
REZENSIONEN

Arnd Bauerkämper / Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe (eds.): Fascism without Borders. Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945, New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books 2017, 373 p.

Review by
Victor Lundberg, Malmö

Fascism is now an international movement, which means not only that the Fascist nations can combine for purposes of loot, but that they are groping, perhaps only half-consciously as yet, towards a world system.¹

As early as 1937, George Orwell pinpointed the significance of the transnational character of fascism. He underlined its potential to dismantle the world we know and threaten the rights we have won and defended during the twentieth century. 80 years later, fascism with its underlying transnational ambitions is unfortunately present on the international political scene again. Today it appears in a neo-fascist costume, with a new combination of beguiling rhetoric, appalling ideas and clumsy political behaviour, but nevertheless, it is

still fascism in its core of strong nationalism and chauvinism, and of anti-democracy, anti-communism, and anti-humanism. From Washington to Budapest, Brasilia to Moscow, Manila to Warsaw, neo-fascism is seeking power. Warning signals from brilliant historians as Federico Finchelstein and perceptive politicians as Madeleine Albright are now as vitally important as once George Orwell's.²

In "Fascism without borders", the editors Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe are very modest when emphasizing the importance and topicality of their book. In their outstanding introduction, they primarily focus, in a very illuminating and clarifying way, transnational fascism from a historical perspective. They start with defining the three dimensions of "transnational fascism": a) fascism was in fact a transnational political movement; b) fascism was in the historical context perceived as a transnational phenomenon; and c) fascism can analytically be approached with a transnational perspective (p. 2). Then they continue to scrutinize "fascism as a transnational political alternative to democracy" in interwar Europe (p. 16). In this, Bauerkämper and Rossolinski-Liebe write pleasurably and concisely with great expertise and analytical abilities. It is pure educational delight to read this.

As the editors initially point out, historical research that focus on the transnational dimensions of fascism are still very rare (pp. 1, 6). However, this volume connects to a small but very important field of historical research, where the most studies are quite recently published.³ In all, this book consists of thirteen chapters, the introduction and the afterword excluded. In fact, the contributions can be divided into three themes. First, there are three essays in this book that stands out with a distinctively conceptual and intellectual ambition. They analyse central key notions and ideas within interwar fascism that had the obvious and strong potential to break national boundaries and bring fascists in interwar Europe together: Johannes Dafinger about the *völkisch* elements throughout fascist Europe; Aristotle Kallis about violence and creative destruction “at the heart of the fascist history-making project” in Europe (p. 41); and Matteo Pasetti about the corporatist ideas as a central political cornerstone, overcoming national borders. These three intelligent essays dig analytically in the overlooked and contradictory intellectual history of fascism with a true transnational perspective.

Second, there are a group of essays that focus on national case studies, specific movements, and personalities, and their various international relations and transnational aspirations: Raul Carstocea about the international relations around the legionary leader of the Romanian Iron Guard, Ion I Mota; Monica Fioravanzo about the idea of a New European Order (NEO) within Italian fascism; Anna Lena Kocks about the relations and circulations of ideas about leisure among Italian and British fascists; Goran Miljan about the in-

terrelated organization of youth activities within the Croatian fascist group Ustasha and the Slovak Hlinka Party; Claudia Nin-hos about the obscure channels between Portugal and Germany beyond the German Kulturpropaganda; Marleen Rensen about the French fascist intellectual Robert Brasillach; and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe about the meaning of inter-fascist conflicts between National Socialists and national fascist groups in Austria, Romania, and Ukraine. These seven essays – the backbone of this book – are all qualitative, empirically based and well written, but some of them maybe slip a little when it comes to staying true to the transnational main theme; internationalism is not the same as transnationalism.

Third, there are three essays on the fringe of this book that all have in common that they deal with antifascism: Kasper Braskén about communist antifascism; Silvia Madotto about universities as the centres of transnational antifascism activism in France and Italy; and Francesco Di Palma about transnational channels between antifascist activists in European exile. This is where the weakness of this book is revealed. These three essays are unfortunately not fully compatible with the qualified and well-defined theme around transnational fascism that the editors initially point out. The general idea that “transnational activities of fascists and antifascists were interrelated” (p. 361) is not really convincing or underpinned by these essays. Of course, were antifascists often related to fascists because of their nature as a collective political reaction against them. But does that really mean the opposite; that fascists actually were related to the antifascists in general? According to

this, it also unclear, what is really meant by dubious suggestions like: “a new history of communist antifascism should be written in close relation to transnational fascism” (p. 304). Here it becomes obvious that international antifascism, not only during the interwar period, need to be more critically investigated by historical research that is able to explore the complex antifascist grey-scale from factual and ideologically manifested (communist, syndicalist, social democratic, and radical liberal) antifascism, via political strategies and party tactics within and between the different antifascist actors, to totalitarian, anarchist, irresponsible, and adolescent, versions of antifascist disguises.⁴

However, this does not take away the strength and importance of this splendid book. It illustrates and problematize interwar fascism in Europe as an organic and multifaceted political force field, something Arnd Bauerkämper (in his interesting but too short afterword) portrays as: “fascist ultranationalism did not exclude a sense of common mission or solidarity, giving rise to a wide scope of relations, from mere perceptions to contacts, interactions, transfers, and processes of learning” (p. 355). On the basis of the essays, he also underlines that entanglements, conflicts, and antagonism were a significant factor in these “multiple asymmetries that characterized relations between fascists” (p. 357). On the other hand it is also essential to keep in mind the strong common concept of violence – which Aristotle Kallis in one of the sharpest essays of this book highlights as “the violent pursuit of the fascists ‘new order’” (p. 56) – that ties European fascists together and unifies them, not at least discursively and practi-

cally. This also reminds us about Robert O. Paxton’s important and clarifying definition of fascism as, beyond ideology and politics, a question of “a form of political behaviour”.⁵ Twentieth century fascism is in that sense like a rat: it is adaptable and could orientate and reproduce itself everywhere; it behaves nasty and completely unscrupulous; and it shuns the day, preferring the darkness.

In conclusion, the sheds new light on this; fascism’s overlooked but lethal capacity to emerge and amalgamate above national (and other) borders. This transnational “fascist spirit” (p. 208) that Marleen Rensen picks out in her shining contribution, must continue to be historically investigated and observed, not least because it is through that kind of knowledge we can stand stronger as democratic and humanitarian societies in the future. We may never forget George Orwell. This book helps us not to do that.

Notes:

- 1 G. Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, London 1937, p. 200. Also quoted in this volume, p. 5.
- 2 M. Albright, *Fascism. A Warning*, New York 2018; F. Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History*, Oakland 2017.
- 3 See, for example, M. Albanese, P. del Hierro, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century. Spain, Italy and the Global Neo-Fascist Network. A Modern History of Politics and Violence*, London 2016; N. Alcade, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe*, Cambridge 2017; A. Costa Pinto, K. Aristotle (eds.), *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, Basingstoke 2014; M. Durham, M. Power (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right*, Basingstoke 2010; M. R. Gutmann, *Building a Nazi Europe. The SS’s Germanic Volunteers*, Cambridge 2017; A. G. Kjøstvedt, A. Salvador (eds.), *New Political Ideas in the Aftermath of the Great War*, Cham 2017; A. Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, New York 2015; Ph. Mor-

- gan, Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945, New York 2003.
- 4 See, for an excellent example, H. Garzia, M. Yusta, X. Tabet, Ch. Climaco (eds.), *Rethinking Antifascism. History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present*, New York, Oxford 2016.
 - 5 R. O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, London 2004, p. 218.

Ralph Callebert: *On Durban's Docks: Zulu Workers, Rural Households, Global Labor*, Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2017, 256 S.

Reviewed by
Jonathan Hyslop, Hamilton

Recent years have seen a shift of historical scholarship on South Africa, in the direction of transnational perspectives. This new work has had a salutary effect on a historiography previously characterized by a considerable degree of national exceptionalism and even, at worst, parochialism. It has also highlighted, for the first time, the maritime dimension of modern South African history, with considerable attention given to port cities and their linkages across the world. Yet in its more simplistic manifestations, the new work has tended toward an over-optimistic celebration of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'global mobility'. Simultaneously, we have seen something of a decline in the strong tradition of South African labour history. While there has been much attention to global cultural flows and the travels of radical anti-coloni-

al politicians, working class life and struggles have become somewhat neglected.

Ralph Callebert's *On Durban's Docks* is an important corrective to all of these trends. It is an account of the harbour workers of South Africa's most important port during the Twentieth Century (with a focus on the 1930s to 1950s). The study is in the best traditions of labour history and of modern African social history, drawing on an extensive programme of oral history interviews and on deep archival work. While recognizing the benefits of a more global understanding of South Africa, Callebert fundamentally questions the centrality this has been given, and the implicit optimism that has come with it. He stresses the relative disconnection of Durban's dockworkers from the wider world, and simultaneously he shows the depth of their exploitation. At a deeper conceptual level, this approach is linked by Callebert to a questioning of accounts of globality which are steeped in a universalist view of the diffusion of wage labour and economic rationalism. He charges such approaches with a failure to grasp the specificity of the African context.

Callebert sees dockworkers as constrained by segregationist laws and by linguistic barriers in their interactions with passing ships.¹ Poverty meant that they consumed little of what was imported through Durban. He shows how workers' self-definition was bound up, not with their position as workers, so much as with their aspirations to be heads of rural households and to accumulate cattle. They seldom desired to settle in the cities, and to this extent, the migrant labour system was not simply a product of state coercion. Their footholds in the countryside represented a zone in

which they could escape from the racial domination of the city. There, the workers could establish themselves as patriarchs, marrying through the acquisition of cattle as bride price (*ukulobola*), and remaining in touch with the ancestral spirits (*amadlozi*). The homestead was their primary cultural and emotional reference point. For Callebert, this means that generic accounts of 'proletarianization' and 'urbanization' are inherently unsatisfactory.

Callebert shows that migrancy did change social patterns, but not only in the ways that are usually imagined. Rural women became more central to the management of households, in the absence of their menfolk. Men did not only rely on waged work, but rather combined it with other economic strategies in the city, in order to accelerate their path toward the satisfaction of returning to the land. Many started small side businesses in Durban, and many traded in goods pilfered in the harbour. Callebert here challenges any idea of the dockworkers as 'pure' proletarians – the crucial thing, for him, is the interface between rural and urban economies, and between wage labour, small scale trade and homestead farming.

This leads the to a much broader point, and it is here that the wider interest of Callebert's work lies. He makes an extensive critique of simple notions of economic man. While the cattle which migrants sought to accumulate had economic value, their primary significance was as a source of cultural meaning. Here, Callebert links his work to the insights of Karl Polanyi. His research supports Polanyi's objections to the idea of a universal, profit-seeking economic rationality. Rather, Polanyi points to the ways in which economic

behaviour is embedded in social political and religious life. Dockworkers engaged in small trade not because of any innate entrepreneurial impulse, but as a way of pursuing their vision of a meaningful life in the places from which they had come. Thus, Callebert challenges what he characterizes as 'eurocentric' conceptions of economic behavior, whether Smithian or Marxist.

As a locally-focussed social history, Callebert's book is exemplary. His descriptions of the economic strategies of the dockworkers, of their living and working conditions in the city and their linkages to their rural homes, of the petty 'crimes' which helped them to survive, and of the cooperative economic initiatives in which workers were involved are superb. His section on labour politics is valuable for its emphasis on the role of nationalism in militancy, and for not shying away from the difficult issue of the deep antagonism between the dockworkers and Durban's Indian community. The anti-Indian feeling was horrifically manifested in massive violence against Indians in a massive 1949 riot, in which dockers played a central part. This clash becomes more comprehensible in the light of Callebert's demonstration of how important small trade was to the dockworkers as a source of their livelihoods. Indians, as a dominant force in retail, were competitors.

The assertion of a Polanyian position in the book is of great value. While there has been some interest in Polanyi in South Africa, he tends mainly to have been invoked by leftist social scientists making a critique of 'neo-liberalism'. Thus, he simply stands as a critic of market economics. The much deeper Polanyian argument that societies

are held together by non-economic factors, tends to be ignored by these scholars, who simply want to use him to attack free market economics, in the name of a more egalitarian economic model. They do not take on board the extent to which Polanyi's thinking would also challenge their own tendency to undervalue the cultural and religious dimensions of the social world. A real engagement with the fundamentals of Polanyian thought, as advocated by Callebert, is long overdue in South Africa. Having said that though, Callebert's critique of South African Marxist scholarship may be a little overstated. He charges this tradition with exaggerating their differences with liberals over the centrality of class as opposed to race, with not considering the cultural level of analysis and with engaging in a functionalist type of analysis of the relation between racist policies and capitalism. Yet while some of this is indeed true of the 1970s 'structuralist' Marxist writing on South Africa (Legassick, Wolpe, the 'Poulantzians') and in some of the South African left industrial sociology literature focusing on 'labour process' theory in the 1980s, Callebert paints with too broad a brush here. The whole Marxist-influenced social history movement since the 1970s, for instance in the work the Johannesburg History Workshop, strongly emphasized the need to deal with issues of culture and to avoid functionalism, and radical industrial sociology also became, over time, much more nuanced in dealing with issues of race. And in an era of populism in South Africa, in which a smokescreen of African nationalist racial rhetoric obscures the growing gap between the condition of the working poor and the wealth of the new African and old white elites, there is

surely nothing wrong with paying at least some renewed attention to the question of class.

Nevertheless, this is a stellar contribution to labour and social history, which not only is essential reading for Southern Africanists, but should be of significant interest to a much wider world of historical and social science scholarship.

Note:

- 1 A problem in the book is a somewhat loose use of the term 'apartheid'. I would say that it is important to recognize a distinction between the somewhat loosely organized and often customary segregationism of pre-1948 period, and the intensely regulated and bureaucratized apartheid policy introduced by the National Party regime in 1948.

Elleke Boehmer / Rouven Kunstmann / Priyasha Mukhopadhyay / Asha Rogers (eds.): The Global Histories of Books. Methods and Practices (New Directions in Book History series), Berlin / Basingstoke: Springer International Publishing / Palgrave Macmillan 2017, 334 p.

Reviewed by
Cécile Cottenet, Marseille

This collection of essays, edited by scholars whose expertise evinces a global outlook, is the result of two workshops organized at the University of Oxford in 2014, and the University of Melbourne in 2015. In the wake of recent scholarship aiming at

displacing the nation-state as an analytical category¹ and intersecting book history and post-/de-colonial studies, these eleven chapters explore the lives of the global book within and without the British empire, in a trans-imperial movement.

In their introduction, Boehmer, Kunstmann, Mukhopadhyay, and Rogers humbly present the collection as an attempt, neither fully-representative nor comprehensive, to showcase “instances of interaction and connection as compelling alternatives” (p. 4) to national histories. The editors thus readily acknowledge that global perspectives in cultural history and print culture are no longer controversial; yet, they rightfully suggest that much remains to be written to further our understanding of the multiple ways in which books, and the assumptions and representations of empire they may convey, circulate and are received across boundaries and in multiple locations.

As the subtitle “Methods and Practices,” indicates, the singular case studies all proceed from practice up, rather than from theory down. They also draw on a vast range of methodologies and approaches, from the history of geography and of literature, mobility studies, theories of globalization, literature, sociology and network theory, to library and print culture. This vast array of practices testifies to the growing importance of transnational and global perspectives in cultural history and print culture; however, it also makes it difficult for the editors, in the introduction, to fully articulate the different interpretive frames and concepts offered by the contributors, at times emphasizing practices over methods. The chapters focus on the means and conditions, as well as the effects, of moving

books across frontiers, cultures and empires from the 18th to the 21st century, with specific attention to the 19th century. The richness of archival work in many of the essays, conducted across several countries and indeed for some, across several continents, is undeniably one of the strengths of the collection. The editors should further be commended for including scholarship by early-career scholars, thereby encouraging innovative perspectives and raising novel questions; and for complexifying the imperial framework by encompassing the mobility of texts and books in different languages besides English – including Arabic, French, Chinese, Persian, Afrikaans and Xam, to give a few – without obscuring the reader’s understanding. Ultimately, the beautiful cover art efficiently appeals to our colonial imagination, as it conjures up visions of past voyages.

To present such a diverse array of case studies without losing the complexity of this volume is delicate. Fundamentally, the overarching question implied by all four sections under which the essays are grouped – “Colonial Networks,” “Global Genres,” “Reading Relationships” and “Cultural Translation” – is what makes books move globally. What, indeed, are the mechanisms by which books, ideas and representations circulate? And ultimately, what are the effects of such mobilities, on the text themselves and on social as well as ideological planes?

Three central issues seem to inform the essays: networks, routes, and commensurability. The contributions consider the composition and workings of different networks: of scholars (Hansun Hsiung, Zahra Shah); of book trade professionals, savants, and consumers, as in Katherine

Parker's study of the circulation of cartographic knowledge; and networks within the book market, encompassing literary agents (Ben Holgate, David Carter), or illustrating the interdependence between literary series and textbooks, as in Gail Low's essay. Interestingly, commercial networks seem to have at times fostered unexpected routes, and the volume uncovers nodes and centres outside the colonial metropolises, such as Buenos Aires (Holgate). Carter demonstrates that Australian texts sometimes bypassed or went beyond the expected route between "colonial outpost" and imperial centre, with London being not only a restricting factor, but also an "accelerator" of sorts in helping to bring Australian texts and books to America. Possibly one of the most intriguing chapters is Alexander Bubb's study of the eccentric and excentric readings of Dickens and other British 19th-century authors in the colonies, highlighting the role played by serendipity in "chance encounters" of books and texts.

One compelling issue is that of global genres and the issue of commensurability. What makes the "translatability" of texts? What allows for the mobility of a text from one language, and from one culture, to the other, is a central interrogation of the last section on "Cultural Translation". Is the universality of texts, whether "real" or built through interpretation, a prerequisite for their translatability? This question underlies in particular Hsiung's analysis of the translation of textbooks for deaf students, as well as Evelyn Richardson's study of the translation of Homer into Arabic, and Kate Highman's focus on the translation/adaptation/appropriation of South African kukummi narratives, reworked as

mythical tales by South African English and Afrikaans writers in the 21st century. Furthermore, what is lost and what is gained in such translations/adaptations?

The notion of commensurability of texts will perhaps appeal more specifically to scholars concentrating on inter-linguistic global histories of books. In this respect, the global scope of the collection is somehow mitigated by the fact that all the authors work within English-language academia, which is bound to influence their vision of colonial and post-/de-colonial issues, even extending as they do their interrogations beyond the British Empire. The volume will profitably lead to a discussion with scholars focusing on other empires, who may perhaps build on a different or complementary scholarship: we might imagine parallels between Gail Low's exploration of Caribbean textbook publishing and the Francophone textbook in the Caribbean, or in other French colonies; or wonder how texts and books moved to and across Cameroon in the days of German, British and French occupation. That this book should actually foster such interrogations and comparisons is certainly one of its merits.

In her afterword, Elleke Boehmer again underlines the "quality of mixed ambition and caution" (p. 324) of the essays. Her own humble caution leads her to refrain from developing connections with her field of expertise, World Literature, which will certainly yield other insights into the circulation of texts. This small regret notwithstanding, this rich and diverse collection of essays certainly proves a valuable addition to the growing scholarship on the global histories and transnational circulation of books. It also provides professors

with fascinating case studies to examine with their students.

Note:

- 1 See M. Lyons, National Histories of the Book in a Transnational Age, in: *Mémoires du Livre/ Studies in Book Culture* 7 (2016) 2; J. G. Con-

nolly et al. (eds.), *Print Culture Histories Beyond the Metropolis*, Toronto 2016, A. Burton, I. Hofmeyr (eds.), *The Books that Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons*, Durham 2014, or M. F. Suarez, H.R. Woudhuysen (eds.), *The Book. A Global History*, Oxford 2013.