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Literature, Geography and The Poetics of Space

Tracing Historical Narratives Across Literary Landscapes

Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)

5. (Geo)politics as an Artwork Two Avant-Garde Magazines in Gabriele D'Annunzio's Fiume

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Abstract

On September 12th, 1919, Gabriele D'Annunzio, a worldwide famous poet and World War I veteran, led an expedition of rebel troopers and aspiring revolutionaries to occupy Fiume, in the region of Istria. Fiume, in fact, had been an important port city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and after the war it was contended between Italy and the newborn Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slaves. However, D'Annunzio's *impresa*, which lasted until December 29th, 1920, and was repressed by the very same Italian army, soon changed into something very different from the mere irredentist blitz that was supposed to be in the first place. As a matter of fact, as demonstrated by a new wave of studies, it became a political laboratory, which attracted many avant-guard intellectuals from all over the world, and produced concrete political projects and actions, such as for instance the so-called *uscocchi's*

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pirate economy, the *Carta del Carnaro*, the *Lega di Fiume*, and the *Nuovo ordinamento dell'esercito liberatore*. It also anticipated, with its mixture of nationalism and socialism, populism and leaderism, militarism and anarchy, many of the most diverse experiences of the 20th century, from fascism to *contestazione*. During this time, the idea of transforming Fiume endeavor into a real revolutionary enterprise was first and foremost supported by two avant-guard magazines: Mario Carli's *La Testa di Ferro*, and Guido Keller's and Giovanni Comisso's *Yoga*. The aim of my contribution will be to explore the ideological stands of these two periodicals – an attempt only partially accomplished so far by critics and historians – showing how they merged D'Annunzio's aesthetic nationalism, irredentists' patriotism, Arditi's *combattentismo*, Alceste De Ambris's syndacalism, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's political futurism in the new synthesis of so-called *fiumanesimo*. In my analysis, first of all I would like to stress how this extraordinary opportunity for avant-garde activists to discuss and enact their visions originated thanks to a little territorial issue; namely, it was the existence of this tiny strip of land disputed by two powers that let first of all the *impresa* take place. In other words, *fiumanesimo* is a limpid example of how a revolutionary movement and its geopolitical situation are always historically intertwined. Secondly, I would like to highlight certain peculiar and surprising instances of these two magazines: like *La Testa di Ferro*'s plan to establish a dialogue, and possibly an active collaboration, between Dannunzian legionaries and left-oriented forces (anarchists, socialists, communists); or *Yoga*'s curious attempt (which embodies the complexity and contradictions of artistic modernism) to make



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their bohemian individualism coincide with an anti-industrialist cult of nature and an almost *Völkish* patriotism. Finally, I would like to underline how both these magazines evoke as their final goal the possibility of artistic avant-guards to actually make life (and politics) as an artwork – namely, to become fully political and to create an *artecrazia*, where intellectuals are in power, and everyone's creativity is freed from all limitations. It is not a coincidence that these positions, in the end, were in a way already anticipated by Gabriele D'Annunzio's works, even before his direct involvement in politics.

Keywords: *Fiume, Gabriele D'Annunzio, La Testa di Ferro, Yoga, Futurism*



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