



The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy

Sergio Luzzatto

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A brilliant young historian follows the odyssey of Mussolini's body in an original exploration of the history and legacy of Italian Fascism

Bullet-ridden, spat on, butchered bloody: this was the fate of Il Duce, strung up beside his dead mistress in a Milan square, as reviled in death as he was adored in life. With Italy's defeat in World War II, the cult of Benito Mussolini's physical self was brought to its grotesque denouement by a frenzied, jeering crowd of thousands—one eerily similar to the cheering throngs that had once roared their approval beneath Il Duce's balcony.

In this groundbreaking work, Sergio Luzzatto traces the fortunes of the Fascist dictator's body: from his charisma, virility, and magnetic domination of Fascist parades, to his humiliating execution, the ugly display of his remains, and beyond. Buried, exhumed, stolen, and hidden for ten years, Il Duce's corpse was finally laid to rest, a shrine for fanatical followers. Through this pursuit, Luzzatto shows how in a totalitarian state the body of the ruler comes to incarnate the nation. And from the indignities visited on Mussolini's corpse, Luzzatto crafts a subtle social and intellectual history of a country struggling to become a republic and free itself from the thrall of Fascism.

Elegantly written and stunningly conceived, alive with never-before-published letters, diaries, and reports, *The Body of Il Duce* cuts a new and compelling path through twentieth-century history.



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