

*Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)*

# Literature, Geography and The Poetics of Space

*Tracing Historical Narratives Across Literary Landscapes*



*Preface by Charles Travis*

*Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)*

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Landscapes*



Geographies  
*of the*  
Anthropocene

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Tracing Historical Narratives Across Literary Landscapes*

Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)

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# PART II:

*Art, Politics and Literature: the  
Formation of Identity Landscapes*



## 5. (Geo)politics as an Artwork

### Two Avant-Garde Magazines in Gabriele D'Annunzio's Fiume

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#### *Abstract*

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 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 29<sup>th</sup>, 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* 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 *fumanesimo*. 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, *fumanesimo* 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 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*

## 1. Introduction

In the last decades, a new special interest seems to have arisen for the *impresa di Fiume* and more in general for political *dannunzianesimo*, both in the field of history of ideas and pop cultural production. Until today, D'Annunzio's *impresa* ("endeavor") has often been mainly considered a mere anticipation of fascism: first on the initiative of the regime itself, which assimilated it to its own mythology; then at the instigation of militant anti-fascism, which embraced the same interpretation while reversing it from positive to negative. However, today's prevailing historiographic research has demonstrated that this episode has an autonomous and complex phenomenology, that with its ideological mixture of nationalism and socialism, populism and elitism, militarism and libertarianism, anticipated in fact not only fascism, but the most different political experiments of 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>.

As it is well known, the *impresa* was inspired by a territorial dispute between the Kingdom of Italy and the newborn Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It therefore consisted in the occupation of the Istrian city of Fiume, by mutinied troops of the Italian army, leaded by the internationally renowned intellectual and First World War hero, Gabriele D'Annunzio. It lasted from September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1919, to December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1920: a little bit more than a year during which the city was ruled by the poet. A unique case, in fact, of an artist in power in the whole world history.

However, the *impresa* became something very different from the mere irredentist blitz it was supposed to be at first. As a matter of fact, under the rule of D'Annunzio Fiume was not only a place where one could exercise freedoms elsewhere unthinkable, but an actual political laboratory, which attracted from Italy and the world any kind of idealists, subversives, adventurers, artists, and intellectuals. Not by chance the *città di vita* ("city of life") became the place of radical political initiatives, like the *uscocchi*'s "pirate economy", the project

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<sup>1</sup> On the *impresa di Fiume*, the great classics are Alatri, 1959; Gerra, 1974-1975; Ledeen, 2002. Other representative texts on political *dannunzianesimo* are Cordova, 2007; De Felice, 1978; De Felice, Gibellini, 1987; Galmozzi, 1994; Gentile, 1996: 225-247; Salaris, 2002; Bordiga, 2013; Alosco, 2014; Guerri, 2019. Two of the last biographies of D'Annunzio pay specific attention to the *impresa* too: Guerri, 2008: 219-261; Serra, 2019: 467-541. Finally, in English, I found appealing the interpretations offered by Bey, 2003: 122-125; Fogu, 2020: 143-157; Champagne, 2019: 94-124".

of an anti-League of Nations known as the *Lega di Fiume*, and the *Carta del Carnaro* (the “Charter of Carnaro”) and the *Nuovo ordinamento dell’esercito liberatore* (the “New Organization of the Liberating Army”), both co-written by D’Annunzio with respectively Alceste De Ambris and Giuseppe Piffer.

The idea of transforming the *impresa* in the beginning of an actual revolution was first and foremost supported by two avant-garde magazines: Mario Carli’s *La Testa di Ferro* (“The Iron Head”), and Guido Keller’s and Giovanni Comisso’s *Yoga*. What is mainly interesting about these publications is their intertwining the revolutionary impulse typical of artistic avant-gardes with a form of geopolitical intuition, which brings them to root the very same possibility of revolution in a specific place and time, that is in the historical ground and in the human factor of a community<sup>2</sup>. After all, the extraordinary opportunity for these avant-gardes to debate and accomplish their political visions originated in the territorial dispute of Fiume: without that, the *impresa* would not have even taken place. A limpid example of how any innovative movement is always historically linked to its geopolitical situation.

The purpose of this essay is therefore to explore the ideological stands of these two periodicals – an attempt so far only partially achieved by researchers – underlining some of their most interesting instances: the project of *Yoga* to create a new spiritual aristocracy revolting against the values of European bourgeois civilization; the efforts of *La Testa di Ferro* to establish a dialogue, and possibly an active collaboration, with far-left forces; and the only apparently paradoxical attempt of both, which incarnates the complexity of artistic modernism<sup>3</sup>, to make individualism and nationalism match in a new political synthesis. In order to really understand the twine of avant-garde poetics and geopolitical commitment that is distinctive of both these magazines, I will employ not only the methodological tools of literary criticism, philosophical aesthetics, and history of ideas, but also categories that are typical of geopolitical analysis – and in general of political realism – such as “human factor”, “grand strategy”, “revisionist / conservative power”, “hegemonic subject”, “soft / hard power”, “*noyau* / nation”, etc<sup>4</sup>.

At last, I intend to bring to light that the actual goal of these magazines

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<sup>2</sup> For the most up-to-date definitions of geopolitics, see Graziano, 2019; Fabbri, 2023; De Ruvo, 2024. On the concept of “human factor”, see also *Limes*, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> See Adamson, 2007; Cangiano, 2018; Subialka, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> For studies on the general intersection between literature and geography, see Blair, 1998; Brosseau, 1994; Peraldo, 2016; Porteous, 1985; Sharp, 2000; Tally, 2011; Thacker, 2005.

was to bring to life, through politics, the same freedom that is characteristic of artistic creativity: “*fare la propria vita come si fa un’opera d’arte*”<sup>5</sup> (D’Annunzio, 1988: 37). This after all is the poetics of all artistic avant-gardes, which, while attempting to restore the continuum, or rather, the unity between art and life<sup>6</sup>, must aim (1) at becoming fully political, and (2) at establishing a regime where everyone’s creativity is freed by any limitation and intellectual (understood in the broader sense) rule: *artecrazia* (“artercacy”). Both *La Testa di Ferro* and *Yoga* thus confirm that the actual artistic avant-garde is nothing else but a *political* avant-garde aspiring to bring art to power. It is not a coincidence, in the end, that these positions were already anticipated by the works and actions of the very same man who led the *impresa*: Gabriele D’Annunzio. We will therefore see how Dannunzian Fiume itself became for these two periodicals the model of the future society.

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<sup>5</sup> “[...] *to make your own life as you make an artwork*”. All the translations of this chapter are the author’s own.

<sup>6</sup> About the definition of “avant-garde” as the attempt to match art and life, see Bürger, 1984.

## 2. *An Italian revolution*

In the attempt to transform the climate of Fiume in an actual revolutionary project, Mario Carli – one of the greatest promoters of political futurism and *arditismo* – employed the term *fiumanesimo*, entrusting the task to propagate this ideal to the weekly publication he founded, *La Testa di Ferro*<sup>7</sup>. He summarized this concept in the header of the Milanese numbers of the magazine, with an evident synthetic futurist style:

FIUMANESIMO = Fiume italiana – città di vita nuova – liberazione di tutti gli oppressi (popoli, classi, individui) – disciplina dello spirito contro disciplina formale – distruzione di tutte le egemonie, dogmi, conservatorismi e parassitismi – fucina di ogni novità – poche parole, molti fatti<sup>8</sup>

*La Testa di Ferro* was the unofficial newspaper of the *Comando* of Fiume, the true incarnation of the *scalmanata* (“agitated”) soul of the *impresa*<sup>9</sup>, and the magazine that took responsibility to give voice to Dannunzian legionaries – those who found in *fiumanesimo* not simply a label for a territorial claim, but (as indicated in the header of the first number of the magazine) “la religione nuova del dopo-guerra”<sup>10</sup> – so that they could freely express their ideas and opinions.

In the beginning, *La Testa di Ferro* was published in Fiume from February 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1920. In the summer of 1920, it was D’Annunzio himself who invited its editorial staff to leave Fiume. The stands of the magazine, in fact, seemed radical enough to compromise the delicate political balance of the city. The publications restarted in Milan on August 8<sup>th</sup>, after almost

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<sup>7</sup> There are not many specific studies about *La Testa di Ferro* indeed. For a general introduction, see Salaris, 2002: 99-124. For a recap of its editorial life, see Meregalli, 2015. About Mario Carli as an activist in Fiume, see also its own works: Carli, 2021; Carli, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> “*FIUMANESIMO* = an Italian Fiume – a city of new life – liberation of all the oppressed ones (people, classes, individuals) – discipline of the spirit against formal discipline – destruction of all hegemonies, dogmas, conservatisms, and parasitisms – the forge of every innovation – few words, many facts”.

<sup>9</sup> See De Felice, 1978: 23-35.

<sup>10</sup> “[...] the new religion of postwar”.

two months of pause, showing remarkable graphic and content changes, and lasted until April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1921 (with an interval between December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1920, and January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1921, during the facts of the so-called *Natale di sangue*, the “Bloody Christmas”). In Milan, without any more direct political controls, *La Testa di Ferro* moved under a complete futurist aegis, multiplying the columns dedicated to art and literature, and increasing its own radicality. It ceased publication only with the twelfth number of the second year, after different editorial events, fifty-four numbers overall, and one year and three months of life. Ultimately, it survived the fate of the *impresa* just a little.

The editorial staff of *La Testa di Ferro* was composed almost exclusively by futurists and veterans of the First World War. In addition to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, especially active in the Milanese numbers, there were also Alessandro Forti, Umberto Foscanelli, Cesare Cerati, Emilio Settimelli, Vincenzo Fani Ciotti as known as *Volt*, Piero Belli, Mino Somenzi, Ottaviano Targioni-Tozzetti, Leòn Kochnitzky, Margherita Keller Besozzi as known as *Fiammetta*... plus Guido Keller (who is also Fiammetta’s cousin) and Giovanni Comisso: the very same men who founded *Yoga*. *La Testa di Ferro* published D’Annunzio’s and De Ambris’ speeches and statements as well, including the complete text of the *Carta del Carnaro* and the comment to it by De Ambris himself. Different columns on chronicle, analysis, satire and polemic were also proposed each week.

The ideological themes of the magazine were first and foremost stated in Mario Carli’s and Alessandro Forti’s articles, even if it is Marinetti who wrote its weightiest political manifesto. As a matter of fact, on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920, the magazine published the founder of futurism’s debut article<sup>11</sup>, *Al di là del comunismo* (“Beyond Communism”): a text that accomplished the definition of political futurism started in 1918 with the foundation of the *Partito Politico Futurista* (“Futurist Political Party”) and continued in 1919 with the publication of *Democrazia futurista*<sup>12</sup> (“Futurist Democracy”). Its importance cannot be measured only because it consisted of a suggestive literary text, but also because it inaugurated an interesting season of ideological openness, without renouncing to the original keynotes of futurist world view.

In this article, Marinetti’s main task is defining the lines of a possible “Italian revolution”. Its perspective, however, has first – broadly speaking

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<sup>11</sup> If we do not consider two very short articles published in the numbers of March 28<sup>th</sup> and June 13<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> See Marinetti, 1983: 343-469.



– philosophical nuances rather than political ones. As he did in his ten-year career as a cultural agitator, Marinetti claims here a *Weltanschauung* that is above all activistic, tragic, and *agonal*. Namely, he consciously acknowledges and undertakes the dynamism and conflict intrinsic in being itself, stating the corollary for which history always demands “ostacoli da rovesciare, cioè guerre rivoluzionarie”<sup>13</sup> (Marinetti, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920). Revolution is therefore not necessarily tied to a specific political project to realize, but it coincides with a concrete, living, immanent reality, in which all phenomena participate, even the ones that would like to banish it.

Since existence is struggle, Marinetti writes, the utopia of perfect equality and eternal peace of communism is not only unattainable, but not even desirable. It is in fact not possible to attempt to eradicate conflict from being without participating in conflict itself, and therefore protracting it. And if it paradoxically happened, it would be equivalent to the death of life itself. It would be more honorable, instead, to go along with the violent motion of becoming, committing in releasing all human beings from the material and spiritual trammels that limit all their possibilities. This, according to Marinetti, would be the true futurist revolution.

In his reflections, he therefore distinguishes a “dogmatic” kind of socialism (which is utopian, internationalist, and egalitarian) from a “pragmatic” one (which is realist, patriotic, and libertarian). Opposing any abstract cosmopolitanism, he states in fact that an actual revolution cannot break out shaping itself on the example of analogous foreign attempts, but only founding on its own concrete historical and geographic situation, that is electing its national context as an action base. Italy, in other words, deserves *its* specific national revolution, corresponding to its distinctive human factor and its contingent historical needs.

*Al di là del comunismo* expresses an only apparently paradoxical position for which, in the wake of an ideal Italian revolution, there is no contradiction between individualism and nationalism. In fact, on one side, for Marinetti the Italian national character coincides precisely with the revolutionary aptitude of the avant-gardes to the “individualismo anarchico”<sup>14</sup>; on the other side, the national community is “il massimo prolungamento dell’individuo, o meglio: il più vasto individuo capace di vivere lungamente, dirigere,

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<sup>13</sup> “[...] obstacles to overturn, that is revolutionary wars”.

<sup>14</sup> “[...] anarchic individualism”.

dominare e difendere tutte le parti del suo corpo”<sup>15</sup> (Marinetti, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920): the nation implies the individual, the individual implies the nation. Individuals therefore enhance and, so to speak, truly fulfill themselves only as a *superhuman knot* of relationship with the others; but the others who are closer and more familiar to us are inevitably those with whom we share a language, a culture, a storytelling, a specific space and time: our compatriots. Marinetti’s intuition, in other words, is exquisitely *geopolitical*.

For this reason, Marinetti fosters an alliance of classes, inviting the proletariat and the middle class to fight together the social and national revolution. He also proposes to abolish, once the power is obtained, all the institutions of the past and to found new ones, more suitable to the era of futurism, when the Italian genius will realize a “meraviglioso paradiso anarchico di libertà assoluta”<sup>16</sup> (Marinetti, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920). As a matter of fact, futurism intends not only to satisfy the material conditions of the needy, but also to elevate their spirit, “[per] dare a tutti la volontà di pensare, creare, svegliare, rinnovare, e distruggere in tutti la volontà di subire, conservare, plagiare”<sup>17</sup> (Marinetti, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920), that is to fully accomplish their own existential potential. This is in fact Marinetti’s final goal: the conquest of power by the Italian “proletariato dei geniali”<sup>18</sup> (Marinetti, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920) – namely, the people as composed by potential artists – and therefore the creation of an “arcratic” regime.

The literary evocation and the political vision of *Al di là del comunismo* synthesize the general conception of *La Testa di Ferro*. Some other articles that reflect on a possible Italian revolution are also those that comment the *Biennio Rosso* (“Red Biennium”) struggle and those that analyze the Russian revolution of 1917.

Despite some partial disagreement, the editorial staff of *La Testa di Ferro* applauds the working class’ mass mobilization during the clashes of summer and fall of 1920, praising its perfect organization in the appropriation of the means of production. However, it also accuses the socialist movement of having appeased its original revolutionary claims, ceding to Giovanni Giolitti’s

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<sup>15</sup> “[...] the utmost extension of the individual, or rather: the vastest individual able to live for a long time, to lead, to dominate, and to defend all the parts of their body”.

<sup>16</sup> “[...] a wonderful anarchic paradise of absolute freedom”.

<sup>17</sup> “[...] [to] give everyone the will of thinking, creating, waking up, renewing, and to destroy in everyone the will of being subjected, conserving, plagiarizing”.

<sup>18</sup> “[...] proletariat of the geniuses”.

mediation, and settling to get mere economic gains. It would have been its historical duty instead to participate in the overturning of the liberal regime together with the middle class, organizing itself in the structure of a trade union, understood as the perfect revolutionary and government unity. The revolutionary exponents of the middle class – namely Dannunzian legionaries – could therefore insert themselves into the struggle, internal to socialism, between maximalists and reformists, supporting the radical faction and directing it against the upper middle class.

Mario Carli's *Il nostro bolscevismo* ("Our Bolshevism") and *Il piccolo padre bolscevico* ("The Little Bolshevik Father"), and Alessandro Forti's *Fiume e il bolscevismo*<sup>19</sup> ("Fiume and Bolshevism") show that the columnists of *La Testa di Ferro* have sympathy for Bolshevism, above all appreciated for its ability to adapt the revolutionary ideals to the historical reality of Russia, while conciliating together socialism and nationalism<sup>20</sup>. As a matter of fact, in their interpretation, the distinction between Italian socialism – accused of preaching the subversion of society only in words, and of impeding those who believe in the revolutionary value of the First World War – and Russian Bolshevism – bravely willing to gain power with violence, and to *de facto* overcome the suffocating utopia of "dogmatic" socialism – really stands out. Giovanni Grandi shares this point of view too, writing:

per il testimone scettico e scevro di pregiudizi non è spettacolo banale quello offerto da internazionalisti che difendono palmo palmo il suolo della patria, socialisti che hanno fatto il processo al socialismo e ucciso il principio democratico e che con mezzi che nessuna tirannia osò fin qui adottare crearono uno Stato che è un monumento elevato allo spirito più aristocratico – all'aristocrazia del pensiero e della volontà creatrice.<sup>21</sup> (Grandi, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1920)

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<sup>19</sup> Appreciations for the Russian revolution is also in De Ambris, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1920.

<sup>20</sup> See Veneziani, 2012: 21-62. According to the author, this conciliation characterizes the so called "Italian ideology", interpreted as a "conservative revolution".

<sup>21</sup> "[...] for a witness that is skeptical and free from prejudice, it is not a banal show that one offered by internationalists who defend each span of the fatherland, socialists who put socialism on trial and killed the democratic principle, and who created with means that no tyranny so far dared to adopt a State that is a monument raised in honor of the most aristocratic spirit – of the aristocracy of thought and creative will".

Therefore, Carli explicitly shows to be open to social justice and direct democracy, whereas he claims he wants to contribute to “sollevare la miseria materiale e spirituale delle masse”, and to “chiamare accanto alle «élites» anche i rappresentanti del «numero» a partecipare della vita collettiva, a decidere dei propri interessi e del proprio destino”<sup>22</sup> (Carli, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920). No one more than an official who fought in the trenches, Carli said, can in fact understand how much the value of making decisions as a group, as equals, is precious on the battlefield. Besides, the same perspective echoes in the already quoted *Nuovo ordinamento dell’esercito liberatore*, written by Piffer and D’Annunzio in 1920; and it is a principle similar to that of the Soviets, whose system, according to Carli, could be extended in every field of social organization. He in fact concludes *Il nostro bolscevismo* writing, “Ancora una volta: guardiamo all’Oriente! Tra Fiume e Mosca c’è forse un oceano di tenebre. Ma indiscutibilmente Fiume e Mosca sono due rive luminose. Bisogna, al più presto, gettare un ponte fra queste due rive”<sup>23</sup> (Carli, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920).

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<sup>22</sup> “[...] [to] lift the material and spiritual misery of the masses”; “[to] call next to the “élites” the representatives of the “number” too, so that they participate to the collective life, and decide about their own interests and destinies”.

<sup>23</sup> “Once again: we look at the East! Between Fiume and Moscow there is maybe an ocean of darkness. But Fiume and Moscow are indisputably two bright shores. We need to build a bridge between these two shores as soon as possible.

### 3. Anarchic-Futurist Experiments

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Mario Carli published on *La Testa di Ferro* an article entitled *Agli avversari rossi e ultra-rossi* (“To [our] Red and Ultra-Red Adversaries”), where he addressed the far-left movements, inaugurating an interesting period of debate between futurists supporting D’Annunzio’s *impresa* and exponents of Italian individualist anarchism<sup>24</sup>. Carli’s call, directed to both socialists and anarchists, is in fact an invitation to recognize that the legionaries have their same revolutionary will, and highlights the points of the *impresa* that show it the most: “Sarebbe ora che questi avversarii riconoscessero che nel tricolore d’Italia c’è anche il rosso, e che questo rosso, dilatato fino a dominare prepotentemente gli altri due colori, dà il vero senso dei limiti e dei fini verso cui deve incanalarsi la nostra azione rivoluzionaria”<sup>25</sup>.

The opening had effect: there were many “ultra-rossi”, in fact, who replied to Carli’s invitation. A fruitful column, *Polemiche di anarchismo* (“Polemics about Anarchism”), published between September 26<sup>th</sup> to December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1920, hosted the debate.

The anarchists’ letters generally gravitate towards futurism, in which they admit seeing a certain libertarian vocation. They share with the legionaries of Fiume a dislike for socialist collectivism and adhesion to absolute individualism. Beyond contingent questions concerning interventionism and the *impresa*, some fundamental disagreements seem to divide anarchists and legionaries though, that is the problem of nations and the theme of the legitimacy of war.

Overall, the anarchists claim their lack of interest in the *impresa* and reject the idea that revolution is a question of territorial borders. They invite the editorial staff of *La Testa di Ferro* to admit that planning to overthrow all bourgeois institutions “significa volere sovvertire tutto il sistema economico politico sociale, non solo di Fiume o della Dalmazia, o della Italia tutta, ma del

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<sup>24</sup> See Carli, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Carli, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1920; Brutno, Marinetti, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Carli, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Occa, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1920; Novatore, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920; D’Arcola, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Carli, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Atomon, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

<sup>25</sup> “It is about time that these adversaries recognize that in the tricolor [Italian flag] there is red too, and that this red, dilated until it overwhelmingly dominates the other two colors, represents the true meaning of the limits and goals towards which our revolutionary action must channel itself”.

mondo intiero”<sup>26</sup> (Occa, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1920). As a matter of fact, it makes no difference that Fiume is part of Italy or of any other nation, “[se] nulla è risolto dell’attuale sistema economico”<sup>27</sup> (Occa, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1920). Since any kind of society unavoidably tends, for its own nature, to cage the wild spontaneity of life in its rigid structures, a war that is at the same time revolutionary *and* national can only bring to a refoundation of the same oppressive structure that it fought in the first place. In this sense, for the anarchists the only good war is the one aiming at the absolute and global liberation of the whole humankind.

According to the anarchists, the futurists found instead their utopian view on the ideal of an *individualist anarchic society*, that is clearly a contradictory concept: “Una Società presuppone un’assetto [sic] regolamentato, normalizzato mutuo o codificato. Società, legge, regolamento, norma, o come si voglia dire, è quanto di più eccellentemente antianarchico ed anti-individualistico vi possa essere”<sup>28</sup> (D’Arcola, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1920). The true anarchists acknowledge in fact only their own individuality and refuse any goal, expectation, and creed imposed from the others: “L’io anarchico non ha confini. Danza sull’arcobaleno del luminoso universo”<sup>29</sup> (Novatore, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920). Futurists indubitably showed that they demolished values as tradition, moral, and religion. All that remains for them is the last sacrifice: abandoning any faith in the nation and declaring themselves pure anarchists.

The legionaries of *La Testa di Ferro* replied with vehemence. About the issue of war, Carli defends, like Marinetti in *Al di là del comunismo*, the agonal character of life, that is its dynamic and conflicting being. He also invites his interlocutors to admit that – for however many reasons one can give – human beings’ actions will be always deep down moved by the need to expand the sphere of their free creative possibilities against all the obstacles, even with violence. Undergoing the test of war therefore raises in human beings the savage joy of exercising their own power. Even physical pain shows its vital function, in unloading a shock of reviving energy in the anesthetized organism of fighters and in awakening them from the trapping torpor of bourgeois society. On the other hand, Marinetti, as he

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<sup>26</sup> “[...] means to overturn the entire economic, political, and social system, not only of Fiume or Dalmatia, or of the whole Italy, but of the entire world”.

<sup>27</sup> “[...] if nothing of the current economic system is solved”.

<sup>28</sup> “Society presupposes a regulated, normalized, mutual or codified structure. Society, law, regulations, norm, or however you want to call it, it is the most excellently anti-anarchic and anti-individualistic [thing] there can be”.

<sup>29</sup> “The anarchic *I* does not have borders. It dances on the rainbow of the bright universe”.

already did in *Al di là del comunismo*, insists on the idea that revolutionary praxis operates efficaciously only in a determined and familiar space: this is why the futurist revolution aims only at Italy. In this sense, futurists preach a practical anarchism, while their interlocutors preach a utopian one.

In closing, Carli adds that he does not demand that the anarchists want an Italian Fiume, but that they at least acknowledge the revolutionary purpose of the *impresa*. He refuses to reduce it to a mere territorial issue, despite claiming the *fiumani*'s right to self-determination. In fact, the great apparent paradox of the political project promoted by *La Testa di Ferro* is that the aversion to an abstract kind of universal revolution coincides precisely with its willingness *to universalize the revolution of Fiume in a constellation of one-thousand other little revolutions*, which are different from each other and simultaneous to the Italian one. The *impresa* would so ideally overcome the mere taking of a city, because it aims to extend its struggle to the whole world, *but without imposing its own specific institutions*. The common ground between all the revolutions inspired by Fiume would therefore be the subversive ideal in the broader sense – revolution in general, as a transcendental, so to say – that is the will to overthrow the institutions in force, and to free people, classes, and individuals materially and spiritually.

Although *Polemiche di anarchismo* ended up in a sort of stalemate, *La Testa di Ferro* continued to show in many other ways its sympathy for ideas and figures of the anarchic movement, promoting both editorial projects (like the launch of the anarchic-futurist magazine, *Vertice* – “Vertex” – born from a collaboration between the anarchists Renzo Novatore and Auro d’Arcola, who participated in the debate of *Polemiche di anarchismo*, and the futurist painter Giovanni Governato<sup>30</sup>) and subversive plans (like the attempt to blow up the power plant of Milan, on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1920, realized by the legionaries Mario Carli and Cesare Cerati, and the anarchists Annunzio Filippi and Aurelio Tromba<sup>31</sup>).

As we saw, according to *La Testa di Ferro*, the revolutionary idea of *fumanesimo* does not impose as a universal model valid for everyone but incarnates precisely in the differences between the various local revolutionary expressions. This ambitious project therefore legitimates an alliance with the far left and the independentists of the entire world, under the common flag of an international political movement – the *Lega di Fiume* – to contrast the

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<sup>30</sup> See the advertising in “La Testa di Ferro”, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

<sup>31</sup> See Cordova, 2007: 103.



European and American imperialism embodied by the League of Nations. The persistent appreciation of *La Testa di Ferro* for anti-colonial movements – the Irish, the Egyptian, the Indian ones – that after the First World War animated the planet seems to aim precisely at laying the foundation for this alliance. In fact, if a revolution takes the character of the people who make it, every revolutionary attempt of peoples fighting for self-determination is worthy of support.

It is precisely in the wake of the question of the *Lega di Fiume* that a short debate between Mario Carli and Volt<sup>32</sup> – another original thinker of political futurism and sci-fi writer, who just arrived on the pages of the magazine – took place.

As well as contesting the term of *oppresso* (“oppressed one”) for the people of European colonies – a title that would permit them to lay claim to any right as it were due – Volt expresses strong doubts on the project of the *Lega di Fiume*, which was founded to unite all the “oppressed” people against European-American imperialism. He in fact fears that this project could turn against Italy itself, which is still a colonial power and whose territory hosts foreign minorities. With these premises, how could the *Lega* be the adequate tool to defend Italian national interests, besides those of Fiume itself?

At the end, Volt’s open letter ends up reaching a somewhat paroxysmal “clash of civilizations” tone, but his criticism does not appear without reasons. However, Carli answered back, first specifying that the title of “oppressi” is not at all “un ruolo da commedia, ma un vero e proprio titolo di nobiltà, se chi lo porta si batte per affrancarsi dall’oppressione”<sup>33</sup> (Volt, Carli, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1920). He clarifies also that, in his perspective, the objective of the *Lega* is not simply contingent, that is tied to the necessity to find endorsements to resolve the international question of Fiume, but it is to create a long-term global solidarity network against the common enemy: “la voracità plutocratica anglo-sassone-francese”<sup>34</sup> (Volt, Carli, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1920). To employ geopolitical language, Carli seems to propose a sort of grand strategy, typical of a revisionist power that, to emerge on the world stage, aims at taking the lead of all the countries hostile to the hegemonic subject(s). Regarding the issues of the colonies, he implicitly suggests that a superior grade of civilization and strength gives to a

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<sup>32</sup> “About Volt’s works and ideological path, see Della Casa, 2022”.

<sup>33</sup> “[...] oppressed ones”; “a comedy role, but an actual title of nobility, if who bears it fights to get free from oppression”.

<sup>34</sup> “[...] the plutocratic Anglo-Saxon-French voracity”.

people the right to dominate another one – in this way, confirming the agonal view of futurism. According to Carli, in fact, the oppressed should not be supported for pity, namely because they are weak, but precisely when, fighting for freedom, they show themselves to be strong and prove to deserve support.

In conclusion, *La Testa di Ferro* embodied the converging or complementary ideas of those movements that, seeing in the First World War revolutionary opportunities, aspired to a both material and spiritual upheaval of liberal Italy. All with the aim to dismantle the old bourgeois institutions, to create a society founded on the absolute creative freedom of individuals, and so to realize “un tipo di uomo libero e forte, unico e indiscusso arbitro dei proprii destini”<sup>35</sup> (Carli, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1920). The authors of *La Testa di Ferro* - who were viscerally pragmatic, unbiased, and for this reason opened to an argumentative dialogue with other political trends, like socialism and anarchism - promoted an alliance between the middle class and the proletariat, and planned the establishment of a national regime of social justice and direct democracy.

One of the main purposes of *La Testa di Ferro* is in fact the promotion of a politics that not only satisfies the material needs of the masses but opens to everyone the possibility of developing their own existential potential. It is not by chance that the figure of D’Annunzio strongly and insistently emerges during all the publications of the magazine, whereas the *impresa*, both in its military and legislative sides, appears above all as one (and the best) of his artworks. As an exemplary avant-garde magazine, *La Testa di Ferro* therefore truly incarnated in its revolutionary project the theme of *art-life*, identifying in the extraordinary *ordine lirico* (“lyrical order”) established in Fiume – where for more than a year a poet was in power, politics was realized by the creative genius, and revolution itself was a party – the model of its ideal society.

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<sup>35</sup> “[...] a type of human being which is free and strong, and the only and uncontested arbiter of their own destinies”.

#### 4. *The party of the spirit*

As we saw, during the *impresa di Fiume*, Guido Keller and Giovanni Comisso – an aviator and an adventurer the former, a soldier and a writer the latter, both “scalmanati” exponents of the *impresa* – actively collaborated with Mario Carli’s futurists. In fact, they published on *La Testa di Ferro* some short articles, and then a column entitled *Informazioni dello Yoga*<sup>36</sup> (“Information about Yoga”). The two groups worked together also in June 1920, when they printed the *Primo quaderno della “Yoga”* (“The first fascicle of “Yoga””), entitled *Il ballo di S. Vito* (“Saint Vito’s Ball”) and managed by the futurist Mino Somenzi: a magazine published in a single issue, with poems, lyric prose, and political articles. Many contributors of this volume are in fact the same of *La Testa di Ferro*; it is therefore not surprising that it was positively reviewed on Carli’s periodical<sup>37</sup>.

Despite the initial partnership with *La Testa di Ferro*, in the very last months of the *impresa* Keller and Comisso started to publish in Fiume their own avant-garde magazine, entitled precisely *Yoga*. As a matter of fact, a group called Yoga, defined as *Unione di spiriti liberi tendenti alla perfezione* (“Union of free spirits tending to perfection”), had already formed in 1920 – probably in summer – as a club of Dannunzian legionaries who aspired to promote a great spiritual transformation of society. But the magazine *Yoga* is launched only on August 29<sup>th</sup> on *La Testa di Ferro* itself, as well as in two manifestos<sup>38</sup>. Despite the ambitions, only four numbers will be published, between November 13<sup>th</sup> and December 4<sup>th</sup>. All the articles were anonymous or signed by symbols, even if it is possible to attribute most of them to Keller and Comisso themselves<sup>39</sup>.

Despite many programmatic points in common with *La Testa di Ferro*, *Yoga* had its own watchwords, sometimes but not always superimposable to those of Mario Carli’s group. The first perceivable difference between the

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<sup>36</sup> “See Comisso, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Comisso, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Keller, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920; Keller, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1920. *Informazioni dello Yoga* appears instead on the numbers of August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1920; September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1920; September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1920”.

<sup>37</sup> See Tignola, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

<sup>38</sup> Respectively republished in Somenzi, 2018: 33; and Gerra, 1974-1975: 150-151.

<sup>39</sup> About *Yoga*, see Carpi, 1981; Salaris, 2002: 47-73; Bartolini, 2003; Bartolini, 2020: 13-84. This last book republished *in full* all the articles of the magazine. More information about Comisso and Keller in Fiume are in their own published works. See Comisso, 2002: 3-89, 1103-1174; Keller, 2019.

two magazines is the more “theoretical” nature of *Yoga*. In fact, despite the imaginative appearance of its analyses and proposals, *La Testa di Ferro* mainly kept a political discourse and a pragmatic tone. On the other hand, *Yoga*, while not lacking in contributions focused on current affairs, primarily expressed enunciations of principle and aesthetic suggestions aiming at permeating an action to come.

The worldview of *Yoga* leaps immediately out for its radical idealism, tending to be a form of absolute activism<sup>40</sup>. The claimed ideal of the magazine, in fact, is not a transcendent metaphysical essence, but the ideal embodied in the activity of the spirit, that is the human subject that everyone of us actively is: “Non per un ideale: ma per esser ciò l’ideale”<sup>41</sup> (*Fiori di loto*, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920). Reading this magazine, one cannot count the references to the superiority of the spirit over matter, which is understood not as an ontological dimension opposed to the spiritual one, but instead “*emanazione dello spirito mossa dal senso estetico*”<sup>42</sup> (*Il fior di loto*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920): namely its product. And in the absolute unit of the spirit not only the whole space but also time is included – “Noi siamo in relazione con tutte le parti dell’universo – anzi anche con il passato e con l’avvenire”<sup>43</sup> (*Profezie*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920). It is thanks to their exceptional sensitivity that the artists can overcome their own individual identity and source to their eternal transcendental bottom, until they feel the entire spatiotemporal continuum vibrate within themselves.

The idea of a Panicle unity between spirit and matter, human being and natural world, often appears in Comisso’s lyrical prose, while the articles attributed to Keller – among which stands out a polemic against futurist *a-human art*<sup>44</sup> – insists on the ontological primacy of the human subject, understood as an individual, free from any trammel imposed by external reality. In the framework of this conception, “[il] fatto che ci stringe” – the cast-iron necessity that the external world imposes us – “non è che la pigrizia del nostro spirito”<sup>45</sup>, namely the self-delusion of a subject that

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<sup>40</sup> On Italian activism between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Meregalli, 2024.

<sup>41</sup> “[...] not for an ideal: but to be the ideal”.

<sup>42</sup> “[...] *an emanation of the spirit moved by the aesthetic sense*”.

<sup>43</sup> “[...] We are in relationship with all the parts of the universe – in fact, with the past and the future too”.

<sup>44</sup> See “*Arte Aumana*”, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920. Marinetti replied to Keller’s criticism precisely on *La Testa di Ferro*, in an article entitled *Polemiche sintetiche* (Marinetti, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1920) where he reviewed *Yoga* as a magazine that does not lack of futurist nuances, but also of residuals of *passatismo*.

<sup>45</sup> “[...] [the] fate that grasps us is nothing else than the laziness of our spirit”.

does not yet have the courage to undertake the responsibility to create its own world. But one day – the authors of *Yoga* forecast – thanks to “[l’] ampliamento della cultura della nostra attività, noi stessi ci trasformeremo nel fato”; and therefore “non vi sarà più natura”, because “sarà trasformata a poco alla volta in un mondo spirituale”<sup>46</sup> (*Profezie* November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920).

But the idealism of *Yoga*, far from being a mere speculative stand, is also a form of rebellion against the bourgeois principles of economism, in perfect agreement with the poetics of all the European artistic avant-garde of that time: a *rivolta ideale*, as Alfredo Oriani called it, that does not take any value or limit for granted, but protests any conformity, mediocrity, and convention, and tries to transpose in concrete life the infinite freedom of art. Like *La Testa di Ferro*, *Yoga* too therefore associates this view to a form of anarchic individualism, celebrating life not in its material and economic dimension, but mainly in the spiritual and aesthetic one, all the way to the glorification – in perfect overlapping with the futurist perspective – of extraordinary and energizing experiences, like those of the war that just ended, and violence in general.

From this *Weltanschauung* derives the actual action program of *Yoga*: to create a *party of the spirit*<sup>47</sup>, a new aristocracy that transcends the partial interests in collective life and contributes to develop “il senso di razza”<sup>48</sup> (*Il fior di loto* November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920) of Italian people<sup>49</sup>. The perspective of the magazine goes in other words beyond any ideological split, but in the perspective of the unity of the nation. It is in fact only refusing to internalize the *grand récit* imposed by the hegemonic powers of northern Europe and cultivating its own human factor that Italy can in turn become again the protagonist of world history. The editorial staff of *Yoga* therefore shows to have the same geopolitical intuition of *La Testa di Ferro*, when it writes in its debut article:

È duro ma occorre fin da ora confessare che a mezzo del linguaggio moderno europeo e a mezzo del sistema di vita e di traffico delle razze sovrastanti è vana cosa sperare, per la nostra razza un avvenire indipendente e trionfante.

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<sup>46</sup> “[...] [the] extension of the culture of our activity, we ourselves will transform into the fate”; “[...] there will not be nature anymore”; “[...] it will little by little be transformed into a spiritual world”.

<sup>47</sup> See *Movimento Yoga*, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

<sup>48</sup> “[...] the sense of race”.

<sup>49</sup> The concept of “razza”, here and in the whole *Yoga*, is understood in an ethnic, historical and cultural way.

Come è possibile ottenere pensiero, giudizio e diritto italico senza la possessione sicura di una nostra moneta e di una nostra spada e soprattutto di un mistero realizzato quale nostro valore e fascino?<sup>50</sup> (*Il fior di loto*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920)

In a few lines *Yoga* synthesizes a general formula for the long-term revisionist strategy of a power that refuses to show interest only to immediate economic and administrative issues: not only equipping with a sovereign currency and sufficient military forces (*hard power*), but also elaborating a collective storytelling, and cultivating its own culture and values, able to seduce, attract, and persuade the other geopolitical actors (*soft power*).

*Yoga* identifies the Italian anthropological character, as well as in the predisposition to agriculture and navigation rather than in the industrial activity<sup>51</sup>, in the invincible tendency to individualism, to the molecularity of localism, and to social conflict: a character that is unavailable to the leveling and the homogenization typical of the modern nation, that the authors of the magazine associate with the “razze negative”<sup>52</sup> (*Lo spirito italico e la reazione europea* November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920) of northern Europe – namely France and England, which are also frequently linked to the disadvantages of parliamentarianism.

It is interesting to note that this analysis of the Italian human factor, apart from recalling the futurist theses of *La Testa di Ferro*, anticipated Robert Ardrey’s intuitions on Italy by almost fifty years. In his masterpiece, *The Territorial Imperative*, he in fact identified Italy not with a nation, but with a *noyau*, that is an ethnic nucleus kept together by conflict rather than cohesion<sup>53</sup>. By virtue of the continue stimulation characterizing any *noyau*, in Ardrey’s opinion Italy is more disposed than other nations to produce *geniuses*, that is original individuals and cultural trends. An idea that *Yoga* shows to share when, comparing Italy with the other great European nations, one of its authors wrote:

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<sup>50</sup> “It is hard, but we need to confess as of now that through the modern European language, and through the life and trade system of the northern races, it is vain to hope for our race an independent and triumphant future. How is it possible to get Italic thought, law, and right, without the firm possession of our own sword, and, above all, of a realized mystery as our value and allure?”.

<sup>51</sup> See *Valori italici*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

<sup>52</sup> “[...] negative races”.

<sup>53</sup> See Ardrey, 2014: 151-154.

per noi, razza di stirpi libere e indomabili, geniale e irrequieta creatrice di nuovo, feconda plasmatrice di fantastiche essenze e rivoluzionari sistemi, può darsi che sia stato escogitato dalle famose razze pensanti [*i.e.* le razze nord-europee] questo sistema di nazione che convenientemente arredato e decorato del sensibile necessario fu da noi ardentemente abbracciato portandoci verso una personalità (forma omogenea e controllabile) e quindi ad un pudore e ad un senso di responsabilità morale che in parte riuscì a trasmutarci, in modo da poter stare alla loro tavola e parlare il loro linguaggio.<sup>54</sup> (*Prospettive italiane*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920)

The suggested solution to make Italy the protagonist of its own destiny again can therefore only be “anti-European” and sounds as paradoxical as the ones proposed by Carli and Marinetti on *La Testa di Ferro*: not neutralizing, but finding strength in the *noyau*; not removing, but canalizing and normalizing the intimate *polemos* of the Italian spirit. Conflict, after all, generates history: a perspective that pushes *Yoga* not to deprecate, but to exalt the condition of crisis that Italy is experiencing in the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century:

occorre vincere il nemico che è in noi, facendo scaturire dal cozzo violento delle nostre individualità (uomini contro uomini) e delle nostre stirpi (regione contro regione) nella libera danza del duello e del combattimento secondo gli eroici istinti il nostro verbo di dominio. Non frenesia e lotta secondo le popolari volontà e intelligenze, ma olimpico assecondamento dei fenomeni e degli eventi presente il solenne istinto di razza: indipendenza!<sup>55</sup> (*Prospettive italiane*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920)

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<sup>54</sup> “[...] maybe the famous thinking [north-European] races devised for us – a race of free and untamable bloodlines, an ingenious and unsettled creator of the new, a fruitful shaper of fantastic essences and revolutionary systems – this national system that, suitably furnished and decorated with the necessary sensitivity, was fervently embraced by us. And that brought us towards a personality (a homogenous and controllable form), and therefore to a modesty and a sense of moral responsibility that in part was able to transmute us, so that we could sit at their [of the north-European races] table and speak their language”.

<sup>55</sup> “[...] we need to win the enemy within us, bringing out our word of dominion from the violent clash of our individualities (human beings against human beings) and bloodlines (region against region), in the free dance of the duel and the fight, according to the heroic instincts. [This must] Not [be] frenzy and struggle according to the people’s wills and intellects, but Olympian indulging the phenomena and the events, being the solemn instinct of the race present: independence!”. About the anti-centralist stand of *Yoga*, see also *Unità d’Italia per il decentramento regionale*, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920.



Precisely like for *La Testa di Ferro*, according to *Yoga* a true Italian nationalism can therefore only be founded on the individualistic character of Italians, so close to the revolutionary spirit of avant-gardes. Once again, it is an inescapable dialectical circle. It is therefore necessary to make the two poles of individualism and nationalism wittingly coincide: the avant-garde principle of the ideal revolt against any reality external to the human subject needs to become the (geo)political action that aims at a national revolution. Or, as futurists would probably write, *individualism = nationalism*. The legislative system established by D'Annunzio and De Ambris with the *Carta del Carnaro* would therefore be only the anticipation of this paradoxical and ambitious project, which hopefully will extend itself from Fiume to Italy, and then to the whole world.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis that I developed in the previous pages let us identify the differences and similarities between the two avant-garde magazines that animated the *impresa di Fiume*, *La Testa di Ferro* and *Yoga*.

In addition to their different contributors, the two periodicals had certainly diverse editorial and aesthetic configurations: more influenced by futurism and oriented towards immediate politics, the former; more theoretical and idealist, if not even anti-industrialist, the latter. But these magazines had also important points of tangency and overlap: first of all the radical and congruent avant-garde poetics inspiring both experiences, and its glaring (geo)political outcome.

As a matter of fact, both *Yoga* and *La Testa di Ferro* pursue the complete liberation of individuals by any limit imposed by the external world – first, by bourgeois society, which institutionalizes art separating it from life, and therefore neutralizes its revolutionary load. Their final goal is in fact to accomplish the full creative freedom of art in life itself: “*fare la propria vita come si fa un’opera d’arte*”, indeed. However, as we anticipated in the introduction, if it does not want to remain an empty dream, this kind of liberation necessarily implies a strong political commitment, that is the transformation of the artistic avant-garde into a true political one. It is first and foremost in this way that art, for avant-gardes, becomes life.

It is interesting to underline the virtuous circle established between the historical episode of the *impresa di Fiume* and these two avant-garde initiatives. On one hand, the *impresa* inspired them, offering the historic occasion and the ideological ground where to settle in. On the other hand, *La Testa di Ferro* and *Yoga* ambitiously claimed to shape the *impresa* in turn, transforming it into an actual long-time national-revolutionary project. What I called the “geopolitical intuition” of these two magazines, from which many of their main instances derive, is in fact strictly linked to this project: the idea, also instilled by the experience of the First World War, that in history one cannot escape the necessity of conflict and violence; the perspective that a revolution, to be effective, needs to root in the human factor of the people undertaking it; the project to assemble an elite superior to social and ideological divisions, able to take the power and form a new intellectual apparatus to lead the nation;

the need to establish a grand strategy for Italy, forming a coalition of revisionist subjects against the current hegemonic powers; the urgency of elaborating a community storytelling that unites together society and fascinates foreign countries.

As we saw, the two magazines articulate this storytelling in a very similar way, namely as the myth<sup>56</sup> of the coincidence of individual freedom and national interests – or, if you want, of avant-garde idealism and geopolitical realism. In fact, the great revolution that according to *Yoga* and *La Testa di Ferro* will bring to the human being's liberation – the main objective of the artistic avant-gardes – can only happen at a political and collective level. It is therefore not a case that both Marinetti and Carli, and Keller and Comisso choose to be enthusiastically *italianisti*<sup>57</sup>: in this way from artistic the avant-garde becomes truly political, and therefore *geopolitical*, that is consciously and proudly placed in a certain time and space, active and effective in a specific historical and geographical context. After all, when *La Testa di Ferro* and *Yoga* declare that anarchic individualism is the main human factor of Italy, they seem precisely to find in this anthropological character the very own essence of avant-garde itself. The circle of individualism and nationalism, avant-garde idealism and geopolitical realism that was one of the greatest and most fascinating paradoxes of the *impresa di Fiume* is therefore welded and sealed.

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<sup>56</sup> On the importance of myth for geopolitical analysis, see *Limes*, 2020.

<sup>57</sup> See Gentile, 2006.

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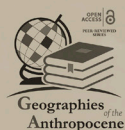
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