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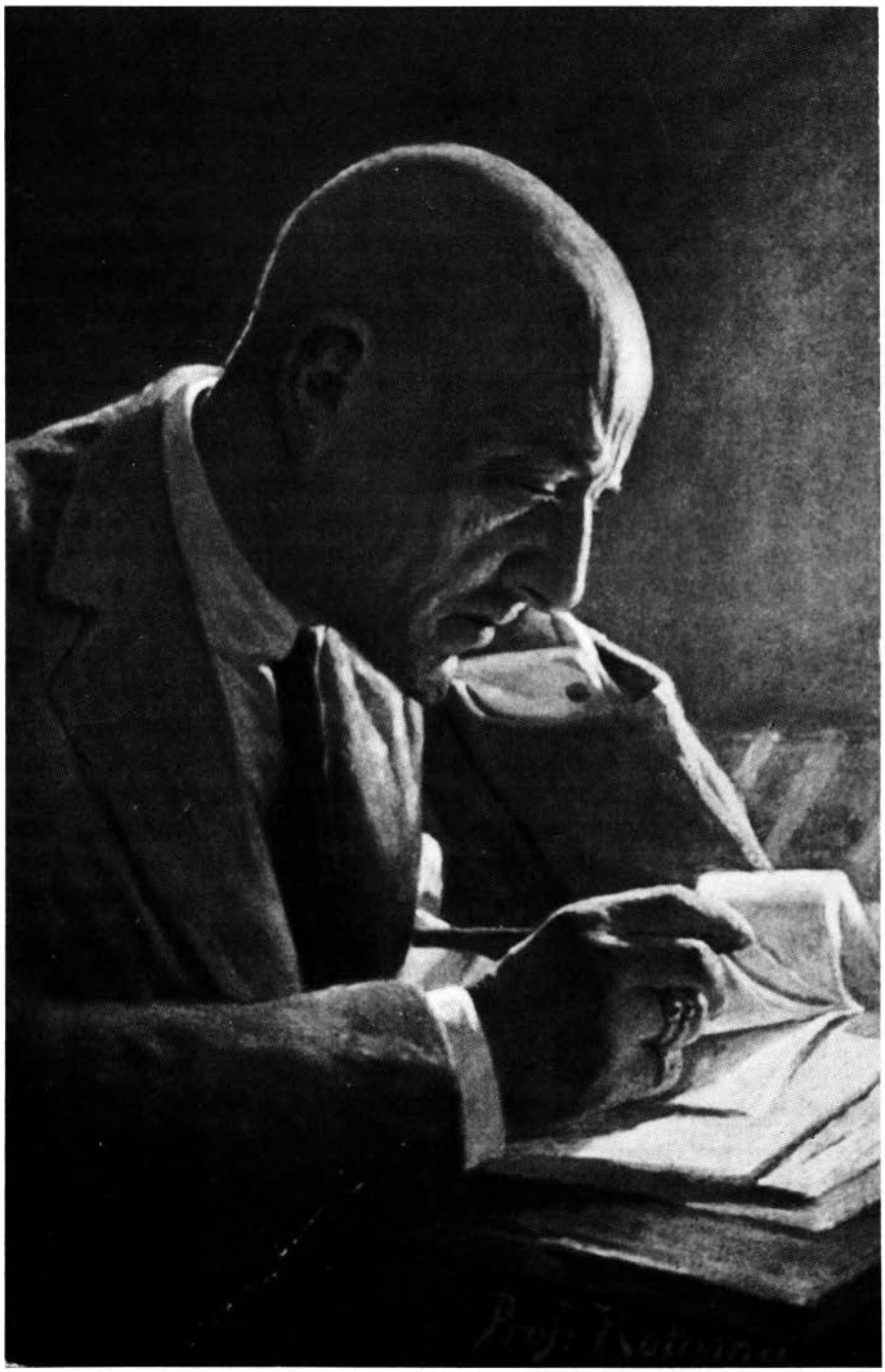
REWRITING THE TEXT OF THE NATION: D'ANNUNZIO AT FIUME

Introduction: In the house of the nation

Perched in the hills above the resort town of Gardone Riviera on the northern Italian Lago di Garda stands the ornate and idiosyncratic villa known as the *Vittoriale.* Visitors invariably express astonishment upon first viewing the villa, which almost overflows with statues, *objets d'art*, Persian carpets, religious icons, and war relics. Countless mottos and inscriptions decorate its walls and niches; garish reds and blues dazzle the eyes in this otherwise dusky building into which little sunlight penetrates. The villa stands as a self-created monument to the lifework of its former owner, the poet and war hero Gabriele D'Annunzio, and to his vision of a revitalized Italian nation. Crossing the *Vittoriale* 's threshold, the visitor enters the symbolic universe of this poet who, having failed to realize as political reality his vision of a new Italian identity founded upon a proto-fascist military ethos, subsequently dedicated himself to memorializing his efforts by transforming his residence into a literal museum and temple. Pausing at the gateway portico formed by two triumphal arches, the visitor's gaze first meets a fountain whose inscription reveals D'Annunzio's aim: "Dentro da questa cerchia triplice di mura, ove tradotto e già in pietre vive quel libro religioso ch'io mi pensai preposto ai riti della Patria e dai vincitori latini chiamato *Vittoriale* " (Mazza 1987: 22).

The entire complex serves as testimony to "D'Annunzio's Italy," whose rites he celebrated not only in his literary output but in his leadership from 1919 to 1921 as the Comandante of an Italian Regency in the port city of Fiume-Rijeka. Traversing the pathway to the main house, the visitor crosses through the Piazzetta della Vittoria del Piave, a square commemorating the Italian battle for the Piave River, a battle fought by many of the veterans who went to Fiume during the period of the D'Annunzian impresa. The visitor then arrives at the Piazzetta Dalmata, whose terrace shelters a vase containing "holy water" from the Piave, banners from Fiume and Dalmatia, and a casket housing the pennant of Timavo, which covered the body of D'Annunzio's friend and fellow aviator, Giovanni Randaccio, killed during the First World War. This piazza faces the poet's house, the Prioria, next to which stands the D'Annunzio Museum, a building intended to serve as his eventual residence. D'Annunzio christened this future home the *Schifamondo*, where he wanted to retreat dopo di averschifato il mondo. From 1921 until his death in 1938, D'Annunzio would rarely leave the *Vittoriale* to which he had "retired" after the demise of the Fiume enterprise. This paper explores the poet's efforts at Fiume to "re-imagine" the Italian community by re-articulating a ritual language combining the sacred and the profane.

For sixteen months (September, 1919-January, 1921) a group of military officers, veterans, and adventurers occupied the city of Fiume-Rijeka in defiance of the Italian, Yugoslav and Allied governments. Previously incorporated within



Portrait of Gabriele D'Annunzio (old postcard).

Austria-Hungary and a focus of ethno-national contestation within that empire, Fiume proved the site for a renewed nationalistic dispute with the empire's collapse. A month before the armistice in November, 1918, the withdrawal of Austro-Hungarian forces and government officials from Fiume-Rijeka prompted the declaration of two rival governments, each claiming to represent a majority. In opposition to the Croatian faction, which demanded incorporation into the new pan-Slavic nation known as Yugoslavia, arose the National Council (formerly the Municipal Council) representing Italian nationals in Fiume. When the Allies appeared unwilling to accede to the demand for Fiume's annexation to Italy and instead decided in favor of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the *fiumani*[1] invited the poet, war hero, and cultural icon D'Annunzio to lead a march (the *Marcia di Ronchi*) to "liberate" the city.

That considerable numbers (as high as 9000 by some estimates but in total probably closer to 4000)[2] of Italian soldiers deserted or mutinied in order to make their way to Fiume, where students, intellectuals, patriots, and adventurers[3] joined them, reflected a widespread dissatisfaction with the Italian government. Fiume occupied a central position in the debate over national identity and direction which resonated throughout Italy during the period. Fiume's "liberation" did not resolve itself quickly, despite the hopes of those *fiumani* and Italians whose sole purpose for the venture lay in the hope of annexation. Instead it evolved and acquired new significance as D'Annunzio and others transformed it into both a gigantic post-war celebration and an "experimental workshop," one in which potential elements of a reconstituted Italian national community came together. The Comandante created a constitution, the *Carta del Carnaro*, which established the Regency of Fiume as a corporate state. Containing socialist, syndicalist, democratic and utopian elements, the Carta reflected Fiume's position as an ideological melting pot in face of the breakdown of traditional alliances in Italian politics.

Equally importantly, at Fiume D'Annunzio orchestrated civic festivals and celebrations which combined sacred and secular elements. These helped solidify the sense of a new community founded upon the veteran "class," a population which cut across the traditional socio-economic and political alignments of Italian life. The endeavour to institutionalize a state of "festival sponsorship" demonstrated the potential for political ritual involving mass participation, a lesson not

[1] I use fiumani here to signify those pro-Italian elements resident in the city of Fiume-Rijeka. I will also refer to the city hereafter simply as Fiume, given that this paper addresses Italian claims to the port. This does not reflect judgement as to the "true" ethno-national character of the city.

[2] According to Riccardo Frassetto's roll lists, in December, 1920, there were approximately 3,810 legionaires and 800 Fiuman volunteers present in the city (Frassetto 1940: 319-320).

[3] The English poet Osbert Sitwell testified to the diverse group of men who made their way to Fiume. Amongst their ranks, Sitwell noted futurists, professional fighters, adventurers, and "Italian Romantic patriots," including two aged veterans of the Garibaldian campaigns who continued to wear their distinctive "red shirts" (Sitwell 1950: 119).

wasted on Mussolini and other (proto) fascists present at Fiume at various points during the *impresa.*

Mussolini's co-optation of symbols and rituals (as well as some of the participants) present at Fiume has resulted in the tendency to view Fiume as a mere precursor to the fascist regime and D'Annunzio as a (or rather, the quintessential) fascist poet. As a political rival, Mussolini helped encourage this marginalization of the Fiume episode and of the poet himself. It is no coincidence that the fascist regime purchased the *Vittoriale* for D'Annunzio and provided him a generous state salary of one million lira per year. While many Italians interpret D'Annunzio's action as one of collaboration, to some degree he appeared like the proverbial bird in the gilded cage; Mussolini deferred to his literary talents while managing to isolate the poet in the Italian lake region and within his own cryptic symbolic universe.

The poet's effort to build the *Vittoriale* as a museum for the edification of the Italian people and as an alternative vision to the increasingly violent one of the fascists thus only played into the deft hands of Mussolini. At the same time, it ironically furnished for subsequent generations of Italians a damning "testament" to D'Annunzio's fascism. Yet the Fiume episode and D'Annunzio's articulation of an aestheticized political theater there not only helps us to understand the symbolic power of subsequent fascist reworkings but also, given the literal and figurative isolation of the Fiume episode, highlights more generally the constructed nature of the "nation" and the creation of a nationalistic religion which glorifies that construct and makes it appear ancient and "primordial."

Reflections upon nationalism

Though not wishing to replay tired debates within the literature exploring nations and nationalism, it should be noted that the discussion here proceeds from Gellner's influential definition of nationalism as the principle holding that "the political and national unity should be congruent" (Gellner 1983: 1). That is, nationalism seeks (perhaps unsuccessfully, as in the case of the Italian Risorgimento) to forge a nation-state in which the state, the administrative/political unit, reflects and expresses the nation, the sense of identity shared by a people. Gellner notes that in the later stages of industrialization the state derives real power from the control of education (and implicitly, information), given that the transition from relatively closed local communities to a mass industrial society engenders a new fluidity and (relative) egalitarianism. While "In stable self-contained communities culture is often quite invisible," Gellner concludes that "when mobility and context-free communication come to be of the essence of social life, the culture

in which one has been *taught* to communicate becomes the core of one's identity" (ibid: 61). The identity-conferring institution of the state therefore necessarily precedes the sense of the nation, i.e. that shared symbolic system through which people identify themselves and through which the state may then be challenged.

In the *age of nationalism*, then, the state provides not only identity but the object of worship, the nation itself. This follows from the sociologist Emile Durkheim's recognition that through the form of religion a society venerates its own disguised self-image, a veneration which becomes explicit in the new secular context of scientific rationalism and state (rather than church) controlled universal education. The national community and its attendant symbols and rituals now acquire sanctity (ibid: 56-58), a process clearly visible at Fiume with D'Annunzio's elaboration of a political liturgy and his elevation of the *patria* as the medium of transcendence. Once the concept of the nation is firmly in place within the collective imagination, a nationalistic movement like that of fiumanesimo or fascismo may then challenge a state which does not adequately "speak" for the national identity.

While the analysis utilized here accepts Gellner's basic premises (at least in this particular context of *European* nationalism), it also draws upon in Benedict Anderson's highly influential work *Imagined Communities* in order to expand Gellner's rather summary definition of nation. Anderson articulated the now widely accepted idea that the nation , or any unit larger than the village whose members all personally know each other, represents "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1987: 15). Anderson agrees with Gellner that contrary to typical nationalist rhetoric, the nation does not represent some inherent or predestined entity which only awaits a national revolution to actualize it. Similarly emphasizing that (European) nationalism represented a new force accompanying the rise of capitalism, industrialization and mass education, Anderson would substitute the term *imagines* in place of *invents* in Gellner's formulation that nationalism "sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them" (Gellner 1983: 49).

Anderson links the rise of nationalism with print capitalism, demonstrating the significance of the novel and the newspaper as the means for "representing" the imagined community by providing "a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together" (Anderson 1987: 40). Whereas the European medieval world had conceived of simultaneity in a millennial time frame — expressed, for example, in the depiction of biblical scenes in contemporary dress and settings with no division between historical past and present — the new sensibility engendered by the spread of mechanical printing and literacy instead conceives of "horizontal simultaneity", that is, the occurrence of concurrent events across space rather than time. In reading a novel, for instance, the audience typically maintains

Portrait of Gabriele D'Annunzio (old postcard).

an omniscient role which allows it to perceive various actions occurring simultaneously but carried out by characters possibly unaware even of each others' existence. The newspaper format similarly reports events which occur on the same day but perhaps in distant and unconnected places. The audiences for these novels and newspapers clearly have a powerful new tool (unthinkable in the medieval context) for visualizing the existence of some larger community of which they are a member.

This larger community is nonetheless imagined as "inherently limited." The nation always possesses boundaries and exists in the context of other nations. While even the illiterate medieval peasant in an isolated community may have counted himself a member of that vast spiritual kingdom by virtue of his mere existence as one of God's creatures, in the national context the audience shares a sense of community only with the unseen but understood "others" who perform the identical ritual of reading the newspaper or who identify with national symbols such as flags and anthems. Members of emergent imagined communities derive much of their member status by virtue of knowledge of the vernacular language in which these national symbols are presented (Anderson 1987: 30-49).

Despite its relative newness in many cases, language, like the nation, thus acquires an image as something primordial and eternal. This understanding of language therefore underwrites many nationalistic movements. In "resurrecting" or, more typically, in inventing "traditional" songs, literature and other cultural artefacts of the nation, language evokes both a (mythic) history and the contemporary community constituted by its speakers (ibid: 132). Anderson's analysis helps explain the prominent position played by artists and writers in nationalist movements. Clearly, he who shapes language and images also shapes (in part, at least) the imagined form taken by the community. Originally employed in service to magical/religious ritual, with the "age of mechanical reproduction" the cult value and aura of uniqueness attached to art objects (the term used here to include literary productions) gave way to their exhibition value. Increasingly, art was designed in order to be reproduced (Benjamin 1955: 225-226).

With the advent of industrial "mass society" and democracy, a development inextricably linked in Europe to the rise of nationalism, the traditional patronage system in which artists had glorified the ruling religious and political dynasties yielded to the modern era of "commercial art." While the artist now could no longer rely on the existence of a wealthy patron, he also found himself freed from the restrictions imposed by such patronage. With industrialization and democratization, the artist increasingly sought the patronage of the "masses," which signified success in the commercial art world. Thus many writers and poets, like D'Annunzio, now sang the hymn of the nation rather than that of the individual ruler or political/religious class (Mosse 1980: 88). In the late 19th and early 20th

century the artist, and in particular the poet, emerged as a new figure crucially involved in the "aestheticization of politics."

In his well-known essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin posits this aestheticization of politics as underwriting the fascist project, a process in which D'Annunzio appears as an innovator. Benjamin examines the de-sacralization of art (and thus the secularization of society), a trend culminating in the quintessentially "reproducible" arts of photography and film. Art forms which may be disseminated and apprehended simultaneously, they condition a mass audience effect quite different from the response elicited by, say, a medieval work viewed only by a few privileged religious initiates. For Benjamin, fascism attempts to utilize this mass response in order to "distract" the masses from changing the system of production. Following from the futurist Marinetti's comment that "We will have no earthly paradise, but the economic inferno will be lightened and pacified by innumerable festivals of Art" (Marinetti 1971: 157) and the marked trend in Italy towards glorifying the first World War as a supreme aesthetic experience, in his epilogue Benjamin concludes:

> *Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses attempt to eliminate . . . The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life . . . All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: War . . . Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technical resources while maintaining the property system . . . Fascism . . . expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of 'l'art pour l'art.' Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic . . . (Benjamin: 243-44).*

Although Benjamin offers an insightful reading of fascism, his argument cannot account for the specificity of the nationalistic aesthetic elaborated at Fiume, the historical moment at which fascismo and fiumanesimo simultaneously converge and diverge. Moving from the recognition that "The fascist response to the erosion of traditionalist society is the invocation of a new national community" (Berman 1986: 211), Benjamin denounces this "aestheticized" community as *peculiarly* fascistic. This concern with a new community founded on aesthetic precepts, however, dominates the modernist project in general (ibid), not just fascism. And unlike those consummate modernists the futurists, at Fiume D'An-

nunzio did not promote society's destruction as an "aesthetic pleasure of the first order." Instead, the poet imagined a city aalready "martyred" — *la città olocausta*, the city of the holocaust — from which to resurrect phoenix-like a new, "model" community as outlined in the Carta del Carnaro. "Our war is not destructive but creative," D'Annunzio had declared two years prior to the impresa (D'Annunzio 1917: 60)[4]. While the Futurists glorified the process of destroying (really obliterating) the old order, then, D'Annunzio desired to reconstruct on that society's *a priori* ruins a "traditional" Italian greatness which paradoxically represented the "march towards the future."

Yet within analyses like that of Benjamin, fascism and its related projects like D'Annunzianism cannot represent creation anything but alienation and destruction. Fascism thus comes to be seen in such analyses as false consciousness engendering a sense of false community, rather than as a re-imagining of community. The latter notion proves more useful than Benjamin's in that it underlines the socially constructed nature of *all* forms of community. Furthermore, Benjamin focuses on the form of "fascist aesthetics" associated with the regime and thus linked to the reproduction of state power, rather than those first enunciated in challenging that power and in creating a new national community embodied by the state. In doing so, he denies the possibility of genuine support such as that found at Fiume — where a two-way dialogue existed between the Comandante and his supporters — and perceives only the deception and manipulation of fascism, here synonymous with the regime.

The emotion typically attached to the subject of fascism, particularly in the post-war period, has often prevented the type of careful analysis needed for understanding fiumanesimo firstly in and of itself and secondly, in its relationship to fascismo and other nationalistic movements. Those making the claim for the impresa di Fiume either as a proto-fascist or anti-fascist episode have frequently appeared unable to move beyond the ideological reasons for their particular argument. Although the scholar has a responsibility in the final analysis to acknowledge the brutal realities of fascism, the "first analysis" needs to accept the pretense of examining fascism as a movement *in process* in order to explicate fiumanism and the ideological matrix of "social nationalism" from which these movements emerged. Articulating and understanding D'Annunzian Fiume in this way points up significant elements of the episode which have been largely neglected.

[4] In common with D'Annunzio, the Futurists also sought a new community founded on the principle of the nation: "For us, the fatherland represents the greatest expansion of individual generosity . . . the broadest concrete solidarity of spiritual, fluvial, commercial, and industrial interests tied together by a single geographical configuration . . . Futurist patriotism is an eager passion, for the becoming-progress-revolution of the race" (Marinetti 1971: 149). Implicit to the idea of "becoming-progress," however, was the Futurist rejection of anything smacking of *passeism*, including both the Dannunzian and fascist cult of *romanità*.

■

The emergence of 'social nationalism

Examining dannunzianesimo *in process* requires at least brief discussion of the common nexus of ideas (as well as supporters)[5] from which emerged Italian fascismo, futurismo and fiumanesimo. These three movements reflect the rise of nationalistic programs that challenged not only the Italian political establishment but also the radical Left in its "traditional" revolutionary role. Although the fascist *regime* eventually abandoned its association with the Futurists and became increasingly puritanical and conservative by emphasizing the importance of family and the Church, in its initial *movement* phase it espoused a largely revolutionary programme[6]. The Futurist Party Manifesto of 1919 enunciated many doctrines in common with the fascist program, including virulent anticlericalism and the abolition of marriage in favor of free love; universal suffrage and the vote for women; a government of elected technicians; and land distribution to the peasants and the veterans (Bordoni 1974: 40; Marinetti 1983: 153-158). Mussolini, of course, was just one of the more prominent socialists who eventually joined with the forces of the reactionary Right.

The figure of D'Annunzio perhaps best symbolizes this blurring of the traditional demarcations between left and right in Italy. In his ideas and his political "alliances" the poet ranged freely along the spectrum. Even after moving from the

[5] Fiumanesimo, fascismo, and futurismo rivalled each other in the attempt to win the support of the veterans and in particular the elite assault forces known as the *arditi*. The *arditi* embodied and elaborated upon a heroic ideal which had dominated the Italian consciousness since the garibaldian exploits. Famed for dying "the beautiful death," the *ardito* personified the image of the handsome warrior joyfully advancing towards his death literally singing the anthem of youth, "Giovinezza." These soldiers were said to embrace death as a victory, as a mystic communion, and even had their own priest in the strange figure of Padre Giuliani, who went to Fiume after the war and finally died in 1935 on the Ethiopian field of battle (Pozzi 1936; Svanoni 1938).

Given distinctive uniforms, higher pay, and special barracks, the arditi's ranks attracted not only opportunists and even some criminal elements but also young intellectuals influenced by the vitalist philosophies of Bergson and Nietzsche. From the outset, the *arditi* behaved as if above the law, immediately establishing an antagonistic relationship with the military *carabinieri* who represented the forces of law and order. In the immediate postwar period the government felt it could most effectively exercise control over the "lawless"*arditi* by maintaining them in uniform. Fearful of a bolshevist revolution, the government did not rigorously enforce its prohibition on associations or political participation by military members. Thus although the futurist Mario Carli found himself jailed for ten days in March of 1919 after he sounded the call leading to the formation of the Associazione fra gli Arditi d'Italia, General Caviglia's personal secretary supposedly reassured him to be patient, since the government did not intend to sabotage his activities (Cordova 1969: 16). Prior to D'Annunzio's march on Fiume, then, the Italian Futurist movement attempted to position itself as the leaders of the *arditi* forces, whose association the independently wealthy futurist impresario Filippo Tommaso Marinetti financed heavily.

At the same time, the Futurists intensified their ongoing collaboration with the fascists. Following the establishment of the *Partito Futurista Italiano*, the futurist and fascist trajectories began to merge with the foundation of a Roman *fascio futurista* in December, 1920. From the founding of Mussolini's original 1914 *Fascio d'Azione Rivoluzionario*, in fact, Marinetti had participated in the embryonic fascist organization and had cultivated a strong friendship with Mussolini during the war. With the armistice, the journal *Roma Futurista* served as a forum for futurist (and fascist) appeals to the *arditi*. From its pages, writers like Carli and Vecchi directed calls for resistance against those government and military heads who nervously began to suggest demobilizing the increasingly autonomous arditi.

[6] Scholars such as Renzo De Felice differentiate between fascismo *movimento* (1914-1922) and *regime* (1922-1945), claiming that conflation of the two distinct periods has contributed to misunderstanding (De Felice 1976, 1977).

Portraying "4th november 1918" (old postcard)

Right to the Left while serving as a parliamentary deputy, the poet declared, "Socialism in Italy is absurd. Between these people and myself there is an insurmountable barrier. I am, and I remain, an incorrigible individualist, a ferocious individualist" (Antongini 1938: 377). In his explicit rejection of party ideology, the poet endorsed the "collective ideology of the unique" which the post-Romantic concept of individualism paradoxically implies (Valesio 1986: 173). D'Annunzio sought a "transcendental" politics transcending divisive political doctrine and dogmatic programmes and instead uniting diverse individuals around the vision of the "higher form" of the nation.

The Carta del Carnaro or Fiuman "constitution" drawn up in 1920 by D'Annunzio and the revolutionary syndicalist Alceste DeAmbris epitomized this blending of Left and Right in a "transcendentalism" beyond rigid theory and dogma. The document established a corporate state that organized society into communes and assigned individuals to corporations based on occupation. Looking backwards to the medieval guild system and the "golden age" of the Italian free communes, this corporatism simultaneously embodied many seeming "progressive" aspects (as did the futurist and early fascist party programmes). The Carta contained provisions establishing universal suffrage (statute 4); freedom of religion and worship, press, speech, and meeting and association (statute 7); and a guaranteed minimum wage, retirement pensions, and unemployment and disability compensation (statute 8). Despite this paradoxical "formalization" of the political "non-doctrine" of fiumanesimo, neither the Comandante nor the Carta placed much emphasis on theoretical principles or the mechanics of rule. Instead Fiumanism as elaborated in the Carta emphasized culture, that "mightiest and the most far reaching of weapons" (statute 6). A primary purpose of government was stated to be cultural instruction and the sponsorship of civic festivals[7]. The constitution therefore institutionalized the vision of an aesthetic society in which individuals no longer organized themselves by parties or ideologies but by corporations and communes, distinct bodies united through the ritualistic functions of art, and in particular music. In creating the Regency of Fiume, D'Annunzio intended to actualize the *fin de siècle* search for the "new life" and the "free man," that is, the desire for the earthly and yet transcendental order in which one attained *Fatica*

[7] The constitution provided for a college of ediles to promote public taste and to orchestrate civic celebrations. The document also detailed public instruction, in which first importance was given to choral singing. More significantly, it devoted an entire section to the "religious and social institution" of music. Music functioned to lift daily life to a higher plane. In accordance with his belief that "music considered as a ritual language is the exalting motive of any action and of any creation in life" (D'Annunzio 1936: 7), D'Annunzio called for the establishment of musical groups attached to each commune. This force embodied by music symbolized the abstract "Tenth Corporation." Unlike the other nine corporations comprised of, for example, agricultural workers or students, the Tenth represented a creative power. "The tenth has neither art, nor number, nor title," explained D'Annunzio, "It is almost a votive figure consecrated to the unknown genius, to the apparition of the new man, to the ideal transformation of labor and time, to the complete liberation of the spirit over pain and agony, over blood and sweat (D'Annunzio 1936: 4)

Senza Fatica.

In his most sweeping vision, D'Annunzio viewed Fiume as the first step in the constitution of a youthful, vigorous, and beautiful new realm embracing the entire world. In a speech given in August, 1920, the Comandante proclaimed that "L'orizzonte della spiritualità di Fiume è vasto come la terra ... Abbraccia tutte le stirpi oppresse, tutte le credenze contrastate" (Bolletino Ufficiale: 12 August 1920). Yet this grand spiritual vision was rooted in a deeply political project, conceived in collaboration with the bolshevist poet Leon Kochnitzky, for an anti-League of Nations. This Lega di Fiume was intended to provide financial support and moral inspiration to liberation movements waged by other "oppressed" peoples such as the Irish Sinn Fein, Egyptians, Indians and Montenegrans. In making contacts with representatives of various revolutionary groups, D'Annunzio hoped to incite national revolutions. These would allow for the establishment of new societies modelled on that of the Carta del Carnaro, in which the human spirit would actualize its potential through participation in the rituals and festivals of the nation. In the tradition of Mazzinian spiritual nationalism, in D'Annunzio's vision both the nation and the nation-*state* represented the mediums for a new spirituality. This glorification of the nation and its attendant cultural symbols explains in large part the impresa's appeal to individuals of apparently disparate ideological convictions.

This "ideological" blurring at Fiume reflects the culmination of 19th century intellectual trends within *fin de siècle* Europe, where one of the main differences between the far left and the emerging revolutionary Right resided in the form of community envisioned as the revolution's end product. Rejecting the left's notion of class warfare, "rightist" (or national socialist, to use the term first employed in 1898 by the Frenchman Maurice Barrès) organizations in Italy called for their country's triumph over the "tyranny" exercised by France, England, and the United States. Substituting the concept of nation for that of class, Italy therefore became a "proletarian" country oppressed by the "bourgeois" western powers. The nationalist Enrico Corradini took up and elaborated this idea, first enunciated by the Italian poet Pascoli (Sternhell 1976: 328). Such ideas clearly influenced the later scheme for the League of Fiume, as well as fascist rhetoric. This movement by some Italian intellectuals from the far Left to the far Right, facilitated by the shared aim to overthrow bourgeois democracy, had already occurred in France with the formation of the *boulangisme* movement in the 1890's (ibid: 325). Given the historical particularities of the Italian unification process and the catalyst provided by the First World War, in Italy nationalistic currents which circulated fairly broadly throughout turn-of-the-century Europe eventually coalesced into the distinctive movement and regime constituting fascism.

In the Italian context, the concept of the nation invigorated the various

ex-combatant movements which emerged out of the Great War and from which fascism ultimately emerged triumphant over fiumanesimo[8]. In face of both widespread feeling that national unification had never fully been realized in the post-Risorgimento period and with the war's shattering of the liberal hold over Italian politics, D'Annunzio's experiment at Fiume represented one powerful attempt to re-define the nation and *italianità*. The problematic issue of Fiume and D'Annunzio's position *vis-à-vis* fascism can thus be best explained by viewing the phenomena as alternative attempts to complete the unfinished work of the *Risorgimento* in fostering a new nationalism and in realizing unity[9]. Although Mussolini derived many elements from D'Annunzian nationalism, D'Annunzio possessed a distinctive formulation which merits consideration on its own rather than as merely an early stage in fascism's development.

The dannunzian inscription of post-Risorgimento nationalism

From the outset of his career, D'Annunzio sought to construct texts expressing and (re)constituting *italianità*. Initially known for his poetry, he quickly expanded into journalism and fiction-writing, two activities powerfully linked with the rise of nationalism. Eventually, D'Annunzio also lent his talents to the theater, an

[8] War veterans generally thought that their service had entitled them to a political weight, a belief explicitly inculcated by the government. After the disastrous rout at Caporetto in 1917, for example, the Nitti government had attempted to boost morale by promising future economic rewards such as land and the creation of a political "class" constituted by the veterans. With demobilization, however, former soldiers returned to the economic ruin wrought by the war. Italian industry proved unable to handle the influx of labor represented by the returning soldiers and 400,000 men found themselves unemployed at the same time that the devaluation of the lira produced an inflationary spiral. The veterans not only bore the economic but also the psychological brunt of the war, suffering the physical and verbal abuse meted out by those (like the socialists) who had originally supported the neutralist cause and now blamed the war and its participants for the nation's ills (Chabod 1961: 39-40).

For many veterans, in particular the arditi, who had grown accustomed to their dangerous and exhilarating lifestyle, the return to mundane civilian life offered only frustration. This uncertainty and disillusionment hardened into a violent anticlericalism (due to the Church's intransigent anti-war stance) and hatred of "war profiteers." Above all, the veterans directed their bitterness towards the parliamentary government which had opposed intervention and now proved incapable of controlling the economy or pressing the nation's territorial claims. As fears of revolution and anarchy spread — with the eruption of strikes and riots hand-in-hdand with stunning electoral advances by the socialists — the veterans offered a potentially powerful new force in the Italian scene. Fiumanesimo, futurismo and fascismo proved the most viable of the newly formed movements seeking to fill the political vacuum in Italy by harnessing the power latent in the veterans' ranks.

[9] Although Italy had officially achieved unification in 1861 with the triumph of the *Risorgimento* — the movement frequently taken as a "textbook" example of late 19th century Romantic nationalism — that term's implication of the resurgence of a "primordial" or inherent Italian identity obscured the artifical nature of the political unification. As Salomone has pointed out, "the unity itself was more an adminstrative and bureaucratic fact than that social and spiritual fusion without which no truly national consciousness was possible" (Salomone 1960: 87).

From the 1870's on, the Church and the parliamentary monarchy agreed upon the need to suppress the revolutionary tradition and thus minimize political participation by the masses (Tasca 1970: 278). As the myth of the *rivoluzione mancata* grew in the post-Risorgimento period, the figure of Garibaldi increasingly came to symbolize the revolution's "martyrdom." D'Annunzio would pick up this notion of the rivoluzione mancata with his vision of the *vittoria mutilata*, the victory in the First World War "mutilated" by the politicians and the loss of Fiume and Dalmatia.

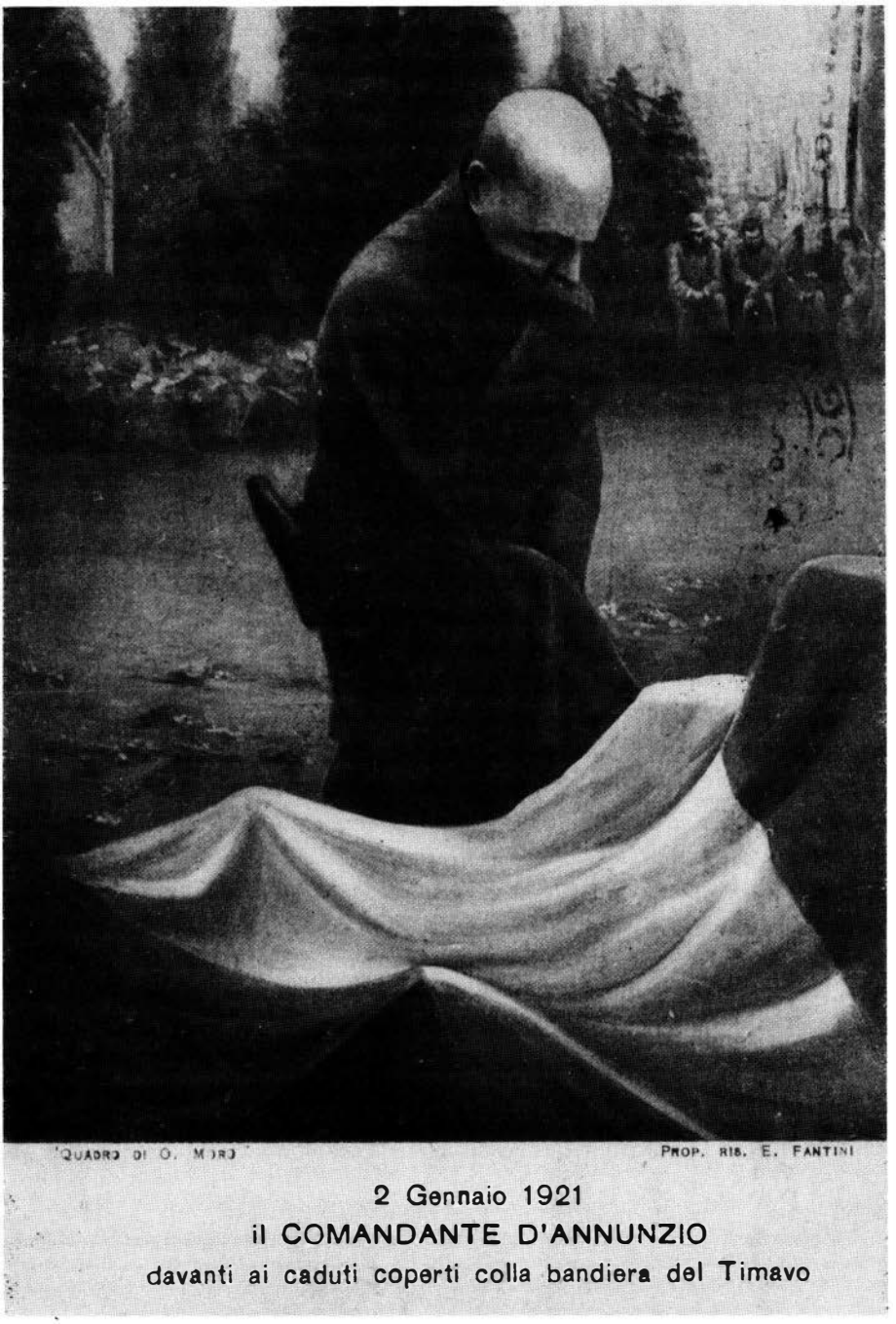
interest that reflected and further refined the particular vision of an "aesthetic politics" which would realize itself in political dramaturgy at Fiume. Although even his first works reflect the poet's aim to return Italy to a position of greatness, D'Annunzio initially expressed this intent largely through stylistic experimentation, i.e. through the recovery of ancient Roman metrical forms or the appropriation of elements of the continental decadent style in order to expand the circumscribed boundaries of Italian literature. By 1893, however, D'Annunzio had produced, along with several other collections, his *Odi Navali,* eight explicitly nationalistic and prophetic odes to maritime power and to the Italian mission to (re)conquer the Mediterranean.

Nine years later, D'Annunzio infused not only his play *La Nave*'s content but also its very staging with political implications. After the play's performance, in response to the education minister's congratulations, D'Annunzio toasted to the "most bitter Adriatic" and Italy's claims there (Jullian 1972: 174). In a prophetic gesture, D'Annunzio travelled to Fiume in that same year (at the invitation of the patriotic *Giovane Fiume* association) to declaim the play to a wildly enthusiastic audience. Meeting with Fiuman representatives, D'Annunzio promised them that *La Nave* concerned them as much as other Italians. Declaring that he "felt fiuman," the poet promised to return to the city (Venanzi 1972: 130).

To the dismay of then-Prime Minister Giolitti, the subsequent Libyan episode galvanized nationalist elements in Italy (Salomone 1970: 514). Again, D'Annunzio's voice proved influential in glorifying war. Many of the war poems contained in the *Canzoni della Gesta d'Oltremare* (1912) and the *Canti della Guerra Latina* (1914-18) saw concurrent publication in the *Il Corriere della Sera* and helped to prepare the climate first for the interventionist and later the irredentist campaign. Returning to Italy in 1915 after a five year "exile" in France ostensibly to dedicate a monument to Garibaldi and the *Mille* at Genoa, D'Annunzio lent his support to those urging Italy's entrance into World War I on the side of the Allies.

With Italy's entrance into the war, the poet did not let his fifty two years prevent him from enlisting in the military and quickly distinguishing himself through a series of exploits[10]. D'Annunzio's war record and his inscription of a new national *epic* which claimed to improve on those of Homer and Virgil also elevated him to the position of spiritual leader of the elite assault troops known as the arditi. Just as the arditi acquired an aura of invincibility, D'Annunzio's out-

[10] In a 1915 flight over Trieste, for example, D'Annunzio showered the city with bags containing miniature Italian flags and a message of fortitude for the Italian occupants of the Austrian city. This foreshadowed one of the poet's most celebrated adventures, the 1918 "Message on Vienna," in which D'Annunzio commanded a squadron of seven airplanes which circled over the enemy capital and dropped leaflets urging revolt against the Austrian government. Equally notorious was the Beffa di Buccari, the "prank" played by D'Annunzio and his companions when their three small navy motorboats (MAS) slipped past the Austrian navy ships in the narrow Bay of Buccari near Fiume and left a sardonic message mocking the decrepit imperial power outwitted by a small band of daring and youthful Italians.



Gabriele D'Annunzio standing before the fallen covered with the flag of Timavo (2nd January 1921) in a painting by G. Moro (old postcard).

rageous risks in the face of the Austrian government's declared reward for his capture thickened the legendary mists already shrouding his figure [which had inspired the *arditi* as a role model (Anonymous 1934: 233)].

The Vate provided the *arditi* with more than inspiration, however, by contributing to their ritual, including the distinctive "Eia!eia!eia!Alalà!" salute (Venanzi 1979: 70; D'Annunzio 1982: 570), subsequently elaborated at Fiume. Spiritual head of the *arditi* by virtue of their common war experiences — and at Fiume actually named honorary president of the Arditi Association (Testa di Ferro: 29 February 1920) — D'Annunzio nevertheless stood singled out due to his heroism and bravado.

This fame made D'Annunzio an obvious candidate for those Italian nationalists at Fiume who sought a spokesperson at the war's conclusion as Italian and Yugoslav representatives wrangled over the city's status. Since the end of the 19th century, pro-Italian fiumani had worked to inculcate a sense of national identity and patriotism through the creation of cultural organizations and attendant "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1986). Claiming a long genealogy in the Italian literary-cultural tradition, such associations also established more recent traditions of performances, lectures and group activities promoting the italianità of Fiume.

One such association, Giovane Fiume, prepared at the end of the World War I to resist the decision at Versailles to award the city to Yugoslavia. Under the command of Giovanni Host-Venturi, a fiumano who had served as an Italian ardito, the nationalists began organizing a citizens militia, the Fiuman Legion or Volunteers[11].

During this period, the paper *La Vedetta D'Italia* kept the *fiumani* apprised of the political situation and exhorted them to action when an inter-Allied commission called for the replacement of the occupying Italian forces with American and British police forces and inter-allied troops (Pittaluga 1926: 233-235).

The fiumani choreographed an emotional protest at the departure of their Italian "brothers," the Sardinian Grenadiers. Some *fiumani* carried signs decorated with the Italian tricolor which read "I granatieri giurano: Fiume o Morte" while others sang newly invented songs foretelling the return of the grenadiers to free Fiume. Stationed at the nearby post of Ronchi, many of the grenadiers (some of whom had helped orchestrate the departure scene) wished to return to Fiume to lead the fight for its annexation to Italy and a group of seven officers soberly swore a secret oath to return to Fiume (Frassetto 1926: 22-39). In a tiny room decorated

[11] The first pronouncement issued yielded enough volunteers to form three divisions, which took the names of three distinguished Fiuman World War I companies. The following month, Host-Venturi commenced training for the approximately 300 volunteers, a practice done in secret once the allied command began to regard the forces with suspicion (Lerda 1919: 131).

with the banners of Italy and Fiume, these conspirators vowed:

> *In nome di tutti i morti, per l'unità d'Italia giuro di essere fedele alla causa santa di Fiume, non permetterò mai con tutti i mezzi che si neghi a Fiume l'annessione completa ed incondizionata all'Italia. Giuro di essere fedele al motto: FIUME O MORTE (Lerda 1919: 78).*

The nationalistic aims held by some elements in the Italian military, bound up with the larger project of fulfilling the *Risorgimento* (and thus Italy's "historical destiny"), now merged with those of the fiuman nationalists. The fiumani had effectively constructed a national identity for themselves, an identity which peninsular Italians — in search of a new definition of *i*talianità in face of the crisis wrought by the war — appropriated and thereby transformed. The fiuman conspirators finally agreed upon D'Annunzio as the person to lead the march and the Grenadier Grandjacquet travelled to Venice to offer the movement's leadership to the self-described "first soldier of Fiume," who had previously offered to bathe the Fiuman soil with his own blood (Venanzi 1979: 75). In the narrowly circumscribed Fiuman soil D'Annunzio located the true *italianità*, the genius of that historic race which had ruled in ". . . tutte le terre, sino agli ultimi orizzonti, sino agli estremi confini" (D'Annunzio 1974: 96).

While articulating a widely held view of Italy's right to Fiume, the poet elaborated this vision with a particular authority and eloquence. In a famous oration delivered from the Campidoglio in May, 1919, for example, D'Annunzio called the imminent reconstitution of the Roman Empire by "Italiani dall'eternità e per l'eternità" (ibid: 61).

This resultant new Italy, that of "life" and vitality, represented a boundless community in one sense and yet one simultaneously defined by and restricted to those possessing "latin sangue gentile" (ibid: 63). Blood constituted the Italian right in a triple sense: by heredity and genetic ties with the populations of the irredentist lands; by a blood "communion" of those fallen and injured in the war (ibid: 67); and by the nobility of the Italians both constituted and reflected by their ancestry, individual virtue and artistic genius (the Dantean notion of *gentilezza* that D'Annunzio's "latin sangue gentile" referred to)[12].

With the Fiume impresa, the new Italy constituted by "latin sangue gentile"

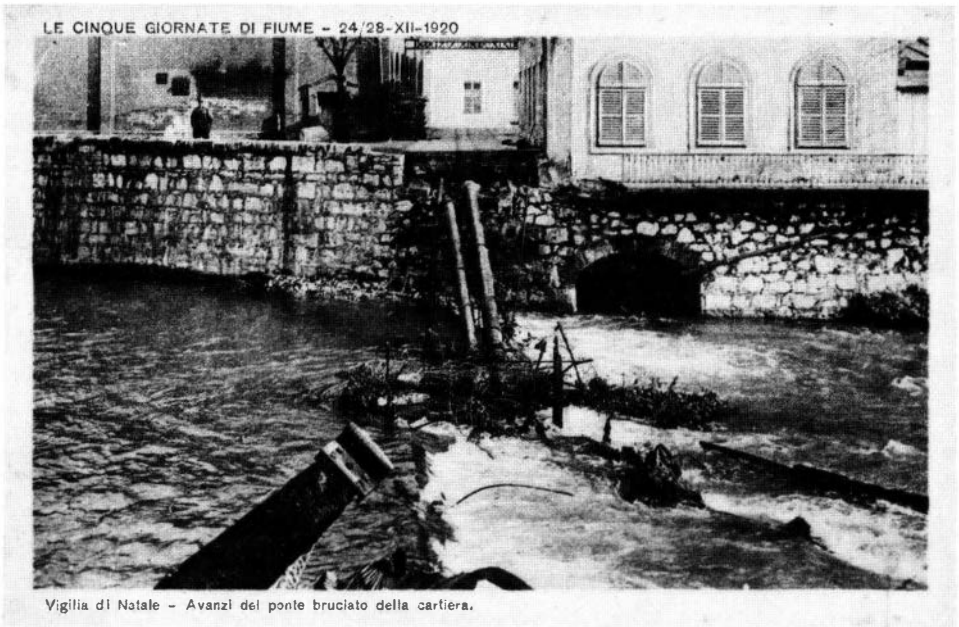
[12] During the war, D'Annunzio had specifically located this Latin *gentilezza* in the "elect" of the Italian youth. Speaking to the class of military recruits born in 1899, the poet declared "Truly the election of old - the election of our 'gentle Latin blood' is made flesh in you . . . you all bear the same sign of brotherhood because the same grace has touched you: *gentil sangue Latino* " (D'Annunzio 1917: 74). Loss (through blood spilt in war) therefore provided for regeneration via the "re-ascendence" of that chosen race marked by *gentilezza*. Linguistic, cultural, historic, and ethnic ties thus converged within a new transcendental religio-political framework.

was now located oltre confine. Appearing before the *fiumani* for the first time, he cried "The *patria* is here," to which the ecstatic crowd responded with a unanimous and deafening "Yes" (Vedetta d'Italia: 21 September 1919). D'Annunzio used this idea that his forces represented the true or pure Italy in order to refute those in the Italian press and government labeling his forces "deserters." In statements of support issued from Italy, Mussolini and the fascists seconded this relocation of *italianità*, saying that Italy resided on the Fiuman Quarnaro rather than the Roman Tiber.

Simultaneously voiced and shaped by D'Annunzio, the compelling vision of a new *italianità* (now exemplified by Fiume) helps explain some contemporary Italians' willingness to fight for — and in the case of the 27 soldiers killed in the *Natale di Sangue* (Frassetto 1940: 319-320) — ultimately die for this cause. Just as the *arditi*'s ranks included those seeking better pay and privileges, admittedly many opportunists and adventurers undoubtedly made their way to Fiume in search of profit or excitement. Yet some soldiers, called up at the war's conclusion, made their way to Fiume in search of the military glory which the armistice had denied them (Caviglia 1948: 81). Similarly, *fiumani* too young to participate in World War I, such as Riccardo Bellasich, welcomed the opportunity for heroism (Venanzi 1979: 14-17). One alpine forces unit made a 250 kilometer march to Fiume (Susmel 1941: 113).

Those soldiers likely came, as did many others, in search of the perpetual and subversive carnival which flourished in Fiume's bacchanalian atmosphere. One of the most flamboyant personalities at Fiume was the Italian aviator Guido Keller, who served as D'Annunzio's "secretary of action." Taking the ardito as the exemplary soldier, Keller dreamed of creating a new military order modeled on that of the ancient companies of Italian adventurers and free of military hierarchy. In accordance with these ideas he recruited into the Comandante's "personal guard" those adventurers who, due to their lack of documents or passports, were living in the shipyards. Christened *La Disperata*, this company marched through the streets of Fiume stripped to the waist and singing patriotic hymns (D'Avila 1940: 37).

While the impresa attracted such adventurers, intellectuals and demobilized soldiers, its appeal extended far beyond these circles. Upon hearing the reports of the Marcia di Ronchi, some young men made their way from Italy to Fiume, travelling first to Venice or Trieste and then continuing on either by boat or train (and a few by plane) to Fiume. Along with three other friends, for example, a sixteen year old Sicilian named Giovanni Boscogrande di Carcaci secretly made his way to the city (di Carcaci 1954: 3). The English poet Osbert Sitwell, who briefly visited Fiume in November of 1920, encountered two of Carcaci's contemporaries attempting to make their way into the city. Having been turned back the



Remains of the paper-factory bridge, burnt during the so-called "Fiume-five days", 24th - 28th December 1920 (old postcard).

Group of legionaries from Fiume (old postcard).

year before because of their tender age, the adolescents, whose pockets bulged with pamphlets written by D'Annunzio, vowed to go over the mountains if necessary in order to reach Fiume (Sitwell 1950: 116).

Similarly, the young patriot and student Giuseppe Maranini (only 12 at the outbreak of the First World War) set out for Fiume without telling his father, a socialist who had once collaborated with Cesare Battisti. En route to Fiume, Maranini wrote his father that he had devoted much contemplation to his decision and that although he left his home with sadness, he felt impelled by duty (Maranini 1974: 5-29). Unlike men such as Keller and Kochnitzky who saw Fiume as a spark for grander projects, Maranini supported only the more limited aim of the city's annexation to Italy. In a letter to his fiance dated September 23, 1919, he conveyed his resolve that should the action transform itself into an attempt to conquer Dalmatia or overthrow the state, he would leave the city in disapproval. In another letter written but a day earlier, Maranini stated that while willing to sacrifice his life for the Fiuman cause he did not agree with the "violent excesses" of Mussolini and D'Annunzio, who threatened to disrupt the entire national order (ibid: 37-40).

Given the occupation's ideological appeal for some (but not, as in the case of Maranini, necessarily all) Italians and *fiumani* seeking a new national identity founded on a military-heroic code, how did D'Annunzian Fiume manage to sustain itself for sixteen months? How did the *Comandante* create some relatively permanent sense of the new community forged from the collective but temporary experience of military service and occupation? And how did D'Annunzio succeed in deriving some of his most fervent support from the female fiumans (Ledeen 1977) who, although having participated in the activities sponsored by nationalistic organizations and having done their part during the war in sheltering Italian fugitives, must be considered largely excluded from the fraternal world of the D'Annunzian and Fiuman legionaires?

The answer to such questions lies in large part in the poet's invention of traditions. His literally "inventive" reworking of traditional religious and cultural symbols within a ritualistic framework provided the cohesive force for this still vaguely defined new community. D'Annunzio moved beyond the "elitist" or limited nature of the masonic-style ritual characterizing the *Risorgimento* (and romantic nationalism in general). He replaced the secretive "group initiation" rituals which distinguished traditional revolutionary brotherhoods such as the *Carbonari* and *Giovane Italia* (Hobsbawm 1959) with more participatory rituals of a "mass" nature. These rituals were of a "mass" nature both in the sense of involving the entire citizenry and in assuming the literal form of the Catholic mass. The Catholic mass implies, however, mediation and thus a hierarchically structured Church. In his privileged position as Comandante of the "elect" legionaires, D'Annunzio did not really supplant the elitism of the revolutionary brotherhood,

which bears obvious links to the religious brotherhood. Rather, he attempted to expand it to the "chosen" nation, Italy, now to be reorganized and reconstructed along the lines of a vast "military brotherhood." Although endorsing hierarchy, D'Annunzio did not construct a "heroic dictatorship" like that characterizing Mussolinian fascism. The tensions created by this paradoxical elitist-fraternal egalitarian formulation remained unresolved and reveal Fiume's position as a transition between 19th and 20th century-style nationalisms.

During the sixteen month occupation, D'Annunzio emerged as an innovator of the new political style prefigured in the "invented traditions" common throughout pre-World War I Europe, a phenomenon clearly visible in the development of "fiuman" nationalism. Central to this new style was its dramaturgic and "participant" nature, the blurring of the distinction between orator and listener, in which both became "actors." While elaborate ritual and "mystic nationalism" had previously been the domain of an elite, the new century heralded the birth of a new "mass" nationalism. As Hobsbawm notes:

> *On the stage of public life the emphasis therefore shifted from the design of elaborate and varied stage-sets, capable of being 'read' in the manner of a strip cartoon or tapestry, to the movement of the actors themselves - either, as in military or royal parades, a ritual minority acting for the benefit of a watching mass public, or, as anticipated in the political mass movements of the period (such as the May Day demonstrations) and the great mass sporting occasions, a merger of actors and public. These were the tendencies which were destined for further development after 1914 (Hobsbawm 1983: 305).*
>
> *At Fiume, these tendencies developed in two distinctive ways: the creation of a dialogue with the crowd — in which the listeners with one voice (that of the people, the nation) collectively spoke to the orator — and the staging of spectacle, festivals and civic ceremonies which assumed a liturgical form (Ledeen 1977; Mosse 1980).*

Dannunzian oratory

The archetypal image of the Duce on the balcony of the Palazzo Veneto — arm raised in the Roman salute, crying out "Eia, eia, alalà" to his blackshirts, and speaking to a transfixed crowd — referred back to the very first address delivered by D'Annunzio after the seizure of Fiume, an event subsequently glorified as the *sacra entrata.* Addressing the mixed crowd of fiumani and arditi-legionaires from the balcony of the Governor's Palace, the Comandante employed the orational style he had already used successfully in the interventionist campaign and in laying

the groundwork for the Fiume venture. D'Annunzio made frequent use of the *noi* and *voi* forms to question and engage the audience. The questions he posed in his speeches were usually rhetorical, to which the spectators responded with an enthusiastic and unanimous "Sì!" or an "Alalà" or a "Fiume o morte!". Just as often, however, the crowd recited long passages in response to and in support of D'Annunzio.

The speeches and essays collected in the volume *La Penultima Ventura* denote these frequent exchanges between the *Comandante* and the audience. In the speech "I Request From the City of Life an Act of Life" (August 12, 1920), for example, the audience initiated the discourse:

> *POPOLO: Parli il Comandante!*
> *COMANDANTE: Ancora parlare? Fino a quando? . . . Ora io vi domando l'indennità per il cordiglio di pazienza che ho portato undici mesi a cintola come un buon cordigliero. Me la darete voi? (D'Annunzio 1974: 307-308).*

When the crowd replied "Quale? Come? " the Comandante declared "Domando alla Città di Vita un atto di vita." The assemblage immediately shot back "Non domandi, comandi!" Directing his gaze to the future, to the vast horizon of Fiume's promise, D'Annunzio exclaimed that together they would wage the war of the *fiumani* for the Italians. This prompted a brief soliloquy by the *arditi*, who pledged their support in this struggle:

> *Quando vorrà il Comandante.*
> *Uno per tutti, tutti per uno.*
> *Uno contro uno, uno contro tutti.*
> *Tutti contro tutti.*
> *In massa! (ibid: 307-322).*

Groups of arditi or fiuman youths or women often engaged in such exchanges with the poet, assuming a role analogous to that of the Greek chorus (Ledeen 1977; Sitwell 1950: 123) This jibed particularly well with the *arditi* practice of inventing songs, a habit which the blackshirts continued. Musicality and rhythmic patterning are, of course, implicit to the idea of the chorus, as well as to the use of rhetorical forms by D'Annunzio. For in posing a statement as a question, the speaker thus employs an ascending pitch like that of singing. Many have referred to the musical quality of D'Annunzio's oration, in terms of the poet's voice and inflection as well as in the rhythmic patterning of ritualistic discourse, which together produced an overwhelming "atmosphere" akin to religious ecstasy. Fiuman ora-

Headquarters Palace (old postcard).

Interior of G. D'Annunzio's room at the H.Q. Palace, struck by the artillery from the ship "Andrea Doria" (old postcard).

tory, in fact, displayed the three linguistic uses identified by Maurice Bloch in his analysis of the Merina religious ritual of circumcision: formal oratory (identical in Merina society from that employed in political contexts), intonation [the "repeating again and again by the elders of a set formula in a chanting voice accompanied by whoops and other non-lexical shouts" (Bloch 1981: 22-23), an image not far removed from that of the Comandante leading the arditi in their "alalàs"], and singing.

Bloch notes that in the case of such ritual oratory, the locutionary force decreases as propositional force increases. Not surprisingly, at Fiume many of the supporters appeared to not have comprehended the more elaborate meanings intended by D'Annunzio in his symbolism and language. The fiumano Paolo Santarcangeli wrote that few of the people could understand the *Comandante* 's high-flown discourses but nevertheless his assured and sonorous delivery held them spellbound (Santarcangeli 1969: 108).

Any analysis of these addresses must therefore recognize, as D'Annunzio did in the *Carta*, the primary importance of music as uniting the crowd in a transcendental realm full of meaning and yet "beyond meaning." In line with such a view, Bloch warns against isolating symbols from the ritual process by interpreting meaning at the level of the individual symbol (Bloch 1981: 19). As with music, the ritual and speech act acquire significance not just as the sum of their component meanings but also an autonomous significance through their existence purely as forms. Although few may realize the original or "intended" theological meaning of a Latin mass, for those who participate in the rite the "meaningless" form paradoxically conveys meaning. Similarly, D'Annunzio's listeners may not have understood all of his symbolic references but the creation of a rhythmically patterned discourse offered meaning in and of itself. In image at least, the crowd which D'Annunzio elevated through his transcendental, musical oration appeared as one unitary or organic whole, a "mystical body" (Mosse 1980: 98) which responded in unison.

A typical clause which reflected the constant reference to D'Annunzio's followers in singular terms noted that " . . . tutta la folla è sollevata da un solo grido" (D'Annunzio 1974: 142). Appropriately, the printing and typesetting of these dialogues resembled nothing so much as scripts for dramatic dialogues between the "characters" of the COMANDANTE and IL POPOLO. This depiction of the singular nature of the crowd referenced not only the ancient Christian notion of the *corpus christi*, the unitary body composed by the community of believers, but also various "theories" of the crowd widespread from the 1890's onward.

In his role as the "voice of the people," D'Annunzio's understanding of the crowd bears affinities with the Durkheimian concept of the "collective efferves-

cence," those moments of social gathering and tumult during which the "strengthening and vivifying of society is especially apparent" (Durkheim 1915: 240). In *Il Fuoco*, however, the poet portrays the artist as not merely articulating the will of the crowd but also shaping and sculpting it. This would suggest a sympathy for the theory of crowds popularized by Gustave Le Bon, who had contended that "To know the art of impressing the imagination of crowds is to know at the same time the art of governing them" (Le Bon 1901: 71). Mussolini subscribed to such a belief, making "bread and circuses" a central feature of fascism. Though to some degree D'Annunzio shared with Mussolini an acceptance of Le Bon's ideas, he did not see "civic festival" as a mere instrument for power, for orchestrating consent. Rather, for D'Annunzio the directing of the previously fluid and dangerously unstable mass of individuals into the united body of the crowd not only infused those individuals with a new transcendentalism but also valorized the artist-orator as well.

In his notion of the poet as sculptor of the crowd, then, D'Annunzio ultimately deferred to Michelangelo's conception that the artist brought to life (or "freed") a shape immanent in the stone or raw material (Ledeen 1977: 207) rather than merely manipulated that mass. Unlike Mussolini — who effectively exercised control over his movement's ranks and forcefully employed specific themes within fascism — D'Annunzio proved unable to guide Fiume in a sole direction or manipulate the many different messages and themes which emanated from the city. As evidenced by his futile efforts in calling for internal vigilance and order, the *Comandante* could not effectively direct and control the many groups present at Fiume, who in their riotous heterogeneity lent the episode much of its carnival-like aspect.

Festival sponsorship

The Comandante's elaboration of civic-religious festival further points up the participatory and dramatic aspects present in the Fiuman addresses. Embedded in this ritualistic framework were the political symbols and themes D'Annunzio and others had employed before and during the war. The common themes of sacrifice and the "beautiful death" which represented a triumph of the spirit (D'Annunzio 1917), for example, resounded in the series of public funerals held during the Fiume occupation. More than mere ceremonies, these funerals represented spectacles in which significant portions of the citizenry and military contingent reportedly participated.

The public funerals held for Aldo Bini and Giovanni Zeppegno, aviators killed in October of 1919 when their plane went down during an attempted reconnaissance over Susak, established a "neo-tradition" of such ceremonies and provided

the occupation with its first holy martyrs. After giving a last salute to the fallen heroes, the Comandante delivered an impassioned oration to the crowd assembled at Piazza Dante. The poet exalted the aviators as having constituted an eternal flame, their fiery deaths consecrating the città olocausta 's renewed will to sacrifice. "Glory to the those who add fire to fire! Glory to the pair that offered the first holocaust of liberty to the holocaust! Glory to the two celestial messengers!" exhorted D'Annunzio, who then ordered his pilots to cover the coffins with the "sacred" banner of fallen aviator Giovanni Randaccio.

Having already presented this flag during an earlier speech in Rome, D'Annunzio had attached a black band to it in "mourning" for Fiume. With the triumphant March of Ronchi, the Comandante had removed this band and presented the infantry banner (which had covered Randaccio's coffin) for an act of "reconsecration" by the fiumani. The fiumani had obliged, pledging their faith upon the banner of Timavo. The presence of this banner at the funerals thus re-invoked the oath sworn on the evening of the *sacra entrata* and further bonded (or "renewed," in the words of the Comandante) through suffering the new community emerging at Fiume.

Calling on his officers to spread Randaccio's banner over the coffins of the fiuman martyrs, the Comandante ritually actualized his notion of the "Winged Shadow and the Shadow of the Cross," perhaps his most striking reworking of "traditional" religious symbols. During the war, the poet had merged the images of the cross and the airplane: "Our heroes know, the living and the dead know, that the shadow of the winged machines is like the shadow cast by the Sign of sacrifice and redemption" (D'Annunzio 1917: 103). This likeness had been suggested to him, he claimed with dramatic flourish, by the appearance of a plane on the field of war covered with the blood of battle. "Its double transverse wings, from prow to screw formed a cross of blood" (ibid).

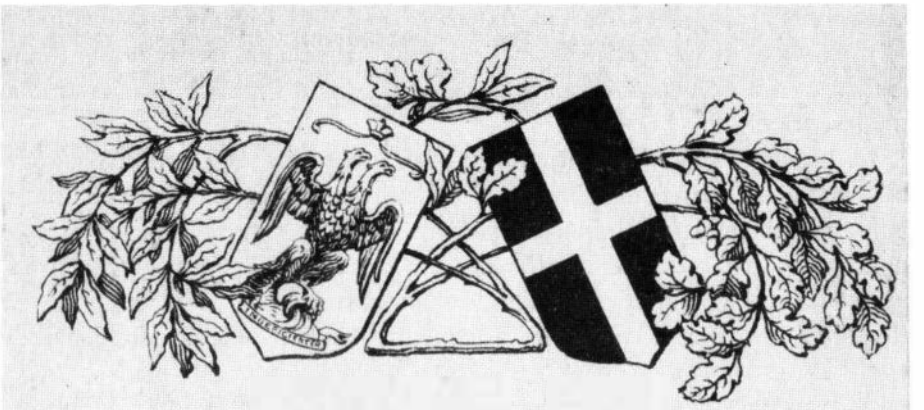
With the Fiume funerals, the poet thus realized the "rite proclaiming the virtue of a new country" (ibid: 104) called for in the "Winged Shadow." In their violent "storms" (referring to the airplanes' machinery) and through their virtue the aviators recalled and resurrected not only their own youth but also the acquilone of the Roman Empire and, thus, Latin greatness. "Miei piloti, ammantate i due feretri. Compiete il rito nel segno di quella croce che fa l'ombria della macchina alata con le sue doppie ali traverse fra la prua e i timoni" (Bolletino Ufficiale: 11 October 1919), commanded the poet at the public funerals. The rhetorical themes of D'Annunzio's essays and speeches had now been formalized as public ritual, a ritual in which the entire populace found itself united not only in common sympathy but also action and participation. This ritual would be repeated again not only in the case of the aviators Scaffidi and Ferri, killed over Pisino, but also in the "mock funerals" [complete with false cenotaphs (Venanzi 1979: 133)] staged

upon Prime Minister Nitti's ousting from office in July, 1920. Appropriately enough, the last public ceremony D'Annunzio staged at Fiume was the funeral honoring the individuals killed in the *Natale di Sangue*, over whose coffins rested the Randaccio banner.

Presiding over such ceremonies and drawing upon Christian imagery, the Comandante established himself as both high priest and patron saint of the emerging nationalist religion. Some fiumani burnt candles before his image (Nardelli & Livingston 1931: 282) while others came in the hopes that this living saint possessed healing powers (ibid: 287). In his priest-like capacity, the Comandante not only officiated at the "last rites" of the funerals but he also constructed a litany embracing baptism and communion as well. Describing the actual hunger suffered by the *fiumani* during and after the war, the poet invoked a new eucharist in which the individual took of the "host," the corporealized *patria* and the blood of its sons.

In a speech delivered to the fiuman workers in April, 1920, the Comandante spoke of "breaking into pieces the bread of our communion." While meager, no other bread possessed the same eucharistic flavor. Invoking an invented history, D'Annunzio declared that this bread had nourished those ancient fiumans who had sought to defend their communal liberty. Before going into battle, these fiuman warriors had also taken an even more profound communion, one with the very earth. These soldiers had placed some soil in their mouths as an unmediated communion with the nation. Such an act thereby united the fiumani with their Italian brothers, those men like Andrea Baafile who in the same spirit had consumed sand from the bank of the Piave before offering his life at Caporetto or the men of the Como and Bisagno brigades who in the same spirit had bathed their hands in that river's waters (Susmel 1941: 137).

Here again D'Annunzio expanded upon pre-occupation themes; prior to the march on the city he had declared that he had eaten the bread of Fiume, a bread suffused with the sweat of blood and pain. As in the case of the "Sacrament of Iron" and the aviator funerals, during the Fiume episode these eucharistic themes now assumed the form of a rite, an act of faith, which reinforced the new sense of community. When the Comandante travelled to the city of Zara in November, 1919, he conducted such a rite of secular communion for the irredentist citizens there who accorded him a hero's welcome. Addressing the populace from the Palazzo Communale, D'Annunzio spoke of his religion as that of the legionaires who represented the will of the people and God. At the end of his speech, the poet proclaimed the *italianità* of Zara and presented the sacred relic, the Randaccio banner, to the crowd which knelt in the mud to "adore" it and to pledge their faith as an act of communion (Vedetta: 19 November 1919). By taking communion with the body and spirit of Italy, those irredentist lands were thereby united with her



LA VOCE DEI FIUMANI.

„Siate certo, Ammiraglio, che gli Italiani di questa terra, un di romana, sono la grandissima maggioranza: preferiscono la morte al servaggio. Tutto che v' è in noi, vita, cuore, pensiero, anima, è italiano; e sia benedetta quell' ora in cui la gran madre Italia stringerà al suo seno l' adorata sua figlia: Fiume!"

FIUME, 4 Novembre 1918.

IL COMITATO NAZIONALE DI FIUME
ALL'AMMIRAGLIO ITALIANO RAINER

LA VOIX DES CITOYENS DE FIUME.

„Soyez sûr, Amiral, que les Italiens de cette région, jadis romaine, forment une majorité incontestable: ils préfèrent la mort à l'esclavage. Tout ce qu'il y a en nous mêmes: vie, coeur, esprit, âme, est Italien: que l'heure soit bénie dans laquelle notre mère l'Italie pourra serrer sur sa poitrine sa fille adorée: Fiume!"

FIUME, le 4 novembre 1918.

LE COMITÉ NATIONAL DES CITOYENS
DE FIUME À L'AMIRAL ITALIEN RAINER.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE OF FIUME.

„You may be certain, Admiral, that the Italians belonging to this country, who was roman in ancient times, are the great majority; they prefer death to slavery. Our life, our heart, our thought, our souls are italian and the moment will be blessed in which the great Mother Italy, will clasp to her bosom her beloved daughter, Fiume!"

FIUME, November 4th 1918.

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF FIUME
TO THE ITALIAN ADMIRAL RAINER.

Trilingual appeal sent by the National Commitee of Fiume to the Italian Admiral Rainer on 4th November 1918 (old postcard).

spiritually and physically through the act of transubstantiation. Having entered into a mystical union with the *patria* through such a communion and through sacrifice of one's own blood made possible the Latin Empire's resurrection and transfiguration.

D'Annunzio similarly appropriated other traditional religious rituals, such as feast and saints' days, transforming them into religio-nationalistic celebrations. While "nationalizing" religious ceremonies, he also sacralized politics by establishing a new "ritual calendar" celebrating events related to the Regency. Prominent amongst the ceremonies constituting this new calendar were those to honor individuals and groups with the "Medal of Ronchi." These commemorative medallions, established with the Regency to honor courage and "genius," may be seen as neo-relics akin to the pins and icons associated with saints[13]. In medieval theology, relics possessed a sanctity "transferrable" through contact; to touch a relic, therefore, provided a holy "charge." The fiumani and legionaires similarly "sanctified" themselves by wearing such pins and medals, just as those who died in the impresa underwent "canonization" by virtue of the sacred Randaccio banner's placement on their coffins. The constant re-invocation of Ronchi, as well, created a neo-tradition and interjected the (albeit quite recent) past into the present. The legionaires and the *fiumani* viewed themselves as the creators of this history, emphasizing the participant nature of this new nationalistic creed which underwrote the re-defined Italian community.

Conclusion

To re-imagine the national community in Italy by invoking cultural symbols proved inextricable from invoking religious symbols as well. In citing and inventing the past, D'Annunzio could not ignore the mutuality of cultural and religious production. Had he done so, he would have found himself in a position like that of Marinetti, who always remained the leader of a primarily elite avant-garde movement (aligned with fascism) rather than the leader of a "popular" movement (such as fascism itself). Marinetti's radical rejection of the entire Italian religio-cultural history, in fact, influenced Mussolini's decision to break with the Futurists after he moved to reconcile Church and State. Finally formalized in the 1929 Lateran Accord, this reconciliation removed the long-standing separation of church and state. The creation of a political liturgy at Fiume thus acquires additional significance in light of the Italian desire to bring into a contiguous relationship the state and national identity, an identity in which Catholicism clearly played a major role.

[13] I am grateful to Hans Gumbrecht for this suggestion.

Considered in itself, this articulation of nationalistic religion at Fiume proves more in keeping with, rather than in exception to, both the particular historical epoch's socio-cultural trends and to the dynamic of modern European nationalism examined by scholars such as Anderson, Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Mosse. What appeared novel at Fiume — the blending of religious and nationalistic imagery, the exaltation of the nation as the medium of a new transcendence and worthy of the highest sacrifice, the poet as political leader, and the fledgling "state" based on ritual — has become commonplace. In our own era, an aestheticized "mass media" politics now plays upon the world stage.

In its specific Italian context, perhaps the fact that in 1945 the Italian partisan and historian Momigliano dissuaded the civil commander Poletti from his original plan to destroy the *Vittoriale* (arguing that the villa testified to the national valor demonstrated by D'Annunzio during World War I) best reflects the ambiguous space occupied today by D'Annunzio and Fiume. Although an avowed anti-fascist, Momigliano did not want to destroy the work of an Italian genius and patriot like D'Annunzio. Many Italians visit the *Vittoriale* today and the issue of *italianità* which fueled the Dannunzian project still confronts Italians in their increasingly pluralistic and prosperous society. Post-World War II Italy has been largely defined as *contro fascismo*, and in one sense the *Vittoriale* in all its excess and hyperbole reinforces this. At the same time, the effect of visiting the *Vittoriale* likely proves akin to the emotion experienced by an Italian visitor to the West Point Museum. Upon viewing a display containing fascist paraphernalia, in this case Mussolini's black fez, "what made the cheeks burn was, quite simply, the humiliation of defeat, a sentiment that . . . leads to a sense (however bitter) of national solidarity" (Valesio 1986: 170-171).

But although "one cannot choose his own . . . occasionally unpleasant [genealogies], every re-inscription involves a vindication" (ibid: 171). Thus while D'Annunzio's reputation has yet to completely resuscitate itself, a collective re-visitation and re-evaluation of D'Annunzio as possessing an "alternative" vision to Mussolini appears possible. Keepers of the "pure flame" still exist, including the few surviving legionaires who each year return to the *Vittoriale* in commemoration, just as they did at the poet's funeral in 1938 when a large fiuman delegation attended the ceremony. Upon the sixth anniversary of the former *Comandante* 's death, Mussolini journeyed to the *Vittoriale* from nearby Salò, where the Duce lived as the Germans' virtual prisoner in the war's final days. Kneeling before the poet's tomb, Mussolini delivered a brief address:

> *You are not dead, my friend, and you will not die so long as there remains, standing in the Mediterranean, an island called Italy. You are not dead and you will not die so long as in the centre of Italy there is a city to which we shall return - a city called Rome (Hibbert 1962: 242).*

Mussolini reiterated the idea of a primordial and eternal Italy, the belief essential to the modern concept of the nation. Re-examining the events at D'Annunzian Fiume paradoxically points up our awareness and understanding of the often constructed and imagined nature of that concept. In the twentieth century, the religion created in celebration of this seemingly pre-destined nation has inspired tremendous destruction, as well as creativity and sacrifice. The easily transgressed boundary between building a constructive community or a dangerous new order requires that we re-examine and recall events such as those at Fiume.

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SAZETAK - Predmet je ovog članka okupacija Rijeke predvođena pjesnikom Gabrieleom D'Annunziom i njegovim sljedbenicima, a posebice veteranima elitnih jurišnih jedinica poznatim pod nazivom *arditi* (jurišnici). Usredotočujući se na nacionalističke simbole i rituale s antropološkog stajališta, ova analiza pristupa zbivanjima riječke *impresa* (pothvat) ne samo kao "preteči" fašizma, već i kao općenitijem pokušaju preoblike predodžbe o talijanskom narodu tragom društvenih, gospodarskih i političkih pomaka izazvanih Prvim svjetskim ratom.

Riječka se zbivanja stoga smještaju i tumače unutar šireg teoretskog okvira usmjerenog istraživanju nacionalizma i stvaranja etničkog i nacionalnog identiteta. U svjetlu D'Annunzijevog riječkog pothvata razmotrene su poglavito utjecajne teorije o nacionalizmu što su ih iznijeli Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawn i Ernest Gellner. Uzimajući kao polazište povijesno stvorenu narav nacije i odbacujući tvrdnje o njezinoj praiskonskoj danosti, navedeni autori razmatraju procese koji dovode do "zamišljanja" ili "izmišljanja" nacionalnih zajednica.

Zaposjednute Rijeke i uspostava kraljevskog namjesništva za Kvarner pružaju jedinstven primjer proučavanju nastanka takvih nacionalnih tradicija. "Izmišljanje" nacije ne javlja se nužno kao potpuna novina, već se može štoviše temeljiti na ukorijenjenim predodžbama i ritualima, kao što se dogodilo i s D'Annunzijevom prilagodbom liturgijskog jezika potrebama stvaranja novog oblika "nacionalnog zajedništva". Ovaj članak stoga potanko ispituje tvorbu složenog skupa nacionalističkih rituala u Rijeci, razmatrajući tu pojavu u okviru širih tijekova nacionalizma i stvaranja nacionalnog identiteta, umjesto da se ograniči na uži okvir talijanskog fašizma i njegova nastanka.

POVZETEK - Članek jemlje v pretres zasedbo Reke, ki so jo izvedli pesnik Gabriele D'Annunzio in njegovi pristaši, obravnava pa zlasti prvoborce posebnih jurišnih enot z imenom *arditi* (pogumni). Avtor se pri analizi osredotoči na antropološko razdelavo nacionalističnih simbolov in obredov in pri tem obravnava reški "podvig" ne le kot predhodnico fašizma pač pa luči širšega poskusa "miselne preonove" italijanske nacije na valu družbenih, gospodarskih in političnih težav, ki jih je naplavila 1. Svetovna vojna.

Razumevanje reških dogodkov zato vmešča v teoretski okvir širše strukture, ki raziskuje nacionalizem in vcepljanje etnično-nacionalnih identitet. Avtor še zlasti preverja vplivne teorije o nacionalizmu, ki so jih izdelali Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm in Ernest Gellner, ob D'Annunzionev reškem podvigu. Ti avtorji izhajajo iz predpostavke izvedene narave nacionalizma in zavračajo trditev e njegovi izvorni naravi ter proučujejo proces, skozi katerega se "oblikuje" oziroma "izumlja" "zavest" o nekem narodnem občestvu.