

Musset wrote the serious dramas *André del Sarto* (1833) and *Lorenzaccio* (1834). The latter has as its protagonist a fascinatingly ambiguous "stranger" or "outsider" with very modern qualities of mind.

Musset's brief tales include such stories as *Emmeline* (1837), *Frédéric et Bernerette* (1838), *Croisilles* (1839), *Histoire d'un merle blanc* (1842), *Mimi Pinson* (1843), and *Pierre et Camille* (1844). *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836) was Musset's famous autobiographical attempt to analyze the causes of the *mal du siècle* that affected the youth of France after the close of the Napoleonic Wars.

### Further Reading

There is a translation of *The Complete Writings of Alfred de Musset* by Andrew Lang and others (10 vols., 1907). In 1962 Peter Meyer published a translation of *Seven Plays of Musset*, containing *Marianne*, *Fantasio*, *Camille and Perdican*, *The Candlestick*, *A Diversion*, *A Door Must be Kept Open or Shut*, and *Journey to Gotha*. Biographies of Musset are Paul Edeme de Musset, *The Biography of Alfred de Musset* (trans. 1877); Henry Dwight Sedgwick, *Alfred de Musset, 1810-1857: A Biography* (1931); and Charlotte Haldane, *Alfred: The Passionate Life of Alfred de Musset* (1960). For Musset's drama see Herbert S. Gochberg, *Stage of Dreams: The Dramatic Art of Alfred de Musset, 1828-1834* (1967). □

## Benito Mussolini

The Italian dictator Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was head of the Italian government from 1922 to 1943. A Fascist dictator, he led Italy into three successive wars, the last of which overturned his regime.

Benito Mussolini was born at Dovia di Predappio in Forlì province on July 29, 1883. His father was a blacksmith and an ardent Socialist; his mother taught elementary school. His family belonged to the impoverished middle classes. Benito, with a sharp and lively intelligence, early demonstrated a powerful ego. Violent and undisciplined, he learned little at school. In 1901, at the age of 18, he took his *diploma di maestro* and then taught secondary school briefly. Voluntarily exiling himself to Switzerland (1902-1904), he formed a dilettante's culture notable only for its philistinism. Not surprisingly, Mussolini based it on Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel, and Max Stirner, on the advocates of force, will, and the superego. Culturally armed, Mussolini returned to Italy in 1904, rendered military service, and engaged in politics full time thereafter.

### Early Career and Politics

Mussolini became a member of the Socialist party in 1900, and his politics, like his culture, were exquisitely bohemian. He crossed anarchism with syndicalism, matched Peter Kropotkin and Louis Blanqui with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. More Nietzschean than Marxist,



Benito Mussolini (top, center)

Mussolini's socialism was *sui generis*, a concoction created entirely by himself. In Socialist circles, nonetheless, he first attracted attention, then applause, and soon widespread admiration. He "specialized" in attacking clericalism, militarism, and reformism. Mussolini urged revolution at any cost. In each attack he was extremist and violent. But he was also eloquent and forceful.

Mussolini occupied several provincial posts as editor and labor leader until he suddenly emerged in the 1912 Socialist Party Congress. Shattering all precedent, he became editor of the party's daily paper, *Avanti*, at a youthful 29. His editorial tenure during 1913-1914 abundantly confirmed his promise. He wrote a new journalism, pungent and polemical, hammered his readership, and injected a new excitement into Socialist ranks. On the Socialist platform, he spoke sharply and well, deft in phrase and savage in irony.

The young Mussolini proved a formidable opponent. In a party long inert, bureaucratic, and burdened with mediocrity, he capitalized on his youth, offered modernity with dynamism, and decried the need for revolution in a moment when revolutionary ferment was sweeping the country. An opportunist to his bones, Mussolini early mastered the direction of the winds and learned quickly to turn full sail into them.

## From Socialist to Fascist

This much-envied talent led Mussolini to desert the Socialist party in 1914 and to cross over to the enemy camp, the Italian bourgeoisie. He rightly understood that World War I would bury the old Europe. Upheaval would follow its wake. He determined to prepare for "the unknown." In late 1914 he founded an independent newspaper, *Popolo d'Italia*, and backed it up with his own independent movement (Autonomous Fascists). He drew close to the new forces in Italian politics, the radicalized middle-class youth, and made himself their national spokesman.

Mussolini developed a new program, substituting nationalism for internationalism, militarism for antimilitarism, and the aggressive restoration of the bourgeois state instead of its revolutionary destruction. He had thus completely reversed himself. The Italian working classes called him "Judas" and "traitor." Drafted into the trenches in 1915, Mussolini was wounded during training exercises in 1917, but he managed to return to active politics that same year. His newspaper, which he now reinforced with a second political movement (Revolutionary Fascists), was his main card; his talents and his reputation guaranteed him a hand in the game.

After the end of the war, Mussolini's career, so promising at the outset, slumped badly. He organized his third movement (Constituent Fascists) in 1918, but it was stillborn. Mussolini ran for office in the 1919 parliamentary elections but was defeated. Nonetheless, he persisted.

## Head of the Government

In March 1919 Mussolini founded another movement (Fighting Fascists), courted the militant Italian youth, and waited for events to favor him. The tide turned in 1921. The elections that year sent him victoriously to Parliament at the head of 35 Fascist deputies; the third assembly of his fledgling movement gave birth to a national party, the National Fascist party (PNF), with more than 250,000 followers and Mussolini as its uncontested leader, its *duce*.

The following year, in October 1922, Mussolini successfully "marched" on Rome. But, in fact, the back door to power had been opened by key ruling groups (industry try and agriculture, military, monarchy, and Church), whose support Mussolini now enjoyed. These groups, economically desperate and politically threatened, accepted Mussolini's solution to their crisis: mobilize middle-class youth, repress the workers violently, and set up a tough central government to restore "law and order." Accordingly, with the youth as his "flying wedge," Mussolini attacked the workers, spilled their blood liberally over the Italian peninsula, and completed triumphantly the betrayal of his early socialism. Without scruple or remorse, Mussolini now showed the extent to which ambition, opportunism, and utter amorality constituted his very core. He was in fact eminently a product of a particular crisis, World War I, and a special social class, the petty bourgeoisie. Mussolini's capture of power was classic: he was the right national leader at the right historical moment.

## Fascist State

Once in power, Mussolini attacked the problem of survival. With accomplished tact, he set general elections, violated their constitutional norms freely, and concluded them in 1924 with an absolute majority in Parliament. But the assassination immediately thereafter of the Socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti, a noted opponent, by Fascist hirelings suddenly reversed his fortunes, threw his regime into crisis, and nearly toppled him. Mussolini, however, recouped and with his pivotal speech of Jan. 3, 1925, took the offensive. He suppressed civil liberties, annihilated the opposition, and imposed open dictatorship. Between 1926 and 1929 Mussolini moved to consolidate his regime through the enactment of "the most Fascist laws" (*le leggi fascistissime*). He concluded the decade on a high note: his Concordat with the Vatican in 1929 settled the historic differences between the Italian state and the Roman Catholic Church. Awed by a generosity that multiplied his annual income fourfold, Pope Pius XI confirmed to the world that Mussolini had been sent "by Divine Providence."

As the 1930s opened, Mussolini, seated safely in power and enjoying wide support from the middle classes, undertook to shape his regime and fix its image. Italy, he announced, had commenced the epoch of the "Third Rome." The "Fascist Revolution," after the French original, would itself date civilized progress anew: 1922 became "Year I of the New Era"; 1932, Year X. The regime called itself the "Corporate State" and offered Italy a bewildering brood of institutions, all splendidly titled but sparsely endowed. For if the rhetoric impressed, the reality denied.

The strongest economic groups remained entrenched. They had put Mussolini into power, and they now reaped their fruits. While they accumulated unprecedented economic control and vast personal fortunes, while a class of nouveau riche attached itself to the regime and parasitically sucked the nation's blood, the living standard of the working majority fell to subsistence. The daily consumption of calories per capita placed Italy near the bottom among European nations; the average Italian worker's income amounted to one-half his French counterpart's, one-third his English, and one-fourth his American. As national leader, Mussolini offered neither solutions nor analyses for Italy's fundamental problems, preferring slogans to facts and propaganda to hard results. The face of the state he indeed refashioned; its substance he left intact. The "new order" was coating only.

Il Duce ruled from the top of this hollow pyramid. A consummate poseur, he approached government as a drama to be enacted, every scene an opportunity to display ample but superficial talents. Cynical and arrogant, he despised men in the same measure that he manipulated them. Without inspired or noble sentiments himself, he instinctively sought the defects in others, their weaknesses, and mastered the craft of corrupting them. He surrounded himself with ambitious opportunists and allowed full rein to their greed and to their other, unnameable vices while his secret agents compiled incriminating dossiers. Count Galeatto Ciano, his son-in-law and successor-designate, de-

fined Mussolini's entourage as "that coterie of old prostitutes." Such was Mussolini's "new governing class."

### Mussolini's Three Wars

In 1930 the worldwide economic depression arrived in Italy. The middle classes succumbed to discontent; the working people suffered aggravated misery. Mussolini initially reacted with a public works program but soon shifted to foreign adventure. The 1935 Ethiopian War, a classic diversionary exercise, was planned to direct attention away from internal discontent and to the myth of imperial grandeur. The "Italian Empire," Mussolini's creation, was announced in 1936. It pushed his star to new heights. But it also exacted its price. The man of destiny lost his balance, and with it that elementary talent that measures real against acclaimed success. No ruler confuses the two and remains in power long. Mussolini thus began his precipitous slide.

The 1936 Spanish intervention, in which Mussolini aided Francisco Franco in the Civil War, followed hard on Ethiopia but returned none of its anticipated gains. Mussolini compounded this error with a headlong rush into Adolf Hitler's embrace. The Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936 and the Tripartite Pact in 1937 were succeeded by the ill-fated Steel Pact in 1939. Meanwhile, Mussolini's pro-Hitlerism struck internally. Having declared earlier that the racial problem did not exist for Italy, Mussolini in 1938 unleashed his own anti-Semitic blows against Italian Jewry. As the 1930s closed, Mussolini had nearly exhausted all toleration for himself and his regime within Italy.

World War II's surprise outbreak in 1939 left Mussolini standing on the margins of world politics, and he saw Hitler redrawing the map of Europe without him. Impelled by the prospect of easy victory, Mussolini determined "to make war at any cost." The cost was clear: modern industry, modern armies, and popular support. Mussolini unfortunately lacked all of these. Nonetheless, in 1940 he pushed a reluctant Italy into war on Hitler's side. He thus ignored the only meaningful lesson of World War I: the United States alone had decided that conflict, and consequently America, not Germany, was the key hegemonic power.

### Disaster and Death

In 1940-1941 Mussolini's armies, badly supplied and impossibly led, strung their defeats from Europe across the Mediterranean to the African continent. These defeats constituted the full measure of Mussolini's bankruptcy. Italy lost its war in 1942; Mussolini collapsed 6 months later. Restored as Hitler's puppet in northern Italy in 1943, he drove Italy deeper into the tragedy of invasion, occupation, and civil war during 1944-1945. The end approached, but Mussolini struggled vainly to survive, unwilling to pay the price for folly. The debt was discharged by a partisan firing squad on April 28, 1945, at Dongo in Como province.

In the end Mussolini failed where he had believed himself most successful: he was not a modern statesman. His politics and culture had been formed before World War I, and they had remained rooted there. After that war, though land empire had become ossified and increasingly superfluous, Mussolini had embarked on territorial expansion

in the grand manner. In a moment when the European nation-state had passed its apogee and entered decline (the economic depression had underscored it), Mussolini had pursued ultranationalism abroad and an iron state within. He had never grasped the lines of the new world already emerging. He had gone to war for more territory and greater influence when he needed new markets and more capital. Tied to a decaying world about to disappear forever, Mussolini was anachronistic, a man of the past, not the future. His Fascist slogan served as his own epitaph: *Non si torna indietro* (There is no turning back). A 19th-century statesman could not survive long in the 20th-century world, and history swept him brutally but rightly aside.

### Further Reading

Mussolini wrote *My Autobiography* (1928; rev. ed. 1939) and *The Fall of Mussolini: His Own Story*, edited with a preface by Max Ascoli (trans. 1948). Most of the studies of Mussolini in English are either archaic and sterile or anecdotal and useless. A comprehensive, objective, and well-written biography is Ivone Kirkpatrick, *Mussolini: A Study in Power* (1964). Frederick W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship* (1962; rev. ed. 1966), offers valid, original scholarship but unfortunately treats only Mussolini's last years. Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (1970), is a well-documented study of Mussolini during the 1920s. Works on the history of fascism in Italy include Frederico Chabod, *A History of Italian Fascism* (1961; trans. 1963), and Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Fascism in Italy: Its Development and Influence* (1969). Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (1963; trans. 1965), discusses the theory and the history of the movement in Italy, France, and Germany. For pertinent documents of the Fascist era in Italy and a brief study of the period see S. William Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (1964). For general background see Denis Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History* (1959). □

## Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (1839-1881) is generally acclaimed the finest of the group of Russian composers known as the Mighty Five.

Without Modest Mussorgsky the notion of the Russian 19th century as one of musical realism would be unsupportable. In his operas, especially *Boris Godunov*, he successfully explored human emotions and failings individually and collectively in a new and forthright manner singularly bereft of the pretensions and emotional excess of the 19th century. His operatic work marks a crossroads in the understanding and use of the form in music history.

Mussorgsky was born on March 9, 1839, in the village of Karevo in the Pskov district. His family was of the middle landed gentry, which placed them high above the serfs, although Mussorgsky had some serf blood. His cultured mother gave him piano lessons and encouraged his clumsy but early efforts at composition. At 10 he went to St. Peters-

burg to study piano with Anton Herke, to prepare for cadet school, and to be tutored in the ways of a young urban gentleman. He entered the Imperial Guards Cadet School in 1852 and, in the course of the year, published (at his family's expense) *Porte Enseigne Polka* for his classmates. His lessons with Herke continued until 1854. Mussorgsky joined the glittering Preobrazhensky Imperial Guards Regiment in 1856.

As a teen-age officer, Mussorgsky met, while on duty, Aleksandr Borodin, a medical officer. The two were not to come together as members of the Mighty Five for some few years, but Borodin remembered Mussorgsky as a smart, dapper, well-mannered, slightly French and slightly foppish youth who played the piano coquettishly at parties, eliciting cries of "charmant!" and "delicieux!" from the assembled young women.

The years brought considerable change in that image. In 1859 Mussorgsky met Aleksandr Dargomyzhsky, who introduced him to César Cui, also a military officer, and to Mily Balakirev, later the leader of the Mighty Five. In late 1857 and 1858 Mussorgsky went through the first of several emotional crises and resigned from the Guards in 1859. That same year he spoke to Balakirev of having been "reborn," not only in the sense of recovery from his nervous disorder but in his conversion, he said, from cosmopolitan to patriot. The thinking of the music and art critic Vladimir Stasov is reflected here, but more particularly that of the Russian social critics Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov. Among these new friends, Mussorgsky was writing music with some seriousness. In 1860 his *Scherzo in B-flat* for



orchestra was performed in St. Petersburg. In 1861 Mussorgsky's financial base was destroyed: the emancipation of the serfs led to the liquidation, over a 2-year period, of the family estate.

In the early 1860s Mussorgsky felt musically dependent on, but fretted under, Balakirev and was close to Dargomyzhsky. Mussorgsky had established certain work patterns: he started something new with great enthusiasm only to bog down in self-doubt, insecure in his technical abilities. Three projected operas were among such works. Mussorgsky did not associate with the other members of the Balakirev circle but with "proletarian" friends in a communal setting. In 1863 he began work on the opera *Salambo* (from Gustave Flaubert's novel). Although he did not finish it, music from this opera figured in later work, most importantly in *Boris Godunov*. He left another opera, *The Marriage* (1864-1868), unfinished; Cherepnin completed the work in 1909.

By 1869 Mussorgsky had abandoned his communal style of living and reentered government service, in the Forestry Department. He was already a serious alcoholic with epileptic tendencies. Though he was a nominal member of the Mighty Five (the term, literally the "Mighty Fist," was used by Stasov in 1867), his life style set him apart from the others. Indeed, he often denied vehemently his belonging, creatively, to any group.

From a suggestion by Stasov, but developing his own ideas and preparing his own libretto from texts by Aleksandr Pushkin and Nicolai Karamzin, Mussorgsky set to work on *Boris Godunov* in 1868. The first version was finished in 1869; that date was but the beginning of a fitful series of redrawings of music and scenario by Mussorgsky and others which has probably not even yet ended. He returned to it in 1871 and again in 1872 but was lured away by, among other things, the joint effort at an opera, *Mlada*, by himself, Borodin, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Cui. The collective effort was abortive, but all used music from it for other works. In 1872 Mussorgsky also started *Khovanshchina*, an opera based on another Russian historical episode. This, too, was unfinished, but enough was done to establish it as one of his major works. He worked on *Khovanshchina* and another opera, *Sorochinsk Fair* (finished by Liadov and Karatygin), until 1880. The period 1871-1881 also saw the piano tribute to artist-architect Viktor Hartmann, *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874; orchestrated by various composers, including Maurice Ravel in 1922), *The Songs and Dances of Death* (1875), and a number of other works, making this, though his last, his most productive decade.

The Mighty Five had begun to disintegrate as a circle after 1872, and Mussorgsky's health was worsening. Near the end of his life he toured with the singer Daria Leonova. He died, more or less in her care, on March 16, 1881, in St. Petersburg.

### "Boris Godunov"

Musically one turns again and again to *Boris Godunov* to reveal what Mussorgsky was and what he wanted. The work is intensely, intimately vocal. And, although he wrote effectively for orchestra, the voice was the instrument he