Introduction

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The aim of this book is to analyse relevant political and intellectual transfers among three different countries – Spain, Italy and Argentina – from a multidirectional perspective, focusing on the links originated and dynamized by transnational experiences. This triple exchange is observed in a midrange period, from the beginning of the First World War in Europe to the end of the Second World War: 1914–45. However, it also looks at the roots of several cultural phenomena dating back to the 1880s, when the first wave of the great emigration went from Europe to Argentina, and extends to the post-Second World War era, a time when people and ideologies found a new home in Latin America. This approach allows us to examine in depth not only the particular nature of cultural and political exchanges, but also to understand the development of different and reciprocal approaches to national identities. Indeed, the crossroads among three national scenarios offers a dynamic perspective of the reciprocal cultural influences.

The chapters in this book, far from presenting a homogeneous and univocal vision, offer plural views on some phenomena centred on circulations and exchanges between continents. Nevertheless, they share a general perspective focused on transnational perspectives constituting a central anchor point for analysing the relations between the new and the old continents. Following Akira Iriye’s approach, they aim at analysing ‘the intricate interrelationship between nations and transnational existences, between national preoccupations and transnational agendas’.¹ Considering its general view, this book also assumes a transatlantic perspective.² It also aims to rethink the categories of internationalism and transnationalism from a global perspective, and in a period between the two world wars, when both nationalism and internationalism reached their apogee.³ Recent works overlook the fact that
there have been contrasts between nationalism and internationalism, suggesting that workers’ international solidarity was very often based on a strong belonging to a craft rather than to a nation or a class.4 Other works show internationalism in different forms, from the original Marxist and labor organizations of the mid-nineteenth century to the twentieth century, to political variants of Liberalism and religious faith,5 to geographical variants in Europe.6 We take a different path: we consider transfer as a methodological point of view in order to observe not only the transmission of an idea from one cultural context to another, but also to see how a concept is reinterpreted in a new country in a different political setting. In this very sense, cultural transfers were not only an exchange but also inspired new meanings, praxis and ideas.7 The authors have considered a wide variety of agents of transfers (books and newspapers, and intellectuals and militants) and a variety of struggles and forms of exile. Individuals, groups, circles and organizations contribute to create imagined communities that can spread both internationalism and nationalism.8

For some years now, there has been a certain level of consensus among historians concerning the limitations of explanations focused only on the nation-state. As a result of this, several perspectives have emerged in recent decades, among which comparative history, world history, global history and transnational history stand out. Despite their many differences, all of them have in common the search for a view that highlights the interactions, connections and interchanges between continents and countries.9 As Clavin has shown, transnational approaches offer much more of a ‘research perspective’ than a closed methodology and, for this reason, they have encompassed a wide variety of objects of study.10 However, this potentiality has led some authors to point out a lack of precision and a potential confusion with other historiographical perspectives.11 Bearing this in mind, we think that it is fundamental to define the transnational space as a series of links of exchange, solidarity and reciprocity that give rise to a cohesion between different social and political groups.12 This space is built from shared collective symbols, interests and representations that are articulated through these exchanges, solidarity, reciprocities and permeabilities. Starting from this basic idea, our general objective has been to present an analysis focused on ‘cross-border interconnections’ between national processes and transnational developments.13

This book takes the perspective of cultural transfers as its own. We believe that the methodological tools, complemented with the aforementioned transnational perspective, allow us to highlight not only the transmission of ideas and experiences from one cultural context to
another, but above all how ideas and concepts were reconstructed in particular political and cultural contexts. In this sense, cultural transfers are not only an exchange, but are also a source of inspiration for new meanings and practices that give rise to transnational political movements and processes. This approach makes it possible to gain an in-depth understanding of both the very nature of cultural and political exchanges and the development of processes linked to national and supranational identities. In this framework, following Michel Espagne and Katia Dmitrieva, the crossroads of three scenarios offers a dynamic perspective of reciprocal cultural influences that can disappear in much broader visions or in exclusively comparative approaches.14

Among these transfers, we think that Latinity was the most interesting transnational project that linked Italy and Spain with Argentina during the first half of the twentieth century. The roots of these projects went back to the nineteenth century. One of the first of these, as is well known, was the spread of French culture, a fundamental factor both in Spain and Latin America, while the second was the rapprochement between the two continents that did not begin to develop strongly until the crisis of 1898 derived from the Spanish-American War.15 In these processes, the multiple links between Spain, Italy and Argentina grew exponentially from 1870, with large population movements from Europe to America.

Italy, Spain and Argentina were part of the ‘Latin Space’ we intend to analyse through some of the political cultures and practices that better represented the period under examination: the different variants of left-wing ideology (specifically, communism and anarcho-syndicalism) and fascism. Considering our perspective, Argentina (and chiefly Buenos Aires) constitutes a privileged laboratory to analyse the results of political and cultural transfers of these ideologies and praxis; indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately one-third of the country’s population was made up of recent immigrants, most of whom were of Spanish and Italian origin.16 Even if Spain and Argentina were not involved in the military events of the First World War, in this conflict neutral countries did not remain apart – they increasingly became part of a global war.17 The ties Argentinian peoples had with their motherlands were strengthened, as there were political crossroads and commercial networks between the Americas and Europe.

As the Argentine intellectual Ernesto Palacio affirmed and as Federica Bertagna notes in her chapter, Latinity realized its moment of glory during the First World War. In the four years of conflict, the ‘Latin race’ was constructed as an appeal to a shared past and cultural roots. It was also used as a geopolitical projection in the struggle for political
and cultural control of the Mediterranean. Likewise, liberal and republican sectors appealed to it using democratizing perspectives, and even revolutionary and anarchist sectors in Argentina and Spain came to consider the existence of a common Latin cultural origin shared with Italy.

However, Latinity lends itself to different readings and interpretations. The late nineteenth-century competition in the Mediterranean between France and Italy had by the beginning of the new century turned into a ‘fraternité latine’ led by intellectual circles. In 1914, the year of Italian neutrality, what was considered a ‘gentile sangue latino’ (a kind Latin blood) was made available to support the Italian intervention alongside France, in the name of a Latin civilization against German barbarism. Some short-lived periodicals, like Revue des nations latines (1916–19), were created with the purpose of strengthening the alliance against the invasion of Germanism in Europe and America, and of creating a Latin Europe against Mitteleuropa once the war was won. After the war, this project was also extended to unifying Spain, Portugal and Belgium in order to contain British and Northern American power in Europe and overseas. In the meantime, the ‘honeymoon’ in the French and Italian democratic and irredentist camp ended in the general discontent in relation to the Treaty of Versailles and the failure of Wilson’s propositions, which resulted in the leadership of Latinity passing into the hands of the right wing, and very quickly from conservative and nationalist groups to the fascist movement. For example, Giacomo Di Belsito, the director of the postwar Milanese periodical Idea Latina, was a journalist of Mussolini’s newspaper Il Popolo d’Italia.

In the end, Latinity assumed transnational characteristics and was articulated through a process of ‘cross-fertilization’ under French influence, particularly following the approaches of Charles Maurras and Action Française. Within this framework, it is not surprising that the cultural politics of fascism recurrently appealed to Latinity both in Argentina and in Spain. The aim was to develop and reformulate a supranational projection that was rooted in the previous century. It was a project to which the Mussolini regime devoted numerous and varied cultural and political endeavours, but that were not successful, as Bertagna, Dogliani and Finchelstein explain. Italy’s inability to exercise unquestionable leadership over an Argentina divided over the Spanish Civil War or Franco’s Spain was evident in the 1930s and 1940s. However, this negative perception of Italian fascism should not obscure one of the fundamental elements derived from this book: the articulation of a ‘Latin space’ shared between Spain, Argentina and...
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Italy. Without resorting to this construction, it is very difficult to understand the development of most of the political processes that took place between 1914 and 1945. Latinism was therefore a supranational horizon that was central to articulating both the imperialist discourses and visions of fascism, and to configuring the nationalist visions that developed in Spain and Argentina.

These Latinist approaches coexisted with the Hispanic projections that had been developed since the end of the nineteenth century in Latin America. In Argentina, Spain sought to develop Hispanism with the aim of exerting a counterweight to the French cultural and commercial influence expressed in Latinism and, simultaneously, countering the ghost of the omnipresent United States and its international projection on the continent. The celebrations of the centennial of the Argentine independence expressed this perspective, which had been developing in previous decades, and opened the door to an improvement in relations between Spain and Argentina. The circulation of intellectuals between both countries assisted in this process. In its development, a new generation of Argentine intellectuals led by Ricardo Rojas, Manuel Gálvez and Leopoldo Lugones showed ideological ambiguities that would unfold throughout the First World War and in the years afterwards. Among them, Latinism and Hispanism became fundamental supranational horizons to build their discourses on the Argentine nation.

During the First World War, the dispute between Latinism and Hispanism helped shape the division of Spanish and Argentine societies. Within this framework, the establishment of 12 October 1917 as a national holiday – the ‘Day of the Race’ – in Argentina and the following year in Spain constituted a fundamental element, as well as the Latinist celebrations of the Allied triumph that took place in both countries in November 1918. In this process, cultural transfers and the constitution of two fields that assumed transnational elements (see Chapter 1) was central. However, the conflict between Latinism and Hispanism disappeared following the end of the war. In subsequent decades, appeals to Latinity and Italian culture spread in Spain and Argentina (see Chapters 2 and 4). Hispanism, for its part, expressed itself more and more strongly through authoritarian speeches. Through his actions both at home and abroad, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera made him an element of the utmost importance in his national discourse.

Ramiro de Maeztu, one of the main intellectuals of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, served as ambassador in Buenos Aires between 1928 and 1930. During his years in Argentina, he came into contact with the nationalist and Maurrasian intellectuals of La Nueva
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Republika, who exercised influence over the Argentine conservative elites that promoted the coup d’état of Josè F. Uriburu in 1930. His book *En Defensa de la Hispanidad*, published in 1934, would exert a notable influence over Argentine nationalists, strongly marked by a deep Catholicism. However, the ‘Hispanidad’ concept was not imported into Argentina. It was far from being a copy of previous formulations that were developed in Spain. On the contrary, it was the Spanish priest Zacarías de Vizcarra, resident in Buenos Aires, who coined the concept in *Criterio*. Later, Maetzu made it a fundamental element of the vision of the reactionary Spanish right, which was expressed in the magazine *Acción Española*.

As the Argentine nationalists and the Spanish reactionary and Falangist right showed, Hispanism and Latinism could complement each other to shape a new discourse that was simultaneously specific and transnational. In this sense, despite being in open dispute with the Hispanic neo-imperial project, fascist Latinism contributed some relevant elements to the articulation of the discourse of Spanish fascism. The influences of the Escuela Romanna del Pirineo and the Maurrasian and Fascist Latinisms were at the base of the Hispanist and imperialist ideas of intellectuals such as Rafael Sánchez Mazas or José Antonio de Primo de Rivera. The same can be said of some Argentine intellectuals, such as Leopoldo Lugones or Julio and Rodolfo Irazusta, who showed a certain hybridization of Latinist and Hispanist elements in the formation of a new authoritarian and anti-liberal discourse. In this transnationally shared space, a renewed authoritarian Hispanism that had many points in common with fascist Latinism was articulated. It was expressed by *La Nueva República*, *Criterio* and also *Acción Española*.

The same dispute between Latinism and Hispanism that created divisions in Spain and Argentina can be also seen between *latinità* and *italianità* in Italy from the beginning of the 1920s. This dispute was resolved by fascism with the concept of *romanità* (romanity). The myth of Rome became the main symbolic and political instrument of fascism, not only in order to legitimize the anti-democratic character of its domestic programme, but also in order to unify and ‘pacify’ territories and peoples under the authority of Rome. In this spirit, fascist militans, intellectuals, university students and young fellows volunteered to fight in Spain alongside the nationalists. Italian historians (Luciano Canfora, Andrea Giardina, Emilio Gentile and others) have discussed the value and significance of *Romanness* for fascism. The debate was focused on whether it has to be considered an attitude against modernity or an expression of reactionary modernity. Fascism claimed that
Rome was the symbol of universality and was best suited to represent Christianity as a global religion, and identified the Roman Empire as the supreme civilization that had dominated the ancient world. Some historians have found traits of modernity in the myth of Rome because it was supported by a political project that looked to the future. It was in this frame in mind that the Action Committees for the Universality of Rome (Caur) were created in 1933 to organize sympathetic movements in Europe into a kind of international fascism. The Caur had as their aim to affirm the primacy of Italian fascism in the Latin world. The two Caur congresses held in Montreux in 1934 and 1935 were not as successful as had been hoped: Nazism had another idea for a European order and the Spanish Falange, even being present at the congresses, did want not be part of a Rome-dominated universality, as would be proven by the cold welcome Italian fascism received at the end of the Civil War.

In the end, the cases analysed here show the full potential of the methodological perspective that has configured this book. The approaches assumed and the applied triangular perspective have made it possible to observe how they confronted two supranational cultural and political projects in a transnational sense. From the interaction between Spain, Italy and Argentina and from the analysis of cultural groups, national projects and political movements, individual and collective trajectories have been observed that, despite having particular elements, cannot be understood outside of interaction and ‘fertilization’ that took place in this transnational space. The research perspectives that can be derived from these approaches are, of course, too many to cover within the scope of these pages.

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Notes

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1. Iryie, Global and Transnational History, 15.
2. Among these recent interpretations, see Finchelstein, Transatlantic Fascism; Albanese and Del Hierro, Transnational Fascism; Costa Pinto and Finchelstein, Authoritarianism and Corporativism.
3. Sluga, Internationalism; and Dogliani, Internazionalismo e transnazionalismo.
4. Delalande, La lutte et l’entraide.
5. Sluga and Clavin, Internationalisms.
8. The quotation is a homage to Benedict Anderson, whose works have inspired historians working on cultural transfers and their agents. See Anderson, Imagined Communities and Under Three Flags. Recent interesting suggestions come from Jeremy Adelman’s work; they can be found in his biography: Adelman, Worldly Philosopher.
12. On the concept of ‘transnational space’, see Alcalde, ‘Spatializing Transnational History’.
15. Rolland, La crise du modèle français; Rolland et al., L’Espagne et l’Amérique Latine; Sepúlveda, El sueño de la Madre Patria.
25. Fuentes Codera, *Spain and Argentina in the First World War*.
27. Botti and Lvovich, ‘Ramiro de Maeztu’; see also Finchelstein, Chapter 7 in this volume.
30. For the debate, see Tarquini, *Storia della cultura fascista*, 127–33.

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