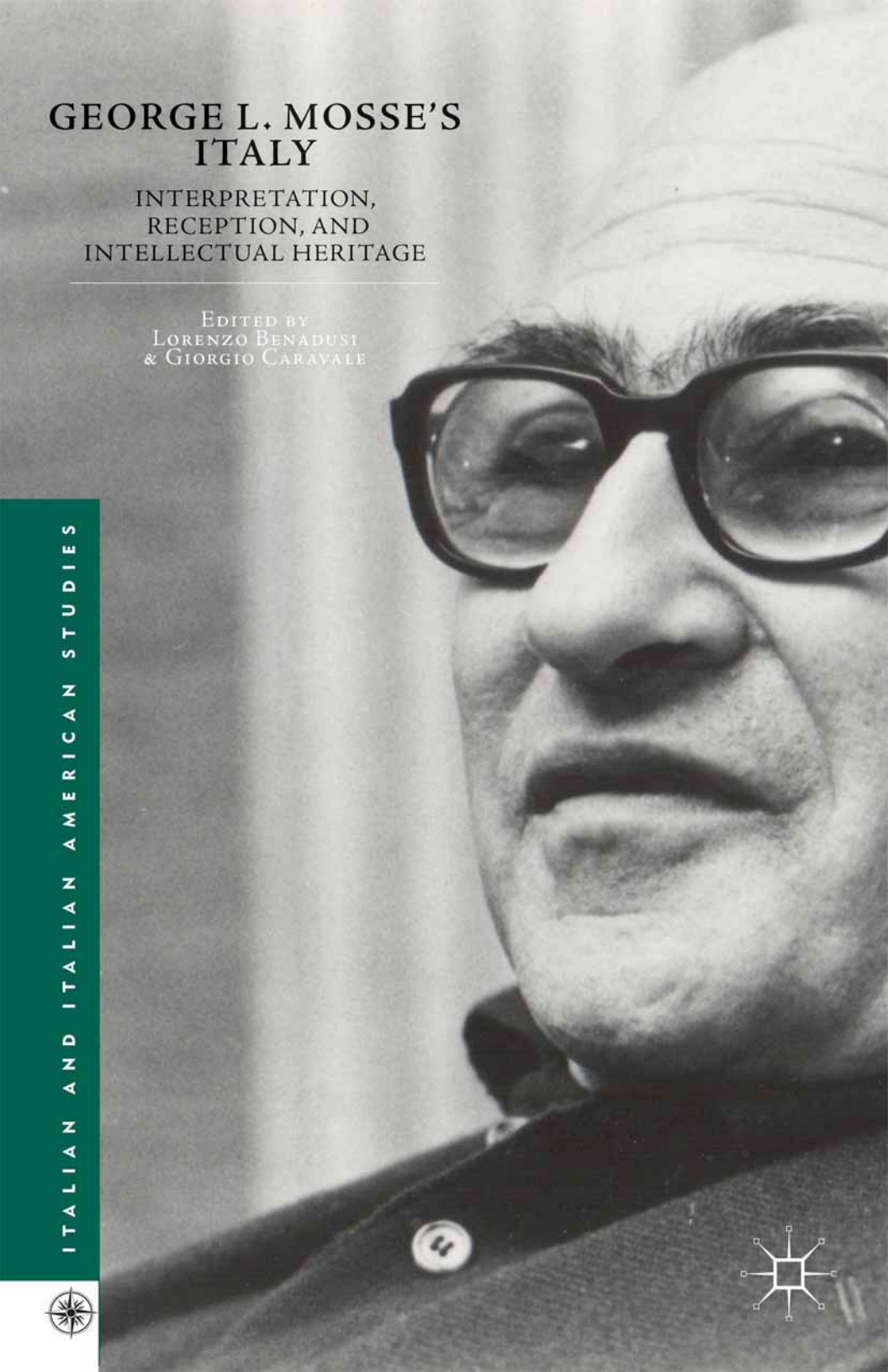
GEORGE L. MOSSE'S ITALY

INTERPRETATION, RECEPTION, AND INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE

Edited by
Lorenzo Benadusi
& Giorgio Caravale



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1

Introduction

Lorenzo Benadusi and Giorgio Caravale

Rome–Madison, Round Trip, August 2007

Madison is a small city in Wisconsin, in the heart of the American Midwest, halfway between Chicago and Minneapolis. Life there in the summertime moves at a tranquil pace; with the departure of the regular students from the university area, the remaining inhabitants circulate by bicycle along the tree-lined streets, stroll leisurely on trails that crisscross the many parks, or find relief from the heat at one of the city's lakes. It was not, however, the holiday atmosphere of the campus or the desire to get away from Italy's enervating heat that brought the editors of this volume—two young scholars, one of us interested in contemporary and the other in modern history—to Wisconsin's capital. Nor was it the hope of turning up some unpublished document or sensational historical event. After all, we were not protagonists of a Fred Vargas novel, nor did we possess the charm and investigative prowess of the historian detectives made famous in French mysteries. The true reason for our presence in Madison was quite another: George L. Mosse, historian, German by birth, a Jew and a homosexual, who fled from the Third Reich and eventually ended up in the Department of History of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. There he dedicated himself to the study of twentieth-century political and cultural movements. For us, the idea of pursuing Mosse's historical legacy took serious form in this city where he spent the most prolific part of his career, and it is there that we found ourselves, somewhat by chance, collaborating in an intense month of study and research in the University's Memorial Library.

Lorenzo Benadusi, trained in contemporary history, a student of Fascism and sexuality, had encountered Mosse's books on university shelves and been fascinated by his ability to bring the past to life, to penetrate the

minds of his protagonists with images capable of embracing art and culture, myths and rituals, ways of thinking and acting, hopes and fears. It is not an exaggeration to say that Mosse was the writer who made Benadusi think of history not only as an obligatory subject for study but as a passion and lifelong interest. In Memorial Library, further, research in the Fry Collection on the image of the soldier during Fascism repeatedly brought reminders of Mosse's work.[1]

The other editor of this volume, Giorgio Caravale, trained as a modernist, had already come across early in his university years the captivating portrait of sixteenth-century Europe written collaboratively by Mosse and Helmut G. Koenigsberger. Caravale had pursued his studies on sixteenth-century religious and cultural history through the prism of the work of Delio Cantimori, student of the modern era, a fascist and later Marxist intellectual, himself a protagonist of Italian twentieth-century culture and author of a seminal volume, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento*. Caravale began by working in the Department of Special Collections of Memorial Library on the trail of one of those heretics who had figured prominently in Cantimori's great work.[2] Through the *Eretici* he had come to admire also the incisive pages dedicated by Mosse to the irrational aspects of Nazi ideology, so close, in many respects, to the chronicles about German life in the thirties published by Cantimori in the principal journals of the time. Caravale, accustomed to foraging in dusty sixteenth-century archives, when placed in direct contact with Mosse's personal papers (which are preserved in the original at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, but with complete copies in Madison) could not resist the temptation to begin reading the rich correspondence, especially the part conducted with Mosse's principal Italian colleagues. The first fruit of this archival research is Chapter 5 in this volume, titled "'A Mutual Admiration Society': The Intellectual Friendships at the Origins of George Mosse's Connection to Italy."

These brief remarks, otherwise lacking in academic interest, about the present volume's editors point to a measure of the broad cultural horizons within which Mosse's immense production occurs—the far-reaching interest exerted by his work on two students whose formation and interests differed so markedly even between themselves. Mosse has been one of the most widely read and best known historians in the world, and Italy probably has been the country that most profoundly expressed to him its appreciation. For testimony of the esteem in which his work is held, we can point to the honorary degree bestowed on Mosse by the University of Camerino in 1995, as well as the prizes he received: "Aqui Storia" (1975) and "Prezzolini" (1989). The German American scholar's success, as Chapter 7 by Vittorio Vidotto in this volume makes clear, is shared by the academic community with a vast public of lay readers. Mosse's writings have

sparked a lively debate that has continued even after his death, the moment when the importance of his historiographical production was recognized virtually by everyone, as Donatello Aramini relates in Chapter 6.

What purpose does reflection on the person of George Mosse have today? The dedication of a volume to his work and to his historiographical inheritance does not signify only that Mosse was a great figure in twentieth-century studies: His personality and his books seem to us today, even more than yesterday, strikingly current and rich in fruitful and lasting teachings, especially for new generations of historians. With the passing of the years, it became ever more clear that one of the principal novelties in Mosse's work is his introduction of cultural history into the sphere of contemporary history, without relinquishing a strong historicist stamp.[3] He was able to avoid the trap of that "culturalist" drift that tended to see Fascism only as a rhetorical or aesthetic creation or something imagined in fantasy.[4] In fact, Mosse came to cultural study through what Karel Plessini defines as an "anthropological and visual turning-point"—in other words, a sort of "retrospective cultural anthropology" that pays due attention also to myths and ideologies expressed through images and representations.[5] His approach, thus, is tied neither to that current of historical study permeated by poststructuralism intent on deconstructing language and meanings, which is so often prone to excessive interpretation and anachronisms,[6] nor even to that trend that views history from below or to microhistory, which sometimes risks vanishing into impressionism.[7] The culturalist approach permitted Mosse to look beyond theoretical formulations and accommodate the contributions of popular culture and the study of mentalities and manners. This enhanced the interdisciplinary quality of his research and enabled him to contemplate from different viewpoints such familiar and thoroughly debated questions as anti-Semitism (discussed by Simon Levis Sullam in Chapter 4 in this volume) but especially to investigate the irrational components of history. It could be said that Mosse examines the irrational adopting a methodology used by Ernesto De Martino for the magical world,[8] seeking out new investigative tools so as not to annihilate it a priori as being outside culture (*come incultura*) or merely a collective fad. The transition from "lazy" to "heroic" historicism is expressed precisely in the attempt to not undervalue the irrational but to try to capture it "through a rational exercise of the mind."[9] Instead of approaching that dimension from without, conditioned by our interpretative categories, it is observed from within, through the eyes of its protagonists, so as to be able to decipher its dynamics and describe its characteristics. This does not mean that value judgments should be eliminated but that they should be made while subjecting one's own rationalist prejudices to a

close critique, opening oneself to the other viewpoint and penetrating and studying the past through the eyes of the ethnographer observing primitive tribes and cultures.

To his credit, Mosse linked the effort to interpret meanings, representations, and mentalities to the rigorous reconstruction of the periods being studied and to the ability to provide a general portrait of an era. He was a precursor, because at a time when social history dominated, he succeeded in demonstrating persuasively culture's strong impact on politics, thereby expanding historical investigation to heretofore unexplored fields, such as race and sexuality (see Chapter 3). As Renato Moro demonstrates in Chapter 8, it is precisely the differing reception of the "cultural turn" in different national contexts that has determined the generally favorable reception of Mosse's work. In the case of Italy, the culturalist turn has been viewed with lively interest but without being thoroughly or systematically assimilated. Probably for this reason his writings have enjoyed great success but remain without the influence capable of orienting historical research. They have been read more than utilized, received more than revisited.

Observing Italy as an outsider permitted Mosse to analyze the general characteristics of Fascism without linking them to the historiographical debate concerning specific aspects of national identity. The perception of Italian history as an uninterrupted sequence of missed occasions, of failed revolutions, and of unfulfilled expectations has led to the view of Fascism as emblematic of Italian anomaly, the culminating moment of haphazard progress, the negative effects of which survived long past the regime itself. The antithesis between Fascism as revelation and as revolution, which had divided Italian historians, is confronted by Mosse, instead, without any ideological conditioning, without any pretense to establish *a priori* the "correct" outcome of a historical process. Mosse's interest focuses on the cultural origins of Nazism and Fascism, on the background that favored their development. But for him these aspects were not the key to a general understanding of a country's history. The roots of the two despotic systems lay in the vast terrain of Western European culture and society, and depending on the different contexts, it assumed specific traits. Building on some of Croce's insights,[10] Mosse insists that the transformation of European public spirit after 1870 was the moment of incubation for irrationalism and that extreme nationalism out of which grew the totalitarian regimes. This permitted Mosse to avoid considering Fascism the autobiography of the nation and identifying its history through the memory of anti-Fascism.

Mosse in this way has been able to circumvent both the Marxist thesis that considers Fascism a reactionary regime, the agent of bourgeois interests, as well as the liberal position that views it as an authoritarian

movement, in a position to interrupt the democratic development of the country by its manipulation of the masses. Both these interpretations have in common the notion of an arbitrary authority that holds power through force or indoctrination, while for Mosse the most significant aspect of Fascism is the heartfelt participation of millions of people. Mosse's research sets out from the question, "How is it possible that so many intelligent men and women reached the point of destroying individual freedom?" In other words, how do we explain the attraction of the persecutor?[11] Criticizing the idea of Fascism as historical negativity does not require ignoring the anti-liberal and brutal elements; on the contrary, it serves to explain how these very elements succeeded in helping to achieve consensus and emotional involvement. Emilio Gentile, in his interview with us in Chapter 9 in this volume, reconstructs the climate in which Mosse's theory, and contemporaneously De Felice's, found acceptance. However, Gentile also indicates how the path opened by their work also made it possible to go beyond it, thereby moving historiography beyond the problem of consensus from which the two great students of Fascism had begun.

To assess Mosse's contributions more than a decade after his death entails also reflecting on the role of the historian and on the scope of his research. Mosse compels us, in fact, to interrogate ourselves anew on the public uses of history, to reevaluate the importance of looking to the past for answers to current problems, each time reworking the fundamentals according to one's own disposition and convictions. Thanks to his autobiography, Mosse has provided us with the key to understanding the manner in which the experiences of his own life decisively influenced his scholarly work. "The cultural approach introduced by Mosse in the historiography of Fascism," writes Gentile, "was the consequence of an existential exigency."[12] In fact, it can be said that Mosse succeeded in establishing a direction to his studies in the very moment he understood the extent to which the story of his life could favor and not impair historical reconstruction. The critique of the supposed objectivity of traditional historiography led him in fact to abandon his study of the modern period and to observe from within the twentieth-century nationalist and fascist movements (Caravale reflects in Chapter 2 on Mosse's transition from modern to contemporary history). The subjective point of view is thus overturned by an important element leading to impartiality. Once again, Croce's teachings are indispensable to arrive at this important historiographical juncture, which Mosse himself describes:

> Mine is surely a personal concept of recent history seemingly far removed from Leopold von Ranke's precepts, though he himself was no impartial observer who merely wanted to reconstruct the past as it had in fact existed,

> but a devout supporter of Prussian conservatism. Like all of my generation, I was taught his canon of writing history: to abstract myself as much as possible from my historical writing. It took me many years to realize writing about historical problems which have affected one's own life was no barrier which stood in the way of understanding historical reality; indeed, I was helped to this realization by a colleague at the University of Iowa who once observed that I was so interesting while my books were so dull.[13]

From this came another of Mosse's convictions: that the historian's involvement in the subject under investigation transforms history into "current politics." He has, in fact, imbued his work with important ethicopolitical valency without directly assuming a public role by regarding teaching as a fundamental tool for influencing the civic sphere. For Mosse, research and teaching are inseparable elements: only by transmitting what one knows is it possible to carry out a pedagogical mission capable of developing a critical spirit in the younger generations—the faculty to deconstruct myths and to attain a multidimensional vision of reality.[14] Mosse's gift for addressing a vast audience of students, for involving them enthusiastically and passionately in his lectures, together with the generous hearing he gave to their concerns and his willingness to engage with them, made him a widely admired figure, with a large following among students and colleagues. Compared to an academic milieu such as the Italian where at times form seems to prevail over content, Mosse's approach is a living lesson on the professional ethics of the university teacher and the commitment to students, and especially an incentive to use one's research to respond to the queries of the society in which one lives.

After a historiographical phase characterized by the political use of history and by a reconstruction of the past, especially the fascist past, frequently conditioned by ideological prejudices, Italian historiography has in recent years tended to lose all contact with the present day. The limitation of ideologies thus risks negating the possibility of drawing from the past insights and reflections about the present. This has driven the new generation of historians to become hyperspecialists or to not develop the motivations behind their research, with the result in both cases that they do not ask themselves why it is still necessary to study nationalism, Fascism, and racism. The fact that this book to a great extent is the fruit of contributions by young historians living in a postideological age leads us to think that new paths can be opened toward participation in the public debate through scholarly commitment without necessarily being involved in militant politics.

The present volume presents itself as the latest installment in the sequence of historiographical reflections on Mosse's work that commenced

even before the great historian's death and continued successively with the conference organized in his honor in Madison in 2001, Emilio Gentile's *Il fascino del persecutore*, Donatello Aramini's examination of Mosse's influence on Italian historiography, and finally with the scholarly meeting held in Rome ten years after Mosse's passing, of which this book is an outcome.

Our intention is, in fact, to reexamine Mosse's contributions, which, even after the passing of the years, continue to furnish important tools for historical research, influence scholarly investigations, suggest new interpretative approaches to the past, and open as yet unexplored fields. The themes of the nationalization of the masses and of bourgeois respectability, of fascist culture and mentality, of the aesthetics and religious beliefs of politics, of the cult of the fallen soldier and the myth of the Great War, and of racism and anti-Semitism, thanks to Mosse's work, have entered the mainstream of historical debate, giving a tremendous impetus to renewed study of twentieth-century political and cultural phenomena. Our book does not attempt, however, to propose only a critical assessment of Mosse's legacy, an effort that, in good part, has already been made,[15] but to discern the influence he has exercised over different disciplines and successive generations of Italian scholars. Historians of very different backgrounds thus examine the most important historiographical findings introduced by Mosse so as to deal diachronically with the subjects that interested him the most; to analyze the course of his development and his methodology, his intellectual relations, and his cultural indebtedness; and to reconstruct the debate fomented by his most stimulating and controversial interpretations.

This retrospective evaluation hinges especially on the so-called Mosse revolution: a new historiographical approach based on a rich and heterogeneous array of previously neglected sources, approached in a wholly original manner. Essentially it is a revolution achieved by Mosse's attempt to trace the different ways ideas, myths, beliefs, and ideologies develop; to distinguish the different paths that branch out from a single phenomenon; and especially to look back at the past through the eyes of its protagonists. By analyzing Mosse's early work on modern history and the development of his interest in the mass movements of the twentieth century, we have tried to reconstruct his intellectual biography, his constant attention to the interdisciplinary study of politics and culture, and his close ties to literature and the visual arts, anthropology, and historical sociology. We have lingered over certain areas of study to which Mosse has contributed most innovatively, even though the emphasis falls on the general theme underlying his entire oeuvre, which links the various essays presented here—namely, culture understood not only as knowledge and consciousness but also as mentality, lifestyle, and behavior. The fruitful dialectical relationship between historicism and culturalism, which is quite unambiguously

present in Mosse's writings, is examined by these chapters and at the same time methodologically influences them. Decidedly, our intent is to confront themes raised by Mosse but to avoid exploiting his work, as has occurred too frequently, with the justification of abstract theories or the reduction of Fascism and Nazism merely to their cultural and aesthetic aspects.

Much attention is also given to weighing the influence of Mosse's work in Italy and to his relations with the world of publishing and the scholarly community. The testimony of some of the historians who have been closest to him (e.g., Renato Moro, Vittorio Vidotto, Emilio Gentile) helps us to grasp the broad and favorable reception of his work in our country and to provide us with an intriguing picture of a profitable exchange of ideas, suggestions, and observations. It is thus not only Mosse's historiographical insights that emerge with clarity but also what he has bequeathed intellectually to his contemporaries and to younger scholars who may never have met him but are nonetheless indebted to his historiographical contributions. The fact that Mosse's achievements continue to resound so emphatically in both professional as well as personal spheres is probably the most eloquent testimony to the originality and fecundity of his historical work. By retracing his steps, we recover the true and proper "mission" that Mosse himself lived: to exert one's influence through a constant and engaged educational program, treating historical research as an ethical duty for the attainment of "truth," and to unmask sectarianism, racism, and the antiliberal authoritarianism that lurk behind nationalist ideologies.

Notes

1. As a product of this research, see Lorenzo Benadusi, "Borghesi in Uniform: Masculinity, Militarism, and the Brutalization of Politics from World War I to the Rise of Fascism," in Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, eds., *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence and Agency in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
2. See now Giorgio Caravale, *Francesco Pucci's Heresy in Sixteenth Century Europe: The Disarmed Prophet* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); original Italian version: *Il profeta disarmato. L'eresia di Francesco Pucci nell'Europa del Cinquecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).
3. On Mosse's historicism, see Giuseppe Galasso, "Il Novecento di George L. Mosse e le sue origini," *Nuova storia contemporanea*, 1, 2000, 43–76, reprinted in George Mosse, *La nazione, le masse e la "nuova politica"* (Rome: Di Rienzo, 1999), 57–104.
4. For a critique of culturalist studies of Fascism, see Sergio Luzzatto, "La cultura politica dell'Italia fascista," *Storica* 12, 1998, 57–80.

5. Karel Plessini, *The Perils of Normalcy: George L. Mosse and the Remaking of Cultural History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), ch. 3.
6. For some critical observations on the reduction of historiography to its narrative dimension, see Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).
7. On these aspects, see especially Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Jerzy Topolski, *Methodology of History* (Dortrech: Reidel, 1976).
8. Ernesto De Martino, *Il mondo magico. Prolegomeni a una storia del magismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1948).
9. Emilio Gentile, "George L. Mosse e la religione della storia," in George L. Mosse, *Di fronte alla storia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2004), xi. On these questions, see also Renato Moro, "George L. Mosse, storico dell'irrazionalismo moderno," in Alessandra Staderini, Luciano Zani, and Francesca Magni, eds., *La grande guerra e il fronte interno. Studi in onore di George Mosse* (Camerino: Università degli Studi di Camerino, 1998), 21–36.
10. See Salvatore Cingari, *Benedetto Croce e la crisi della civiltà europea* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003); Gennaro Sasso, *La "Storia d'Italia" di Benedetto Croce cinquant'anni dopo* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1979); Roberto Vivarelli, "Il 1870 nella storia d'Europa e nella storiografia," in Vivarelli, *Storia e storiografia. Approssimazioni per lo studio dell'età contemporanea* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 1–26. Mosse has contributed significantly to the debate over the question of continuity or break between Nazism and prior German history that broke out in 1961 over the work of Fritz Fischer; see the Italian edition: *Assalto al potere mondiale. La Germania nella guerra 1914–1918* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973).
11. Emilio Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore. George L. Mosse e la catastrofe dell'uomo moderno* (Rome: Carocci, 2007).
12. Ibid., 12.
13. From a speech by Mosse on the occasion of his retirement from the Hebrew University, June 17, 1985, in *George Mosse on the Occasion of His Retirement. 17.6.85* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986), xxviii.
14. According to Mosse, the primary role of the historian is to study history without fear or partiality, because only by unmasking myths and symbols can the past and the present be understood. Speech given upon the conferral of the Prezzolini Prize, Florence, March 16, 1985, in ibid., 8.
15. See Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

2

A Forgotten Story

Studies on the Early Modern Age

Giorgio Caravale

Continuity and Discontinuity

Perhaps not everyone will remember that before becoming a pioneer and a teacher of modern studies, George Mosse was an established scholar of early modern English constitutional and intellectual history. One of his closest students, now a scholar himself of early modern English history, recently told of how, as a graduate student in the 1940s and '50s, he had read and appreciated two books and numerous articles written by George Mosse on the first centuries of the early modern period (in particular on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). He then went on to recount how he had been convinced that the same accomplished scholar had begun a well-deserved retirement. However, when he applied for a position as professor of British history at the University of Wisconsin in 1988, he was greatly surprised to find out not only that George Mosse was on the committee that would be hiring him but that he was one of the most renowned scholars of nineteenth and twentieth centuries history working at the time.[1] This anecdote gives us an idea of how important his work was as an early modernist, even though it would be somewhat overshadowed by the success of his research on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As a PhD student at Harvard and later a professor at the University of Iowa, what were the principle themes that Mosse investigated? What were the initial interests of this historian who would later revolutionize the way in which we approach modern history? His first book, an elaboration of his doctoral dissertation,[2] was on the theme of sovereignty in

sixteenth-century England. An investigation of how the concept of sovereignty was assimilated into English political and constitutional thought, the study followed the struggle between the promoters of absolute sovereignty and the defenders of a conception of limited sovereignty that would guarantee individual rights against claims to absolute power. The second volume published by him in these years was a study of the relationship between Christianity and the State and how the tradition of the reason of state was adapted by Puritan casuistry.[3]

With good reason, those who have focused on this formative period of Mosse's career have stressed the question of continuity (or discontinuity) between these first works and his successive modernist production and have sought to look at Mosse's historiographical work as a unified whole, with a coherent internal logic. David Warren Sabean has delineated at least three elements of continuity in the work of Mosse: (1) a constant concern with finding an equilibrium between contrasting forces, be it between Christian morality and the practical demands of the reason of state in the seventeenth century or between the rational and irrational elements of nineteenth-century politics; (2) a surprising and often jarring juxtaposition of elements that would appear to have nothing to do with one another, like the association (in *The Holy Pretence*) of the name of the Puritan John Winthrop with that of the German statesman Otto von Bismarck or the parallel that Mosse outlines in his Germans and Jews between Martin Buber's study of Hasidim and Jakob Böhme's contemporary rediscovery of the German Meister Eckhart; and finally, closely connected to this last element, (3) the irony with which Mosse creates these unusual combinations or the paradoxes of history that he delights in revealing.[4] Johann Sommerville recently underlined the continuity between George Mosse's early modern and contemporary studies, focusing his attention on the methodological and theoretical aspects of his approach. Sommerville pinpoints two themes that he believes are "constant in his work": on the one hand, "the stress on the need for solid empirical foundations as the basis for interpretation," and on the other, "the emphasis on the importance of ideas in shaping historical action and on the irreducibility of ideas to social, political, or economic substructures."[5] Emilio Gentile, the Italian scholar who more than any other was able to digest and put into use the teachings of Mosse, underlined the precociousness of his interest in historical periods so close to us and highlighted—basing himself on unpublished texts and lessons from the 1940s and '50s—Mosse's consistent concern with periods whose "social, political, and cultural upheaval put different conceptions of life, the world, faith and politics in opposition with one another,"[6] beginning with the religious crisis of the Reformation up to the crisis of bourgeoisie and liberal ideology in the face of the rise of the totalitarian movements,

emphasizing how ideology "as a fundamental factor in the historical processes" had always been "a mainstay of Mosse's historiographic approach."[7] In numerous points of his own intellectual autobiography, Mosse himself explicitly underlined the continuities between his first English studies and his later work on the twentieth century, be it in his constant return to the theme of the fate of liberalism, which he investigates beginning with his *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, or in the attention he gives to diversity, a thematic crux that runs through all his historiographical work, defined by him as "the nature of outsiderdom," a concept he had formulated in his first article on twentieth-century history, "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Culture."[8]

From Popular Culture to the History of the Elite

Though it might be difficult to deny that there is a connecting thread that ties Mosse's first works on English constitutional history to his later research on totalitarian ideologies (to ignore that many of the themes most noted to the public are also present in his earlier books on the early modern period), one must note that there is an evident gap between his first books and a "history of mentality, or rather . . . a type of cultural history which I sought to define, which was concerned with perceptions, myths and symbols, and the power of their attraction," which would be the trademark of his later work.[9]

Those tempted to trace the seeds of the "historiographical revolution" that many have attributed to Mosse in his early modern work would be disappointed.[10] None of the books and articles published by the historian during the 1950s and '60s have the stamp of radical newness that will later come to characterize his works on nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe. Mosse's early modern work deals with more traditional themes and adopts a historiographical approach and methodology that is much more conventional than his later work—though innovative in some ways with regard to his time.

Presenting an Italian translation of an essay Mosse had written in 1959,[11] "Changes in Religious Thought," to Italian readers in the Garzanti volume *Storia del mondo moderno* (originally published by New Cambridge Modern History in 1970), Carlo Ginzburg expressed a somewhat harsh judgment of Mosse's work that is significant in relation to this point. The brilliant, and at the time young, early modernist underlined the lack of attention that Mosse had dedicated to social history and the history of popular piety in favor of an approach dedicated to what he defined as "phenomena at the vertices" (of the élite):

> Attention is given to social history, if only out of necessity, in G.L. Mosse's chapter on religious thought. Of course, we are talking about "religious thought" and not, shall we say, "religious life": yet Mosse observes, at the opening of the chapter, that we cannot ignore popular piety, if nothing else because it poses a series of theological problems. Later on, the author alludes to the dramatic tone of popular catholic piety, provoked, in part, by a new hagiography. These are suggestions that could have been investigated in greater depth: after all, it is not true that we know "almost nothing" about popular piety as Mosse maintains—just think about the studies that have been done on religious practice in France in the past years. The interest of the author was evidently perked more by "phenomena at the vertices," such as the proliferation of religious groups like the French Oratory, and the theological debates within the Protestant Church, which ended dramatically in the Synod of Dordrecth.[12]

Ginzburg's criticism is harsh. Yet, in his snapshot of the methodological approach of an early modernist George Mosse, he also helps us understand the reasons Italian historians of the 1970s, pressed between the descendants of the Marxist school and the new approaches of microhistory and the Annales school, found it difficult to appreciate Mosse's studies on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.[13] The interval between when the essay was written (1959) and when it was actually published also helps explain Ginzburg's judgment. As we shall see, during that time Mosse's approach changed considerably—to such an extent that he would never have rewritten those pages in the same way. Had Ginzburg had the opportunity to read the pages that Mosse had sent to the New York editor Howard Fertig (pages that were never published), his criticism might have been less severe.[14] In that unpublished manuscript, titled "The Cultural Historian and Popular Literature," Mosse had praised an approach to cultural historiography that reached deep into the territory of popular culture, passing outside of the boundaries of the history of elites in which the majority of European historians were still stuck.[15] Even a work like Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, which Mosse had always cited as one of his major sources of inspiration, now became the target of his criticism, albeit a criticism tempered by great affection.

> Above all, modern historians shunned topics which were thought to be too vast for an intelligible use of historical evidence. It was easier to write about individual men, or even about the thought of elites, than about something so ill-defined as "popular culture." Even a commonly acknowledged masterpiece like J. Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages* generalizes about the whole cultural atmosphere of an epoch from a very restricted body of evidence. While Huizinga claims that the emphasis on the symbolic as it developed in

> fifteenth century Burgundy made its imprint on the age as a whole, he ends up writing solely about the elites of that period.[16]

The history of the elites alone, the world of the courts and the intellectuals, was unable to capture the spirit and the cultural atmosphere of a period. Had Huizinga shifted his focus toward popular culture, he would have encountered a more complete and multifaceted vision of the past: "Cultural history has tended to become the history of elites. This is true whether it entails an examination of the thought of governing elites, of those who inspired them, or the reconstruction of the feeling of an age through the ideas of its most important and creative intellectuals. While Huizinga centers his analysis upon the fossilization of fifteenth century religious life into symbolism and superstition, taking his examples from the lives of the great, among the masses of people themselves millenarian and prophetic ideas often produced the opposite results."[17]

The interpretive key to utopia and millenarianism was an approach that allowed one a direct view of the world and lives of the peasants. Mosse pointed to popular literature as a fruitful object of study, steeped in utopia: thanks to what Ernst Bloch had called the "principle of hope," these popular and editorially successful texts were a response to the fears of the masses fueled by unanswered questions on the existence of man and the future of humanity:

> If we can find out why people liked an immensely popular work we may have opened a door to an understanding of their cast of mind. In this quest we are aided by a second factor which emerges strongly from a reading of such popular literature: utopian longings are apt to color literary taste. The eternal question of who are we? Where are we going? What can we expect? Trouble men and women at every level of life, but among the mass of men they assume a crucial importance. The "principle of hope," as the philosopher Ernst Bloch called such utopian expectations, fills popular literature at every turn. In the preface to his major work with this same title he quite correctly wrote that "many men merely possess a feeling of confusion. The floor beneath them trembles, they do not know why and from what cause. This state of being is filled with anxiety, and if it becomes more clearly defined, it is filled with fear." Popular literature which sold in the millions counters anxiety and fear through utopia. This utopia, in turn, instilled in the public mind a vision of man and society which cannot but entail political and social consequences.[18]

Alongside the most circulated popular literary texts there were vast archival resources to which historians would have to turn their attention in order to answer new questions raised by cultural history. Also in this case,

Mosse would choose an approach to the peasant and popular world that was surprisingly similar to that taken by Carlo Ginzburg, who was busy scouring the Inquisition archives of Northern Italy: "The constant peasant uprisings, great and small, are filled with religious thought stimulating dynamic social myths. Rather than the art and writing of the courts, the heresy trials and official inquiries into peasant and urban unrest can furnish us with essential evidence as to the turns and twists of the primitive mind which dominated among the peoples of Europe."[19]

This approach, outlined here in a series of pages that would never be published, represented the final phases of a development that would come as Mosse was moving away from his early modern work to focus his research on turn-of-the-century Germany. As it only considered Mosse's published work on the early modern period up to that point, Ginzburg's criticism could not have accounted for Mosse's changing historiographical approach expressed in this unpublished essay.

An Interpretation

Returning then to the relationship between Mosse's studies on the early modern period and his later ones on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, it is clear that we are dealing with two approaches that are distinct from one another. In my opinion, this diversity should be analyzed with great attention[20] and cannot be as easily resolved, as some have claimed to do with a certain degree of authoritativeness, by considering it a "a giant shift of his research to fields in which the dialectic between rational and irrational superseded the dialectics between high and low sections of society, between religion and politics, which were so important at the beginning of his research."[21] Such a resolution of the contrast is impossible for a couple of reasons: first, the early modern work of Mosse—with the exception of *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*, published with Koenigsberger at the end of the 1960s—is not characterized by any particular attention to low and high culture, such that the low–high dialectic is present only marginally in these early works; second, a historical interest in the irrational already manifests itself in Mosse's work before his shift to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I will return to discuss both of these points in further detail.

We should approach the question of continuity/discontinuity in Mosse's career from a slightly different vantage point. It seems natural—unless we look at his intellectual biography as a trajectory made of traumas and violent ruptures—to consider the historical sensibility that he develops in his early years as the foundation for his more mature and fruitful work on the

twentieth century. But what are the qualities of this sensibility? The familiarity with the religious dimension of power, the metaphor of the nation as a secular religion[22] that we find in his later work, come, in my opinion, from the remarkable acquaintance with the rituals and liturgies of Christianity he developed during his early modern studies—especially those in relation to the Baroque, the period in which these ritualistic and symbolic characteristics of Christianity reached the height of their expression. In relation to the baroque, Mosse recognized Benedetto Croce as having been a major influence on his work, claiming to have voraciously read Croce's *Storia dell'età barocca in Italia*. When asked by an Italian journalist if he admired Croce's work, Mosse responded, "Very much. I am sorry that his work is somewhat overlooked outside of Italy. As a young scholar, Croce's book on the Baroque was extremely important to me." During the same interview, Mosse remembered having met him in Naples and how Federico Chabod had served as their interpreter: "I had written a book on Machiavellianism in England. Since Croce expressed interested in the book, I wanted to come to Italy to meet him. Our conversation was about Machiavelli. Croce, who was very old by that time, spoke in Italian while looking toward the ground. I would not have understood much had Chabod not been there to translate."[23] Here he is obviously referring to his book *The Struggle for Sovereignty in England*, published in 1950. That Mosse had been so tied to meeting Croce and Chabod shows that he felt a strong methodological affinity to Croce. He had been the one to search out Federico Chabod by sending him a letter full of expectation and empathy on August 25, 1951:

> I am writing a book on the idea of raison d'état in 17. century England, especially as it concerns the Puritans [*The Holy Pretence*, published only in 1957] [. . .] I have been struck increasingly by the importance of Botero and others in the transmission of these Renaissance ideas as far as England is concerned. At the moment I am in Europe and will come to Rome [. . .]. I was wondering if you would be free for a talk about these problems, if I came down to Naples? I know that both Croce and yourself are interested in the problem of Machiavellian ideas and the Reformation, which is the larger subject to which my researches may lead.[24]

Even without seeing the response from Chabod, it is easy to imagine that the invitation to talk was accepted and that the "Machiavellian" conversation with the two Italian scholars must have left its mark on the George Mosse at the beginning of his career. It is clear, however, that his reflections on the themes of ritual and liturgy, begun in the 1950s, strongly contributed to reinforcing his dialectical concept of history, understood as an interaction between myth and realty, a conception that would be integral

to his work on the ideologies of the twentieth century. In an interview on Nazism between Mosse and one of his students, Michael Ledeen, Mosse cites the Baroque period as a comparison: "The baroque is full of myth, theater, and symbols which carry you away from the reality of this world. But the very success of the Jesuits was that while carrying you away from this world they really integrated you into their political system."[25] The theatrical, pictorial, and, in a certain sense, mythic universe constructed by the Jesuits and the Catholic culture of the Counter Reformation interacted with the reality of the masses, overcoming it and absorbing it within its own system of symbols, just like the myths of Hitler permeated German society in the 1930s. Mosse himself remembered this in his autobiography:

> While my historical research has concentrated upon various modern belief systems, it would undoubtedly be correct to see here a continuity between my work on the Reformation and that on more recent history. I was familiar with theological thought as well as religious practices and could bring this knowledge to bear upon the secularization of modern and contemporary politics. It was not such a big step from Christian belief systems, especially in the baroque period, to modern civic religions such as nationalism in its various forms—including Fascism—which have occupied me for many decades.[26]

If, then, we are talking about a continuity in terms of interests, as Mosse himself affirms, this continuity regards more the readings and the reflections he made around the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s on Christianity, the Baroque period, and the role of Jesuit theatricality, and not so much the studies he published in the 1950s. Readings like Croce's *Storia dell'età Barocca*, Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, or Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* had not yet had time to leave their mark on early modern studies. The two volumes that I mentioned before (*The Struggle for Sovereignty* and *The Holy Pretence*) still belong to a historiographical tradition concerned with the history of ideas, the relationship between doctrines of political power, in which cultural history is of only marginal importance at best.

These "early modernist" readings had a profound influence on Mosse's methodology, both then and later on, and would have their most fruitful impact on his studies of the modern era. In a work like *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*, written together with his colleague Koenigsberger, we begin to see a concept of history that is similar to what we see in his studies on the twentieth century—what we have come to consider as typical of Mosse's work. The work considers not just monarchs and princes but also popular religiosity, the prayers and episodes of the more disparate social

classes, and it paints a broad picture of society by intertwining the history of society, religion, literature, art, and science, each of them considered with equal weight.

Here it is useful to compare this work with the short book dedicated to the same themes, *The Reformation*,[27] which Mosse had published 15 years earlier. This small volume, which had a very successful editorial run (six editions were published over a short period), presents us with a historian who is still tied to rather traditional methods.[28] The structure is the same he had established in the PhD dissertation he had published three years earlier. As he explains in the preface, the work's central focus is on how ideologies come to be formed: "If men expressed their dilemmas in religious terminology and through religious longings it was because this was their ideology: they saw their entire way of life and attitude toward life in terms of Christianity. Any change in religion meant a change in the whole tenor of life itself."[29]

A three-page sketch of popular piety,[30] the preface to *The Reformation* would expand to become the backbone of a long chapter dedicated to "Christianity, Popular Culture and Humanism." This same development of ideas would permeate his sections on "Literature and the Age," a series of pages in which Mosse moves from devotional literature to the role of lyric poetry in the sixteenth century, and "Art, Music, and Science," a chapter dedicated to themes that up until then had been completely overlooked in general historical reconstructions of that kind. They are pages in which a concept of culture as a "history of perceptions" begins to make itself noticeably present.[31]

But *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* was written well after he had begun his studies on *The Culture of Western Europe* (1961)[32] and *The Crisis of German Ideology* (1964).[33] As Mosse himself noted, he wrote it "nearly ten years after I had closed the books on early modern history."[34] The question we should ask ourselves, then, is of how much his research on National Socialism and its mystic origins, and on the twentieth century more generally, influenced this beautiful panorama of the sixteenth century that he wrote at the end of the 1960s, from whose flowing and confident pages emerges a new way of thinking about early modern history—and not the other way around.

Mosse's two studies on contemporary Europe were responsible for modifying (if not codifying) the approach to historiography that he had developed up to that point. When he returns, after his study on the origins of the intellectuals of the Third Reich, to those same themes that had been dear to him in *The Struggle for Sovereignty* and *The Holy Pretence*, he does so with a completely fresh pair of eyes, publishing an essay whose very title promised a new perspective on the material: "Puritanism Reconsidered"

(1964). Seemingly a mere historiographical review, the article would prove to be a sample of a complete rethinking of his approach to historiography.[35] There is an autobiographical component in the first pages of the essay, which the reader notes. Mosse writes about a new positive trend in studies on seventeenth-century Puritanism, to which he feels participant. Recent historiography could proudly claim to have elevated Puritan thought to the level of an ideology and to have disproved the defamatory claim that it was a "mere excess of enthusiasm," and George Mosse himself had contributed to "that ever greater interest and preoccupation with ideologies" that characterized his time.[36] Mosse and his contemporaries were no longer thinking of Puritanism as a "series of negative attitudes" identifiable as "the English form of Calvinism" but rather as a "positive ideology,"[37] a movement made up of "humanists" and "evangelicals" that was closely connected with the "the common currents of contemporary 17th century thought." This is what Mosse had sought to do by comparing Puritan and Catholic casuistry in his study on Puritanism. By noting that the two shared many points of contact, Mosse was able to contextualize the Puritans in the reality of their time—in relationship to the same problems and questions that all men from that period were facing.

By approaching Puritanism exclusively in terms of ideology, Mosse ran the risk of portraying "his" English puritans as thinkers who were completely absorbed in their "theoretical debates," far from the quotidian reality of society, a contrasting image (as seen in a recent study by an American scholar) to that of American Puritanism, for example. To avoid this risk, it was of course necessary to underline the "strong rational base" of their theological and philosophical reflections, which were always aimed at a "practical goal,"[38] while also implementing a radical shift in his historiographical approach. Mosse realized the significant limitations of the work that he and his contemporaries had carried out up to then on Puritanism and the history of ideas. These limits had led to studies such Daniel J. Boorstin's *The Americas: The Colonial Experience* (1958), which had propagated an idea of the English Puritans as a group of abstract intellectuals who were disconnected from society.[39] They needed to broaden the spectrum of their research, moving from the rational island of the ideas of intellectuals toward the lowly environs of "Puritans of the sects." The "excess of Puritan enthusiasm" that Mosse himself had stigmatized before deserved a second look, but this time through a different lens. Instead of underlining the undefined nature of it, the goal would be to more deeply understand its true nature, to grasp through tools of reasoning the essential message of the radical sects that were themselves more developed expressions of this "enthusiasm." In other words, the task required rationalizing the irrational—something that Mosse had become quite good at in studies

such as *The Crisis of German Ideology* and *The Culture of Western Europe*. In these studies, Mosse focused his attention on the romantic period and its amorphous mass of irrational impulses that had somehow culminated in the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century. Mosse believed he could give form and substance to what he defined as "an ideology of the lower classes," a "radical popular movement" that had much in common with other forms of "popular piety" widespread in early modern Europe, by studying the widely diffused ideas of radical seventeenth-century English Puritan sects: their prophetic, chiliastic components, the deist conclusion of their theological reflections, and their contribution toward spreading religious tolerance in Europe.[40] This type of study would lead historians to radically rethink the categories they had used to interpret the English seventeenth century up to that point. For example, it would lead to the observation that the mysticism of the radical sects "dissolves the difference between nature and revelation," leading to rationalistic results that "are commonly associated solely with rational religion and the growth of science."[41] Mosse cited (and admired) the suggestions put forth by Christopher Hill and Brian Manning, which helped lead him to a self-critical, radical rethinking of his work on English Puritanism and its relationship to the revolutionary events of the 1640s:[42] "Historians have seen this revolution as caused either by a breakdown of the constitutional machinery or by a struggle for power within the ruling classes of England. I myself once saw the revolution's prime cause as a struggle over a new and modern definition of power and sovereignty. Such points of view need severe modification. The Revolution was not just a struggle for power within certain important vested interests and not just a matter which concerned a few hundred members of Parliament."[43] He concluded with an articulate explanation of the situation:

> The great advance of Puritan scholarship in our time has been to elucidate Puritan ideology on the level of the learned man, the theologians, and the system builders. The next step is to go down among the sects. We must investigate this ideology with all its implications. We must also clarify the relationship of this thought to the revolution in England, and analyze its importance for the New World as well. Finally, we must arrive at a synthesis of English popular piety during this period. These seem to me the tasks which the twentieth century puts before the historian of the Puritan movement.[44]

Mosse's well-delineated line of research would see its mature evolution a few years later in Christopher Hill's masterful work *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972).[45] At that moment Mosse was too immersed in his studies on twentieth-century totalitarianism to return to the English sixteenth century: he had no more time to conduct research on the early

modern period, and the task of developing those historiographical reflections had been passed on to someone else. One can easily imagine, however, how much he must have esteemed Hill's book.

Yet the question remains: What was the catalyst for a rethinking of such dimensions? Where had Mosse developed and matured these ideas?

Presenting his book *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, Mosse explained his desire to investigate "a profound mood, a peculiar view of man and society which seems alien and even demonic to the Western intellect": "[T]o understand the growth of such ideas, the role they played, and the longings they gratified during nearly a century of German life is to go far toward an explanation of Germany's unique development." Later he would explain what these ideas were and what their importance was: "Racial thought, Germanic Christianity, and Volkish nature mysticism will all receive serious consideration here. Historians have not given them much serious attention, for they have regarded this ideology as a species of subintellectual rather than intellectual history." Historiography tended to consider these factors of little importance for understanding fundamental historical phenomena: "It has been generally considered as a facade used to conceal a naked and intense struggle for power, and therefore the historian should be concerned with other and presumably more important attitudes toward life." Mosse, on the other hand, claimed that these apparently "apolitical" ideological elements were fundamental for understanding the dynamics of nineteenth- and twentieth-century German history: "[S]uch, however, was not the case. It was precisely that complex of particularly German values and ideas which conveyed the great issues of the times to important segments of the population."[46]

In those pages, then, one reads the same dissatisfaction he had expressed in "Puritanism Reconsidered" with historiography's undervaluing of apparently irrational elements that he considered fundamental for understanding how history evolved.

He reiterated the importance of understanding the "state of feeling" for understanding the destiny of a nation. In doing so, he indirectly redirected attention to the need to study the most evident manifestations of this state of feeling in the mystical, prophetic, and millenarian Volkish movements.[47]

In the 1964 book, Mosse had merely developed a way of thinking that was already present in a mature form in his essay on "The Image of the Jew," in which he had underlined the need to give serious attention to the ideological aspects of Nazism. In his appeal for a cultural analysis of Nazism he had stressed the importance of analyzing the role of emotion in the construction of a totalitarian regime[48] and the mechanisms behind the "preconditioning of popular culture."[49] This development in Mosse's

thought would not come in time to leave its mark on his early modern studies, with the exception of the volume on the sixteenth century mentioned before, but it would certainly lead to a very prolific period of work on the past two centuries of history.

Mosse's formation, then, is marked by elements of both continuity and discontinuity. Highly influenced by European trends, and German ones in particular, he was, nevertheless, constrained by the events of his life into a relationship with Anglo-Saxon historiography.[50] We should, however, consider Mosse's career and historiographical methodology in terms of evolution rather than continuity and discontinuity. Reading back through his works, from the first to the last, entails thinking of his work as a unified whole, observing for example the gradual refinement of the philosophical concepts that underlie it. The Hegelian Dialectic is a perfect example of this. Most likely exposed to this category—foundational to his historiographical reflection—through the Frankfort school, Mosse employed it from various perspectives over the years. Starting with the traditional Hegelian dialectic, quite often materialistic, understood in terms of a struggle between social forces (this is the case in *The Struggle for Sovereignty*), Mosse would apply the concept to the interaction between moral principles and reality. This is true in his study of Puritan casuistry, which he understood as a simple problem of reconciliation between Christian ethics and the presence of good and bad in society. The Hegelian category would then underlie his understanding of the dialectic between myth and social forces, between "myth and what Marx called objective reality," in a concept that, as Renato Moro has noted, "did not separate objective reality and the way in which it is perceived into two distinct analytical moments," making perception into "something just as real as the thing itself."[51] And this is the interpretive key in which one reads many of his works on the age of ideologies. It also serves as an example of how his historiographical production, beyond the elements of discontinuity that may be present, should be thought of as a unified whole.

Notes

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1. Johann Sommerville, "The Modern Contexts of George Mosse's Early Modern Scholarship," in Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 26.

2. George L. Mosse, *The Struggle for Sovereignty in England from the Reign of Queen Elizabeth to the Petition of Right* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1950).
3. George L. Mosse, *The Holy Pretence: A Study in Christianity and Reason of State from William Perkins to John Winthrop* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957).
4. Three elements that, according to Sabean's interpretation, were joined together thanks to the didactic impulse that characterized all Mosse's work; see David W. Sabean, "George Mosse and *The Holy Pretence*," in Payne, Sorkin, and Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells*, 15–24.
5. Sommerville, "The Modern Contexts of George Mosse's Early Modern Scholarship," 26–28. Sommerville largely analyzes Mosse's first book (*The Struggle for Sovereignty*), clearly enlightening the figure of Charles Howard McIlwain (George Mosse's teacher at Harvard in the 1940s) and showing how his point of view differed from Mosse's (28–29). He then focuses on the luck of the respective volumes in the following decades (32–35).
6. Emilio Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore. George L. Mosse e la catastrofe dell'uomo moderno* (Rome: Carocci, 2007), 25–26.
7. Ibid.
8. George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 181. The complete title of the essay is "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Culture: Felix Dahn and Gustav Freytag," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 2, 1957, 218–27.
9. Ibid.; see also Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore*, 32.
10. Around the mid-1980s, when interviewed about Mosse's work, Renzo De Felice likened "Mosse's revolution" to the Annales' historiographical revolution. According to his interpretation, Mosse had recalled "some elements of the Annales school and of the cultural anthropology," making them flourish in the field of modern history, one that French historians were not able to plow successfully ("Due storici a confronto," interview by Francesco Perfetti, *Il Tempo*, November 15, 1986). It is worth noting that Mosse's emphasis on the cultural element, on its autonomy and irreducibility, is far away from the tendency of the French Annales historians to present the history of mentality as a fundamental part of the society's structures; see Renato Moro, "Mosse storico dell'irrazionalismo moderno," in Alessandra Staderini, Luciano Zani, and Francesca Magni, eds., *La grande guerra e il fronte interno. Studi in onore di George Mosse* (Camerino: Università degli Studi di Camerino, 1998), 21–36. In any case, if we consider the impact of their works, it's difficult to deny that both Mosse and the French school of the Annales marked an important caesura in the evolution of their historiographies.
11. George L. Mosse, "Changes in Religious Thought," in John P. Cooper, ed., *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 4, *The Decline of Spain and the Thirty Years War, 1609–48/59* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 169–201. For the reference to the exact dating of the composition of the essay, see Sommerville, "The Modern Contexts of George Mosse's Early Modern Scholarship," 26.

12. Carlo Ginzburg, "Presentazione ai lettori italiani," in John P. Cooper, ed., *Storia del mondo moderno*, Vol. 4, *La decadenza della Spagna e la Guerra dei trent'anni (1610–1648/59)* (Milan: Garzanti, 1971), vii–viii. A little further on, Ginzburg extends his criticism to the entire volume, contesting the basic setting of the editor of the work: "The basic reason which prompted the editors of this volume of the Cambridge Modern History to choose as the main theme of the whole work the development of national states is probably another: the distrust of social history, in contrast, as we have seen, with the 'mere history' or history without adjectives—that is, the traditional political history" (ix).
13. The reference contained in the text is to Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Italian first edition: *Benandanti. Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinque e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966). These were the years in which a group of Italian historians founded around Carlo Ginzburg the so-called school of microhistory, which enjoyed a great success in Italy and abroad in the second half of the seventies and in the next decade. A few years later Ginzburg published the bestselling book *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980; first Italian edition, Turin: Einaudi, 1976). The only significant exception to the cold reception of Mosse's early modernist studies by Italian historiography is represented by the historian Giorgio Spini. On him and the relationship of friendship and deep mutual respect that bound him to George Mosse since the late fifties, I would refer to Chapter 5 in this volume. Further evidence of the strong bond of friendship between Mosse and Spini was the visit of the German historian to Florence in March 1962, most likely in the aftermath of Spini's American stay (for which I would refer to my aforementioned article), when Mosse gave a lecture at the University of Florence. We learn this detail from a letter in which the same Spini invited Delio Cantimori to join the group. We do not know if Cantimori received his invitation, but in any case, this had to be the first and probably only meeting between the two great historians often combined in the memory of Renzo De Felice as two "masters and friends" who had much in common. So Spini wrote to Cantimori:

> Thursday, April 5th I'll guest prof. George Mosse from the University of Wisconsin, author, among others, of an interesting work on the influence of Machiavellian political ideas on the English and American Puritans of the Seventeenth century. I'll take advantage of his visit to make him hold a conversation on this topic with a group of colleagues and students [. . .]. I guess Mosse will speak in English, however, he is a native of Berlin, and therefore has the German as a mother tongue. After the conference, we'll go to dinner in a restaurant together. Of course I would be very happy if you would join our group and go with us that evening, if that will be possible.

(*Giovedì 5 aprile p.v. avrò ospite il prof. George Mosse dell'University of Wisconsin, autore fra l'altro di un'interessante opera sull'influenza del machiavellismo sulle idee politiche dei puritani inglesi ed americani del Seicento. Approfitterò dell'occasione per fargli tenere una conversazione su questo argomento ad un gruppo di colleghi e studenti [. . .]. Mosse credo che parlerà in inglese, è però nativo di Berlino e quindi ha il tedesco come madre lingua. Dopo la conferenza ce ne andremo a cena in una trattoria tutti insieme. Naturalmente sarei molto felice se tu volessi unirti al nostro gruppo e passare con noi quella serata, qualora ciò ti sia possibile*; letter from Florence, March 29, 1962, in Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, Archivio Cantimori, fasc. Spini, cc. nn.)

14. The book was conceived by Mosse as a collection of essays that revolved around the theme of his "The Image of the Jew"; see Mosse's letter to Howard Fertig, Madison, October 18, 1967, and Fertig's answer, dated October 25, 1967: both these documents are in the Leo Baeck Institute, New York, George L. Mosse Collection (henceforth cited as GLMC), box 7, folder 6.
15. "The Cultural Historian and Popular Culture," 1967, unpublished writing preserved in GLMC, 7/6, 7/7.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Gentile himself noted that "his study of modern history has a very different character, in method and style, from the studies of early modern history" (*Il fascino del persecutore*, 25).
21. Giuseppe Galasso, "Il Novecento di George L. Mosse e le sue origini," *Nuova Storia Contemporanea*, 1, 2000, 44; the article has also been published with a slightly different title in Mosse, *La nazione, le masse e la "nuova politica"* (Rome: Di Rienzo, 1999), 57–104.
22. Mosse goes back often to the metaphor of the nation as a secular religion and as a form of nostalgia of traditional religions, referring frequently to "the theatrical and dramatic tradition of Baroque." See in particular the pages dedicated to the "new politics" in the opening of his *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975).
23. Interview by Antonio Benedetti, *Corriere della Sera*, March 17, 1985. On Mosse's intellectual debt to Croce, see also Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore*, 24.
24. Presenting his work, Mosse made reference to the volume published in 1950 that, he wrote, "deals with the reception of the ideas of Bodin." The contact with Chabod was provided by the German historian Alessandro Passerin Entrèves, as stated in the opening of the same letter. The letter, written and sent by Mosse from Salzburg, is kept in Rome, Archivio Chabod, Istituto storico per l'età moderna e contemporanea, s. III, ss. 1, 184M, cc. nn.

25. George L. Mosse and Michael A. Ledeen, *Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1978), 31.
26. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 178. It is the same passage quoted also by Sabean, "George Mosse and *The Holy Pretence*," 18–19.
27. George L. Mosse, *The Reformation* (New York: Holt, 1953).
28. From the first chapter on Luther, the crisis of the papacy, the Diet of Worms, the Anabaptists, and the peasant war, Mosse dedicated the second chapter to the figure of John Calvin, and more briefly to that of Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Bucer, before moving to the ground certainly more familiar to him: the English Reformation, to which he devoted almost the entire third chapter, significantly titled "The Middle Way."
29. Ibid., 2.
30. Ibid., 16–19.
31. Mosse himself, in relation to his historical methodology, spoke of a definition of culture as a history of perceptions (*Confronting History*, 138).
32. George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries; An Introduction* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1961); Italian translation: *La cultura dell'Europa occidentale nell'Ottocento e nel Novecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1986).
33. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); Italian translation: *Le origini culturali del Terzo Reich* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1968).
34. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 209.
35. George L. Mosse, "Puritanism Reconsidered," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 55, no. 1, 1964, 37–47.
36. Mosse referred in particular to the renewed awareness of the "importance of ideology in human affairs," especially "through its role in both National Socialism and Communism" that characterized his generation (ibid., 37).
37. The reference was to the work of Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1939).
38. "The theoretical and the practical were never completely divided from each other in the Puritan mind" (Mosse, "Puritanism Reconsidered," 40). And just as it was necessary to reduce the degree of "pragmatism" attributed by Boorstin to the Puritans overseas, so it was important not to forget that the "Puritan logic determined the ways of arguments wherever Puritans went" (40–41).
39. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Vintage, 1958).
40. Mosse, "Puritanism Reconsidered," 42.
41. Ibid., 43.
42. Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958); and Brian Manning, "The Nobles, the People and the Constitution," *Past & Present*, 9, 1956, 42–64.

43. Mosse, "Puritanism Reconsidered," 44. It was important to analyze not only the "beliefs of these [radical] revolutionaries, but also [. . .] the pressures they exercised upon Westminster" (45). What was missing for the English history of the seventeenth century, stressed Mosse, was a historian like Huizinga who could synthesize the "diverse strands of Popular piety in England" (46).
44. Ibid., 47.
45. The full title was *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1972).
46. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 2nd ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 1–2.
47. Mosse insisted on the necessity of studying the cultural substratum: "What the National Socialists shared with other Volkish groups and with many of the youth was their mood, which in turn depended upon the ideological presuppositions we are discussing. For these presuppositions gave men and women their idea of their place in their country and society. It determined their image of themselves and of the world in which they lived. Such considerations seem much more important than the search for some individual precursors of National Socialism, which historians have detected in various figures from Herder to Wagner and Nietzsche" (ibid., 6).
48. In this respect, Robert Nye has a good definition of this aspect of Mosse's work: "Empathy has been his most useful tool; in his hands, ideology appeals as much to deep emotional structures as to rational and cognitive ones" (quoted by Sabean, "George Mosse and *The Holy Pretence*," 16).
49. George L. Mosse, "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Culture," *Leo Back Institute Yearbook*, 2, 1956, 218–27, quotation at 227; Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore*, 30.
50. See what has been written by Mosse himself in reference to his early modern studies noting this kind of dialectic: "From the beginning [I] tried to apply to sixteenth and seventeenth-century English theoretical concepts which came from my German background and my quite un-English interest in theory" (*Confronting History*, 116).
51. Moro, "Mosse storico dell'irrazionalismo moderno," 26.

3

A Fully Furnished House

The History of Masculinity

Lorenzo Benadusi

"It would never occur to a male to write a book about the singular situation of males in humanity"[1] George Mosse, a forerunner of *gender history* and *men's studies* and a pioneer in this field, which is so often ignored by historiography, is one of the few well-known exceptions to this affirmation by Simone de Beauvoir. As Maurizio Vaudagna notes, the universality of the masculine sex has made it, in some ways, "invisible," and therefore overlooked and rarely investigated in detail.[2]

"Not only did Mosse anticipate an entire field of study, expanding the scope of historical research, but he developed an entirely new and distinct approach to these topics. Unlike approaches concerned primarily with social history—the Annales school in France, the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure in Great Britain, and the New Social History in the United States—Mosse's studies on the body, gender, and sexuality were driven by an interest in the history of culture and politics. He began working on these themes in the 1960s, continued through the 1970s, and would dedicate particular attention to them in the 1980s, always in relationship to broader reflections on racism, nationalism, and totalitarian regimes. For Mosse, the body, sexuality, and gender were particularly fruitful lines of inquiry for answering questions about the role of respectability and conformism and the treatment of diversity—for understanding the relationship between norms and transgressions, discrimination and assimilation, and exclusion and inclusion. Mosse's interest in the problems more than in the historical events led him to broaden his approach to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At times, it also led

him to emphasize continuity over fracture, and gradual developments over moments of sudden change. He himself affirmed that most of his works investigated similar themes, because his fundamental interest was in studying how these themes development across different contexts and historical periods. In *The Culture of Western Europe* (1961), one already finds the topics he would consistently return to—separately and with greater attention—in the years to come. It is his understanding of culture as a type of mental clothing, a way of thinking and being—a concept developed in this early work—that allows him to broaden his investigation to include codes of respectability, good manners, and the dictates of sexuality. The connection between the collective mentality and sex will also be fundamental for understanding gender as a sociocultural construct.

A pioneer in the history of gender as well, Mosse always centered his studies around the correlation between the feminine, the masculine, and other identities. Never limiting himself to a simple narration of the events of one group of men or women, he sought instead to individuate the factors that lead to certain ways of representing and codifying masculinity and/or femininity. From this perspective, Mosse has been criticized for setting up an excessive contrast between opposing models (man/woman, homosexual/heterosexual, type/countertype, normal/abnormal) to the point that he undervalued the extent to which they are mutually conditioned through constantly renegotiated relationships of power and are therefore always renegotiable. This tendency to reduce the nuanced differences between genders, to make the labile boundaries of gender rigid, was fostered by the protest climate of the 1960s. Also, it is easy to imagine how someone who had himself experienced the encumbrance of exclusion could, almost inevitably, accentuate this dichotomy.

Mosse was also accused of giving greater attention to masculinity than to femininity. The accusation is self-serving but is useful for underlining another unique aspect of his approach. Unlike the feminist movement, which turned its attention toward masculinity out of an internal need to extend its perspective from women to men (from the "victims to the perpetrators"),[3] Mosse's interest in masculinity stems from his curiosity in how nationalism employed myths and symbols to garner consensus. As we have seen, his inquiry into stereotypes, rules of behavior, and collective mentality led him to study the behavioral models imposed by society. As a consequence, his research on the image of man and the ideal of virility contributes to a history of gender and masculinity, born out of a historical investigation rather than a theoretical elaboration. Rudy Koshar speaks of how Mosse's aversion to theory kept him from ever entering into the kinds of theoretical debates that "would have allowed him to leave his mark on various disciplines, even more so than he already had."[4] Mosse

did, however, address these theoretical questions with students during his lessons at the University of Wisconsin, as a means of concretely examining the historical questions they discussed. For him, history has the task of supplying answers to theoretical questions, and not the other way around.

Rather than approaching the history of masculinity and homosexuality as a means of establishing identity awareness, Mosse understood it as a starting point for historical investigation in general. His work raised questions of general interest and maintained a perspective and tone that, unlike many studies on these topics, were neither excessively declarative nor self-referential.[5] In this regard, his position stands out among the work of an entire generation of historians of masculinity that would come after him. In Mosse there was never the direct and explicit connection between historical investigation and political interests that one finds, for example, in feminism's joining of research and public involvement in its attempt to do away with a patriarchal society, throw male domination into question, or mold a new male identity through collective self-awareness. In contrast to some militant approaches that often end in history being exploited for public use, Mosse's nonmilitant approach allows him to observe and investigate the connection between masculinity and politics without seeing the past through his own hopes for the future or imposing philosophical theory on historical reconstruction.

This is not to say that Mosse did not find these questions to be relevant to the present day.[6] His adherence to Benedetto Croce's affirmation that history is always contemporary led him to seek to understand the long-term effects of myths, prejudices, and false information in order to reconstruct the origins and trace the evolution of phenomena in the present. In his autobiography, he clearly expresses the connection between historical research and the experiences of his life, which are inextricably tied—his particular experiences having led him to investigate the past in order to understand himself.[7] And Mosse's interest in the study of sexuality and masculinity is no doubt connected to his autobiography. As a Jew and a homosexual, he underwent the experience of being both other and outcast. He classified himself a permanent outsider and eternal emigrant, a stateless American who could not escape thinking and feeling like a refugee. However, being a much esteemed and appreciated university professor, his *outsider identity* was more closely tied to his capacity to observe reality without prejudice and conformism than it was to an existential condition.[8] For Mosse, respectability was just as much an interiorized force to which he had to conform as it was an exterior straightjacket from which he would have liked to liberate himself.

Such ambivalences in his personality will provide an important stimulus for his analysis of the continuous dialectic between self-control and

transgression, conservatism and revolution, tradition and modernity. For example, his education at the Schule Schloss Salem in Germany pushes him to consider the role played by religion and the school in disciplining the body and behavior. He writes, "Religion (Judaism) was a matter of lifestyle rather than faith";[9] the school was aimed at character building and the "hardening of the body"[10] rather than at instruction. Likewise, the *ethos* of his important family drove him to consider the role of respectability in safeguarding appearances and in avoiding discussions relating to sexuality. At the same time, the need to hide his homosexuality in order to be accepted was certainly a strong inspiration for him to investigate the relationship between conformism and freedom. As he affirmed, "[M]y preoccupation with the tension between insiders and outsiders within society is obviously related to my homosexuality."[11] Mosse's inferiority complex is important for fully understanding the power of attraction that respectability exercised over "outsiders" and assessing the consequences of their aspirations at assimilation. Mosse personally suffered the costs of entering into respectable society, avoiding, for example, any explicit investigation of the "inconvenient" theme of homosexuality for fear of being discovered and judged.[12]

Being an outsider two times over provided Mosse with a privileged point of view for critically observing society, culture, and stereotypes. As Emilio Gentile noted, a persecutor's most effective interpreter is often the victim.[13] For Mosse the task of the historian is to look at the past from within, through the eyes of its protagonists, with the intention of pointing out problems, overturning prejudices, and destroying myths. As Renato Moro observes, Mosse approaches history with the "impassioned detachment" of one who relies on empathy without abandoning judgment and critical thought.[14] His objective of demystifying reality drives him to retrace the origins of racism, bourgeois respectability, and the male stereotype. These are all elements related to the history of gender and masculinity, but above all, they are all questions that remain the object of lively debate today.

This essay is not intended as a reconstruction of Mosse's studies in this field—something that Robert Nye has already done[15]—but rather as a critical analysis of some of his most innovative and controversial interpretations.

Racism, Bourgeois Respectability, and the Male Stereotype

The central connecting block between Mosse's studies on sexuality, masculinity, and Fascism is his analysis of racism. The correlation between the three is built on the notion that the attitudes and reactions toward

so-called sexual abnormality held the seeds of the later discrimination and elimination of the Jews by the totalitarian regimes. Mosse's originality lies in his having recognized the alliance between nationalism and bourgeois respectability as the key factor leading to control over sexuality and the development of a racist ideology based on a rigid classification of bodies and behaviors, individuals and ethnic groups. For Mosse, in order to exist, bourgeois society relies on an other with which to compare itself, an enemy with whom to contrast itself, a negative model to stigmatize. Defining what one is not, and what one does not want to be, is central to the process of identity construction. With nationalism, the dialectic between countertype and type that was so deeply embedded in bourgeois respectability became a general moral code prescribed to all citizens. Mosse retraced the roots of racism to the eighteenth century, locating its beginnings in the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the evangelistic and pietist religious reawakening. His theory has been harshly criticized, in particular by scholars who held that Enlightenment thought had strong democratic and equalitarian undercurrents, and by those who locate the origins of racism in nineteenth-century romanticism and scientific positivism. Drawing on some of the Frankfurt school's ideas, he maintained instead that it was the Enlightenment, with its tendency toward classification and depersonalization, that laid the foundations for the explosion of racism in Europe. However, when considering his interpretation, we should remember that Mosse took a dialectical approach to history, which pushed him to consider the forces of authoritarianism and intolerance at play as much as he did those of emancipation and liberation. For Mosse, then, the Enlightenment marked a moment of delineation between two opposing faces of rational progress that would evolve into antithetical ideologies: one liberal and the other illiberal. His objective was to reveal the "dark side of the Enlightenment"[16] without, however, ignoring the other side of the coin. In so doing, Mosse, pointed out the positive factors that lead to the development of individual autonomy (independence from beliefs and false information) while also underlining the negative ones: the tendency toward conformism, classification, and a rigid ordering of reality, nature, and behavior.

There is an inherent risk to this approach: that one might come to view history from a teleological perspective, recognizing in Fascism and racism the end result of the Enlightenment. Mosse himself recognized this danger: "I have been accused, not without reason, of writing teleological history, that is to say, history which always looked to the future, ending up in the Fascist or Nazi embrace. However, Fascism did represent the climax of many of the trends which have interested me."[17] Even his studies on the formation of masculine ideals locate their moment of climax, the codification of an image of man—an embodiment of neoclassical ideals of beauty,

harmony, and virtue—in Fascism. Nevertheless, Mosse was most interested in tracing the origins of the cultural forces that would later find their ultimate fulfillment in Fascism—without ever believing, however, that "any of these cultural tendencies were necessarily destined to lead to Fascism (or any other political ideology)."[18]

In Mosse's interpretation, racism appropriates different ideological and cultural currents and bends them to its own ends, in a manner that makes it seem acceptable or familiar. From this perspective, bourgeois respectability is a principal and indispensable agent in legitimizing racism in the eyes of the public. Indeed, "though racism was often vague, it clearly embraced all the values of middle-class respectability, and claimed to be their defender."[19] Nationalism and racism reinforce a series of rigid asymmetries: between men and women, between licit and illicit sexual behavior, between the normal and abnormal gender roles that middle-class morality used to impose and inculcate its rules of discipline.

Mosse analyzed these concepts in detail in his *Nationalism and Sexuality* (1982). Here he investigates the history of the body in relation to the history of sexuality, relying heavily on Sander Gilman's elaboration of the concept of stereotype.[20] For Mosse the stereotype of male beauty has its origins in the eighteenth century, as do bourgeois respectability, decency and good manners, and the civilization process. In contrast with Nobert Elias, who sees the development of court society as a key factor in this process, Mosse emphasizes the importance of the growth of pietism and evangelicalism in Germany.[21] For him, religious resurgence is a key factor. In its moral fervor and attack on the licentiousness of court society, Protestantism preaches the return of chastity and purity. Without entering into a discussion of the details of how Catholicism treats masculinity and respectability, Mosse's attention to Protestantism allows him to observe the interwoven relationship between religious and secular morality. The French Revolution also attacks the licentious behavior of court society and proposes the revolutionary fervor of the Jacobins as the force that might redeem French society from its vices and return it on the path toward virtue and moderation. For Mosse, however, respectability truly triumphs with the rise of the middle class. From this perspective, he shares, though not explicitly, the conclusion of Michael Foucault on the role of sexual morality in confirming the social distinction of the middle classes. For the bourgeois, sex functions like blood does for the aristocracy: an instrument for confirming one's status and identity.

Mosse identifies romanticism as another cultural phenomenon that—with its worship of courtly love, ideals of chivalry, and its exaltation of uncorrupted nature—contributed to the popularity of bourgeois respectability. And of course, with positivism, science (in particular medicine) and

law become essential tools for upholding respectability. Mosse also contends that the youthful ferment of the movements of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century like decadentism or feminism brought about a crisis of masculinity that only served to reinforce the hypervirile, aggressive, misogynistic, and homophobic traits of males.[22] In this case, the fear of degeneration and the spread of perversions created the need to reaffirm the dominant normative model and to accentuate an attitude of intolerance toward all alternative models.

Upon closer analysis, this concept is more complex than Mosse made it out to be. In their studies on Victorian America, Mark Carnes and Clyde Griffen have demonstrated how the lifestyles of different men varied substantially depending on their social class and context.[23] They also stress the importance of studying practices in addition to discourses in order to form an objective idea of the true impact of cultural constructs of masculinity. For example, alongside the development of a hypervirile male model and the rigid distinction between gender roles described by Mosse, the end of the nineteenth century also witnessed the development of a certain degree of male domesticity. With an increase in free time, men began to spend more time at home and with their families, devoting themselves to the education of their children, gardening, and hobbies. Mosse's analysis of the martial male, which focuses almost exclusively on the middle class, does not fully capture the various connotations of masculinity provided by artisans, peasants, and manual laborers and undervalues the close relationship between masculinity and work, production and reproduction.

Mosse was successful, however, in observing how the same revolutionary forces, carried forward by the younger generation and the avant-garde movements, would eventually be absorbed and tamed by nationalism and the bourgeois way of life.[24] In Mosse's analysis, the shift from the desire to modify one's existence to a necessity to integrate, from contestation to conformism, does not result from a need to assimilate alone but is, in large part, driven by an appropriation and cooptation of this spirit from above. For Mosse, a perfect example of this was Zionism's attempt to appeal to the model of the hypervirile male (robust and combative), a model that was commonly used to highlight an opposing image of the Jew as cowardly, unwarlike, weak, and feminine.

The Great War and the Militarization of Masculinity

For Mosse, the Great War is the culmination of the alliance between nationalism and bourgeois respectability, the moment in which youthful enthusiasm is channeled into the rigid binaries of military discipline and a code

of honor. With the war, the nation becomes a barrier against any propulsion toward change. The volunteer spirit and the enthusiasm expressed in 1914 by the Community of August, the desire to express one's virility, and the determination to liberate oneself from the narrow-minded confines of bourgeois life would be reined in and controlled within the camaraderie of the barracks and the banal and inhuman life of the trenches. At the same time, however, Mosse stresses that the war was also responsible for intensifying certain elements of masculinity, such as aggressiveness, violence, and disrespect for life. With the war, he writes, "manhood was cast in the warrior image," putting on display the latently aggressive face of the model of masculinity.[25] It represented a clear threat to respectability. Civilians, by putting on uniforms and carrying guns, were transformed into individuals quite different from the peaceful, well-mannered bourgeois. The new barbarians in Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel*, with their cult of brutal force and their bodies "forged of storms of steel," do not care about the conventions of the civilized world, which they explicitly defy. As a result, "such a new race of men might easily leave respectability a casualty on the battlefield."[26] Mosse's vision of masculinity is characterized by a certain unresolved ambiguity between two models: an ideal type of bourgeois respectability (frugal, industrious, proper, and restrained) and a strong and courageous warrior type (combative and resolute, bloodthirsty, overcome by his own virile fervor): on the one hand, masculinity is seen as banal, civil, and peaceful, and on the other, it is seen as heroic, violent, and militaristic. Never having completely clarified the reasons for the permanence of the code of bourgeois respectability, Mosse was unable to correctly interpret the relationship between combative masculinity and disciplined masculinity, something that was present up until the First World War and in some respects even afterward. The two models seemed destined to coexist. This emerges in the letters, diaries, and memoirs of soldiers who fought on the battlefields. These documents paint us a picture in which the aggressiveness, heroism, and combative virility exalted by the most extreme interventionist groups never cancelled out the inherited sense of self-control, sense of duty, and nobility of character typical of the mannerly official and the gentlemanly bourgeois.[27] This is also partially a result of the enduring presence of titles and modes of behaviors typical of the nobility among high-ranking officials, something that worked as a barrier against the type of unrestrained aggressive virility and violence of the battlefield to which Mosse refers.[28]

Also, the reality of the effects of war on masculinity does not completely match up with Mosse's suggestion that conflict reinforces virility, making it more aggressive and less vulnerable to effeminacy. Mosse observes that life in the trenches transforms the combatant army into a virtual *Männerbund*, made up of men who are united with one another by a sense of camaraderie

so strong that it brings the group closer together, distancing above all the feminine sphere. At the same time, however, the experience of war also leads to a sense of lessened virility due to the absence of strongly defined gender roles and, above all, the association of soldiers' fears and anxieties, signs of weakness and fragility, with feminization.[29] The trauma of the event creates a new way of experiencing emotions, which might mean moments of losing self-control or panic, behavior that would throw the model of the hypervirile soldier into question. Mosse himself stresses that society considers this kind of behavior (fear, alienation, cowardliness) a threat to the masculine model of the combative soldier.[30] Wounded and disabled soldiers are seen as having assumed even more explicit feminine characteristics: passivity, dependence on others (often on women), fragility, vulnerability, infantilization, and feminization. The loss of mobility, strength, and action, all of which are considered indispensable for a soldier, cause terrible shock and problems of gender identity. War, then, can both reinforce and weaken the image of the virile soldier and the combative model of masculinity. The experience sees both the exaltation of a strengthened combat body and the fear of an impotent and mutilated body. This ambivalence is an inherent part of war itself. As Joanna Bourke notes, we naturally focus more on the act of dying than on killing, but both of these possibilities are always present in war, making it just as terrifying as it is seductive.[31]

The personal stories of the men who fought at the front offer us a dual image of war: on the one hand, a traumatic event from which a new man arises and, on the other, an opportunity to reestablish the ideal of the traditional gentleman in uniform. The war also accentuates the desire to seek refuge in the company of family in the domestic sphere and to trade one's uniform and the military life for traditional and simple bourgeois street clothes, the life one had before. The suspension of the rules of cohabitation is only momentary, making the desire to return home and take up one's life again even stronger. The image of the soldier who desires to return to the domestic nest is quite different from the tough, fearless, and combative image of the soldier that the totalitarian regimes would paint.

It is precisely the success of Fascism that would lead historians to stress only the brutalizing effects of war, seen as the inevitable origin of the violence that came between the wars. For example, Hannah Arendt writes, "[V]ery few of this generation were cured of their war enthusiasm by actual experience of its horrors. The survivors of the trenches did not become pacifists. They cherished the experience which, they thought, might serve to separate them definitely from the hated surroundings of respectability."[32]

Also for Mosse, "a certain brutalization of politics" and a "heightened indifference toward human life" characterize the postwar period and were a result of the dehumanization of the enemy during conflict. In his opinion,

"there is little doubt that the myth of the war experience made fascist brutality more acceptable and Fascism itself more attractive."[33] In Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker's interpretation of the war as the foundation and precursor for Fascism and Nazism, they uncritically apply Mosse's interpretation by accentuating the role of the destructive crusade against the enemy.[34] Though we can claim that "in the extraordinary psychological climate of the trenches one encounters the same combination of nihilism, mysticism, resolution, detachment, cruelty and cynicism, which will be the essence of the fascist type,"[35] it is also true that Fascism itself impresses this type of bellicose, violent, and virile male image on the collective consciousness. It is Mosse himself, in his study of the cult of the fallen soldier, who teaches us that the continuation of war during peacetime was an initiative of the totalitarian regimes, which appropriated and exploited the collective memory, selectively using those elements of the war experience that were most suitable to their ideologies.

Fascism: An Antibourgeois Bourgeois Revolution

According to Mosse, with Fascism there is a clear tension between bourgeois respectability and what Gentile has defined "respectability in uniform."[36] The totalitarian regimes seek to promote their ambivalent internal impulses: opposing impulses toward destruction and conservation, militancy and protection of traditional morals, order and change. Mosse's definition of Fascism as an antibourgeois revolution carried out by young bourgeois men is effective in synthesizing the dualism of Fascism and Nazism, their criticism of certain bourgeois values and simultaneous reliance on bourgeois respectability to tame the revolutionary spirit at their cores. For example, the Nazi and fascist models of the new man only coincided in part with that of the *squadrista* or *SA*. Because of their rebelliousness, these soldiers needed to be reined in and transformed into respectable men, without however forcing them to cast off their brown or black shirts or altogether renounce their militancy. In my opinion, the most characteristic element of Fascism and Nazism in relation to sexual morals and the male image is how the dual connotation of respectability and masculinity allows the two regimes to obtain consensus in various sectors of the population and to tailor their political message depending on the audience. The image of Mussolini has this same fundamental ambivalence: one moment a young fascist rebel in black, a fearless leader, and an insatiable lover; and the next, a member of the bourgeoisie in a bowler hat, discerning statesman and family man. As Mosse would write, "[T]he intrinsic contradiction between the need for action and the maintaining of discipline belongs to all Fascisms and it also determines their attitude towards sexuality."[37]

Mosse, however, did not fully clarify how these two aspects were able to coexist. In the end, he either addressed them alternately as distinctive elements of the image of the fascist man or privileged the category of bourgeois respectability without giving proper consideration to the antibourgeois impulses of Fascism. According to Mosse, after an initial moment of dynamism, "Fascism quickly became a defender of a generally accepted lifestyle and set of values." Seeing then that the male image tends to transmit the message of a controlled virility, "one observes that, despite all of its aggressiveness, the new fascist man is fundamentally the ideal type of the middle class."[38] However, this interpretation, which tends to level differences by having every characteristic enter under the category of a bourgeois model of masculinity that is valid for the entire West during the interwar years—for the American college student, members of the *Hitlerjugend*, the English gentleman, and the militants of the *SS*—Mosse runs the risk of not fully defining what was specific about Fascism. Only in his *Autorappresentazione negli anni Trenta negli Stati Uniti e in Europa*[39] would he attempt to compare different national contexts, making a connection between the figures of the American cowboy and the European soldier: the first, fearless and untamable; the second, regimented and ready to fulfill his duty. For Mosse, however, aesthetics tend to bring together these different ideals of masculinity, represented in Italy and Germany by the figure of the athlete and in the United States and the Soviet Union by the figure of the worker. Mosse also overly identifies the male image with that of the fascist male, for him the final apex of modern masculinity. The differences are there in substance, not only in form. One observes this in the American context in the two disparate figures of Theodore Roosevelt (proponent of the strenuous life) and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (calm and resolved).[40] Sexual repression and respect for traditional morals are ingrained aspects of authoritarian regimes—used by Franco in Spain, Pinochet in Chile, Mussolini in Italy, Castro in Cuba—but the specificity of these manifestations across different nations should be studied more closely, with attention to the different cultural and religious traditions.

For Mosse, then, modern masculinity and bourgeois respectability can serve as the genesis of various phenomena, including different ideologies and political movements. His interpretation of Fascism and Nazism as "'ideal' bourgeois revolutions"[41] is most likely—as Steven Ascheim maintains—"the most startling of all Mosse's theses."[42] Not surprisingly, the criticism it incited was fierce enough to merit some clarification on Mosse's part,[43] perhaps most importantly because his interpretation of the Nazis as the evil incarnation of the middle class, intent on preserving its way of life against the threat of degeneration, ends up considering the Holocaust an expression of this same bourgeois experience. His thesis, of course, is intentionally

provocative, aimed as it is at pointing out the negative aspects of conformism and liberalism's delay in recognizing and protecting the rights of the individual. Mosse himself recognized that he had forced the concept by understating the dialectical tension in the notion of an antibourgeois revolution whose very aim was the preservation of bourgeois respectability: "My analysis of Fascism as a bourgeois revolution has often been criticized because it is difficult to demonstrate how the need for perpetual war and a climate of aggressiveness go together with what are considered family values [. . .] so in the fascist movements we notice a conflict between the aggressive component and what we can refer to as family values. Nevertheless, also bourgeois values were at time aggressive, in the name of discipline and moral regeneration, against outsiders who threatened respectability."[44]

According to Mosse, the totalitarian regimes and the middle class shared the same enemies: the "outsiders." However, there is a substantial difference between those who consider intolerance normal and those who consider it exceptional. Democratic societies allow for circumstances of barbarization and discrimination that are not necessarily founded in racism, in the same way that that the institutions of the law sometimes limit individual liberties in exceptional circumstances. In order to make this exception stand for an entire system, one must twist the case to such a degree that the comparison is no longer valid. Mosse himself admitted that "normal society would not imagine exterminating [the outsiders], but it would want to exclude them: obviously the difference between extermination and exclusion is considerable"[45]—considerable enough to delegitimize a comparison between middle-class democracies and fascist totalitarianisms.

These differences are even more evident if, in addition to the repressive and political attitudes toward outsiders, one analyzes how sexuality was promoted.

The Repressive Hypothesis

Mosse was without a doubt one of the first historians to analyze the importance of *eros* in the German youth movements of the beginning of the twentieth century and in the Nazi youth movements of the 1930s. As he recognized, "I wrote the first serious analysis ever on the connection between National Socialism and sexuality, published in 1965 [. . .] It was clear to me from the beginning that National Socialism could only be understood if it were interpreted by focusing on it as a movement of men and masculinity."[46] The role played by the *Männerbund* is essential for understanding the nature of the connection uniting these groups of men formed around friendship, the exaltation of beauty and nature, and the sublimation of sexuality and homoeroticism. For Mosse, the latent

conflict between respectability and *Männerbund* creates an inevitable tension between male camaraderie and the warrior image of fascist political organizations and the model of the bourgeois family man.[47] This conflict is then resolved by National Socialism, which defends the puritan cause while eliminating its most extreme representatives. Already in 1934, "all these things offensive to bourgeois ethics were rooted out of the party. The sexual license of some of the Volkish groups and the early National Socialists was abolished," and the nudism initiated by the youth movement was banned. The tie between *Bund* and *eros* was severed.[48]

Mosse's innovative ideas inspired new studies on the relationship between Fascism and Nazism and sexuality, which have broadened and in part modified his interpretation. For example, scholars have questioned Mosse's understanding of the totalitarian regimes as repressive structures that protect the trinomial morality, law, and order (or to use one of Mussolini's slogans, Mussolini, God, country, and family). Mosse's analysis is inevitably influenced by the climate of liberation of the 1970s, in which a new relationship with sexuality had led to a bitter protest against respectable society, with its "hypocritical" and repressive forms of tolerance. Mosse himself admits to having accentuated the repressive aspects of totalitarianism, probably because he was unable to "suppress sufficiently my anger over the fact that the strictures of respectability had made my own life so much more difficult."[49]

Nevertheless, Mosse's studies, together with those of Foucault, on the process of normatization and medicalization of sexual behaviors and the birth of biopolitics led the way to a new understanding of power as an entity that works not only through repression but also through the production and retention of knowledge. Later studies that shifted the focus of their attention from discourse to behavior and identity once again threw into question the repressive hypothesis, to such a degree that even the Victorian age came to seem much less sexophobic and homophobic than it had before.[50] This approach was successful at showing how an overly rigid vision of masculinity had created a dichotomous juxtaposition between type and countertype, between hegemonic and subaltern models, while in reality the definitions and practices associated with being male are much more nuanced. Actually, it is the accentuation of the hypervirile characteristics of man that makes gender identity even more fragile, since the existence of rules presupposes the possibility that they will be violated, leading often to the coexistence of prescribed and transgressive behaviors. What emerges in the case of dictatorial regimes, then, are subjectivities negotiated through compromise, similar to what Judith Butler defines as "regulatory fictions":[51] discursive constructions that the more rigid they become, the more likely they are to fail.

As a result the relationship between norms and transgressions becomes more problematic. This emerges in the differences of behavior in the colonies with respect to the homeland,[52] in Fascism and Nazism's attitudes toward homosexuality,[53] and their repression of more subtle propulsions toward forms of sexuality seen as nonconformist. In relation to Germany, Dagmar Herzog has pointed out that it is inappropriate to only consider the Third Reich in terms of sexual repression, because in addition to promoting traditional family values, National Socialism advocated prostitution, extramarital relationships, and nudism.[54] The point is not to negate the repressive nature of these regimes and their imposition of law and order but rather to underline how they limited *and* promoted sexuality.

In evaluating this attitude toward masculinity and sexuality, one should be aware of the specific groups in question. Without a doubt, above all for young fascists and Nazis there was a strong sense that one could experience his corporeity in a collective dimension and embrace freer and less inhibited forms of sexuality.[55] The tension between repression and tolerance, change and preservation, new morals and traditional values remains a constant element of the totalitarian regimes, though it has yet to be established what factors favor the prevalence of one attitude over the other, just as it remains unclear what the connection is between the glorification of the male body, nude and beautiful, and the sensualism of the male body in works such as the Stadio dei Marmi or Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*.

Though these tensions—between tradition and modernity, bourgeois respectability and respectability in uniform, norms and transgressions, aggressive and disciplined masculinity, individualism and camaraderie, State and family, self-control and libertinism—deserve greater attention, it seems clear that the aspiration to have a fully furnished house was an important motivation for the adherence of a population to Fascism, a population that was in search of stability and a set system of behavioral norms.[56] The fully furnished house described by Mosse, built and reinforced by the totalitarian regimes, is, however, always at risk of being destroyed and replaced with a military State barracks, in which all distinctions between private and public are erased.

Notes

1. Simon De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 5.
2. Maurizio Vaudagna, "Gli studi sul maschile: scopi, metodi e prospettive storiografiche," in Sandro Bellassai and Maria Malatesta, eds., *Genere e mascolinità. Uno sguardo storico* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2000), 15.
3. The first stimulus to broaden our vision not only to women but also to men is given by Natalie Zemon Davis's fundamental essay of 1976, in which she

suggested, "[W]e should now be interested in the history of both women and men. We should not be working on the subjected sex any more than a historian of class can focus exclusively on peasants" ("Women's History in Transition," *Feminist Studies*, 3, 1975–76, 90).

4. Rudy Koshar, "George Mosse e gli interrogativi della storia tedesca," *Passato e presente*, 58, 2003, 104.
5. Mosse comes to the genre through masculinity and to masculinity through history *tout court*, while the reverse is the path of men's studies, which, not surprisingly fearing marginalization, continually claims the importance of integrating their particular point of view in the broader context of traditional historical studies.
6. About the history of homosexuality, Mosse writes for example, "There has been little change in the perception of Gays for over a century, in how they are perceived and pictured. If we want to change all that we must know where we stand" ("Why Gay History?" speech in Madison on March 30, 1996, now in http://history.wisc.edu/mosse/george_mosse/why_gay_history.htm).
7. In his memoirs, Mosse openly admitted that "the attempt to make sense out of the history of my own century . . . was also a means of understanding my own past." George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 176.
8. See David Gross, "Between Myth and Reality: George L. Mosse's Confrontations with History," *Telos*, 119, 2001, 162–64.
9. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 27.
10. Ibid., 57.
11. Ibid., 176.
12. In the letter of recommendation for his first academic position at the University of Iowa in 1945, his teacher at Harvard, Charles Howard McIlwain, although convinced that he have no prejudice, felt compelled to write that "Mr. Mosse has manners very well educated even if it is a jew." From Mosse's speech given on the occasion of his retirement, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, June 17, 1985, now in Pier Francesco Listri, *George Mosse* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1990), 56.
13. Emilio Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore. George L. Mosse e la catastrofe dell'uomo moderno* (Rome: Carocci, 2007); see also Renato Moro, "George L. Mosse, storico dell'irrazionalismo moderno," in Alessandra Staderini, Luciano Zani, and Francesca Magni, eds., *La grande guerra e il fronte interno. Studi in onore di George Mosse* (Camerino: Università degli Studi di Camerino, 1998), 21–36.
14. Ibid., 25. On the idea of impassioned detachment, see Ze'ev Mankowitz, *George Mosse and Jewish History*, in *George Mosse: On the Occasion of His Retirement. 17.6.85* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986), xxi.
15. Robert Nye, "Mosse, Masculinity, and the History of Sexuality," in Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John. Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 183–201.

16. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
17. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 238.
18. Nicolò Zapponi, "Mosse e il problema delle origini culturali del fascismo: significato di una svolta," *Storia Contemporanea*, 3, 1976, 477.
19. George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1978), 234.
20. Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
21. See George L. Mosse, "Norbert Elias: The Civilizing Process," *New German Critique*, 15, 1978, 178–83.
22. See George L. Mosse, "Virilità e decadentismo," *Sodoma*, 5, 1993, 91–101.
23. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings of Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
24. Mosse also critically analyzes the risk that post-1968 society could shift from nonconformist to conformist—from being provocative minority to an absorbed trend.
25. "It is significant that the search for a 'new man,' which started before the war, focused upon a militant masculinity. The war strengthened this emphasis." George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 60.
26. George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), 155.
27. See Lorenzo Benadusi, "Borghesi in Uniform: Masculinity, Militarism, and the Brutalization of Politics from World War I to the Rise of Fascism," in Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, eds., *In the Society of Fascist: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 40–67.
28. See Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).
29. See Françoise Thébaud, "The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division," in Georges Duby, Michelle Perrot, and Françoise Thébaud, eds. *Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*. Vol. 5, *A History of Women in the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 21–75.
30. George L. Mosse, "Shell-Shock as a Social Disease," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1, 2000, 101–8.
31. Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (New York: Basic, 1999).
32. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 328–29.
33. George L. Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Howard Ferting, 1980), 173.
34. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *La violenza, la crociata, il lutto. La Grande Guerra e la storia del Novecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), 25.

35. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, "Introduzione," in Paul Fussell, ed., *La Grande Guerra e la memoria moderna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1984), xvii; English version: *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also for Mosse, "the new fascist man exemplified this combination of war and death" (Mosse, "L'olocausto, la morte e la memoria della guerra," in Staderini, Zani, and Magni, eds., *La grande guerra e il fronte interno*, 15).
36. Gentile revealed how Mosse—in his studies on sexuality and masculinity—overlooked these antithetical aspects of respectability in uniform and bourgeois respectability, leading him to equate the fascist with the ideal bourgeois. In my opinion, however, the contraposition between the two should not be exaggerated, because it is precisely the dialectic and the coexistence of the two aspects that provides us with a better understanding of Fascism. See Emilio Gentile, "L'uomo nuovo' del fascismo. Riflessioni su un esperimento totalitario di rivoluzione antropologica," in *Storia e interpretazione del fascismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2002), 235–64.
37. "The tension between the ideal of masculinity and family life was common to all forms of Fascism: on the one hand there was the covenant among males that was believed to determine the destiny of the state; on the other, the virtues of a bourgeois family life that Fascism promised to protect." George L. Mosse, "Estetica fascista e società: alcune considerazioni," in Angelo Del Boca, Massimo Legnani, and Mario G. Rossi, eds., *Il regime fascista. Storia e storiografia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1995), 112.
38. George L. Mosse, *La nazione, le masse e la "nuova politica"* (Rome: Di Rienzo, 1999), 39.
39. In Maurizio Vaudagna, ed., *L'estetica della politica. Europa e America negli anni Trenta* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1989), 3–23.
40. See Arnaldo Testi, "L'autobiografia di Theodore Roosevelt: la faticosa costruzione di un forte e maschio carattere," *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea*, 1, 1991, 42–68; and Maurizio Vaudagna, "Victorian Virility, Democratic Emotionalism and Patriotic Citizenship in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats," in Raffaella Baritono, Daria Frezza, Alessandra Lorini, Maurizio Vaudagna, and Elisabetta Vezzosi, eds., *Public and Private in American History: State, Family, Subjectivity in the Twentieth Century* (Turin: Otto, 2003), 573–608.
41. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 7. Mosse's thesis of Fascism as an ideal bourgeois revolution has nothing to do with the Marxist approach, because he believes the bond between the middle class and Fascism is due to cultural reasons and not to economic factors.
42. Steven E. Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80: A Critical Laudatio," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2, 1999, 304.
43. To limit ourselves to criticism by Italian historiography to Mosse's thesis that "the concept of respectability has held a special place in the rise of Fascism," see Massimo L. Salvadori, "Niente sesso siam fascisti, recensione a Sessualità e nazionalismo," *La Stampa*, February 2, 1985; Mario Corona, "Il re è nudo, recensione a L'immagine dell'uomo," *L'Indice*, 9, 1997, 39; Isabella Bossi

Fedrigotti, "L'uomo tutto muscoli e torace negli anni beati del patriarcato, recensione all'Immagine dell'uomo," *Corriere della Sera*, July 5, 1997.

44. Mosse, *La nazione, le masse e la "nuova politica,"* 20–21.
45. Ibid., 43.
46. Interview with Mosse by Irene Runge and Uwe Stelbrink, "Always an Emigre: Conversations with George L. Mosse," now in http://mosseprogram.wisc.edu/george_mosse_interview.pdf.
47. According to Mosse, the tension between the homoeroticism of Männerbund and respectability manifests itself most clearly in French Fascism, where there is no central authority strong enough to impose a strict control over behavior (George L. Mosse, "Homosexualité et fascisme français," *Société*, March 17, 1988, 14–16).
48. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 309.
49. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 180.
50. Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses: The Bourgeois Experience; Victoria to Freud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); and Graham Robb, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 2003).
51. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
52. See, for example, Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); and Giulietta Stefani, *Colonia per maschi. Italiani in Africa orientale: Una storia di genere* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2007).
53. Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); and Andrew Hewitt, *Political Inversions: Homosexuality, Fascism, and the Modernist Imaginary* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
54. See Dagmar Herzog, "Hubris and Hypocrisy, Incitement and Disavowal: Sexuality and German Fascism," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11, no. 1–2, 2002, 3–21; Annette F. Timm, "Sex with a Purpose: Prostitution, Veneral Disease, and Militarized Masculinity in the Third Reich," ibid., 223–55; and Chad Ross, *Naked Germany: Health, Race, and the Nation* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).
55. See Robert G. Waite, "Teenage Sexuality in Nazi Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 3, 1998, 434–76; about Italy, see Paolo Nello, *L'avanguardismo giovanile alle origini del fascismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1978).
56. According to Mosse, Fascism and Nazism arose from "men again wish[ing] for a fully furnished home where what is beautiful and gives pleasure should not be separated from the useful and the necessary. However removed from a true humanism, the new politics provided one such home." George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Ferting, 1975), 216. On this point, see also Chapter 9 in this volume.

4

"The Outsider as Insider"

George Mosse, German Jews, Italian Jews

Simon Levis Sullam

Between Autobiography and Historical Method

As George Mosse made clear in his autobiography written toward the end of his life, his condition as an outsider was a major influence and motivating force in his work as a historian of modern Europe, and the question of the relation between outsider and insider emerged as a central preoccupation of his entire oeuvre. "My status as a real or potential outsider," Mosse wrote, "a Jew living in a decidedly hostile environment during my formative years, was bound to leave its mark, as was my existence as a sexual outsider."[1] Mosse also noted, "Concern with outsiderdom continued to determine much of [the] content [of my work]"; this resulted in the attempt "to show how the fate of outsiders is part of the essential workings of our society, and how, in turn, society itself created the image of the outsider, the shape which he took in people's minds."[2] According to Saul Friedländer, Mosse came to elaborate an actual "theory of outsiderdom,"[3] which sustained his interpretation of the history of racism up to its most tragic climax, the Holocaust—another central concern, or nightmare, that obsessed Mosse throughout his life and work, as he himself and others have pointed out.[4]

This article looks at some aspects and implications of the concern with the relationship between outsider and insider in Mosse's work on German Jews, and it highlights the broader relevance of these categories, and of Mosse's approach, in the study of Jewish emancipation and assimilation in Europe. It does so by proposing some parallels between the German Jewish

experience and the experience of Italian Jews, although Mosse, despite his evident fascination with Italy[5] and his interest in Italian Fascism, wrote very little about the latter. There were clear and significant differences between the Italian and German contexts and consequently in the Italian Jewish and German Jewish experiences, both in quantitative and in qualitative terms, and I do not mean to overstate the parallel between these two histories.

Around 1900, thirty years after the complete unification of both countries, Germany and Italy counted 600,000 and almost 35,000 Jewish citizens, respectively (i.e., approximately 1 percent and 0.1 percent of their populations). For the first time, the Jewish group was enjoying civil and political rights in the two national contexts. Such conditions of equality had been reached through different paths, though in both cases 1848 had represented a turning point, albeit temporary. Germany, however, had known anti-Semitic movements since the beginning of the nineteenth century, which had become formal political organizations in the 1880s. These were characterized ideologically by a combination of nationalism and aspects of Protestantism and, at times, Catholicism, and they displayed overt racist components. Italy had only seen occasional and isolated episodes of anti-Jewish hatred, although the Catholic majority culture could feed religious prejudices among the Italian population. The German-Jewish symbiosis had produced, between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, outstanding cultural and intellectual results, both in the Jewish and in the broader German context. The Italian Jewish world had not been as lively and productive in the same period, with the exception of a few noticeable voices and experiences. While keeping these differences in mind, I would like to use the comparison between Germany and Italy to point to the fruitfulness of the insider/outsider couple in the investigation of both cases and, more broadly, of the historical process of Jewish integration within European societies, especially in the modern period. Mosse himself was aware of the broad significance of his approach to the relationship between outsider and insider. Though concerned with the German case, the historian also reckoned that his observations might hold true for the French, the English, or even the American context, and likewise beyond the Jewish experience. As Mosse wrote with his typically evocative style in the introduction to *Masses and Man*, "What Proust observed [concerning homosexuality and Judaism] at the turn of the century in *Remembrance of Things Past* would hold true in equal measure for the first Jew in an Oxford common room or the black at a liberal cocktail party."[6]

In *Confronting History*, Mosse summarized as follows the conclusions of his lifelong investigation into the categories of "insider" and "outsider" in the context of his work on nationalism: "Respectability and nationalism needed discernible and visible foes for their own self-definition. I came to

believe that the existence of outsiderdom was built into modern society as a prerequisite for its continued existence and the self-esteem of its insiders. The insider and the outsider are linked; one cannot exist without the other, just as there can be no ideal type without its antitype. [. . .] Type and antitype are a part of the new politics, living and familiar symbols of nationalism and respectability and of their enemies."[7]

Despite the use of so clear-cut an antinomy, Mosse was aware of further complexities emerging in the relationship between outsider and insider. It was a relationship of constant, unresolved tension, but also of close intimacy, due to the outsider's desire to assimilate and the insider's tendency to coopt and subjugate. "The outsiders wanted to become insiders, and many of them succeeded only too well," Mosse noted in his autobiography. He also emphasized, in the course of an observation referring to the artistic avant-garde and to cultural revolt, but with broader implications for the relationship between majority and minority groups, "Normative society always managed to co-opt the core of the revolt."[8] The majority attracted and subjugated the minority through the norms it imposed. If we consider the autobiographical significance of the categories of outsider and insider for Mosse—namely, his belonging to the Jewish and the German world, as well as his ability to identify not only with the familiar but also with the unfamiliar and even with the foe (including the Nazi)—we could suggest that the relationship between Mosse's two categories may be analyzed not only in terms of antinomy but also in terms of direct relationship. We could therefore propose that the opposing couple "outsider *vs*. insider," central though it has been to the construction of modern European society, may also be reformulated, as a historical reality and as an interpretative tool, in terms of the equivalence "outsider *as* insider." This formula is drawn from the subtitle of Peter Gay's work on *Weimar Culture*, written also in the wake of Mosse's own early studies on German and German Jewish history and to the genesis of which Mosse contributed both directly and indirectly.[9]

In relation to the historical experience of Jewish emancipation, I take the phrase "the outsider as insider" to mean that the Jewish outsider lives in a real or perceived (even self-perceived) condition of inferiority, or at least of nonbelonging, and at the same time is able to participate as an insider to the culture of the majority, of which he represents an expression at once typical and distinct. This two-fold condition may generate, on the cultural and political level, both the original and creative results that derive from a "minority outlook"[10] and a compliant demeanor due to the desire and ability to identify closely with the majority, resulting in integration but also in conformism.[11] The former outcome is characteristic, as we shall see, of Weimar left-wing intellectuals or of Italian Jewish antifascists; the latter, of German Jewish nationalists and of Italian Jewish fascists.

However, even in a state of cultural and political conformism or full integration (the condition of insiderdom), the outsider will still produce and live distinct variants of the culture and experiences of the majority. This aspect of the outsider/insider relationship may be further described and understood through the definition of the German Jewish experience proposed by one of Mosse's most distinguished students and successors, David Sorkin. In *The Transformation of German Jewry*, Sorkin defines German Jewry as a subculture in the following terms: "While it is largely composed of elements of the majority culture, it is nevertheless distinct and functions as a self-contained system of ideas and symbols. There was a creative element in the Jews' encounter with German culture: as they actively transformed whatever they appropriated, their German culture differed from that of the majority society, if only by nuances, social weight and its fusion with elements of Judaism. Thus, while the boundaries separating the subculture from the majority culture were shifting there *were* boundaries."[12]

About a decade earlier, the sociologist Luciano Gallino had argued that Italian Jews might serve as examples of a subculture, which he defined as follows:

> A subset of immaterial and material cultural elements—values, knowledges, languages, rules of conduct, life styles [. . .]—produced and/or used by a sector, or segment or stratum of a society: a class, a regional community, an ethnic minority, a political, religious or sports association, a professional category [. . .] While it shares some of the majority's essential traits, such a subset of cultural elements characterizes itself in the broader context of the dominating culture [. . .] as one of its differentiated variants [. . .], or one of its historical constituents, such as regional or ethnic subcultures.[13]

A combination of Sorkin's and Gallino's definitions of subculture may be applied to both the German and the Italian Jewish experience,[14] and probably to the modern Jewish experience more generally, to characterize identification and belonging and internal differentiation. One could discuss the degree of self-containment of these Jewish subcultures at different periods of history and in different contexts, as well as the shifting relevance and influence of separating boundaries, but the notion of a subset of material and immaterial cultural values and of variants within the majority culture would seem to serve as an apt description of the general social and cultural circumstances of the Jewish community after Emancipation (and perhaps before, so long as the requisite distinctions are made). The introduction within this theoretical framework of Mosse's categories of "outsider" and "insider," however, immediately allows us to emphasize the tensions and contradictions within these systems of cultural and social

relationships, which may first easily and rapidly lead to reversals of the processes of integration, then generate forms of exclusion, and finally unleash hatred and persecution. These general definitions, frameworks, and categories deriving from a "Mossean" approach will now be looked at through particular examples and in the context of specific situations.

Emancipation, Popular Literature, and Anti-Jewish Stereotypes

"What was the route that rendered the Jews the storm center of modern events? Why was it [. . .] that 'hatred of the Jews was perhaps the most sincere emotion' of which Adolf Hitler was capable?"[15] It is rare for the first lines of an oeuvre, and, we may say, the first steps in a lifelong intellectual adventure, to reflect so accurately a historian's enduring concerns. Such is the case, however, with the very first essay devoted by George Mosse to a topic in modern history. As he himself observed some thirty years later: "All my books in one way or the other have dealt with the Jewish catastrophe," an event that Mosse saw as "built into our society and attitudes towards life," so that "nothing in European history is a stranger to the Holocaust."[16] From the outset, Mosse brought a sort of anthropological outlook to the study of modern history, including Jewish history and the history of anti-Semitism, by exploring the profound structures ("the attitudes towards life")[17] of German and European society and imagination. This set his work apart from major studies on Germany and Nazism that were available at the time and cited in the footnotes of his first essays: most prominently the philosophical and politological work of Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951),[18] Alan Bullock's biography of Hitler (1953), and in part also Léon Poliakov's history of anti-Semitism (1955). By means of his essay on Dahn and Freytag and the literary image of the Jew, Mosse set out, for example, to explore the anti-Semitic imaginary of German society between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the pages of two popular novels with Jewish characters.[19] These novels presented Jewish figures who were stereotypically evil, untrustworthy, and physically repugnant: the ideological background was Volkish ideology in the case of Dahn's book and the aspiration to achieve integration into the German middle classes in the case of Freytag's.

Twenty years would pass before anything similar was attempted by Italian historiography: first in an article by Andrew Canepa and then in Lynn Gunzberg's monograph *Strangers at Home*.[20] Despite the value of such contributions, we still lack a cultural history of Italian anti-Semitism or at least a modern history of Italian Jews taking into detailed account the existence and spread among Italians of an anti-Semitic imaginary. Indeed, it is the

voices in favor of emancipation that are usually given most prominence in the historiography of the Jews of Italy and in Italian collective memory.[21] These studies and a few others have begun to look, though still mainly on the literary level, at *l'Ebreo di Verona* by the Jesuit Antonio Bresciani, at passages from the novels by the democratic patriot Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, at *l'Orfana del Ghetto* by Carolina Invernizio, and at other minor literary and political works.[22] This production, stemming from a Catholic religious background, sheds light on an Italian imaginary in which the themes of a Jewish conspiracy, the stereotypes of Jewish usurers,[23] or even—including in secular authors such as Guerrazzi and Invernizio—blood libel can still be detected. If we were to suggest a parallel with Mosse's investigation of the image of the Jew in Dahn and Freytag, a preliminary distinction should be made, since in Germany the impact and spread of Volkish ideology had rendered anti-Semitism an integral part of mainstream patriotic and nationalist discourse. In the Italian case, by contrast, the initial impression one has is that the anti-Semitic imaginary was chiefly characteristic of Catholic literature, emanating as it did from a milieu that was politically opposed to the project and the common discourse of Italian national unification. But a closer examination suggests that this set of beliefs was in fact more widespread, since they may be found in secular authors as well, and they thus bring to light a society in which Catholic anti-Judaic prejudices remain present and active. Mosse's reference to a "liberal anti-Semitism" in the case of Gustav Freytag also suggests a further parallel with the liberal or, more precisely, the democratic Mazzinian Guerrazzi: the two authors could both condemn aspects of the ancient restrictions suffered by the Jewish minority and, at the same time, resort to stereotypical images of the Jew involving racial characterizations and racist undertones or even display centuries-old anti-Judaic motifs. Guerrazzi, in particular, revived in his *L'asino* the myth of "*matzo* bread dipped in blood"; he called the Jews "brothers" "so long as they would cleanse themselves from the leprosy they had brought from Palestine"; and he portrayed his Jewish character Abacuc as an opportunist, behaving in public as a monarchist in the course of the working week, as a republican at home during the Sabbath, but "always [. . .] a usurer."[24] So it was that in the Italian case, too, the elements of an anti-Semitic imaginary—even if they were not, by contrast with Germany, central to patriotic discourse—could be shared by, or at least belong to the repertoire and horizon of expectations of, liberal and even democratic public opinion.[25] After all, in his second venture into the field of modern history, with the essay "Culture, Civilization and Modern Anti-Semitism," George Mosse highlighted in the writings of one of the fathers of German Jewish Emancipation, Christian Wilhelm Dohm, contradictions that seem relevant to the European discourse on the Emancipation of the Jews

more generally. Between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the call for the acknowledgment of the rights of the Jews was intertwined, even in the writings of the emancipationists themselves, with persistently anti-Jewish tropes and stereotypes. This is evident, for example, in the case of the Abbé Gregoire in France, who interspersed his work on the "regeneration of the Jews" with remarks about the "*foetor judaicus*" (the medieval "Jewish stink").[26] But this is also true, for example, in the pages of the economist Carlo Cattaneo, a democratic champion of the rights of Italian Jews, who though explicitly rejecting racial theories still described Jewish economic conduct in terms of the traditional reference to their greed.[27] Finally, in "The Image of the Jew," Mosse raised a question that historians have only recently begun to explore at some length in the German case[28] but still remains in many ways unanswered for Italy beyond what we know of the official attitudes of the upper echelons of the Catholic Church or of the anti-Jewish campaigns waged by the Jesuit periodical *Civiltà Cattolica*.[29] The question is, "What part does the rural priest [. . .], who teaches the catechism and the Crucifixion, play in the spreading of this image of the Jew?"[30] At the same time, the centrality of Volkish thought in German nationalism, underlined by Mosse in his first essays (not without partial concessions—as commentators have noticed—to the *Sonderweg* thesis), as well as the presence of strong anti-Jewish prejudices in the German cultural élite from Wagner to Burckhardt, sheds a specific light on the paradoxes, the dialectics, and the final tragedy of the German-Jewish symbiosis.

Volkish Ideas, Nationalist Ideology, and the Jews

In an essay from the late 1970s, in which he began to address another of the historical questions that would most preoccupy him, George Mosse indicated what he thought was the necessary general approach to the German Jewish experience: "Certain fundamental problems in the German-Jewish dialogue which the war laid bare [. . .] cannot be subsumed under the familiar dichotomy of assimilation and anti-Semitism."[31] This statement, I would suggest, implied the need for a joint exploration of insiderdom (the outcome of assimilation) and outsiderdom (the product of tensions culminating in anti-Semitism): an exploration that might reveal a nexus between the experiences of the outsider and those of the insider and could thus also open up the possibility of analyzing the outsider *as* insider. Mosse had in fact pursued such a line of enquiry as early as 1961, to judge by the particularly disquieting topic he chose for a lecture at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem: "The Influence of the Volkish Idea on German Jewry." The

theme of Volkish ideology had been central to Mosse's recently completed study on *The Crisis of German Ideology*; he would now undertake the controversial task of investigating the presence of nationalist ideology within the Jewish world itself. As Mosse recalls in his autobiography, the original lecture immediately provoked a polemical response from one of his great interlocutors in Israel, Gershom Scholem. Scholem contested the existence of a German-Jewish symbiosis, and although fundamentally he did not share Martin Buber's vision and sensibility, the great scholar of mysticism found it hard to admit the influence of Volkish ideas on such an icon of cultural Zionism.[32] From the outset, Mosse had pointed out the controversial nature of the object of his research: "The title of this [essay] may at first seem presumptuous, for the Volkish movement laid the groundwork for the Jewish catastrophe of our times."[33] But the choice of this paradoxical experience as his starting point resulted precisely from Mosse's characteristic approach toward German and German Jewish history: his desire to empathize with his object of study and, at the same time, to maintain a critical distance and a rational approach; his ability to consider cultural phenomena from the perspective of outsider and insider alike, by identifying with both. In this essay, Mosse described the appropriation, even the introjection by Jews of the German naturalistic and ethnic national ideology, and he identified two distinct phases in this process. The first was the appropriation of Volkish ideology for the rediscovery of a specific Jewish identity as prelude to the new Zionist synthesis (an example was the rediscovery of the Eastern European Chassidic legacy as reconstructed by Martin Buber). The second or alternative appropriation was the Jewish attempt to assimilate the ideals of German patriotic ideology as a means to advance a complete integration of the Jews within the German nation. Mosse emphasized that these processes were also the result of the pressure that came from the spread in German society of stereotypical images of the Jew as "inauthentic" and "rootless." Both these efforts of appropriation and introjection were doomed to fail: the first because the "transference" of Volkish ideology "tended to cloud the uniquely Jewish component of [the Jewish] national awakening"; the second because it was genetically impossible, as "the very awakening of a new German Volkish self-consciousness called for a 'clean separation' and for unity."[34] In the end, a German-Jewish synthesis was inconceivable within a Volkish world view. In his provocative investigation—especially given the period, the early sixties, when it was launched—Mosse was even prepared to consider the case of Jewish extremist groups such as the *Deutschnationale Juden*, led by Max Naumann, who invoked a "German-Jewish race," or that of the *Reichsbund Judischer Frontsoldaten*, which in October 1933 "sent the new Nazi government a declaration affirming its stand along with the German fatherland."[35]

The name of one of these German Jewish patriotic and nationalist groups founded in 1932, the Black Flag (*Schwarze Fahnlein*), calls to mind what one may consider their Italian counterpart—namely, the group of Italian Jews who, in the midthirties, founded in Turin the journal (and the movement) Our Flag (*La Nostra Bandiera*). These "fascist Jews," as they called themselves, attempted an ultrapatriotic synthesis of Fascism and Judaism in a country that was by then under the control of a totalitarian regime and heading toward state anti-Semitism. The "*bandieristi*" considered themselves "Italian fighters and fascists of Jewish religion" who "both in their sincere Italian identity and in their Jewish religiosity" felt offended by antifascist Jews.[36] Nor did such views appear unduly contradictory, since the fascist movement, despite the anti-Jewish posturing of some of its fringe elements, did not have anti-Semitism at its ideological core. This, and the control exerted by the fascist regime on Italian society (including, for example, mandatory membership in the fascist party for all public servants, teachers in public schools, etc.), may account for the adherence of the majority of Jews to Fascism.[37] It is reasonable to say that Italian Jews construed this support as a logical extension of their patriotism and of an allegiance to the Italian nation that had its origins in the *Risorgimento*, the period in which Jewish emancipation had first been granted and members of the elite of the Jewish community had participated in the fight for Italian national independence.

Such experiences, both in the Germany and in the Italy of the early 1930s, raise the question of the condition of the outsider who in part desires and in part is forced to comply with the insider and who eventually becomes an insider, even if, as we said, of a specific kind. In these situations we have to deal not only with a strategy of political conformism but also with a desired condition, such as a minority seeking social integration it may well hope to attain. These conditions and strategies cease, however, to be feasible once political and ideological contradictions emerge in the national discourse and the public sphere, whereupon the process of integration is put into question, reversed, and transformed into the contrary process of persecution, expulsion, and eventually annihilation. Both Italy and Germany would undergo this process of reversal, though following different paths.

Insiders, Outsiders, and the First World War

When George Mosse first turned to the First World War, he began by addressing themes he would thoroughly explore about two decades later in *Fallen Soldier* but also the question of bourgeois "respectability" that

would be at the center of his work on *Nationalism and Sexuality*. His starting point had been, once again, the Jewish experience. In the essay "Jews and the German War Experience, 1914–1918," Mosse observed, "Most German Jews succumbed to the almost irresistible temptation to share to the full the German war experience."[38] In this observation, we see Mosse as, to quote Stephen Aschheim,[39] the investigator of "the manifold strategies of inclusion and exclusion" and thus as a historian deeply preoccupied by "insiderdom" and "outsiderdom." The boundaries of the national community were severely tested by the experience of war: participation in the conflict was only possible through the acceptance of a shared national mythology and of codes of conduct that were supposed to be both "virile" and "respectable." In such a context the Jew was once again forced to face and, so to speak, prove wrong anti-Jewish stereotypes of weakness and effeminacy but also of inappropriate and untrustworthy conduct. As Mosse further underlined, "Not only did the Germanic stereotype receive renewed impetus through the war experience, but also the ideals of simplicity and modesty that were part of the myth of camaraderie as symbolized in the resting places of the fallen."[40] The Jew in part desired and in part was compelled to comply with these ideals at a time of necessary national cohesion. But Mosse's main emphasis was on the Christian mythology and the imaginary of sacrifice produced by the war: if "mass death was central to World War I," he observed, then "the only possible confrontation was to transcend it, and this was done by the analogy of death for the fatherland to the passion and sacrifice of Christ."[41] Consequently, "The cross became a national symbol for a war that was regarded as holy by all combatants,"[42] Mosse wrote, in the course of pointing out the conditions and premises for inclusion and insiderdom, as well as the constraints they generated. Just a few lines earlier he had delineated the experience of the outsider in such a context: this was an experience of compulsion, sometimes leading to religious camouflage, and at other times to a desired integration: "That sometimes Jews were buried under crosses on the battle field becomes meaningful in this context, and so does the fact that [in a poem] one Jewish officer immediately connect[ed] his presumed death with the plain wooden cross under which he w[ould] rest."[43] With such examples, Mosse offered a striking representation of the consequences of the spread of Christian symbols during the war.

Some of Mosse's observations and suggestions concerning the German Jewish experience of the First World War can, once again, be applied to the Italian case. If we examine with a "Mossean" eye a commemorative volume edited by the Consortium of the Italian Jewish Communities and published in Turin in 1921 by the press of the Jewish assimilationist periodical *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, a number of Mosse's insights will be confirmed by the Italian experience as well. We will recognize the influence of bourgeois

models of respectability as well as the blatant celebration of virility and heroism as essential factors in the construction of the memory of Jewish participation in the war. The national element (and thus the question of inclusion and insiderdom) are emphasized to the highest degree in this publication, while the Jewish component, if it were not for the title of the volume and the names of the hundreds of Italian Jews portrayed, is wholly neglected, even excised. Furthermore, Mosse's findings concerning the spread, indeed, the forcible imposition, of a Christian mythology regarding the war (as seen from the perspective of the Jew as outsider) apply to the case of Italian Jews as well. In Catholic Italy, such mythology was actually embraced, with Jewish graves occasionally being marked by a cross, thus producing a condition of imposed, or at times desired, inclusion and "insiderdom."[44] At the same time, it is possible to discern Jewish hesitation and resistance—as expressed by those who felt themselves to be "outsiders," or rather "insiders as outsiders"—toward this Catholic-centered, religious interpretation of sacrifice.[45] These tensions show how also the modern experience of the Jews of Italy cannot be construed as an inexorable and painless path toward integration within the Italian nation, its mythology, and its collective memory but should be viewed rather as a more tortuous and conflictual process and condition, displaying tensions partly similar to those experienced by other Western and Central European Jewish communities.

In the course of reflecting on the memory of the First World War, Mosse also paused to consider the final reversal of the processes of Jewish identification with the war myths and of the inclusion of the Jews within the nation at war. This reversal would indeed "end with the expulsion of the Jew from participation in the national myth."[46] The process can be documented also in the Italian memory of the war—for example, in an episode recorded by the fascist minister of education Giuseppe Bottai in his diary. Bottai recalls Mussolini telling him, at the time of the fascist anti-Semitic turn of 1938, of the irritation he had felt upon seeing a cross on the grave of Roberto Sarfatti (the son of his biographer and lover Margherita), who had been killed in the war at the age of 17. However, in the case just mentioned, the process of reversal would culminate in an outright refusal to grant the Jewish community of Venice permission to name its school, established by the fascist "racial laws," after the young Sarfatti (who had been posthumously awarded a golden medal).[47] By proposing to commemorate its fallen son through the name of the Jewish school, the community had made a last, desperate attempt to remind Italian society of the Jewish patriotic contribution to the war and thus to reaffirm its inclusion within the Italian nation. At that stage, however, the authorities' and, we may add, society's response would be refusal and permanent exclusion.

Weimar Intellectuals and Italian Jewish Antifascists

George Mosse regarded himself as a "child of [his] century," in his "anxieties" and in his "fears," but he also shared some of his century's passions, even if he obviously execrated Fascism and kept Communism at arm's length. Where his passions are concerned, a careful consideration of Mosse's complicated attitude toward Zionism would be of particular interest, given his evolution from a critical distance, even a rational condemnation, to the emotional and at times proud identification of the persecuted and the refugee with a reborn Judaism. The case of Zionism came perhaps to represent for Mosse—as he conceded in his autobiography—the only nationalism with which he was, at any rate emotionally, in sympathy.[48]

Here, then, we may for once consider Mosse's reflections not on persecutors and political foes but on a historical experience that he viewed with admiration and was sometimes prone to idealize—namely, that of left-wing intellectuals during the Weimar republic. This will also suggest a further (on this occasion positive) parallel between German and Italian history: a parallel that struck Mosse directly and might have led him to draw an analogy between the German-Jewish and the Italian-Jewish symbiosis. This aspect of Mosse's research would eventually find expression in the book that he considered his "most personal, almost a confession of faith"[49]: *German Jews beyond Judaism* (1985). The preliminary exploration of this topic is contained in the closing chapter of the volume *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left and the Search for a "Third Force" in Pre-Nazi Germany*, and it derived from a paper dating to 1964. Here Mosse studied the "third way" that had crossed Europe in the 1920s and had involved in different and complex ways both fascists and antifascists. He looked in particular at those left-wing intellectuals who, during the Weimar republic, had proposed a revision of Marxism through the return to Kantian Enlightenment values and through the attempt at formulating a novel synthesis between socialism and liberalism. Mosse could not help but notice that most of these intellectuals had Jewish origins and that such origins had had a profound impact on their ideology and ideals. He thus wrote, "Without doubt this factor [of their Jewish origin] contributed to the isolation of these intellectuals within the population [. . .] The ethical impulse of the Enlightenment, the emphasis on reason which characterized that age, had remained very much alive within the Jewish bourgeoisie throughout the nineteenth century. [. . .] The feeling of being a powerless minority in a Germany where Jewish emancipation had never taken deep roots directed the thoughts of many Jews away from a narrow nationalism and toward the ideal of fellowship and concern with all humanity."[50]

Alongside these intellectuals, who were socialists—but not Marxists—and who were grouped around, for example, the journals *Weltbühne* and *Tagebuch*, the historian placed the Italian brothers Carlo and Nello Rosselli. They best exemplified what might have been in Mosse's eyes an Italian-Jewish symbiosis. Carlo, in Mosse's words, "identified his Judaism with a religion of liberty and a tradition of social concern" ("not unlike Hermann Cohen in Germany," the historian added). For Nello, "Jewish monotheism meant a social conscience imbued with personal responsibility and a love for one's fellow men."[51] If we turn to Carlo Rosselli's *Socialismo Liberale* (1929), we find that the author began by evoking the name of the "Prophets of Israel."[52] He explicitly mentioned Renan as his source for this reference, but it is fair to suggest that, consciously or not, Rosselli had also in mind the experience of Marx and, more particularly, of Bernstein or, where Italy was concerned, that of Claudio Treves and Rodolfo Mondolfo, who were his (Jewish) political initiators and senior interlocutors. Finally, some of Mosse's observations concerning the culture, the ideological tendencies, and the sociology of the "non-Jewish Jews" among Weimar's left-wing intellectuals might perhaps be relevant to the exploration of the experience of Italian antifascists of Jewish origins. Their capital was Turin, with an outpost in the Parisian exile, and their headquarters in the 1930s was the movement Giustizia e Libertà (with precedents at the beginning of the century in the Italian Socialist party), although the question remains open whether—and if so, in what terms—the experience of the Rossellis, of Carlo Levi, Leone Ginzburg, Vittorio Foa and a few others, can rightly be termed "Jewish antifascism."[53] Certainly theirs was an experience of "outsiderdom" in which, as in the German case, the condition of belonging to a minority, combined with a reverence for the ideals of Enlightenment and a quest for a "religion of humanity" (as Mosse noted with respect to Germany), had a major impact and produced extraordinary political and cultural results.[54] The Jewish antifascist group based in Turin—an informal network, in which a common Jewish origin played no explicit role—existed in parallel to a Jewish fascist group. The latter, named *La Nostra Bandiera*, had been created in direct response to the Turin antifascist network and was in fact the only one of the two to define itself as Jewish. This Italian experience, therefore, strikingly confirms the need to jointly investigate, beyond the German case, the conditions of the outsider and of the insider, and in terms of not only antinomy but also equivalence and identification.

Clearly the Weimar intellectuals—and, if briefly, certain Italian Jewish antifascists—provided Mosse with a world in which to mirror himself. Many of the categories he used to interpret those personalities and experiences would recur in his autobiography as definitions of himself. Concerning the left-wing militants, Mosse asked if they were Karl Mannheim's

"free-floating intellectuals": a label he would later apply to himself in *Confronting History*.[55] By the same token, in *German Jews beyond Judaism*, as he would eventually emphasize about himself and his own work, he noted that in Weimar it had been "precisely their involuntary role as outsiders which left a heritage much more meaningful to the future generations than that left by the insiders."[56] In the same pages, we read of Freud's "double outsider status" in the Vienna of his times, which had made him "a self-questioning Jew,"[57] and when defining Aby Warburg's method, Mosse wrote of his ability "to use the rational mind to cope with the irrational" or to "exorcise the irrational through understanding its function."[58] These were the same formulas that Mosse would employ when describing his own historical method and his condition as a scholar and a man facing the nightmares and the passions of his century.[59] This condition and method, thanks also to his personal and idiosyncratic intellectual gifts, would lead Mosse to intuitions and discoveries of broad and lasting significance for the study not only of the modern German but of the European Jewish experience.

Notes

1. George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 5.
2. Ibid., 178–79.
3. Saul Friedländer, "Mosse's Influence on the Historiography of the Holocaust," in Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 141–45.
4. See especially Steven E. Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80: A Critical Laudatio," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34, no. 2, April 1999, 295–312; Emilio Gentile, "A Provisional Dwelling: The Origin and Development of the Concept of Fascism in Mosse's Historiography," in Payne, Sorkin, and Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells*, 41–109; Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore. George L. Mosse e la catastrofe dell'uomo moderno* (Rome: Carocci, 2007).
5. "I have been an almost passionate italophile ever since I visited Italy with my mother in 1936 [and] and the many invitations to speak and the prizes I have received there have been among the greatest delights of my life" (*Confronting History*, 178). Concerning Mosse's relations with Italian historians and especially his historiographical standing in Italy, see Donatello Aramini and Gian Mario Ceci, eds., "Carteggio George L. Mosse—Renzo De Felice," *Mondo Contemporaneo*, 3, 2007, 77–103; Donatello Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010); and Chapter 5 in this volume.
6. George L. Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987 [1980]), 13.
7. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 181.

8. Ibid. Mosse nuanced these tensions in the following terms: "The dialectic between the quest of society for the maintenance of respectability and the drive of those who hurl themselves against it was not one of absolutes, of revolt and its repression."
9. Mosse's name appears in the acknowledgments of Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970 [1968]), xv. Most of his German Jewish colleagues, emigrés to the United States and likewise well-known academics, are strikingly absent from Mosse's autobiography, but the presence of Weimar is pervasive. The repeated use in those pages of the categories of "outsider" and "insider" in connection with Weimar inevitably recalls the title of Gay's work.
10. I borrow this expression from Stefano Levi Della Torre, *Mosaico. Attualità e inattualità degli ebrei* (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1994), 28. Levi Della Torre, a painter and essayist, is the nephew of the Jewish writer and antifascist activist Carlo Levi.
11. Some of the tensions, contradictions, and conundrums of the "outsider as insider" coupling characterize also the unresolved condition of the "pariah" and "parvenu" typical of the modern Jewish experience according to Hannah Arendt; see "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition" (1944), in Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken, 2007), 275–97.
12. David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990 [1987]), 6.
13. See the entry for "Subcultura" in Luciano Gallino, *Dizionario di sociologia* (Turin: UTET, 1978), 703–5. In Italian sociology, subcultures have been defined also as depending on an "internal variability within a common belonging and participation in a system of shared customs"; see Pier Giorgio Solinas, *Enciclopedia delle scienze sociali* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1999), vol. 8, 445–50.
14. I have done so in my *Una comunità immaginata. Gli ebrei a Venezia, 1900–1938* (Milan: Unicopli, 2001), 13–14, where I refer to the works of Sorkin, Gallino, and Solinas.
15. George L. Mosse, "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Literature: Felix Dahn and Gustav Freytag" (1957), collected in partly revised form in Mosse, *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left and the Search for a "Third Force" in Pre-Nazi Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987 [1970]), 61.
16. Quoted from a speech by Mosse upon his retirement in Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80," 301. See also *Confronting History*, 219 and 185, where Mosse writes that the Holocaust is "a latent presence" in many of his writings.
17. This is, again, Mosse's phrase quoted in Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80," 301.
18. This is true for Arendt's general approach, but it is interesting to notice that the philosopher also, if briefly and indirectly, addressed the "Jewish question" through a reference to Marcel Proust's novel and his representation of Parisian society at the time of the Dreyfus affair. This same reference will later return, as we mentioned, also in the opening pages of Mosse's *Masses and Man.*

19. Mosse, "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Literature," 61–76.
20. Andrew M. Canepa, "The Image of the Jew in the Folklore and Literature of the Postrisorgimento," *Journal of European Studies*, 9, 1979, 260–73; Lynn Gunzberg, *Strangers at Home: Jews in the Italian Literary Imagination* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).
21. I have raised such concerns in my essay "I critici e i nemici dell'emancipazione degli ebrei," in Marcello Flores et al., eds., *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni* (Turin: UTET, 2010), vol. 1, 37–61. Recent studies have begun to problematize numerous aspects of the Italian Jewish experience in the nineteenth century: see E. Schächter, *The Jews of Italy 1848–1915: Between Tradition and Transformation* (London: Vallentine-Mitchell, 2011); and Carlotta Ferrara Degli Uberti, *Fare gli ebrei italiani. Autorappresentazioni di una minoranza (1861–1918)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012).
22. Bresciani's *L'ebreo di Verona* appeared originally in the journal *Civiltà Cattolica* in 1850–51 and the following year as a separate volume. It was repeatedly republished, and translated into the major European languages, during the following decades. Guerrazzi's novels with anti-Semitic elements, also frequently reissued, are *L'asino* (1857), *Paolo Pelliccioni* (1864), and *Il secolo che muore* (1885). Invernizio's *L'orfana del Ghetto* was published for the first time in 1887. Beyond Canepa's and Gunzberg's works, see most recently the many insights into this literature offered by Riccardo Bonavita, *Spettri dell'altro. Letteratura e razzismo nell'Italia contemporanea* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2009).
23. We should also notice that some of these tropes were circulating in the European literary imagination of the time under the influence of Walter Scott's historical novels and their minor Jewish characters.
24. I draw all quotes from Guerrazzi's aforementioned works between the 1850s and the 1880s from my "I critici e i nemici dell'emancipazione degli ebrei," 49.
25. A recent, preliminary exploration, which includes examples drawn from the novels of the *Risorgimento* hero Giuseppe Garibaldi, is offered by Ariella Lang, "Un antisemitismo liberale? Politica dell'identità e questione religiosa nell'Italia post-risorgimentale," in Mario Isnenghi and Simon Levis Sullam, eds., *Gli italiani in guerra*, vol. 2, *Le «Tre Italie»: Dalla presa di Roma alla Settimana rossa (1870–1914)* (Turin: UTET, 2009), 190–96. See also Lang's broader investigation of defining aspects of the Catholic imaginary around the Jews in her *Converting a Nation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
26. Henri Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs* (Metz: Imprimerie de Claude Lamort, 1789), ch. 7: "Réfléxions sur la constitution physique du peuple Juif."
27. Carlo Cattaneo, *Le interdizioni israelitiche* (1836), ed. by Luigi Ambrosoli (Turin: Einaudi, 1987), 115–57. For a wide-ranging survey of the Italian debate on the emancipation of the Jews, see Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'uguaglianza. Il dibattito sull'emancipazione degli ebrei in Italia (1781–1848)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1997).
28. See especially Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999).

29. See Giovanni Miccoli, "Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo fra Otto e Novecento," in *Storia d'Italia*, *Annali* 11, *Gli ebrei in Italia,* vol. 2, 1371–577; Ruggero Taradel and Barbara Raggi, *La segregazione amichevole. La "Civiltà Cattolica" e la questione ebraica 1850–1945* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2000); David I. Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews*: *The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Knopf, 2001).
30. Mosse, "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Literature," 75–76.
31. George L. Mosse, "The Jews and the German War Experience, 1914–1918" (1977), in Mosse, *Masses and Man*, 263.
32. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 188–89.
33. George L. Mosse, "The Influence of the Volkish Idea on German Jewry" (1967), in Mosse, *Germans and Jews*, 77.
34. Ibid., 114.
35. Ibid., 112 and 106.
36. Luca Ventura, *Ebrei con il duce. La «Nostra Bandiera» (1934–1938)* (Turin: Zamorani, 2002), 47. The quote is drawn from the first issue of the journal, dated May 1, 1934.
37. On the general question and amount of support for Fascism by Italian Jews, see Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993 [1963]), 73–77. According to a different interpretation, Italian Jews were both as "fascist as all other Italians, [and] more anti-fascist than the other Italians"; see Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), 24.
38. Mosse, "Jews and the German War Experience," 282.
39. Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80: A Critical Laudatio," 295.
40. Mosse, "Jews and the German War Experience," 281.
41. Ibid., 266.
42. Ibid., 267.
43. Ibid., 266–67.
44. See the essays by Mario Toscano, "Gli ebrei e la prima guerra mondiale 1915–1918. Tra crisi religiosa e fermenti patriottici" and "Ebrei ed ebraismo nell'Italia della grande guerra. Note su un inchiesta del Comitato delle comunità israelitiche italiane del maggio 1917," in Toscano, *Ebraismo e antisemitismo in Italia. Dal 1848 alla guerra dei sei giorni* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003). Most recently see, by the same author, "Religione, patriottismo, sionismo: il rabbinato militare nell'Italia della Grande Guerra (1915–1918)," *Zakhor*, 8, 2005, 77–133, which deals also with the questions of religious camouflage and of the weighty influence of the war on the religious sphere. I am grateful to Mario Toscano for pointing me to the fact that, among the differences between the German and the Italian experience of the war, there was the menacing "Jewish census" that German Jews had to undergo. Its purpose was to demonstrate the allegedly limited Jewish participation in the war.
45. For example, in the case of the Jewish community of Venice, the president protested that the names of fallen Jewish soldiers should not appear under a cross on the plaques erected on the façades of churches (for the episode,

see Levis Sullam, *Una comunità immaginata*, 254). A novel published in the periodical *Il Vessilo Israelitico* in 1915 described the difficulties of its Jewish protagonist in front of comrades reciting the rosary in the trenches (see Ferrara Degli Uberti, *Fare gli ebrei italiani*).

46. Mosse, "Jews and the German War Experience," 269.
47. I recalled this episode in *Una comunità immaginata*, 254–55; see also the entry dated September 23, 1938, in Giuseppe Bottai, *Diario, 1935–1944*, ed. by Giordano Bruno Guerri (Milan: Rizzoli, 1997), 134.
48. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 189.
49. Ibid., 184.
50. George L. Mosse, "Left-Wing Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic," in Mosse, *Germans and Jews*, 205.
51. Ibid., 207 and 206. Other references to Carlo Rosselli (quoted throughout as "Roselli") are in George L. Mosse, "Fascism and the Intellectuals,", in Mosse, *Germans and Jews*, 146, 151; and in George L. Mosse, "German Jews and Liberalism in Retrospect," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 32, 1987, 13–25.
52. See Carlo Rosselli, *Liberal Socialism*, ed. by Nadia Urbinati, trans. by William McCraig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
53. According to historian Piero Treves, however, who participated in that experience and thus spoke also (and perhaps primarily) as a witness, "One can neither talk of a 'Jewish' anti-fascism, nor of a Jewish problem for and within Italian anti-fascism. The Jewish problem was part of the broader, unifying and universal problem of freedoms." Piero Treves, "Antifascisti ebrei od antifascismo ebraico?" *La rassegna mensile di Israel*, 1–3, 1981, 147. A recent reassessment is in Alberto Cavaglion, "Ebrei e Antifascismo," in Flores, Levis Sullam, Matard-Bonucci, and Traverso, eds., *Storia della Shoah in Italia*, vol. 1, 171–91.
54. A further factor that should be taken into account in the Jewish antifascist experience of Turin is that its protagonists were all part of a closely knit network of friendly, and often family, relationships. This and other aspects emerge very evocatively in the novel and memoir by Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico famigliare* (Einaudi, Turin, 1963); an English translation is *The Things We Used to Say*, trans. by Judith Woolf (New York: Arcade, 1999).
55. See, respectively, Mosse, *Germans and Jews*, 204; and Mosse, *Confronting History*, 6, 159, 217.
56. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), 24.
57. Ibid., 49.
58. Ibid., 51.
59. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 118, 180 (for the "double outsider"); Mosse, *Masses and Man*, 15 ("The chief problem facing any historian is to capture the irrational by an exercise of the rational mind").

5

"A Mutual Admiration Society"

The Intellectual Friendships at the Origins of George Mosse's Connection to Italy

Giorgio Caravale

From Florence to Madison: Mosse's Friendship with Giorgio Spini

George Mosse never concealed his love for Italy. He wrote in his autobiography, "I have been an almost passionate Italophile ever since I first visited Italy with my mother in 1936, the many invitations to speak and the various prizes I have received there have been among the greatest delights of my life."[1] And Italy, for its part, fully reciprocated this love. As Gentile recently noted, Italy is "the country in which Mosse gained the greatest notoriety, even outside of the scholarly community."[2] He himself was well aware of this fact and reflected on it. He hypothesized that his popularity in Italy was somehow related to "the widespread diffusion in your country to think visually: a predisposition which is very important for understanding my writings, the encounter between symbols and myths"—a clear reference to the visual richness of the Baroque-Counterreformation period in Italian history.[3]

The name that is most commonly associated with the memory of Mosse is that of the historian Renzo De Felice. As we will see, De Felice, together with his wife Livia, strongly promoted the Italian translation of Mosse's *Nationalization of the Masses*, marking the beginning of his enduring popularity in Italy. Yet while De Felice was the historian who most contributed to the circulation of Mosse's work in Italy, he was not the first Italian to form a connection with Mosse. Instead, Mosse's first encounter would be with the early modernist Giorgio Spini. And perhaps this was inevitable, considering the early modernist interests that characterize the early career of Mosse.[4]

In speaking of the fortune (or misfortune) of one of the works he most loved but that was practically unknown to the public, *The Holy Pretence* (1957)—a study of Puritan casuistry in which he attempts to "establish the thin borderline between truth and falsehood among the Puritans" and at the same time reflect on the "reception of Machiavelli in England, thus linking the Renaissance and the Reformation"—Mosse could not help adding a note expressing his regret: "That book was a great disappointment, for no reviewer understood the larger purpose behind it . . . I suppose that every writer has one book which he thinks was wrongfully neglected and misinterpreted despite its insights, and this is the relevant book in my case."[5]

In these lines from his autobiography, Mosse's memory seems to have failed him. There was indeed one person who had understood the "larger purpose" at the base of the book. Mosse himself had acknowledged as much in his interview with his former student Michael Ledeen. When asked about the historians who had most inspired him, Mosse first responded with the names of Benedetto Croce (whom he met in person in Italy at the beginning of the 1950s),[6] the Dutch historian Johann Huizinga, and Friedrich Meinecke, the great historian of the idea of political power and of the reason of state. And then, immediately afterward—as though by some sort of incontrollable impulse—his memory drifted back to his beloved book: "One of my early efforts was to interest American historians (who were very deficient in theory at the time) in the idea of Reason of State which was an important reality in American political thought, and which had even infected American Puritans." And he added, "The only article written in appreciation of this effort of mine to bring Meinecke to bear on English and American Puritan theology is by an Italian historian—Professor Georgio [sic] Spini."[7]

Spini was a member of the Italian Action Party and a scholar of Protestantism and the principality of Cosimo I. He wrote a study on Antonio Brucioli, a sixteenth-century Florentine heretic, and most importantly a book on the Italian Libertines of the Counterreformation, which investigated the theme of fraud in seventeenth-century religions, locating its origins in late medieval naturalism and Averroism and following its development through pre-Enlightenment Europe.[8] Mosse had been "impressed and fascinated"[9] by the book and had drawn from it when writing an essay on the relationship between "Puritan Radicalism and the Enlightenment," published in *Church History* in 1960.[10] The article investigated the contribution of radical currents of Puritanism, in particular of a group of seventeenth-century deists, to the formation of the ideals of Enlightenment. Therefore the historiographical area in which the two historians worked was very similar: the Crocean problem of the relationship between the Renaissance and the Reformation, which served as Mosse's starting point in *The Holy*

Pretense—the problem of measuring how much of Renaissance political thought (in this case, Machiavelli's ideas on the reason of state) had been modified by the Puritan Reformation—is very similar to the approach that Spini took in his investigation of the success of late medieval naturalistic and Averroistic theories in Counterreformation Italy. Moreover, Mosse's enthusiastic investigation of the impact of seventeenth-century English Puritanism on European Enlightenment would inevitably gain the favor of Spini, who had made the "role of Protestantism in history" the central focus of his own historiographical research.[11]

In a historiographical review, "Il periodo coloniale della storia americana nella recente storiografia,"[12] published in 1961 in *Rivista storica italiana*, Giorgio Spini stressed the quality and innovation of Mosse's early modernist work—the only one ever to have done so according to Mosse.[13] He noted Mosse's historicist formation and how Friedrich Meinecke's work on the reason of state[14] had greatly informed this research. "It is clear," he wrote,

> that Mosse belongs to the stock of restless explorers of unbeaten paths that is the tragic generation of WWII. He is not content with simply repudiating the conventional image of Puritans as fanatical utopians who are isolated from the voices of the modern world. Instead, he turns the image on its head by focusing his analysis—as he has in other essays [here Spini is referring to "Puritan Radicalism and the Enlightenment"]—on the relationship between late European and American Calvinism and political naturalism on the one hand, and Machiavellianism and, say, pre-Enlightenment libertinism on the other. He shows us the Puritans in the process of weighing Christian consciousness with Calvinist theology and coming to terms with the modern culture of their day: Renaissance naturalism, Counterreformation casuistry, the doctrine of reason of state. One can imagine how fascinating this perspective was for American and European scholars of the 17th century and of the Harzardian "crisis of the European conscience."[15]

Mosse and Spini's relationship started as a scholarly encounter, born from a shared interest in certain historiographical themes and a mutual respect for one another's wok, but quickly became a close personal friendship.[16] When Mosse came to Italy in the early 1960s, he made sure to stop in Florence to visit his Italian friend. Likewise, Spini visited Mosse on various occasions in Madison. Mosse recalls, "When in the 1960s money seemed plentiful, one could also further students' intellectual experience through inviting visitors from abroad. I had ample opportunity to do so because I was on leave every third semester . . . Giorgio Spini, from Florence replaced me in the early 1960s when I still taught early modern as well as modern history."[17] They shared similar political positions and often spoke of the American Left and their feelings of distrust toward it (during the Kennedy

years). Inspired by these conversations during his visits to Madison, Spini wrote the short book *America* (1962), which Mosse would later describe as "most prescient" in his autobiography.[18] Yet above all, their friendship was reinforced by a shared existential condition. A Jewish homosexual, Mosse often emphasized his condition as an outsider. He felt like an outsider in regard to the European culture in which he grew up but also with regard to the American society in which he lived. Though Mosse utilized this existential condition to his professional benefit, he always experienced it with unease, or if nothing else a sense of estrangement. As a prominent figure in the Protestant Valdese Church in Catholic Italy, Spini shared some of Mosse's existential experience as an outsider, and this fact fostered a certain amount of familiarity between the two.

Correspondence and encounters between them would become rarer over the years, paralleling Mosse's shift away from the early modern period (though never completely) toward modern and contemporary history beginning in the late 1950s.

On January 29, 1971, Mosse wrote to Spini in order to thank him for the Christmas card he had received and to tell him about a book one of his students, Donald Weinstein, had recently published on Savonarola with Princeton University Press. Soon after Spini wrote a review of it in an important journal on sixteenth-century religious history.[19] A couple of months later, Mosse wrote to congratulate Spini for the book "on L'evangelo" that he had received. He told Spini he was "especially fascinated by the English and American connections."[20]

Correspondence between the two recommenced in 1977. After a few years of silence, the tone between the two had shifted from the friendlier "Dear Giorgio" of previous letters to the more formal and detached "Dear Prof. Spini," a clear sign that the interval had cooled their friendship. However, after a few letters they seem to have instinctively returned to using the Italian informal tense. Spini had written to invite his old friend to speak at a conference he was organizing as director of the Socialist Institute of Historical Studies on the theme of "Revolution and Reaction in Europe after WWI." He proposed that Mosse give a comparative talk on the extreme right-wing movements in Europe from these years.[21] Mosse responded enthusiastically to the invite but suggested he present instead on "The European Left and the War Experience," adding that "the failure of the Leninist revolutionary program is certainly related, in my opinion, to the struggle of the left with what one might call the 'war experience' between the two world wars."[22] Spini accepted the proposal readily and the two men agreed that Mosse would also hold one or two lectures while he was in Florence in the days immediately preceding the conference on the origins of National Socialism at the institute's center in Perugia.[23] However,

before the trip, planned for April 1978, Mosse's sister grew ill and he was compelled to return to New York from Jerusalem where he had been teaching as a visiting professor, causing him to miss the conference. Mosse's text, which he sent ahead in the weeks before, was read publicly by Spini, but the much awaited encounter between the two old friends would be postponed. Their relationship seems to have remained fairly solid despite the missed occasion. In the months following the assassination of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades, the statesman's family went to Giorgio Spini asking to be put in contact with George Mosse, who they hoped would contribute an essay to an edition of Moro's writings.[24] Mosse's name had come up as someone who was an influential historian but impartial to the Italian political debate in which many Italian scholars were involved. He had recently published *The Nationalization of the Masses* with the editor Mulino thanks to the intervention of Renzo De Felice and his wife Livia. With the publication of a long interview with Alfonso Alfonsi, Mosse's Italian fame would be definitively established, establishing him as not only a historian but an all-around intellectual who could be asked to weigh in on a myriad of arguments—an authoritative voice and an attentive outside observer of Italy. Again in this case, Giorgio Spini's role would prove to be decisive.[25]

A Dialogue across Time: Delio Cantimori and George Mosse

Above all, Mosse's successive fortune in Italy was dependent on "historian friends" like Renzo De Felice and later Emilio Gentile, who helped put his work into circulation. Before discussing this relationship, however, it is important to note that De Felice's positive reception of Mosse's work was in large part due to Mosse's fascination with Delio Cantimori, De Felice's mentor. Cantimori was a fascist and later a communist intellectual and scholar of sixteenth-century religious life and Marxism. He was a prominent Italian historian of the postwar period, and like Mosse, he was fascinated by the religious and theological dimensions of history and was divided in his interests between the first centuries of the early modern period and the twentieth century, "the age of ideologies." In one of his early essays, "*Osservazioni sui concetti di cultura e storia della cultura*" (1928), Cantimori laid out the theoretical premise for a methodological approach that, as De Felice would note in the 1980s, "foreshadowed" many aspects that one would later see in Mosse.[26] In the essay, Cantimori reflected on the usefulness of cultural history for understanding the "rationalization of the irrational, the passage from chaos to order, from life to thought." He observed how in the cultural history in vogue up until then (i.e., Jacob Burckhardt) "the concepts (or pseudo-concepts) of race and people had been elevated [. . .] to spiritual

values, they were almost like new gods or myths." What he proposed was not to "reject" or "squash these new gods" but rather to "bring them back down to earth" and relegate them to a precise position in history in order to domesticate them and prevent them from "doing the [enormous] harm they had in the past."[27] Cantimori's approach to cultural history allowed one to "observe the resurfacing of basic sentiments, ancient beliefs, and their historical roots, though at times contorted to the point that they are unrecognizable."[28] Cantimori applied this method, which so closely foreshadows Mosse's, not only for better situating and assessing the significance of figures like Luther and other "founders of religions and sects" and more fully understanding sixteenth-century religious life, which the "history of religion" had not been capable of fully doing. He also wanted to test out his method on the political scene of his day—in particular, the same German politics on which Mosse would later turn his perspicuous eye. With the same attention with which he had approached the marginal cultural tendencies in his research on heretics, Cantimori carefully analyzed the German youth movements of the Right. In a series of articles published in the journal *Vita Nova* at the end of the 1920s, Cantimori investigated the presence of a strong and influential theological culture in contemporary German politics. With the same intuitive capacity that quickly made him a recognized expert in the field of sixteenth-century religious life, he shed light on the anxieties, the new mysticisms, old religious nostalgia, and the racism and anti-Semitism of the reactionary youth culture, paving the way for the work of Mosse that would come decades later.[29]

When Mosse wrote his *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*,[30] he did not know about these articles. The only direct evidence that Mosse knew of Cantimori's work at all goes back to 1960 and is in relation to his book *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento*.[31] It is possible, I would even say probable, that Renzo De Felice spoke to Mosse about his old mentor and his work on pre-Hitler Germany, but when Mosse met De Felice in 1967, Cantimori had died just a year before. De Felice himself would benefit greatly from Cantimori's lesson. Indeed, the historical sensibility he inherited from his mentor would later allowed De Felice to recognize the same characteristics in the work of Mosse and to promote its publication and circulation in Italy.[32]

The Origins of an Intellectual Friendship: Renzo De Felice, Michael Ledeen, and Mosse

The relationship between Mosse and De Felice, defined by Michael Ledeen as a "mutual admiration society,"[33] began, as I noted, back in 1967 in Reading,

where they met during a conference on Fascism. There was an immediate connection between the two. De Felice appreciated Mosse's talk for the attention he had given to the cultural dimensions of Fascism, the anticipations that had culminated in Fascism, and the political and emotional investment that the new generation of intellectuals had made in hopes of a "spiritual revolution" that, pushing aside the decadent bourgeoisie society, would have renewed the nation and the entire world "through a new type of man."[34] In the years immediately following their first encounter, De Felice often stressed the importance of Mosse's work.[35] And so, it was no surprise when in 1971 an essay by Mosse on the presence of anti-Semitism among the ranks of the German communist Left during the Weimar Republic appeared in the journal *Storia contemporanea* (published by il Mulino) directed by De Felice. The article was accompanied by a friendly private letter expressing De Felice's hope that this was just the beginning of a long-term collaboration.[36] Flattered by De Felice's esteem and expression of friendship, Mosse returned the sentiment by inviting the Italian historian to join the international editorial board of the *Journal of Contemporary History*, which he directed together with Walter Laqueur.[37] In an attempt to introduce De Felice's work to American academics and intellectuals, Mosse invited him to hold a lecture at the Italian Cultural Center of New York (today the Italian Cultural Institute of New York).[38] It was the beginning of a friendship that would shape Mosse's entire relationship with Italy and Italian historiography. Donatello Aramini has recently reconstructed in great detail the specific phases of this relationship and the various ups and downs for the reception of Mosse's work in Italy—a reception that was heavily influenced, for good and for bad, by his relationship with Renzo De Felice.[39] I would like to return to the first years of their intellectual friendship, adding to Aramini's analysis with the help of a series of unpublished letters from the correspondence between the two[40] and above all from the correspondence between Mosse and his student Michael Ledeen. After graduating from Madison with a comparative thesis on the Fascist International and the theoretical and philosophical aspects of Fascism, which was quickly published as a well-received book, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928–1936* (1972), Ledeen had set up residency in Rome to dedicate himself fully to a research project on Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Fiume experience. Renzo De Felice, who had recognized the importance of Ledeen's first work, for which he promoted the translation and publication with Laterza (*Internazionale fascista*, 1973), welcomed him into his circle of students and friends and constantly encouraged his progress, providing him with documents and new avenues of research, as was his custom with his closest students.[41] Closely tied to Mosse[42] and fond of De Felice, who was backing him in Italy, Ledeen worked to foster the bond between his two

mentors. As such, his frequent correspondence with Mosse in these years serves as a very useful source for reconstructing the origins of the intellectual bond between Mosse and De Felice. For example, these letters tell us that De Felice's academic responsibilities would cause his meeting with Mosse to be postponed numerous times—though it is also true that, in general, De Felice seems to have been somewhat of a reluctant traveler. Ledeen writes to Mosse in February 1971 to tell him the meeting has been postponed: "Dear George, De Felice will be coming to America in April, it now appears. He was delayed by some University business here. I'll let you know when I know the exact dates."[43] The visit, by this point eminent, was again postponed a couple of months, as we learn from Ledeen, who was excited and prepared to act as the official translator for the meeting: "De Felice has put off his trip until the fall, and I said I would come up to Madison when he [will be] there, in order to help as translator and 'general aid.' It would give me an opportunity to see you as well."[44] De Felice flip-flopped so much on the dates of the visit that Mosse felt the need to write to him himself to see whether or not their plans for the autumn would materialize.[45] We do not know whether they ever met that fall or if they were forced to put it off. We can, however, confirm that they met around the time of Easter in 1972. This we know from a letter from February 1973 that speaks of a fruitful exchange of ideas and plans for future research projects. Mosse's project on the theme of the nationalization of the masses, which he was completing at the time, greatly interested De Felice, who would later lend his full support for the translation of the research after it had been published in English. Thanks to his communication with Ledeen, Mosse knew that De Felice was considering the possibility of having the work translated into Italian. Flattered by this possibility, Mosse wrote a long and friendly letter in February 1973:

> When we met last Easter, you said that you might be interested in seeing the MS. of my new book. I was really reluctant to impose upon you, as I know how busy you are. But then Ledeen wrote and said that you were still interested. Therefore my publisher will send you a Xeroxed copy. I would, of course, be terribly interested in your criticism. Though it is confined to Germany, I am sure it also has an Italian application: I start with some words of Mussolini, but drop it there because as you told me little work has been done on that subject. Mike [Ledeen] also mentioned the possibility of an Italian edition. That may have been rash, but, of course, if it could be arranged that would please me very much indeed. You know how highly I would value this because of my admiration for Italian historical scholarship.[46]

From the letter we see that Mosse recognizes the potential for applying his arguments about Nazism to Italian Fascism; however, he understood

that this application might be limited and felt that an introduction explaining this potential would be useful. Though he did not think himself well suited to the task, he hoped that someone more prepared than he might take up the endeavor. Though De Felice's name was never mentioned—perhaps the formality that often characterized even the friendliest of academic relationships did not allow him to take such liberties—one can easily deduct from his measured words that it was precisely De Felice whom Mosse had in mind: "As the book is not long, there could be an introduction pointing out the fascist parallels in Italy, but I know too little about them to do it properly. Perhaps my work could stimulate such a study—I remember we talked about that in Rome also."

It would not be long before Mosse's tacit wish came true. De Felice quickly took the initiative. It was, after all, the most natural solution: an introduction written by the most important Italian historian of Fascism, the same person who had promoted the publication of Mosse's book with one of the nation's most prestigious editors. Just a month later, in response to a note from De Felice, which has since been lost, Mosse thanked him for having expressed his intention to write the introduction: "I was delighted with your letter, and it meant a great deal to me that you liked the book. I look forward to hearing any criticism you have, they [sic] will be most valuable. I am also most flattered that you are willing to write an introduction to Italian audiences."[47]

While De Felice's wife, Livia De Ruggiero De Felice, took on the project of translating the typescript, communicating directly with Madison,[48] De Felice started work on the introduction to the Italian edition of the book. Mosse kept himself updated on the progress of the work through his dependable student in Rome: "Give De Felice and his wife my very warmest greetings. I haven't seen his introduction to my book, but I look forward very much to it."[49] Ledeen's responses were always punctual, often ending in words of praise for De Felice's generosity in helping him along with his research on Fiume and D'Annunzio, the American publication of which still seemed rather uncertain: "You may rest assured that I'll keep you informed about the reaction to your book in Italy, and I thank you for asking Il Mulino to send me a copy. My work is excellent [. . .]. De Felice has uncovered the financial data from the period, and he and I will go through that in September, just in time for me to put [it] into the book as it goes to press. I don't know who's going to publish the thing in America, either Knopf or Simon and Shuster. I'll let you know when I do."[50]

And then again just a few weeks later,[51] "Your book is not out yet here, and the last I heard they were waiting for illustrative material to arrive. Since the entire country closes down for August, nothing will be known for another few weeks, but when I have a definite publication date I'll let you

know. [. . .] De Felice is currently writing the Introduction to your book, and simultaneously finishing his most recent volume on Mussolini, which runs up to 1936."[52]

As Ledeen notes at the end of this last letter, De Felice was in the process of finishing the third volume of his biography of Mussolini (*Mussolini il Duce*): Mosse would soon receive a copy as a gift from De Felice. His reaction to the book was immediately enthusiastic. When writing to Ledeen,[53] he expressed his happiness that the young scholar's work had been so frequently cited by De Felice, and with an eye toward the future, he asked Ledeen to procure him a copy of a certain short publication by the Italian historian that had somehow escaped his insatiable curiosity:

> I have received De Felice's *Mussolini il duce*, and have started to read it already. It is of course splendid and I must say I was most happy to see you cited so often. But there is one favor you could do for me, one of many favors that you have done for me already. De Felice lists in his footnotes *I rapporti tra fascismo e nazionalsocialismo fino all'andata al potere di Hitler*, Napoli 1971 (corso litografato). As he has already been so wonderful and sent me his book I certainly do not feel like writing to him and asking him to send me this mimeographed paper. But if it should be still available, I would be very happy to buy it, or if it is not available I would love to see a copy. I think it may have some very important things to say for my new book on *The European Experience of Race* which is now halfway completed. [. . .] My plans for the summer are still very undecided as we may have an editorial conference in London to which we can invite our editors abroad including De Felice.[54]

At the end of March, Ledeen could finally announce the imminent publication of the Italian edition of *The Nationalization of the Masses*. And having already read De Felice's introduction, he was able to give Mosse a preview of its content. De Felice had structured his introduction around a comparison between Mosse and two of the world's most important historians, Huizinga and Bloch. For Mosse, it was the highest compliment that a historian could hope to receive: "Your book, complete with a glowing introduction by De Felice (he said that the only book to which yours could properly be compared were the *Waning of the Middle Ages* and *Les Rois Thaumaturgues*, which I consider to be the highest compliment an historian could possibly pay to another), is coming out in two weeks."[55]

Always attentive to the balance between the two historians—aware of the worries of the one and the sensitivity of the other—Ledeen suggested in the same letter that Mosse return the favor by writing a review of De Felice's book even before having had a chance to see the flattering introduction. De Felice's book had been received with some hostility and could

have used the support and backing of friends like Mosse, whose authoritative voice would have helped to dispel the veil of mistrust that had culminated in the "radical chic" culture accusing the historian of being too "soft on Mussolini":

> May I suggest—I hope you won't consider this improper—that you look for the opportunity to repay De Felice for all his compliments and substantial help here, by writing some rave comments about his new book, *Mussolini il Duce; gli anni del consenso*? It's really a masterpiece, by far the best thing done on the subject, but the poor man is certainly not a prophet in his own land, and would benefit from some prestigious intellectual support from you. Here the monolithic "radical chic" culture continues to accuse him of being "soft on Mussolini" (which he certainly is NOT).[56]

But Mosse did not feel up to writing the review. The Italian logic of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," which Ledeen had quickly learned, was not part of Mosse's character: the historian avoided the task, claiming he was unqualified and suggesting that Ledeen himself write it.[57] Ledeen, however, was persistent and even went so far as to invoke what he called the "mafia manners" that were in vogue in Italy:

> My point was that I think it's fitting for YOU to do it, not find someone else. I would be only too pleased to do a piece for your journal, but it doesn't carry the same weight in Renzo's eyes. Anyway, he knows I love him, so to speak, but some kind words from you would be more meaningful. Also, he has really gone out of his way for you—and if you remember your book of Mafia manners, it is now your turn to repay the "favor." This is said, you understand, not to slight Renzo's motives in the lightest, but just my impression of what something written by you would mean to him.[58]

Ledeen's insistence had its intended effect on Mosse. The historian could not deny that he was indeed indebted to De Felice, but at the same time he did not feel he was the most qualified person for the job: "I think you are right about my doing something about De Felice, but I don't feel very qualified about Mussolini, however, I might try my hand after what you say."[59]

While he delayed, he thought of an alternative solution. If Ledeen declined, he already had someone to write the introduction in the *Journal of Contemporary History*:

> Walter and I have now decided to go ahead and try and get someone to write us an article on De Felice's great work. When Bracher was here he said it might tempt him to do it, but I am not sure, though I will write to him

> again after he has had time to be back in Bonn for a while. I would like it very much if he would do it. But if not, I take it that you would not be willing, but Bracher recommended a certain Peterson[60] [*sic*] who has written a book on The Rome-Berlin Axis, I believe and whom in fact I think you once introduced me to and who is at the German Historical Institute in Rome.[61]

The situation was not immediately resolved. In the end, it was Ledeen who wrote an article about De Felice in the *Journal of Contemporary History*. The article was not a review of *Mussolini il Duce* but rather a reaction to the debate provoked around *Intervista sul fascismo*, a publication that he himself had edited. The article appeared in a monographic number of the journal dedicated to the theme "Theories of Fascism."[62] However, Ledeen's suggestion would remain embedded in the back of Mosse's mind. As soon as the moment presented itself, Mosse publicly expressed his esteem for the work of his Italian friend. In an interview in *La Repubblica* on April 24, 1976, in the midst of the debate surrounding De Felice's *Intervista*, Mosse addressed the "question of consensus" that had caused the polemic, affirming without hesitation that "any type of propaganda must find a foundation. Without anticipation, a desire from the part of the masses, there is no propaganda that takes root."[63]

Ledeen was meanwhile experiencing a moment of intense productivity and great excitement. While his book on D'Annunzio and Fiume was set for publication,[64] in February 1975 he had recorded the well-known *Intervista sul fascismo*, which was published before the summer.[65] For Ledeen it was his chance to exit from the shadows: "This book will guarantee my reputation in Italy and provide me with a ready-made group of intellectual opponents; so it's good news and bad news, per usual."[66] Though somewhat colored by an excessive sense of self-exaltation, Ledeen's prediction was not far off. After the interview, his name would be forever tied to the memory of De Felice, with all the positive and negative consequences of that connection. Though Mosse and Ledeen are not comparable in terms of their success and stature, you could almost say that, in this first stage, they followed somewhat parallel paths in Italy: both of them were introduced into the arena of Italian historiography through the intuition and generosity of Renzo De Felice and would be susceptible to the changing moods surrounding the historian. However, Mosse's intellectual stature and the eclectic range of his work would soon free him from the "fatal" tie to De Felice and guarantee him his own popularity independent of his Italian companion.[67] Ledeen, on the other hand, would remain in De Felice's shadow until deciding to abandon his academic aspirations for another career path.

Ledeen's letter, despite its self-celebrating tone, provides some significant details on Mosse's relationship to Italian culture, in particular in

regard to his expectations in the country: "In the interview-book De Felice and I are just completing (the footnotes will be done in a couple of days now, and then off to the press), you receive more citations than any other historian—aside from the two of us, naturally. So you see you are rapidly becoming a cultural force in Italy. Your years treading the Vatican were not in vain after all."[68]

Ledeen's mention of the time Mosse spent in the Vatican is in reference to his early work on Puritanism and the Baroque. These words serve more than any other documentary fragment to illustrate Mosse's deep professional and emotional investment in Italy and its culture. Better than any others, Ledeen's words reflect the "admiration" that Mosse had for "Italian historical scholarship," the fulfillment of his expectations with regard to Italy, and his love for the country.

When Mosse finally had a copy of the translation of his *Nationalization of the Masses* in his hands, his satisfaction was immense. He immediately wrote to De Felice to express his gratitude:[69]

> Today I finally got the Italian volume, and I really do not know how properly to thank you for having brought about its publication and for the preface. What you say there, coming from your pen, is the greatest honour I have ever received in my life. There is really nothing I could say that would adequately express my feelings of gratitude. I also want to express my great debt to Mrs. De Felice for the translation, it is all and more than any author could expect—indeed in as much as my Italian allows me to judge, some passages read much better than in the original.[70]

The book marked the beginning of what would be a very fruitful collaboration.[71] De Felice's role in fostering its success was not limited to promoting its translation. A few months later Mosse's book would be awarded the "Acqui prize" for best history book, by a jury that included De Felice. An ecstatic Mosse wrote to De Felice, telling him that this prize was "the first I have won."[72] Michael Ledeen would accept the prize on behalf of Mosse, who was unable to make it to the event.[73] In his letter to Mosse, Ledeen wavers between excitement over the (presumed) Italian fame he was acquiring ("I'm in the process of becoming a celebrity")[74] and the disappointing news he was receiving from the American front.[75] The success of *Intervista sul fascismo* had inspired the editor Laterza to promote and entrust another similar project to Ledeen already in 1975, but this time Mosse would serve as the interviewee, *Intervista sul nazismo* (*Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism: An Interview with Michael A. Ledeen*). The book, published in 1977, was a great success,[76] but it would represent Ledeen's last moment of three-way collaboration

with the elder historians.[77] And with Ledeen's career taking a different path than expected, the relationship between Mosse and De Felice finally began to exist on its own two legs.[78]

A Jealous Editor and an Ambitious Author

Intervista sul nazismo is the fruit of another important relationship that defined the initial stages of Mosse's relationship with Italy: his friendship with Vito Laterza.[79] Evidence of the enduring productiveness between the two, and a sign of the great affection Mosse had for Laterza, can be found in an undated autobiographical note conserved in his papers. Full of historical reflections and knowledge, the note is a critical assessment that is at once personal and political in the broad sense of the word. Mosse reflects on the importance of the Crocean tradition in the history of Italy and the significance of Laterza's editorial activity within 1960s and '70s Italian historiography. Mosse begins his thoughts by recognizing the role played by the antifascist publisher Vito Laterza in the process of historicizing the fascist experience begun by Italian and international historians in the 1960s:

> My collaboration with the publishing house of Laterza must be set within the reconsideration of the fascist past which took place in the 1970s: a strong anti-fascist tradition which played an important role in overthrowing the dictatorship now faced historical scholarship which on the basis of archival research sought to get closer to the fascist reality and to the kind of support fascism had received throughout its history. The polemics which resulted eventually did advance historical scholarship as they became debates based upon an evaluation of the past rather than the present. Here Laterza played a crucial role, not only through its many books [on] fascism but especially through the Intervista series which through an imaginative combination of historical scholarship and personal opinion gave a new dimension to the debate about fascism.

In Mosse's opinion, the Intervista series, with which Vito Laterza had launched his "Saggi tascabili" ("pocket essays") series, had played a fundamental role in bringing the public in closer contact with historical research. His *Intervista sul nazismo* was no exception: "Though I had already published an earlier co-authored book with Laterza [here he is referring to *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* written with Hans G. Koenigsberger], it is through the *Intervista* that our close relationship began. Italian Fascism could not really be seen in all its dimension without a comparison with National Socialism, and the *Intervista sul Nazismo* sparked a new interest in the similarities and differences between these fascisms."

This small volume published in 1977 and edited by Michael Ledeen marks the beginning of a long intellectual relationship between Mosse and Vito Laterza, which would see the publication of all Mosse's most important works, inaugurating an entire era of historiography: "From there we went on to explore racism and various forms of nationalism whose consideration, once more, could by contrast and similarities give a broader perspective to an Italian past which still troubled men's minds."

Following in the tradition of Croce, Vito Laterza had built on the best traditions of his publishing house and played a fundamental role in Italian culture in those years. Mosse is "proud to have had a small role to play in this enterprise":

> Through its editorial policy Laterza helped Fascism enter history and thus made a proper confrontation possible. There had never been the kind of evasion of this past in Italy, in contrast to Germany, were [sic] any confrontation was complicated by Auschwitz. But unlike Germany, Italy also had a historiographical tradition never so closely linked to a belief in national superiority. Here the pervasive influence of Benedetto Croce, so closely linked with Laterza, must be given much of the credit. His credo that "what man is only history tells" points to the past as a process rather than making it coincide with the present. Here there is a sense of historical distance which makes it easier to analyze the past without the polemics of present politics. The role which Laterza has played in bringing about a better understanding of the perils of Fascism and nationalism is in the best tradition of the publishing house as well as Italian historiography, and I am proud to have had a small role to play in this enterprise.[80]

Of course, the intense intellectual relationship between the two should be read within the larger context of Mosse's relationships with all his editors. Mosse personally oversaw every step of the publication of his work with an almost neurotic attention to detail: all the intermediate phases, the preparation of the publishing contracts and their proper implementation, the choice of illustrations to use, the design of the cover, the translation, and then the postpublication matters like sales, republications, and so on. Considering the number of languages into which his books were translated, this work must have taken up a considerable part of Mosse's time and especially correspondence. Mosse oversaw the process with passion, anxiety, and great expectation. Every new edition of one of his works in a different language was a moment he looked forward to and celebrated. And if something went awry or there was an excessive delay in the process, he did not hesitate to express his disapproval; if something was done without the proper care, he did not hesitate to reproach his editors, and he was quick to show his anger when he was not informed of editorial

choices made about his works.[81] This background is essential for completely understanding the relationship between Mosse and Vito Laterza, a relationship characterized by great fidelity, affection, and courtship, but like all love stories spotted with occasional mishaps, betrayals, and dramatic scenes of jealousy.[82] Two moments in particular give us some insight into the complexities of their long friendship, which began in the middle of the 1970s. In the first months of 1983, while Mosse was finishing work on *Nationalism and Sexuality* (which was published in Italian with Laterza before it was in English),[83] Vito Laterza—who always enjoyed first right of refusal—declined to publish Mosse's book *The Culture of Western Europe*, stating that though it was "very good, it is ill-suited to our market . . . aimed as it is at teaching Anglo-Saxon university students."[84] And so, despite the fact that Vito Laterza had personally declined to publish the volume, on October 11, 1984, Mosse received a letter from Vito Laterza and Sons containing the following: "Dear Professor, we've recently been informed by a person connected with Mondadori that you have promised your book to the Milanese publishing house . . . our competitor. Is this true? And why? If I may ask considering our long relationship of collaboration and friendship. If it is true—and I hope it is not—when will it be published?"[85] Perhaps with a bit of embarrassment, but certainly confident in his position, Mosse was forced to remind his forgetful friend that he had sent him the volume a year before and given him, as was to be expected, the "first right of refusal," and that Laterza himself had judged the book to be ill suited for his market.[86] One could perhaps chalk up the incident to the forgetfulness of an editor who dealt with large numbers of authors every year if it weren't for the fact that the episode repeated itself two years later when the volume was published with Arnoldo Mondadori. Mosse received a letter dated October 28, 1986: "Dear Mosse, I read in the newspaper today that your book *The Culture of Western Europe* will be published in Italian. I am happy that your work will be more widely circulated in Italy, but why is it being published with Mondadori? After our long collaboration and so many books, I feel a bit betrayed. Is there a reason why you made this decision?"[87] It is clear that Laterza had not simply forgotten their previous correspondence. The editor obviously felt a profound, almost visceral, attachment to "his" author, which made it impossible to accept the consequences of an editorial decision that he himself had made just a short time before. The idea of seeing one of Mosse's books published with another Italian editor was unfathomable to him.

While this episode may be described as a scene of blind jealousy, what took place in relation to the publication of one of Mosse's last books, *The Image of Man*, represents a small or great betrayal—depending on the perspective. As early as 1991, after reading Cristiana Paternò's interview with

Mosse in the newspaper *L'Unità*, Vito Laterza had written to the author to ask about a project on "[w]omen in politics in the 20th century" to which Mosse seemed to have alluded in the interview.[88] Mosse responded with his usual warm tone, specifying that, yes, he was working on a project in which women played a prominent role but that the project was centered around the theme of "the political culture of masculinity in the 19th and 20th centuries."[89] Receiving the letter from Mosse a few months later, Laterza reiterated his "great interest" in publishing the volume.[90] Later, in 1993, Mosse wrote to Laterza to inform him that he was making good progress on his book *The Construction of Modern Masculinity*, as it was provisionally titled.[91]

Between 1993 and 1995, however, at the same time that the publishing house was undergoing internal changes as the son Giuseppe Laterza began taking over his father's position, something changed for Mosse. With the air of someone trying to put off the inevitable, Mosse wrote to Giuseppe Laterza in 1995: "With regard to the contract for *The Image of Man* [whose American edition was just coming out], I will let you know more at the beginning of December. I have had many offers for the book, which is something different from the genre of books on which we have collaborated. As it deals with a theme which is very popular these days, I would like the book to be priced low and to have a large circulation."[92] Giuseppe Laterza did not waver in the face of Mosse's allusions, writing that the editing house had the firm intention of publishing 5,000 copies as part of the series "Storia e Società" and to immediately publish another 8,000 copies in a more economical paperback version.[93] But Mosse clearly had intentions to publish with another editor, in this case Einaudi, and in order to justify his decision, he again emphasized the particular nature of the book. This book was different than the previous ones and would require a type of editorial-graphic presentation—even more than a large circulation—that Laterza could not guarantee. "This is not the usual kind of scholarly book and should have a much different kind of publishing than my other books."[94] Naturally, the tone of Giuseppe Laterza's response was resentful: "I hope that Einaudi is successful in promoting your book in ways that in your mind Laterza would not have been capable." He added, however, in a tone of reconciliation,[95] that Laterza would continue to consider themselves his publisher in Italy. We do not know what the father Vito Laterza's response was even though he was still alive at the time. He would die in 2001. Apparently the episode did not completely ruin the relationship between Mosse and the publishing house. Just a few years after Mosse's death, Laterza would translate and publish his autobiography.[96] The episode would stand as the exception that confirms the rule, a blip in a long and intense intellectual friendship and collaboration capable of

overshadowing the small scenes of jealousy of the possessive editor and the understandable vanities of an ambitious author.

Appendix

1. *George L. Mosse to Renzo De Felice, Madison, February 23, 1973, in LBI, GLMC, Subseries 44/58, Società editrice Il Mulino 1973–1987*

Dear Professor De Felice,

When we met last Easter, you said that might be interested in seeing the MS. of my new book. I was really reluctant to impose upon you, as I know how busy you are. But then Ledeen wrote and said that you were still interested. Therefore my publisher will send you a Xeroxed copy.

I would, of course, be terribly interested in your criticism. Though it is confined to Germany, I am sure it also has an Italian application: I start with some words of Mussolini, but drop it there because as you told me little work has been done on that subject. Mike also mentioned the possibility of an Italian edition. That may have been rash, but, of course, if it could be arranged that would please me very much indeed. You know how highly I would value this because of my admiration for Italian historical scholarship. As the book is not long, there could be an introduction pointing out the fascist parallels in Italy, but I know too little about them to do it properly. Perhaps my work could stimulate such a study—I remember we talked about that in Rome also.

I hope all is well with you. I plan to be in Rome for a few days starting in June 18. If you have time to read the MS. you could pass on your thoughts through Mike if you like. As I said, I really impose on your valuable time most reluctantly.

With best greetings, also to Mrs. De Felice,

George Mosse

2. *George L. Mosse to Renzo De Felice, Madison, March 28, 1973 (ibidem)*

Dear Professor De Felice,

I was delighted with your letter, and it meant a great deal to me that you liked the book. I look forward to hearing any criticism you have, they will be most valuable. I am also most flattered that you are willing to write an introduction to Italian audiences. I am now making the final revisions on the MS: as it has come back from the editor. I have rewritten certain parts, to make

it hold together better, but nothing has changed essentially. I look forward to hearing about the possibilities of a translation concretely, and I will then pass it on to my publisher to handle (Howard Fertig, 80 E. II. Str. New York City, N. Y. 10003). It will be wonderful to see you in June, Ledeen is making reservations in Rome for me.

It is really terrible with his marital difficulties on top of the job difficulties. But he sounded cheerful when he called me up last month. It was I who was very shocked. It will not be easy to find a job these days, though he narrowly missed one at Smith College. We will have to see. I quite agree that his work on Fiume is important and he must finish it no matter what happens.

With best greetings,

George Mosse

3. Renzo De Felice to George L. Mosse, Rome, June, 4 1973 (ibidem)

Caro Professor Mosse,

Spero che questa lettera la raggiunga prima della Sua partenza: in attesa di vederla a Roma e di poter parlare con calma, voglio informarla che Il Mulino (la casa editrice che stampa la mia rivista e che oggi è per la storia e la sociologia una delle più importanti in Italia) ha deciso di tradurre e pubblicare il suo libro di cui mi inviò il dattiloscritto. Io farei la prefazione. Gli amici del Mulino (che ha sede a Bologna) sperano molto di potersi incontrare personalmente con Lei tra due settimane in modo da concordare tutti i particolari.

Con i più cordiali saluti,

Renzo De Felice

4. George L. Mosse to Livia De Felice, Madison, December 6, 1973 (ibidem)

Dear Mrs. De Felice,

Now that I have sent you some pages—that is the last revision. The book was copyedited for over here, but the changes are mostly grammatical and I do not think they need concern you. I must, however, point out that there are pictures in the book and that the pictures have now been selected. Eventually we will have to think of a way of getting the pictures to Il Mulino. They are, as you know, a very important part of the book. There will also have to be an insert in the text which is a reference to the picture (see plate 000). That is in the English text and will have to be put in the Italian text as well. Howard Fertig decided to put all the pictures together and not to spread them

throughout the text, but that is of course up to Il Mulino. At the moment he needs all the pictures in order to have the book designed, etc. They are glossy prints and there are no negatives of some of them so that they can only go to Il Mulino when Howard Fertig is finished with them. I see no other way to do it. Perhaps Il Mulino can get in touch with Fertig about that directly.

I hope you and Professor De Felice are well. I am due to teach in Jerusalem, but as you can imagine it is all up in the air. As a result I am first flying to London on December 31st and waiting it out there. My address will be 6 Boyne Terrace Mews, London W11. If there is no hurry it is best to reach me through Madison because they will always know when I am departing for Jerusalem. I will also see what has become of the invitation to you or whether it is a casualty of the war. In fact my teaching in Jerusalem may become such a casualty as they have to do odd things to get to their term which has not opened yet. If I get to Jerusalem I will talk to Professor Silvan further about it. Up to the war it was all arranged.

With best greetings and also to Professor Romeo.

Yours,

George Mosse

5. *Livia De Felice to George L. Mosse, Rome, January 27, 1974 (ibidem)*

Caro Professor Mosse,

Faccio seguito alla lettera inviatale la settimana scorsa a Madison.[97] *Qui sta succedendo l'incredibile con le poste: oggi ho ricevuto un pacco della Howard Fertig con timbro postale del 20 luglio 1973 (!!!). In esso ho trovato i capitoli dal IV alla fine con correzioni rispetto al testo già in mio possesso e tutte le note. Per poter tener conto delle correzioni che vedo apportate rispetto al testo su cui sto lavorando e siccome non riesco a ricostruire l'ordine delle successive correzioni (a causa del disordine nei tempi di arrivo postale) le sarei grato se Lei potesse, andando in Israele, fermarsi a Roma in modo che io possa farle vedere tutto il materiale in mio possesso e sapere da Lei quali sono le correzioni definitive. Mi scusi ma non è colpa mia. Con Renzo la saluto con molta cordialità,*

Livia De Felice

6. *Undated note kept in LBI, GLMC, Subseries 41/63, Editori Laterza 1975–1989*

My collaboration with the publishing house of Laterza must be set within the reconsideration of the fascist past which took place in the 1970s: a strong

anti-fascist tradition which played an important role in overthrowing the dictatorship now faced historical scholarship which on the basis of archival research sough to get closer to the fascist reality and to the kind of support Fascism had received throughout its history. The polemics which resulted eventually did advance historical scholarship as they became debates based upon an evaluation of the past rather than the present. Here Laterza played a crucial role, not only through its many books [on] Fascism but especially through the Intervista series which through an imaginative combination of historical scholarship and personal opinion gave a new dimension to the debate about Fascism. Though I had already published an earlier co-authored book with Laterza, it is through the Intervista that our close relationship began. Italian Fascism could not really be seen in all its dimension without a comparison with National Socialism, and the Intervista sul Nazismo sparked a new interest in the similarities and differences between these Fascisms. From there we went on to explore racism and various forms of nationalism whose consideration, once more, could by contrast and similarities give a broader perspective to an Italian past which still troubled men' minds. Through its editorial policy Laterza helped Fascism enter history and thus made a proper confrontation possible. There had never been the kind of evasion of this past in Italy, in contrast to Germany, were [sic] any confrontation was complicated by Auschwitz. But unlike Germany, Italy also had a historiographical tradition never so closely linked to a belief in national superiority. Here the pervasive influence of Benedetto Croce, so closely linked with Laterza, must be given much of the credit. His credo that «what man is only history tells» points to the past as a process rather than making it coincide with the present. Here there is a sense of historical distance which makes it easier to analyse the past without the polemics of present politics. The role which Laterza has played in bringing about a better understanding of the perils of Fascism and nationalism is in the best tradition of the publishing house as well as Italian historiography, and I am proud to have had a small role to play in this enterprise.

Notes

1. George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 178; see also Emilio Gentile, "Premessa," in Mosse, *Di fronte alla storia* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2004), vi.
2. Gentile, "Premessa," vi.
3. See his interview with Antonio Benedetti, *Corriere della sera*, March 17, 1985.
4. On Mosse's early modern studies, see David W. Sabean, "George Mosse and *The Holy Pretence*," and J. Sommerville, "The Modern Contexts of George Mosse's Early Modern Scholarship," in Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), respectively 15–24 and 25–38; see also Chapter 2 in this volume.

5. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 174.
6. During an interview on the occasion of receiving the Prezzolini award, Mosse told with evident emotion of his meeting Neapolitan and the role of cultural mediator played by Federico Chabod: "I had written a book on Machiavellianism in England. This work interested Croce, so I wanted to come to Italy to meet him. Our conversation was on Machiavelli. Croce, now very old, spoke in Italian, looking towards the ground. I would not understand if he was not translated by Federico Chabod" ("*Avevo scritto un libro sul machiavellismo in Inghilterra. Quest'opera interessò Croce, così volli venire in Italia a conoscerlo. La nostra conversazione fu su Machiavelli. Croce, ormai molto vecchio, parlava in italiano, guardando verso terra. Non avrei capito molto se non ci fosse stato a tradurre Federico Chabod*"; interview with Antonio Benedetti). The reference is to his book *The Struggle for Sovereignty in England from the Reign of Queen Elizabeth to the Petition of Right* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1950). Despite his deep admiration for Croce, Mosse could not share his historical judgment on Fascism as an accident of history (see, for example, his interview with Guido Gerosa, *Il Giorno*, February 4, 1983).
7. "It is very typical that it was a European, not an American to understand my attempt," he added. George L. Mosse, *Intervista sul nazismo*, ed. by Michael Ledeen (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1977), 11.
8. On Giorgio Spini, see the essays collected in Artemio Enzo Baldini and Massimo Firpo, eds., *Tradizione protestante e ricerca storica: L'impegno intellettuale di Giorgio Spini* (Florence: Olschki, 1998); as well as the contributions collected in the monographic section dedicated to him in *Rivista storica italiana*, 1, 2007, 175–263, and the *Bibliografia degli scritti di Giorgio Spini*, ed. by Daniele Spini (Florence: Olschki, 2007).
9. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 168.
10. George L. Mosse, "Puritan Radicalism and the Enlightenment," *Church History*, 29, no. 4, December 1960, 424–39.
11. See the autobiographical passage cited by Emidio Campi in "La Riforma e il fattore protestante nell'opera storiografica," in Baldini and Firpo, eds., *Tradizione protestante e ricerca storica*, 29–49, 29.
12. Giorgio Spini, "Il periodo coloniale della storia americana nella recente storiografia," *Rivista storica italiana*, 73, no. 2, 1961, 321–34.
13. On Mosse's early modernist studies and their difficult Italian reception, refer to Chapter 2 in this volume.
14. "The more free from all traditional constraints is George L. Mosse, whose cultural training is much closer to the ways of European historicism, than to those of the prevailing positivist flavor of the American historiography. In a certain sense, indeed, his *Holy Pretence* could be said an original Anglo-American extrapolation from the classic work by Meinecke on the idea of Reason of State" ("*Il più libero da tutti i vincoli tradizionalistici è George L. Mosse, che oltre tutto è egli stesso di formazione culturale assai più vicina ai modi dello storicismo europeo, che non a quelli di prevalente sapore positivistico, propri di molta storiografia americana. In certo senso, anzi, la sua* Holy

Pretence *potrebbe dirsi un'originale estrapolazione anglo-americana della classica opera del Meinecke sulla Idea della Ragion di Stato*"; Spini, "Il periodo coloniale della storia americana," 326).

15. So continued Spini's reflection:

> Since Mosse, in our opinion at least, really pointed out one of the basic problems of the spiritual history of Puritanism. It is not a random accident that even the Pilgrim Fathers brought back to America, alongside the works of Calvin or Vermigli, even those of Bacon, Machiavelli and Bodin. The Christian *polis*, that the Puritans tried to build with such strenuous efforts, it's not a restoration, that is, returning back from the Renaissance to the Middle Ages, but the effort of a building, which stands consciously on the other side of the humanistic and Renaissance experience. Developing the prospect designed by Mosse, there is a vast field which still awaits scholars: just to name a few, even Guicciardini was one of the great loves of intellectual Puritans and Boccalini found interested readers across the Atlantic, including Cotton Mather himself. And not to mention the fundamental problem of the transition from Puritanism to the Enlightenment in the U.S.: a problem which affects the very origins of the United States and instead has been relatively little investigated so far. If there is a limit in the work of Mosse, as in all human things, it's—if ever—the extreme rigidity with which the work was held in the pure soil of the history of ideas without affecting that of '*evenementielle*' history. But whether it's an intuition exceptionally acute and fruitful there is no doubt
>
> (*Giacchè il Mosse, a nostro avviso almeno, ha posto realmente l'indice su uno dei problemi di fondo della storia spirituale del puritanesimo. Non è un accidente casuale il fatto che persino i Padri Pellegrini in persona si siano portati dietro in America, accanto alle opere del Calvino o del Vermigli, anche quelle del Bacone, del Machiavelli e del Bodin. La polis cristiana, che i puritani hanno cercato di edificare con tanto strenuo impegno, non è restaurazione, cioè ritorno indietro dal Rinascimento al Medioevo, ma sforzo di una costruzione, che si pone coscientemente al di qua dell'esperienza umanistica e rinascimentale. Sviluppando la prospettiva disegnata dal Mosse, c'è un campo vastissimo che attende ancora gli studiosi: tanto per fare qualche nome, anche un Guicciardini è stato tra i grandi amori intellettuali dei puritani ed un Boccalini ha trovato lettori appassionati oltre l'Atlantico, compreso lo stesso Cotton Mather. E non parliamo poi di quel fondamentale problema che è il trapasso dal puritanesimo all'illuminismo nell'ambiente americano: un problema che investe le origini stesse degli Stati Uniti e che invece è stato relativamente poco investigato sino ad ora. Se v'è un limite anche nell'opera del Mosse, come in ogni cosa umana, esso è costituito—se mai—dall'estrema rigidezza con cui l'opera è stata tenuta sul puro terreno della storia delle idee senza intaccare quello della storia "evenementale." Ma che si tratti di una intuizione eccezionalmente acuta e feconda non v'è dubbio alcuno*; ibid., 326–27).

16. Part of this intellectual and personal friendship was the habit of encouraging and facilitating the research of each other's students, as when Spini helped Paul Grendler, Mosse's student in the early 1960s, get a Fulbright fellowship to finish his doctoral research in Florence (see the draft letter of recommendation without holder, signed by Mosse, April 23, 1963, in the file that contains the correspondence with Spini). Very attached to his German teacher, Grendler, a well-known scholar of Italian cultural and religious history of the early modern period, published in 1981 a collection of essays on *Censorship and Culture in Late Renaissance Italy and France* (London: Variorum Reprints), dedicating it just to George Mosse as a contribution to his festschrift. The relationship between Mosse and Spini is also mentioned by Aramini in the opening pages of his work on the fortune of Mosse in Italy: Donatello Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2010).
17. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 168.
18. "But above all, we also shared a distrust of the Kennedy presidency, about which while in Madison, he wrote a most prescient book" (ibid., 158).
19. Mosse to Spini, Madison, January 29, 1971, in Leo Baeck Institute, George L. Mosse Collection (henceforth cited as GLMC), Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 43, folder 6, Istituto Socialista di studi storici, 1977–1978. The complete title of Donald Weinstein's work is *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Italian translation: *Savonarola a Firenze. Profezia e patriottismo nel Rinascimento* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1976). Spini's review was published in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, suppl. 1, 1972, 166–67.
20. Mosse to Spini, Madison, March 31, 1971, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 43, folder 6, Istituto Socialista di studi storici, 1977–78. Spini's work was *L'evangelo e il berretto frigio. Storia della Chiesa Cristiana Libera in Italia 1870–1904* (Turin: Claudiana, 1971).
21. Spini to Mosse, Florence, July 18, 1977, ibid.
22. Mosse to Spini, Madison, August 10, 1977, ibid.
23. Spini to Mosse, Florence, October 8, 1977, ibid.
24. Among the papers of the German historian is preserved a telegram, dated November 3, 1978, from an unknown sender, which called for Mosse to telephone to Spini in response to a request from the Moro family. See Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 65, note 64.
25. Aldo Moro, *L'intelligenza e gli avvenimenti. Testi del 1959–1978*, ed. by Fondazione Aldo Moro, with a contribution by George L. Mosse (Milan: Garzanti, 1979). On the long interview given by Mosse on this occasion and then inserted as an introduction to the collection of writings by Moro and the reactions it provoked, see Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 63–66.
26. The complete reference to Delio Cantimori's essay is "Osservazioni sui concetti di cultura e storia della cultura" (1928), now in Luisa Mangoni, ed., *Politica e storia contemporanea. Scritti 1927–1942* (Turin, Einaudi, 1991), 5–13. De Felice's quotation is taken from his essay "Gli storici italiani nel

periodo fascista," in De Felice, *Intellettuali di fronte al fascismo* (Rome: Bonacci, 1985), 227–28, cited also by Giovanni Mario Ceci, *Renzo De Felice storico della politica* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2008), 107.

27. Cantimori, "Osservazioni," 9–10.
28. Mangoni, "Europa sotterranea," introduction to Cantimori, *Politica e storia contemporanea*, xxi.
29. See the articles now collected in Cantimori, *Politica e storia contemporanea*.
30. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), translated in Italian with the title *Le origini culturali del Terzo Reich* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1968).
31. Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento e altri scritti*, ed. by A. Prosperi (Turin, Einaudi: 1992), First Edition, 1939. Reference is to his already quoted essay on "Radical Puritanism and Enlightenment," 424 and 438.
32. On the fertile historiographical legacy of Delio Cantimori, not limited to his own students but also extended to many other scholars, see Pasquale Villani, "La vicenda storiografica italiana: continuità e fratture," in Pietro Rossi, ed., *La storiografia contemporanea* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1987), 391–99. An organic reflection on the influence of his work and of his historical method on the historiography of postwar Italian is still missing. See some early reflections in Paolo Favilli, *Marxismo e storia. Saggio sull'innovazione storiografica in Italia (1945–1970)* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006), 122–52, which contains among other things the acute observation of Armando Saitta, according to whom Cantimori "was the master of a whole generation of young historians who moved from the Crocian shores to the Marxist ones" (133). It does not appear that Mosse's studies have exercised any suggestion on other students of Cantimori besides De Felice. In reference to the latter, Ceci spoke rightly of a "cultural approach to political history" while stressing the different approaches that distinguished him from George Mosse (Ceci, *Renzo De Felice storico della politica*, 83–125). On the different phases of the reception of Mosse's work in Italy, characterized at first by a widespread distrust and then by a greater attention, see Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*. See also the remarks made by Renato Moro in Chapter 8 in this volume. On the relationship between Cantimori and De Felice, see also Paolo Simoncelli, *Renzo De Felice. La formazione intellettuale* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2001).
33. Michael Ledeen to George L. Mosse, Rome, June 3, 1975, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19, Michael Ledeen.
34. Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 28.
35. Ibid., 29–31.
36. Ibid., 32.
37. De Felice to Mosse, Rome, May 8, 1971, and Mosse to De Felice, May 11, 1971, in "Carteggio George L. Mosse—Renzo De Felice," edited by Donatello Aramini and Gian Mario Ceci, *Mondo contemporaneo*, 3, 2007 (henceforth cited as *Carteggio*), 77–104, 82. The essay is George L. Mosse, "I socialisti tedeschi e la questione ebraica durante la repubblica di Weimar," *Storia contemporanea*, 1, 1971, 17–52.

38. "Any argument on Italian fascism or fascism in general would be appreciated as an argument of the conference," wrote the German historian, advancing the invitation in early February. See Mosse to De Felice, February 2, 1971, in *Carteggio*, 81.
39. The enthusiastic reception that the group gathered around the journal *Storia contemporanea* gave his work, as well as the long and fruitful intellectual relationship with Emilio Gentile, a pupil and friend of Renzo De Felice, both came of the friendship born in Reading at the end of the 1960s; on the other hand, the leftwing hostility that surrounded, at least until the early 1980s, the work of Mosse can be explained to a large extent by De Felice's support, thanks to which the work of the German historian arrived on the Italian cultural market. Unlike De Felice, whose books on Fascism continued to be the subject of controversy until his death in 1996, Mosse could count on an extraordinary eclecticism and an amazing ability to wander through the centuries and more diverse themes: volumes such as *Masses and Man*, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, and *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* did breach the leftwing press long before it laid down its arms against De Felice. Those books ensured Mosse the reputation of a public intellectual, which was one of the reasons for his success in the arena of Italian culture.
40. They are three unpublished letters preserved among the papers of George Mosse in the file that contains the material related to the publisher il Mulino (GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 44, folder 58), which we publish here in full at the end of Chapter 5 and that complement the *Carteggio*.
41. Ledeen told the story of his volume to Mosse, highlighting the generous help that De Felice was giving to him: "D'Annunzio at Fiume is coming along well, will be finished this fall. [. . .] De Felice is now a dear friend, helping me infinitely with the book, feeling me documents, suggesting lines of analysis [. . .] making life a positive pleasure. [. . .] I will take care of your business here. Any reviews will be sent on to Madison, and I'll let you know the general reaction" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, July 12, 1974, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19).
42. Mosse himself reciprocated the affection shown by the young American. The great consideration that Mosse had for his student emerges from the praise that spiced the many letters of recommendation sent from Madison to diverse universities in the USA, in which the name of De Felice (along with that of other senior figures in the Italian historiography on Fascism) was frequently cited to increase the authority of his own judgment (see, for example, Mosse's letter to professor Rice, Madison, September 20, 1973, ibid.).
43. Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, February 26, 1971, ibid. It is worth noting that a few years earlier, in 1966, during one of his first Italian visits, to Florence in particular, Ledeen was put in contact by Mosse with Giorgio Spini, then probably the only Italian friendship of the German historian (Ledeen to Mosse, Florence, January 19, 1966, ibid.).
44. Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, March 24, 1971, ibid.
45. Mosse to De Felice, Madison, May 11, 1971, in *Carteggio*, 82–83.

46. Mosse to De Felice, Madison, February 23, 1973, in GLMC, Subseries 44/58, Società editrice il Mulino 1973–87 (see appendix, document n. 1). "If you have time to read the MS. you could pass on your thoughts through Mike if you like," he added, stressing the important role of mediation entrusted to Michael Ledeen. In a subsequent letter of March 28, Mosse dwells on some details of the private life of his American student, probably to show his correspondent how much he cared for him (doc. n. 2).
47. Mosse to De Felice, Madison, March 28, 1973, ibid. On June 4, 1973, De Felice would tell his German friend the official decision taken by il Mulino to publish the Italian translation of his book (doc. n. 3).
48. The letters exchanged between the two bear witness to an intense and affectionate relationship. Mosse immediately got in tune with Livia, establishing a direct contact that was independent from her husband. See, for example, what he wrote in December 1973 in the first unpublished letter we have to her (Mosse to Livia De Felice, Madison, December 6, 1973, ibid., doc. 4). See also the next letter exchanged between the two, shown in the appendix (doc. n. 5). See also *Carteggio*, 83–84.
49. Mosse to Ledeen, Madison, August 2, 1974, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19.
50. Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, August 26, 1974, ibid. Not infrequently, the Roman letters of the young American historian widened his eyes to the political and cultural landscape of early 1970s Italy, in particular to the growing resurgence of neofascists, about which De Felice himself was very worried: "De Felice looks very tired, and speaks of feeling very isolated. He and his wife seem very concerned about the new fascism" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, June 10, 1974, ibid.). "Things in Italy are bad as you know," he specified a couple of months later. "Some signs of some nasty antisemitism and neonazism cropping up here and there, and nobody has the vaguest idea what to do about the economy, but that is an old story for Italy" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, August 26, 1974, ibid.).
51. Ledeen was happy to dwell on the contribution that he made to the success of the event: "I have gone over most of the galleys of your book with Mrs. De Felice, who has done an excellent job of resolving some of the problems your English prose had raised. For the areas which required an export in 'Mosseese' my help was needed, and was pleased to do so. The book will thus be out in a couple of months, provided that the illustrations arrive from America. At last hearing they had not come" (Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, Yom Kippur, 1974, ibid.). And Mosse didn't forget to thank him (Mosse to Ledeen, Madison [signed in Professor Mosse's absence], October 8, 1974, ibid.).
52. As usual, the news about the progress of the Italian translation of Mosse's book proceeded in parallel with information about his own volume about Fiume: "He and I are going to do a joint analysis of the financial aspects of D'Annunzio at Fiume, when we get our hands on the private archives of one of the major financiers, within a couple of weeks" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, August 27, 1974, ibid.).

53. There are no traces of a letter written directly to De Felice after receiving the volume.
54. Mosse to Ledeen, Madison, February 27, 1975, ibid.
55. Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, March 6, 1975, ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. It is what can be deduced, in the absence of Mosse's letter, from Ledeen's subsequent response.
58. Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, Passover, ibid.
59. Mosse to Ledeen, Madison, April 10, 1975, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19.
60. Jens Petersen, author of the volume *Hitler-Mussolini. Die Entstehung der Achse Berlin-Rom 1933–1936* (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1973).
61. Mosse concluded his argument with a Solomonic judgment: "One thing does not exclude another" (Mosse to Ledeen, Madison, April 10, 1975, ibid.). In the face of Mosse's resistance, Ledeen, who certainly didn't miss the allusion to his alleged willingness to call himself out, was forced to capitulate. If Bracher had pulled back, he would write the review (Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, April 21, 1975, ibid.).
62. Michael Ledeen, "Renzo de Felice and the Controversy over Italian Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 11, no. 4, Special Issue: "Theories of Fascism" (Oct. 1976), 269–83.
63. Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 49; see also Giovanni Belardelli, "L'intervista pericolosa," *Nuova storia contemporanea*, 2, 1999, 25–36.
64. The book would come out a little later from the publisher Laterza with the title *D'Annunzio a Fiume* (1975) and two years later in English translation from the publisher John Hopkins University Press with the title *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).
65. "The book of 'conversations on fascism' which he and I recorded in early February is fast approaching publication, and should be out in late June or early July. I won't comment on it yet, because obviously I'm too involved in it, but everyone who has read the preliminary text is wildly enthusiastic" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, April 21, 1975, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19).
66. "It will be good reading, anyway, although I doubt that it will have much of market outside Italy," read Ledeen's letter, before updating his interlocutor on the progress of his research around D'Annunzio's experience in Fiume: "De Felice and I believe we've uncovered evidence linking D'Annunzio with Lenin in at least two ways in 1920, and if I can prove it, I'll let you know the details. [. . .] It seems Rosario Romeo is leaving the University, he can't stand the atmosphere any more [. . .] it is difficult, what with the riots and the strikes almost every week" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, March 6, 1975, ibid.).
67. A significant contribution to its public reputation came from the special relationship Mosse entertained with the Italian press, which is beyond the

scope of this study. In an interview in which he responded to some questions concerning the reasons for his Italian success, the German historian bluntly stated that "Italy is the only country in the world [. . .] where the major newspapers [. . .] devote much space to culture. This helps decisively to make known scholars and their work" (interview with Antonio Benedetti, my translation). This explicit recognition of the central role that the cultural pages of Italian leading national newspapers had played and continued to play in promoting and stimulating the historiographical debate was an act of love for the Italian press. And the Italian newspapers, with few exceptions, largely reciprocated this affection, devoting to him an attention and a space perhaps unmatched. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Mosse was one of the first "public" intellectuals in Italy, a figure that we are used to today but that in the 1980s was not so common. In other words, he interpreted the figure of an intellectual as one called to speak out publicly on any issue current policy imposed on the agenda—on not only "his" issues, such as the Holocaust, racism, and the idea of the nation and its degeneration, but also topics that were far from his research, such as the Cold War, the American empire, the Gulf War of 1991, the growing Northern League, the role of the Greens (*Verdi*) in Italian politics, and so on. *L'Unità*, the newspaper of the Italian Communist Party, played a central role in defining the public image of Mosse, although it had initially echoed the strong left-wing suspicion that surrounded his figure as a historian. On Mosse's relationship with the Italian press, see the cited work by Aramini.

68. Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, Passover, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19.
69. In the absence of the letter, once again the faithful Ledeen is there to give us a picture of the growing bond between the two, giving his blessing to the final launch of the "mutual admiration society": "De Felice was amazed by your letter (of which I approve entirely), and appreciated it a lot, since the two of you have developed a mutual admiration society" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, June 3, 1975, ibid.).
70. Mosse to De Felice, Madison, May 7, 1975, in *Carteggio*, 85.
71. For a detailed picture of the reception of Mosse's volume by Italian journalists and historians, see Aramini, *George L. Mosse*; as well as Donatello Aramini, "George L. Mosse e gli storici italiani: il problema della 'nazionalizzazione delle masse,'" *Mondo contemporaneo*, 2, 2007, 129–59; and Aramini, ed., "George L. Mosse e la 'nazionalizzazione delle masse' in Italia: un dibattito televisivo del 1976," *Mondo contemporaneo*, 1, 2010, 79–95.
72. Mosse to De Felice, Madison, October 14, 1975, in *Carteggio*, 86.
73. See the letter in which Ledeen gave an account of the event to his German teacher, peppering his narrative with spicy political notes:

> I have received your prize, I have deposited it in my bank account (it was 1 million lire, by the way, not 2 as De Felice had thought) [. . .]. I had a good time accepting the award, especially since the local government has just changed (it's now communist) and the new officials would have

> preferred that a different kind of book had been celebrated. So when the major said that perhaps it would be better to give these prizes to books which 'the people can read' I replied that 'the people' should certainly read THIS book, since it is indispensable for an understanding of fascism. Without understanding it, we can't fight against it. Ovations. A good time was had by all (Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, November 10, 1975, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 3, box 37, folder 19).

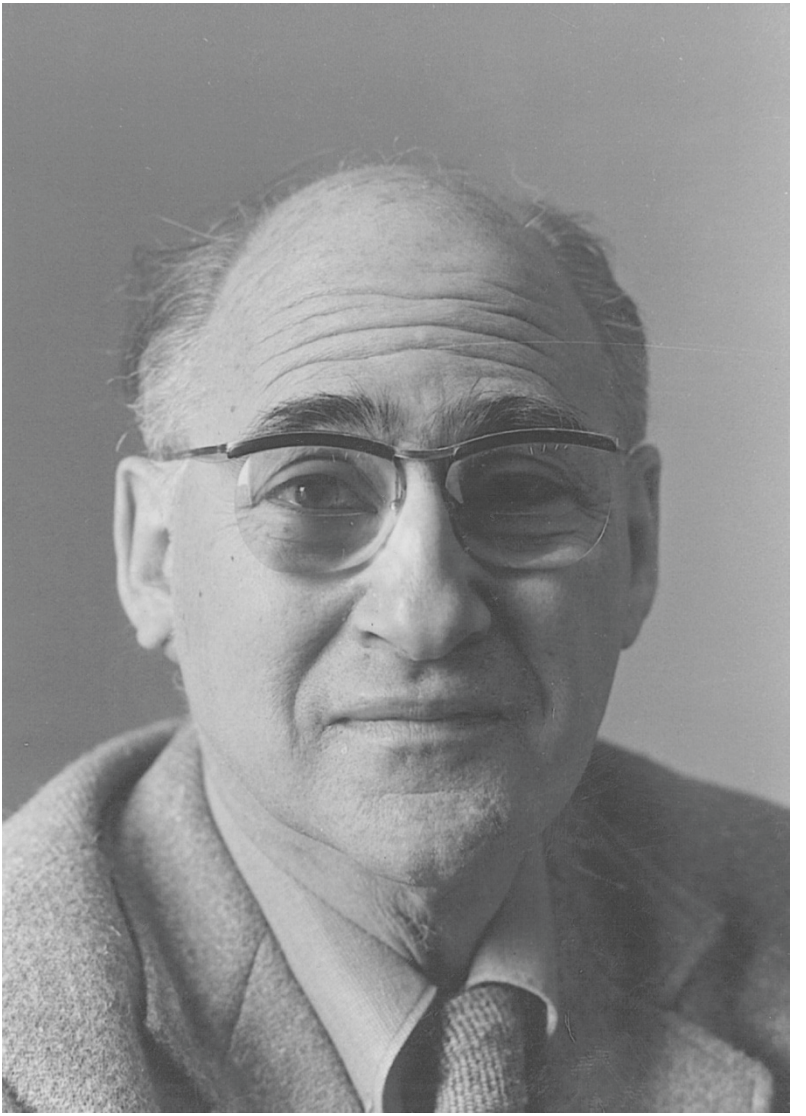
74. Ibid. See also one of the following letters: "The *Intervista sul fascismo* is now out, and major reviews are starting to appear in all the major Italian publications. The initial broadsides—from the official Left, of course—are, as usual, highly misinformed and very critical. It remains to be seen what form the debate will take, if any, but the book has at least caused a bit stir, which is something. At the moment I badly need people to recognize my name, and I think that will now happen [. . .] let us hope so, at any event" (Ledeen to Mosse, Roma, July 7, 1975, ibid.). And again, "I'm excited, what with the book with De Felice due out in less than a month!" (Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, June 3, 1975, ibid.).
75. For his rancorous disappointment due to his difficulties in finding a university post in the United States and to the reluctance shown by the American market in welcoming the English version of the book forthcoming in Italy, see Ledeen to Mosse, Rome, Passover, 1974, ibid.: "My book with De Felice comes out 30 June. D'Annunzio will be out [. . .] in late Novembre. Still no American publisher for it (Knopf said no)."
76. On the public success obtained by the volume as well as on the difficult, in some cases negative reception by the reviewers, see Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 54.
77. Ledeen published his volume on D'Annunzio in 1975, but the hostility with which the American Academy continued to receive his applications soon led him to seek success in other ways.
78. We leave here the word to research and documents Aramini and others have recently brought to the attention of scholars. See the letters exchanged between the two since 1977 in *Carteggio*, 86–104, and the pages dedicated to them in Aramini, *George L. Mosse*. On the role of Emilio Gentile as a follower of Mosse as well as his great friend, see Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 78 and 169, and Gentile's interview published in Chapter 9 of this volume. On Michael Ledeen and his career as a SISMI informer undertaken shortly thereafter, before being hired as a consultant to the US Secretary of State, see the Wikipedia article on him.
79. Even in this case, the name of Michael Ledeen is at the origin of the intellectual friendship established by Mosse with Vito Laterza. He was in fact the one who proposed to the publisher the name of the German historian for an interview that would equal the success of the just-published interview with Renzo De Felice. See V. Laterza's letter to G. L. Mosse, Bari, November 5, 1975, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 41, folder 63, Editore Laterza 1975–89.

80. This is an undated note in English preserved among the papers of George Mosse in the Laterza file, dating back probably to the 1980s, published in the appendix (doc. no. 6).
81. In late 1982 and early 1983, Il Mulino dared to reprint in a different series his book *The Nationalization of the Masses* without having first consulted him, and Mosse wrote a fiery letter to Carla Carloni, who hastened to respond with a letter full of excuses (George L. Mosse to Carla Carloni, undated, and Carla Carloni to George L. Mosse, Bologna, February 7, 1983, in GLMC, Subseries 4, box 44, folder 58, Società editrice il Mulino 1973–87).
82. One case, recently reconstructed by Emilio Gentile, concerns an essay by Mosse intended for an edited volume on the French Revolution and its legacy. It was rejected by the curator of the book, the French historian François Furet, due to irreconcilable differences of interpretation. Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore. George L. Mosse e la catastrofe dell'uomo moderno* (Rome: Carocci, 2007), 191–93.
83. George L. Mosse, *Sessualità e nazionalismo. Mentalità borghese e rispettabilità* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1984); English version: *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985).
84. Vito Laterza to George L. Mosse, Rome, April 26, 1983, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 41, folder 63, Editori Laterza 1975–89. On the volume and the subsequent historiographical debate, cf. Donatello Aramini, "Modernità e cultura nell'Europa occidentale," *Recensioni di storia*, http://www.recensionidistoria.net/mosse.pdf.
85. Laterza to Mosse, Rome, October 11, 1984, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 41, folder 63, Editori Laterza 1975–89.
86. Mosse to Laterza, undated letter, ibid.
87. Laterza to Mosse, Bari, October 28, 1986, ibid.
88. Laterza to Mosse, Roma, January 25, 1991, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 41, folder 64, Editori Laterza 1990–98.
89. Mosse to Laterza, Cambridge (England), March 9, 1991, ibid. A brief mention of this letter and the letter cited in the following note is in Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 205.
90. Laterza to Mosse, Rome, June 17, 1991, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 41, folder 64, Editori Laterza 1990–98.
91. Mosse to Laterza, Madison, September 4, 1993, ibid.
92. Mosse to Giuseppe Laterza, Madison, November 21, 1995, ibid. A brief mention of the event is in Aramini, *George L. Mosse*, 205–6.
93. G. Laterza to Mosse, Roma, December 11, 1995, in GLMC, Correspondence, Subseries 4, box 41, folder 64, Editori Laterza 1990–98.
94. Mosse to G. Laterza, Madison, February 2, 1996, ibid.
95. G. Laterza to Mosse, Rome, April 1, 1996, ibid.
96. The original edition was published in 2000, one year after Mosse's death, with the title *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), while the Italian translation came out in 2004 with the title *Di*

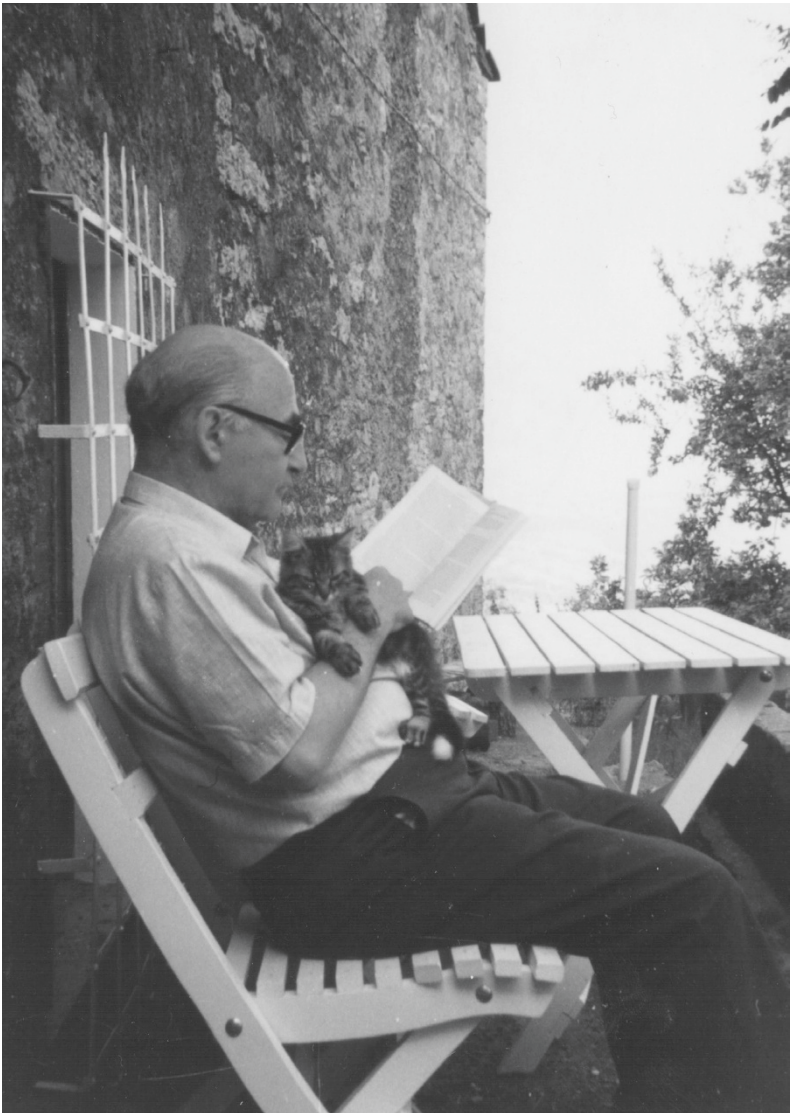
fronte alla storia. Laterza did not translate the collection of essays *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), most likely because it was a collection of articles that some of which already appeared in volumes published by Laterza.

97. Letter from Rome, January 21, 1974, in *Carteggio*, 83.

Mosse, Rome, 1956



Mosse, portrait, early 1980s



Mosse, Assisi, 1992

6

Mosse after Mosse

An Ambivalent Legacy

Donatello Aramini

Reactions

George Mosse died on January 22, 1999. News of his death quickly spread in Italy, where, with the exception of the historian Ernst Nolte, all the articles in the daily newspapers highlighted his innovative approaches to analyzing irrationalism and "new politics." The same leftist group of historians that had distanced itself from Mosse's methodology and what it saw as the underestimation of the importance of economic structures in his work was now applauding his "culturalist" approach and the "fundamental" importance of categories frequently used by him such as myths and "new politics."[1] The articles affirmed that Mosse had written "books which were destined to revolutionize the way in which historiography approached the question of Fascism." His scholarship had covered a "vast territory," influencing "all areas of scholarship" and opening "with his suggestions new avenues of study which promised to yield even greater results in the years to come."[2]

These comments were not just made to honor the historian's passing but part of a general interest in his research that had begun at the end of the 1980s. As Emilio Gentile commented, this trend had made Italy "the country in which Mosse had gained the greatest notoriety, both in and outside of the scholarly community."[3] The articles indicated how the reserves and doubts about his work had faded with his death.

This initial reaction to Mosse's death in Italy, however, would be slow in transforming itself into a critical evaluation of the importance of his

interpretations, whereas first in France[4] and then in Madison[5] conferences would be organized with this precise aim. These initiatives, like others, underlined Mosse's qualities as a teacher—informal and open to discussions and the input of his students[6]—and the originality of his approach to political history, which stressed the impact of culture on politics (in a time when social history dominated scholarship) and demonstrated that "the connections between culture and catastrophe, European normality and Fascist and Nazi barbarism were closer than that implied by accounts presenting the latter as a complete rejection of Europe's heritage."[7] Mosse, "one of the twentieth century's giants of the study of modern European history,"[8] had, according to American scholars, inspired a "whole sequence of new trends and subspecialities."[9] As one of his own students recalled in an important critical essay that appeared immediately after his death in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, this was due to his approach in which "history becomes a kind of updated Hegelian totality, a dialectic in which the political cannot be separated from the religious, the scientific from the aesthetic, the national from the mythological."[10] For Israeli historians, he had brought "a fresh wind" to the study of the history of the Jews. Melding "the eager curious inquisitiveness of the outsider, with a new style of teaching and lecturing which comprised the best aspects of American academic informality and the horizons of a great scholar and Weltbürger," Mosse "endowed the study of Jewish and general history of nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the Hebrew University with a completely new conceptual framework which redeemed the subject of its methodological isolation and ideological exclusiveness."[11] As his friend and colleague Stanley Payne said during a commemorative ceremony at the University of Wisconsin,

> [N]o scholar of the past generation made a greater contribution to the study of Fascism than did George Mosse. Though in several studies he referred to Fascism as a "revolution of the right," it is clear that Mosse did not consider Fascism merely part of "the right" in the conventional sense. Rather, he viewed it as a revolutionary phenomenon of its own, warning a number of times against the fairly common tendency on the part of commentators to deny that Fascism constituted a revolutionary force because of the prejudice that anything genuinely revolutionary must be "of the left," or somehow "progressive" in a left-liberal sense, or that a revolution must be conceived, at least in the abstract, as a "good" revolution.

In Mosse's opinion, Payne stated, "none of these qualifications held for Fascism": it must be "subjected to analysis that is initially value-free in the Weberian-sense," and "there is no a priori reason why revolutions need be considered creative instead of destructive."[12]

These first assessments of the work of Mosse were gathered together and reflected on in the book *What History Tells*, the important collection of the proceedings from the conference held in Madison in 2001.[13] The volume critically analyzed his work, his person, and his legacy. Examining the breadth of his scholarship—on the Protestant Reformation, Jewish history, Fascism, racism, political symbolism, bourgeoisie respectability, and nationalism—the conference sought to trace "the manifold ways in which George presciently influenced the subsequent course of these various historiographies—sensitizing them to new questions, exposing previously hidden connections, hinting at novel areas of research, nudging them on to redefine their agenda."[14]

In Italy, this moment of reflection came later. Just a few months after Mosse's death, the historian Giuseppe Galasso published an article in which he, in addition to underlining Mosse's fundamental methodological innovations (reiterating many points that Renato Moro had already made),[15] expressed some doubts about the importance Mosse placed on irrational forces and ideology, which had led him to consider Nazism "more of a 'revelation' than a 'revolution.'"[16] In 2003 the journal *Passato e presente* (characterized by a leftist historiographical approach tied to Marxist interpretive methods inherited from Hobsbawm and the English journal *Past & Present*), which in the past had hosted articles critical of Mosse's research,[17] published an article by the American historian Rudy Koshar. In the article, Koshar defined Mosse as a historian who had consistently remained ahead of the times, defending theses that would be the subject of historiographical debate only years later.[18] It was clear now that Mosse had individuated the elements that had most characterized the twentieth century: the "inseparable link between politics and ideology" and the use of myths to make individuals feel a part of history.[19]

The Italian translation of Mosse's memoir[20] provided an occasion for a more attentive analysis of Mosse's work, situating it at the center of the Italian historiographical debate. Emilio Gentile, one of Mosse's best Italian friends, in his preface to the Italian edition maintained that the historian brought about a "revolution" in the historiography of Fascism and nationalism.[21] In the first number of *Mondo Contemporaneo*, a journal founded by some former students of Renzo De Felice, Renato Moro demonstrated how Mosse's work on these topics had represented his last great lesson in methodology.[22] Similar assessments were expressed in the publication of the National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy (whose members had long polemicized Mosse's interpretations)[23] and in the communist newspaper *il Manifesto*, where Mosse was defined as one of the most influential scholars of Fascism and perhaps one of the most important scholars of the twentieth century.[24] The review of his memoir in

Passato e presente took a different approach, underlining the import of his work for the study of propaganda and the manipulation of the masses by the fascist parties.[25]

Almost without exception, in Italy like in other countries (especially in France[26] and the United Kingdom[27]) there is widespread consensus about the importance of Mosse's work. Vittorio Vidotto, professor of history at the University of Rome, has underlined the "central" role of Mosse's research for explaining the characteristics of mass society and has placed him alongside the greatest historians of the modern age. In addition, following a survey of colleagues and students, Vidotto pointed out that Mosse's *Nationalization of the Masses* was held as the most important work of modern historiography, noting how this was a sign of the degree to which modern historiography had changed.[28] In recent years, there has been an increased focus on the relationship between Mosse and Italian historiography[29] (especially with Renzo De Felice[30]) and his interpretations, beginning with the idea of bourgeois respectability, a concept that is present, even if indirectly, in all Mosse's work—in particular, in his interpretation of modern Europe and the origins of Nazi consensus.[31] According to Saul Friedländer, the theme was not only a "historiographical breakthrough" but "perhaps" the most innovative aspect of Mosse's analysis of nationalism.[32]

New Lines of Research

As one can see, it is not surprising that many leftist scholars have referred to Mosse as "one of the greatest historians of the twentieth century"—the historian "who brought about the most dramatic innovations in the study of Fascism and the 'new politics' of the masses beginning in the 1960s, giving new foundation to the concept of totalitarian democracy."[33] These historians have even given Mosse credit for the "turn" toward interpreting Fascism with "greater attention to its ideological dimension" when the "dominant tendency was to underline Fascism's lack of ideology."[34] It seems natural that in Europe the first volume of Mosse's work to be published was in Italy, and by Emilio Gentile,[35] who, in all probability, was the scholar most inspired by Mosse's approach. Gentile elaborated on Mosse's method and content in order to establish his own new avenues of research. A good example of this is his work on the religion of politics.

Mosse's concept of "new politics," laid out in his 1975 book, was particularly well received by Gentile, who thought that this concept was groundbreaking.[36] Mosse himself considered Gentile a "partner" in historiography for their shared research interests.[37] In a book he published in 2007, Gentile stressed the "civic function" of Mosse's historiographical work, which

counteracted the seductive effect of myths, stereotypes, and demagoguery.[38] Nevertheless, Gentile saw a certain risk in the historian's tendency to privilege the cultural dimension over institutional or organizational factors, which led to a new, "one-way" analysis of Fascism.

Modern historiography is perhaps most indebted to Mosse for his interpretation of Fascism as a political religion and his tracing of a general tendency toward a sacralization of politics in the twentieth century.[39] In a recent book on fascist culture, Alessandra Tarquini, calling Mosse's studies "the most convincing confutation" of Marxist and liberal interpretations of Fascism, underlined how his studies have left their mark on today's historiography of Fascism.[40] This is visible in studies focused on the aesthetic dimensions of the regime, those aimed at defining its more general characteristics, as well as in those interested in Fascism as a political religion. However, rehashing in part the arguments of Emilio Gentile[41] and Zeev Sternhell,[42] Tarquini notes how Mosse's stressing of the symbolic and aesthetic aspects of Fascism had paradoxically led to a "less defined image of the totalitarian regime" and had involuntarily initiated a course of research that would end up negating the existence of a fascist ideology, such as in the case of cultural studies and other approaches that focus exclusively on the aesthetic aspects of fascist culture.[43] Nevertheless, as Sternhell notes, "even today [. . .] Mosse's pioneering work has lost none of its original freshness."[44] Stanley Payne,[45] Roger Eatwell,[46] and Roger Griffin have said the same about his work, the latter noting how he had followed in Mosse's footsteps[47] and how his studies participate in the spiritual legacy of the great historian.[48] According to Griffin, the fact that many of Mosse's essays are still up to date with contemporary approaches to Fascism proves just how innovative his work was. Even when his research has not had a direct influence on historians, his work as the director of the *Journal of Contemporary History* "helped steer fascist studies in the 'right' direction" through a process of indirect influence and collaboration.[49] These assessments are easily confirmed by observing the animate debate on the formulation of a general definition of Fascism and its function as a political religion,[50] a debate that has often taken place in the pages of the journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*. A recent volume on the subject, *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism*, observes how the last two decades of scholarship on Fascism have registered a shift thanks to the attention toward its ideological and cultural dimensions and the "cultural/ideological turn."[51] Since the 1990s, this new cultural approach has led to a rising interpretive consensus.[52] As the texts in the volume edited by Costa Pinto illustrate—which gives a panorama of the most innovative and important research carried out on Fascism in the last twenty years—Mosse takes on a "prophetic"[53] role as a precursor of historiography's "cultural turn," a leader in the long

and tortuous journey toward a reassessment of the importance of ideology and culture in the study of Fascism.[54] Mosse's influence is evident in what has been called "the key work" to have "raised the study of fascist culture to a higher level":[55] Roger Griffin's *Modernism and Fascism*. Griffin has recognized the influence of Mosse in his presentation of Fascism as a bearer of modernity, an entirely modern and extremely transcendent phenomenon that regenerated the nation, creating an alternative to liberal-democratic society and traditional religion.[56]

In Italy, however, the question is decidedly more complex. Here, like in other countries, there is consensus about the fundamental points of interpretation for the fascist period. In part this has been determined by new scholarship from abroad. But it's also due both to the long-term impact of studies that have drastically broken with deeply rooted interpretative models here in Italy and, above all, to the prolific work of Emilio Gentile, who has indisputably demonstrated the "modern," "revolutionary," and "totalitarian" nature of fascist ideology.[57] Following Gentile's work, studies have been published that have developed his interpretations or have also reinterpreted in a different light those sectors of the regime that just a few years ago were considered by historiography to be outposts of unconscious anti-Fascism. Following this trend, rightist scholars have reaffirmed the central role of Mosse's thesis,[58] and those on the left have begun to juxtapose Fascism with the concepts of modernity and revolution.[59] Nevertheless, some sectors of Italian historiography still struggle with this approach and, as a result, fail to recognize the revolutionary and modern character of Fascism.[60] A clear example of this is Gabriele Turi's notion that a proper fascist culture in itself did not exist but rather a culture from the fascist period that the regime was able in part to make its own through the media, propaganda, and cultural politics.[61] Such an approach is diametrically opposed, and incompatible, with that of Mosse and Gentile.

In addition to Gentile's prolific work on Fascism and Renato Moro's studies on the politicization of religion and the sacralization of politics[62]—both coming in the 1970s as part of a more general positive reaction toward Mosse's work by De Felice and his students—another important avenue of research significantly influenced by Mosse's work assesses the political consequences of the experience of World War I. As Antonio Gibelli has noted, Mosse's theories on the "brutalization" of European politics changed the approach to studies on the war. They have prompted historians, such as Gibelli himself,[63] to look back to 1915–18 in order to trace the genesis of the sacralization of politics, the nationalization of the masses, and those general "attitudes towards life" that were open to experiences of a totalitarian nature.[64] Though few truly appreciated the novelty of Mosse's work on the history of violence when it was first published, this is obviously no longer

the case. An informal school of research has formed in Europe[65] around the study of violence and the sacralization of politics, building on and, in many cases, confirming his ideas.[66] In this panorama, Mario Isneghi and Giorgio Rochat, who were among the least convinced of Mosse's approach, now point to his studies as the "general coordinates for the cultural history" of the war.[67] Moreover, Mosse's concept of the "brutalization of politics" has become an interpretive key for understanding the crisis that democracies underwent during the interwar period and the birth of Nazism[68] and Fascism.[69] It has also led to discussions of a transnational history of violence.[70] Building on a series of ideas already present in Gentile, the concept of violence has come to take on a crucial role. Understood as an instrument of political struggle, it has also become a category for interpreting reality, or, as Gentile defined it, "the expression of a new political will"[71] that had its roots in the period before World War I but would later become a common characteristic of the fascist movements.[72]

On a broader scale, many of the avenues of investigation pioneered by Mosse have left their mark on various other areas of historical scholarship. For example, one interesting study inspired by his scholarship has located a mythic language similar to that of the totalitarian regimes in the Christian Democratic party of the postwar era: a language aimed at "an effective resacralization of secularized religious values for political use."[73] Mosse's work has also had an important influence on the study of the history of masculinity and gender. His analysis in this field has been particularly useful and at times indispensable for understanding the ideological dimensions of Nazism and Fascism, the relationship between nationalism and bourgeois respectability, and the process of national self-definition. In addition, it has pushed Italian historiography to confront these themes.[74] We see this in a number of studies that stress the evolution of a normative model of virility, seen as a central characteristic of modernity and the development of national identity, or in research that builds on Mosse's writings on specific national contexts and processes of nation building in their investigation of the relationship between nation and gender.[75] Such an approach has replaced the tendency to insist on the idea that nationalist ideologies were a product of industrialization (Gellner), the State (Hobsbawm), or modernization (Anderson).[76] In Italy, Alberto Mario Banti has investigated the neglected relationship between nation and gender in some of his studies.[77] In my opinion, these studies are a great example of the new importance that the themes most dear to Mosse have acquired, especially in the new millennium, in two historical fields of investigation such as masculinity and nationalism. Research on nationalism seems to be embarking on some particularly interesting and original lines of investigation. Recently published studies on the Italian *Risorgimento*, such as those on the Italian Jacobins[78]

and Mazzinian nationalism,[79] have been influenced by the concept of the "sacralization of politics" and Mosse's concept of "new politics." In addition, a new line of research inspired by Mosse's research on "new politics" has culminated in the Einaudi volume *Storia d'Italia*, in which the *Risorgimento* is understood as a "mass movement."[80] Here, Banti's great contribution to the study of nationalism during the *Risorgimento* is evident. Over the years, his original elaboration of the ideas of Agulhon, Foucault, and Mosse, and the work of different Italian scholars on the processes behind the "invention of tradition," has led him to trace a religiosity in the worship of the nation beginning in the early nineteenth century[81] and inspired him to see the nationalist reawakening of 1846–49 as an episode of the "sacralization of politics."[82]

An Ambivalent Legacy

These are just some examples of the implications of Mosse's studies on Italian scholarship—examples whose trajectories are difficult to define, as they continue to develop, but that show how also in Italy historiography is more and more inspired by Mosse's studies, similar to what happens abroad, as with Shulamit Volkov's interpretation of anti-Semitism as a "cultural code,"[83] Steven Aschheim's studies[84] on the "German-Jewish dialogue,"[85] and the work on the anti-Jewish politics of Nazism that have been carried out by Philippe Burrin,[86] Michael Berkowitz,[87] Christopher Browning,[88] Jeffrey Herf,[89] and Saul Friedländer.[90] In these studies, the juxtaposition between intentionalism and functionalism seems to have finally been overcome, and the origins of the "final solution" have been located more and more in a widespread apocalyptic and anti-Semitic ideology—something that Mosse advocated beginning in the 1980s.[91]

Even Mosse's studies on racism and anti-Semitism, which were not as warmly received in Italy, seem to be getting greater attention in some recent publications.[92] These recent studies, which come in the wake of the "cultural turn," stress the need to distinguish between the circulation of racial idioms and stereotypes and the formation of a vision of the world: a political religion of racism as the dominant cultural instrument for interpreting reality.[93] Distancing itself from the teleological "continuist" interpretation of fascist anti-Semitic racism as the expression of racist sentiments that had long existed in Italian society, Italy has seen the formation of a new current of scholarship that individuates the formation and diffusion of a culture founded on the division of the human population into unequal races.[94] According to this interpretation, this tendency was firmly rooted in European culture and in the anti-Jewish tradition of the Catholic Church but

was secularized and transformed into a modern political anti-Semitism[95]—predominantly in the 1930s—creating an underground cultural patrimony of racism and anti-Semitism from which Fascism drew.[96] A "culture based on race" formed the cultural conditions for the racial laws of 1938. The racial laws, however, represented an "epochal break with the period stretching from the Risorgimento and the unification of Italy until the First World War."[97] The laws marked the formation of an "Italian ideology of racism," which was closely tied to the fascist totalitarian experiment and the conception of a fascist nation,[98] within which the push to carry out an anthropological revolution aimed at forging a new Italian race occupied a central role. Although these studies moved away from Mosse's German-centric thesis, they ended up re-elaborating and integrating the broader themes and interpretations found in his *Toward the Final Solution* as well as some other concepts dear to Mosse, such as "new politics," nationalism, models of virility, and his understanding of culture as an "attitude toward life."[99]

And yet, despite all these new studies inspired by Mosse's work, his legacy remains decidedly ambivalent. Of course his work has been absorbed more deeply into Italian scholarship, moving beyond the merely superficial impact described by Gentile at the end of the 1980s.[100] The "war" on Mosse has subsided, and he is no longer read in opposition to De Felice,[101] probably due in part to the passing of both historians (although there are still those who speak of De Felice as having strategically "used" Mosse's work for his own revisionist aims).[102] While accusations of revisionism against De Felice, understood in negative terms,[103] are still common, it seems that historians avoid discussing the relationship between the two historians and often avoid citing Mosse when they exclusively aim at criticizing De Felice's work. This is confirmed by the lack of consideration given to his affirmation that De Felice's work on the biography of Mussolini was a "truly antifascist act."[104]

There is still an evident tendency (and not only in Italy) to read Mosse within a "constructivist" school and in relation to Hobsbawm's work on the "invention of tradition." These works stress how Mosse's 1975 work, despite its having downplayed "the role of the State and its Institutions," investigated the establishment of a "revolutionary pedagogy aimed at 'constructing the citizen.'"[105] This reading of Mosse, then, continues to explore—as Renato Moro has written—the "exterior" side of the problem of the "nationalization of the masses" and is substantially tied to a "functionalist logic" that bypasses "a proper exploration of the basic dimensions of mentality" and an understanding of myths as a sincere and spontaneous response to the dilemmas of modernity.[106]

Such an interpretation overlooks the actual intentions of Mosse, who admitted to Renato Moro to have been in complete disagreement with

Hobsbawm. For Mosse, tradition could not be invented; Hobsbawm's interpretations were still marked by the shadows of a Marxist approach from which he was unable to free himself.[107] In response to those who pointed out his complex and at times confusing use of myths,[108] Mosse noted that they should be read dialectically as both artificial constructions and spontaneous belief.[109] They represented a mediation between reality and perceptions of reality that encompassed the manipulators, who themselves were manipulated in so much as they ended up believing in the myths that they supported.[110] Mosse's explanation was in complete harmony with the very definition that he himself had given to this method of cultural history in 1961: "an interaction of ideas between the intellectuals conscious of what they were about and of the general mood of their times."[111] His definition gives a clear vision of his conception of historical reality, understood as a dialectical synthesis of objective reality and the perception of reality. As he stated in one of his lessons in the 1950–60s,

> History is like a kind of river: the flow of events interacts with the more permanent slower changes in the landscape or the river bed. That means that a lot of factors work to influence the course of events and that is why we must make sense out of its complexity. For it is not economics that determines history, or social or political factors but all of these together. But even this is not enough: men act according to their own vision and perception of things. There are always choices, and the question is why do men take that choice over this? In the last resort history is based on people and their perceptions—not on cosmic forces or pre determination.
>
> But this perception, these myths by which we all live are informed by reality and reflect reality. Thus we must say at the very beginning: what we are concerned with is the interplay between myth and reality, people's perception which leads to their action and the reality with which they interact. Thus we must avoid single causes: economics, social etc. for it all depends on what people make of them. Only in this way can we come close to historical reality. Reality sets the framework and cannot be ignored. But men attempt this, the need for utopia, need for fairy tales, for a happy healthy world [. . .]. But reality always stands in the way.[112]

To conclude, in spite of the evident success of his research, the significance of George Mosse's work has not always been completely understood. Although less so than in the past, it is not uncommon that only parts of his historiographic production are accepted and that certain elements of it are interpreted through conceptual perspectives that do not incorporate his overall lesson. A recent comment by Banti himself illustrates this ambivalence. The "nationalization of the masses," he writes, describes "the diffusion of nationalism from above"; Mosse delineates the "artificial

nature of the idea of nation," which is a "political concept that is created and invented by political leaders," drawing on "the same analytic assumption that would drive the work of Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm a few years later."[113] Similarly to many other cultural studies contributions, Banti's analysis, despite making good use of some of Mosse's interpretations, only concentrates on the aesthetic aspects of the diffusion of the patriotic myths of the *Risorgimento* and stresses the "manipulatory" origin of discussions of the nation.[114]

Regardless, the fact that many scholars draw on Mosse's ideas demonstrates the absolute importance of his work for Italian historical research and should be seen as a positive trend. Though his work has been approached with some ambivalence, the attention that has been given it proves that Niccoli Zapponi's invitation to scholars made thirty years ago to follow in Mosse's path has finally been accepted.[115] Yet there is still a key problem that blocks historiography from fully absorbing Mosse's lesson—a problem that arises, as Moro recently observed, from the way in which Mosse was received beginning in the mid-1980s and how historians responded to the "cultural turn," of which Mosse was "an indisputable expert" and a "real protagonist."[116] As Eric John Hobsbawm noted in his memoirs, many historians responded to this shift with mistrust and resignation.[117]

In Italy, Mosse's success was strongly conditioned by the compatibility of his ideas on the nationalization of the masses with studies interested in the "invention of tradition," a line of study that began with Hobsbawm and the journal *Past & Present* and its contributors.[118] As such, Mosse and Hobsbawm's ideas were used interchangeably[119] without any "recognition of the fact that in reality they were clearly opposed."[120] We must also keep in mind Mosse's particular style: a style that brought together politics, art, anthropology, and history in an investigation of a general historical period. On the one hand, it fostered the reception of his work in ambits such as Italian historiography, which tends to be specialized; on the other hand, it offered itself up to an uncritical application, in particular regarding interpretive categories such as the "nationalization of the masses," the "brutalization of politics," and "bourgeois respectability."[121]

Italian historiography still has the task of disentangling the knot between Mosse and Hobsbawm. This confusion has represented a persistent problem for a part of Italian historians since Mosse entered into the Italian scene in the 1970s. Confronting the problem would allow us to correctly situate his scholarship and to truly appreciate the innovative ideas that his work and the "cultural turn" brought about in relation to political history. As Renato Moro observed, historiography risks embarking "on a road towards a sort of interpretive 'Babel,' in which everyone speaks a

different language and doesn't truly understand one another"—in which we think we are studying the same things but in reality refer to "different phenomena, if not in fact opposed [phenomena]." This is taking place in the field of historiography throughout the Western world, but it in Italy it seems "particularly grave, as a result of a historiographical evolution which had trouble digesting the cultural turn and which only did so indirectly and surreptitiously." Beginning, then, with an attentive critical analysis of Mosse's historiographical work, it will be important to differentiate between different aspects and phenomena:

> Should we study the exterior or interior aspects of the nationalization of the masses? "Rites" as expressions of a secular political religion or "ceremonies" as simple acts of collective representation, the reflection and support for deeply rooted and widespread values? Should we underline the stylistic aspects of the various techniques of nation building, their communicative, literary, artistic and symbolic aspects, consider phenomena like Fascism—like some have suggested—not so much "ideological" as "aesthetic" or stress rather the centrality of the category of the religious as a decisive move toward a more general phenomenon, the move of politics toward more absolute values? Should we concentrate, as many historians do, on theories, sensibilities, tastes, theater experiments, festivals and popular celebration, gymnastic demonstrations or choral performances, the analysis of monuments and inscriptions, funeral and theatrical texts, or rather more strictly on political culture and its theorists? Should we accentuate the irreducibility of political rituals to the rational dimension of doctrine or rather stress the rational employment of irrationality by politics?[122]

These are all essential questions to ask ourselves. In fact, Mosse, whose religion was history,[123] argued that if history has a civic function[124] and if its use consists in "understanding the limits and the traditions which formed western civilization in order to act as political animals," "in order to understand the civilization in which we live" and avoid "drifting off without hope,"[125] then only by understanding, studying, distinguishing, and correctly approaching the phenomena of the past is it possible to confront the present.

Notes

1. Donatello Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010), 211–14.
2. Gianpasquale Santomassimo, "La messa in scena della nazione," *il Manifesto*, January 27, 1999. See also Francesco Germinario, "Lo storico delle nozze tra Hitler e le masse," ibid.; Nicola Tranfaglia, "Mosse, lo storico che studiò il

nazismo di massa," *la Repubblica*, January 26, 1999; Massimo L. Salvadori, "Viaggio alle radici del nazismo," *La Stampa*, January 27, 1999.

3. Emilio Gentile, "Premessa. George L. Mosse e la religione della storia," in George L. Mosse, *Di fronte alla storia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2004), vi.
4. "Les histoires culturelles de la Grande Guerre. Hommage à George Mosse," Centre de Recherche de L'Historial de Péronne, January 22, 2000 (see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, "George L. Mosse: réflexions sur une méconnaissance française," *Annales*, 1, 2001, 184).
5. "An Historian's Legacy: George L. Mosse and the Recent Research on Fascism, Society and Culture," University of Wisconsin, Madison, September 9–10, 2001.
6. Mosse's former student Anson Rabinbach underlined the importance for both Mosse and his students of the discussions in Madison with the followers of the "New Left" radical movement during the seventies: Anson Rabinbach, "George L. Mosse 1919–1999: An Appreciation," *Central European History*, 3, 2001, 331–36. See also "In memoriam George Mosse," *The German Quarterly*, 1, 1999, 74.
7. Jeffrey Herf, "The Historian as a Provocateur: George Mosse's Accomplishment and Legacy," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 29, 2001, 7–26.
8. David Silberklang, "Introduction," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 29, 2001, 1.
9. Gordon Craig, "George L. Mosse, September 20, 1918—January 22, 1999," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 2, 2001, 221–25. See also Steven Grosby, "Cultural History, Nationalism and the Dignity of the Individual: The Work of George L. Mosse," *Nations and Nationalism*, 2, 2000, 275–86.
10. Steven E. Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80: A Critical Laudatio," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2, 1999, 295–312.
11. Yehoshua Arieli, "George Mosse," speech given at the George Mosse Commemoration, Koebner Center of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, March 4, 1999, in University of Wisconsin–Madison, Memorial Library, Department of Special Collections, George L. Mosse Collection (henceforth cited as GLMC), box 3, folder 16.
12. The typescript of Payne's speech is in GLMC, ibid.
13. Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).
14. Steven E. Aschheim, "Introduction," in ibid., 3.
15. Renato Moro, "George L. Mosse, storico dell'irrazionalismo moderno," in Alessandra Staderini, Luciano Zani, and Francesca Magni, eds., *La grande guerra e il fronte interno. Studi in onore di George Mosse* (Camerino: Università degli Studi di Camerino, 1998), 21–36.
16. Giuseppe Galasso, "Mosse: il Novecento e le sue origini," in George L. Mosse, *La nazione, le masse e la "nuova politica"* (Rome: Di Rienzo, 1999), 57–104.
17. For example, see Gian Carlo Jocteau, "Review to George L. Mosse, L'uomo e le masse nelle ideologie nazionaliste (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1982)," *Passato e presente*, 2, 1983, 265–66.

18. Rudy Koshar, "George Mosse e gli interrogativi della storia tedesca," *Passato e presente*, 1, 2003, 99–110.
19. Maria Salvati, *Il Novecento. Interpretazioni e bilanci* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2001), 57–58, 65.
20. George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).
21. Gentile, "Premessa. George L. Mosse e la religione della storia," vii.
22. Renato Moro, "Review to Mosse, *Di fronte alla storia*," *Mondo Contemporaneo*, 1, 2005, 159–67. On Mosse's methodological innovations, see also Donatello Aramini, "Review to Mosse, *Di fronte alla storia*," *Giornale di storia contemporanea*, 2, 2004, 304–7.
23. David Bidussa, "Identità nazionali, nazionalismo e fascismo. George L. Mosse storico del Novecento," *Italia contemporanea*, 1, 2004, 159–62.
24. Simon Levis Sullam, "George Mosse, lo storico taumaturgo," *il Manifesto*, February 21, 2004.
25. Enzo Collotti, "Review to Mosse, *Di fronte alla storia,*" *Passato e presente*, 2, 2005, 159–60.
26. See Jay Winter, "De l'histoire intellectuelle à l'histoire culturelle: la contribution de George Mosse," *Annales*, 1, 2001, 177–81; Audoin-Rouzeau, "George L. Mosse: réflexions sur une méconnaissance française," 183–86.
27. See the reviews of the book *What History Tells* written by Michael Berkowitz (*American Historical Review*, 1, 2005, 101–3), Paul Breines (*Historian*, 3, 2005, 592–93), and Seymour Drescher (*Central European History*, 3, 2006, 510–13).
28. Vittorio Vidotto, *Guida allo studio della storia contemporanea* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005), 22–23, 65, 121–22, 151–58.
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33. Gianpasquale Santomassimo, "George L. Mosse. Quella rivoluzione del borghese ideale," *il Manifesto*, June 26, 2007.
34. Francesco Germinario, "La mentalità del fascismo, gli studi originali di George Mosse," *Liberazione*, June 19, 2007.
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46. See the correspondence between Mosse and Eatwell in GLMC, box 34, folder 35.
47. Roger Griffin to Mosse, letter of July 7, 1998, in GLMC, box 35, folder 31.
48. Griffin to Mosse, letter of August 28, 1998, ibid.
49. Roger Griffin, "Withstanding the Rush of Time: The Prescience of Mosse's Anthropological View of Fascism," in Payne, Sorkin, and Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells*, 118–20.
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55. Payne, "Foreword," ix.
56. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). See also Matthew Feldman, ed., *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
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62. See, above all, Daniele Menozzi and Renato Moro, eds., *Cattolicesimo e totalitarismo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2004); Moro, "Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche. Il cattolicesimo italiano di fronte alla sacralizzazione fascista della politica," *Mondo Contemporaneo*, 1, 2005, 9–67; Moro, "Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularization: The Sacralization of Politics and Politicization of Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 1, 2005, 71–86; Moro, "Le chiese e la modernità totalitaria," in Daniele Menozzi, ed., *Il Cristianesimo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2008), 418–51; Moro, "Rituales politicos/Religiones politicas," 93–143.
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102. Federico Finchelstein, "Rileggendo il canone: Renzo De Felice fra storia e critica," *I Viaggi di Erodoto*, 1, 2001, 52–67.
103. Angelo Del Boca, ed., *La storia negata. Il revisionismo e il suo uso politico* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2009).
104. George L. Mosse, "Il revisionismo storico," in *Alla ricerca dell'Italia contemporanea: Romeo, De Felice, Spadolini* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2002), 49–58; Mosse, "Fascismo, razzismo e uso politico della storia," in Geminello Preterossi, ed., *Un passato che passa? Germania e Italia tra memoria e prospettiva* (Rome: Fahrenheit 451, 2000), 15–23.
105. Maurizio Ridolfi, "Per una storia della religione civile: il 'caso italiano' in prospettiva comparata," *Memoria e Ricerca*, 2, 2003, 136–38.
106. Renato Moro, "Religione e politica nell'età della secolarizzazione: riflessioni su di un recente volume di Emilio Gentile," *Storia contemporanea*, 2, 1995, 292.

107. Mosse to Moro, October 24, 1995, in GLMC, box 45, folder 17.
108. Eric J. Leed to Mosse, November 11, 1990, in GLMC, box 14, folder 17; Gentile to Mosse, September 12, 1990, in GLMC, box 35, folder 9.
109. Mosse to Gentile, October 15, 1990, ibid.
110. Ibid.; Mosse to Leed, September 20, 1990, in GLMC, box 14, folder 17.
111. George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries; An Introduction* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1961), 3.
112. The typescript of the lecture is in GLMC, box 19, folder 29.
113. Alberto Mario Banti, *Le questioni dell'età contemporanea* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2010), 54–55, 57–59, 161–66.
114. Alberto Mario Banti, *Sublime madre nostra. La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2011), v–vi.
115. Niccolò Zapponi, "G.L. Mosse e il problema delle origini culturali del fascismo: significato di una svolta," *Storia contemporanea*, 3, 1976, 461–80.
116. Renato Moro, "Review to Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*," *Mondo Contemporaneo*, 1, 2011, 149–54.
117. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (London: Penguin, 2002), 294.
118. On this approach, see, above all, Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
119. For example, Nicola Gallerano interpreted the myth of the war experience described by Mosse as a "great work of manipulation" of the radical right (Gallerano, "L'estetica della morte sul campo di battaglia," *il Manifesto*, April 27, 1990).
120. Moro, "Review to Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*," 154.
121. Lorenzo Benadusi, "Review to Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*," *Il mestiere di storico*, 1, 2011, 101.
122. Ibid., 154.
123. Mosse, *Confronting History*, 172. See also Gentile, "Premessa. George L. Mosse e la religione della storia," v–xii.
124. See Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore*, 184–88.
125. See the typescript of the lecture in GLMC, box 19, folder 38 (cited in Gentile, *Il fascino del persecutore*, 185).

7

George Mosse and His Italian Publishers

Vittorio Vidotto

> *Runge/Stelbrink:* Then you studied the Weimar Republic era, the Nazi era, nationalism, racism, sexuality. A colorful mixture for a historian.
> *Mosse:* Yes, isn't it? No system to it! Oh, I never was interested in chronology or periodization; only in problems and issues. Their causes, their consequences. I never went along with narrow specialization.[1]

So said George L. Mosse in an interview with two East German intellectuals in 1990.

Later, in his autobiography, he writes, "I have always approached history not as a narrative but as a series of questions and possible answers . . . Such influence as my work may possess, however, does not stem from concrete discoveries, but rather from the new insights it has managed to convey, how it may have shifted our vision by giving some new perspectives and dimensions to aspects of modern history."[2]

Mosse's concise reflections give us an idea of how self-aware he was about his innovative approach to history. Sure, an author's words do not always correspond with the reality of his work. At times they only reflect his intentions and do not coincide with what readers get from his books. However, in this case his words not only seem to fit the overall impression of Mosse's style but also provide an explanation of the great success of his work in Italy—in particular, his book *The Nationalization of the Masses*.[3]

Published by the Italian publishing house il Mulino, the book saw 14 editions and republications between 1975 and 2009, though its substantial series of illustrations—one of the book's strong points—was removed beginning with the more economical 1976 edition. Its large readership and

sales were also certainly linked to it having been widely adopted and recommended in Italian university classes.[4]

Its importance was in the novelty of the themes it addressed across a long period of German and European history: an analysis of irrationality in the behavior of the masses, a reconstruction of the birth and the diffusion of political myths and symbols, and a formulation of new categories like "new politics" and "the nationalization of the masses," which would become an integral part of the conceptualization of contemporary history and its periodization.[5]

Nevertheless, the strength and the appeal of the book lay not only in the themes it addressed but also in its style, an explanatory essayist approach, which was unusual for an Italian public and allowed for unconventional perspectives on the subject. His writing evaded the dictates of what I have referred to as the "Chabodian canon"[6] of historiography—the habitual and indispensable apparatus of notes and bibliographic and archival cross-references. At that time, the more innovative the scholarship, the more substantial the notation. The obvious point of reference here would be Renzo De Felice's monumental work on Mussolini. It was De Felice, however, who out of foresight and intellectual curiosity promoted the translation of Mosse's book, comparing the author's importance to that of Johan Huizinga and Marc Bloch. Then at the height of the debate surrounding De Felice, the two historians featured alongside each other as the authors of two Laterza volumes: *Intervista sul fascismo* (1975) and *Intervista sul nazismo* (1977; *Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism: An Interview with Michael A. Ledeen*).

With the exception of *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* and *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*,[7] the Italian editions of all Mosse's most important works after the *Intervista* were published by Laterza. All these, with the exception of *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (1996) and his autobiography, were republished at least once, making his work constantly available to readers.

Actually, Mosse's work had already appeared from Laterza as early as 1969 with the university textbook *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* written together with Helmut Koenigsberger. The textbook, which was reissued until 1999, was a big success in university classrooms. Rosario Romeo used it in place of Gerhard Ritter's classic work *The Formation of Modern Europe* as part of the readings for his early modern history class at the University Sapienza in Rome.

However, the translation and publication of *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* from il Saggiatore in 1968 with the title *Le origini culturali del Terzo Reich* (the book was originally published in the United States in 1964) was most important for the diffusion of

Mosse's truly innovative work in Italy. At the time, the publishing house was under the direction of Alberto Mondadori and was exceedingly broadening the cultural scope of its production: after publishing a series of important philosophical, anthropological, and linguistic works, they had turned their attention to history and had brought in Leo Valiani as the consulting editor for their series on modern history. It was most likely Valiani himself—a member of the editorial board for the *Journal of Contemporary History* (founded by Walter Laqueur and Mosse in 1966)[8] from its very first issue—who proposed the translation of Mosse's book. Being his first work on modern Germany, *The Crisis of German Ideology*'s reconstruction of the Volkish ideology paved the way for a new perspective for the study of Nazism.

However, the book did not receive the attention it deserved in Italy, neither with specialists in the field nor with the larger public: it would be republished only in 1984, 1994, 1997, and in the years following, after Mosse had achieved well-established notoriety and his other books had been published and reissued numerous times.

Mosse's work enjoyed a level of popularity in Italy that was greater and more enduring than in other countries.[9] His book on the *Nationalization of the Masses* was not translated into French—though this is common, as France has often been slow in accepting new studies from abroad—and it is not even present in its English edition in the National Library there. In 1976 it was translated into German, but it was not warmly received there and was only republished in a new edition in 1993.[10] In the United States, Cornell University Press published a new edition of the book in 1991[11] and a third edition was published by its original editor, Howard Fertig, in 2001. Surprisingly, even his study on the cultural originals of the Nazi regime was not published in Germany until 1979 and only in 2008 in France! Mosse's concept of the nationalization of the masses was not included in the imposing seven-volume *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, edited by the renowned historian Reinhart Koselleck, neither as an autonomous entry nor under any other entries.[12]

This analysis of the varying popularity of Mosse's work could also be extended to his other books. However, here I would just like to note that, in general, his later research received more attention and aroused greater interest across disciplines. These include his work on sexuality and respectability in relation to nationalism and male sexuality—*The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996) had already been translated into French, German, Spanish, and Italian in 1997[13]—as well as his work on the figure of fallen soldiers, the banalization of war, and the brutalization of European society following the First World War in his book *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (1990), themes that Mosse had addressed in various earlier essays.[14] Interestingly, the variation in

the translation of the title of this work from language to language reflects the different interests of each country: *Le guerre mondiali. Dalla tragedia al mito dei caduti* in Italy (Roma-Bari, 1990), *Gefallen für das Vaterland. Nationales Heldentum und namenloses Sterben* in Germany (Stuttgart, 1993), and *De la Grande Guerre au totalitarisme. La brutalisation des sociétés européennes* in France (Paris, 1999). The variety of titles suggests the key role of the publishers, with their attention to the market and the book's sales prospects. For example, Laterza places the emphasis—with a bit of a stretch with regard to the actual content of the book—on the world wars ("*guerre mondiali*") and moves the fallen soldiers and memory ("*i caduti e la memoria*") to the subtitle.[15]

These observations give us some insight into the relationship between publishers and authors and the role of the former in determining the success and diffusion of books. In this case we also have the correspondence between Mosse and his Italian publishers, Vito and Giuseppe Laterza. Having myself been the publishing house's consulting editor for their history publications from 1977 to 2000, I am also in some way involved in this relationship.[16] In November 1977, when Mosse asked about his *Intervista sul nazismo* (*Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism: An Interview with Michael A. Ledeen*), Vito Laterza exaggerated a bit in his response,[17] telling Mosse that the book "had really done well" and adding, "As you can see the relationship Mosse-Laterza works well and I hope we continue it by publishing another one of your books."

At that point, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* had been published in three editions and Laterza had been following Mosse's progress on his book on racism (published in 1980) since 1975. *Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism: An Interview with Michael A. Ledeen*, which was published in the United States and in Great Britain in 1978, was not translated into German, and in his letter Vito Laterza comments on the difficulty of inserting the book in the German market.[18]

The next book published by Laterza was *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality*. Also in this case, the Italian title, *L'uomo e le masse nelle ideologie nazionaliste*, was somewhat unfaithful to the original title. In addition, the publisher—or his consulting editor, to be precise—had the number of essays in the collection for the Italian public reduced from 14 to 10 and added a new essay ("*La prima guerra mondiale e l'appropriazione della natura*") that had not appeared in the American edition from 1980.[19] After seeing the volume, Mosse was impressed with the quality of the production and the cover image: "I am delighted with its production, and I think that the Diego Rivera picture was a masterstroke. I never knew it existed."[20]

In March, Mosse sent in the second edition of his *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1974), which I considered at the time to be a big textbook full of interesting ideas but ill-suited to Italian university students.[21] Vito Laterza agreed with my negative judgment and wrote as much to Mosse. When the book came out with Mondadori three years later, Laterza, having forgotten his refusal, wrote to Mosse to express his disappointment that the book came out with another Italian publishing house.[22]

In 1983 Laterza was waiting for Mosse to finish his book on sexuality and nationalism, a topic on which they had received two sample articles in fall 1982.[23] In addition, they had just decided to translate Karl Dietrich Bracher's *The Age of Ideologies*. In the fall of 1983, a first draft of *Sexuality, Modernity and Nationalism: A Study in the History of Respectability* arrived, stirring up a lot of interest for the intellectual courage with which Mosse approached the theme of the history of bourgeois mentality.[24] The following year, Mosse's *Sessualità e nazionalismo. Mentalità borghese e rispettabilità* (*Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*) came out, a year before the American edition. Though the book was well received and is still in publication now, it aroused some doubts at the time. After recognizing the great importance of his research for studies on the history of mentality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Massimo L. Salvadori wrote, "However, that Fascism was the privileged beneficiary of this world of respectability is not clearly demonstrated in my opinion. And above all it seems doubtful that the concept of respectability played a crucial role in Fascism's rise to power."[25]

As one can see, in his publications Giuseppe Laterza had followed, and in some cases preceded, Mosse's books. Thus it is no surprise that Laterza was disappointed when Mosse chose to publish his book *The Image of Man* with Einaudi (Laterza's all-time rival) in the hopes of it enjoying greater circulation. Laterza concluded with these words:

> I will not try to conceal my regret. I strongly believe in long-term relationships between an author and publisher, and, as you know, we have committed ourselves greatly to the promotion of your books in Italy over the years. I sincerely hope Einaudi manages to promote your book to the extent that, in this case, you feel Laterza incapable of doing. I can state, however, without fear of contradiction, that Laterza has always promoted his quality history texts in such a way as to not worry about unfavourable comparison with other publishers. [. . .] Having said this, we will continue to consider ourselves your publisher in Italy, and continue to believe in a special friendship and collaboration, like that enjoyed with other authors

such as Jacques Le Goff, Georges Duby, Lawrence Stone, Natalie Zemon Davis, François Furet, Denis Mack Smith and others, not to mention numerous Italian historians.[26]

It is of course true that moments of "betrayal" between authors and publishers are not uncommon, with authors often lamenting the publishing houses' insufficient promotion of their books. In this case, in his eagerness to change, Mosse did not take into account the momentum that had been generated by the publication of the previous books nor the strength of Laterza's overall catalogue. *The Image of Man* did not end up enjoying the success that Mosse had hoped for. This was the last book published during Mosse's lifetime. He was also finishing his autobiography, but Laterza did not seem interested at the time. It would be published posthumously without Mosse's final revision in the United States in 2000 and in Italy in 2004 by Laterza.

Mosse's success in Italy is not only measured by the number of books published and republished, though it's clear that his popularity with the cultured public and not just the specialists is closely tied to publishing strategies that elevated him to the level of public intellectual in Italy.

The reception of his work and its influence on historians cannot be estimated by counting the number of reviews or the number of times Mosse is cited. On the contrary, I believe we must use other criteria to assess the level of "sedimentation" of a historian's work—what Roger Griffin referred to as "osmosis" in the place of "influence" when he wrote about the presence of Mosse's work in the scholarship of Walter Laqueur, Stanley Payne, and Juan Linz but noted the complete absence of it in the works of Ian Kershaw.[27]

Without doubt, one can speak of sedimentation—especially following the widespread absorption of the category of the nationalization of the masses—with regard to Bruno Tobia's pioneering studies on public monuments or my own studies in urban history, which reflect other influences as well, from Maurice Agulhon's *Marianne au combat* (1979) to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) and Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* (1984).[28]

It would be fair to note the differences between these studies and Mosse's own intentions,[29] yet it is apparent that the former witnessed a change of perspective away from established patterns and toward interpretative eclecticism.

In point of fact, one could cite as examples of Mosse's direct influence on Italian historians almost exclusively Emilio Gentile's works: from *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (original Italian 1993) to his later original and innovative contributions to the field of personal and innovative developments he later made on the topic of politics as religion. On

the other hand, De Felice, who was Mosse's privileged interlocutor for the definition of the category of Fascism, seems to be uninfluenced by his ideas. It is difficult to find many other examples of direct influence in Italy other than the recent works of Lorenzo Benadusi on homosexuality[30] or the scholarship being carried out on the theme of political violence during the wars.[31]

We should also mention a series of cases in which either amnesia or willful forgetfulness has led to Mosse's work going unrecognized. Some examples of this include the work done on monuments to fallen soldiers and on "the sites of memory," above all in Germany. *The Political Cult of the Dead* (*Der politische Totenkult*), edited by Reinhart Koselleck and Michael Jeismann,[32] does not mention Mosse's work. The same is true of the three large volumes on the sites of memory in Germany[33] published under the aegis of Pierre Nora—the inventor of the format[34]—and with his afterword, despite the fact that some of those sites had been expressly written about in *The Nationalization of the Masses*.

So to Mosse's often cited condition of double outsider, as a homosexual and a Jew,[35] we could add that of insider, as a scholar whose long-term influence has been at times subterranean or not always recognized, but not for that any less decisive.

Notes

1. Quotation from the English translation of George L. Mosse, "*Ich bleibe Emigrant.*" *Gespräche mit George L. Mosse*, ed. by Irene Runge and Uwe Stelbrink (Berlin: Dietz, 1991); *An Interview with George Mosse*, http://history.wisc.edu/mosse/program_archives/george_mosse_interview.pdf, 30.
2. George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 174–75.
3. George L. Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse. Simbolismo politico e movimenti di massa in Germania dalle guerre napoleoniche al Terzo Reich* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1975). The Italian edition was published the same year as the original edition.
4. In my courses, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse* has been included in the reading list since the academic year 1983–84.
5. Paolo Macry, *La società contemporanea. Una introduzione storica* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1992), 299; Alberto Mario Banti, "La nazionalizzazione delle masse," in Banti, *Storia contemporanea* (Rome: Donzelli 1997), 151–74.
6. Vittorio Vidotto, *Guida allo studio della storia contemporanea* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2004), 36, 130.
7. Published by Mondadori in 1986 and Einaudi in 1997.
8. Published also in Italy by il Saggiatore between 1967 and 1969 with the title "Dialoghi del XX. Rassegna di Storia Contemporanea."

9. For a thorough account of Mosse's popularity in Italy, including the initial resistance by many historians, especially leftwing, and the subsequent widespread appreciation of his work, see Donatello Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010). For a summary, and interesting critical remarks on Italian historiography, see Renato Moro's review in *Mondo Contemporaneo*, 1, 2011, 149–54.
10. George L. Mosse, *Die Nationalisierung der Massen: Die politische Symbolik und Massenbewegung in Deutschland von den Napoleonischen Kriegen bis zum Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1976). See Peter Alter's short report in "Historisch-Politische Buch," 1977, 110, which is quite critical about the actual relevance of political symbolism.
11. In the United States, the theme of political symbolism was brought back to the forefront by Seymour Drescher, David Sabean, and Allan Sharlin, eds., *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of George L. Mosse* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1982).
12. Reinhart Koselleck, ed., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–97): seven volumes plus two volumes of indexes.
13. Italian translation: *L'immagine dell'uomo. Lo stereotipo maschile nell'epoca moderna* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997).
14. See, for instance, George L. Mosse, "National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14, 1979, 1–20.
15. On the Italian title, see the rich correspondence between Mosse and Vito Laterza (who wrote almost always in Italian) from August 1 to November 13, 1989, a period during which their relationship becomes friendlier and they get to be on first-name terms. The American title itself changes several times, from *The Myth of the War Experience*, to *Guns and Roses*, to the final choice *Fallen Soldiers*. For the Italian title, Mosse insists on a series of variants on *The Myth of the War Experience* (*Il mito dell'esperienza di guerra*), while Laterza puts forward three proposals—*Mito ed esperienza delle guerre mondiali*, *Miti ed esperienza delle guerre mondiali*, *Miti e memoria delle guerre mondiali*—till they reach an agreement on *I miti delle guerre mondiali e la memoria dei caduti*. However, the publisher then writes to the author, "*I miti delle guerre mondiali* is brilliant, but the subtitle *La memoria dei caduti* is met with scepticism by some friends I consulted, which in English would sound like 'after a careful market analysis'" (letter dated November 13, 1989). I am grateful to Giuseppe Laterza for allowing me to consult the correspondence with Mosse.
16. As a consultant editor, I used to give advice on the content and quality of books (especially foreign books, in a time when many were translated) and on the opportunity of publishing them. However, the final decision was always the publisher's.
17. See Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*, 57. The correspondence with Laterza is widely used by Aramini, who cites from Mosse's records held

by the Leo Baeck Institute of New York. On the relationship between Mosse and Vito Laterza, see also Chapter 5 in this volume.

18. Archivio Laterza, letter dated September 6, 1978.
19. My personal notes, October 16 and 30, and December 22, 1980.
20. Archivio Laterza, letter dated July 18, 1982. Rivera's mural was entitled *Nazi Culture*.
21. See my personal notes, March 16, 1983.
22. "I read in a newspaper today that your book La cultura in Europa occidentale is about to be published in Italian. I am pleased for the wider circulation of your work in Italy. However, why is this book published by Mondadori? After so many books and so much work done together, I feel a bit betrayed" (Archivio Laterza, letter dated October 28, 1986, original in Italian).
23. Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*, 101. See also my personal reading notes from October 19, 1982, for Mosse, "Nationalism and Respectability: Normal and Abnormal Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17, 1982, 221–46.
24. My personal reading notes, November 3, 1983.
25. Massimo L. Salvadori, "Niente sesso siam fascisti," *La Stampa*, February 2, 1985.
26. Archivio Laterza, letter dated April 1, 1996 (Giuseppe Laterza's letters are all written in English). The previous rich correspondence between the publisher and the author is thoroughly analyzed in Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*, 205–6.
27. "None of the four editions of Ian Kershaw's magisterial survey of the debate on key issues in the study of the Third Reich, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, make any reference to Mosse's work (nor does his two-volume biography *Hitler*)." Roger Griffin, "Withstanding the Rush of Time: The Presence of Mosse's Anthropological View of Fascism," in Stanley Payne, David Sorkin, and John. Tortorice, eds., *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 119.
28. Bruno Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991); and Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2001). What I wrote in the foreword was a clear reference to Mosse's themes, even if Mosse was not cited in the volume (I apologize for quoting myself): "This book aims at interweaving the thread of political events with the crucial moments of social and cultural change, and with the symbolic functions in their rising, coming up again or weakening: this is because, from my point of view, the analysis of rituals, myths and self-representations of a capital city, and of a capital such as Rome, is crucial for achieving a better understanding of its history in all its articulations" (vii).
29. Moro, review of Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*, 152–54.
30. Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).
31. With regard to this, see Giulia Albanese's reflections in "Violenza politica e origini del fascismo. Un percorso di ricerca," in Angelo D'Orsi, ed., *Gli*

storici si raccontano. Tre generazioni tra revisioni e revisionismi (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2005), 275–77; Albanese, *La marcia su Roma* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2006), 204–5, 279–80.

32. Reinhard Koselleck and Michael Jeismann, eds., *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 1994).
33. Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, eds., *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich: Beck, 2001).
34. When the three volumes of the Italian *Luoghi della memoria*, edited by Mario Isnenghi, came out (1996–97), Laterza received a severe letter from Nora, who lamented the usurpation of the formula and title.
35. This issue is discussed in many places throughout Mosse's autobiography, *Confronting History*; see also the interview given to Bruno Ventavoli, "Mosse l'importanza di essere gay," *La Stampa*, May 26, 1991; and the texts "Razzismo e omosessualità: intervista a George L. Mosse," *Sodoma*, 1, 1984, 93–101; and Mosse, "Virilità e decadentismo," *Sodoma*, 5, 1993, 91–101.

8

Mosse, the Cultural Turn, and the Cruces of Modern Historiography

Renato Moro

George Mosse passed away just 13 years ago. It seems like just yesterday that he was here with us—that we read and listened to his papers and presentations and reflected on the new horizons for research that they revealed. Every day the absolute importance of Mosse for historians becomes more and more evident. Just a decade later, not only does today's research on themes dear to Mosse—nationalism, racism, the experience of war, the religion of politics, consensus under totalitarian regimes, the experience of modern Jews, models of masculinity, iconographic sources—follow his lead, but it seems impossible to carry out such research without the foundations he put in place.

Let's compare Mosse with another important historian from his generation, Eric John Hobsbawm: both men were Jews; both lived and were educated in Berlin during Nazism's rise to power; both were fascinated by the intense emotions set off by mass political manifestations; both emigrated to England and were students at Cambridge with some of the same professors (e.g., Michael M. Postan); both were politically active during the war in Spain and were members of the Socialist Club (Hobsbawm, however, with more radical leanings, a militant in the Communist Party); both were scholars of nineteenth- to twentieth-century European nationalism; and both were two of the most well-received authors of contemporary history.[1] Hobsbawm, like Mosse, wrote an autobiography (it is extraordinary that neither of the two mentions the other in these memoirs, not even in passing), yet his story could not be any more different

than Mosse's. Hobsbawm presents his autobiography as "an introduction to the most extraordinary century in the world's history through the itinerary of one human being"[2] and self-defines himself as a "non-Jewish Jew."[3] And yet, in his memoirs from 2002, Hobsbawm viewed the change in direction that studies had taken with great diffidence, pessimism, and dejection: "In the early 70s the historiographical tide turned. Those who thought they had won most of the battles from the 1930s on, now found it running against them. 'Structure' was on the way down, 'culture' was on the way up. Perhaps the best way of summarizing the change is to say that the young historians after 1945 found their inspiration in Braudel's *Mediterranean* (1949), the young historians after 1968 in the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's brilliant tour de force of 'thick description,' 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cock-Fight' (1973)."[4]

The principle representative of this *cultural turn* that historiography has taken over the last forty years, and that Hobsbawm viewed as negative, was of course Mosse, for his research on the modern age (and perhaps not only that if we consider the importance of his work for early modernists as well). Mosse was unquestionably the master of the Geertz's *thick description* approach. At a distance of almost fifty years from the founding of the *Journal of Contemporary History*, it is clear how much Mosse truly contributed to revolutionizing what we typically think of as cultural and political history. Study after study, Mosse stressed the autonomy and irreducibility of the cultural component and directed us toward the sphere of popular culture, in which the diffusion of myths and ideologies, symbols and stereotypes is of primary importance. By means of his extraordinary ability to trace the contours of these aspects and to arrive at a true sense of the role that they play in life and in how human beings define themselves, Mosse was able to illuminate, often in inspiring and unexpected ways, the prerational zones of human experience, without losing sight of how they interconnect with a larger more complex picture. Mosse's cultural history, then, is a global whole that refuses to separate the political sphere from the religious, the scientific from the aesthetic, the ideological from the mythological and the symbolic. In this sense, as Emilio Gentile has observed, historiography on mass politics can be subdivided into a "pre-Mosse" phase and a "post-Mosse" phase.[5]

Mosse, therefore, is a key figure for understanding the overall evolution of historiography in Italy and for situating the specifics of this evolution within a more general transformation in historical research that has taken place in the last decades, following historicism and the Annales school. As Donatello Aramini observed in a recent publication, when Mosse died Italian journals dedicated an inordinate amount of attention to the event. Italian historians were prompted to underline the significance,

importance, and positive (and decisive) impact of his work on scholarship.[6] But as Aramini demonstrated, the problem is that this status, in 1999 when Mosse died (and now universally recognized), does not correspond with how the historian was received during his lifetime. Many of those who eulogized Mosse with descriptive profiles of the great historian were the same to have expressed criticism—often harsh—of his work. Not only in Italy, but also in Germany, England, and France, Mosse writings were difficult, not so much to accept, but rather to truly understand.[7]

We need only reflect on the state of Italian historiography when Mosse's works on the modern period appeared in the mid-1960s: at the time our historiography still took as its main points of reference the historicism of Croce and the Marxist school, and the realist positivist approach. Adherents to the Annales school were few and they tended to insert the new methodologies of Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel in one or the other schema listed before. None of these perspectives made it easy to fully appreciate the new cultural history of politics proposed by Mosse. All three approaches—be it idealist, Marxist, or positivist—interpreted the irrational aspects of political life as simple pathological or demagogically degenerative factors, mere screens without real substance, a reflection of more consistent, structural elements tied to economic and social processes. It is not surprising then that Mosse's first works generated only relative interest, with the significant exception of a few important figures, such as Giorgio Spini and Renzo De Felice, who for different reasons were strongly interested in the history of the mentality of the modern age.[8] And yet Mosse's research was the first to show that Nazism had deep roots in the evolution of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany, in particular in popular culture—that it was not just the result of mass propaganda, violence, and terror. This posed two fundamental questions: one in relation to methodology and the other to content. The first is the one that Hobsbawm laid out in the passage cited previously: the unresolved passage from structure to culture. The second question concerned the interpretation of Fascism: most readings were still inspired by typical antifascist readings of Fascism (for the liberals it was seen as a moral disease, for the democrats it was the result of uncompleted democratic processes, and for the Marxists it was a reaction of the bourgeoisie). As Emilio Gentile has very successfully explained,[9] in all these interpretations Fascism was seen as a historical negative, without any true identity, far from being able to claim its own "culture" or "intellectual origins," as Mosse might have put it. It is true, as Aramini demonstrated very clearly, that the Italian debate was heavily conditioned by discussions surrounding De Felice's work, which Mosse had presented to the Italian public in 1975 and which in 1974 was at the center of public debate after the publication of *Mussolini il Duce*, with

its consensus theory, and *Intervista sul fascismo*.[10] Though this certainly did not favor Mosse's work, the problems surrounding the incomprehension of his work in Italy lay much deeper. The phenomenon did not involve "progressive" historians alone, since the critique of conservative culture was not really all that different.[11] Actually, in the 1980s, leftist historians would begin to view Mosse in a more positive light after the English Marxist group from the journal *Past & Present*, which had previously criticized attempts to examine the symbolic, ritual, and cultural-anthropological dimensions of ideologies, decided themselves to venture into this field with the interpretive concept of the "invention of tradition."[12] In this framework, identity was considered a phenomenon that renewed itself through a projection of the past into the future and relied on myths and symbols to do so. Central to this approach was the idea that political liturgies, in particular the political liturgy of the nation, were the result of public policies appropriated and directed by the elite in power through a process that was essentially driven from above. Political rituals were substantially what Hobsbawm referred to as "manufacture."[13] Such an interpretation diminished the importance and the implications of Mosse's approach. Following the lead of *Past & Present*, historians dedicated renewed attention to the symbolic and irrational dimensions of politics—understood, however, as a simple construction of the ruling classes.

What followed was a direct result of this development. Mosse's fundamental works on racism and anti-Semitism were ignored (or used in a manner that did not respect their true innovative, interpretive, and methodological significance) just as much as they were cited. Studies on sexuality and masculinity followed an interesting but different course, and the use of iconographic sources for the history of contemporary politics (something that Mosse pioneered) moved forward often without any reference to his work. With the exception of Emilio Gentile—who was heavily inspired by the work of Mosse but contributed original and autonomous interpretations of Fascism and the sacralization of politics—we could cite a long list of studies on the history of mass politics that used the approaches of Hobsbawm and Mosse indiscriminately without realizing that, in reality, the two ran completely counter to one another.

What I have said in relation to historiography in Italy is also true for many other traditions. The trend has not been without consequence. The first impression one has is that in relation to today's studies, despite the enormous development (mass politics is an extremely popular area of study at the moment) there is little clarity or consistency in terms of intentions, concepts, or interpretations. We run the risk of provoking a sort of Babel of interpretations: a situation in which we all speak different languages without truly understanding one another. We think we

are studying the same things, but really we are unknowingly referring to completely different, if not opposing, phenomena. Though this trend is true in other countries, the situation seems grave here in Italy, where the *cultural turn* was digested with great difficultly and eventually in an indirect and surreptitious manner. Should we study the interior or exterior aspect of the nationalization of the masses? "Rites" as expressions of a secular political religion or "ceremonies" as simple acts of collective representation, the reflection and support for deeply rooted and widespread values? Should we underline the stylistic aspects of the various techniques of national building—their communicative, literary, artistic and symbolic aspects—and consider phenomena like Fascism, like some have suggested, not so much "ideological" as "aesthetic," or stress rather the centrality of the category of the religious as a decisive move toward a more general phenomenon, the move of politics toward more absolute values? Should we concentrate, as many historians do, on theories, sensibilities, tastes, theater experiments, festivals and popular celebrations, gymnastic demonstrations and choral performances, the analysis of monuments and inscriptions, and funeral and theatrical texts, or rather more strictly on political culture and its theorists? Should we accentuate the irreducibility of political rituals to the rational dimension of doctrine or stress the rational employment of irrationality by politics?

Before it is too late, we need to establish some fixed points of reference, individuate the questions that need to be resolved, and see if there are any initial solutions on which we all agree—above all we need to clarify the situation. In order to do so, we must go back and take a close and informed look at Mosse's legacy. The Annales school sought to find meaning within a world of symbols through the elastic filter of the "base-superstructure" premised on the belief that symbols could be explained with sufficient understanding of economic and social conditions, a reconstruction of the role of the psychological factors, and with the help of a few fundamental epistemological categories. Mosse, however, argued that the symbols themselves are the significant element: that they are multifaceted, give order to reality, and mediate between subject and object. For Mosse, there is a complicated dialectical circuit between myth and reality. Therefore he did not separate "objective" reality and the way in which it is perceived into two distinct analytical moments—the perception of a thing is just as real as the thing itself. Mosse teaches us, then, to approach political myths, symbols, and rites as expressions of the collective mentality and to connect them with the needs of the masses in order to better understand their domination over the spirit of men. And above all he reminds us of the central importance of human beings in history—of their points of view in any reconstruction of mass politics.

Notes

1. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (New York: Pantheon, 2002); and George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).
2. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, xiv.
3. Ibid., 24.
4. Ibid., 294.
5. Emilio Gentile to Mosse, December 18, 1998, cited in Donatello Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010), 255.
6. Ibid., 211.
7. Ibid., 13–16.
8. On Mosse's intellectual friendship with Spini and De Felice, see Chapter 5 in this volume.
9. Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo. Storia e interpretazione* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2002), 35–39.
10. See Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*, 45–46.
11. See ibid., 84–85, 99.
12. Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 6.
13. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848–1875* (New York: Scribner, 1975), 108.

9

A Lasting Intellectual Friendship

An Interview with Emilio Gentile

Lorenzo Benadusi and Giorgio Caravale

Lorenzo Benadusi and Giorgio Caravale: Could you tell us about the first time you met George Mosse?

Emilio Gentile: I met Mosse, or, more accurately, one of Mosse's books, sort of by chance at the end of the sixties. It may have been in 1969. I had just graduated from the university or was about to. I used to stop by a book shop regularly that unfortunately no longer exists: the "Remainders" in Piazza San Silvestro, which used to sell books at half or reduced price. Perusing the shelves I spotted a copy of the *Origini culturali del Terzo Reich*. It was the first of Mosse's works to have been translated into Italian, published only a year earlier by Saggiatore, but already remaindered, probably a sign that it had not enjoyed great success.[1]

LB & GC: Was the name Mosse new to you?

EG: Actually, no. I had already acquired the first two numbers of the "Dialoghi del XX," the Italian translation of the first two fascicles of the *Journal of Contemporary History*, which had been founded by Mosse and Walter Laqueur in 1966. The first issue, on international Fascism, came out in Italian in 1967. Moreover, I had encountered Mosse's name in Renzo De Felice's essay, "Origini del fascismo," which appeared in 1968 in *Nuove questioni di storia contemporanea*, published by Marzorati, and in De Felice's book *Le interpretazioni del fascismo* issued by Laterza the

following year.[2] I was greatly impressed by Mosse's article on the origins of Fascism, so I decided to purchase the book on Nazism and I read it immediately. It made a deep impression, leaving me with the sensation of being continually assailed, in the course of the narrative, by wave after wave of the ideas, prejudices, stereotypes, and emotions of the epoch in which the cultural environment was formed from which Nazi ideology originated. It was like being immersed in the historical process, and being able to witness at first hand its rhythm and flow. In other words, what seized my attention in that book, as happened also in later readings of Mosse's other works, was his ability to evoke history without intervening directly and continually in the text—his ability to leave the reader free to steep himself in the past without being distracted by the intrusions of the historian with his comments, judgments, and after-the-fact foretelling.

LB & GC: Can you tell us more about this methodological approach?

EG: Certainly. It boils down precisely to this attempt to leave the reader free to make his own evaluation and form his own opinion. In Mosse's approach to the study of the past, we can see in action what he called in his autobiography "empathy"—in other words, the capacity to observe the past through the eyes of his protagonists, to relive from within a mental world foreign to us or which may even inspire a certain repugnance in us. Mosse's purpose had been that of immersing himself profoundly in the subject he is studying so as to be able to examine it in light of the mentality and ideas of the time, before proceeding to evaluate it critically.

LB & GC: In what way did this approach influence your research?

EG: At the time I was planning to study the origins of fascist ideology: to try to understand what fascists thought, how they conceived life, man, history, politics—in other words, decipher their culture, their mentality. I finished that book in 1974 and it was published by Laterza the following year.[3] At the time, it was the dominant opinion among historians that Fascism had not had an ideology, that it made no sense to speak of fascist ideology. The reading of Mosse's book, together with De Felice's encouragement, spurred me in my choice and persuaded me that I was not embarking on a useless task. And in Mosse's book on the cultural origins of Nazism, I found the same questions being asked that I was also posing for Fascism, even though I was conscious of the differences between his work and mine. Mosse had to identify the popular stratification of myths that had helped to foster German consensus toward

Nazism, while I was not so much interested in the question of consensus as knowing how the militant politicians and intellectuals of Fascism had contributed to the development of its ideology. At the time, what I meant by ideology was what Vilfredo Pareto called "derivations" [*derivazioni*]—namely, the processes of rationalizing the residues [*residui*], to use the other term by which he designated the irrational aspect of human action.

LB & GC: We will return to this again . . . If we understand you properly, Mosse's book was very useful to you in establishing how the reality of Nazism differed from that of Italian Fascism.

EG: Yes, in the course of my research the difference between Nazi and fascist ideology became more and more evident. The book on *Origini dell'ideologia fascista* stemmed from my earlier study on political culture and on the theme of national rebirth nurtured by the group gathered around Giuseppe Prezzolini's journal *La Voce*, which was the subject of my university thesis and of my first book, "*La Voce*" *e l'età giolittiana*, issued in 1972 by the publisher Pan, directed by the writer and journalist Giuseppe Longo. What interested me was to try to understand how the contributors to *La Voce*, Giovanni Amendola, Gaetano Salvemini, Giovanni Gentile, Benedetto Croce, Giovanni Papini, Ardengo Soffici, and even Mussolini, had all come to collaborate with Prezzolini in the common goal of working for the regeneration of Italians. This was to be accomplished not only through a cultural renewal but also through the regeneration of politics, of Italian politics. I wanted to understand how they ended up on ideologically and politically opposed extremes as implacable enemies. Prezzolini, with whom I was on friendly terms beginning in 1965, responded to my queries with Curzio Malaparte's well-known quip that from *La Voce* had emerged both Fascism and anti-Fascism. But this reply did not seem satisfactory, because it was only a simple declaration of a fact. It failed to explain what had actually happened.

LB & GC: And this was only an Italian phenomenon?

EG: So it seemed to me. In fact, it did not appear from my reading of Mosse's book that there had been anything resembling the circle of *La Voce* in the cultural milieu from which Nazism originated. Hitler had not been a member of a culturally avant-garde group as Mussolini had been with Prezzolini's journal, where side-by-side we saw the Jew and the anti-Semite, the enemy of democracy and the liberal, the Catholic and the atheist, the positivist and the idealist. And they all, in their amicable

encounters and confrontations, debated the concepts of nation, state, and citizenship, hoping to attain a common synthesis. Instead they ended up fighting as enemies over the same concepts, interpreted according to the categories of Fascism and anti-Fascism, which were intellectual and moral categories, in addition to being incompatible and irreconcilable experiences of life and of conflict. From Mosse's work it was clear that the cultural currents that went to make up National Socialism were already firmly imbued by a rather homogeneous mental outlook, centered on the myths of *Volk*, of the Aryan race, and of anti-Semitism.

LB & GC: Already in 1974, in your review of a book by Tarmo Kunnas,[4] you wrote that Mosse was one of the greatest contemporary historians. In view of this profound admiration, did you try to meet him?

EG: Our first contact was through correspondence when I sent him my review of his *La nazionalizzazione delle masse*, which I had written for the newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino*.[5] But our first actual meeting took place in Rome, probably toward the end of the 1970s. It was De Felice who invited us to supper, and it was on that occasion that I came into contact for the first time with the exuberant personality of George Mosse. He turned toward me with his customary inquisitiveness, telling me straight off that he had read and greatly appreciated my volume *Origini dell'ideologia fascista*. I remember that he talked about his new research on "caducci," as he put it, and I could not understand why he was interested in Carducci, the Italian poet of the nineteenth century. And he repeated, "Not Carducci, the caducci, the caducci." I finally understood that he was alluding to the *caduti*, men who had fallen in the Great War. After dinner we walked together to his hotel, and from that conversation was born a long and intense personal friendship that endured until the day he died. Every time he came through Rome, whatever the occasion, he was a guest in my home, and he became friendly even with "signora Teresa," as he called my wife, until he dropped "signora." And we, in turn, visited him in Madison. It was not accidental, to return to the previous point, that many of our conversations, not just those conducted through the mail, dealt with the differences between Nazism and Fascism. I was learning a great deal from his broad culture, while he, through De Felice and me, enhanced his knowledge of Fascism.

LB & GC: You were close to both Mosse and De Felice. What was the relationship between the two?

EG: There was almost total harmony between the two until the end. Each saw in the research of the other something that he thought was

important, fundamental for the historical understanding of the fascist phenomenon, even if their working methods and historiographical approach differed greatly. To the best of my knowledge, there is no trace in any of Mosse's work of any sort of criticism of De Felice, even though the former was not shy about frankly voicing his opinions. Not even in the letters that Mosse wrote to me can one find objections of any sort toward De Felice. Only once, verbally, did Mosse express the opinion that in the later volumes of the biography of the *Duce*, De Felice might have gone too far in interpreting Mussolini's ideas.

The comment may have originated from the fact that Mosse was not convinced by the portrait of an irresolute, hesitant Mussolini during the years 1939–40, as De Felice had drawn him. But this is only a hypothesis on my part. Let me repeat, the harmony that reigned between them was indeed noteworthy. Toward the end there was some criticism of Mosse by De Felice, and I do not think the latter found Mosse's studies on sexuality interesting. But I do not believe this diminished his esteem, as attested by the public demonstrations of admiration that De Felice continued to pay him, especially for his studies on racism and anti-Semitism. For that matter, in my opinion, from the very beginning, from their first encounter at Reading in 1967, De Felice felt a fascination for Mosse, especially because of his vitality and intellectual curiosity. I remember Signora De Felice telling me of Mosse's joyous enthusiasm when he visited the monsters of Bomarzo, which was only the emotion he felt toward any new and unusual thing he experienced.

LB & GC: The two men, however, epitomized totally opposed ways of writing history: the first consumed by archival research and the narrative detail; the other wholly given over to describing in broad strokes the essence of an entire epoch . . .

EG: Theirs were two different ways of writing history, but in my opinion, they were quite complementary. In addition, De Felice saw in Mosse much of his teacher and friend Delio Cantimori, especially his attention to the irrational element in National Socialism. Reading the pioneering studies of Cantimori on Weimar Germany and Nazism, one is left with the same impression, with the same sense of a living historical experience that is produced by reading Mosse. De Felice may have rediscovered in Mosse the point of cultural reference that he lost with the death of Cantimori. He saw in Mosse the historian who had developed certain of Cantimori's intuitions in his attempt to comprehend historically, namely rationally, the irrational world of National Socialism. De Felice spoke to me often of this affinity between Mosse and Cantimori,

of their cultural interest for political irrationalism. Unfortunately, De Felice never wrote anything on the subject, except for the solitary allusion in the essay on Italian historians during Fascism. There, apropos Cantimori's studies on National Socialism, De Felice observed that Cantimori's approach to contemporary history anticipated Mosse's.[6]

LB & GC: It was not mere chance that in his preface to Mosse's Nazionalizzazione delle masse De Felice referred to the book as one of high culture, placing the name of its author on a par with such great historians as Huizinga and Bloch . . .

EG: Yes, De Felice felt that the historical perspective opened up by Mosse with that book did not pertain only to Nazism but was an undeniable qualitative leap forward in the approach to contemporary history. He saw it as an innovative and significant contribution to the advancement of history, because courageously and objectively he had succeeded in looking at the past in a way that was totally new. In other words, De Felice grasped fully the innovative thrust of Mosse's work.

LB & GC: A new way that, however, he did not follow.

EG: As a matter of fact, De Felice had already said it in his preface. He was convinced that Mosse's discussion on the Nazi liturgy could not be applied to Italian Fascism, where liturgy had not carried great weight. But I did not agree with this opinion and discussed it at length with De Felice, from my review of Mosse's book to the article on Fascism as political religion and the book on the *Il culto del littorio*.[7]

LB & GC: How do you react when you read that you are Mosse's heir—that you are the historian who in our country has most fruitfully carried on his historiographical tradition? Do you recognize yourself in this definition?

EG: Someone else said that I am De Felice's heir. I could boast that I have been considered the heir of two of the greatest historians of the twentieth century. But I am not vain. Personally, I do not consider myself to be anyone's heir, first of all because everyone has the right to choose one's own heirs. Neither De Felice nor Mosse ever called me his heir, nor have I ever said that I was or believed that I was. Actually, I refuse as a matter of principle to consider myself or to declare myself anyone's heir. I believe that culturally and intellectually every person is responsible for what he does, and if he is indebted intellectually he declares it openly, without useless exhibitions or claims of noble descent or lineage. Moreover, I cling jealously to my intellectual independence, while freely acknowledging what I learned from others: for example, what I

learned through my friendship with Prezzolini, who reinforced my will to protect my independence from passing fashions, from the opportunities or perils of fleeting circumstances. I found in De Felice and Mosse the same independence I had admired in Prezzolini. For this, too, I was their friend, greatly honored by the friendship they showed me. I openly recognized my intellectual debt to De Felice and Mosse in the only way I could: with affection but with independent judgment, dedicating to each one of them a critical assessment of their work, just as I had on many occasions with Prezzolini.

LB & GC: Someone has written that you started from positions close to De Felice and ended up with an outlook closer to Mosse's. Do you agree?

EG: Totally baseless: in my book on fascist ideology, Mosse's name already appears alongside De Felice's. Mosse is present in my first book on Fascism, together with De Felice, and both also figure in some of my more recent books—for example, in the new edition of the *Mito dello Stato nuovo*, published in 2002.[8] These are the books that take up themes over which I truly had a dialogue with them, where I really felt the duty to discuss them even after they had passed on. In the books that had no connection with them, I did not disport artificial credentials. At De Felice's death, some right-wing journalists and intellectuals, claiming to be 'true' interpreters of De Felice's thought, attacked me and Signora De Felice because she—although as staunch an antifascist as her father, the philosopher Guido De Ruggiero, one of the founders of the *Partito d'Azione*—was almost betraying her husband's intellectual and historical legacy by entrusting the completion of the last volume of the Mussolini biography to Luigi Goglia, Mario Missori, and me, rather than to more strict and orthodox De Felicians. I was accused of no longer being De Felician. Another journalist gossiped that in my book *La Grande Italia* I did not mention De Felice.[9] This was false. Just look at the notes to see the citations to De Felice. Another writer observed that I did not thank De Felice nor name him in the preface. True, but the book had been largely written after De Felice's death, and I had not discussed it with him. Thus there was no need to thank him in the acknowledgments. Moreover, besides having dedicated to him my *Storia del partito fascista*,[10] I thanked De Felice in my own way, just as I thanked Mosse for what I had learned from their work and from their friendship: by writing a book about each of them. I believe this is a more serious and genuine way, even if more laborious, of showing one's gratitude than some formal words of thanks. For that matter, I can say that I embarked from "Emilian" positions and concluded with "Emilian" positions, taking full

advantage of De Felice's work, just as of Mosse's. But I should like to add the work of another great historian, Gioacchino Volpe, whom I knew personally for a brief time, just as I also made use of Burckhardt, Croce, Huizinga, Perry Miller with his studies on the New England mind, of Merle Curti with his on the American nation, of Henri-Irénée Marrou for his fundamental lesson on the humility of the historian—to name those who most directly helped me to advance my scholarship and my historiographical method.

LB & GC: In what way are your methodology and your research, as they have developed from the 1980s to today, related to Mosse's?

EG: There are many points in common, but they do not always originate from a reciprocal awareness of the other's work. Even before the publication of Mosse's *Nazionalizzazione delle masse* and before having met Mosse, in a brief note on fascist ideology that I had published in the March issue of *Storia Contemporanea*, but which I believe I had written at least a year earlier, I was already speaking about politics as aesthetics and as spectacle, alluding to the fascist way of doing politics through rites and symbols, without having any notion of Mosse's ideas on the subject.[11] There was another accidental similarity: Mosse held that we had to understand the irrational through a rational mental process. Well, in my 1974 book on fascist ideology, I wrote that to understand Fascism we had to realize that it was the product of a rational use of the irrational. I had grasped this studying Pareto before I had encountered Mosse's work. They were different concepts traveling in the same direction.

LB & GC: There is no doubt then that there was an initial affinity that favored your intellectual and personal encounter . . .

EG: Actually, my view of history was originally conditioned by a rationalist intellectualism à la Voltaire in regard to the irrational. My reading of Mosse had a salutary maieutical effect on me, spurring me to confront the problems of political irrationalism and of myth, not only through the study of verbal "derivations," but by pursuing in greater depth research in the realm of myths, rites, and symbols. Mosse enabled me to see, so to speak, the tridimensionality of a phenomenon that at first I had seen only in an intellectual dimension. To be sure, as I said, I was aware of the fact that fascists used rites and symbols even before I read *La nazionalizzazione delle masse*, but for me the principal subject matter to be studied, before I read Mosse, were the ideas verbally expressed as a system of rationalizing the "residues."

LB & GC: When your book Il mito dello stato nuovo appeared in 1982,[12] *Mosse wrote to you that he was fascinated by what you were writing on the cult of politics in Italy. To him it appeared to be a subject that had been neglected by historians, and he urged you to persevere . . .*

EG: In effect, in that volume I had alluded to the problem of the cult of politics in the fascist state, but I had already mentioned that there was a substantial difference between fascist and Nazi cults, and that it was difficult to assign to Fascism Mosse's concept of the nationalization of the masses. On the other hand, it was possible to apply profitably the concept of the new politics. My article on Fascism as political religion appeared in 1990 and the book *Il culto del littorio* in 1993. Thus it took me almost ten years to be able to demonstrate concretely, through the history of the fascist cult, that it was not possible to apply mechanically Mosse's ideas on the nationalization of the masses to Italian Fascism. Except for the fact that both books deal with rites and symbols, they are basically very different. Suffice it to say that Mosse is concerned with the aesthetics of politics, while I occupy myself with its sacralization. For Mosse the new politics is especially a phenomenon of aesthetic dramatization; for me it is especially one of the religious experiences of politics.

LB & GC: In his autobiography, Mosse included your Il culto del littorio among the studies dealing with the sacralization of politics that had been inaugurated by his La nazionalizzazione delle masse . . .

EG: I must confess that I was surprised that he had juxtaposed our two books. Although mine is indeed a consequence of his, it goes in another direction. This was first demonstrated by Renato Moro in his excellent review article on *Il culto del littorio*[13] and was further documented in the fine research by Donatello Aramini on Mosse's reception in Italian historiography.[14] Actually, Mosse had never used the expression "the sacralization of politics" in his studies on fascist ritual. I believe I was the first, in *Il culto del littorio*, to coin the concept of the sacralization of politics, applying it to Fascism and, successively, to other experiences of civic and political religion, in a very different sense from the aesthetics of politics. In addition, there were substantial differences in the choice of the historical period and in the theme of the book: Mosse arrived at the political cult of Nazism from the vantage point of the French Revolution and the anti-Napoleonic war, but he did not analyze the development of the Nazi cult as political religion. I, instead, began from the close of the *Risorgimento* and dedicated my entire book to illustrating the fascist political cult as an expression of a political religion. I spoke

with Mosse about these differences at a time when I felt the greatest uncertainty on the direction of my research, and he helped me, by his friendship and encouragement, to persevere.

LB & GC: What did Mosse say about the book?

EG: When it was still in proofs I ran into Mosse in New York. One evening, at dinner, I gave him a copy of the proofs to look at. He read them that night and we talked about it the next morning. He praised the book highly, but he also criticized me for not having discussed sufficiently the historical period preceding the advent of Fascism, as he had done in *La nazionalizzazione delle masse*. I replied that in the case of Fascism that course which he had traced for the development of the "new politics" in the German situation, which from the French Revolution led to Nazism, was not duplicated in the Italy from the French Revolution to Fascism. I had already noted this in the *Mito dello Stato nuovo*, but it was concretely demonstrated in the *Il culto del littorio*. I think that a profound break occurred between liberal Italy and fascist Italy, in the basic ideas if not in the rhetoric, as I showed in *La Grande Italia*. I am not persuaded by the thesis of a continuity between liberalism and Fascism, in the nation's development, as recently argued by a seasoned historian of the *Risorgimento*, Alberto Mario Banti.[15]

LB & GC: What then are the differences between La nazionalizzazione delle masse and Il culto del littorio?

EG: The basic difference lies especially in the substantial discrepancy between the Italian and the German historical processes. In Mosse's book, Nazism culminates a historical process that it uses to involve the masses, who have already passed through a century of nationalization, a process Mosse demonstrates. In the case of *Il culto del littorio*, Fascism, while availing itself of preexistent political liturgical traditions, traditions that were very limited in terms of popular involvement, behaves like a movement assaulting a people, to renew them, rather than like a movement that expresses and utilizes an already achieved nationalization. The Fascist Party assaults the Italian people to make them fascist but is not working on a nationalization that already has been consolidated. Giovanni Gentile's slogan about fascist doctrine, to which Mussolini placed his signature, "The State Creates the Nation," is the exact opposite of Hitler's rallying cry that the State is the instrument of the *Volk*. Finally, there is still another, even more substantial, difference between the two books. It concerns not the historical reality but the perspective selected to

analyze it. As I have already alluded, in his book Mosse speaks of the "aesthetics of politics" and never uses the phrase "the sacralization of politics," which instead is the central concept and subject matter of my own volume.

LB & GC: In the pages in which he deals with Hitler, however, Mosse pays a great deal of attention to the dimension of the sacred . . .

EG: Yes, but only generically. Mosse writes about the lay religion of nationalism. Very early he wrote that Fascism is a religion—he did this in a review of a book by Nolte, which at the time was a novel idea and could seem extravagant. Later, this theme of political religion in Mosse's work was resolved especially, if not exclusively, in the dimension of the aesthetic representation of liturgy, of symbolism, of dramatic stage decoration. For me, instead, the aesthetics of politics is only an aspect of the sacralization of politics, and it is this last point that constitutes the central theme of *Il culto del littorio*, from which almost a decade later *La religione della politica* emerged.[16]

LB & GC: In what way do you distance yourself from Mosse's approach? In a recent study, someone spoke of your historical work, also in regard to what you inherited from Mosse, "as a refusal to investigate in Fascism the cultural and aesthetic elements so as to be able to concentrate instead on the connections linking the cultural, organizational and institutional dimensions."[17] Is it a question of a diversity that is reflected also on the various themes of Fascism?

EG: In my studies on Fascism I did not restrict myself, as Mosse did for Nazism, to ideology and liturgy. I always explicitly affirmed that I did not consider ideology and liturgy the single dimensions encompassing the nature of Fascism. My books on the origins of the Fascist Party and on the relationship between party and regime in the Fascist State, as well as my studies on the senate during the fascist era, deal with organizations and institutions. I am convinced that the essence of Fascism comprises also its organizations and institutions. The difference from Mosse is reflected also in themes unrelated to Fascism. For example, when his book on the myth of the fallen soldier appeared,[18] I wrote to him that, while he spoke about myth at length, he had never explained what he meant by it. Thus he had ended up by talking about something that had been artificially constructed by persons who had lived an experience for the purpose of perpetuating it. I, instead, was always more convinced that we are dealing with a religious dimension of politics, or, better, by a sacral experience of politics, independent

of the fact that a party or a political class may then artificially create a mythology, a ritual. As I understand it, myth is born from the experience of the sacred by generation, let us say spontaneous generation, even if after it can be elaborated and given form, as happened with many religions. Mosse used the terms *lay religion* and *secular religion*, but he never asked himself the question of the sacral dimensions of politics. He concentrated on what comforted modern man, disoriented in the face of a modernity that had caused him to lose the sense of belonging. I, instead, interpret modernity as a continuous source of the sacred, even outside the traditional dimension of ecclesiastical religion—for example, in art and especially in politics. The experience of the sacred in wars or in political revolutions is the opposite of the search for comfort against the assaults of modernity. Totalitarian political religion in reality refuses to flee into the comfort of a fully furnished house, to borrow from Mosse's apt formulation. At the end of the day, as Americans would say, Fascism and Nazism concluded their revolutionary experiences seeking and wanting war, thus endangering the fully furnished house apparently constructed in the totalitarian regime.

LB & GC: Do you reproach George Mosse for anything?

EG: Reproach? Certainly not. The term is inappropriate. Rather, there is a disagreement, which became more pronounced vis-à-vis Mosse and also De Felice, as my study of totalitarianism progressed. This is over the emphasis that they both gave to the question of consensus, setting out from the presupposition that it truly was at the heart of Fascism and Nazism. For me, instead, the more I study these phenomena, the more I become convinced that the problem of consensus was not central to the two regimes; it was not their principal objective, almost as if they needed democratic endorsement to justify totalitarian authority. This does not imply denying the importance of the forging of a consensus in the fascist regime.[19] Rather, it means that we should reexamine it in light of what was new and specific to Fascism as the creation of a totalitarian authority, the foundations of which consisted in the power of its police apparatuses, in its militia, in the capillary organization of the party, in the opposition to and suppression of dissent, in the obligatory regimentation of the individual and of the masses. All this was to be accomplished by way of methods, principles, ideals, and objectives that conceded nothing to the democratic principle that the authority of those who governed depended on the approval of the governed.

LB & GC: Did not De Felice and Mosse, however, begin from the historical premise that it was almost unthinkable to talk about consensus in Fascism and Nazism?

EG: True. Posing the problem of consensus, Mosse and De Felice made a fundamental contribution to the process of extricating the interpretation of Fascism from polemical interpretations, such as that of the country occupied by criminal bands who had imposed themselves over an innocent and hostile populace. But the subject of consensus has also been the cause of idle disquisitions on its meaning, on the possibility of measuring it, on the genuineness of consensus. As early as a 1986 article, [20] I announced my perplexity over this approach—an unease that has grown over the years, especially because of the misunderstanding that this question of consensus had generated over the question of fascist totalitarianism (but this misunderstanding extends also to Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism).

LB & GC: Can we say that both the subject of totalitarianism and that of consensus served to catch the attention of historians of Fascism, leading to misconceptions in some cases?

EG: The misunderstanding derives, on the one hand, from confusing totalitarianism with consensus—we have totalitarianism only where there is a mass consensus toward the ideology of the regime, etc.—and on the other, from the identification of totalitarianism with the ultimate goal of Fascism (just as of Communism or Nazism), its conclusive ideological objective: we have totalitarianism only if the so-called totalitarian project expressed by the ideology is fully realized. It is like saying, on the one hand, that a single-party regime becomes totalitarian only if it succeeds in obtaining the greatest possible consensus from the greatest number of people, and on the other hand, that Fascism, Communism, and Nazism had a common project, pursued the same objective, and wanted to attain an identical goal. The paradox in such historiographical approaches is obvious. I believe this is the origin and the reason for De Felice's travails in regard to the problem of fascist totalitarianism and Mosse's wavering between accepting and rejecting this category.

LB & GC: How then can we avoid remaining prisoners of this paradox?

EG: In my opinion, we can do so only by restoring to the concept of totalitarianism its original historical significance. This would permit us also to revisit the question of consensus in the fascist regime, overcoming the long and fruitless opposition between "consensus yes," "consensus no," "consensus yes and no," to determine whether this is really an essential

problem in the study and interpretation of Fascism. To restore to the concept of totalitarianism its original historical significance entails interpreting totalitarianism as an instrument for attaining a goal and not as a goal to achieve. Totalitarianism, to express it with a formula, was a method to achieve an end, not an end in itself. Or, to put it differently, it was not a project to be realized but the means to realize a project. Fascism, Bolshevism, and Nazism did not want to achieve the same project, but each used the totalitarian method to attain its specific, desired objectives. The antifascists who coined and developed the concept of totalitarianism between 1923 and 1925 did not mean by it the ideology, the intentions, the ambitions, and the purposes of Fascism but applied it to the concrete reality of Fascism as it revealed itself from its very first months in power: fascist totalitarianism was the organization of an armed party with its violent methods for obtaining, preserving, imposing, and extending its own monopoly over the forces of the state, establishing a single-party regime—namely, the "forging of power."

LB & GC: Did you have a chance to discuss these things with De Felice and Mosse?

EG: Yes, with both. When there was an occasion to discuss totalitarianism and dissent with them, I usually mentioned that from 1923 Mussolini used to say, "Consensus is fine, but if this fails, there remains force," and this consideration is decisive. In fact, we should think of the fascist system as a garrison state, with a military-style organization where of the citizen, just as of the soldier, high commanders do not ask for consensus but obedience above all, on which they try persuasion to attempt to convert obedience into consensus or, more precisely, fideistic assent. It is significant that the fascist regime, even though it encountered powerful resistance to this attempt to encroach upon and regiment the lives of the masses, did not on this account abandon the policy. On the contrary, it promoted it even more energetically, dissipating some of the consensus rather than expanding and consolidating it.

LB & GC: So there are some drawbacks in Mosse's and De Felice's views of totalitarianism?

EG: It is the way they posed the question of consensus, which locked them into an oscillating and contradictory vision of totalitarianism. In De Felice's case, at the beginning his model of totalitarianism stemmed from his reading, but in my opinion not sufficiently critical, of Hannah Arendt's book, which is not at all clear and logical in its formulation of the theory of totalitarianism, even in the case of Nazism and Stalinism.[21]

She is totally misinformed about Italian Fascism, as I tried to show in the new edition of the *Via italiana al totalitarismo*.[22] Arendt identified totalitarianism with mass terror, with systematic mass slaughter. But the crucial question is of what totalitarianism was before the slaughter, or without the mass slaughter, as in the case of Fascism. Some scholars, Juan Linz for example, deny that mass terror is a decisive factor in the definition of totalitarianism. This is my thinking exactly. I should also like to mention that both De Felice and Mosse seem not to have been aware that, for Arendt, Fascism had not been totalitarian, but just up to 1938. Well then, what did it become after 1938? De Felice and Mosse seem not to have noticed that for Arendt neither the Bolshevist party nor the Bolshevist regime up to Stalin were totalitarian, nor that for Arendt even Nazism was not totalitarian until 1941. It would have become so only if it had won World War II. With such contradictions, vacillations, and discontinuous uses of the concept, the historical significance of totalitarianism is lost in the most abject confusion and vagueness.

LB & GC: Perhaps this is the reason both Mosse and De Felice changed positions often about totalitarianism . . .

EG: Mosse began by considering totalitarianism the epilogue of over a century and a half of attacks on the freedom of the individual in the course of European history. This is what he asserted in his *La cultura dell'Europa occidentale*,[23] reaching the point of criticizing the very concept of totalitarianism but, at the end, agreeing with the results of my own studies. De Felice set out denying the totalitarian character of Fascism but ended up asserting, also taking note of my work, that a totalitarianism proper to Fascism did exist, that the fascist regime can be considered totalitarian, and that to deny this reality not only would have been wrong on the political and moral plane but would have made it incomprehensible from the historiographical point of view. In conclusion, it seems to me that in the end there was a certain agreement among us on the question of totalitarianism.

LB & GC: What then is totalitarianism for you?

EG: A brief response must necessarily be schematic but, I hope, at least clear. Totalitarianism is a system of political domination originating in a revolutionary party that becomes the sole party in a new regime. The totalitarian dimension in politics originates in the phenomenon of the political party—in the organization of politics in parties as collective associations that regimented the masses and mobilized them in the competition for power. At a certain point from the galaxy of

parties, certain revolutionary and antidemocratic parties are born that consider competition a death struggle against the other parties. It has to culminate with the elimination of the other parties and the irrevocable conquest of power, executed by the totalitarian parties monopolistically so as to subject all of society to their control: to mold it according to their concept of man, of existence, of politics. It comes down to the choice of a mode of governing that bestows on the party the irrevocable totality of the control of power, a rejection of democratic competition.

LB & GC: It would appear that this method evades the problem of the real involvement of the masses and ends up by selecting only the representations and self-representations of these regimes.

EG: No evasion here, on the contrary—I think the question is put badly. When I speak of totalitarianism, I am not speaking only of ideology, liturgy, representations, or self-representations of these regimes, as has been claimed by some hostile critics of my interpretation of Fascism, both on the Right and on the Left. There are persons who may have only looked at the titles of my books or perused a few pages, picking out a passage here and there, sometimes even distorting it and altering its meaning. When I speak of the totalitarianism of these regimes, I am alluding especially to their violent practices, to their organization of party and government, to their concrete reality, hard and oppressive, to which they contributed also ideology and liturgy. The objective was not rational persuasion but irrational conversion—fideistic assent that annulled the critical capacity of the individual. As for the involvement of the masses, it is present in totalitarianism not because of the consensus they bestow on the regime, always difficult to weigh accurately, but because the involvement takes place through regimentation, militarization, mobilization.

LB & GC: The question of the reception of the political message, however, is central to the theme of the nationalization of the masses, which you dealt with extensively in La Grande Italia, a book that seems to have taken much from Mosse.

EG: No, in reality I think that *La Grande Italia* has little of Mosse about it. In fact, it has nothing in common with the nationalization of the masses as Mosse poses the question. For this reason he is never cited, not even in the notes. On the contrary, my book demonstrates how varied, heterogeneous, and conflicting has been the research on the nationalization of Italians: a tormented history of different, even

opposed concepts of what constitutes a nation, a state, a homeland, citizenship. Thus it is still so difficult to speak of an Italian nation and of an accomplished nationalization of Italians, in the sense of feeling that we belong to a common homeland, a common state. I would say that *La Grande Italia* is a purely "Emilian" book, although Mosse liked it immediately. Thanks to him it was translated into English, as had happened with *Il culto del littorio*.

LB & GC: So did the degree of involvement by the masses in national life in Germany and Italy differ?

EG: Precisely. The process of the making of the nation-state differed greatly between the two. In Germany one encounters a very simple fact: Germans fought for national unity, but not against an oppressive foreign power. The Italians instead had to contend for their unity against a foreign power that occupied the country or controlled the other states, except Piedmont. Moreover, Germany did not have a democratic current, opposed to the monarchy, striving for unification, which was so influential and at the end even decisive for the conquest of unity in Italy. Still more, in Germany unification took place with the consent of the churches; in Italy against the opposition of the church, with all that entailed in terms of the relations between religion and politics. To sum up, Italy lacked the progressive stratification of the nationalization of the masses that led first to cultural and ideological and then to political and governmental unification.

LB & GC: Thus in Italy the nation provoked greater division and splintering than in Germany?

EG: I think so. In the *Nazionalizzazione delle masse*, Mosse showed, for example, how everything converged, the workers' movement included, to create the conditions that allowed Hitler to exploit this mass of common national rites, myths, symbols, and beliefs. The history of *La Grande Italia*, instead, is the story of conflicts among Italians over how the nation was to be conceived, and it is rather the demonstration, not so much of failure, as of the difference between the two historical processes. In Germany the difference had run its course by 1848, while in Italy after that date it became more acute because, with the success of the monarcho-liberal current, Mazzinians, democrats, and federalists were set in opposition to each other. They were all involved in the *Risorgimento* movement, but the solution that was achieved did not satisfy everyone. It is precisely this competition or sundering of the idea of nation that has been perpetuated in Italian history.

LB & GC: In your opinion, did this influence, during the liberal era, the absence of a large-scale effort to nationalize Italians?

EG: Until a few years ago I believed that the Liberal State, because of its oligarchic origins and deeply rooted diffidence toward the masses, had tried only partially and intermittently to achieve this program of nationalization. I must admit, though, that after the studies of Bruno Tobia, Catherine Brice, Ilaria Porciani, and Maurizio Ridolfi, a greater commitment can be discerned on the part of the Liberal State, and not just through the schools and the army, but also through the "new politics," in the program to nationalize Italians. If today I had to rewrite *Il culto del littorio*, I would add that the age of liberalism saw an effort toward nationalization and a commitment to it greater than what I had imagined. The fact remains, however, that the commitment was generally on the part of the monarchy, which is not so much the symbol of the nation as of the State. This is how it was seen not only by republicans and Mazzinians but also by all democrats and, in the opposite camp, by a large part of the Catholics. Moreover, the moments of greatest collective involvement in monarchical rites were the royal funerals of Vittorio Emanuele II and of Umberto I: in other words, all collective experiences of mourning, and expressions of sympathy on which national, mass enthusiasm could not be constructed. Italy lacked the phenomenon of a lay religion among the masses, due to the pervasive presence of the Catholic Church and the fideistic and liturgical competition it represented.

LB & GC: Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that with the Great War a strong national sentiment emerged in Italy that seems to have had its roots in the Liberal State . . .

EG: To be sure, there was greater national sentiment in 1911 than in 1861 or in 1901, but I would not say that it was a "strong" collective sentiment. We should remember that Italy was the only country that split radically at the moment of intervention. Wherever nationalism functioned, socialists were converted to intervention and chose to support the country at war: this did not happen in Italy. In any case, there was wavering in the collective mindset. After the defeat of Caporetto, the Italian State began to realize that it had to teach patriotism, especially to soldiers. The experience of war caused citizens to become more fully participant and conscious of belonging to something that reached beyond their individual and family spheres. I believe, and I wrote it in *La Grande Italia*, that World War I became, especially after Caporetto and until final victory, the moment of greatest emotional unification for a large segment of Italians around the concepts of country and nation. But this

emotional unification dissolved at war's end. The delusions that came with the peace and the myth of the Bolshevist revolution collaborated to destroy the fragile nationalization produced by wartime patriotism. If there had been a socialist party capable of resisting the infatuation over the Bolshevist myth and of realizing that the problem of nationalization was one of democracy and not of ideological mystification, Italian history might have taken a very different course . . .

LB & GC: Did the Russian Revolution imperil the process of nationalizing the masses also in Germany?

EG: Yes, the laceration is profound in the Weimar Republic as well. But Germany had lost the war, and this contributed to the birth of a republic without republicans. What survived, with the myth of a Germany that had lost the war not because it had been defeated on the battlefield but because it had been stabbed in the back by socialists and democrats, was a strong nationalist sentiment bent on revenge. And yet, during the Weimar Republic nationalism was not the dominant ideology. Hitler remained a marginal figure until 1928, and even on the eve of his nomination as chancellor, the surge of success of the National Socialist Party, which had already begun to experience a reduction of votes . . .

LB & GC: Another of your books that recently has been associated with Mosse is L'apocalisse della modernità . . .[24]

EG: No, I would emphatically deny this, even if the basic subject matter treated is the same, namely the catastrophe of modern man, which I believe was the underlying theme of all Mosse's work. Nevertheless, the way I treat the theme in my book is different. Once again, I look at the dimension of the sacred produced by modernity, a dimension that may leave the masses out of consideration and that can also be expressed by limited cultural movements. This perspective has no relationship to the problem of the construction of the myth of experiencing war that Mosse places at the heart of his study.

LB & GC: Thus modernity as the great matrix of experiencing the sacred . . .

EG: Exactly. Modernity consists of conflicts, a historical dimension composed of antagonisms that cannot be definitively eradicated by compromise, an antagonism that stems from the disintegration of a millenarian order, one based on the interpenetration of throne and altar as foundations of collective life; paraphrasing Rousseau, we could say that modernity, having defeated the pillars of throne and altar by installing popular sovereignty, created a situation of continuous struggle reuniting the

two heads of the eagle: spiritual authority and religious authority. This has occurred through new experiences of symbiosis, which take place even outside the traditional religions, as, for example, in civic American religion and in the totalitarian political religions. Religions spring up in situations where the existing order experiences deep laceration—situations in which a people, as Mosse would say, go looking for a fragment of eternity. Modernity, unlike what Max Weber had sustained, is not the disappearance of the sacred. On the contrary, by its very essence it is a factor favoring, in circumstances of crisis and profound laceration in society, the bursting forth of the sacred that at times reveals itself in intense forms, such as wars and revolutions, and at other times instead manifests itself scattered in a thousand rivulets.

LB & GC: In effect, from the time of the American Revolution politics has been characterized more and more by moments of the generation of the sacred . . .

EG: For me, the concept of the sacralization of politics is key to understanding many phenomena in the modern world in which experiences of the sacred occur that may develop into actual civic or political religions. In the twentieth century, the sacral explosion of politics began with the Great War, with the Bolshevist and fascist revolutions, and extended into the third millennium until the time of North Korea, developing into the various political religions of anticolonialist and anti-imperialist nationalism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It then erupted again in the world of traditional religions with the various Islamic, Christian, and Indian fundamentalisms.

LB & GC: Returning to Mosse and his reception in Italy and focusing our attention on that group of scholars who work on the journal Storia Contemporanea, in which you also were involved, to what extent, in your opinion, was Mosse's contribution accepted by those young historians? In the development of that group, how significant was the obvious distance (even disagreement) between Mosse's methodology and De Felice's, totally concentrated on archival digging and on detailed documentary analysis?

EG: There were many who esteemed Mosse in the group around De Felice and *Storia Contemporanea*, interested in determining whether it was possible to apply his findings to the Italian situation. We can say without hesitation that the journal gave a strong impulse to the diffusion of Mosse's work in Italy.

LB & GC: Personal friendships must have counted for a lot also . . .

EG: Yes, some who collaborated with *Storia Contemporanea* came to know Mosse through De Felice, and a direct encounter was an important

advantage for many of us. Face-to-face meetings with a person make it much easier to see how a certain way of doing history corresponds to the personality and curiosity of the historian and of the man. I remember our now deceased friend, Niccolò Zapponi, who penned a beautiful remembrance of Mosse and culture over the *longue durée*, juxtaposing the name of the German scholar to that of György Lukács, a comparison that pleased Mosse greatly even if he did not feel particularly close to Lukács.[25] There were also Luciano Zani and Sandra Staderini, who spent a few months in Madison and saw Mosse regularly. When Mosse would come to Italy, especially in the early years, De Felice invited us to dine with him, and these were occasions to draw closer to the person: he was a true magnet of friendships, always ready for new encounters and discussions. The strict education he had received in the German school of Salem-Hermannsberg made Mosse a person who might seem outwardly severe, but his great humanity permitted him to open himself to others with commitment and great cordiality. On each occasion I was struck by his availability toward all, from students to young researchers, from colleagues to the many readers of his books.

LB & GC: Italy is probably the country where Mosse's work has enjoyed the greatest success, as opposed to France, where it has been totally neglected, and to a lesser extent England and Germany. Would you agree, however, that even in Italy, outside a restricted circle, the esteem and admiration in which Mosse is held is not accompanied by actual adoption of his historiographical method?

EG: I would say, instead, that there has been notable imitation without further elaboration. True assimilation does not in fact consist in imitation but rather in absorbing and refining in a personal and creative way what is vital in other cultural experiences that we consider richer in knowledge and wisdom.

LB & GC: Do you think that this imitation produced an excess of culturalism in the interpretation of Fascism?

EG: Culturalism is the degeneration on the part of Mosse's imitators who did not understand him, who were unable to assimilate him and went beyond him. I think there are two chief defects in contemporary historiography, and not just in the Italian. The first is the treatment of "historiographical populism," so to speak, which is always pretending to speak in the name of an imaginary populace, studying history "from below," and which considers a historical problem important only if it has been accepted by the imaginary populace, which in reality is only the mirror of the populist

historian. The second is the treatment of clericalism, the formulae, the "schools," the clique that dogmatically receives a tradition and passes it on always as it is, with almost ecclesiastical orthodoxy. For example, about Mosse one hears repeated the formulae about the myths, rites, and symbols of the "new politics," mixing them all up with Eric Hobsbawm's "the invention of tradition," which is a very different thing.[26] About De Felice, provocative statements from his *Intervista sul fascismo* are repeated as if they were dogma.[27] Or one assumes as irrefutable gospel truth what he wrote in 1967, or what was attributed to him, or what he might have said casually in some interview. Instead, there is no attempt to dig deeper, to revise, to build on what is contained in his laboriously constructed, vast historical work, which he was continually renewing through fresh research, reflection, and taking account of the work of other historians.

LB & GC: Does it seem to you, then, that in many studies, especially American, there has been an attempt to legitimize this culturalist drift by tracing it back to Mosse?

EG: I think so. But considering the cultural or culturalist or aestheticizing aspect as the dominant element, or even as the essence of Fascism, we move away from its historical reality; Fascism triumphed because it was a party and regime besides being an ideology, a liturgy, and an aesthetic. But thereby we also distance ourselves from the genuine aspect of Mosse's thought. He, in fact, never held that the political movements that arose between the two world wars can be reduced only to a cultural dimension. In fact, in his first book on Nazism, he also dealt with organization, and he states emphatically that the success of the Volkish ideology stemmed from the fact that Hitler succeeded in institutionalizing it. Some scholars, instead, actually having Walter Benjamin in mind more than George Mosse, ended up by reducing Fascism to a text or to an aesthetic. They sustained, for example, in company with some American historians, that the involvement of the masses in its ritualism and symbolism was the evidence of an ideological deficiency in Fascism. How you can have a liturgy without ideology—in other words, rites without myths—is a mystery that only historiographical empiricism can espouse . . .

LB & GC: To conclude, do you think that it was the story of Mosse's life that led him to consider the ritual and liturgical dimension as genuine involvement rather than mere propagandistic manipulation to advance the interests of one's own class?

EG: As I wrote in *Il fascino del persecutore*,[28] the purpose of all George Mosse's work on Nazism was to understand why the masses gave

their consensus to the Hitler regime. His existential drama as German Jew who survived the Holocaust impelled him to try to comprehend how such a horror could have happened. Utilizing, in the best way possible, the instruments of the historian, he realized that in this hermeneutical effort he had to go beyond simple recrimination, or pragmatic artifice, and penetrate the mentality of the millions of persons who participated in National Socialism. I am profoundly convinced that Mosse's work is in reality a single book, even if it is not clear to me if we should consider each of his books as a chapter in a single book or whether, across many books, he wrote but one book, but from a different perspective. Be that as it may, it is a great book that we shall always read with profit, because each new reading will reveal something new.

Notes

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16. Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
17. Aramini, *George L. Mosse, l'Italia e gli storici*, 245.
18. George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
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21. First Italian edition: Hannah Arendt, *Le origini del totalitarismo* (Milan: Edizioni di comunità, 1967).
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