-and-blood young men hoping to turn hero within a culture of fascism. Their deaths,

he writes, had “been rehearsed through the participation—sometimes as active producers and sometimes as passive consumers—in the communal myth.” The process of securing that myth required a variegated “saturation” of the cultural sphere even more than a unified propogandistic assault.<sup>51</sup> As Alejandro Yarza argues in the concluding essay of this volume, a “relaxed” Francoist film policy in Spain illuminates the “hybrid and apparently contradictory ways in which fascist regimes attempted to secure ideological hegemony.”

In the trenchant foreword that opens the volume, Marilyn Ivy puts a fine point on the cultural work of fascism. The fascist fantasy, she writes, “is always cultural,” and “it is the fantasy of culture itself that gives shape to many of the aesthetic and philosophical enterprises circulating around the fascist sign.” This volume represents an attempt to suggest the shape to that sign as it marked various works of Japanese culture.

## Notes

1. See Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 76. Mabel Berezin points out that much writing on European fascism has failed to distinguish between movements and regimes, ideology and state, and political impulse and political institution and has elided questions of culture, which regard “conversion mechanisms” and the assurance of consent. Concerning Franco’s regime in Spain, Paul Preston cautions that applying a strict definition of fascism to Spain allows the regime to be understood as not having been fascist, and thereby to be seen as less morally distasteful. See Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Inter-War Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 9; Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 69.
2. Abe Hirozumi’s use of the term in his 1975 book exemplifies its common usage as a term of debate in discussing Japan in the 1930s. After four hundred pages of closely parsing debates over fascism in Japan he arrives at no final conclusion about its precise applicability, yet he opens his study by stating that Japan’s fascism took hold in 1931—with attempted military coups, the violent takeover in Manchuria, and the formation of radical right-wing organizations—and became regularized in 1936, with the beginning of mass mobilization and mass censorship. See Abe Hirozumi, *Fuashizumu hihan no jōsetsu* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1975). In the United States, Peter Duus and Daniel I. Okimoto argued that even in the most nuanced discussion of the concept of fascism in Japan had “passed on to the most obvious conclusion: the Japanese case is so dissimilar [to the European] that it is meaningless to speak of Japan in the 1930s as a ‘fascist’ political system.” To them, it was clear that “the hazards of using the fascist paradigm as an analytical

- tool are likely to offset its benefits.” Duus’s and Okimoto’s argument seems to have been an effective one. By the mid-1980s, the consensus among American scholars seems to have been that the term *fascism* “must not be applied to Japan” between 1930 and 1941, for it had become analytically useless in both the United States and Japan. See Peter Duus and Daniel Okimoto, “Fascism and the History of Prewar Japan: The Failure of a Concept,” *Journal of Asian Studies* (November 1979): 65–76.
3. Walter Laqueur says this about Europeans living under fascism: see Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10.
  4. On one of the earliest of such analyses, Sassa Hirō argued that Japan’s incipient fascism was a response to the economic and social crises of capitalism and, as in Europe, had led to imperialist violence. Sassa hoped to distinguish Japanese from Western forms of fascism, not to strip it of its fascist inflection but to prevent Japan’s fascism from going unrecognized in a general description based on a foreign model. But for him, Japanese fascism belonged to a global phenomenon. And as in Europe, in Japan it was unstoppable, even if, unlike its European variety, it had no dictator. Sassa’s brave essay is riddled with Xs marking the power of the state—made either by the hand of the censor or by his own self-censoring pen. One can easily imagine that these marks of power, which must have forced Sassa to feel the pressure of the state on his language, allowed him to see the salience of the control of representation to an analysis of fascism. Through the haze created by the censors, he managed to plead with his readers to notice what was happening. “Dear reader, do you feel the rush of the times, the pressing down of its force?”: Sassa Hirō, *Nihon fasshizumu no hatten katei* [The Process of Development of Japanese Fascism] (Tokyo: Asano Shoten, 1932), 106–10.
  5. Tosaka Jun, “Gendai Tetsugaku Tōwa,” in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1934–37), 213–14.
  6. Tosaka makes the interesting comment that the lineage of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger came to Japan not as fascist thought but as philosophies of cultural freedom: see, *Nihon ideorogiron*, in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1966), 434.
  7. Idem, “Nihonshugi no bungakka,” in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1967), 82.
  8. *Ibid.*, 86.
  9. *Ibid.*, 42–45.
  10. Minami Hiroshi, “Senden—Senji no taishū sōsa,” in *Shōwa Bunka 1925–1945*, Minami Hiroshi and Shakai Shinri Kenkyūjo, eds. (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1987), 364.
  11. Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism,” in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 91.
  12. Maruyama Masao, “The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism,” trans. Andrew Fraser, in *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, expanded ed.,

ed. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 65. Maruyama argued that Japanese fascism shared much with its European counterparts, including a rejection of individualistic liberalism, an opposition to parliamentary politics, the promotion of foreign expansion, the glorification of military buildup, a rejection of class warfare, a struggle against Marxism, and an ideological language of spirituality and idealism. What differentiates Japanese fascism, for Maruyama, is its emphasis on the nation as a family-state, the prominent position of agrarianism, and a rhetoric of the emancipation of Asian peoples from Western colonialism. Maruyama discerned three stages of the fascist movement in Japan: the preparatory period, from after the First World War until the Manchurian Incident in 1931; the period of maturity, from 1931 to the February Incident of 1936, in which a movement among civilians became concretely linked with military power that came to occupy the core of national governance; and the consummation period, in which the military, supporting fascism from above, created a ruling coalition with the bureaucracy, monopoly capital, and the political parties: see *ibid.*, 26–27. Hasegawa Nyozeikan coined the phrase “cool fascism” in 1932 to describe fascism born without violent upheaval but through existing government institutions. This was popularized by Maruyama in the 1950s. On Hasegawa, see Andrew Barshay, *State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan: The Public Man in Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 193.

13. On February 26, 1,400 troops led by junior army officers acting in the name of the emperor seized central Tokyo and killed the finance minister, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, and the inspector general of the military and attacked the residence of the prime minister. Though supported by some in the military, they were opposed by others and vehemently by the emperor himself. On February 27, martial law was declared, and by February 29, the coup had been put down, and most of the soldiers dispersed. Two committed suicide, and nineteen, including the central ideologue Kita Ikki, were executed. The failed coup followed two others in 1931: the October Incident (*jūgatsu jikken*), in which ultranationalist field officers attempted to install General Sadao as head of the cabinet, eliminate parliamentary politics, and consolidate gains made in Manchuria (all those involved were dismissed); and the May Incident (*sanjūgatsu jikken*), whose plans were exposed and aborted and kept secret by the army. Many of those involved became members of the Kwantung Army and were instrumental in the takeover of Manchuria: see Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Kōdansha Encyclopedia of Japanese History*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1983), 250.
14. See, e.g., Komatsu Shigeo, “Nihongata fashizumu—Sono taishūteki kisoku,” in *Kindai Nihon shisō kōza*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), 277–326; Tanaka Sōgoro, *Nihon fashizumushi* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1960). My own reading of the historiography of fascism in Japan is that Japanese scholars have been far more at ease with the term. In the 1920s, there were no analyses of fascism in Japanese, and the word itself had not entered the lexicon. Since the 1950s, the Marxist literature on fascism has been prolific, but in the 1930s only a few valiantly faced

- the topic: see Gavan McCormack, “1930’s Japan: Fascist?” in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 14, no. 2 (April–June 1982): 20–33.
15. Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Meiji Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 4–6.
  16. Irokawa Daikichi, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, trans. Marius B. Jansen (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 246. The term itself was coined in the 1930s as an increased discrepancy between ideology and the world it described led to greater ideological rigidity and harsher enforcement of it. This process began its shift into high gear after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, after which the “national essence (*kokutai*)” became, in Irokawa’s view, an un-self-conscious component of popular thinking. Irokawa has argued that the people could indeed resist the power of the emperor system, as the government well knew when it imposed it through a police state: *ibid.*, 245. Irokawa has argued that “the emperor system was organized so that the hard, external side of the power structure—the special higher police, the military police, the Peace Preservation Law, and the other forces used to intimidate and discriminate against the lower classes—was covered up by the gentler side”: *ibid.*, 122. Carol Gluck has argued that what *tennōsei* signified was not as monolithic as has often been argued. “In what ways *tennōsei* ideology moved prewar Japanese to act as the state would have them act and in what ways it prevented them from acting differently are questions that must still be asked of the ideological process in the Shōwa period.” Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, 285.
  17. By the 1980s, Japanese scholars had come to use the term *fascism* to identify Japan’s history of repression and imperialism. See, e.g., Ban Bō, *Nihon fashizumu* (Tokyo: Ōgetsu Shoten, 1981); Nagahama Isao, *Nihon fashizumu kyoshiron* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1984). This brand of fascism consisted of a system imposed from the top by an Army leadership that was loyal to the emperor. It was anticommunist and restricted, then eliminated, liberal civic and political freedoms by controlling economic, social, and cultural life in the name of an imperialist war whose cause it trumpeted through jingoistic and nativistic rhetoric: see the essays in Eguchi Keiichi, ed., *Nihon fashizumu no keisei* (Tokyo: Nihonhyōronsha, 1978); Ban Bō, *Nihon fashizumu no kōbō* (Tokyo: Rokkō Shuppan, 1989), 29–31.
  18. A strong dissent against this is in Graham Parkes, “The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School, and the Political,” *Philosophy East and West* 47, no. 3 (1997): 305–36.
  19. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 82.
  20. See Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 247. See also Harry Harootunian, “Overcoming Modernity: Fantasizing Everyday Life and the Discourse on the Social in Interwar Japan,” *Parallax* 2 (February 1996): 79–84, 88.
  21. This “mythic core” can “unleash strong affective energies” through a vision of reality by positing an organic nation in a state of decay that, because it possesses

- a lifecycle, can be revitalized through the manipulation of a group psyche, appealing to individuals to sacrifice themselves for a destiny that will bring them greatness: see Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3–8.
22. Like Marxism, it is also an assault on materialism; fascism uses the socialist language of anti-materialistic revolution shorn of socialism's basic premises: see Neocleous, *Fascism*, 38.
  23. Although the German inflection may differ from the Italian—the Germans harking back to a medieval ideal of community and the Italians to a corporate ancient Rome; the Germans forging bonds by race or species and the Italians by corporate group—both (and all fascisms) demand national cohesion in the cause of war and are grounded in a philosophy of violence that forges a healthy body and develops a healthy human spirit out of an ill modern body and its fractured mind. Fascism dips into a mythic past while marching into a technologically advanced future to meld disputing masses, political parties, and economic interests into a unified nation, now deified. An individual's freedom in fascism is a freedom found not within the self but within the nation, whose power is masked as natural and spiritual. Fascism may be revolutionary in its promise to transform politics and to alter the very being and spirit of man by curing the ills caused by modernity (materialism, liberal freedom, the life of the intellect), but fascism is conservative in that it seeks to conserve capitalism, not destroy it. As much as it condemns finance capital for being nonproductive, it needs industrial capital to modernize technologically, to execute war, and to control and administer colonies: *ibid.*, 69.
  24. See Harry Harootunian and Tetsuo Najita, "The Japanese Revolt against the West: Political and Cultural Critique in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 6, ed. Peter Duus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
  25. Kevin M. Doak provides an overview of how ethnicity and nationalism evolved in the political discourse of early-twentieth-century Japan and became a pressing issue in the 1930s. He translates *minzoku* as "ethnic nation": see Kevin M. Doak, "Ethnic Nationalism and Romanticism in Early Twentieth-Century Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 77–103.
  26. In 1942, the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium summed up the period's attempt to break through the aporia to which modernity had led the Japanese. The symposium was attended by a select few, but the argument was joined by philosophers, political thinkers, and literary and cultural critics across the spectrum of political belief: See Hiromatsu Wataru, "Kindai no chōkoku" *ron: Showa shisōshi e no ichi shikaku* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1989).
  27. Edward Seidensticker traces much of the anxiety and hope of the age to the event: see Edward Seidensticker, *Tokyo Rising: The City since the Great Earthquake* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 8–13.
  28. "Hijōji," in *Nihonkingendaishiji* (Tokyo: Tōyōkeizaishinpōsha, 1978), 573. The lan-



- guage of national emergency, which included popular words such as *deadlock* (*yukizumari*) and *national emergency* (*jikyoku*), was used throughout the culture, even in advertising. On the language of crisis, see Sandra Wilson, “Bureaucrats and Villages in Japan,” *Social Science Japan Journal*, no. 1 (1998). By the 1930s, Japan had already experienced periods of rapid social change and collapse, but the crisis in the 1930s was at a higher pitch: see Kerry Smith, *A Time of Crisis: Japan, the Great Depression, and Rural Revitalization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 2–5, 379. Frederick Dickinson rightly insists on seeing the events of the 1930s as having a history beginning before the 1930s. “The Great War (World War I),” he writes, “offers telling clues of subsequent events,” and the dramatic developments of the 1930s “should not be considered more than immediate catalysts to renewed aggression”: Frederick Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–19* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asian Center, 1999), 247–48.
29. See Miki Kiyoshi, “Fuan no Shisō to sono chōkoku,” in *Miki Kiyoshi zenshū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1985), 285–309. Miki critiques the easy acceptance by the Japanese of the language of anxiety as another example of a fascination with new European ideas that have no grounding in Japanese conditions; he then recognizes that Japan is, indeed, approaching those conditions: see *ibid.*, esp. 285–86. Kakiwara Osamu discusses the “boom” in essays by the Marxists and non-Marxists Miki Kiyoshi, Kobayashi Hideo, Masamune Hakuchō, Yokomitsu Ryūichi, Aono Suekichi, Tosaka Jun, Kamei Katsuichirō, and others: see Kakiwara Osamu, “‘Haikyō’ to ‘Fuan’—Shestovteki fuan,” in *Kōza Shōwa Bungaku shi*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Yūseido, 1988), 124–35. See also Kevin M. Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xx–xxi, 90–95.
  30. Hirato Renkichi, “Watashi no mirai shugi to jikko,” in *Gendai bungaku no hakken—Saisho no shōtotsu* (Tokyo: Gakugeishorin, 1968), 204. Marjorie Perloff argues that Futurism can, but does not necessarily, lend itself to fascism: see Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 30; Cinzia Blum, *The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti’s Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
  31. Tsuji Jun, “Despera,” in *Gendai bungaku no hakken*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Gakugeishorin, 1967), 8, 18, 123.
  32. Rōyama Masamichi (1895–1945), Ryū Shōtarō (1900–67), and Miki Kiyoshi (1895–1945): see Valerie F. Fletcher, *Dreams and Nightmares: Utopian Visions in Modern Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 3, 156.
  33. Beginning in 1925, the Peace Preservation Law gave legal leverage to crush opposition to the government; in 1928 (the year 1,600 communists or sympathizers were arrested in one crackdown), the law was amended to include the death penalty for seditious activities: Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, 15. Gavan McCormack gives an excellent survey of arguments about fascism in Japan from

- the 1930s to the 1970s: see Gavan McCormack, "Nineteen-Thirties Japan: Fascism?" *Social Analysis* (1981): 20–30.
34. The fact that the Imperial Rule Assistance Association was not a political party pulling the strings of government but what one scholar describes as a tool of administrative mass mobilization has led to the view that it—and, by extension, the Japanese government—was neither fascist nor totalitarian, even if Japan did create a propaganda network more effective than Goebbels's own in shaping public opinion: see Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3–12; Thomas R. H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 72–79, 197; Gregory Kasza, "Fascism from Below? A Comparative Perspective on the Japanese Right, 1931–36," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 (1984): 286–90.
  35. Minami and Shakai, *Shōwa Bunka 1925–1945*, 131–34, 83.
  36. *Ibid.*, 66–78.
  37. Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 237, 327–28, 259. See also Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5–13.
  38. Minami and Shakai, *Shōwa Bunka 1925–1945*, 517–24.
  39. See Griffin, *Fascism*, 3–8.
  40. From its inception, radio was tied to state power and under the aegis of government control. Hundreds of thousands of listeners would hear reports from the war front. These reports, of course, were not given through the transparent medium of radio from actual places to listeners in the form of truth. News was mediated through the state—that is, through censorship codes: Minami and Shakai, *Shōwa Bunka 1925–1945*, 313, 315, 331.
  41. Kirsten Cather's dissertation, "The Great Censorship Trials of Literature and Film in Postwar Japan, 1950–1983" (University of California, Berkeley, 2004), shows that censors also functioned as cultural critics.
  42. Minami and Shakai, *Shōwa Bunka 1925–1945*, 190, 315, 399.
  43. I take the phrase from Richard Burt, ed., *The Administration of Aesthetics: Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
  44. Kasuko Tsurumi, *Social Change and the Individual: Japan before and after Defeat in World War II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 120. See also Minami and Shakai, *Shōwa Bunka 1925–1945*, 355–83.
  45. No Japanese leader ever wrote a script and had a film made from it, as did Franco; nor was any so influenced by and immersed in the arts of music and architecture as was Hitler; and none was so directly influenced by men of literature (Futurists such as Marinetti) as was Mussolini. The mesmerizing rhetoric that emerges from these leaders' speeches and from iconic texts such as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Mussolini's autobiographies did not emanate from the mouth of the emperor, though the artistry of imperial pageantry and the diffusion through mass

- media of the emperor's sanctified image did indeed transform him into a "visible symbol" representing the national totality: see Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 24, 236. Japan's political leaders did, of course, make speeches, but their speechifying was not as central to the propaganda effort as it was in Europe. The Japanese state did not employ the services of a genius of propaganda like Joseph Goebbels, of an architect like Albert Speer to transform physical space, of a philosopher like Albert Rosenberg to change the shape of the arts, or of a filmmaker like Leni Riefenstahl to make those newly designed artistic spaces available to mass audiences.
46. Plans for a sublime capital in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, for example, were called for but never executed, and the power of design was to be limited to the small numbers of people who saw the plans exhibited: Inoue Shōichi, *Senjika Nihon no kenchikuka: Ato, kitchu, japanesuku* (Tokyo: Asahi Sensho, 1995), 1–16, 88–94, 128.
  47. Yanagi Muneyoshi, "Nihon o aisuru," in *Yanagi Muneyoshi zenshū*, vol. 17 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1980), 597. Yanagi also argued against the government's attempt to standardize Okinawan dialects in 1940, out of his desire to preserve provincial differences. See his "Chihōsei no bunkateki kachi," in *Yanagi Muneyoshi zenshū*, vol. 8, 224.
  48. Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London: John Murray, 1990), 197.
  49. In *Kusa no ne no fashizumu: Nihon minshū no sensō taiken* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1987), Yoshimi Yoshiaki suggests that propagandistic clichés such as the "holy war (*seisen*)" and "extinguish oneself through service to the state (*messhi hōkō*)," while infiltrating the language and thoughts of Japanese men and women struggling through their everyday lives during the war years, only imperfectly penetrated their minds. Some young men who expressed passionate support for the "holy war" before being drafted expressed only visceral fear after; some who felt regret, or sadness even, for not being drafted at all quickly were relieved of their sentiments by the fear that set in with the reality of going to war: *ibid.*, 92, 95. As the war progressed, exhaustion set in, and surrender soon became the most desirable option. Some were transformed from peace-loving to violently anti-Chinese; others felt empathy with the Chinese on the battlefield as fellow farmers or as the bearers of a great civilization, though this fellow feeling could strengthen one's belief in Japan's role as the protector of Asia: *ibid.*, 39, 41, 52, 63. At home, many may have felt joy in the work being done in Manchuria, rendered unaware by censorship and propaganda of the project there as one of theft and violence: *ibid.*, 110. Indeed, the goodwill of believers in the war as holy and in Japan as protector and liberator of Asia may have prevented them from seeing the more complicated truth of events. Yoshimi's reading of hundreds of letters, diaries, and surveys reveals that the language of ideology shifted according to the practical exigencies of daily life, and its reception depended on a multitude

of factors, including economic class, education, age, gender, and locale. However, those with a measure of material comfort had the luxury to be thrilled at the prospect of a “holy war,” while those in a more fragile economic condition were more pragmatic and tended to view the war in terms of its effects on their daily lives: *ibid.*, 1–17.

50. Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism: Part Three of The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1979 [1968]), 5.
51. See Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 271.