Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy

This book investigates the establishment, evolution, and international links of the extreme right in one of the main Western European areas since 1945. Andrea Mammone details the long journey in the development of this political and cultural phenomenon in France and Italy, tracing the exchanges and the similarities among neofascist movements and thinkers across national borders from 1945 to the present day. Mammone analyzes the adaptation of neofascism in society and politics, the attempts to build international associations and pan-national networks, and its responses to the defeat of fascism, the Cold War, European integration, decolonization, immigration, and EU-led austerity politics.

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Ai sorrisi di Mariangela e di nonna Rosina

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Preface

To find any sense in life it was pointless to search in
the places where people were instructed to look.
Sense was only to be found in secrets.

John Berger, "Here is where we meet"

Pour trouver un quelconque sens à la vie,
il était vain de chercher là où on nous disait de le faire.
On ne pouvait trouver du sens que dans les secrets.

John Berger, "D'ici là"

Se si vuole trovare un qualche senso nella vita
è inutile cercare nei posti dove ti dicono di guardare.
Il senso lo si può trovare solo nei segreti.

John Berger, "Qui, dove ci incontriamo"

Walking across Paris is an extraordinary experience and an irresistible temptation to avoid locking oneself up in a library. Springtime is especially fascinating and intriguingly romantic, even beautifully melancholic. This French universe appears full of veritable discoveries: from the Jardin du Luxembourg to the Centre Georges Pompidou, and from Parc de Belleville to Saint-Germain-des-Prés – these all portray a glimpse of the finest European architecture and culture, with a typical Francophone taste. But even Paris cannot be taken alone and decontextualized. Europe, its people, cultures, and many of its histories, are much closer and more tied together than had previously been thought. As the Dutch journalist and writer Geert Mak magnificently pointed out after his "journeys" across the old continent: "Berlin can never been understood without Versailles,

nor London without Munich, Vichy without Verdun, Moscow without Stalingrad, Boon without Dresden, Vásárosbéc without Yalta."[1]

Europe then has always been a world full of discoveries and the starting point of further explorations. Indeed, at one point during the research for *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, I felt like a little Cristoforo Colombo – although much less famous than my worldwide-known compatriot, and probably less happy-go-lucky than contemporary tourists visiting the *Ville-Lumière* (as they are not usually committed to go through archival catalogs). My own modest voyage of discovery in such a lovely city, often at the center of this interconnected European world, was in those rather modern *bâtiments* hosting the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. After years of working on the French and Italian extreme right, I accidentally came across a seemingly unimportant essay that had been published in one of the main neofascist periodicals in postwar Europe, *Défense de l'Occident*, on the fin-de-siècle Italian writer Alfredo Oriani (1852–1909), an author appropriated by Benito Mussolini's circles and included in the pantheon of his *fascismo*. The article apparently had no relevance to my main interests, namely, the transnational links, similarities, and the cultural and political transfer between French and Italian right-wing thinkers, activists, and movements. The author of the piece was Pascal Gauchon, at the time a twenty-four-year-old contributor to the journal and, later, strongly involved in some of the French right-leaning groups that were also looking at Italy as their major role model. He opened his article as follows:

> Italy and France live according to the same political rhythm. We have brought this evidence to light a number of times in *Défense de l'Occident*, evidence that deserves to be extended beyond historical realities, to a study of ideology. Revolutionary Italian union activists imitate their French counterparts. The thinkers behind Alleanza Nazionalista are the natural heirs of AF [Action Française], whether they intend it or not. It is no surprise to see that of the thinkers that most influenced Mussolini, we find three French figures like Bergson, Maurras, Sorel. We are not only talking about a simple level of influence here: there are also many similarities in life and style between Barrès and D'Annunzio, as there were with Doriot and Mussolini, Mazzini and the revolutionaries of 1848. ... To summarize, nationalist ideology was created and developed in parallel in the two countries.[2]

[1] Geert Mak, *Europe: Travels through the Twentieth Century* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. XVI.

[2] Pascal Gauchon, "Alfredo Oriani, précurseur du 'fascisme,'" *Défense de l'Occident*, 118, 1974, pp. 10–11.

A little difference was in the impact of the Action Française's thinkers on early nationalism, an influence that, perhaps, could not find, Gauchon continues, an exact Italian counterpart. According to the French writer, this explains why, after the First World War, political ideologies developed more distinctly in Italy than in France: "in fact it was Italy that served as a model, and it would be the French thinkers who would seek their source of inspiration from these [Italian] fascist writers."[3] All this is hardly surprising. Historically, well before Napoleon, these neighboring countries experienced a long history of exchanges, mutual cultural influences, and transborder links. In fact, these links and the cross-fascination existed before the establishment of Italy's nation-state – when it was often a land geopolitically unified only in some literary landscapes of foreign travelers such as Alexandre Dumas and Stendhal.[4] Gauchon's statement was, nonetheless, at least for me, a sort of bolt from the blue: It was a near perfect synthesis of my own evolving methodological approach and even an excellent (potential) abstract for a book. It captured some of the key theoretical themes that I had been developing regarding the role of transnationalism in the development of recent Europe, the evolution of the extreme right, and the proximity of these two nations.

This neofascist writer was then wholly truthful: Italy and France in the interwar years had, in fact, an incredible number of ties. Extreme-right history experienced the borrowing of some relevant Italian fascist events by activists in France and of French fascistic intellectuals by like-minded fellows in Italy. It is true that there had been notable patterns of transnational associations and a transmission of doctrines and strategies across the Alps since (and even before) the First World War: from Tommaso Marinetti to Georges Sorel, from Charles Maurras's Açtion Francaise and Georges Valois's Faisceau to the March on Rome, from Benito Mussolini to the fascist leagues of Marcel Bucard and Jacques Doriot, and from the Italian Fasci in France to the newspaper *Je suis partout*. However, there was even more than this. A shared Franco-Italian nationalist space, and life, was also made by a web of artists, art critics, and modern aesthetics – all often strongly tied up with extreme-right politics and ideology. Given such a fruitful context, some scholars have pertinently

[3] Ibid.

[4] "In France alone 1,700 travel journals were written about Italy in the nineteenth century. Many of these books contributed to characterisation of Italian typologies even before a national identity had been elaborated." Paolo Varvaro, "European travellers in Italy," *European Review of History–Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, **4**(2), 1997, p. 165.

suggested that "the common premises of fascist thought in France and Italy led to the development of shared ideological and cultural precepts; and these principles were often expressed and promoted by figures who maintained links with both countries."[5]

This cross-fertilization developed well beyond the fin-de-siècle and the interwar years. At the edge of the Second World War, which was to change Europe, Robert Brasillach, in a melancholic but imaginative frame of mind, envisioned that France and Italy would "meet" again after warfare. He summarized this feeling with a simple *Au revoir, Italie*.[6] In hindsight, he was right about this: Extreme-right France and Italy would find one another again, although Brasillach, of course, did not experience this new encounter himself. This war collaborationist, well-known intellectual, and literary critic, who labeled fascist Italy the "eternal country" and praised the Italian Duce, was executed for treason on February 6, 1945. He, nonetheless, represented an epitome of the fascist transnationalism with a life and an intellectual trajectory that "paralleled that of a generation of European youth caught up in the vision of a new type of man, *homo fascista*."[7] Admiration of Brasillach circulated widely among right-wingers over the postwar years, and Italian neofascists often paid tribute to him and also commemorated his figure.[8]

My own "discovery" of Gauchon was therefore very apt, for he fairly assumed the existence of a "same political rhythm" shared by France and Italy. These were, according to the neofascist press of the 1950s, two "sister" Latin nations, with the same "torments" and "fate."[9] For a long part of the postwar period, they really had a parallel destiny: a Catholic

[5] Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff, "Art and Fascist Ideology in France and Italy: An Introduction," in M. Affron and M. Antliff, eds., Fascist *Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 3.

[6] Robert Brasillach, "Au revoir, Italie," *Je suis partout*, May 26, 1939, pp. 1 and 3.

[7] William M. Tucker, "Politics and Aesthetics: The Fascism of Robert Brasillach," *Western Political Quarterly*, 15(4), 1962, p. 605.

[8] Ibid. On September 21, 1985, for example, the important neofascist newspaper *Il Secolo d'Italia* discussed the republication (in Italian) of a "quality work" such as Jean Madiran's book on Brasillach and interviewed the author. This work first appeared in France under the title *Brasillach* and was published by the Club du Luxembourg in 1958. "Jean Madiran" is one of the pen names of Jean Arfel. This latter was a nationalist and extremist journalist closely involved with the mentioned *Action Française* and very close to the leader Charles Maurras during the interwar years. He then backed a number of extreme-right movements and was among the founders of the daily *Présent* in 1982, a publication close to the Front National.

[9] "'Purtroppo la Francia mancava.' Commento di 'Rivarol' al congresso del MSI," *Meridiano d'Italia*, 9(30), January 24, 1954, p. 4.

culture with some effects on their sociopolitical life, a strong polarization between opposing symbolic (ideological) universes, the presence of the strongest communist parties in Western Europe, and a low degree of political alternation in power (with the exclusion of communist forces).[10] Nonetheless, as suggested before, this shared history and ground was especially true for the extreme-right ideology, developments, and forces in the twentieth century.

Politically and historically, France is indeed deemed to be the nation with the ideal-type of a contemporary right-wing extremist party, the Front National (National Front, FN) and its longtime leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, and now successfully (also from an electoral standpoint) led by his daughter, Marine. However, *the hexagone*, long before the arrival of the FN, has always been a land where extreme-right and proto-fascist "ferments" were lively.[11] Moreover, culturally and ideologically, the country produced noteworthy postwar intellectuals and schools of thought. For example, since the 1970s, the powerful, and truly transnational, group the Nouvelle Droite (New Right, ND), led by Alain de Benoist, influenced right-wing thinking well beyond France and outside the usual extremist fringes (an Italian permutation was, for instance, immediately formed after a meeting in Paris). Italy represents the other excellent reference point in Europe. Historically this *penisola* is the land that experienced the invention of the word "fascismo" and the twenty years of the fascist regime, then the advent of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (Italian Social Republic, RSI – also known as the Salò Republic), and, subsequently, the birth of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement, MSI) in 1946.[12] Politically, it may be seen as the vanguard of right-wing extremism (at least in its electoral version) in

[10] Isabelle Sommier, *La violence politique et son deuil: L'après 68 en France et en Italie* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998), pp. 23–24.

[11] Scholars such as Zeev Sternhell have even claimed that fascist ideology had some French roots, or at least that many ideals, later found in Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, first and foremost appeared in France. See Zeev Sternhell (with M. Sznajder and M. Asheri), *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Zeev Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire (1885–1914); Les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1983); Zeev Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme française* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972).

[12] Interestingly, the MSI, despite its isolation, and its anomalous position within the framework of a republic based on an anti-fascist constitution, managed to maintain visibility in the political system. As rightly suggested, the party was paradoxically "neo-fascist by identity" and "democratic from necessity." Roberto Chiarini, "Anti-Zionism and the Italian Extreme Right," *Modern Italy*, 13(1), 2008, p. 22.

Western European societies for roughly forty years. The MSI was a magnet for similar foreign groups, cultivating links with many of these groups along with authoritarian regimes across Europe. French neofascists undoubtedly perceived it as a "great party," the most important one among all the groups that, in their own words, "consider themselves the successors of a politics crushed in 1945."[13]

It will be shown how extreme-right movements in this significant European region built, since the interwar years, a wider network of exchanges. This friendship will be "confirmed" and very often renewed by the same protagonists of my story. The influential intellectual of the ND, de Benoist, for example, wrote at the edge of the past century: "No matter what we do or say, among other Europeans, the closest to us French and those we get on with most easily are the Italians."[14]

Some years ago, a French journalist, Frédéric Charpier, similarly remembered this connective framework linking neofascist France to its neighboring nation:

> The links between the French between the French and the Italian extreme right are old. They hark back to the Mussolinian era, to the role of Italy's secret agencies with their funding and armament of the Cagoule, the PPF [Parti Populaire Français, led by Doriot], and the [Bucard's] Parti franciste. These links were renewed after the war at the 1951 Malmö congress, where the MSI build a European alliance with some French, Belgian, and Swedish groups. At the moment of the Algerian war, these ties were strengthened, whether it was for a direct support to the OAS [Organisation Armée Secrète] or the connections between the Italian and French student organizations. The majority of [foreign] movements, in fact, sent their activists to attend the summer schools organized by the FEN [Fédération des Étudiants Nationalistes].[15]

What is probably surprising, however, is the fact that although French neofascists, as well as their intellectual and political newspapers and publications, were ready to accept and admit the proximity of France and Italy, much of the (mainly French) academic literature was reluctant to develop such paradigms. Consequently, neofascist sources became, from my own perspective, excellent portrait painters of the transnational framework; this is also one of the reasons why readers will find in these

[13] Fabrice Laroche, "Le M.S.I.: des origines à nos jours," *Europe Action*, 11, 1963, p. 20. Fabrice Laroche is known to be a pseudonym used by the mentioned Alain de Benoist.
[14] Alain de Benoist, *Dèrnière Année: Notes pour conclure le siècle* (Paris: L'Âge d'Homme, 2001), p. 73.
[15] Frédéric Charpier, *Génération Occident: De l'extrême droite à la droite* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), p. 212.

pages my commentaries and analyses of some historical processes and facts, but also what the same protagonists were writing at the time, often while looking at each other.

Is this another case of French-based *exceptionalisme*? The situation was certainly aggravated with the first electoral successes of Le Pen's Front National in the 1980s, followed over the years by other electoral achievements of similar parties across nations. This caused consternation in many sectors of European civil society, public opinion, the mass media, and academia. The sight of an extremist party gaining votes and popular credibility took many commentators by surprise and caused considerable confusion among those attempting to analyze it in the initial stages. What were the reasons behind the FN's success? Why in France? How was the FN to be classified in terms of European political history? I shall return to some of these questions later.

Italian scholars were probably less narrow, but, with very few exceptions, similarly less interested in analyzing the transborder stances and international dimensions of the postwar right. More generally, only a few of them were interested in the history of the MSI itself. Studies of this political phenomenon started quite late, mostly when the party had transformed itself and entered in a governmental coalition – and roughly the same can be said for works in the English language. Continuing interest in the fascist regime had probably diverted most scholarly attention toward the interwar phase of Mussolini's galaxy. This is bizarre because Italian neofascism (taken as a whole and not confining this universe to the MSI) often had a kind of "international aspiration" that has been overlooked by academics for a considerable number of years. This internationalism was mutually linked with the Italian neofascists' actual impact and influence on foreign like-minded movements and its attempts to build or participate in international blackshirt associations (such as the European Social Movement and the Euroright, which will also be discussed). Moreover, some Italian historians have recently pointed in the direction of another almost neglected dimension: this domestic right-wing extremism often had a fascination with some overseas thinkers and borrowed some nonnational authors and references.[16]

[16] This was, in reality, also made for some very practical reasons: It was to avoid any contamination with the prevailing antifascist national culture – and, I would add, it was a way to react against the military defeat of local fascism and its post-1945 "burdens" in terms of blame or shame. See Francesco Germinario, *Da Salò al governo: Immaginario e cultura politica della destra italiana* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005), pp. 31–35.

Transnational Neofascism goes in a very different direction than much of this published literature on the postwar extreme right in Europe and on the extreme/radical/far right in general. First, it takes "history" very seriously. It covers, for example, a historical period from the end of the Second World War up to the late 1970s/early 1980s, which a number of other books – mostly written by political scientists, and only with some few exceptions – usually overlook.[17] This is somewhat curious, although to a certain extent understandable given the different approaches (and aims) of the various academic disciplines. On the other hand, the wrong belief that nothing relevant happened in the first postwar decades prevailed. These years are, in fact, often perceived like a sort of crossing of the desert, while the extreme-right saga started only with the first electoral successes of the FN. Yet the long postwar period is truly fundamental to understanding the evolution of the contemporary parties (and their ideology), particularly regarding the development of that cross-national web that is so relevant today. Second, my work has the ambition to widen the scholar's "lens of investigation" on this subject. The analysis encompasses political cultures, as well as party politics, looking at both the organizational and the intellectual dimensions of the extreme right. In doing so, it additionally goes beyond the usual well-known movements: The book certainly covers their stories but also narrates the trajectories of little groups and how they disappear or migrate in other political containers. It describes the influence of (important) thinkers such as Maurice Bardèche and Julius Evola but also how less renowned bulletins, and activists, operated like transnational vectors or (ideological and organizational) transmission belts from a decade to the other or from a country to its neighbor. I understand that other social scientists might be slightly worried by all this: What are the reasons and aims to (also) study some obscure groups and almost unknown extreme-right personnel? What is their actual impact? The answer is that obviously they all contributed to the making of this bigger neofascist "whole," including the most recent one, and, consequently, they help to clarify some of its inner dimensions and worldviews. Moreover, although radical, or – at least in some cases – marginal, we are not

[17] As suggested, there are a number of exceptions including David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London: Pimlico, 2003) among others, but not many monographs take a long-term historical perspective, and none of them, to my knowledge, look at the transnational exchanges.

dealing here with a fringe phenomenon, but rather one at the center of European politics. More recently, the extreme right has influenced mainstream policies on immigration as well as ethnic relations in many countries. Studying this – and also in a historical perspective, considering the strong impact of some movements (like the MSI), ideals, and events (like colonization, among others) on contemporary phenomena and looking at the transnational interactions – is therefore essential to understanding the functioning of the contemporary western world and to (implicitly) contribute to the ongoing discussion on very popular concepts such as heritage and belonging, cosmopolitanism and national identity, multiculturalism and migration.

What seems to be peripheral might have deeper outcomes or influences than immediately expected. The extreme-right ideal of an uncontaminated and mythical Europe is one of the various examples here: It is still a relatively neglected page in the history books. In July 2011, after the tragic events in Norway, the extreme-right "terrorist" admitted that he acted to save Europe from multiculturalism and that he was part of a wider pan-European network. All this generated surprise in the media and among the general public. Was the extreme right only indissolubly linked to the preservation of its own nation and citizens? How can we then explain such references to "Europe?" How may some activists believe in the value of a pan-nationalism? *Transnational Neofascism* attempts to cover this ground. It shows the birth of this Euro-nationalist thinking in the 1950s and how it was also developed by some "obscure" and "fringe" streams; at the same time, it highlights the extreme right's efforts to balance national interests with a transnational, or even pan-European, agenda. Some of these cultures have remained and might clearly be seen in today's right-leaning variegated networks (from parties to marginal activists, and from music to the internet). History, in this sense, matters a lot, and it can elucidate contemporary processes.[18] In other words, even some of the apparent "little stories" narrated in the following pages fostered the modern transnational exchanges and the existence of a right-wing brotherhood that is still active today, and not only at the EU parliament level. On the other hand, nothing should, in theory, even stop us from studying fringe movements: This is also a book, as implicitly suggested before,

[18] See Andrea Mammone, "A Lesson That European History Can Teach Us," *The Independent*, July 25, 2011, p. 4.

on the adaptation of neofascism to the changing times and European contexts, and all discussed movements and people are part of this wider story.

Most interestingly, at least from a historiographical perspective, I attempt to build a somewhat innovative method for the study of the extreme right and European political history at large. I use the current case studies – despite their alleged centrality or marginality – as a methodological platform that may also hopefully generate new research frames and further writing tools for other scholarly explorers. In this specific case, the book adopts a transnational and historical analytical framework to show the porosity of geographical borders along with some of the mentioned broader, often neglected, extreme-right dimensions. This "transnational history" seems to me the only frame able to identify and examine some of the key processes of cross-fertilization and the circulation of extremist doctrines, strategies, and personnel across state borders, as well as a commonality of behaviors between neofascist France and Italy.

Readers will discover that politicians in one nation were, for example, well aware of the ultra-rightist political and intellectual developments taking place in the other, neighboring, nation, but, more generally, how the same people were, for example, aware of developments brought by more mainstream "nationalist" politicians, such as Charles de Gaulle, and by events and facts that were happening across the Franco-Italian border. Indeed, events in other countries mattered, as international politics were in play. The Algerian decolonization will be a significant example: Italian neofascists became involved with a foreign politics issue rather than with a strictly extreme-right one. By looking at the colonization process, the story narrated in these pages also crosses the boundaries of Europe's territorial landscape. In other words, this work takes a transregional stance by relating what was perceived as a narrow right-wing "localism" with a more global sphere.

In this sense, I might have certainly have included other international events, such as the rise of right-wing authoritarian regimes and leaders in Latin America, the impact and reactions to the policies of Soviet Russia in foreign nations, the Greek Colonels, and even the season of anti-communism in the United States among others, and have eventually highlighted how the French and Italian extreme right looked at them or if there was any of their "transnational" involvement in some of those processes. However, this monograph faces the usual inevitable limitations of spaces that force a selectivity of themes to be covered. Moreover,

this could have affected the shape and narrative of existing sections and distracted readers from some of the book's aims. On the other hand, I accept that, in some cases, the intercontinental and global dimensions have an appropriate significance. This is what Federico Finchelstein has superbly done in his work on "transatlantic fascism," offering a global vision of the interwar extreme right in Argentina and Italy and the transnational reformulations of fascist ideology in different places – work that has further confirmed some of my beliefs.[19]

To summarize, a new and different way of looking at the extreme right will also fascinatingly show that, basically, even what is generally perceived as a narrow nationalism can take a non-national dimension and redeploys at a supranational or international level (even if the main feeling of blackshirted comradeship was almost always with their right-wing fellows and with their political and ideological projects). As suggested, looking at France and Italy offers some novel and clear gateways for research and historical investigations. Intriguingly, French neofascists very often shaped their own world visions according to events occurring in Italy, and Italians did the same on their part (and the outlook might have been really extended to other nations, and some of them are, at times, mentioned). The influence worked, in fact, both ways, sometimes with the prominence of a country, at other times with the impact of the other, while in some cases with an almost equal fertilization. The following pages explore these processes in detail. In doing so, I implicitly challenge, as also mentioned before, any assumption of the exceptionality of French and Italian history, as well as those who refer to a "special (domestic) path" followed by the nationalist extreme right. This is, nevertheless, not simply a challenge or criticism of extreme right-wing studies. Indeed, I prefer not to position myself into any nebulous literature or academic school of thought – albeit I take an evident strong stance in favor of "trasnationalism." The problem, as I see it, is wider: It is the overall lack of studies aiming to consider some European political movements as units of a much larger geopolitical, and cultural, space. This is often, I suspect, for issues of language proficiency, time, and funding. My work has, instead, other goals – some empirical, historiographical, and methodological ones. The belief is that the permeability of Europe should not be relegated just to a consideration of the European integration and its common market. In such a context, this monograph

[19] See Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

hopefully aims to represent a new contribution to the "transnational history of Europe." Through discussion of postwar fascism, it further shows, in fact, the richness of Europe as a whole, its interconnected history and the porosity of its politics, cultures, and spaces.

The book therefore highlights the most salient cases of transmission of political ideals and their similarities, looking at the resurgence of the extreme right after the war, the various patterns of radicalization and pan-Europeanism, the extreme right's reorganization in the Cold War years, the establishment of international associations, the fascination with French Algeria across the Alps, the impact and the aftermath of 1968 on neofascism, the attempts to escape political and cultural marginalization, and the borrowing of a transnational xenophobia in recent years (along with the response to the austerity politics and anti–financial markets and anti-European Union discourse).

All this also implicitly reminds us that this monograph is placed into a transnational narrative. This means that the story frequently jumps from one case to another, from one source to another, from France to Italy, and vice versa, and the attention is brought to all the connective issues: how events, values, movements, and people were linked, perceived, and covered across nations. Like in a sport competition spectators will follow the ball ("history") moving quickly from one side to the other.

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This somewhat transnational life is reflected in the book, its genesis, and its theoretical frame: If, like countless other people, I was travelling across nations, and I had social, cultural, human, and intellectual links in

different countries, was it possible that some of the protagonists of these pages had a similar cross-national outlook? This also means that the book has also moved substantially from the doctoral dissertation. This led to extensive additional research in France and Italy, in order to find further evidence of lives, ideals, and politics "in between" European nations. I naturally need to thank the personnel of a number of libraries and archives for their often invaluable help with my research. I specifically refer here to the Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina (Rome), Archivio Centrale di Stato (Rome), Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire (Strasbourg), Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (Nanterre), Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (Florence), Fondazione Ugo Spirito (Rome), Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea (Rome), and Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris). The Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina also kindly offered one of the pictures for this book. I wish to thank all who hosted me in some of the mentioned places or simply offered me their support of the topic I was researching. It would be impossible to mention all of them, but my gratitude goes to all of them (as it goes to my other lifelong friends) who made my existence, in Rota Greca, Mongiana, Siena, New York, Florence, Rome, Strasbourg, Paris, London, and Paola, a much better one.

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the spectrum. It was the perfect theoretical frame for my own goals. It was transnational history. I could also claim to be a transnational historian then.

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Some parts of the chapters were previously published (usually in very a different format) in *Contemporary European History* (2008), *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (2009), and *Patterns of Prejudice* (2011), while some very sporadic sentences and intellectual elaborations appeared in some of my articles for various media outlets. I would like to thank the editors (and publishing houses) of the aforementioned

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Abbreviations

AEMN	European Alliance of National Movements
AN	Alleanza Nazionale
ARLP	Alliance Républicaine pour les Libertés et Progrès
DC	Democrazia Cristiana
DN	Destra Nazionale (see also MSI-DN)
EA	Europe-Action
EU	European Union
FANE	Fédération d'Action National et Européenne
FDJ	Front de la Jeunesse
FEN	Fédération des Étudiants Nationalistes
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FN	Front National
FUAN	Fronte Universitario d'Azione Nazionale
GRECE	Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne
GUD	Groupe Union Droit/Groupe d'Union et de Défense
IND	Nuova Destra
JN	Jeune Nation
LN	Lega Nord
MNP	Mouvement Nationaliste du Progrès
MPF	Mouvement Populaire Français
MSE	Mouvement Social Européen
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
MSI-DN	Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale
ND	Nouvelle Droite
NOE	Nouvel Ordre Européen
OAS	Organisation Armée Secrète
ON	Ordine Nuovo
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano

PDL	Popolo della Libertà
PFN	Parti des Forces Nouvelles
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
REL	Rassemblement Européen de la Liberté
RSI	Repubblica Sociale Italiana
UDCA	Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans
UNIR	Union des Nationaux Indépendants et Républicains
UQ	Uomo Qualunque