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"Jack Bratich has written a compelling and original discourse on how microfascism presents itself nowadays and how this is imbued with misogyny, the cult of death, and violence in many forms—war included. A must-read for all scholars and activists."—Leopoldina Fortunati, author of *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*

Fascist and reactionary populist forces have undeniably swelled in the US in recent years. To effectively counter fascist movements, we need to understand them beyond their most visible and public expressions. To do this, Jack Bratich asserts, we must dig deeper into the psyche and body that gives rise to fascist formations. There we will find microfascism, or the cultural ways in which a fascist understanding of the world is generated from the hatreds that suffuse everyday life.



By highlighting the misogyny at fascism's core, we are able to observe a key process in the formation of a fascist body. Recognizing the microfascism behind appeals to recover the past glory of white male subjects created by earlier foundational wars, we see how histories

of settler colonialism, genocide, and domination are animating the deadly mission of fascism today. By focusing on the variety of ways the resurgent fascist tendency courts its own destruction (and demands the destruction of others), we can trace how fascism refines and expands the death and annihilation that underpins capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal systems.

The implications of *On Microfascism* are far-reaching and unsettling. Still, Bratich insists, the new fascism is not as powerful as its adherents wish us to believe. To defeat it, we must develop and defend a "micro-antifascism" grounded in the ethics of mutual aid and care in the everyday. Rooted in an understanding of how the fascist body is constructed, we can develop the collective power to dismember it.

Jack Z. Bratich is professor in the Journalism and Media Studies Department at Rutgers University. He is author of *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture* and coeditor of *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality.*\$20 US



Praise for On Microfascism

"On Microfascism stands out as a uniquely important offering, in which Bratich goes further and deeper than almost every text dedicated to naming and understanding the fascism(s) of today. In this rigorous and righteous book, Bratich rightly insists on the insufficiency of seeing fascism only when it arises in state regime form. Through which subjectivities, practices, hierarchies, and cultural forms do fascistic constellations permeate and grow? Bratich's razor-sharp analysis provides invaluable answers, and in so doing, offers a crucial tool for antifascist praxis.

-Natasha Lennard, author of Being Numerous: Essays on Non-Fascist Life

"On Microfascism is a profoundly original and compelling analysis of fascism's deep roots in Western traditions of patriarchy. By pinpointing the foundational role of the concept of autogenetic sovereignty and charting its many implications for how we live and die, Bratich equips readers with the intellectual framework necessary to wage not only an antifascist struggle, but an anti-microfascist struggle."

—Mark Bray, author of Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook

"It was hard to miss the wake-up call: fascism is back, no doubt about it, but in the novel formations of a microfascist culture that is directing the contemporary production of subjectivity. Jack Bratich not only undertakes a probing analysis of the mechanisms of the misogynistic, racist death-style of the self-affirming sovereign microfascist subject, but he most importantly proposes a number of welcome responses for living, to paraphrase Foucault, a micro-antifascist life. This book puts its readers on the path to such an art of living."

—Gary Genosko, Professor of Communication and Digital Media Studies at Ontario Tech University, Oshawa, Canada

"On Microfascism provides crucial insight into the gendered dynamics and libidinal binds of everyday fascisms. In a devastating analysis of the necropolitical drive and militarized infatuations of fascist subjectivity, Bratich highlights the concerted authoritarian desire for the restoration and renewal of white supremacist heteropatriarchy. On Microfascism is a generative companion to such significant and varied studies as Ewa Majewska's and Natasha Lennard's writing on antifascist feminism and Klaus Theweleit's classic analysis of the misogynistic psychopathologies of the German Freikorps."

—Alyosha Goldstein, coeditor of For Antifascist Futures: Against the Violence of Imperial Crisis

"On Microfascism unpacks the deeply disturbing gender narratives that underskirt our societies and create an insurgent cruelty that corrodes our human relationships. This is an incredible intervention in the crisis we are living through and calls for us to collectively look deeper when responding to the growth of misogynist, white supremacist movements."

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"Jack Bratich has written a compelling and original discourse on how microfascism presents itself nowadays and how this is imbued with misogyny, the cult of death, and violence in many forms—war included. A must-read for all scholars and activists concerned with the historical, political, and social need to understand in time the real nature and the more or less weak signs of the emergent dimensions of this political phenomenon."

—Leopoldina Fortunati, author of *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework,*Prostitution, Labor and Capital

On Microfascism



On Microfascism



Gender, War, and Death

Jack Z. Bratich



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Contents

Acknowledgments	IX
Introduction: Why the Micro Matters for Fascist Culture	1
1. Autogenetic Sovereignty: Subjectivity and the Violence of Authority	25
2. Gender: Ancient Misogyny and the Microfascist Manosphere	55
3. War: Männerbund and Microfascism	83
4. Necrotics: Death and the Microfascist	119
5. Platforming Micro-Antifascism	145
Notes	179
Bibliography	203
Index	218
About the Author	224

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Introduction

Why the Micro Matters for Fascist Culture

What comes to mind when we think of James Alex Fields, Jr., the 2017 Charlottesville killer? Images of his khaki pants, white polo shirt, and freshly buzzed undercut hairstyle likely appear. The alt-right, white nationalist uniform itself might be sufficient to identify him as fascist. His high school teacher noted that Fields was obsessed with Adolf Hitler. A good case could be made for fascist leanings there. Some might recall the telling detail conveyed by a classmate about a school trip to a former concentration camp in Germany, where Fields quipped, "This is where the magic happened." We *can* imagine this, too, would quickly associate him with fascism.

But in the retelling of Fields' vehicular homicide of antifascist counterprotester Heather Heyer during the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, how many remember the fact that Fields' wheel-chair-bound mother called the police three times over the prior years due to his violent behavior against her? On one occasion, he struck her in the head and forced his hands over her mouth when she tried to impose limits on his video game play time. In another incident, he threatened her with a foot-long knife. He also spat on her. Before Fields was born, his grandfather killed his grandmother and then committed suicide. While this personal and familial misogynistic history has been noted in passing, it subsided in the narrativization of the Fields. So, what about this history's relation to fascism?

One might debate about whether *any* of these elements in the Charlottesville case are in themselves sufficient to call it fascism, much like commentators mused over whether to consider Donald Trump a fascist. This book is not designed to persuade you one way or the other. But if your starting point is antifascist, and you do consider Charlottesville an event steeped in or tied to fascism, then this book asks you to consider what role Fields' misogyny and domestic violence against his mother had to do with it. To do so, we need to expand our notion of fascism.

Fascism is an elusive and contested term. Andreas Huyssen modifies Theodor Adorno's statement on nationalism when he suggests that the word "fascism is both obsolete and up-to-date." The literature on fascism is sprawling, complex, and multidisciplinary.

When fascism (new or old) is studied, the focus tends to be on a leader or styles of leadership, named organizations, particular national contexts, or economic conditions. Such analyses foreground fascist politics as institutionalized and systematized. There are stubborn attachments, as some writers and readers will never let go of the idea that fascism is *extraordinary* rather than ordinary. Others see fascism as a *recent* phenomenon (either as European interwar event or, at its most expansive, a reaction to modernity). Still others will only consider it a *state* affair. Finally, there are those who deploy the term only when ethnonationalism is primary.

Rather than hold up historical expressions of fascism as paradigms, I orient toward Alberto Toscano's position that the usual set of "checklists, analogies, or ideal-types cannot do justice to the concrete history of fascism." Debates over fascism's definition and features are sometimes pedantic affairs, but as praxis they matter because they set the stage for what it means to be antifascist.

When fascism arrives, it does not always announce itself with sleek uniforms, amassed crowds, and spectacular stage presentations. Nor does it appear only or primarily as a state affair. As French philosopher of antiracism Pierre-André Taguieff reminds us, fascism will not "do us the favor of returning in such a way that we can recognize easily. If vigilance was only a game of recognizing something already well-known, then it would only be a question of remembering. Vigilance would be reduced to a social game . . . a consoling illusion." In other words, if we fixate on expected characteristics that match other eras, we miss out on perceiving the particularities of the current one.

Alt-right, neofascist, and reactionary populist forces have swelled in the US during the second decade of the twenty-first century, becoming the object of significant journalistic coverage, academic analyses, and activist chronicling. Books on the subject fall into several categories. Given the period of this publication surge (2017–2020), many works focus on the rise of the alt-right, often with overlapping accounts of personalities (e.g., Richard Spencer, Andrew Weev, Steve Bannon), groups, and actions. A number of these are journalistic accounts that perceive the rise of the alt-right as a sign of expanding white supremacy or as an explanation for the 2016 Trump election victory—or both. In the United States, considerable focus is placed on the followers of Donald Trump, especially to make sense of Trump's ascendancy. They thus limit their analysis to the conditions leading to his victory and continued influence, including the militancy in the January 6, 2021 storming of the US Capitol.

At the same time, multidisciplinary accounts of fascism as a concept and historical formation have proliferated. While some are situated as defenders of liberal democracy, others are movement-based works that assess the contemporary resurgence of fascism. More explicitly antifascist analyses chronicle a series of recent and longer historical examples of white supremacist, neo-Nazi, ethnonationalist, and alt-right groups that often emphasize leaders and personalities.⁵

Much of the research on this reactionary milieu is oriented to political ideologies and explicit political phenomena, often using historical or sociological approaches. Whether named as the alt-right, radical right, or right-wing populism, they employ standard categories and frameworks about social movements. Phenomena are mostly linked to more institution-alized party politics. When movements are the focus, they tend to be ones with a proper name, studied for their formal components: decision-making protocols, functions and roles, planning efforts, strategic meetings, street actions, and principal individuals or groups. In sum, the research is oriented toward the organizational dimension of public actions. Moreover, when that movement is determined to be fascist, it is studied for its passage from the margins to the mainstream as a strategy of implanting itself as a fascist state.

These works form a vital and timely syllabus for contemporary fascism studies. Examining belief systems, organizations, and movements, studies of fascism give us grounding in historical patterns as well as their effects on contemporary elections, policies, and communities. As a collective body of

work, these recent sources provide much insight into the old and new fascist aspects of our current context. Only some highlight the realm I consider crucial to microfascism: the cultural dimensions of fascism.

Antifascists have understood that social and cultural realms produce the values and ideas a fascist state draws upon. Neiwert, Ross, and Burley, for instance, build on Robert O. Paxton's "Five Stages of Fascism" model in which culture plays an early role in developing a populace ready for the state. Stages allow clearer thinking about *proto*-fascism or *pre*-fascism. While such a model pinpoints different expressions well, the clarity that comes with steps also reduces certain realms to being steppingstones.

Recent authors have given significant attention to the cultural dimensions of the alt-right, mostly by focusing on Internet-based subcultures⁷ or digital technologies.⁸ Often these works classify media as news and information systems, with occasional mentions of idiosyncratic cultural expressions (such as neo-folk and Nazi punk). Most note the importance of the online worlds that have generated (mis)information, ideas, and sensibilities that have contributed to ethnonationalism and the alt-right.

When culture is foregrounded, it is positioned within the right's own terminology of "meta-politics." Shane Burley defines meta-politics as the "ideas, culture, and inclinations that motivate politics down the line. Meta-politics, in the neo-fascist sense, are the cultural projects that attempt to influence ideological positions without engaging strictly in political practice . . . [which] includes art, music, and philosophy."9

Culture is thus explicitly part of twenty-first century right-wing organizational strategy, encapsulated in the well-worn phrase "politics is downstream from culture." As meta-politics, culture tends to be equated with ideas and beliefs (encoded in art and pop culture artifacts) that are *strategically shaped* by organized actors. Those actors develop a fascist movement in order to establish a fascist state, moving from fringe Internet culture to alt-right to Trumpism.

In this formulation, culture matters only when it is instrumentalized for a body formed outside of itself, such as when actors recruit followers through it. For example, some commentators classify popular culture as "apolitical" until specific individuals and groups "hijack" or infiltrate it to guide it to their own ends. Culture can certainly operate as this kind of "strategic messaging," but reducing it to a weapon and a channel becomes too intentionalist and even conspiratorial. Moreover, such a focus on strategic hijacking only works in

retrospect. The analysis is *already-too-late*; the moment to understand culture is over, since it only mattered in the moment it was instrumentalized and not when it was "apolitical." Such analysis hampers our ability to defeat fascism's future manifestations.

This book, while recognizing culture as *meta*-politics, centers culture and stays with it longer, since culture is the sphere where *micro*-politics take place. Such an approach is rooted in cultural studies, where culture is not apolitical, waiting for external actors to politicize it. Instead, culture is *always political*: not just in the sense of expressing political dynamics formed in other spheres, but as the realm where values, power relations, subjective encounters, and capacities for connection and freedom develop. Specifically, this book examines the realm of *microfascist cultural politics*, which is composed before being organized, directed, even named.

Fascism and/as culture

This project studies fascism as a fundamentally *cultural* phenomenon.¹⁰ The vast intellectual output on interwar fascism includes key works on culture—whether as aesthetics¹¹ or as industry,¹² as religiosity and sacralization,¹³ as embodiment,¹⁴ as media spectacles, as the production of imaginaries and values.¹⁵

Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Ashéri define fascist culture as a spirit of rebellion involving "the cult of energy, of dynamism and power, of the machine and speed, of instinct and intuition, of movement, will power, and youth."16 Lutz Koepnick sees culture as profoundly central to fascist renewal and restoration, as it involves "breaking older bonds of solidarity while simultaneously rendering modern consumerism . . . a privileged ticket to national rebirth."17 Christoffer Kølvraa and Bernhard Forchtner draw on early fascism scholar George Mosse's position on the importance of culture "to better understand the existential imaginary which drew people to fascism by looking beyond the latter's organizational forms, institutional structures, or concrete aims and policies."18 Only after comprehending fascism's subjective structure formed through vision, ideas, and comportment can we get a proper sense of fascist self-understanding and therefore its appeal. And, in a nod to fascist philosopher Julius Evola, whose theories of subjectivity, war, and gender figure prominently in this book, Alexander Reid Ross notes, "Greater

than mass-based civilization . . . was culture, which as he understood it could be carefully curated by elites to channel the energy of the masses toward destruction while leaving the higher echelon of spiritual warriors to play in the ashes."¹⁹

The most developed attention to culture for the purpose of the current project has been proposed by Roger Griffin. Even within analyses that foreground culture he finds that the genre of fascist studies neglects "the attempts by Fascism and Nazism to engineer a *subjective revolution* . . . as an integral part of their project to regenerate the nation." For Griffin, this means fascism is not best identified as a state-form, a conventional political party, or even a movement. Indeed fascism's "creation of a new type of state was the materialisation and externalisation of a subjective revolution in values and national character." Griffin argues for an understanding of fascist culture as "a wholesale transformation of the world, of time/space coordinates as well as the direction of human development." His focus on culture will be key for our close attention to microfascism, as will his emphasis on the transformation of subjectivity (the new/reborn man), and on the types of composition that he calls groupuscules (fluid and amorphous clusters that are not attached to formal parties or structures).

Fascism's two core features: restoration/renewal and eliminationism

Roger Griffin provides the first of two main features of fascism that will inform our concept of microfascism, *restoration/renewal* and *eliminationism*. In addition to centering culture in his analysis of fascism, Roger Griffin's methodological approach invites analysts to pay careful attention to what is essential and what is epiphenomenal in fascism. He asks us "to separate out those 'ineliminable,' definitional components from time- or place-specific, peripheral ones." He finds that too often, a historically situated expression comes to stand in as the template, model, or even sole example of the set. Griffin distills fascism's definitional essence: "Fascism is a political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism." Palingenetic refers to a temporal quality that seeks restoration, renewal, and rebirth. It's the continuous revival and return of the "original."

Palingenetic form as process

This project on microfascism takes up Griffin's notion of the palingenetic but with qualifications. Like many analysts, Griffin situates fascism as something opposed to modernity, especially liberal democracy. While certain expressions of microfascism (e.g., neo-reactionary subcultures, traditionalist groups, outright neo-Nazis) explicitly rail against liberal democracy, microfascism both precedes modernity and incorporates aspects of it. I will argue in this book that we should look for it in the constitution of states themselves. Fascism includes the modern production of *sovereign subjectivity*, defined here as the capacity of a subject to make its will reality (including its own reality as subject). Fascism is an extension of systems of power and oppression in what Walter Benjamin calls mythical violence: the mystical capacity of a state to simultaneously establish its foundation as monopoly on violence and justify it as reality itself.

Fascism is only conjuncturally—as an historically specific mode of becoming—a reaction to liberal democracy. For instance, the neo-reactionary component of the right wing, which at first blush appears as a *response* to liberal democracy, traces its roots to positions *prior* to modernity's rise. The contemporary reactionary position is a renewal of the positions *taken at the time* by royal sovereigns who saw liberal democracy as degenerate and sought to preserve their power. It is reactive in advance, posed against insurrections of the time, seeking to preserve and continue a type of sovereignty against revolt.²⁶ It was the failure of sovereigns to suppress the revolts that animates today's "response." Fascism is the imagined and enacted renewal of *sovereignty*, which now happens to be expressed as antimodern and antidemocratic.

Moreover, these forms of sovereignty never fully disappeared as a concession to the triumph of liberal democracy. As the Black Radical Tradition demonstrates, liberal democracy was always underpinned and organized by racial capitalism. The founding and perpetuation of that political project was tied to wage slavery, enslavement, settler colonialism, and the carceral complex. We thus need to push Griffin beyond the confines of a particular time/space framework into a more expansive one that includes *colonization* and *patriarchy*.

Griffin has given us the tools to overcome his own restrictions. He has asked us to not limit fascism to its historical expression/epiphenomenon. His version of the transhistorical (or the ineliminable) is still tied to a narrow frame of Western history—from twentieth-century interwar Europe to now. We need to expand the timeline to include understandings of racial

capitalism and colonialism. But even anticolonial accounts are still focused on a Western moment, now coterminous with something called the "birth of modernity." We must stretch our analysis beyond the modern West to the state foundations, especially in its gendered and war contexts.²⁷

Importantly, palingenesis occurs within a process of subjectivation that *preexists nationhood*. Nationalism is certainly in play as a mythic image for contemporary fascist restoration operations. But "nationalism" is only one set of values and identities being restored. By focusing on sovereignty, I highlight the *process* of restoration. What is restored is not a mythic past but the performance of founding itself—the capacity to make reality and the authority to establish order. The nation is a result of sovereign acts, mythic and otherwise, and not a fixed object for renewal. This subjective sovereignty preexists "nation" or "community" by originating in, and inaugurating, the authority of ordering as such. Such an ordering principle is found in the state, in patriarchal social order, and in war. What is palingenetic is the creation process itself, the founding and self-authorizing acts that seek to shape reality.

This book makes the controversial claim that microfascism is a resource that is not primarily antimodern. It is premodern and even helps form the modern through its primary subject, the sovereign. In the comforting story it tells itself, the modern heroically triumphs over tradition through the values of democracy and progress. Fascism is seen as the negation of this fragile displacement in favor of restoring a mythical past grounded in actual power relations. This book argues that we need to recast the modern, especially as it was forged in patriarchal pacts and an authoritative order based on transcendent (religious) values and war. Modernity's values depended on a subject and state-form that underpinned the system's authority. What Umberto Eco called *Ur-Fascism*—the deep structure of fascist tendencies in human history—was not displaced by the modern, it was just reconfigured as state-form.

Fascist philosopher Julius Evola would not fit into Griffin's notion of "palingenetic ultranationalism," as Evola's fulcrum for understanding authority and tradition is the state and not the nation. For fascist thinkers like Evola, nationalism is already a decadent swerve from the primary authority-making mechanism: the state and its autotelic sovereign. He even goes so far as to oppose nationalism, as he sees it embodying a feminized political sensibility. Evola's traditionalism, as we'll explore later, leads him to invoke war, specifically the formation of masculine war societies called *Männerbunde*, as the origin of a sovereign subject. In other words, what is renewed in any

palingenesis is much older than the nation and it's something much more gendered. This binding, this patriarchal pact, is what needs renewal and restoration: a palingenetic *ultra-statism* or *ultra-sovereignty*.

Eliminationism as violence

The second feature of fascism that anchors my project is what David Neiwert calls the violence of *eliminationism*. Eliminationism refers to a "politics and a culture that shuns dialogue and the democratic exchange of ideas in favor of the pursuit of outright elimination of the opposing side, either through suppression, exile, and ejection, or extermination." Fascist power defines its opposition as "the embodiment of evil itself, unfit for participation in their vision of society, and thus worthy of elimination." Eliminationism constitutes its enemy as whole blocs of the populace that need to be excised or exterminated by peaceful or violent means. The subjective orientation of eliminationism infuses culture—appearing as offhand comments, crude jokes, and microaggressions. Culture creates the conditions for eliminationist actions by providing the dehumanizing imagination and the normalizing permission to speak and act in vilifying ways.

Neiwert draws from Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, who coined the term "eliminationist antisemitism" in *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust.*³¹ The most obvious versions of elimination associated with fascism involve state-sponsored murders and genocide. Settler colonial projects are quite visible expressions of eliminationism, resulting in genocide and social death in addition to establishing a race-based carceral apparatus, once again anchoring the claim that fascism as palingenetic eliminationism predates twentieth-century fascism.

I would add the following to Neiwert's contribution: before eliminationism becomes concretized, the violence of action is akin to what Walter Benjamin called *mythic violence*. James Martel summarizes Benjamin's development of the concept:

Mythic violence is Benjamin's term for the way that illicit economic and political power has asserted itself over all human life, projecting a form of authority out into the world that then becomes accepted as reality itself. It is mythic because there is no true or ontological basis for the powers of liberalism and capitalism; its right to rule is self-proclaimed and then naturalized so that it becomes seen as fated

and inevitable. It is violent because, without a genuine basis for its authority, mythic violence must endlessly strike out, killing and hurting over and over again to establish its power and even its reality. 32

Mythic violence is the shaping of reality in accordance with an abstraction that founds the state, based on a sovereign capacity that I'll argue derives from archaic masculine subjectivity. Mythic and foundational violence is not done in one strike nor does it recur as a single type. Its palingenesis is more pervasive, based on an *eliminationism spectrum*, or what I will be identifying as *reductionism* as it pertains to gender.

Gender changes the typical understanding of eliminationism, for instance, when it comes to its temporality. What is the measurement of speed and time for reduction, annihilation, extermination? Elimination can take the form of what Lauren Berlant calls *slow death*: "a condition of being worn out by the activity of reproducing life."³³ In this state of the long elimination, "dying and the ordinary reproduction of life are coextensive."³⁴ And, as she puts it, only some populations are "marked out for wearing out."³⁵

Elimination is thus not the result but the *process* of "taking to the limit," reducing, de-animating, de-vivifying, and annulling. Elimination decapacitates but does not always kill. It is closer to what Jasbir Puar calls "the right to maim': a right expressive of sovereign power that is linked to, but not the same as, 'the right to kill.'"³⁶ Elimination reduces capacity, it is "debilitation and the production of disability" that is ultimately an *inclusive* annulment. When it comes to gender, women are necessarily included but as reduced. Elimination is an ongoing management of this inclusive annulment, the continuous "taking to" (and past) the limit.

Eliminationism is a political and cultural tendency that only partially finds expression in the state. With US plantation-based enslavement systems, for instance, what was remarkable was precisely the ability for ordinary enslavers and their postbellum successors to reduce others with *impunity*.³⁷ In colonial relations, white settlers had a birthright to act with sovereign violence, an ongoing and pervasive eliminationism. Achille Mbembe's origin of necropolitics begins with war in the colonies waged for "civilization." Invaders imagine enemies to be nonhuman, allowing the culture of settler colonialism, apartheid, and the plantation world to deploy "social death" and generate "death-worlds."³⁸

This project will focus on another systemic spectrum of elimination, patriarchy, whose fundamental features include the instrumentalization,

objectification, and reduction of women. For what I'll be describing as microfascism, patriarchy takes the form of everyday sexism and misogyny as a slow elimination and includes policing limits of women's actions through threats, chasing women from public places (whether streets or the Internet), and reducing their capacities through ongoing attrition. Gendered eliminationism is a reductionism *towards* the limit, a nullification that deposits women into a sphere or a role in the patriarchal order.

Gendered eliminationism is the ongoing process of diminishment into a thing that teeters on becoming no-thing. Elimination as physical death systematically occurs in patriarchy, but it is not the only kind of reduction. Social death, slow death, the longue durée of feminicide, the spectrum of violence, the erosion of life—all of these are forms of what I am examining here as the gendered dimension of microfascism.

Palingenesis, I argue, renews not just a past or a foundation, but the exclusions and violence that allow it to "take place." Any particular fascist war of restoration (like a mythic lost nation) is also a restoration of the founding violence that instituted the order and of the *subjectivity* that subtends it. Combining these two key features (palingenesis and eliminationism) into a process opens a path to understanding microfascism.

Microfascism

Microfascism is a concept drawn from Deleuze and Guattari, primarily the latter. Developed across essays and in books, the concept was an effort to rethink the forms and scales of fascism. Microfascism delves into the subjective realm with three main characteristics that are also qualifications: 1) it takes place "before" but really *in excess of* the state; 2) it exists in minds but moreover in desires, bodies and practices; and 3) it is composed in culture to create individual and collective actions with their own specific fascist results.

The first feature of microfascism is defined by Guattari in this way: "Fascism is inseparable from a proliferation of molecular focuses in interaction, which skip from point to point, before beginning to resonate together in the National Socialist State."³⁹ Microfascism takes a "step" or a stage and expands it outwards, nonlinearly. There is a continuity to the micro beyond its temporal placement "before" the state, since we may not ever see a state formation that crystallizes. A focus on microfascism can identify processes that have effects even if they don't "creep" to another stage.⁴⁰

For Deleuze and Guattari, microfascism exists prior to a capture by molar state apparatuses as well as before the formation of organizations. Microfascism sets conditions for fascism even before it becomes a *movement*. The *micro* does not refer to a small scale but something multiple and molecular rather than coherent and uniform—a proliferation of resonances, practices, and relations that can cohere into operative bodies and collective agencies with their own short- and long-term effects. This is the realm we'll be exploring as culture—as ordinary, as cultivation of subjectivity, as pervasive.⁴¹

Second, microfascism encompasses the relation between *desire* and fascism. In "Everybody Wants to Be a Fascist," Guattari posits that fascism "seems to come from the outside, but it finds its energy right at the heart of everyone's desire." In his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault refers to it as the fascism "in our heads and in our everyday behavior." The fascism in our subjectivity is more than a psychological category—it's "in our heads" but also in our bodies. Better yet, it's in the embodiments and affective armor produced within our relationships. Foucault describes Deleuze and Guattari's project as excavating and warding off the "fascism in us all." While we might temper this universalism, he prompts us to reflect on the tendencies in our relationships (familial, erotic, institutional)—as a microfascism appearing at various scales.

Gary Genosko has worked methodically through the concept. As he puts it, "fascism is immanent to desiring-production . . . [it] is everywhere and to desire is to activate it in some measure at different scales within a microphysics of power relations."44 While some, like Wilhelm Reich, focused on desire as the impulse to be dominated (seeking a master and the comfort of conformity), for Deleuze and Guattari desire is much more expansive. It includes becoming master without a leader figure. This book examines the microfascist as a social investment in masculine forms of sovereignty, specifically the desire to give to oneself the powers of creation through a fear of realms and practices coded as "feminine." Why would it be necessary to examine these micropolitics when fascism disappears as state-form? Following Guattari as well as Umberto Eco, Genosko astutely answers that it's because fascism "has survived its historical mutations and adapted itself to contemporary institutions, knowingly or unknowingly clinging to subcultural and political expression."45 For Guattari, fascism "passes through the tightest mesh; it is in constant evolution."46

Following their lead, combating fascism involves a change in perception: microfascism appears not only when white nationalists carry tiki torches to defend Confederate statues but also when the ghosts of fallen soldiers are invoked to generate the statues in the first place. We don't just see microfascism when the alt-right promotes its "TradWives," who invest desire in submissive social roles but also when the "manosphere" begins coordinating its masculine instrumentalization of women. We need to perceive how the *Freikorps* campaigns of Great War veterans, with their feminicidal impulses, have now mutated into veterans of the *World of Warcraft*. Most importantly, microfascism inhabits desires that don't always crystallize into nameable groups and it can erupt even in leftist movements. Microfascism is thus pervasive and latent, embedding itself in our relationships and our subjectivities. Any antifascism needs to also be *anti-microfascist*.

The third feature of microfascism is related to subjective action—now defined less as individual desire and more as coordinated operations, or what describe as the *compositional realm*. Microfascism has a connective dimension where fascism forms a social body. For Deleuze and Guattari, "what makes fascism dangerous is its molecular or micropolitical power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism." This mass is neither uniform nor dependent on conforming subjects. It is something more elusive as a coordinating and gathering force—it "occupies micro-black holes and resonates among them acting on the masses through millions of catastrophes." It's not that individuals are formed "first" and then find each other in some sociological manner—although this is what social movement studies often presumes. As Guattari remarks, "These black holes swarm and proliferate across the social field" which draw in and transform subjectivities. Desire is again central here, as the attraction to these networked black holes is already socially produced.

Fascism is connective and networked, best understood through "the language of mutation, proliferation, and molecularity." The movement here is not nameable as an organized coordination (even one as loose as the altright) but is a roving, mutating throng of self-affirming subjects. In other words, fascist individuals, even in their rigid "black hole" interiors, do not simply end up that way through their personal encounters with fascist ideas and beliefs. They become fascists through mimicking and inspiring others, based on an already-existing desire. They may even be initiated, whether by an explicit act (e.g., redpilling) or echoes of archaic rites of masculine

passage and differentiation from women. Much of this happens below the usual threshold of political perception.

Thinking of microfascism as a network of disconnected holes is puzzling, even paradoxical upon first blush. It warrants an analysis that attends to both the hyperindividualism (self-sealed subjects, black holes) and the ways those units compose in collective action. Atomization is part of a composition of a more interactive body that holds the holes in place but also increases their capacity for action, thus posing a profound danger in the world.

Microfascism, ultimately, is the growth of a fascist formation beyond organized efforts: "Fascism, like desire, is scattered everywhere, in separate bits and pieces, within the whole social realm; it crystallizes in one place or another, depending on the relationships of force." A laugh, a red pill-induced epiphany, an inspirational act—these can produce a fascist leap or jolt of subjectivation. Microfascism is punctuated by such resonant flashes. While most accounts continue to work with concepts of mass, movement, leader, and nation, analyzing microfascism's new conditions means looking at production and circulation processes well before and beyond any state capture, organizational form, or charismatic leader.

Microfascism, we could say, occupies a place in our analysis that is analogous to fascist culture as discussed above: not just pre-state formation or passage to more organized forms, but a necessary realm of the production of subjectivity and composition of collective action, akin to what Eco calls *Ur-Fascism* or "Eternal Fascism." Microfascism is a *form of life* that finds expression in politics as well as cultural practices and subjective orientations. Microfascism is a structuring of everyday life that resonates with macro-structures without being reducible to or absorbed by them.

Microfascism and culture

When referring to culture as the principal domain for microfascism, a few caveats are necessary. Culture can include representations (the best contemporary example of microfascism would be the visual and sonic genre of "fashwave") but is not primarily about images, ideas, or information. Culture is not just a series of artifacts expressing identity or subculture, nor is it bounded by ethnic enclosures or the commonalities of nation-state.

Culture consists of the production of subjectivity and the making of reality. It is less knowledge-based (truth, beliefs) and more action-oriented

(making/production), a psychosocial dimension of power and ideology "operating in the affective realm as much as the realm of ideas." ⁵² Culture is the sphere where capacities develop and forms of life proliferate, before organizational, even nameable, entities can be identified (e.g., the "alternative right" or alt-right).

The constellation of culture, gender, and fascism comes out most thoroughly and concretely in the work of Klaus Theweleit. His two-volume opus *Male Fantasies* examined the letters, diaries, and images from the nomadic veterans and new irregular recruits that took up vicious campaigns and settlements throughout post-WWI Germany as the *Freikorps*. These bloodthirsty independent volunteer units translated their war training into murderous domestic operations, now fueled by misogyny and anticommunism. These ad-hoc squads carried out massacres and became prototypes for Nazi troops.

Theweleit examines artifacts including personal letters, poetry, propaganda posters, ads, comic strips, and diaries. Through this treasure trove of an archive, Theweleit pieces together a profound gender analysis of the collective and individual bodies (actual and metaphorical) that set the stage for Nazi Germany's masculine warrior subject. Methodologically speaking, William Connolly notes that Theweleit "loosens readings of structural determinations as he probes volatile intersections between bodies, movements, and politics." ⁵³

"Bodies, movements, and politics": culture is where these intersect to produce subjectivity. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri put it, what needs studying even in "leaderless' movements [is the] *production of subjectivity* necessary to create lasting social relations." These processes of subjectivation involve the encounters, relationships, and convergences that have come to be called *composition*. 55

Composition refers to how bodies enter into relations with one another—a coming-together which cannot be predicted from component parts or interactions. Composition thus refers to an entity's *emergent qualities*, the not-yet-formed in the passage to action.

I have argued elsewhere that the genealogy of crafting is a paradigmatic case for understanding composition (especially its gendered dimensions).⁵⁶ Crafting existed before, during, and after capitalism's arrival and crisis. Compositional analysis, therefore, would have to begin earlier and in another place than those imagined with the capital/labor relation.

What would it mean to examine fascism compositionally? *Compositionism* begins not with sovereignty as a juridical matter, or fascism as a state affair, but with social relations and the powers of ordering being in the world. Before a fascist social movement, a fascist body that *can* move or be moved develops. This book's compositionist approach to microfascist culture means examining a process tied to an underlying and ongoing social body infused with capacities.

Microfascist culture is the realm where this collective body forms its capacities. This means downplaying representations of reality (epistemology) in favor making reality through metamorphosis (ontology). A compositionist approach to microfascism helps understand not the mentality/psychological profile of movement members (in their heads), nor their explicitly sociological roots (proximate causes), but the emergent capacities that seek to order reality through the production of sovereign subjectivity.

Compositional culture is not apolitical, waiting for external actors to politicize it—it is *the space for cultural politics*, an immanent sphere where meanings, values, and pleasures are circulated to form social identities and social relationships.⁵⁷ Culture is the realm where life (and death) is given a form and a style. It involves sensibilities and connective action—the circulation of embodiments and disembodiments we will examine as *mimesis*. Culture is the milieu of subjectivation where we collectively work out the making of reality through the social production of desire.

Analyzing compositionist culture resonates with works that study fascist-embodied aesthetics, such as Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's analysis of the style, enthusiasm, and assemblages of Mussolini's Italy, or the "politics of the piazza." Composition is also highly mediated. Culture can include the mediated forms of affective mobilization, including radio and cinema in Italy and Germany. Media here do more than spread beliefs or recruit adherents. Susan Sontag located Nazi Germany's "transformation of reality" in the power of its media forms. She notes that with Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* "the document (the image) is no longer simply the record of reality; 'reality' has been constructed to serve the image."

More than representation, mediation reshapes reality and the subjects within it. Media cultural studies have analyzed professional wrestling, reality television, meme magic, cosplay and deepfakes, among others, to define media less as representing reality than a series of techniques *intervening* in it. Media forms are technical systems that set some conditions for assembling

capacities and associations with an orientation towards action. My analysis in *On Microfascism* follows in this tradition of media composition, specifically by homing in on the mediated production of a fascist collective body.

The mediated form of collective action, I argue, has moved from mass spectator to networked participant. The results are an increase in circulation, mimicry, and transmission—the digital media formatting of imagination and inspiration. Mediated culture now refers to Internet technologies producing aesthetics that generate renewal and elimination, affects like irony and fun, modes of initiation like redpilling, and forms of coordination like raiding squads and gaming swarms. The ensuing body is networked and operational, drawn heavily from chan boards and gaming platforms, and organized via logistics and squad-based campaigns. The result is a distributed—what Griffin calls *groupuscular*—composition of operations, maneuvers, and logistics channeling action into war with homi-suicidal results.

Like culture, this means not reducing the Internet to an instrument for organizing and recruiting as this would relegate microfascism to "bad actors" and their "tools." The compositional substratum that shapes not only subjective resources but the subjects themselves should no longer be marginalized in favor of organized and readily apparent forms. In summary, composition is the dimension where the desiring machines of microfascism proliferate and crystallize. The main elements of this archaic culture are: 1) the *gendered* dimension; 2) a *necropolitical* dynamic; and 3) the *war* context.

A key feature of microfascist culture is that it's where we see patriarchal differentiation from nature/women instrumentalized to establish man as transcendent and sovereign. This makes worlds and orders reality through palingenetic elimination. Microfascist culture is the realm where fascism as a collective body is composed (before being organized, directed, even named). It generates desensitization and armored relationships, producing abstractions and reducing some groups' capacities while augmenting others. This is the place of initiation rites and death-rituals, cultivating a masculine renewal of spiritual subjectivity while eliminating materiality (the feminine).

Fascism, after all, is a *binding*, emblemized by the bundle of rods with an axe projecting from it [*fasces*] used by Mussolini's followers. It is *collective-making*. What is new is that historical forms of binding are now networked. Microfascism is thus both archaic and hypercontemporary. The rise of connective technologies and digital culture become key for the contemporary

expression of this long-standing subjective realm. Microfascism features millions of tiny command centers, each self-enclosed yet bonded in action-at-a-distance. Each black hole is sealed while also networked, resonating via imitation, inspiration, and transmission. This paradox (the cohesion of the disconnected) results in action, not a standstill. Social clusters emit from this assemblage as a transient collective assembling. Such clusters, this project argues, appear at the origin of fascism—the war bands, the squads, the patriarchal pacts.

Recently, scholars have been giving this non-state, non-organized cultural dimension more attention. Thinking through a post-organizational framework, Maik Fielitz and Holger Marcks speak of *digital fascism*, which they define as "a more fluid and ambivalent movement, which cannot be fully grasped with actor- or ideology-centered approaches." Instead, they argue, contemporary fascism is most pervasive and installed "as a social phenomenon of cultural practices." Rather than calling it *pre-fascist* or *proto-fascist* culture (which still favors the state-form of fascism) microfascism is closer to what Mark Bray calls *everyday fascism*. It is ordinary, pervasive, even latent. Temporally speaking, it lurks as an Ur-Fascism of the archaic in the mundane.

Natasha Lennard proposes ways of living the antifascist life by first pointing out "fascistic habit'—formed of fascistic desire to dominate, oppress, and obliterate the nameable 'other.'"⁶² Habit, for Lennard, is not the trivialized, normalized phenomenon that appears in commonsensical language but refers to "no less than the modes by which we live."⁶³ Lennard situates microfascism as "a perversion of desire produced through forms of life under capitalism and modernity: practices of authoritarianism and domination and exploitation that form us."⁶⁴ She lists some central black holes: "The individualized and detached Self, the over-codings of family-unit normativity, the authoritarian tendency of careerism—all of them paranoiac sites of micro-fascism in need of anti-fascist care."⁶⁵

Lennard's last phrase is key. Ultimately, a focus on microfascism enriches an antifascist analysis and praxis. As Guattari puts it, examining a "micropolitics of desire means that henceforth we will refuse to allow any fascist formula to slip by, on whatever scale it may manifest itself, including within the scale of the family or even within our own personal economy." Identifying the features of microfascism conceptually can assist in recognizing its emergent tendencies in our own lives.

Microfascism and transhistorical materialism

Some readers might ask straightaway, "Isn't a cultural approach too idealist? What about the material conditions?" There are plenty of works that address what we could call the material conditions or systemic determinations of the rise of fascism: the economic contexts, organizing efforts, party-building, and interwar state formations. We could call this kind of materialist analysis a structural one.

Brad Evans and Julian Reid, elaborating Deleuze and Guattari's broad analysis, assert that fascism cannot "be represented or understood as that of an historically constituted regime, particular system of power relations, or incipient ideology. Fascism, we believe, is as diffuse as the phenomenon of power itself." Approaches to fascism that take up the European interwar version as its model can limit our understanding of the temporality of microfascism and could even produce an analytic attachment that allows microfascism (and fascism) to reappear and renew itself, especially when it doesn't do so in familiar ways.

For the purposes of this project, and to preserve Griffin's prompt that we distinguish historical expressions from ineliminable elements of fascism, I work with the notion that some systems appear through various conjunctures which end up being modes or conditional expressions of more enduring, ineliminable or *ur-qualities*. Fascism lurks deep in society, as "ephemeral and indistinct" features that can combine into a force that then takes perceptible contours.⁶⁸ Eco listed fourteen characteristics of Ur-Fascism that were latent but always proximate in modern societies, even archetypal. ⁶⁹ These are fascism's enduring qualities. Andrew Johnson summarizes Eco when he says Ur-Fascism does not merely refer to the most obvious models, "but to future cases and the process of metamorphosis."⁷⁰ The aim is to identify and diagnose emergent forms based on previous expressions, as we are always walking with "eternal fascism."⁷¹

At times, my approach will take up the techniques of mining the past that traditionalists do. There is a fascist mode of doing so, involving the projection of contemporary ideological values into an ancient past in order to create a continuity that universalizes and therefore justifies fascist thought and action. But there is also an antifascist mode for finding the continuity of fascism in other times and places or an antifascist transhistorical method.

Guattari gives us another angle on the study of "the genealogy and the permanence of certain fascist machineries."⁷² One example he gives is the

Inquisition, which "had already put together a type of fascist machinery which kept developing and perfecting itself up to our own time."⁷³ For Guattari, the continuity of these forces—the "fascist machineries"—beg our attention, as they reappear "in the family, in school, or in a trade union. . . . A struggle against the modern forms of totalitarianism can be organized only if we are prepared to recognize the continuity of this machine."⁷⁴

Such continuity will be most explicit when we discuss patriarchy in Chapter 2, as I'll trace the resonances between archaic ur-qualities, as well as more delimited conjunctural systemic forms. How do we speak of patriarchy's reverberations through time, systems, and subjects? One obviously does not need to valorize it to analyze it as archaic and continuous. Microfascism, like misogyny, is not an unbroken or universal story. Aligned with Eco's Ur-Fascism and Guattari's "continuity" of fascist machineries, I am arguing that microfascism appears earlier than modernity (with its liberal democracy, nationhood, and Western systems). By tracing contemporary microfascism's resonances with archaic ones, we address Guattari's antifascist question: "What is this bizarre totalitarian machine that traverses time and space?" 75

The microfascist machineries return in conjunctures that are unstable. There is a crisis in the effectiveness of the mythic foundation of the state and, for our purposes, the sovereign subject that underpins it: "the 'phantasmagoria' is unraveling and is no longer doing the job of producing political and economic quiescence," says Martel, applying Benjamin to our times. The Ideological cohesion is crumbling, and stark expressions of violence increasingly work to police and secure a declining order. In Michel Foucault's terms, a political order built on a "rationality of calculations, strategies, ruses, [and] . . . technical procedures" erodes, reverting to its origins in war. The interpretation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the state and the strategies of the mythic foundation of the mythic foundation of the strategies of the mythic foundation of the mythic foundation of the strategies of the mythic foundation of the mythic foundation

For this project, that means an acute revival of what Silvia Federici calls "the war on women." A conjuncture or system in decline asks for an analysis that maps its volatile elements rather than its relatively stable terms. The primary *ur-microfascisms* this book takes up are gender and patriarchy. Before exploring those in detail, some necessary gestures must be made to two other systems central to microfascism: colonialism and capitalism.

Colonialism and race

Social theorist Alberto Toscano poses a challenge to recent analyses of fascism, asking what would happen if the discussion "of fascism were not dominated by the question of analogy?" He is referring to the way interwar Europe tends to stand in for all forms of fascism. Toscano turns to thinkers who situate fascism in other lineages, namely race and colonialism. Aimé Césaire famously talked of Nazi Germany as the boomerang of European imperialist violence. George Padmore wrote "Fascism in the Colonies" in 1938, seeing in South Africa "the world's classic Fascist state." Cedric Robinson, Amiri Baraka, and Langston Hughes all noted that being Black means being intimately familiar with fascism in the form of white supremacy. George Jackson and Angela Davis used the term "fascism" to make sense of the US prison-industrial complex as "the ongoing fact of racialized state terror."

Moving to the cultural sphere, we could say microfascism is marked by the ruinous project of whiteness on an everyday level. Whiteness is not just a demographic or a "working class left behind" that then turns into a racist bloc. Whiteness is a mythic abstraction that galvanizes expansion and control as a matter of habit and practice. The modern Western state does not exist without the colonial and settler violence at the root of the state's mythic violence.

The mission of whiteness at the basis of the American project is composed of coordinated action through renewal and elimination. As capitalism abandons its laborers and resources, we see what David Roediger calls a decline in "the wages of whiteness." Such a feeling of dispossession and despair are part of what I call a *downsurgency* organized by right-wing activist groups.

A reorientation of fascism away from interwar Europe and towards scenes of colonial and racial sovereignty is indispensable to understanding fascism. In a moment when race is front and center for insurrections both fascist and antifascist, the displacement of the European expression is historically urgent.

When we discuss necropolitical sovereignty in Chapter 4, we'll find one of its early laboratories in the colonial encounter, which extends to the carceral system. The twenty-first century legacy includes massacres and lone-wolf killings in the Global North, often based on the reactionary idea of the "Great Replacement" in which refugees and immigrants are targeted. White supremacy—whether it be anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Indigenous genocide, or hostility to Asian and Pacific Islanders—has been a growing multinational movement with lethal results. Antifascist work must necessarily chronicle and combat this global resurgence.

This long-standing global supremacist project of whiteness has become accelerated via networked communication technologies to form what Jesse Daniels calls "a translocal whiteness—that is, a form of white identity not tied to a specific region or nation but reimagined as an identity that transcends geography and is linked via a global network." Daniels grasps the power of digital culture beyond the means "of recruitment or political mobilization" to "the real epistemological challenge it poses to undermining the very basis of racial equality." Whiteness seeks to ground itself and its values as nationalist common sense and as sovereign truths (in fascist lingo, to be "based"). I would add that this epistemology is tied to an *ontology*, the production of subjectivity to shape a world in which these claims make sense. Moreover, such a subject gives itself the authority to make an action stick. Race and microfascism are inextricably linked as the ongoing sphere of the production of subjectivity, shaping reality, and establishing sovereignty under the sign of whiteness.

The racial project of whiteness and colonialism complicate palingenetic ultranationalism since whiteness preexists the nation-state. Nationalism remains a modern project, while fascism has older roots in forms of authority, command, and state formation—the settler colonialism of the state.

Capitalism

When it comes to capitalism, we need to acknowledge both its recent form as well as its longer-standing structure. First, as a persistent system of extraction and destruction, capitalism is closely tied to death-making. As we'll explore in Chapter 4, capitalism subsumes, systematizes, and expands death into a planetary machine, which Justin McBrien calls the "Necrocene" or "Capitalocene." The Capitalocene's conditions systematize a homicidal and suicidal sovereignty writ large in the so-called Anthropocene.

In addition, Silvia Federici expertly traces the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism through a necessary figure for capitalism's origins in primitive accumulation: the witch. The destruction of women's knowledges and practices under the sign of the witch inaugurates the role for women within capitalism, which in sum involves social reproduction without inclusion into wage relations.⁸³

On a more conjunctural plane, capitalism's specifically neoliberal expression sets the stage for contemporary fascism by being always-already

in *crisis*. Verónica Gago, Marta Malo, and Liz Mason-Deese posit that the crisis of neoliberalism will lead to "the advance of social fascism on the micropolitical plane." This plane includes religious fundamentalism and other feminicidal subjectivities that "reinforce the divisions between the human and what is categorized as less-than-human (the feminized, racialized, and naturalized) that sustain necropolitics." The current context is thus "a particular conjunction between a neoliberalism that refuses to die and fascist forms that come to save it." Neoliberalism in decline thus unleashes and activates microfascism that is the nexus of gender, war, and death on women. 87

Keeping in mind both the cyclical persistence and crisis-laden ruptures described by Gago and her collaborators, this book takes capitalism into account not as the totalizing machine that determines forms of gender violence, but as itself an event in history within a broader patriarchal ordering and gender-based microfascism. Patriarchal capitalism, sure, but also *capitalist patriarchy*, the latter referring to a mode of patriarchy that reigned for some time and is now in crisis.⁸⁸

This book's project displaces nation from the center of analysis to locate fascism in another material dynamic of sovereignty and subjectivity—the premodern, pre-liberal democracy lineage that operates primarily in the mode of gender.⁸⁹ This project thus examines microfascism as marked by archaic and ongoing production of sovereign subjectivity. To that end, my project centers on the cultural domain as its own specific sphere of producing subjective formations, relational dynamics, and affective appeals.

Discerning morbid phenomena as antifascist praxis

This book's understanding of antifascism is rooted in a Deleuzo-Guattarian anarcho-feminist approach, one that finds fascism in microspheres of everyday life as well as the usual social and political venues. The project is a study in perception that encourages readers to become more attuned to that which does not always reveal itself in familiar ways. It aims to understand fascism's *emergent dimensions*—the subtle dynamics in play before historical expressions manifest. Such perceptions allow us to identify fascism before it turns into a movement or settles into state-forms, and it comes with an expansive notion of *antifascist praxis* as a preemptive strike, as ongoing *anti-microfascisms*. Until we understand the subjective and cultural dimensions

of microfascism, we will continue to feel morally superior in our analysis ("racists are racists!") while ignoring the terrain we're on *and that lurks in us* as microfascism.

This book is written in a conjuncture marked by decline and crisis—this is not news to many. A waning of liberal centrist integrative capacities is generating a crisis so severe it is becoming what Antonio Gramsci calls an *interregnum*: the passage between conjunctures. He announces that in these moments "the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born . . . morbid phenomena of the most varied kind come to pass." Tracing some of the interregnum's morbid phenomena as they fundamentally reshape reality, this book foregrounds culture as the realm where pervasive "latent" tendencies rest and move.

We are in an interregnum where foundational violences return as morbid phenomena, drawing from simultaneously archaic and hypercontemporary processes. We are not just seeing crises in particular systems (e.g., racial patriarchal capitalism) but in their foundational ability to authorize themselves, which I will argue rests on the ontological structure of Western masculine subjectivity. A war of restoration has been unleashed in which sovereign subjects seek renewal by reverting to their primordial operations. They seek to restore not just a prelapsarian world but the founding act of sovereignty that can make that world. Any such renewal is accompanied by eliminationist power.

Ultimately, microfascist culture is a *deathstyle*. It replaces life with abstractions, it flees life to reproduce it without women. These palingenetic and eliminationist processes make death-worlds and a life-destroying reality. The project of this book is to trace this deathstyle through gender, war, and sovereignty as well as point to some core elements of an anti-microfascism.