

La comunità mutilata:
Embodiment, Corporality, and the Reconstruction of the Italian Body Politic in the Works
of F.T. Marinetti and Gabriele D'Annunzio

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Abstract

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“La comunità mutilata: Embodiment, Corporality, and the Reconstruction of the Italian Body Politic in the works of F.T. Marinetti and Gabriele D'Annunzio”, is a study in how discourses of technological modernism, nationality, and woundedness operate on the longstanding metaphor of the body politic. It focuses on the writings of two of Italy's most controversial, and influential, figures during and after the First World War. I show how mutilated and prosthetic bodies become powerful political metaphors for both Marinetti and D'Annunzio, which upend and transform the notion of the body politic in posthuman, postliberal and antidemocratic ways. This study is grounded in literary analysis, but draws from political philosophy, art history and rhetoric to examine Marinetti's futurist manifestos, novels, and poetry (1909-1921), and D'Annunzio's political speeches relating to the occupation of the city of Fiume (1919-1920).

In Chapter 1, I analyze Marinetti's manifestos produced between 1909 and 1918 in order to demonstrate how Marinetti inaugurates the post-humanist discourse of cybernetics. In Chapter 2, I provide a reading of two of Marinetti's prose works, *L'alcova d'acciaio* (1921), and *Come si seducono le donne* (1917), in order to demonstrate the connection between the representation of prosthesis and the attempt to construct an anti-democratic mode of political subjectivity in Italy. In Chapters 3 and 4, I analyze the speeches and writings of Gabriele D'Annunzio during his occupation of the eastern Adriatic city of Fiume (now Rijeka) as they pertain to the promotion of the concept of Italian irredentism as a means of overcoming the “mutilated victory” of World War One, and the construction of a postliberal form of *italianità*.

This study takes as its guiding premise the notion that metaphors of corporality act upon the experiences of individual and collective embodiment, and that they provide forms in which the body politic is recognized. I illustrate how the language of nationalism converges with the desire to enhance, extend, and expand the limits of the self to produce a model of Italian national identity

that is grounded upon an embrace of the traumatic possibilities of war and technological modernization in the works of these two figures. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate how both F.T. Marinetti's and Gabriele D'Annunzio's texts reflect a transitional moment for the discourse of Italian national identity between the Liberal nation and the Fascist state.

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Introduction

This dissertation argues that the discourses of technological modernism in the works of F.T. Marinetti and Gabriele D'Annunzio construct an image of Italian society as a mutilated body. The confrontation between modernist aesthetics, technological modernization and the traumatic experience of the First World War in their texts produces metaphors of political community characterized by a rejection of the human body as a natural, necessary component of the subject. They oppose the mutilated, prosthetic body of the postliberal nation to the organic, autonomous body of the individual subject in liberal-democratic ideology. In doing so, their works problematize the boundary between autonomy and control, interior subjectivity and exterior subjection, representation and reproduction. I argue that a more thorough reading of these largely understudied texts can aid scholars in better understanding the key role played by these two figures in the gradual disintegration of ideas of democracy and personal freedom in the socio-political arena pursuant to the rise of Fascism in 1922.

The first forty-three years of the twentieth in Italy bore witness to the rise of mass political culture and the devastation of two total wars. In addition to that, the birth and growth of Marxist and other anti-capitalist political movements on one hand, and extreme nationalist-conservative movements on the other; economic crisis; the disintegration of the liberal-democratic order; and the rise and fall of two totalitarian regimes whose imprint on the development of European culture would last for decades to come. In the sphere of cultural production, this period in Italy saw a flourishing of experimental forms of representation in literature, music and the visual arts that are influential elements of the European modernism. The genesis of one such movement, Futurism, would have a profound influence both culturally and politically in Italy and abroad. As Janice Ho has recently argued, the kinds of alternative political and artistic modes of representation that circulated across the continent are equally reflective of a general sense of rupture with traditional liberal tenets at the dawn of the twentieth century (47).

These tenets focused on the centrality of the individual as the primary unit of social organization, an individual endowed with natural rights to freedom, autonomy, and self-regulation. Ho argues that modernist, and particularly avant-garde, aesthetics can be understood as clearly concerned with the breakdown of liberal institutions and values that occurs as the result of the processes of modernization and the associated unmooring of traditional social values (50-51). The question of whether or not artistic modernism shares the same sense of rupture with classical liberal ideology as modern political formations seems to miss the mark. What does ring true, at least in Italy, is that the intimate relationship between cultural production and political ideology is at the basis of the transition away from traditional modes of representing the subject as an autonomous individual toward a vision of the modern political subject as a function of the nation.

With this in mind, I analyze the related discourses of mutilation, reconstruction, and national identity in Marinetti and D'Annunzio's pre-and immediate postwar texts. I do so in an attempt to demonstrate the ways in which their representations of mutilation and prosthesis reflect an important moment in Italian history when both the aestheticization of politics and the crisis of the liberal nation-state influenced the

trajectory of the development of mass politics, and the breakdown of the democratic order. I take as a guiding premise the notion that the formulation and promotion of related, though distinct, cultural aesthetics by these two figures impacts the fundamental relationship between the individual and the nation in Liberal Italy in ways that emphasize the reinforcement of the latter, and the ultimate erasure for the former.

Recently, interdisciplinary studies focusing on the impact of constructions of race, national identity, gender and political community have demonstrated the fact that a variety of discursive practices contributed as much to the difficult process of modernization in Italy as did economic or geo-political factors.¹ As Susan Stewart-Steinberg eloquently phrases it, Italy's history in the so-called Liberal period is "the history of a state in search of a nation". Stewart-Steinberg and others have attempted, with great success, to analyze this remarkable period in Italy as more than merely a precursory moment on the road to Italian fascism, nor as wholly the result of Italy's comparatively late processes of modernization, and industrialization.

Rather, it is understood as a crucial moment in which the discourses of national cohesion, technological advancement, and political crisis converge. In the work that follows, I will attempt to contribute to this viewpoint. I argue that in the period between the First World War and the rise of fascism, the convergence of these discourses within the works of two of Italy's most influential cultural figures produced an image of a postliberal, anti-humanist subject that would represent the modern Italian nation.

This dissertation takes part in a longstanding conversation within critical studies in which the human body is treated as the site on which a multiplicity of discursive practices related to the formation and consolidation of self, nation, gender, sexuality, productivity and power operate.² A guiding principle of my argument is that the experiences of physicality and consciousness are more influenced by, rather than influential to, systems of individual and collective representation including, but not limited to, rhetoric, the visual and literary arts, and media. Furthermore, I claim that the representation of these experiences is fundamental to the development of modern political subjectivity at the level of the individual, the national, and the global. The body is thus a crossroads of sorts, at which the organization and regulation of the discreet subject intersects with the organization and regulation of society.

With its concomitant processes of physical generation and degradation, the body forms a complex yet universally recognizable text that has spanned centuries and cultures as it operates as a marker of both individual and collective identities.³

¹ These studies tend to focus on the ways in which notions of an Italian national subject are produced in the various inflections of positivist, anti-modern, colonialist, chauvinist, aesthetic discourses that circulate within Italy following the unification and which appear in a variety of forms. For examples see: Susan Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1861-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Alexel Körner, *The Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Eliza Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911: Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

² As such, a number of contemporary literary critics, cultural theorists, and historians have engaged with the question of the body's relationship to cultural formations across time and within various fields of inquiry. A representative sample of such works, of the type that have influenced this study, include: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981); Dalia Judovitz, *The Culture of the Body: Genealogies of Modernity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Antonio Damasio, *Descartes Error: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999).

Representations of bodies in media, the arts, or political discourse often reinforce the durability of the metaphor's binding power through the projection of stable, strong, healthy bodies. Alternatively, the destruction of bodies often signals the transgression of social bonds threatening the disintegration of the community in the physical and psychological fragmentation of the individual subject.

The experience of First World War between 1914 and 1918 effected the ability of the body (most often figured as male) to generate stable meaning in a world marked by the technological transformations and the trauma resulting from continent-wide total warfare. The war radically altered the contours of a metaphor that for much of Western history has engendered representations of organic and spiritual wholeness for social formations whose ideological structures often operated under the veneer of natural flesh. Within this context, the wounded body and the possibilities of artificial reconstruction afforded by advancements in medical science and engineering throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries occupy a particularly important position because they represent both the transgression of boundaries, and the transformation of the self in the age of mass politics and mechanical reproduction.

I have divided the arguments of the dissertation into two halves. The first half, consisting of two chapters, deals with the elements of avant-garde, techno-modernism that characterize the artistic principles of Marinetti's futurism as it plays out in his numerous manifestos, the *parole in libertà* (words in freedom) poems, and his prose works relating to the First World War. The second half, also consisting of two chapters, focuses on the more historicizing, though nonetheless experimental elements of D'Annunzio's nationalism, as it was manifest in his writings and speeches from the occupation of the city of Fiume (Rijeka) from 1919 to 1920. In the first half of the dissertation, my aim is to demonstrate how the prosthetic body functions for Marinetti as a productive metaphor for a proto-cybernetic body politic oriented toward the erasure of physical body as a marker of the self. I argue for a reading of the centrality of communications technology in futurist aesthetics that understands corporality to be chiefly a function of textual manipulation and information processing, such that notions of selfhood are dependent on the subjects linkage to networks of analogy, which are akin to circuits.

In the second half of the dissertation I focus on the body-centric rhetorical strategies that coalesce into the discourse of the *vittoria mutilata* (mutilated victory), Italy's perceived disgrace at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919, in D'Annunzio's political writings and speeches immediately following the First World War. I show how the resulting occupation of the city of Fiume between 1919 and 1920 by D'Annunzio and his legionnaires reflects a postliberal, proto-totalitarian notion of national community that troubles attempts to categorize dannunzian politics as the ideological precursor to fascism. In doing so, I hope to highlight how modernist aesthetics influenced the long-

³ These included social, political and spiritual hierarchies such as the Church, figured as the "body of Christ"; secular monarchy, figured as the head of the body politic; liberal democratic civic and political institutions, e.g. parliament as a "sovereign body". As Shadi Barch points out in the first chapter of her excellent reading of bodily mutilation and political discourse in Lucan's *Pharsalia*: "Even the literary text-in-prescriptions from Aristotle's *Poetics* to the New Criticism in general-falls prey to this influence of this analogy, so that the failed story, the inferior plot, is the one that is not organic, intact of limb, and well proportioned" (11).

standing question of Italian national identity in ways that were both subversive and reactionary.

Moreover, I argue that any attempt to understand how the manipulation of political subjectivity conditions the representation of the national community in Italy following the First World War must take into account the ways in which the mutilated body serves primarily as a metaphor for the nation. I focus on Marinetti and D'Annunzio because the manifestations of this anti-liberal, posthuman "body politics" to be found in their texts most influence the cultural and political climate in Italy between the disintegration of the liberal state, and the ascension of the fascist regime in 1922. At stake in this dissertation, then, is a critical reevaluation of the political projects of two of Italy's most influential cultural figures of the period. A clearer understanding of how each one conceives of the relationship between corporeal integrity and national identity will better aid us in charting the important role played by modernist aesthetics in the transition from liberal democracy to totalitarianism in Italy after the First World War.

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Chapter 1

The Flesh Made Word: F.T. Marinetti's Cybernetic Subject

In this chapter, I look at the ways in which the literary experimentation of Futurism's founder F.T. Marinetti produces an image of the political body, and in doing so inaugurates the discursive relationship between cybernetics and subjectivity at the foundation of post-humanist theory.¹ Though the shift from a Post-Industrial to an Information Society is commonly thought to occur in the years immediately following the Second World War, I argue that the Futurist concern with information production and its manipulation towards the formation of the subject reflects its having already begun prior to the First World War.² Moreover, I argue that the futurist exaltation of violence, speed,

¹ The concept of the post-human arises in a number of fields such as philosophy, science fiction, critical theory, and contemporary art. A helpful description incorporating as many discourses as possible is that provided by Chris Hables Gray, Steven Mentor, and Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera: "By the end of World War Two it was very clear that the mechanization of the human, the vitalization of the machine, and the integration of both into cybernetics was producing a whole new range of informational disciplines, fantasies, and practices that transgressed the machinic-organic border. This marks a major transition from a world where distinctions between human and tool, human and machine, living and dead, organic and inorganic, present and distant, natural and artificial seemed clear (even if they really weren't) to the present, where all these distinctions seem plastic, if not ludicrous." In "Cyborgology: Constructing the Knowledge of Cybernetic Organisms", in *The Cyborg Handbook*, eds. Chris Hables Gray, Steven Mentor, and Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera (New York: Routledge, 1995) 5. As such it engages in a critical reevaluation of the humanist subject's supposed naturalness, itself the effect of a problematic relationship between physicality and . Soper and Davies provide thorough and useful histories of the development of various strains of humanism, including its Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment manifestations. See: Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1986); Tony Davies, *Humanism* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Badmington offers an overview of posthumanism, which he generally defines as "a refusal to take humanism for granted". See: Neil Badmington, *Posthumanism* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 10. Hayles, Halberstam, and Haraway view the post- human with some optimism, in ways that challenge many traditional humanist values. See N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, eds. *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991).

² Most theories concerning the rise of information technology in the cultural sphere take the immediate post-war period as a point of departure, whereas a number of theorists in the field of information theory and media see a connection between modern forms of media and the early development of communications technologies. On the former see Sergio Verdú and Steven W. McLaughlin, *Information Theory: 50 Years of Discovery* (Piscataway: Wiley-IEEE Press, 1999); Robert Hassan, *The Information Society: Cyber Dreams and Digital Nightmares* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008); Manuel Castells, *The Rise of The Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society, Culture Vol 1* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009). Studies that take into account the changing modes of representation inherent in the rise of an Information Society include Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Originally published: (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), (London : Routledge, 2001); Mark Hansen, *Embodiment Technesis : Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); R.L. Rutsky, *High Technē: Art and Technology From the machine Aesthetic to the Posthuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, (1986) Trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

and wireless technology conceives of war as a form of interaction founded on, and governed by, principles of technological communication and sensory perception, figuring it as a model for political community in the post-war period.

Within the context of an epistemological shift rooted in the possibility of non-corporeal presence, the body as a social, political and economic metaphor is re-conceptualized by artists, philosophers, theoreticians and scientists across Europe.³ In the case of Italy, the body as political metaphor is capable of providing a stable image of both the individual subject and the national collective as it structures the relationship between artistic practice and political engagement for the modernist avant-garde. I argue that Futurist poetics is above all concerned with exploring the boundaries, or bounded-ness, of the body as a means of responding to the cultural and political instability that characterized the liberal Italian nation-state since its unification in 1861.

Looking specifically at the work of F.T. Marinetti, I argue that he employs notions of fragmentation, extension, and enhancement as further challenges to the idea of the autonomous liberal subject. In doing so, Marinetti's texts appropriate the discourse of Italian national identity as an artificial construct towards anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-humanist ends. Most studies on Futurism and Marinetti focus on the links between futurist aesthetics and the representation of the body in the context of a reaction to the psychically destabilizing effects of technological modernization, war, and gender politics. More often than not these categories tend to coalesce in what has been called the "futurist ideal of masculinity", which structures the appeal to technology as an attempt to overcome the tension between the desire for reinforcement of the male ego and the desire to dissolve it (Poggi 151). The question I ask, is can we locate a particular anxiety dealing with the question of national identity within Marinetti's discourse of technological hybridization?

Moreover, I ask whether and to what extent futurist poetics foregrounds the act of textual production within a project of national renewal and a proto- imperialist understanding of the subject/object distinction, such that notions of fragmentation and dispersal come to define Italian nationality. If so, what are the ways in which this new formulation of the national subject as man/machine conceives of how bodies become sites of productivity and reproductivity? Finally, how does the relationship between the rise of the Information Age, and the experience of the First World War impact Marinetti's conception of Italian identity?

The relationship between cultural production and political subjectivity in Liberal Italy is inseparable from considerations of the effect that technological modernization had upon every facet of society inside and outside of Italy. The link between industrial, agricultural, socio-political, economic modernization and the broader cultural movement labeled Modernism is perhaps more distinct in Italy than in other countries because of Italy's later involvement in these processes compared to its European counterparts. As a reaction to the failures of the Liberal state, the genesis and ascension of Futurism is

³Studies that analyze instances of a preoccupation with, and thematization of, technology in other expressions of the European avant-garde see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in "The Large Glass" and Related Works*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Lawrence S. Rainey, "Taking Dictation: Collage Poetics, Pathology, and Politics", in *Modernism/Modernity*, Volume 5, Number 2, April 1998, pp. 123-53; Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

often understood as part of a range of reactions to the experience of modernization within Italy that attempted to reconceptualize not only the role of the state in relation to society, but the place of the individual within both.

I look specifically at the genre of poetry which Marinetti names *parole in libertà* (words in freedom), to elucidate the manner in which the body is deconstructed and reconstituted as words assembled in a closed system of signification that I liken to the structure of the cybernetic system. In addition, I examine the relationship between formal experimentation and ideological process that drives the futurist exaltation of syntactical and grammatical “freedom” found in the technical manifestos. I claim that in Marinetti’s theoretical and textual production communication becomes synonymous with corporality. The textual body, as the only possible mode of materializing consciousness is not a figuration of the physical body, but rather a structuring element of the physical body itself as circuitry.

My work here deviates somewhat from the path established by preceding studies. Many tend to focus on the underlying ideological processes at work in the literary and visual representations of Italian society in the early half of the twentieth century. The frequent exaltations of violence, (almost viral) virility, speed and mechanics by Futurism’s founder F.T. Marinetti, his associates and followers are largely understood as fundamentally reactionary. Some scholars have characterized it as a response to a “fin de siècle malaise”, while others have characterized Futurism in terms of its relation to capitalism and fascism (Blum 4-5; Issak 55-6). Moreover, the preoccupation with configurations of gender and sexuality in Futurist texts has lead literary scholars to place a primary emphasis on the relationship between sexuality, violence and power in the Futurist artistic and political projects.⁴

Italian Futurism primarily occupies itself with incorporating nascent processes of technological modernization into a larger political project based on the centrality of aesthetics. The fundamental interpretive key is the recognition that *what is conveyed* through textual representation is as important as the *manner in which it is conveyed*. While necessary and revelatory, the work done thus far on Futurism has unfortunately overlooked the role of technology as the central element, both aesthetically and politically, of Futurist poetics and politics.⁵ By formulating an image of the subject that moves beyond questions of gender and political affiliations, futurism blends that particularly Italian preoccupation with the art of representation with a then-barely-yet developed science of information technology and mass communications.

This is not only the case because form dictates the extent to which content is absorbed into the social fabric, but because the rise of information technology such as the radio, telephone, and cinema necessitate a different understanding of how

⁴ Chief among them are Blum, cit.; Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra: Da Marinetti a Malaparte* (Bari: Laterza, 1970); Alice Kaplan, "Futurism and Fascism: Reflexions on the 70th Anniversary of the Trial of *Maifarka the Futurist*", *Yale Italian Studies* 1.3, 1981:48; Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁵ Two notable exceptions are Jeffrey Schnapp's "Propeller Talk", in *Modernism/Modernity* 1.3 (1994) 153-178; Timothy Campbell, *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

information is produced, and how it is received. Indeed Marinetti's "wireless imagination" expanding out from the artistic realm into the sociopolitical sphere prefigures our own contemporary reliance on high-speed, computerized communication networks as a major site of economic and social exchange. At stake in the futurist model of communicative corporality, is the production of nationalized subjects at once bound to the social network of the *patria*, and engineered as self-possessed, psychologically armored individuals. Thus, I characterize futurist subjectivity as based on the interplay between reflexivity and feedback in the production and distribution of information. I argue that these concepts form the basis of what we may call the "cybernetic" subject.

It is important to draw a distinction regarding the terms prosthetic and cybernetic, as well as to highlight the theoretical continuity between them. Though the terms *prostheses*, *cybernetic*, and its counterpart *cyborg* do not appear in Futurist works, they are particularly useful in investigating the link between the artistic practices of the modernist avant-garde and the discourse of technological culture in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁶ The model for individual as well as group subjectivity within which these terms operate provides a clearer understanding of the socio-political ramifications of Marinetti's artistic experimentation.

As a category of analysis, prosthesis has been somewhat difficult to define. This is in no small part due to its ambiguous meaning as a term. It first appears in the English language in 1553 as a term denoting the addition of a letter or syllable to the beginning of a word. Such an addition would make the word easier to pronounce or more recognizable to speakers of a common language unfamiliar with a particular word. Prosthesis takes on its common definition as the "replacement of defective or absent

⁶ The term cyborg was coined by Manfred E. Clynes, who co-authored, with Nathan S. Kline, the article "Cyborgs and Space" in 1960. He defines them thus: "For the exogenously extended organizational complex functioning as an integrated homeostatic system unconsciously, we propose the term "Cyborg". The Cyborg deliberately incorporates exogenous components extending the self regulatory control function of the organism in order to adapt it to new environments." In *Astronautics*, September, 1960, p. 29. The term has gone on to become a central category in the work of posthumanist theorizations of political subjectivity in an Information Society. It's most renowned manifestation came in the work of the philosopher Donna Haraway, who appropriated it as a form of identity that resists stabilizing, totalizing structures through its mobility. She writes: "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. This cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. In the traditions of 'Western' science and politics--the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other - the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination. This chapter is an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction. It is also an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end. The cyborg incarnation is outside salvation history. Nor does it mark time on an oedipal calendar, attempting to heal the terrible cleavages of gender in an oral symbiotic utopia or post-oedipal apocalypse. As Zoe Sofoulis argues in her unpublished manuscript on Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, and nuclear culture, the most terrible and perhaps the most promising monsters in cyborg worlds are embodied in non-oedipal narratives with a different logic of repression, which we need to understand for our survival." (149)

parts of the body by artificial substitutes" in 1706.⁷ With its double meaning as both addition and replacement, the prosthetic as David Wills has argued can best be understood as a relationship of mutual signification between two elements characterized by a disproportionate emphasis placed on one element as an effect of the other.⁸

Recently, scholars from a variety of disciplines have begun to embrace prosthesis as a critical tool that can help explore the relationship between humanity and technology.⁹ Today new forms of technology have made the generation, diffusion, and reception of information on the level of mass society a commonplace. Looking back to a historical moment in which information technology, mass politics, and artistic production converge provides us with a particularly enlightening example of the extent to which our social bodies are conditioned less by what we know than by the way we know. This is especially the case for Italy in the period between the Great War and the advent of Fascism. Understanding literary representations of the relationship between selfhood and corporality at the dawn of an era of large-scale mechanization and technological advancement can aid us in better understanding the key role played by "high-culture" in the gradual disintegration of ideas of democracy and personal freedom in the socio-political arena.

At the close of the nineteenth century Italy, unlike its European counterparts that had already experienced processes of advanced industrialization, underwent a rapid process of technological modernization. The development and expansion of new means of manufacturing, mass communications and transportation had created a general sense that Italy had become a mobile society.¹⁰ This process of technological advancement extends to the literary and artistic spheres in the form of Futurism's embrace of a machine aesthetic that emphasizes the possibility of humanity's prosthetic extension both physically and mentally.

In current discussions of the influence wielded by the discourses of technology and informatics on conceptions of the body, prosthesis as a category transforms to fit contemporary trends with the term cybernetics. The former connects the subject to

⁷ "Prosthesis" n. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 21 March, 2008 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50190589>.

⁸ See: David Wills, *Prosthesis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁹ On the theorization of prosthesis in cultural histories of Modernity see Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Elaine Scarry, "The merging of Bodies and Artifacts in the Social Contract", in *Culture on the Brink: Ideologies of Technology*, Eds. Gretchen Bender and Timothy Druckery (Seattle: Bay press, 1994); Sarah S. Jain, "The Prosthetic Imagination: Enabling and Disabling the Trope of Prosthesis", in *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, Vol.24 No.1. Winter, 1999, pp. 31-54; Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998); Ryan Bishop and John Phillips, "Sighted Weapons and Modernist Opacity: Aesthetics, Poetics, and Prosthesis", in *Boundary*, 2. 29.2, 2002, pp.157-79; Relating specifically to Futurism and the Modernism Hall Foster's work has been particularly useful in flushing out the connections between the image of the prosthetic and the Freudian fetish. See: Hall Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004); Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Anson Rabinach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

¹⁰ On the long process of Italian economic and technological modernization see: Alberto Caracciolo, *La formazione dell'Italia industriale: Discussioni e ricerche* (Bari: Laterza, 1963); Shepard Bancroft Clough, *The Economic History of Modern Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); Renato Gianetti, *Tecnologia e sviluppo economico italiano 1870-1990*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998).

outside world, creating a flow of information that structures the subject's perception based on physicality. A cybernetic system, as a more complex prosthesis, is also characterized by the distribution, reception and exchange of information in a homeostatic system. Both its social and textual manifestations arrive in the form of a coalescence of the two categories as the cyborg.

Cybernetics as a formal category of scientific study does not emerge until after the Second World War when its chief theorist, Norbert Wiener, developed his theory of controlled communication between humans and machines.¹¹ Wiener's cybernetics, though developed with the backing of a military industrial complex that gears itself toward the creation of more efficient weapons technology and manufacturing capabilities, was chiefly concerned with the role played by the act of communication in the production of individual subjects, and their reliance on communicative functionality in order sustain themselves.

Thus, the cybernetic system is characterized by the production and flow of information within a given subject, and between a particular subject and its environment. Cybernetics is all about connections. The function of cybernetics is the regulation of the border between interior and exterior, conditioning the relationship between both categories and thus consciousness itself. It does so by affecting the recipient's ability to perceive and process sensations into practical knowledge about the physical world. In short, the dynamics of a cybernetic relationship identify it as a form of prosthesis. Be it a wooden leg, a hearing aid, or a telephone, the chief function of the prosthesis is to provide a channel of communication between an information source and its recipient. The information provided thus allows the subject to orient itself within a specific environment as well as extend its physical function beyond a previously insurmountable limit.

The mediating effect of the prosthesis, however, undergoes a process of psychological incorporation. A slippage occurs in the perception of the subject through which it is able to identify the artificial mediator with its own natural ability. The production of a sense of immediacy thus is the primary function of the prosthetic relation, and it is this immediacy that serves as the primary marker of subjectivity in Marinetti's writings. At the outset, it would seem that Marinetti's poetics is not one of binding but of total fragmentation. The *parole in libertà* exemplify the futurist desire to "destroy syntax" and linear meaning.

¹¹ The term "cybernetics" was first used in French as *cybernétique* by André Marie Ampère in 1834. It was coined in English by Wiener in 1948. *κυβερνητικός* or *kybernetikos*, meaning to steer, guide, govern, appears earliest in Plato's *Alcibiades I*, when Socrates explains the relationship between skilled, goal-oriented direction and proper governance: "Or again, in a ship, if a man having the power to do what he likes, has no intelligence or skill in navigation [*αρετης κυβερνητικης*], do you see what will happen to him and to his fellow-sailors?" (135a-135b). Wiener's output on cybernetics details not only the evolution of cybernetics as a science, but the social, political and, for Wiener, moral implications of its usage. See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Paris: Librairie Hermann & Cie, and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1948); *The Human Use of Human Beings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1954).

This requires a new and more dynamic interplay between author, text and reader where the mediatory third term "text" would now encompass the first and third terms making the production of information, more than its transmission, the locus of the communicative act. Author and recipient in their interplay embody textual production with infinite possibilities as the removal of normative orthographic signifiers, such as punctuation and format, allows for myriad constructions and reconstructions of meaning. As we shall see, these "endless" possibilities, this "immaginazione senza fili", in fact mask the inherently authoritarian use of information in the production and manipulation of the subject of its text.

As Cinzia Sartini-Blum has argued, the *parole in libertà* in fact only mimic the infinite hermeneutical possibilities that characterize the chaotic text in order to structure it (37-41). Rather than opening up a space of free signification unfettered by the "bourgeois 'I' of poetry", the structure of the *parole in libertà* conditions the breaking of that autonomous, individualized 'I' upon the identification of the reader with a piece of communications technology. Rather than locate a self that derives meaning from within the traditional author-reader relationship, the recipient feels so disjoined from that relationship that they must reorient themselves as both the generator and recipient of any possible meaning within the text. This perceptual disjunction couples with a disjointed syntax modeled, I argue, more upon the "unmediated" speed and mobility of information dispersal in the electronic age than upon that of the simple machine.

Marinetti's preoccupation with reconfiguring the body be it textual, physical, or sociopolitical, derives in large part from the blending of artistic and political practices that characterize the modernist avant-garde. We can understand what many scholars have pointed to as the Futurist project of *arte-azione* within the context of changing notions of communication and social interaction at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹² More than an avant-garde preoccupation with injecting artistic values and practices into the social sphere, the Futurist project reflects the powerfully reciprocal relationship between "technologies" of representation and the burgeoning technologies of communication and information. Much like the fusing of the interpretive modes author/reader, the fusing together of the socio-political/artistic modes of representation underscore the centrality of the communicative process in Marinetti's work.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that it is a process characterized not by a 1-1 exchange of meaning, but rather by the perceived disintegration of the barriers between producer and receiver. Thus, immediacy and universality characterize the futurist communicative act. The classical model of communication based the act of signification, evolving from single instances of linguistic interaction into a large-scale theory of language, transforms in Marinetti's work. Instead of an emphasis on the act of signification, the focus is instead on the production and dispersal of *information*. Such a shift retains the value of the linguistic as a function in the generation of informational units while devaluing its traditionally central role as a mode of representation. Here again the splicing of various representational modes, visual, auditory, and tactile into

¹² Gunter Berghaus, *Avant-garde Performance: Live Events and Electronic Technologies*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); also Harold B. Segel, *Pinocchio's Progeny: Puppets, Marionettes and Robots in Modernist and Avant-Garde Drama*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995).

one omni-sensorial experience emphasizes the role of *production* in the artistic representation over the possible meaning produced.

Information then is conceived of not in terms of what it conveys, but rather in terms of its ability to convey. This accounts for the "materiality" of information that Marinetti prizes over the hollow aestheticism of literature. Information is a unit of data that represents a probability function within a range of possible messages. Years later, immediately following the Second World War, the noted mathematician and electrical engineer Claude Shannon would define information in precisely this manner.¹³ Like Shannon, Norbert Wiener's conceptualization of information was rooted in its ability to function as a stable value regardless of context.

Such a decontextualization presupposes two forms of information, both of which we can see at work within Marinetti's various manifestos and poems. The first form is what Donald MacKay called "selective information", which refers to units of data calculable within the range of possible messages in a given set.¹⁴ This is the contained space of the parole in libertà where syntactic disjunction renders meaning "free", but always within a discreet range of interpretations connected to physicality. The second form, of equal importance to the first, is what MacKay deems "structural information", or information that indicates the boundaries of interpretive possibility (220-222).

What makes Marinetti's particularly effective as a means of effecting a change in the way information is represented, received, and reproduced is the balance between these two forms. The principles of poetic disfiguration promote an understanding of information as representational, contextualized and thus able to embody a particular experience such as that of bombardment or wounded-ness as in *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914). As such, it involves the receiver as much as it does the producer, for in order to convey sensory experience the particular chains of analogy must act upon the reader to produce a synesthetic quality in the mind. The seemingly infinite range of substitutions made possible by the removal of syntactic markers and the replacement of the adjectival form with verbalized noun clusters, however, decontextualize the information contained within the poem allowing it act upon the structure of the poem itself, dictating the range and quality of sensory experiences possible to the reader.

Emphasizing the production and reception of information over its ability to signify necessarily relies on the privileging of agglomeration over individuation, structure over singular instance. The intended audience of Futurist art is not the solitary individual mulling about a museum, but rather mass society. The image of structural cohesion it offers reflects a long history of bodily metaphors employed when describing the state. The difference lies, however, in that the image of the body constructed by Marinetti is not one within which exists a multiplicity of separate bodies as in the classical body politic of Hobbes. Instead, the image of the nation as one uniform body, complete with vertebrae, signifies a departure from traditional modes of representing the nation-state.

¹³ For a full explanation of Shannon's highly mathematical theory see: Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

¹⁴ Mackay originally made the distinction during a presentation for the eighth conference on cybernetics of the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation in 1951, which was included in the published proceedings *Cybernetics; Circular, Casual and Feedback Mechanisms in Biological and Social Systems* (1952). An even fuller account of his theory can be found in: Donald MacKay, *Information, Mechanism and Meaning* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1969).

Thus, for Marinetti and the futurists the wireless serves as the primary metaphor for mass consciousness and the organizing, or disorganizing, principle behind the *parole in libertà*.

This is not to say, however, that meaning is of no value whatsoever to Marinetti. Indeed, the nationalistic current running through his work alone signals a deep concern with the function of poetry in generating and maintaining social discourse. Indeed poetry, like journalistic reportage, is what drives social discourse for Marinetti as both genres participate in a highly diffused network of consumption and circulation on both a national and an international level. Their status as public legitimates them as at once art forms and information sources, instructive and informative. These two literary forms, poetry and reportage, are Marinetti's primary vehicles for conceptualizing the relationship between art and political action. Like machines or the wireless imagination, they are structured around the formation of networks of information, which in turn agglomerate and regulate bodies.

Perhaps the best point of entry into a discussion of Marinetti's poetics is the "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista" (1912). In it, as in the manifestos of 1913 and 1914, Marinetti introduces the central tenets of futurist literary production. The function of poetry is partly to advocate the death of the bourgeois "io" of literature to "sostituirlo finalmente colla materia, di cui si deve afferrare l'essenza di colpi d'intuizione" (44).¹⁵ As a matter of pure poetics, the technical manifesto perhaps more than the founding manifesto lays out the principles by which Marinetti signals a formal break from the Symbolists. His rejection of the metaphysical elements of his largely French predecessors does not imply a complete rupture, however, but rather a refashioning of particular elements of the Symbolist tradition (the use of onomatopoeia and synesthesia, the importance of the plastic arts to name but a few) in more contemporary terms, and to a more public, consumer-oriented audience.

The manifesto opens with an exchange of information between Marinetti and an airplane propeller. Sitting on top of a gas cylinder, he takes dictation from the propeller as it informs him of the fundamental principles of a new, modern poetics. Thus, the manifesto itself is presented both as a source of information and a unit of information as it embodies Marinetti's prescription to "ascoltare i motori e riprodurre i loro discorsi" (TIF 45). As Timothy Campbell has shown, the manifesto defines the contours of the wireless imagination that largely governs Marinetti's poetics. What concerns us here, rather than understanding the Futurist preoccupation with communications technology in terms of the "relation between changes in communication media brought on by the wireless with certain forms of modern literature", is Marinetti's contribution to the image of the national corpus in the age of modern communications technology (x).

The "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista", reflects the pivotal role played not only by machines, but also by a conceptualization of information, as an entity apart from what it is meant to convey. This is a key component for the argument that Marinetti's poetics, and indeed the Futurist artistic/political project in general, should be

¹⁵ The manifesto and its supplement were originally published as leaflets in both French and Italian in May and August of 1912 respectively and served as an introduction to the collection *I poeti futuristi* (Milan: Edizioni futuriste di "Poesia", 1912). It is republished in *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (hereafter TIF), Ed. Luciano de Maria (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1983). All references in this dissertation to Marinetti's manifestos derive from this latter collection.

understood in terms of the liminal space they inhabit with regard to the shift from a post-industrial to an information society. Moreover, the manifesto highlights the centrality of the experience of modern warfare in the conceptualization of a national body, a collective consciousness routed in the mobility of information *networks* that signify through unmediated association. Consider point 9:

Per dare i movimenti successivi d'un oggetto bisogna dare la raccolta in una parola essenziale...In certi casi bisognerà unire le immagini a due a due, come le palle incatenate, che schiantano, nel loro volo tutto un gruppo d'alberi per avvolgere e cogliere tutto ciò che vi è di più fuggevole e di più inafferrabile nella materia, bisogna formare delle **strette reti d'immagini o analogie**, che verranno lanciate nel mare dei fenomeni. (TIF 43)

In Marinetti's formulation, the process of signification depends upon the ability to create associative links between concepts. These concepts, which are analogical in style if not strictly in quality, form what he calls "chains of analogies", or "networks", and serve to encapsulate and convey materiality. Like any analogy, such a process is dependent upon a form of mental processing characterized by the ability to exchange, replace, and connect varied and often opposing types of data in order to produce a larger signifying linguistic structure. The transformation of these structures into networks implies a way of reading and writing based on the ability for types of signifiers to move rapidly, or rather to change associations, within a given network while retaining a structural link to its prior associations. Thus, differing associations made within the network and their positional relationship to all other possibilities produce meaning and variations in meaning.

The succession of images produced, their pattern and rapidity of occurrence, manipulates the possible relations to the network. This is perhaps the strongest link between Marinetti's poetics and the discourse of cybernetics, for both are fundamentally dependent on distinguished borders between objects that are systematically crossed in order to function. Analogy entails a type of border crossing that affects all elements of its associative structure. In the work of cybernetics' founder, Norbert Wiener, analogical association structures the discursive field within which machines and humans are mutually identified.

Weiner's arguments for signification as arising through the categorization of concepts have opened the door to redefining the way subjects are constructed through the manipulation of sensory perception.¹⁶ Marinetti's poetics on one hand revolutionized the way artists interacted with the discourse of technology. On another, futurist poetics as laid out in the "Technical Manifesto" and other tracts prefigure the central role of communication science in the development of modern aesthetic models.

It is within this context that pattern emerges, as an important element of Marinetti's poetics, for pattern constitutes an insurmountable threshold that must be rhetorically breached in order for Futurist aesthetics to truly legitimate itself as revolutionary. The call to ensure "maximum disorder" in the arrangement of poems is well placed between the explication of analogical networks in point 9, and the destruction of the "bourgeois 'I' of literature". Representation is thus the analogical

¹⁶ An enlightening discussion on the subject is in Norbert Wiener, "The Role of the Observer", in *Philosophy of Science*, 3, 1936: pp. 300-23.

equation of variant though interlinked sensory experiences transmitted through the poem. As Wiener showed in his research on anti-aircraft technology, such an understanding of representation requires that we understand sense perception not to directly reflect reality. Rather, through a series of reactions and transformations that follow particular patterns across different sensory modalities, it constructs an analogical equivalent. For Marinetti, analogy allows for the creation of boundaries to be crossed. The "freedom" of the poems, however, exists only at the level of a probabilistic impossibility of determining the pattern in which the recipient will process the information transmitted.

"Freedom", then, must be understood as the freedom of words to signify random patterns of information (word combinations; synesthetic imagery) within a closed structure (the page; the track; the canvas), and not the absolute possibility of words to endlessly join to create new types of meaning. Nor does this transmission system represent as Marinetti says the ability to "sostituire la psicologia dell'uomo ormai esaurita con **l'ossessione lirica della materia**" (TIF 44). That the representation and communication of matter should become the primary focus of Futurist art and poetry seems congruent with Marinetti's stated aim to "ascoltare i motori".

The division between human psychology and the experience of the physical world, however, rests on the rhetorical cleavage between literature with its stylization, aesthetic principles, and internal logic and the so-called reproduction of the discourses of "oggetti in libertà":

Guardatevi dall'prestar alla materia i sentimenti umani, ma indovinate piuttosto i suoi differenti impulsi direttivi, le sue forze di compressione, di dilatazione, di coesione, e di disgregazione, le sue torme di molecole in massa, i suoi turbini di elettroni. Non si tratta di endere i drammi della materia umanizzata. È la solidità di una lastra d'acciaio che ci interessa per sé stessa, cioè l'alleanza incomprensibile e inumana delle sue molecole e dei suoi elettroni che si oppongono, per esempio, alla penetrazione di un obice. (45)

In other words, Marinetti draws a distinction between literature and information, with the former being the purview of forerunners such as the Symbolists. The latter belongs to those who simply aim to record the experience of the world, its sounds, smells, sites and tastes and translate them in as direct a way as possible to the audience:

Nulla è più interessante per un poeta futurista, che l'agitarsi della tastiera di un pianoforte meccanico. Il cinematografo ci offre la danza di un oggetto che si divide e si ricompone senza intervento umano. Ci offre anch'lo slancio ritroso di un nuotatore i cui piedi escono dal mare e rimbalzano violentemente sul trampolino. Ci offre infine la corsa d'un uomo a 200 chilometri all'ora. Sono altrettanti movimenti della materia, fuor dalle leggi d'intelligenza e quindi di un'essenza più significativa. (45)

Ascribing an essence outside of the laws of human intelligence at once mystifies the workings of technology and creates a distinct boundary between the internal and the external, one across which futurist poetics can provide a circuitous cross-articulation.

Let us look at one of Marinetti's more well known examples of *paroliberismo*

originally entitled "Montagnes+vallées+routes+Joffe" later entitled "Après la Marne, Joffe visite le front en auto" (1915), in which a specific moment of the First World War is translated through the synesthetic conjunction of sound and image. The scene, depicting the site of a famous French/German battle is constructed entirely of combinations of words, mathematical symbols and black lining, forming geometric designs that resemble mountains, roads, and weaponry. Bearing no relation to a topographical map, the poem instead relies on the sense of movement created by the swirling black lines around text blocks which draw the eye in an upward direction in order to create a dizzying interplay between verbalized sensation and pictorial chaos all centered around the experience of war:



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¹⁷ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto*, 1915, in *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (Milan, 1919): 99. Research Library, the Getty Research Institute, 87-B6595 (© 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome).

The piece is interesting because it interweaves instances of intelligible communication and destabilizing "word shapes", which at once inform and displace the reader. Seemingly, there is no order in its presentation, much as there is no order to a post-battle location. The sheer circularity of the poem, however, demands that movement across the images and words be made in an orderly fashion after the initial disarray. The "verablisation dynamique de la route" at the bottom corner demands that read first the block of text to its right, continuing on along the path set by the bombshell encased text that connects us to the first black line, passing over the "prussiens" in the bottom left corner. This is precisely how the cybernetic circuit functions. Governing the interaction between systems through the manipulation of information streams the cyborg, as N. Katherine Hayles writes, "violates the human/machine distinction; replacing cognition with neural feedback" (84).

That Marinetti himself was not given to a scientific exploration of the nature of information, feedback, and control systems in the communicative process, in no way subtracts from his contribution to a possible history of the relation between communications technology and artistic practice. Johanna Drucker has written extensively on Marinetti's revolutionary typographical manipulation in terms of its privileging modes of communication over thematic elements such as masculinity, war, violence, and gender politics. Drucker argues for understanding a concept such as speed, exalted in nearly every piece of Futurist communication, in the context of the technological advancements of Marinetti's day (109). Building on that, I argue that notions such as speed, virility, and war stand in as conceptual analogies for the more central notions of mobility, communication, and malleability which characterize not only the formal structure of the Futurist poem, but which also tie together the thematics of technological production with those of a national refashioning.

The manifesto "Distruzione della sintassi-Immagine senza fili-Parole in libertà" (1913), provides a clearer understanding of the extent to which a proto-cybernetic system of information flow and perceptual underscores the marriage between the aesthetic and the political principles of Futurism. As an explanation of the social function of the Technical Manifesto, Marinetti concedes that outside of the futurist serata, off the page or the canvas, the asyntactic model of language cannot fit in the discourses of politics, philosophy, journalism or science. He goes on to say, however, that the effect of the new "lirismo essenziale e sintetico" (57) on the ways in which individuals interact on the social level cannot be denied. The new perceptual possibilities brought on by technological modernization in the arts, in communications and warfare are for the sharp observer "modificatori della nostra sensibilità" (58), which must be recognized and internalized.

Of the seventeen modifications to the individual sensibility, three stand out as particularly important on a sociopolitical level. Point 1 reads: "Accerleramento della vita, che ha oggi, ritmo rapido. Equilibrismo fisico, intellettuale e sentimentale sulla corda tesa della velocità fra i magnetismi contraddittorii. Coscienze molteplici e simultanee in uno stesso individuo" (58). The sentiment is reiterated in detail in point 15:

La terra rimpicciolita dalla velocità. Nuovo senso del mondo. Mi spiego: Gli uomini conquistarono successivamente il senso della casa, il senso del quartiere in cui abitavano, il senso della città, il senso della zona geografica, il senso del continente. Oggi posseggono il

senso del mondo; hanno mediocrementemente bisogno di sapere ciò che fanno i loro contemporanei di ogni parte del mondo. Conseguente necessità, per l'individuo, di comunicare con tutti i popoli della terra. Conseguente bisogno di sentirsi centro, giudice e motore dell'infinito esplorato e inesplorato. Ingigantimento del senso umano e urgente necessità di fissare ad ogni istante i nostri rapporti con tutta l'umanità. (60)

Here the two central concepts, velocity and simultaneity, provide the spring board for the rest of the manifesto. Indeed, these two concepts are often linked in Futurist writings. Speed in and of itself, while clearly defined as a Futurist value, is here understood in the context of the speed with which new experiential possibilities can move within and throughout the individual. The capacity for multi-sensory perception of a wide and varying range of information defines the value of speed, thus making it inseparable from simultaneity. The fundamental characteristics of the tight networks of analogy that are to govern poetic language are rapidity of occurrence, and simultaneous identification of concepts. Such are also the qualities of the new sources of information and mobility that Marinetti lists at the beginning of the manifesto:

Il Futurismo si fonda sul completo rinnovamento della sensibilità umana avvenuto per effetto delle grandi scoperte scientifiche. Coloro che usano oggi del telegrafo, del telefono e del grammofono, del treno, della bicicletta, della motocicletta, dell'automobile, del transatlantico, del dirigibile, dell'aeroplano, del cinematografo, del grande quotidiano (sintesi di una giornata del mondo) non pensano che queste diverse forme di comunicazione, di trasporto e d'informazione esercitano sulla loro psiche una decisiva influenza. (57)

The connection between transportation, information and communication should not be overlooked, for therein lies the key analogical connection which structures Marinetti's poetics as well as his politics.

Such a connection is indicative of the discourse on communications technology in Marinetti's day and well before. Friedrich Kittler provides a detailed history of how new technologies in the late nineteenth century transformed notions of art and literature, and by extension society (85-88). Kittler argues that in the rapid technologisation of society in the early twentieth century there occurs a crucial epistemological break between the discourses on the body in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He argues that by the time of the latter, "Man is split up into physiology and information technology" (16).

That connection, however, must be unpacked for therein also lies the moment in which agency is confused with control. It is the point in which, as Hal Foster has argued, there occurs a type of slippage between the notion of the prosthetic as expanding the subject and the prosthetic as constricting the subject. This double logic of the prosthetic derives from Freud's comment that "Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all of his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown onto him, and they still give him much trouble at times" (XXI-91-92). In Foster's highly psychoanalytic interpretation of Marinetti's works the mechanization of the subject is framed as a "protofascist desire to elevate this self-alienation into an absolute value", thus conceiving of the machine as both "castrative

trauma *and* as a phallic shield against such trauma" (8).

Foster is correct in arguing for a reading of Marinetti's work as an attempt to destroy the "bourgeois notion of a non technological subject" (9). Ultimately, the damaged body of the worker/soldier, fragmented because of its interaction with the mechanizing processes of modern technology, locates the possibility of its own ego re-arming precisely within the psychic management of the tension between binding and unbinding, which Alice Kaplan argues characterizes Fascism (24). However, the slippage that concerns us here is not that between a sense of ego expansion and constriction, which Foster identifies in terms of a fetishistic disavowal. The logic of prosthesis entails the interdependent relationship between an ontologically heterogeneous subject and object, as well as between the distinctly recognized subjects.

The prosthetic (re)constitution of the unified subject is thus always recognized as a relation rooted in crisis. Its textual manifestation is located in an oscillation to be sure, but not of the type which characterizes the Freudian fetish. The subject does not disavow the scene of its mutilation, neither its memory nor the area affected. There is no unconscious splitting of the ego so crucial to the formation of the fetish, but rather a constant awareness of the oscillation of the ego between its constituent parts. The conscious mobility implied by prosthesis in the process of identity formation allows subjectivity to shift between the physical body and the enabling mechanism. What we have seen from the above readings, and what I will continue to tease out in the remaining pages is a fundamental confusion between agency and control, embodiment and disembodiment, matter and information.

This is alluded to in the 12th point of "Distruzione della sintassi- Immaginazione senza fili-Parole in libertà", where Marinetti extols the virtue of "L'uomo moltiplicato dalla macchina. Nuovo senso meccanico, fusione del istinto col rendimento del motore e colle forze ammaestrate"(59). The fusion of instinct with the output (rendimento) of the motor and domesticated power signifies a mode of consciousness characterized by the perpetual movement of the instinct in a programmed direction. instinct and not reason. In reducing consciousness to pure physicality, instinct is inextricably linked to perception, which is fundamentally altered by the dynamics of speed and strengthened mobility indicated in the first and fifteenth points.

The association of the mechanical with a form of consciousness rooted in sensory perception supposes a fusion of the physical body with the experience of *embodiment*. In contemporary discussions of embodiment, the physical body is understood as a complex of culturally constructed experiences that interact with the various physiological processes resulting of millennia of biological evolution. Moreover, it defines Marinetti's place in an oratorical tradition going back at least until 1789, that understands the centrality of the body in revolutionary language, what Peter Brooks calls "an aesthetics of embodiment" (55).

In this construction, the body understood as an object is the physical presence that is visible to the external world, whereas embodiment is understood as the complex of emotions, intuitions and sensations that characterize the body's relation to the world. For Marinetti, such a split does not exist. Instead, as Tim Campbell has shown, Marinetti's "wireless imagination" breaks down the distinction between the physical and the ephemeral in the reduction of matter to information (83). In *How We Became*

Posthuman, N. Katherine Hayles further demonstrates the threat that such an understanding of the cyborg body poses to traditional liberal notions of individual freedom rooted in physical presence, and classical formulations of autonomy (84-112).

Marinetti's futurist subject poses just such a threat. Shifting the basis for self-hood from an internally grounded, individuated form of consciousness to a fully externalized, reactive formulation of consciousness masks the erasure of autonomy with an erasure of the physical and its replacement with the seamless, efficient powerful carapace of technology. In effect what occurs is the opposite of embodiment. Instead, what to Marinetti seems like total embodiment in the communication between consciousness and the materiality of objects and machines (*oggetti in libertà*), instead enacts a type of disembodied subjectivity in the hierarchization of sensory perception over cognition.

In "Lo splendore geometrico e meccanico e la sensibilità numerica" (1914), Marinetti makes clear the role of perception and its effect on the self:

I miei sensi futuristi percepirono per la prima volta questo splendore geometrico sul ponte di uno *dreadnought*. Le velocità della nave, le distanze dei tiri fissate dall'alto del cassero nella ventilazione fresca delle probabilità guerresche, la vitalità strana degli ordini trasmessi dall'ammiraglio e subitamente divenuti autonomi, non più umani, attraverso i capricci, le impazienze e le malattie dell'acciaio e del rame: tutto ciò irradiava splendore geometrico e meccanico. (TIF 85)

The effect of Marinetti's cybernetic model of subjectivity on the individual is important for an understanding of the balance between interiority and exteriority that defines the Futurist subject. We must not forget, however, that Marinetti's audience is not the solitary reader sitting before a book, or museumgoers encountering a discreet series of works. Futurism directs itself toward the crowd. It is a mass-audience oriented practice, and as such, the public as a whole is the intended reader. The conception of human consciousness as characterized by a continuous flow of impressions derives largely from their influence.

Recently, Christine Poggi has drawn connections between Marinetti's conceptualization of the crowd, those of Gustave Le Bon and Scipio Sighele, and the writings of Georges Sorel. Linking Sorel's notion of the power of myths, or bodies of images, over the collective consciousness to Marinetti's position on the importance of imagery in the cultivation of a manipulable crowd dynamic, Christine Poggi provides us with a rough outline of the inherent political potential of Marinetti's Project (61-2). Thus, we must remain mindful of the relationship between the concept of the individual and that of the collective in Marinetti's work. As a type of working circuit, the *immaginazione senza fili* functions by means of directed information flows and feedback manipulations that dictate the contours of the interpretive process. In other words the audience, in the futurist formulation of the audience, is analogous to the Hobbesian body politic. As a living, moving structure created out of the conglomeration of smaller individual structures each dependent on rest for cohesion and proper functional development.

This where the similarity ends, however, for where Hobbes' body politic was animated with a divine soul, Marinetti's body politic is a cyborg, animated by the electronic information flow that defines its contours and shapes its movements. This external structure, as Foucault explains, is as important to the conception of the modern body politic as the spirit, embodied by the sovereign power, is for Hobbes and

Descartes.¹⁸ For Marinetti, of course, technopower is a characteristic of the soul. It is fully externalized, metalized and electrified. Above all else, it is collectivizing. No longer the individuating element of human life, it is reconfigured as a prosthetic device that homogenizes, regulates and reproduces the new national subject.

The “L'uomo moltiplicato e il regno della macchina” (1914), brings us to the threshold between the Machine Age and the Information Age in its depiction of the new futurist subject. Marinetti's description of the “idea della bellezza meccanica” (TIF 255) in the opening paragraphs, and its opposition to the classical association of beauty with Woman, contextualizes the discussion of the technological splendor of the future within a polemic on love, and its overcoming through a dual effacement of the body and mind:

Il giorno in cui sarà possibile all'uomo di esteriorizzare la sua volontà in modo che essa si prolunghi fuori di lui come un immenso braccio invisibile il Sogno e il Desiderio, che oggi sono vane parole, regneranno soverani sullo Spazio e sul tempo domati. Il tipo non umano e meccanico, costruito per una velocità onnipresente, sarà naturalmente crudele, onnisciente e combattivo...Per preparare la formazione del tipo non umano e meccanico dell'uomo moltiplicato mediante l'esteriorizzazione della sua volontà, bisogna singolarmente diminuire il bisogno di affetto, non ancora distruttibile, che l'uomo porta nelle sue vene. (257)

What concerns us here is the way in which that externalized “soul”, or discursive network, etc., works in relation to the mechanized man that Marinetti writes about. There is a seeming disconnect between the proto-cybernetic network, which structures individual consciousness in relation to the network, and the mechanized male subject depicted here. Whereas in previous writings we are presented with theorizations of the interior or the exterior function of the technological prostheses, here we are given an insight into the prosthetic function itself as it oscillates between the interior and the exterior, or the physiological/psychological and the physical world.

The externalization of the will for Marinetti follows a process, much like the extension of a limb, outward toward the world on the part of the subject. It is thus characterized as an active process that retains the distinction between interiority and exteriority in a relationship of asymmetrical influence with the former controlling the latter. Marinetti opposes it to the external influences of art and literature on the social classes, who absorb them “per via d'infiltrazioni misteriose” (257). The will is distinct from the body; it operates upon it by virtue of its externalization or its superficiality. Here *volontà* and *velocità* fuse together, electrified and running through, around, and between human and non-human bodies.

Like the will, desire too becomes a function of the circuit. The opening paragraphs of “L'uomo moltiplicato e il regno della macchina”, reiterate the fusion of male desire and the machine introduced in the founding manifesto of 1909. In the former the love between *uomo* and *macchina* is structured by his rejection of *donna* and

¹⁸ Indeed, writes Foucault, “it would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary it exists, it has a reality, it produced permanently around, on and within the body....This real, non-corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power...The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (29-30).

sentimentalismo, and the transfer of sexual desire to sleek, metallic motor:

Non avete mai osservato un macchinista quando lava amorevolmente il gran corpo possente della sua locomotiva? Sono le tenerezze minuziose e sapienti di un amante che accarezzi la sua donna adorata. Si è potuto constatare nel grande sciopero dei ferrovieri francesi, che gli organizzatori del sabotaggio non riuscirono a indurre nemmeno un solo macchinista a sabotare la sua locomotiva. Questo mi pare assolutamente naturale. Come mai uno di quegli uomini avrebbe potuto ferire o uccidere la sua grande amica fedele e devota, dal cuore ardente e pronto: la sua bella macchina d'acciaio che tante volte aveva brillato di voluttà sotto la sua carezza lubrificante? Non è un'immagine, questa, ma quasi una realtà, che facilmente potremo controllare fra qualche anno. (255)

Such is Marinetti's approach to representing technology. It is comprised of sleek, glistening, polished, efficient metal and electricity. Its seamlessness resides in its visual apprehension, which in turn conditions the apprehension of both its functionality and its touchability. The operations that act upon and beneath the surface of the armored tank, the airplane, the metalized man, are concealed by its totalizing construction. Thus, the interior space of desire is confused with its external, physicality. The tactility of the object decouples from the object itself and structures the operation of the subject's desire. The surface, which in Deleuze and Guattari's words becomes deterritorialized, is the screen upon which this machinic, or prosthetic, desire is projected in order to at once mask and regulate the tension between interiority and exteriority.

Thus far, my argument has centered on the important influence of changing notions of communications technology in Futurist poetics, its role in the Futurist conceptualization of the subject, and the roots of a form of political subjectivity that begins to take the shape of an anti-liberal democratic model. At this point it is necessary to discuss the place that war holds in Marinetti's writings because war, like technology, is a fundamental element of Marinetti's understanding of communication. Throughout his early texts two wars in particular, the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-12 and the First World War of 1914- 1918, are the conflicts on which Marinetti focuses his thought. His impression of both wars is of paramount importance and highly influential to his conceptualization of the Italian national identity, as well as to a general conceptualization of an anti-liberal subject.

Marinetti's exaltation of war as "sola igne del mondo" extends through nearly all of his writings and speeches. According to Giovanni Lista, nowhere is it more prominent than in *In quest'anno futurista* (31). Originally published as a leaflet dated November 29, 1914, it was republished in *Guerra sola igene del mondo* (1915) as "1915: In quest'anno futurista" and later again in *Futurismo e Fascismo* (1924), as "Manifesto agli studenti". In it, Marinetti succinctly encapsulates the tenets of Futurism laid out in the founding manifesto linking national revitalization to revolutions in art, the reorganization of cultural interests, and disdain for the past. More importantly, he attributes the outbreak of the First World War to the creative principles of Futurism:

Il Futurismo dinamico e aggressivo si realizza oggi pienamente nella grande guerra mondiale che-solo-previde e glorificò prima che scoppiasse. **La guerra attuale è il più bel poema futurista apparso finora:** il Futurismo segnò appunto l'irrompere della guerra nell'arte, col

creare quel fenomeno che è la Serata futurista (efficacissima propoganda di coraggio)...I bombardamenti, i treni blindati, le trincee, i duelli d'artiglieria, le cariche, i reticolati elettrizzati, non hanno nulla a che fare colla poesia passatista classicheggiante, tradizionale, archeologica, georgica, nostalgica, erotica...I poeti passatisti vorrebbero denigrare le parole in libertà chiamandole *lirismo telegrafico*. Noi futuristi cantiamo la loro morte *telegraficamente*, e questo ci evita di sentire a lungo il loro fetore. (TIF 255)

The passage is particularly interesting because it posits Futurism as a influence on modern war rather than the other way around. As the clearest expression of Futurist poetics, modern war takes on a greater significance than mere armed conflict between nations. Instead, it reflects the mixture of Bergsonian and Sorelian theorizations of the social arena that characterize Marinetti's philosophical thought. As a motor of historical development, war for Marinetti structures the sphere of interaction between individuals just it does between nations. It is the arena in which revolutionary violence is marries the expressive force of heroic individual will. What truly concerns me here, though, is the conflation that occurs between war (understood as a state of reality), the mechanization of communication (coterminous with the machines of war), and the transformation of the cultural sphere (equated to the public sphere) in the Futurist *serata*.

As in the writings previously mentioned, the connecting thread running through each concept is the rhetorical erasure of mediation that Marinetti associates with speed. The violent eruption of war in the artistic arena is characterized by the immediacy of the newly developed weapons technologies, and analogous to the seemingly unmediated power of newly developed technologies of communication (the telegraph) with which the Futurists declare the death of passéist poetry. It is in this vein, then, that we can view war as a metaphor for the intersection of Futurist poetics and the experience of the modern world. As such, it supplants the exaltation of transportation technologies as the vehicle of modern consciousness. The chaos of battle that acts simultaneously upon all of the senses at the same time structures the way in which perception informs cognition, ultimately conditioning the experience of corporality through spontaneous transformation, fragmentation and dispersal.

The distinctly nationalist current which runs through Marinetti's prosthetic imaginary halts the seeming progression from individual body to social body to universal consciousness, and the disintegration of national borders. As a manifestation of the prosthetic polis, a community whose presence is rooted in the covertly mediating force of communications technologies, the state of war reflects only the Italian character. In "La declamazione dinamica e sinottica" (1916), Marinetti details the necessary mode of interaction with the public. Poggi has demonstrated the importance of performative events modeled on militant and militaristic modes of expression for Marinetti through an analysis of his gendered rhetoric (62-3). The text itself is also useful in that it provides us with a relatively clear example of how the state of war structures the connection between man and machine and between society and information technology.

The first line of the text invokes the front, and the futurists' desire to return to it, as if to legitimize the discourse to follow.¹⁹ Marinetti next details the activities of his

fellow futurists throughout Italy, effectively equating their artistic output around the country with a series of military campaigns. The aim of the text, Marinetti explains, is to "liberare gli ambienti intellettuali dalla vecchia declamazione statica pacifista e nostalgica, e creare una nuova declamazione dinamica sinottica e guerresca"(105). The text goes on to list the methods according to which one ought to practice such a new form of oratory. These include, but are not limited to anonymous dress, "disumanizzazione" of the face and voice, the metallization and electrification of the voice; a rigid, geometric system of movement, and the constant movement about the space in which one is speaking (106-8).

Marinetti directs all eleven of the points toward one main objective that he explains:

Col nuovo lirismo futurista, espressione dello splendore geometrico, il nostro *io* letterario brucia e si distrugge nella grande vibrazione cosmica, così che il declamatore deve anch'esso sparire, in qualche modo, nella manifestazione dinamica e sinottica delle parole in libertà. (106)

Marinetti's orator here does not take on the shape of the massive, built for speed machine of destruction that characterizes the commonly thought image of the futurist man/machine. Rather, he takes on the characteristics, almost even the form, of a radio transmission that bandies about through a room, or around a crowd. In other words, effacing his own physical presence he becomes synonymous with the discursive property of an information stream.

In this sense, Marinetti's futurist community is more akin to a cybernetic circuit itself rather than a community of cyborgs, each with their own individual circuitry. Though related concepts, in terms of their political valence the two formulations are quite distinct, and carry important consequences for the existence of a free, pluralistic society in the liberal-democratic sense. Understanding Marinetti's contempt for liberal democracy, futurism's political program conceives of a body politic along Hobbesian lines. For Hobbes, the "body politic" is a mechanistic conception of the state constructed by the people, its parts, governed by the sovereign power understood as a divinely created "Artificial Soul".²⁰ This soul/mind, embodied by the king, is replaced in Marinetti's formulation with a type of national technological apparatus. The information networks characterized by chains of analogy and metaphor in futurist poetics find their counterparts in the electric currents of information that animate the individual subject as

¹⁹ "Aspettando l'onore-piacere di ritornare al fronte, noi futuristi rinnoviamo, acceleriamo e virilizziamo il genio della nostra razza"(TIF, 104).

²⁰ Hobbes' words on the subject seem helpful here. That " Nature (the Art whereby God hath made and governs the World) is by the Art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that is can make an Artificial Animal. For seeing life is but a motion of Limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within; why may we not say that all *Automata* (Engines that move themselves by spring and wheel as doth a watch) have an artificiall life?...*Art* goes yet further, imitating the Rationall and most excellent work of Nature, *Man*. For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH or STATE (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man ; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defense it was intended; and in which, the *Soveraignty* is an Artificiall *Soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the *Magistrates*, and other *Officers* of Judicature and Execution, artificiall *Joynts*; *Reward* and *Punishment* (by which fastned to the seate of the Soveraignty, every joynt and member is moved to perform his duty) are the *Nerves*, that do the same in the Body Naturall[...]" . Original emphasis (81-2).

they course through the national territory.

This is not to say, however, that Marinetti's political subject is not configured as a cyborg. Rather, the national cybernetic system produces the subject as a cyborg through the production and reification of discourse networks embodied by the electric current. The splitting of the perception of the body between the realm of information and the physical world constitutes the production of a cybernetic subjectivity, the locus of which oscillates perpetually between the network and the physical body. Such a process is akin to what in Allucquère Rosanne Stone calls "warranting" (40), a process by which the controlling apparatus produces stable identity categories, thus producing a politically intelligible subject. Doing so formalizes the relationship between the subject and the state by effectively creating the subject as a complex of information, which is used to place it within the grasp of the apparatus of government.

Chapter 2

Bodies that Shatter: Mutilation, National Rebirth and the Political Subject in *L'Alcova d'acciaio* and *Come si seducono le donne*

The prosthetic construction of character developed by Marinetti, and incorporated into the larger symbolic network of the political community, forms the basis of his longer, prose works. These texts, much like futurist poetry, function as textual prostheses that simultaneously identify the post-war Italian male as mutilated, and reconfigure the concept of mutilation as a point of departure for the reconstruction of the national subject. In this chapter, I focus my attention largely on a reading of Marinetti's post-war novel *L'alcova d'acciaio: romanzo vissuto* (1921). I argue that the text engages in a narrative practice that constructs a model of a distinctly nationalized, anti-democratic political consciousness. In addition, I will demonstrate how Marinetti deploys the discourse of technological modernism in another text, *Come si seducono le donne* (1917), in an attempt to construct a model of anti-humanist subjectivity.

The association of corporeal form and consciousness is not, however, a unique element of the futurist aesthetic. The First World War, more so than any preceding conflict, saw the diffusal of speculative theories linking physicality with military performance in a way reminiscent of the positivist linkages between physical form and personality developed by Lombroso in the nineteenth century.²¹ The sprawling nature of the conflict and its widespread participation required the organization of not only soldier's bodies at the service of a complex of new technologies designed to maximize offensive aggression and minimize resistance. This type of military organization takes, as Joanna Bourke demonstrates in the case of British soldiers, the form of a reorganization of consciousness that devalues individual will in favor of the utter destruction of selfhood and autonomy in a way that impinges on traditional formulations of masculinity.²²

Non-military viewpoints as well regarded advances in medical science brought about through the uses of new technologies, themselves in part developed because of the war, as positive markers of social progress. In an article from "L'illustrazione italiana" in August 1915, the paper's science and medicine editor writing under the name "Dr. Cisalpino" lauds the potential for reconstructing bodies through artificial means:

²¹ A few scholars have argued that the initial motivation for the military organization of participant nations was precisely nothing more than to destroy objects and opposition on as large a scale as possible. Among them, Elaine Scarry has argued that any other attempt to characterize the war apart from focusing on its destructive motives would be disingenuous. See: Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Also Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

²² In her book, Bourke includes the private writings of British soldiers, including those of Peter Graham who reports being taught to dismiss any sense of individual autonomy in his army training. See Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (London: Granata and New York: Basic Books, 1999). On the relationship between war, corporality and masculinity in Britain see Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

La guerra ha cessato di essere un'arte, per diventare una scienza: per questo, essa ha acquistato in ferocia ciò che ha perduto in valore estetico. Il coraggio, l'azione morale mantengono ancora un'importanza definitiva, ma la loro portata e la loro azione pratica possono venire ridotte o sospese. [...] Ed ecco gli ortopedici studiare arti ingegnosi, nei quali la vita si fonde con l'artificio così che anche i più miserevoli monconi diventano capaci di qualche utile sfruttamento. Talvolta è soltanto un aggruppamento di tendini e di resti muscolari che aziona le leve artificiali, altra volta si ricorre ad azioni indirette di muscoli rimasti integri, ma i risultati che si ottengono sono tali da commuovere. [...] Nella qual lotta non è il compiacimento umano di togliere una delle conseguenze dinamiche più dolorose della guerra, non è solamente la gioia di aver domato il male anche in quelle che paiono le immutabili conseguenze del male, ma ancora la conquista civile di anime che nell'ozio forzoso sarebbero perdute. (182)²³

The reconstruction of the body is likened to the recovery of the soul and the overcoming of the evils of war. Technology, specifically the prosthesis of the body, moves the war from the aesthetic to the scientific register. It provides an opportunity to engage with the materiality of the body. The technology of limb reconstruction also achieves the reconstruction of the soul, not by making men feel whole, but by restoring their social use-value. The passage reveals an important discursive operation in which the social value of the functional body substitutes for the moral value of the body.

By encapsulating his observations about the effectiveness of prosthetic technology in a rhetorical argument pitting aesthetic and moral signification against medical and scientific productivity, Dr. Cisalpino equates a notion of the body as a product of social/scientific engineering to the notion of the soul. Indeed, as he states, the value in rebuilding the body is not the redemption of the spirit, as though one depended on the other, nor is it even in the overcoming of the evils of war and destruction. Rather it is purely in the restoration of the functionality of the body, and its socially productive capability, that the value of science lay. Interestingly enough, towards the middle of the passage this is rendered explicit in the characterization of orthopedic surgeons studying "arti ingegnosi", equating science with artisanal craft and thus reifying the link between use-value and aesthetic-value.

For Marinetti, the aesthetics of the war experience are enhanced, rather than supplanted, by the potentiality of technological transformation. If we read novel in the context of a larger social discourse on the relationship between physicality and subjectivity rather than as another demonstration of a uniquely futurist idealization of virility, violence and velocity, *L'alcova d'acciaio* takes on the guise of a consciously

²³ This article and many like it appear throughout periodicals and newspapers in Italy during and after the war. Articles promoting the new discoveries and scientific advancements brought on by the war were all part of a larger, tightly controlled, attempt by the government to disseminate an image of the conflict as being not nearly as bad as it would later be discovered to have been. Mario Isnenghi and Giorgio Rochat look to the articles by Achille Beltrame in "La Domenica Del Corriere", and those of Antonio Rubino in "La Tradotta" between 1916 and 1917 to see just how far journalistic representations of life in the trenches was from the actuality (233). In 1916, the army high command established a press office, and in 1917 an office specifically dedicated to pro-war propaganda known as "il servizio P". See Nicola della Volpe, *Esercito e propaganda nella Grande Guerra, 1915-1918* (Torino: Einaudi, 1977).

political representation of the Italian soldier at the front and elsewhere. As such, it bears striking resemblances to other non-futurist attempts, such as the article by Dr. Cisalpino, to consolidate the discursive relationship between the war, technology and the character of the ideal Italian soldier both during and after the war.

I offer yet another example of how the relationship between science, morality and society centers on the body of the Italian soldier during the war. Writing in 1917, Father Agostino Gemelli, one of the first theorists of military psychology in Italy, attempted not only to understand the nature of the psychological effects of the war on soldiers, but to aid in the conditioning of a soldierly psychology as well.²⁴ On the importance of military discipline in the maintenance of order, both in battle and in society, he writes:

L'educazione militare tende ad abolire l'esercizio della volontà, che, sottomessa com'è al giuoco dell'emozione, potrebbe, al momento opportuno, mancare. La disciplina militare, l'esercizio militare hanno lo scopo di sostituire qualche cosa di automatico, di riflesso, di meccanico, all'esercizio della volontà. (285)

Father Gemelli's frank observations provide us with the other side of Dr. Cisalpino's claim that the science of warfare and the science produced as an effect of warfare transform the categorical value of the body within society. Even before the necessity of physical reconstruction, the psychological reconstruction of the soldier occurs in their training, and in the new forms of subjective interaction with the world around them, that war necessitates. The abolition of the will, of subjective identity itself in Gemelli's essay, goes hand in hand with the simultaneous demystification and remystification of science in Cisalpino's article. Both reflect a deep-seeded interest in Italy in the effect of the war on the subject that can only be expressed through the discourse of technological reconstruction.

Marinetti's novel, however, does not take up the question of individual agency from a scientific point of departure. His expertise, as alluded to in the subtitle "un romanzo vissuto", is first-hand. Yet, as an account of the war, as Mario Isnenghi has pointed out, one notices a distinct absence of any verisimilar description of the front (283). Instead, Marinetti's aim seems to be to construct an overarching *sense* of the war, and aesthetic of battle that combines a recuperated sense of masculinity with an exaltation of the benefit provided by technology in political articulation of a new, anti-liberal, national character. I argue that we must read the novel, however, as more than an exercise in futurist stylistics. If we regard the attention paid to the aesthetic experience of war in the novel as an aspect of the novel's function, as both a representation of the superiority of the prosthetic-body and as a discursive prosthesis itself, *L'alcova d'acciaio* becomes an important component of the Futurist political project.

²⁴ Recognized as both a spiritual authority and as an authority in the field of psychology, Gemelli published frequently in psychology journals and directed the Laboratorio Psicofisiologico del Comando Supremo during the war where he performed experiments on the perception of soldiers and aviators. Many psychologists of the period engaged in theorizations of the relationship between perception and personality with regard to wounded soldiers. Of particular influence were Giulio Cesare Ferrari, "Osservazioni psicologiche sui feriti della nostra guerra", in *Rivista di Psicologica*, 1915, pp. 171-172, and Giuseppe Tarozzi, "L'ideale e l'obbligazione morale (Note di psicologia morale sulla guerra presente)", in *Rivista di Psicologia*, n.1917, p.33.

Unlike in the *parole in libertà*, Marinetti's prose texts take up the question of Italian national identity in a more direct way.²⁵ They specifically address the question of how to understand the experience of war, particularly for Italian soldiers and veterans returning from the front. They also provide an outline of the post-war, Italian male and female characters, and the mode by which social interaction ought to be enacted. The character of Marinetti's futurist political consciousness is distinctly anti-democratic in that, owing to its oppositional stance toward the Cartesian humanist subject, it destabilizes the fixity of deliberative thought for the individual and substitutes in its place a form of subjectivity rooted in the absolute identification of the self with sensory perception, i.e. its external surroundings.

In *L'alcova d'acciaio*, the role of the front in Marinetti's representation of a new, futurist Italian subject is central. For Marinetti, the war serves as a space within which subjects are both broken down, and created. The destructiveness of war is always in a sense productive in that it opens the door to the manifestation of the violent heroics that define the futurist subject. In a more important sense, however, the representation of war in *L'alcova d'acciaio* serves as a model for the difficult process of nationalization that Italy must undergo in order to become a fully modern space of productivity. It does so through the identification of the Italian soldier with the geo-political space of the nation. As such, Marinetti aligns himself with a failed attempt on the part of many early twentieth century Anglo-American Modernists to successfully disconnect from traditional modes of representation which, as Michael Levinson proposes, "continued to cherish nineteenth century ideals of the autonomous ego, free and integral" (xiii). Marinetti's texts reveal the fundamental incapacity of futurism to overcome the limits of the body as a marker of social presence, and a critical apparatus in the formation of the individual subject.

The traumatic experience of the First World War profoundly altered not only the political landscapes of its participants, but for many across the continent it called into question the very meaning of an individual existence in a world bereft of traditional forms of social signification.²⁶ The sense of disproportionate loss on the part of Italy with

²⁵ Certainly the *parole in libertà* also play an important role in the cultivation of the new, futurist subject that I am speaking of in that they promoted a type of depersonalized consciousness that was rooted in the highly nationalistic and imperialistic military agenda that Marinetti promoted. Nevertheless, owing to the distinctly internationalist quality of early futurist poetics, I would argue that with the exception of *Zang Tumb Tumb* in 1912, the majority of Marinetti's and the futurist's technical writings, as well as the poems, collages, and paintings produced, were more engaged in a debate over larger aesthetic questions in which nationalism would play an increasingly important part, than in a specifically national-political one. This is, again, not to say that Marinetti wasn't invested in such matters, but rather that his concern with them appears more often in his specifically political manifestos as well as in the works discussed in this chapter. On the political aspects of the *parole in libertà*, see Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Lawrence Rainey, "Introduction: Marinetti and the Development of Futurism", in *Futurism: an Anthology*, eds. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)1-40; Chiara Gatti, Francesco Tedeschi, Filadelfo Ferri, *1905-2005: l'estetica della velocità. Poesia e universo futuribile: Catalogo della Mostra di Varese nel 2005* (Varese: Insubria University Press, 2005); Bruno Romani, *Dal simbolismo al futurismo* (Florence: Sandron, 1960); Gianni Eugenio Viola, *Gli anni del futurismo. La poesia italiana nell'età delle avanguardie* (Rome: Studium, 1990).

²⁶ On the altered state of European politics following the war, see: Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War One* (Princeton:

respect to its allies aided in the eruption of a period political instability characterized in the discourse of right-leaning nationalists as a "mutilated victory", and embodied in the problematic civic status of thousands of wounded soldiers returned from the front.²⁷ For many on the interventionist side, the war promised to be the culmination of the Risorgimento as it was hoped that Italy might claim those territories understood by the nationalists and irredentists to be rightfully, because culturally, Italian and therefore "unredeemed" in the process of national unification (Isnenghi and Rochat, 87). Thus, the period between the end of the war in 1918 and the rise of Fascism in 1922 represents both a crisis of political organization, and a crisis of national identity that influences the representation of the Italian body in its collective and individual iterations.

The period of Italian history immediately preceding, and up through the end of the First World War can also be understood in terms of a particular crisis of liberal-democratic ideology across Europe and especially in the still-fairly recently established Kingdom of Italy. The political administration of Giovanni Giolitti between 1903 and 1914, commonly referred to as Italy's "belle époque", brought political reforms and measurable economic stability according to what many intellectuals saw as a corrupt and outmoded parliamentary political system.²⁸ Marinetti writes in "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo" (1911), of a discredited political order built on a distinct lack of popular representation which has impeded the manifestation of true liberty and equality of the sexes:

Il parlamentarismo è quasi dappertutto una forma sciupata. Esso diede qualche buon risultato: creò l'illusoria partecipazione delle maggioranze al governo. Dico *illusoria*, poiché s'è constatato che il popolo non può, né potrà mai essere rappresentato da mandatari che esso non sa scegliere.²⁹

Here Marinetti's rhetorical stance would seem to be that of the defender of a true form of democracy, one based on direct representation of all sectors of society. Indeed by 1909 only about 10 percent of Italian males over the age of 30 had the right to vote. He goes so far as to invoke the spirit of the French Revolution, as well as the authority of Rousseau in calling for universal suffrage. Indeed, the futurist's entry into the political

Princeton University Press, 1975). On the cultural crisis surrounding the war there are many important scholarly contributions, among them: Emilio Gentile, "Un'apocalissi nella modernità: La Grande Guerra e il Mito della rigenerazione della politica", in *Storia Contemporanea*, n.5, (1995): 773-787.

²⁷ Originally coined by Gabriele D'Annunzio in an article appearing in the "Corriere della Sera" on October 24th 1918, the concept of a mutilated victory encapsulated the frustration of Italian interventionists with the post-war political machinations of its allies. See Michele Rallo, *Il coinvolgimento dell'Italia nella Prima Guerra Mondiale e la "Vittoria Mutilata"* (Roma: Edizioni Settimo Sigillo, 2007) ; See also Maria Grazia Melchionni, *La vittoria mutilata. Problemi ed incertezze della politica estera italiana sul finire della Grande Guerra (ottobre 1918 - gennaio 1919)*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1981. These studies are helpful in getting a clearer understanding of the historical background. They are, however, largely diplomatic and political histories. As such they don't engage in the kind of critical analysis of the discursive power of the concept of mutilation that I am attempting here.

²⁸ On the rhetoric of anti-parliamentarianism in liberal Italy, see Gunter Berghaus, "Introduction", in *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944* (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996) 3-8; Carlo Salinari, *Miti e coscienza del decadentismo italiano* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1960) 62-4.

²⁹ Originally published in French in 1911, the manifesto was subsequently included in the volumes *Guerra sola igene del mondo* (1915), and *Futurismo e fascismo* (1924), see: F.T. Marinetti, *Teoria ed invenzione futurista*, Luciano de Maria, ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 1968), 252. All citations to the manifestos are taken from this edition, which is abbreviated to *TIF*.

sphere was from the outset grounded in reorganizing the structures of democratic government rather than merely abolishing them in favor of any type of purely authoritarian regime. Too often futurism as a movement is regarded more in relation to its ultimate absorption into fascism, and less in relation to the liberal-democratic social structures whence it sprang.

While it is largely true, following Benjamin's assertion, that the futurist aestheticization of politics provides the ideological mantle assumed by fascism, it is also important to remember the "democratic constellation" within which futurism arose, and whose basic principles it attempted to redefine.³⁰ In "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo", Marinetti's call for universal suffrage is couched within a discourse on sexual difference and the possibility of gender equality that takes as its prime target the socio-historical institutions that according to him have produced an image of woman, "concepita come unico ideale, divino serbatoio d'amore" (TIF 250). As Barbara Spackman has pointed out, the seemingly libratory bent of Marinetti's discourse is directed at the ultimate destruction of the liberal parliamentary system as it champions women's suffrage largely on the basis of their natural ineptitude (12-13). How, then, does Marinetti conceive of the relationship between liberty and democracy as it would apply to an Italy in the midst of a process of modernization?

The blending of the equally disquieting discourses of misogyny and anti-democratic sentiment in "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo" reflects a larger social debate occurring among political and artistic figures on the extreme ends of the political spectrum in Italy during the Giolittian period. Notwithstanding the wide consensus with which Giolitti's administration ruled in the parliament, for many thinkers on both the right and the left, Giolitti represented an outmoded, decadent form of political oligarchy that refused the authentic participation of the masses in order to govern them. As such, the traditional political class was understood to place the maintenance of private interests above the well-being of the national community.

In this political climate, ideologically opposed groups found themselves trumpeting similar values of social revolution, regeneration and reorganization. Syndicalists, nationalists, anarchists, and imperialists all coalesced around a general sense of anti-parliamentarianism that questioned the supposed correlation between the liberal democratic values of the Risorgimento, and the idea of a solid and stable national

³⁰ From his seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935), Benjamin's formulation of the relationship between futurism and fascism has been a point of departure for much scholarship on the political culture of Fascism. Arguing that fascism's organization of the masses depends upon the introduction of aestheticized forms of expression that figure war as the "apotheosis" of society, Benjamin represents one end of the spectrum from which to understand the role of war in the futurist imagination. Renato Poggioli, on the other end, attempts to reframe the discussion in terms of futurism's (and other avant-garde movements') dependence on liberal democratic social institutions. Poggioli's work then, would belong to a strain of thinking about the modernist avant-garde that does not restrict itself to the totalitarian politics of the early twentieth century, but rather focuses its attention on problems of democratic representational politics. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, Ed. Hannah Arendt, Trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969) 217-62; Renato Poggioli, *The theory of the Avant-garde*, Trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) 3-4. Also in the vein of Poggioli, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, Ed. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997).

community (Gentile 75-95).³¹ Within this context, the weaving together of anti-liberal sentiment with the characterization of woman that appears in Marinetti's text reflects in the equation of parliamentary democracy with decadent romanticism, the correlation of virile, futurist masculinity with the mass politics of the avant-gardes.

Often the cultural movement towards mass political engagement in the early twentieth century in Italy is seen as one of the major links between the political patrimony of the avant-garde and the cultural politics of Fascism.³² What I am interested in, however, is analyzing the way in which Marinetti's narrative practice appears to be more focused on reconfiguring the constitutive elements of the classical humanist subject of liberalism in as much as it provides the basis for a theory of democracy in Italy. As an off-shoot of the political and cultural movements that blend nationalism and imperialism into what we might call a form of modernist individualism, futurism poses a unique problem for thinking about political subjectivity. More than simply responding to a specific crisis of political representation or cultural identity, Marinetti's writings take a radically different approach in that they question the relationship between individual consciousness and materiality in order to address the problem of organizing a national collectivity.

For Marinetti, the aim is to achieve a model of political subjectivity that is chiefly rooted in one's identification with the *patria*, but which bases that identification on a highly individualized notion of the self. Notwithstanding the call to destroy the literary "I" in the earlier manifestos, some form of individuated being must be constructed in order to a subject to identify as Italian. Freedom, then, would have to be reconceived in terms of the individual's capacity to first submit to a process of *de-subjectivization* and identification with a larger network of signifying structures (in this case Italy) that would erase the boundaries between the interior self and its external representation. Thus, following the invasion of Libya, Marinetti declares in the second political manifesto that "The word 'Italy' must dominate the word 'Freedom'" (75).³³

This is a particularly difficult operation because it requires that the ideal futurist subject link his physical self to the physical space of nation, but only in so far as that

³¹ Insofar as they preserved the Risorgimento traditions while rejecting the liberal democratic state, Emilio Gentile has linked the variant strains of nationalism circulating in Italy during this period to either an imperialist or a what calls "humanist" nationalism. These were fundamentally opposed to the revolutionary leftist movements particularly because of the obvious focus on national identity rather than on class struggle. See Emilio Gentile, *La grande Italia: Il mito della nazione nel XX secolo* (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2006); on the general political climate of the time see Paolo Vita Finzi, *Le delusioni della libertà* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1961).

³² Studies linking the nationalistic writings of the avant-gardes with the development of fascist ideology both inside and outside Italy abound. See in particular Umberto Carpi, "Per una storia dei rapporti tra movimento futurista e fascismo: La scintilla di Cremona", in *Letteratura italiana contemporanea*, 3:6, May-August, 1982): 31-50; Emilio Gentile, "From the Cultural Revolt of the Giolittian Era to the Ideology of Fascism", in *Studies of Modern Italian History: From the Risorgimento to the Republic*, Ed. Frank J. Coppa (New York: P. Lang, 1986): 103-119; Walter L. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism*, cit.

³³ The bullet points of the manifesto, dated October, 1911, were first published under the titles "Per la guerra sola igene del mondo" and "Tripoli italiana" as well as in the newspaper *La grande Italia*. The full text of the manifesto appears first in *Guerra sola igene del mondo* (1915). It is translated and reprinted in F.T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, Ed. Gunter Berghaus, Trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

space is mediated through the constantly signifying networks of association that are the product of futurist art and writing. The series of associative links which in the previous chapter defined the cybernetic character of the *parole in libertà* functions in an equally prosthetic way, as we shall see, in the narrative structure of *L'alcova d'acciaio*. In that text, the use of space to materialize consciousness is joined to a representation of speed that serves as a model of desire. Both elements are then implanted into the subject of the novel, Marinetti cum Italian soldier, in a way that renders futurist narrativization analogous with mechanization. The result is that the political subject of futurism is defined by what we might call a fully textualized ontology, in which national identity is produced by fragmentation, mobility, and violence.

Though Marinetti's texts engage in a narrative practice rooted in the fragmentation of the self as a consequence of technological modernization, what we find is that the attempt to overcome a humanist model of subjectivity ultimately folds back upon itself. As Nick Bostrom has shown, the relationship between nationalism and transhumanism reflects an underlying ambivalence that is central to the desire to transcend the natural confines of the body.³⁴ In *L'Alcova d'acciaio*, Marinetti's narrative attempts to overcome this ambivalence through a self-conscious assault on the notion of character rooted in the fragmentation of consciousness, and its near dissolution into the flattened dimensions of the Italian front and the mechanized shell of his A-74 tank. From the outset of the novel, the physical and emotional state of woundedness that characterizes Marinetti's *autobiografismo* are associated with an Italy wounded by its failures in the war:

Oggi 11 giugno 1918,

Sono un tenete dei bombardieri che a fatto il suo dovere. Ma non mi sento degno di te, libro mio preferito. Mentre il mio cuore batte sicuro il mio passo no lo sa cadere con eguale sicurezza. Ho il passo indeciso, malfermo ondeggiante, ferito, che ripete sulla terra le punture dilanianti d'una piaga infame e assillante aperta nel mio fianco. Piaga di Caporetto, piaga enorme che sento vivere soffrire, imputridire e che presto bisogna, ad ogni costo bisogna colmare, colmare con un nuovo ultravermiglio generosissimo sangue a fiotti bollenti, a torrenti nel suo centro e sugli orli il cui viola sinistro ricorda le botti sventrate dai fuggiaschi ubriachi, le schifose avioleaceo fuggente tramonto del 27 ottobre. Guarire, guarire quella piaga! La guariremo. Già domino il mio passo e lo cadenzo. La grande battaglia è prossima e tutto nel mio corpo s'avventa verso quell'ora decisiva dalla quale nascerà il nuovo passo Italiano, quello avant'ieri sul Carso, passo elastico, martellante, padrone delle nobili elegantemente femminili strade italiane. (12)³⁵

The passage is critical to an understanding of the complex dynamics of the novel for a number of reasons.³⁶ First, it foreshadows the narrative structure of the novel as a

³⁴ Nick Bostrom, "A History of Transhumanist Thought", in *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol.14no. 1 (April 2005): 1-25.

³⁵ F.T. Marinetti, *L'alcova d'acciaio. Romanzo vissuto* (1921). All future references are made to this edition.

³⁶ I argue that Marinetti's "autobiographical" novel participates in a tradition of writing about the self in Italian literary history that is distinct from the mere practice of autobiographical writing. As Michel David demonstrates, the semantic distinction between *autobiografismo* and *autobiografia* in Italian highlights the

whole. Memory, sensation, and desire are conflated in Marinetti's recounting and filtered through a recollection that oscillates between the character's sexual and military exploits. The physical borders of the body are substituted by the imagined borders of the nation which, as Spackman argues, are patrolled throughout the novel by the logic of sexuality (14-15). Moreover, the metonymic substitution of his own wounded body for that of the nation foregrounds the "piaga enorme" of Caporetto as a structuring element of a post-war, Italian subjectivity that is marked by the identification of individual corporality with the geographic and social spaces of the nation.

Woundedness, or rather mutilation, functions in Marinetti's text as a condition of entrance into the national community. This is a community imagined as a cultural reality, and in need of establishing a connection to the space of the nation in a way that relies on direct, though media based, access to its organizing symbols and points of reference.³⁷ For the futurists, however, these must also clearly distinguish themselves from the discursive appropriation of historical continuity with the values of the Risorgimento, which themselves provide access to the very liberal-democratic values that the futurists opposed. Within the context of a cultural tradition that figures *italianità* as a form of subjectivity grounded in the rhetoric of historical fragmentation and loss, we can understand Marinetti's usage of the mutilate as both a marker for Italian national identity and the mode of its reformulation. The importance of the First World War for Marinetti's representation of a new Italian subject, then, is key. For Marinetti, the war serves as a space within which subjects are both broken down, and created. The destructiveness of war is always in a sense productive in that it opens the door to the violent heroics that define the futurist subject.

In a more important sense, however, the representation of war in *L'alcova d'acciaio*, serves as a model for the difficult process of national regeneration that Italy must undergo in order to become a fully modern space of productivity. In the novel, this process must be precipitated by a total breakdown of both individual bodies and the space that they inhabit, i.e. Italy itself. Only then is a kind of reconstitution that attaches individual, physical health to geo-politically oriented social health possible. The very ambivalence in overcoming the limits of physical presence, previously alluded to by Bostrom, can be seen as a self-conscious assault on the notion of character rooted in the disorder of consciousness, and its near dissolution into the flattened dimensions of the Italian front.

If we are to understand Marinetti's discourse as an attempt to construct an anti-humanist stance, one that effectively countermines the stability of the liberal-democratic subject, we must recognize that it is upon the basis of a tension between an anti-sentimental materialism and an over-determined voluntarism that the subject of futurist

degree to which autobiographical writing in the Italian context deals specifically with issues of self-formation and presentation in a cultural situation devoid of a stable national identity. See Michel David, "Le Problème du journal intime en Italie", in *Le journal intime et ses formes littéraires. Actes du colloque de septembre 1975*, Ed. Vittorio Del Litto (Genève-Paris: Droz 1978) 101-18.

³⁷ The notion of the "imagined community", as it was formulated by Benedict Anderson, has been invaluable in conceptualizing the ideological foundations of national identities. Anderson's work has been of particular interest to scholars studying the difficult processes of national unification undergone by nation-states that formed in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Italy, Germany, et al.). See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

political culture is constructed. As an effect, the traditional humanist subject is rendered inconsequential, malleable, and able to be deconstructed and reconstructed according to the principles of speed, mobility, and material dynamism. In the same manner, artistic representation is conceived of as a motor for the production of the new futurist subject insofar as it functions as a supplement to the experience of war, the primary site of futurist creation. Marinetti's call in the "Technical Manifesto" to represent the life of matter, its "differenti impulsi direttivi, le sue forze di compressione, di dilatazione, di coesione, e di disgregazione", rather than to project human emotions onto nature rests upon a fundamentally asymmetrical formulation of the relationship between interior and exterior that, while establishing a constant flow of information inward and outward, prizes the latter over the former (TIF 50).

Such an understanding of the dynamics of information flow, and its effects on the organization and interpretation of experience is of particular importance in Marinetti's writing about the experience of the Italian Campaign of First World War. *L'alcova d'acciaio* can thus be read as performing a number of tasks that are central to what we may term Marinetti's politico-poetic agenda. I argue that the text must be interpreted paying attention to three fundamental elements, those of 1) the narrative shifts between experiences on the front and experiences in the company of women; 2) the ideological link between personal memoir and nationalist propaganda; 3) the positing of a form of mobile consciousness which ultimately undermines the stability of the deliberative, rational subject of democracy.

Let us begin with an account of the novel on perhaps its most superficial level, that of nationalist propaganda. Marinetti was, from the outset, a propagandist. More than simply reflecting the essence of futurist ideals, the war served as both a rallying point and a point of departure for previously disparate currents of nationalist sentiment. That Marinetti's so called *romanzo vissuto*, or "lived novel", provides a relatively scant depiction of the front and the activities that occurred there seems less important than the way in which his literary interpretation of the war-time experience functions as a model for that of its audience. At the outset the novel is intended to perform a certain work upon its reader:

No, non ho pensato all'amore. Ho ideato invece l'architettura del mio nuovo libro che sarà meraviglioso, siatene sicuro. Voglio che questo libro danzi, danzi, danzi vivo e palpitante con ritmo giocondo fra le mani del lettore. Voglio che la sua danza pazza d'amore e di sconfinato eroismo trasformi le mani del lettore in quelle agilissime del giocoliere. Scatterà anch'egli fuor dalla poltrona e ritto si sforzerà di aumentare la sua statura sulla punta dei piedi ballerinamente nell'ebbrezza ascensionale che lo spingerà a gareggiare in temerario equilibrio col ritmo selvaggio del mio libro. Sarà ebbro di guardarlo in alto quasi in bilico sull'improvviso zampillo di gioia che gli schizzerà dal cuore. A braccia aperte aspetterà che ricada e ricada finalmente. Ma intendiamoci parlo del lettore geniale, amico d'ogni coraggio spirituale! Con ferocia brutale il mio libro sul naso del passatista imbecille acidulo e occhialuto che trema sotto i suoi vetri come un microbo sotto il microscopio. Si staccherà da lui per rimbalzargli addosso furente e per schiaffeggiarlo. (16-17)

The book is formulated not in terms of its effective representation of action, but as action itself. Like the *parole in libertà*, *L'alcova d'acciaio* can be read as a borderline text between the representational and the performative. It is here that we can locate its properly prosthetic character. Taking Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera's definition of a prosthesis as indicating a "device designed to replace a missing part of the body, but also a device that extends the radius of action of an organism" (135), the novel serves as both a supplement to the literary representations of Italy's war time experience, and as a point of departure for the reconfiguration of the futurist male subject.³⁸ In this sense, the prosthetic function of the text aligns with what I have argued is Marinetti's cybernetic vision of the national community, or national consciousness.

The intended audience of the novel would be, in a general sense, the nation as a whole though more specifically, perhaps more crucially, war veterans and potential future soldiers. The Italian defeat at Caporetto in October 1917 was a particularly damaging event for interventionists and non-interventionists alike. Italian soldiers, many of whom already had little desire to participate in the conflict had to be convinced to remain at the front (Melograni 549-53). Large scale propaganda campaigns as well as harsh punishments for desertion were among those methods employed to retain the presence, and the presence of mind, of Italian soldiers. In *L'alcova*, Marinetti attempts to redress the notion of Italian soldiers as frightened or unwilling to participate in the war by reconfiguring the relationship between masculine heroics at the front, and the maintenance of sexual primacy in social relations at home, and juxtaposing it with an encounter with an Austrian deserter:

È un disertore austriaco. Indovino i piccoli occhi celesti nel viso biondiccio. Breve interrogatorio. Appartiene alle truppe d'assalto, parla italiano, si dice slovacco. Ha lavorato in Italia in una fabbrica di birra.
- Perché hai disertato?
-Perchè il mio tenente mi ha schiaffeggiato ieri. Ogni sera di pattuglia. Sono stanco.
-L'offensiva austriaca è sicura, non è vero?
-Sì- e anche la data fissata-il 15 giugno all 2 e mezza dall'Astico al mare, ma l'attacco importante sarà nel centro. (21)

The Austrian soldier, with his feminine features, easily divulges the exact details of his army's immanent assault simply to avoid the hardships of his military responsibilities, and the abuse of his superiors. A few lines later, we are told of the few Italian deserters in a discussion between Marinetti and Major Sannia:

Quanto diversi, i nostri disertori! noi abbiamo avuto nella brigata solo 3 soldati fucilati per diserzione. Uno appena uscito dall linea fu subito

³⁸ Marinetti's text stands in stark opposition to much of the literary output concerning the First World War in Italy. In particular, comparisons with war time diaries and memoirs such as Giovanni Comisso's *Giorni di Guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1930), written between 1923 and '28 and published in 1930, or Emilio Lussu's *Un anno sull'altipiano* (Torino: Einaudi, 1938). Like *L'alcova*, both are first-person narratives that recount highly personal experiences of the war: Comisso's of a young officer who situates his experience in terms of a fascinating disruption of the boredom of provincial life, Lussu's a critical recounting of the perceived incompetence of the military structure. Both, however, attempt to recount facts and situations as they were lived and might be said to be proper memoirs. Marinetti's account differs in that the aim seems to be less a verisimilar account of the war than the creation of a set of sensations and impressions.

inseguito da una pattuglia ordinata da me e fucilato a tre passi dai reticolati austriaci. Gli trovai addosso una lettera che spiegava la sua diserzione veramente strana dato il suo ottimo stato di servizio. Scriveva alla moglie: « Non mi farò ammazzare dal dispiacere. Domani mi darò prigioniero agli austriaci. Conserverò così la pellaccia per il dopo-guerra quando verrò a spaccarti il cuore per pagare il tuo tradimento...» Il secondo disertore fu preso dai carabinieri mentre abbandonava la linea. Disse: « Non vado via per paura. me ne frego degli austriaci. Voglio andare a Trapani a uccidere mio padre che ogni notte va a letto colla mia fidanzata.

E il maggiore concluse: “Con simili disertori si deve assolutamente vincere la guerra”. (21-2)

Here Marinetti's narrative transforms the negative connotations of desertion into a demonstration of the superiority of the Italian soldier in comparison to his foreign counterparts. At the same time the narrative creates a link between sexual conquest and the defense of territory that mirrors the goal of the Italian war effort for the irredentists, that of reclaiming Italy's lost territories, by equating the female body with the geographical space of the nation. Interestingly, while the defense of one's sexual conquests is linked to the responsibilities of the soldier at war in this passage, it also functions as a way to excuse the shirking of the latter so as to elide the possibility of fear or incompetence on the part of the Italian male. Rather, the internal defense of the national body (the regulation of sexual relations between men and the regulation of social relations between men) supplants aggressive tendencies towards the external threat posed by the war, splitting the reader's apprehension of where the actual threat lies. It is thus on two fronts that the war is waged, in the bedroom and on the battlefield, and these constitute the general settings of the narrative, as well as the psychological dimensions of the Italian soldiers including Marinetti himself.

The front is a space characterized by a fundamental inability to engage in the act of deliberation. As a space of pure sensation, it requires the sort of streamlined, mechanized consciousness embodied in the futurist ideal of speed. On the front, speed is not understood as lacking direction. As Timothy Campbell has argued, the emphasis on speed reconfigures the subject's ability to perceive his surroundings in a way that influences the relationship between vision and cognition.³⁹ This is, to be sure, the effect of the mechanization of the mind, and it functions as the constitutive element of futurist subject formation. It is in this vein that the setting of the novel reflects the sociopolitical aim of Futurism: to transform the character of Italian society from one of passive, unproductive weakness into one of dynamic production and reproduction.

For Marinetti, the proto-cybernetic discourse contained within the artistic manifestos as well as in the structures of *L'alcova d'acciaio* and *Come si seducono le donne*, posits the man/machine dynamic in a way that challenges the centrality of the

³⁹ Campbell's essay argues that a change occurs in visual culture in Italy as a result of the introduction of new forms of media technology into society which had previously served to alter the ways in which soldiers perceived the action of the war, as such it provides a valuable insight into how the relationship to technology aids in the transformation of post-war Italian society with an eye towards the advent of totalitarian ideology. See Timothy Campbell, "Infinite Remoteness": Marinetti, Bontempelli, and the Emergence of Modern Italian Visual Culture", in *MLN*, 120.1, (2005):111-36.

former over the latter. Marinetti's anti-humanism stems from his abandonment of the conception of a free, autonomous subject and locating agency rather in its connectivity to technology as constitutive rather than conducive of desire. Futurism conceived of a new ethics founded on the primacy of speed, immediacy, violent rupture, and the externalization of will. In these elements, however, Marinetti's theoretical apparatus turns on itself, revealing itself to be fundamentally contradictory in its aims. For any anti-humanism that confounds the individual subject with the nationalized subject ultimately reproduces the structures it seeks to overcome.

The constant oscillation between the front and spaces of sexual conquest embodies the prosthetic turn in Marinetti's text. Understood as a symbiotic relationship between an organism (here, the sexually active Italian male) and a machine (his tank) grounded in the exchange of information patterns, the prosthetic aspect of the text is above all concerned with the control of the organism, its governability, through the naturalizing of those patterns. In *L'alcova d'acciaio*, Marinetti presents himself as the subject with whom the reader should identify. He stands in as the futurist Italian male par excellence insofar as his experience of the war informs his orientation toward the national/female body. His interactions with various women throughout the novel inform, and are informed by, his internalization of the war as consciousness itself.

There are, however, complications between the character of the lover and that of the soldier that play out in the course of the novel that must be overcome in order for the futurist male subject to come fully into being. During a period away from the front, in which Marinetti finds himself in Naples with his lover Bianca, the tension between his desire for her and his identity as soldier manifests itself as a moment of crisis. What remains essential, however, is the consistency with which spatial orientation, perception and consciousness are rendered mobile and largely interchangeable in the text. At the front, Marinetti exemplifies the futurist subject externalizing his psyche in the association with the action and the mechanisms of war, and fashioning a protective psychic "armor" in a way akin to the process of subject formation on the parts of fascist soldiers as theorized by Klaus Theweleit in his 1977 psychoanalytic investigation, *Männerphantasien* (Male Fantasies).

In his work on the psychological underpinnings of the male fascist subject, Theweleit identifies the impulse to associate the ego with the military discipline and aggressive behaviors inherent to the practice of war as a constitutive element of fascist subjectivity. Disciplining the body aids in the construction of a psychic armor that resists contagion by sensual or erotic pleasure and redirects the subject's own desire toward the destruction of the enemy and the cohesion of the self (178). Arguing that Theweleit's analysis of the libidinal structures of fascist soldiers does indeed provide useful insight to and understanding of the futurist male, Christine Poggi suggests that Marinetti's primary identification as a poet and artist belies a "certain romantic allegiance to anarchist ideals of individual liberty and spontaneity" (163). Poggi then goes on to argue that the narrative shifts between action on the front and action in the boudoir demonstrate the extent to which the futurist subject diverges from the fascist subject. Applied to a passage midway through the novel in chapter XIII entitled "I veleni del golfo", in which Marinetti is confronted with the desire to remain with his lover Bianca and the disgust that said desire arouses within him, Poggi's interpretation seems to hold water.

I would suggest, however that the passage Poggi cites should be read in a different way, because its productive function within the narrative has less to do with troubling the psychological similarities between futurists and fascists, than with demonstrating the essential linkage between space/perception and masculine subjects and female objects. The passage reads as follows:

Nello scendere dal treno a Napoli io constatai che una lotta si era scatenata fra il mio cervello volitivo pieno di idee di guerra e di prossima offensiva e il mio cuore tremante, vinto, liquefatto, napoletano. Irritatissimo, sconvolto, con le lacrime in gola, traballavo nella carrozzella traballante pei vicoli notturni. (103)

At first glance the passage, taken alone, would seem to support Poggi's interpretation. Clearly the affair with Bianca can be read as signifying a split between Marinetti's romantic sensibilities and the armored masculine drives of his futurist ideal man. If, however, we read the passage in terms of its equation with Marinetti's internal conflict with the movement from the front to Naples, and the description of his impressions on the train prior to this passage, a different interpretation seems more useful:

Il giorno dopo alle due del pomeriggio appena entrato nello scompartimento soffocante sono preso da un'ansia inaspettata. Il treno è zeppo. Quasi tutti napoletani. Sono forse le loro voci cadenzate che mi spremono i nervi mutando completamente la mia sensibilità. Il mio cuore radoppia i suoi battiti. Vorrei respirare, respirare il grande alito passionale del golfo. (100)

Marinetti's internal crisis stems from the movement from the space of the war to Naples, a city where according to Marinetti "l'allegria napoletana cede un poco, ma non troppo, alla severità della guerra"(104). Unlike the descriptions of his previous sexual encounters, in his Neapolitan excursion there is a departure from the jovial, almost celebratory dynamic that characterizes his pursuit of sexual satisfaction. Instead, Marinetti engages in a highly sentimentalized recollection of memories and sensations. He discounts the possibility of his having seduced Bianca, and declares instead that he is "innamorato come un pazzo di Bianca" (147). He suffers, "torturato, inquieto", from a return to a space in which deliberation must be undertaken, choices must be reflected upon and subjectivity is split between lover and soldier (149).

In doing so, he creates a disjuncture between emotion and sensation that posits the former as a weakening force and the latter as strengthening. Contemplation of the city of Naples, and its identification with his sentiment for Bianca is threatening because it allows him to engage in deliberative thought, whether it is right to stay with Bianca in Naples or to return to the war. Access to choice is what begins to break down his protective, productive structure. In that sense, the recourse to the romantic mindset which Poggi suggests is demonstrated by Marinetti's discourse on his time spent with Bianca, and which reveals his allegiance to a more poetic sense of self, can be read as an indictment of that mind set in its representation of the space of Naples and its sentimental associations as contaminating his externalized, metallic sense of self.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ On this point, I would tend more toward the interpretation provided by Cinza Sartini-Blum, in which she argues that the interlude with Bianca reinforces Marinetti's rejection of sentimentalized love when he

The trope of landscape invoked by Marinetti figures the front as paradoxically utopic because of its dystopian characteristics. The chaos, danger and destruction that the war produces upon the Italian landscape provides both the condition for the realization of the futurist model of consciousness as an effect of its textual representation as both present and outside of the boundaries of a historicized notion of Italy. The landscape of the front, which correlates to the actual front of the Italian Campaign in the war functions as a reflection of a fractured, exteriorized consciousness that marks the dissolution of the unitary subject. This is set in opposition to the spaces, such as the Gulf of Naples, that embody the pre-futurist sensibility threatening the subject from outside of the self and inside of the collective Italian consciousness.

As a literary trope, landscape often functions as a complex of signifying structures geared toward the association of the individual with the space of the nation. Its deployment requires that its discursive origins are always suppressed at the moment of its production, thus enabling the perception of the nation as a natural phenomenon. This in turn legitimizes the recognition of a historically defined community which identifies itself with its surroundings. In *L'alcova d'acciaio*, however, the associative links between the landscape and the individual do not serve to reinforce a notion of space that emphasizes materiality as an organic unity that defines its inhabitants in terms of a static, historically defined connection. Instead, by placing an emphasis on the malleability of the landscape, Marinetti locates the front as a space of chaotic destruction and invention. In doing so the violation of the landscape, which he sees "sventrata dagli atletici colpi di reni delle nostre bombarde" (33), is both an act of cleansing and (highly sexualized) conquest.

The transformation of the Italian soldier into an instrument of war coincides with the mechanization of the body as a result of the privileging of dynamic action over rationality. Men become machines in the fulfillment of their military duties. Marinetti's descriptions of the *arditi*, Italy's crack troops, transform them into mindless functions "simili a ruote dentate della gran macchina della battaglia"(41-1). Their roles as soldiers, mechanized by the externalization and automation of their individual subjectivities mark them as invincible. Marinetti, in observing them begins to understand that their strength lies precisely in their connection as cogs in the machine:

Il mistero mi avvince, la divinazione mi incoraggia. Ogni ruota è formata, tessuta di innumerevoli ruote. Più queste piccole ruote snelle e combacianti sono numerose, più alone o ruota globale chiude fortemente il nucleo che è più compatto. Quando è facile decifrare e contare le ruote secondarie che girano sul combattente; questo ha un nucleo più fragile e più scoperto; e la massa di sensibilità vissute, ondeggiando elasticamente e agganciandosi ad altri aloni, lo protegge poco o affatto. (41)

Here, soldiers are reduced to machinic functions, all parts and disembodied organisms, in both the execution of their duties and in their free time. Arriving in Verona, Marinetti encounters a group to *Arditi*, arguably the secondary heroes of the novel, on leave following a victorious push against the Austrians:

Alla stazione di Verona quasi buia mugola asserragliato e ribollente uno dei reparti d'assalto che va a riposo. Odore acre e mordente di belve

distinguishes his own inner turmoil from her clearly futurist superficiality. See Cinzia Sartini-Blum, *The Other Modernism*, cit., 100-01.

vittoriose... Gli arditi hanno occupato il caffè della stazione. Si intravede un rimescolio di braccia nude stantuffare e rubinettare fiaschi di vino e bicchieri di birra, fra una fantasmagorica agitazione di luci azzurre e di ombre caricaturali. (53)

Indeed, we are not dealing here with the same self-perception that is conditioned by the relation to his *carro armato-74*. In chapter VII "La 74", we are presented with the total identification of the lover with the soldier as Marinetti describes his "nuova amante":

Ma la mia è la più agile di tutte, ha un cuore-motore più forte, e il fuoco delle sue ironie mitragliate non ha debolezze nè distrazioni. Fu la sorte a designarmi come compagno della bella 74. Subito le bacai i fianchi d'acciaio, la grande palpebra metallica e lei mi ringraziò con un mezzo giro della sua cupola ornata d'un fascione tricolore. (77)

Like Bianca, the *carro armato* is a source of energetic plenitude that fills Marinetti with both pleasure and power. Unlike with Bianca, however, the erotic desire that pulsates through Marinetti as he engages in a race with his fellow soldiers is associated with the dynamic mobility that his "donna d'acciaio" provides to him. In Naples with Bianca, it is a desire rooted in a notion of bodily presence as static, decaying, and feminine. His removal from the sphere of action opens up the possibility of contemplation, which hinders the ability of the soldier to perform correctly in that it confuses the fulfillment he is supposed to receive in meeting the objective to serve the patria with that which he finds in the arms of his lover.

With Bianca, Marinetti is in the space of the largely psychological. He describes her as "sensuale e cerebrale" and "capricciosa" (146-7). Each of her qualities, even the physical ones he describes, point to an inner self that is grounded in the emotionality that sets the tone of the entire chapter. The A-74, however, contains no inner life of the mind. Her qualities (it is obviously female though not feminine), are external, sleek and metallic. The A-74 becomes anthropomorphized only to the extent that its sensual qualities are in the service of enabling Marinetti's own mechanization. In that sense, the desire that wells up inside of Marinetti in confrontation with his tank is one rooted not in presence, but precisely in the dynamic movement engendered by velocity.⁴¹

As a war narrative, the pitting of two notions of desire against each other never provides for a legitimate choice to be made between them by the reader. For, while one is self fulfilling, it is constructed as dangerous for the well-being of the nation. The other relocates the object of desire as well as the possibility of satisfaction in a figuration of the patria that retains the desirability of the female body as an object of pure physicality. Mapping his desire onto an engine of speed then, allows Marinetti to overcome the deliberative choosing of a path demanded by the individual's position as a free, autonomous agent. Instead, because his relation to the A-74 tank is primarily physical, in that it structures his ability to perceive and act in the world around him, i.e. because he joins in a prosthetic relationship with it, it functions as a working system of information exchange that replaces the imperative to think rationally with the imperative to process immediate sensation.

⁴¹ On the engendering quality of speed see: Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Crash (Speed as engine of Individuation)", in *Modernism/Modernity*, 6, no.1, (Jan. 1999):1-49.

The dehumanization of the soldier initiates the process of reconstructing a new Italian character modeled on the futurist ideal man. It is a process that is intimately tied to the patriotic goals of Italy in the war. Within the context of the novel, it is paralleled by Marinetti's own gradual identification with his A-74 tank. As he is engaging with the enemy, with the force of 22 other divisions, he begins to swell with a patriotic fervor wrought from the complex of sensations and impressions taken in through the vehicle's rapid movement. He declares feeling "la materia del mio corpo trasformarsi, metalizzarsi in un ottimismo d'acciaio" (200). It is an optimism that reflects the externalization of his individuality and his identification with the larger whole of the Italian army.

As a mode of realizing one's individual subject position, Marinetti's narrative represents a threat to the traditional liberal-democratic subject in its challenge to the primacy of deliberative thought over unmediated perception. At the same time, it poses a threat to the Cartesian humanist subject, and inaugurates a discourse that approximates the notion of a post-humanism. It does not, however, ultimately belong to the field of textual productions, discursive strategies and philosophical ruminations that fall under the umbrella of post-human theory. Instead, I argue that Marinetti's work represents an important, if somewhat specious and politically suspect, step on the way to the post-human that we can characterize as a pseudo-anti-humanism. The futurist notion of *arte-azione*, of a fundamental comingling of aesthetic and political discourses of both the self and the nation, entails an understanding of corporality that attempts to overcome the limits of classical liberal formulations of a self rooted in a physical body, in favor of a purely textualized body.

Writing the body then, producing corporality as a chiefly textual act, requires the mutilation of its structural integrity, its fragmentation, and rendering constantly interchangeable its experiences of embodiment. The mutilated body, rebuilt with the aid of a prosthesis, figures as the culmination of the difficult process of modernization at the level of the individual as well as the collective. This becomes clear in Marinetti's earlier, and indeed more widely read, manual on the seduction of women *Come si seducono le donne* (1917). On the surface the text may seem like a bombastic discourse on the nature of women, one that highlights Marinetti's own prowess as a virile Italian male as an example of the fact that, unlike in other European countries, "più della metà dei maschi italiani hanno la forza che seduce e capisce il bel sesso" (31).⁴² Notwithstanding the text's function as seduction manual, scholars have pointed to its importance as a strategic military tactic, as well as its centrality for understanding the politics of gender in Italian culture during the First World War.⁴³

In the tenth chapter, entitled "Donne, preferite i gloriosi mutilati!", a change occurs in the subject of the text from a discussion on the nature of women and the various ways to successfully court them to one of the type of male character that women, Italian women in particular, should desire. He writes:

Donne, dovete preferire ai maschi intatti più o meno sospetti di vigliaccheria, i gloriosi mutilati! Amateli ardentemente! I loro baci futuristi vi

⁴² F.T. Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne* (Rocca San Casciano, Stabilimento Tipografico L. Cappelli, 1918). All future references are made to this edition.

⁴³ See Lucia Re, "Futurism, Seduction, and the Strange Sublimity of War", in *Italian Studies*, Vol. LIX, (2004): 83-111; Catherine Daly, "Futurism's Construction of a Phallic National Identity", *Carte Italiane*, vol. 1, n. 13, (1994): 63-76.

daranno dei figli d'acciaio, precisi, veloci, carichi di elettricità celeste, ispirati come il fulmine nel colpire e abbattere uomini, alberi e ruderi secolari. (146)

The characterization of unwounded men returning from war as “sospetti di vigliaccheria” and that of the mutilated veteran as a glorious, virile, ‘new man’, reinforces the futurist notion of the “guerra, solo igiene del mondo”, while providing a blueprint for a new Italian subjectivity wrought from the trauma inflicted by the First War.

In this text, as in *L'alcova d'acciaio*, Marinetti's representation of the ideal Italian male is encapsulated within a discourse of mutilation and regeneration. The manual itself is dedicated to the “granata austriaca” which, having wounded Marinetti, allows him to dictate the manual while away from the front. The dedication goes on to explain that although the grenade was unsuccessful in extinguishing his “vulcaniche schiiaantaanti bombarde di Zagora”, its traces are imprinted upon his body leaving what he calls the “soli tatuaggi degni di noi futuristi” who fight “per il rinnovamento ingigantimento del genio italiano”. From the very outset, then, mutilation serves as a point of departure from which a formulation of a national, male, subjectivity can be thought insofar as it marks the subject as a product of the paradoxically destructive creativity of war.

As Lucia Re has argued, Marinetti's description of his scars as tattoos figure the violence done to the physical body as sign of beauty that contains the memorializing effect of the scar well its figuration as an object of desire, belonging to a “symbolic logic of the gift as a reciprocal exchange between men” (Re 86-7). He produces an image of the *mutilato* as an erotic ideal that might supplant the desirability of women as mode of reinscribing the strictures of a homosocial system of relations in light of the destabilizing effects of the war, modernization, and political instability on traditional notions of masculinity. What concerns me here, however, is how we can read Marinetti's figuration of the mutilated body as a condition of entry into a modern, Italian socio-political community.

Moreover, I am interested in understanding the extent to which prosthetic reconstruction of the body signals an overcoming of the classical liberal-democratic subject. In other words, the question is how do mutilation, and the subsequent prosthetic regeneration of corporal integrity function in terms of their political and ideological ramifications and as characteristics of a post-liberal, post-human form of *Italianità*? The answer, it would seem, can be found in an examination of the usages of wounded-ness as political metaphor for both the individual subject and the body politic in Western cultural discourse and, consequently, how wounded-ness has functioned within discourses of Italian national identity at least since the Risorgimento.

The image of the body politic is, by now, a well known and well studied one.⁴⁴ Though its usage is perhaps more germane to the Late Medieval and Early Modern

⁴⁴ Though by no means an exhaustive list of works dealing with the notion of the body politic, on the history of the analogy between the individual body and the social collective see: Arnold D. Harvey, *Body Politic, Political Metaphor and Political Violence* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); Bruno Accarino, “tra libertà e decisione: Alle origini dell'antropologia filosofica”, in *Ratio imaginis: Uomo e mondo nell'antropologia filosofica*, Ed. Bruno Accarino (Florence: Ponte delle Grazie, 1991); Sergio Bertielli, *Il corpo del re: Sacralità del potere nell'Europa medievale e moderna* (Florence: Ponte delle Grazie, 1990). The feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero provides us with one of the more thought

periods, it has remained an important and often powerful metaphor for the functioning of the nation-state. Moreover, in the twentieth century the relationship between corporality, embodiment, and identity in the socio-political sphere has been critical to the development of modern political thought in the west.⁴⁵ In the case of Italy during, and immediately following, the First World War the manipulation of image of the national body in both artistic and political discourse plays a pivotal role in the development of anti-liberal, anti-democratic ideologies of the state. It is important, however, to note that the way that the representation of the body as a locus of individual or collective autonomy plays out in Italy during, and following, the First World War is starkly different from the way in which it would develop later during the Fascist regime.

The importance of refiguring the symbolic meaning of mutilation in the service of the national character, rather than to its detriment appears to be as important to Marinetti's aesthetic reconstruction of *italianità* as it is to the political reintegration of mutilated soldiers on the part of the government following the war. As Barbara Bracco suggests, the liberal democratic and socialist currents in Italian politics seemed to be at a loss for how to deal with the destabilizing materiality of soldiers' wounded bodies. For the socialists the destruction symbolized by the maimed, and distorted bodies of Italians returning from the front revealed the failure of connecting internationalism with armed conflict. For the liberals, the absolute carnage experienced by so many young, formerly productive members of the growing middle class, left many with a dual sense of shame and displacement. At the same time, other political elements made constant overtures to the returning soldiers, lauding them as heroes and appealing to them as associations dedicated to realizing the post-war promises made by the government.⁴⁶

For many soldiers returning from the war the loss of a sense of adventure, the sudden quieting of the chaotic atmosphere to which they had become accustomed, and the return to a social status marked not by military rank or performance on the battlefield proved to be difficult obstacles to reintegration into society⁴⁷. For the *Arditi*, especially,

provoking analyses of the figure of the political body, and its relation to figurations of gender. See: Adriana Cavarero, *Corpo in figure: filosofia e politica della corporeità* (Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1995).

⁴⁵ Of particular interest regarding the role of the body politic in the Medieval and Early Modern periods see Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study of Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957); Sarah Covinton, *Wounds, Flesh, and Metaphor in Seventeenth Century England* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). On figurations of the body in relation to modern politics see Debra B. Bergoffen, "The Body Politics: Democratic Metaphors, Totalitarian Practices, Erotic Practices", in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 16, no.2, 1990, pp. 109-26.; Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: The meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, Trans. G. Schwab, E. Hilfstein (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1996).

⁴⁶ According to Barbara Bracco, the resulting inability to reintegrate war mutilates and other veterans back into the political consciousness of the left-wing parties directly lead their being co-opted into the ranks of the extreme right. See Barbara Bracco, *Combattere a Milano, 1915-1918: il corpo e la guerra nella capitale del fronte interno* (Milan: Editoriale Il Ponte, 2005).

⁴⁷ Writing in his diary, the arditto Angelo Gatti summed up the problems of reintegrating a generation of young men into society who had psychologically internalized the war he writes: "Questa gente ha una sua disciplina speciale: curbasciate, legato all'albero...Vive lanciando fucilate e bombe a destra ed a sinistra, allegramente. Quando ritorna d'all azione i soldati dicono tra loro: no ho ammazzati 6,8,10. Ognuno vanta il suo colp di coltello, e si esperimenta il modo migliore per togliere di mezzo l'avversario. Tutto ciò va benissimo per la guerra: ma per la pace? Ahimé: io vedo già cosa potrà fare questa gente che non conosce più il valore della vita umana." Angelo Gatti, *Caporetto* (Bologna, 1964) 229-30.

the loss of a position of social primacy left many veterans with a sense that as the victors of the greatest conflict anyone had ever seen, the return to the mundane routines of daily life was unacceptable. In addition, the return from the frontlines of thousands of wounded and mutilated soldiers presented a challenge to state authorities whose task then became finding ways to reintegrate into the social fabric, bodies that served as living testaments to how much the war had transformed both the physical and social realities of all those involved.

During the Fascist period the bodies of soldiers wounded, and metonymically the wounds themselves, in battle serve a memorializing function. They reinforce the value of the heroic sacrifice of one's flesh in the service of the patria, and the spiritual quality of nationality as a marker of inclusion in the communal faith that Fascism projects itself as. For Marinetti, the experience of mutilation is distinctly non-transcendent in that it does not reflect the greater spiritual harmony of the Italian people. Rather, in its capacity to render asymmetrical the physical structure of the body, it embodies the chaotic, disjointed perception of reality produced by war. For Marinetti, mutilation equals embodiment, a coming into presence for the Italian soldier not simply as soldier but as *Italian*. Thus, «il proiettile è come un secondo padre del ferito. Gli impone il suo carattere. Gli insinua nelle fibre un atavismo di violenza feroce e di velocità incendiaria» (136). In so doing, the wounds left behind do not function as sites of traumatic memory, but rather as markers of a new type of Italian subjectivity based on heroism, dynamism and virility.

Mutilation and prosthesis in Marinetti's design for a post-war, Italian political subject internalize the state of war as a mode of experiencing physicality. They serve to reconfigure the relation between the individual and the national community in order to overcome the traumatic experiences of pain and loss suffered by Italian soldiers during the war. In arguing for a reading of *L'alcova d'acciaio*, and *Come si seducono le donne*, that takes into account a notion of prosthesis which reconstructs and aligns the discursive properties of violence, sexuality, corporality, and nationality I would argue that the actual representation of prosthesis within the texts serves to metaphorize the anti-democratic nature of Marinetti's model of political subjectivity. Although the Futurist/Italian subject is said to be born from the “umanizzazione dell'acciaio e la metalizzazione della carne”, it is clear that the actual production of the Futurist subject occurs at the level of the text (148). In the fusing together of semiotic fields into an image of a post-humanist, post-liberal body, Marinetti blurs the distinction between individuality and collectivity, communication and control, autonomy and authority.

Chapter 3

Occupy Fiume: Constitutive Crowds, Disarticulated Bodies and the Politics of Mutilation at Fiume

In an issue of the pro-annexationist Fiuman newspaper *La Vedetta d'Italia* dated Tuesday September 9th, 1919, Gabriele D'Annunzio authored the headlining article entitled "Italia o morte", which contained the following:

Fiume pareva lo spasimo d'Italia come l'Italia era lo spasimo di Fiume . Per le Pentecoste che è la festa dello Spirito e della Fiamma, ci credemmo ingenuamente di celebrare il giorno della città olocausta per "tutti gli italiani di qualunque credenza". Alludendo alla parola del vangelo di Giovanni, un interprete scrisse: "Fiume oggi soffia nel viso di tutti noi italiani ci avvampa il viso col suo soffio, e ci dice "ricevete lo Spirito, ricevete la Fiamma". Or è tre mesi appena...Il salmista luccano, che infiora di citazioni peregrine i suoi componimenti esortativi all'unione ventrale e la concordia escrementale può parafrasare il salmista ebraico: "D'adipe e di grassezza sia ripiena l'anima mia come la vostra". Non c'è neppur bisogno della prudente cera d'Ulisse per turarsi le orecchie contro le strazianti sireno del Quarnaro. Basta l'adipe (901).⁴⁸

The passage is a perfect example of D'Annunzio's political rhetoric with regard to the question of Fiume's cultural, if not yet geo-political, status. The Christian thematics of baptism and satiation by the fire of the Holy Spirit evoke a body whose materiality is transcended. At the same time, however, the allusion to Ulysses' encounter with the Sirens changes the directionality of that transcendence. Instead of moving upward into the light of Heaven, D'Annunzio's reawakened spirit projects outward with an adventurous and defiant resolve. Moreover, the juxtaposition of stomach and ears as the destination of the edifying tallow signifies that what is to be received will be directed not just to the gut, but to the mind as well.

Even more striking is the linkage between the celebration at Fiume of the Pentecost "per gli italiani di qualunque credenza", and the city figured as the Holy Spirit itself in the words of "an interpreter" (likely D'Annunzio himself) of the gospel of John. The communality of the experience of transcendence, or baptism is emphasized over individuating power, signaling that the body of Christ is a body characterized by relation instead of presence. It is a body that is connective and social, signifying both a temporal presence and an infinite durability. This social body stands in opposition to that of the transient institutional body that, as we shall see, D'Annunzio identifies as the form of liberal-democratic government. It presents itself in his speeches as a metaphor for the essential character of a national community as it is distinguished from the state.

⁴⁸ See Gabriele D'Annunzio, "Italia o morte", in *La Vedetta d'Italia*, No.12, 9, September, 1919. Print. Republished in *Il sudore di sangue*, in Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Prose di ricerca, di lotta, di comando, di conquista, di tormento, d'indovinanza, di rivendicazione, di liberazione, di favole, di giochi, di baleni*, Vol.1, Eds. Annamaria Andreoli and Giorgio Zanetti (Rome: Mondadori, 2005), 901. All references to D'Annunzio's speeches are drawn from this collection.

Two days after the article appeared in the leading newspaper of the Italian community at Fiume, D'Annunzio and a group of followers including active military assault troops, fervent nationalists, and veterans of the First World War marched on the city from Ronchi, 30 kilometers northwest of Trieste. The occupation of the city, and its relation to the difficult peace process at Versailles came as a shock to relatively few people in Italy with the exception of the sitting prime minister Francesco Saverio Nitti. The question of Fiume's future as a municipality had been of great concern to the nationalist associations, such as the Associazione Dante Alighieri, which had grown in influence in the previous two decades.⁴⁹

In this chapter, I focus on the relationship between the discourse of the mutilated body in the political speeches of Gabriele D'Annunzio and the materiality of the crowds that formed his political base. When discussing the role of bodily imagery, of metaphors of flesh both real and artificial, in the development of modern political discourse there has been a bias toward examining the influence of the physical body on conceptions of the body politic rather than on how the image of the social body is inscribed upon the materiality of the crowd. Scholars such as Jonathan Hess and Antoine de Baecque have begun to chart out a different course for the study of the modern body politic that tends toward examining the influence of public culture on the figuration of the body as a political metaphor.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Fiume's status as representative of the irredentist cause following the First World War reflects both the culmination of long standing claims to the territories along the eastern Adriatic coast that included sizable, though in many cases non-majority, populations of ethnic Italians. An important port city, Fiume had for centuries maintained a special status under the government of Austria-Hungary with respect to its governance, which defined as a "corpus separatum" of the dual state. Fiume's internal politics remained for most of the nineteenth century largely stable in regard to relations between the larger though socioeconomically less mobile Croat population and the smaller Italian population, which dominated the political atmosphere in the city. Certainly, as Gianluca Volpi points out, the city of Fiume would not have been as easily recognizable to the average Italian in Italy as would have Trento or Trieste, the traditional cities that represented the *terre irredenti* prior to the outbreak of the war. Rather, the idea of Fiume as a space whose very *italianità* is under siege begins to seep into the national consciousness after its appearance in an article in the newspaper *Italia all'Estero* from 1907, in which the "magyarization" of the city by the Hungarian government is alleged. See Gianluca Volpi, "Fiumani, ungheresi, italiani. La formazione dell'identità nazionale a Fiume nell'epoca dualista (1867-1914)", in *Nazionalismi di frontiera: Identità contrapposte sull'adriatico nord-orientale 1850-1950*, Ed. Marina Cattaruzza (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 2003) pp.47-72. On the history of Fiume up to D'Annunzio's occupation see: Silvio Gigante, *Storia del comune di Fiume* (Florence: Bemporad, 1928); Giorgio Radetti, "Profilo dell storia di Fiume", in *Fiume*, no.1, Jan-Mar, 1952, pp. 65-80. Outside of Fiume, its cause was taken up by numerous nationalist associations and journals dedicated to the revitalization of irredentism as a political force capable of challenging the anti-interventionist forces within the government at the outset of the war. It is thus within the context of two contemporaneous, though not always conjoined, discourses of national autonomy that the Fiume problem presents itself. On one hand, its ideological function in the movement towards antiparliamentarian nationalism in Italy lends support to the discourse of civic autonomy exposed by ethnically Italian forces within the city who see the irredentist cause as a vehicle for the annexation of Fiume to Italy which they saw as more favorable to the maintenance of Fiume's status as a *corpus separatum* than the Yugoslav majority who would lay claim to Fiume in the wreckage of the Hapsburg Empire. See Renato Monteleone, *La politica dei fuoriusciti irredenti nella guerra mondiale* (Udine: Del Bianco, 1972); Ilona Fried, *Fiume: Città della memoria 1868-1945* (Udine: Del Bianco, 2005).

⁵⁰ See Jonathan M. Hess, *Reconstituting the Body Politic: Enlightenment, Public Culture and the Invention of Aesthetic Autonomy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Antoine de Baecque, *Le Corps de l'histoire: Métaphores et politique 1770-1800* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1993).

Hess attempts to locate the emergence of the concept of autonomous art within the expansion and development of Enlightenment public culture. In so doing, he engages with the notion of the public sphere as a space founded on the same principles of autonomy that undergird the elaboration of political rights and values in the works of Enlightenment era philosophers, artists, and political actors. De Baecque, in turn, analyzes the bodily metaphor in the cultural production of the French Revolution, demonstrating how the presence of the crowd apart from and in opposition to, the institutions of civil society and the state challenges the ways in which the body is deployed as a sign of political union and stability.

Like Hess or de Baecque, I am interested in understanding how the body is represented as a marker of autonomy in a way different from its traditional formulation as a figure for the state. I analyze the representation of this more properly "social" body, composed of diverse identity groups, or collectivities in opposition to the institutions of government, as it emerges as the primary site of biopolitical discourse at the start of the twentieth century. In Foucault's description of the rise of biopolitics in Western history, the discursive construction of the body becomes the priority of the state as the production of containable subjects displaces the mere consolidation of power through repression.⁵¹ For the purposes of my argument I identify an important moment in modern European history in which the concerns Foucault attributes to the practice of governmental power are equally attributable to an emphasis on mass political identity over individual political identity that influences representations of the physical body as a political metaphor. In this regard, perhaps the most prolific instances in Italian culture is Gabriele D'Annunzio.

The political importance of the events that transpired at Fiume between September of 1919 and December of 1920 extends far beyond their association with the totalitarian identity politics that would follow them during the Fascist era. At its core, the occupation of Fiume represents a transformation in the way that the politics of national identity impacts an entire range of discursive practices that constitute the *governance* of subjects within a state. As one of the most influential, though often overlooked, examples of how the practice of mass politics redefines the relationship between subjectivity and sovereign power in the twentieth century, the Fiume episode occurs at a historical moment in which the convergence of media, ideology and civil society emerges as a destabilizing threat to the traditional dominance of liberal humanism in western Europe.

For Foucault, the development of "governmentality" takes place in the liberal tradition through the delineation of concepts and the specification of borders which condition the processing of reality, and structure the mutual articulation of autonomous individuals and sovereign power.⁵² What D'Annunzio's treatment of the metaphor of the body demonstrates, however, is that between the collapse of liberal hegemony and the

⁵¹ Foucault's notion of biopolitics is particularly significant in the case of liberal Italy, and I would argue that it is essential to an understanding of how the breakdown of liberal ideology in Italy after the war plays out in various registers of cultural production including, but not limited to the sociological, the historiographical, the aesthetic and the political. See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, Trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁵² See also: Michel Foucault, "Governmentality", in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Trans. Rosi Braidotti, Eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 87-104.

ascendance of totalitarianism the effacement of the autonomous body as a mode of representation determines a relationship of mutual articulation, which binds the subject to an image of the nation-state reflected in the national community. Building off of Nicolas Bourriard's theory of "relational aesthetics" (42), I argue that the transfer to a primarily aesthetic register of political discourse determines the emergence of a form of mass political organization that doesn't require (and indeed rejects) the juridical classification of "citizen" or "voter" in order to realize any measure of agency.⁵³ What's more, the tacit recognition of the *discursivity* of the body politic in the rhetoricization and ritualization of political participation in post-war Italy and at Fiume opens the door to the gradual dissolution of a notion of the rational, autonomous self as a consequence of physical presence, thus paving an antiliberal, posthumanist path for the antidemocratic movements to come.

Scholars often view D'Annunzio's political engagement as subfield of his larger, poetic project, and this has the effect of emphasizing the influence of a kind of late decadent, nationalist mythos on the development of modern political ideologies such as Fascism.⁵⁴ These studies tend to forego a more nuanced dynamic of technological representation, mass political organization, and nationalist discursive strategies of the

⁵³ See: Nicolas Bourriard, *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods with M. Copeland (Les presses du reel: Dijon, 2002). Bourriard's theory consists of the notion that art is primarily social in its construction, interpretation and internalization as a set of practices and discourses. Pinpointing the eruption of a radically destabilizing form of artistic production in the blending of artistic practices and technological modes of representation that flourish in the nineties, Bourriard's critical contribution to thinking the sociality of aesthetic principles is both useful and fraught. Numerous critics have taken him to task for the reductive quality of his work and his seeming lack of interest in interrogating the dialectical properties of a kind of thinking about social exchange that would, as Stewart Martin writes, challenge its status as "reversible into an aestheticisation of capitalist exchange" (371). See: Stewart Martin, "Critique of *Relational Aesthetics*", in *Third Text*, vol. 21, 4, July, 2007, 369-386. See also: Clare Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", in *October*, 110, Fall 2004, 51-79. For my purposes, Bourriard's work as provided a jumping off point from which to begin thinking about the way in which community can be thought of in terms of an inter-relational encounter with aesthetic experience. It is the insistence that in the twentieth century media representations of the body politic constitute a kind of space of encounter that seems more productive of national identity than it is representational of forms of national identity, that I find persuasive.

⁵⁴ These types of treatments of D'Annunzio's political engagement tend to share a common academic genealogy stemming from the fact that not many works dealing specifically with the Fiume occupation have been published in recent years, and thus a paucity of resources has left a field of scholarship highly dependent on too few studies, many of which tend to enact a retroactive reading of D'Annunzio through Fascism. This genealogy, particularly in North American Italian Studies, tends to include the following: Michael Leeden, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Guglielmo Ferrero, *Da Fiume a Roma, 1919-1923: Storia di quattro anni; L'invenzione del fascismo* (Rome: Nuovi Equilibri, 2003); Thomas Harrison, ed., *Nietzsche in Italy*, Saratoga, CA: ANMA, 1988; George L. Mosse, "The Poet and the Exercise of Political Power: Gabriele D'Annunzio", in *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: H. Fertig, 1980), 87-103; and of course Renzo de Felice, *D'Annunzio politico, 1918-1938* (Rome: Laterza, 1978), which is by now the standard historical account of the Fiume occupation. These works have contributed a great deal to the study of the political discourse surrounding Italy's experience following the First World War and, specifically, D'Annunzio's involvement in its development both in Italy and at Fiume, and should not be dismissed for their sometimes over determined associations of D'Annunzian rhetorical style with that of Mussolini.

type that I will argue for in the pages that follow.⁵⁵ Looking to D'Annunzio's writings and public orations in the period immediately preceding, and in the aftermath of his occupation of the city of Fiume from 1919 to 1920, we find ourselves confronted with examples of two crucial elements in the development of modern totalitarian ideology in Italy with regard to its relationship to the physical body. First, D'Annunzio's rhetoric underscores the centrality of the mutilated body as a metaphor for the post-democratic polity. He does so by positing the disarticulation of the physiological subject as the ontological foundation of the national community. Second, in distinguishing between the legionnaires who followed him on one hand, and the residents of the occupied city of Fiume on the other, we can see how D'Annunzio's oscillation between constitutive bodies renders problematic the distinction between crowds, masses, and communities as the basis of a polity in his post-democratic experiment.

Whereas the previous two chapters were concerned with Marinetti and the uses to which figurations of mutilation and prosthetic (or cybernetic) bodies are put, in this chapter my emphasis is less on the exaltation of the mutilated body by D'Annunzio, so much as on looking at how the mutilated body functions as both symptom of an outdated form of social organization and the sign of a new, post-democratic body politic contained within D'Annunzio's textual production. To that end, the role of the crowd as a constitutive social body apart from the representative body of parliament is of primary importance not only at Fiume, but within the larger arc of Italian social theory from the early nineteenth century to the expulsion of D'Annunzio's troops from Fiume in December of 1920.

As Barbara Spackman has argued, the ritualization of a kind of totalitarian violence that is a major thematic in D'Annunzio's speeches from the Fiume episode produces a rhetorical joining of the occupying forces (particularly D'Annunzio himself) with the mystical body of Christ as both sacrificial lamb and redeemer. Drawing from Sorel, as Spackman points out, D'Annunzio "actualizes not referential but linguistic structures, he literalizes not a proletarian strike but analogies and metaphors employed by Sorel to clarify his conception of mythic violence" (223). This is attested to by the heavily christological allusions that associate blood with both purified life and death, and that characterize Fiume as the *Città olocausta*. Unlike readings of D'Annunzio's Christological rhetoric that re-appropriate it as sure proof of the proto-fascist character of his political style⁵⁶, Spackman argues that the Christological "vein" running through D'Annunzio's symbolization of the body allows him to *re-symbolize* the image of Italy in the aftermath of the war, ritualizing a violence that is less reactionary than it is *redemptive*.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Studies more in this vein include: Laura Wittman, "Mutilation and Spectacle", in *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: Modern Mourning and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Claudia Salaris, *Alla festa della rivoluzione: Artisti e liberatori con D'Annunzio a Fiume* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002); Barbara Spackman, "Il verbo (e)sangue: Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Ritualization of Violence", *Quaderni d'italianistica* 4, no. 2, 1983: 218-29.

⁵⁶ In particular, Ledeen (1977), and Mosse (1980), come to mind as two scholars whose works on D'Annunzio have done much to promote the view that Fascism is the ideological inheritor of *Fiumanesimo*.

I agree in large part with the notion that the ritualization of violence (particularly in the sacralization of the spilled blood of the *arditi*), is part of an attempt to reconfigure the symbolic structures of Italian society. What I would ask, then, is what effect does the appeal to the *corpus mysticum* of the Christian body politic have on the relationship that those who occupied, and were occupied in, Fiume had to traditional liberal-democratic conceptions of cohesion, contract, and consensus? These are the contours of liberal-democratic society institutionalized in the forms of the legislature, constitution, and national community, and they all make an appearance at Fiume in often surprising ways. The dynamic between rhetorical construct and political representation at Fiume provides us with a particularly rich example of how representations of the social body, the body politic, operate in the transition from the liberal-democratic ideology that seemed to belated in Italy, to an authoritarian ideology concretized in the form of Fascism.⁵⁸

This period gives rise to what we may call the "postliberal subject". In using that term, I am attempting to encompass the problematic position, vis-à-vis the physical body, of certain fundamental elements of liberal-democratic ideology such as individuality, contract, consensus, and community in the years following the First World War.⁵⁹ Recently, Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg has deployed the term as a useful category with which to analyze the political ramifications of the intertwining discourses of liberalism and sociology in the Italian context.⁶⁰ It is fitting that Stewart-Steinberg

⁵⁷ "A Christological rhetoric offers itself as an archaizing strategy for maintaining cohesion and consent; it taps the cultural history of individuals and, through recurrent references to Dante, of the nation. The resolution of factual distinctions is thus aimed against new Romans, and D'Annunzio makes explicit the identity of those Romans: they are the parliamentary government of Italy and the new emperors of the world- the Americans in particular- who at that time were gathered together at Versailles. In fact, the Christological rhetoric has a logic of its own: it leads D'Annunzio to a perception of Italy as a second-world nation which can combat the new empire only if it allies itself to the third worlds of Africa and Asia."(221).

⁵⁸ It is an interesting question, the extent to which the rise of authoritarianism, and later totalitarianism in Italy might be traced back to the difficult relationship Italy has had to the liberal-democratic institutions and ideologies that were founded and maintained with such difficulty after 1861. On one hand, it would seem credible that the development of political theory in Italy has always suffered at the hands of Italy's own "lateness" as a modern developed nation-state in relation to its neighbors in Western and Northern Europe. On the other, it is also credible (perhaps more so) that the development of modern totalitarian ideology stems less directly from Italy's status as "belatedly modern", and more from a more complex dynamics of both national and international economic, cultural, and military forces that had developed over the course of centuries, far before the rise of nationalisms and nation-states.

⁵⁹ The notion of the "postliberal" subject is a somewhat difficult term to define. It has been taken up by a range of political theorists, sociologists, and literary critics who often use it in very different ways. In general, studies on the "postliberal condition" deal with the transition from formulations of political liberty based on classically defined ideas of individual rights. Many, in fact make recourse to a return to pre-modern Christian formulations of community as a conceptual model for the social unit after the age of liberalism. Perhaps most influential in this regard is the work of philosopher George Santayana. See in particular: George Santayana, *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1951), and "Alternatives to Liberalism", in *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); See also: John Gray, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and *Post-Liberalism: Studies in Political Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Paul Edward Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁶⁰ See Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, "The Secret Power of Suggestion: Scipio Sighele's Succubal Subject", in *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (Chicago and London: University of

selects the work of the Italian sociologist Scipio Sighele as the focus of her argument, given that Sighele's work makes an important contribution to the development of what I deem the postliberal subject of modern politics as it is "embodied" during the occupation of Fiume.

In what is perhaps his best known work, *La folla delinquente* (1891), Sighele elaborates the first theory of the criminal crowd in Italy based on work on social psychology previously developed in France by established positivist theorists such as Hippolyte Taine and Gabriel Tarde, and Gustave Le Bon. The theory of collective behavior proposed by Sighele sees crowd behavior as given to extreme or violent behavior that is distinctly revolutionary in character owing to the rapidity with which the individual loses the capability of rational, autonomous self-determination.⁶¹ Sighele's work fits into a longer context of the development of positivist sociology in Italy in the nineteenth century, and which flourished following the unification in 1861.⁶² As Jaap van Ginneken argues, this requires us to read Sighele's texts in light of what was a demonstrated concern for the communal identity of the newly born Italian nation.⁶³

This does not mean, however, that Sighele's nationalism should be read in the same vein as that of D'Annunzio. Although he wrote admiringly of D'Annunzio in an added chapter to the volume *L'intelligenza della folla* (1903), Sighele's own brand of nationalism was deeply rooted in the positivist discourse that he had helped to diffuse.⁶⁴ Rather, what Sighele's work demonstrates is the gradual growth of the importance of understanding the crowd as a more active component of civil society than it had been prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, Sighele's involvement with the nationalist and irredentist movements in Italy reveals how heterogeneous these movements were with respect to the forms of nationalist sentiment they tapped into.

What Sighele and D'Annunzio share in common is a mode of interpreting the political value of the masses as a unit of social organization that undermines the stability of the individual, autonomous subject prized in the democratic order. Where Sighele sees this as a danger to the stability of the self, however, D'Annunzio characterizes it in terms of a coming into being of a new order of society. On the twelfth of September, 1919 having concluded the invasion of the city, D'Annunzio addresses the public thusly:
Italiani di Fiume,

Chicago Press, 2007) pp. 64-96; originally published as "The Secret Power of Suggestion: Scipio Sighele and the Postliberal Subject", in *diacritics*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Spring, 2003, 60-79.

⁶¹ See Scipio Sighele, *La folla delinquente* (Turin:Fratelli Bocca, 1891); Also published as "La folla delinquente", in *Archivio di Psichiatria*, 12, (1891): pp.10-53, 222-67, 322-46.

⁶² For discussions on the development of sociology in Italy, its connections with French scholarship and its political implications see: Richard Paul Bellamy, *Modern Italian Social Theory: Ideology and Politics from Pareto to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Harry Elmer Barnes, *Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961).

⁶³ Van Ginneken's work charts the development of crowd psychology in Italy and France in the later nineteenth century, with particular attention paid to Sighele's thought in light of his involvement with the nationalist movement in Italy. See: Japp van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics: 1871-1899* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 95-97.

⁶⁴ This chapter was included in the third Italian edition of his famous work *La folla delinquente* published by Bocca in Turin. The original work was split into two volumes *I delitti della folla* (1902), and *L'intelligenza della folla* (1903). It is in this second volume that the chapter praising D'Annunzio appears as a kind of defense against the supposed inferiority of Italian society in opposition to their northern European counterparts. See Scipio Sighele, *L'intelligenza della folla*, cit.

Eccomi. Non vorrei pronunciare oggi altra parola.

Ecco l'uomo; che ha tutto abbandonato di sé per esser libero e nuovo al servizio della Causa bella, della Causa vostra: la più bella del mondo, e l'eccelsa, per un combattente che in tanta bassezza e in tanta tristezza cerchi ancora una ragione di vivere e di credere, di donarsi e di morire...⁶⁵

From the outset D'Annunzio is addressing two different groups of people here: the occupied and the occupiers. Declaring himself void of any other element than desire to join the cause of Fiume (its supposed annexation), he simultaneously devalues his selfhood while positioning himself as a kind of geist-like force that is both leader and servant by virtue of his being at the head of the invasion. The reference to a lost and despairing combatant in search of a reason to go on ("di vivere e di credere, di donarsi e di morire"), imbues his cohort with a kind of purpose that draws upon their nostalgia for the heroic dynamism of the war. It is a kind of rhetoric that speaks both to victim and to protector/redeemer, roles that are assigned to both the legionnaires and to the citizens of Fiume in a sort of chiasmatic equation. He then turns to the citizens of Fiume recalling to them his journey across the Italian peninsula with the flag of Timavo, asking the people of each city to consecrate it as a kind of relic whose power is signified by the sacrifice of his friend Nino Randaccio as by the suffering of the unredeemed lands (terre irredenti):

All Quota 12, alla Cava di pietra, ripiegata servì di guanciaie per l'eroe moribondo. A Monfalcone, coprì il suo santo corpo. Ad Aquileia coprì il suo feretro...E io gridai: "Comandatemi che, prima di donare questa bandiera a Trieste, prima di issarla in cima alla torre quadrata di San Giusto, comandatemi ch'io la porti a tutte le città roventi che non vogliono più attendere, che non possono più patire. Bacio per voi in queste pieghe i nomi delle màrtiri ancora senza palma: Fiume, Zara, Sebenico, Traù, Spalato, Almissa, Ragusa, Càttaro, Perasto, tutti i nomi, tutti"... Allora io dissi quel che a voi ridico, Italiani di Fiume, con lo stesso animo violento e innamorato: "Ricordarsi e diffidare; diffidare di tutti, conidare in noi stessi; ma sopra tutto, ricordarsi ricordarsi ricordarsi".(940)

Here is a crucial moment in which bodies and collectivities are identified. The cities of the Adriatic coast are conflated with martyrs, signifying both a religious and political dimension to their sacrifice in the war. Laura Wittman has already remarked on how the body of D'Annunzio's friend and companion Nino Randaccio, as well as the flag of Timavo works towards the mystification of the soldier's body as a site of communal mourning and redemption (Wittman 212-31).⁶⁶ What is important to my argument is the

⁶⁵ D'Annunzio, "La Prima Voce Dell'Arengo" (937).

⁶⁶ Wittman's analysis of the rituals involving flags at Fiume is spot on as it connects the religious significance of the shroud, or veil of Christ to the ritualization of patriotic mourning in funerary practices at Fiume. I would add that the "association of the flag with the 'shroud of sacrifice' or the Shroud of Turin" (217), becomes even more interesting because of the way in which the flag functions as a signifier for three constantly interchangeable, and linguistically linked concepts. One links the materiality of Randaccio's body (his *corpo*) with that of the soldier (the *corporale*). *Corporale* is also the name of the cloth used during the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic mass. These all converge into a powerful symbol of relationship between materiality, collective transcendence and the mutilation of the body in the tattered national flag.

clear transition that occurs from a kind of suffering that is experienced and achieves redemption in the physical regeneration of the individual body to a spiritual suffering that this experienced and gains redemption only through a communal process of identification and subjection:

Ora, concittadini e commilitoni, innanzi alla bandiera del timavo, dov'è rimasta effigiata l'immagine sublime di fante che vi poggiò la testa, mi riconfermate voi unanimi il plebiscito del 30 ottobre 1918?(...) Ebbene, dopo questo unanime grido che risponde alla stessa mia violenza di ribellione, alla mia stessa potenza di creazione, dico sotto il cielo aperto, in vista dell'Adriatico: io volontario, io combattente di tutte le armi, fante marinaio, aviatore, io ferito e mutilato di guerra credo interpretare l'ansia profonda di tutta la mia nazione vera dichiarando oggi restituita per sempre la città di Fiume all'Italia madre. (941)

There is a major pivot from citizens to soldiers. Though announcing their mission to the people of Fiume, and asking at the end for a reaffirmation of the declaration welcoming the city's annexation by Italy, the final lines of D'Annunzio's speech end in a military oath. In effect, the conflation of cities and bodies mirrors that of citizens and soldiers. Mutilation is the term common to each category, recasts their respective destructions as moments of genesis. This common suffering is what constitutes the identity of Fiume as Italian because it legitimizes both Fiume as a source of wounding, and Italy's victory in the war as "mutilated". That mutilation should condition the transition from the liberal to the postliberal order here seems fitting. The thematics of suffering and redemption have been commonplaces in the rhetoric of Italian national identity for centuries. From Petrarch's "Italia Mia", to Leopardi's *Canti* and the irredentist claims of the Risorgimento, the wounded, fragmented body has often served as a metaphor for the Italian situation.⁶⁷

D'Annunzio's rhetoric, however, departs somewhat from traditional formulations of the body of the nation in Italian literature. It is more closely aligned with what I argue is a major transition from a mode of social organization rooted in classical principles of individual right and democratic representation, to popular will and authoritarian-leaning consolidation that strikes the western world in various ways. It is important to remember that the events at Fiume take place at a historical moment in which the diffusion of mass communications technologies were radically transforming the ways in which societies operate on the political level. New forms of communication like the radio and cinema engender new forms of political identity. These draw their fundamental principles less and less from traditional modes of civil interaction and more from encounters with

⁶⁷ The list of instances in which authors have engaged in what we might call the personification of the nation-space is long and rich, to say the least. More often than not, the appearance of Italy as a human body takes on highly gendered terms particularly in Petrarch's Canzone 128: "Italia mia, benché 'l parlar sia indarno/a le piaghe mortali/che nel bel corpo tuo sí spesse veggio" (174); as well as in Leopardi's "All'Italia": "Or fatta inerme,/Nuda la fronte e nudo il petto mostri./Oimè quante ferite,/Che lividor, che sangue!" (6). Each of these texts are foundational in the national mythos and, along with many others, characterize Italy not only as a woman, but as a *mutilated* woman. Woundedness, or mutilation, then might be said to be at the very basis of Italian national identity, at least as it is formulated as a national literary or artistic aesthetic. See: Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Ed. Gianfranco Contini (Turin: Einaudi, 1964); Giacomo Leopardi, *Canti*, Ed. Giuseppe De Robertis (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967).

previously unreachable populations and modes of political representation like democracy in some countries, socialism in others, and later still fascism in others.⁶⁸

For example, whereas in the United States where mass communication becomes a more powerful tool for reinforcing liberal democratic ideology through the reorganization and envelopment of varying strata of American society, in Russia just the opposite occurs. Mass organization becomes a means of undermining the dominant order and giving body (albeit transitory) to revolutionary politics. In Italy, mass communications technologies are politicized less directly though with no less ideological intent. As noted in previous chapters, mass communications technology becomes an important element in the design and diffusion of images of the nation that trend toward bellicose, anti-democratic, and nationalist discourses. What is particular about the Italian context, however, is the extent to which these discourses are often all being doubly mediated: through technology, and through debates on the role of aesthetics in the cultivation of a modern, national political project. The aestheticization of violence that Spackman locates in the sacralization of spilled blood in D'Annunzio's speeches at Fiume, the aestheticization of political representation in the work of the Futurists, and the politico-literary contributions to the various journals like *La Voce* and *Leonardo* all speak to a preoccupation in Italian political culture with representation of the masses.

The representation of mutilated soldiers was thus by no means restricted to the semantic field of D'Annunzian rhetoric. Following the First World War the confluence of severe political and economic crises affected nearly all strata of Italian society, and provided fertile ground for the growth of an anti-liberal politics of national renewal. What makes the Italian case so particular, however, is that this anti liberal politics was so strongly identified with the organization of mutilated and wounded veterans. To that extent, D'Annunzio's own rhetoric of the body must be seen as a reflection of a larger anxiety within Italy concerning the status of the body as a marker of social presence. As a constituency whose political affiliation was of major concern to the war-time and post-war agendas of nearly every organized political persuasion, *combattentismo* as an autonomous political movement only begins to emerge in the flourishing of veteran's

⁶⁸ On the role of mass communication and political representation in the early twentieth century, Marshall McLuhan's work has remained both salient and productive over the years, both for the association between the collapse of spatial and temporal barriers in the development of mass society, but also for the ways in which political subjects are understood to be enacted in the realization of their reach and mobility. See: Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967). Scholars such as Michael Tratner and Charles Ferrall have attempted to demonstrate how modernist writers and artists in Britain, through textual practices fully engaged with questions of technology and communication, attempted to represent the cultural and political vicissitudes of mass society. See: Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Charles Ferrall, *Modernist Writing and Reactionary Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Corey Ross has recently shown how the expansion of mass media in Germany in the early twentieth century fits into the development of extreme right-wing political ideology, while Ruth Ben-Ghiat has argued for a reevaluation of the relationship between modern media and the construction of a particularly fascist vision of modernity during the years of the regime. To date, no in-depth study of media culture, mass politics and Italian society in the years that encapsulate the collapse of the liberal system and the rise of Fascism has been produced apart from studies that focus on specific artistic movements. See: Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

organizations towards the end of the conflict in ways ideologically distinct from the existing political groups.⁶⁹

For the soldiers returned from the front, some sense of opposition was felt to some extent toward those fervent interventionists who had launched the country into a war in which a disproportionately larger number of working-class and *contadini* suffered the brunt of the damage (Sabbatucci 3-4). A greater sense of enmity, however, was directed toward the *imboscati*; those supporters of the war who had nevertheless refused to serve, or found ways around being sent to the front, but who had also profited from it (Melograni 110-11).⁷⁰ For those who had experienced the realities of war upfront (literally), traditional social divisions were replaced with divisions and hierarchization of heroism, suffering and station that all referred back to a mode of social interaction based on life in the trenches. This was a mode of social organization in which the physicality of the body was simultaneously prized for its ability, notably among the *Arditi*, and retroactively honored for its disability by the emphasis in post-war soldier's associations on the primary status of the wounded beginning with the *Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra*, founded in Milan in the summer of 1917, which transformed into the *Associazione Nazionale Combattente* in November of 1918.⁷¹

Among the bourgeoisie, the change in outlook among the retuning soldiers was no less stark. As Sabbatucci argues, while those belonging to the burgeoning middle class made up the majority of the officer's corps, little difference was registered between them and those of the lower classes who populated the non-commissioned infantry. Rather, for many class divisions dissolved into divisions which were internalized as existential. Only those who had lived, fought, and died in the trenches understood the fundamental place that ideal expressions of patriotism, dynamism, heroism, and sacrifice held in society (Sabbatucci 10).⁷² Among these newly united sectors of the population the mutilated and wounded veterans occupied a special position in the national associations, given that at the time of their founding, those who had been sent back from the front were the only ones capable of speaking for the "average soldier".

Thus, from the outset the politics of post-war reintegration is dominated by an image of the mutilated body as both a sign of the overcoming of partisan division by the sense of patriotic duty that many had hoped would renew Italy's civic character, and as

⁶⁹ Interest in attracting the support of soldiers and veterans was of particular importance to both the Socialists (both interventionist and non-interventionist) and the Fascists (who would ultimately win over the bulk of their support). For a detailed examination of the development and expansion of these groups in the political atmosphere of post-WWI Italy, see: Giovanni Sabbatucci, *I combattenti nel primo dopoguerra* (Rome: Laterza, 1974). On the image of the soldier and its political value during and after the war see Isnenghi, *Il mito della Grande Guerra*, cit.

⁷⁰ As one former soldier put it: "Bisogna distinguere: Carso e tutto il resto. Fanteria e tutto il resto. Prima linea e tutto il resto." See, Carlo Salsa, *Trincee: Confidenze di un fante* (Milan: Casa Editrice Sonzogno, 1924):148.

⁷¹ On the mythologization of the *Arditi* and their place in the political machinations of the soldier's associations and the turn toward both "reactionary" and "revolutionary" tendencies see: Ferdinando Cordova, *Arditi e legionari dannunziani* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1969). Sabbatucci reminds us, as well, that the ANC, an organization with a more overtly right-wing affiliation, gained a far larger following than organizations that promoted the interests of left-wing mutilates such as the *Lega Proletaria Mutilati, Invalidi e Reduci di Guerra*, founded only days after the armistice. See Sabbatucci, cit. 52-78.

⁷² Giovanni Sabbatucci, *La stampa del combattentismo 1918-1925*.

a discomfoting presence that threatens the stability of the socio-political order. Such associations were not, however, immune to the politics of class division. Indeed, what initially distinguishes these movements from the discursive constellation of bodies, treaties, and national boundaries that solidifies around the notion of a "vittoria mutilata" taken up by D'Annunzio and his followers is the play between the external threat of disproportionate gain posed by the peace conferences and the internal threat posed by the shrugging of the duty of the nation with regard to those who had sacrificed their lives and limbs for its transformation.

In the "Bollettino" of the *Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra* (1918), the journalist and later historian of Fascism Giovanni Mira explained the group's mission in terms of a duty to the fallen who had lost their lives in the attempt to usher in a new political order:

Prima di tutto pensiamo ai morti. Bisognerebbe che tutti quanti pensassero sempre alle migliaia e migliaia di giovani che sono morti in guerra, che dormono il sonno dell'eternità sotto l'erba di tutti i campi e tra i sassi di tutti i monti e nelle acque di tutti i mari dove la nostra guerra è passata...Ciascun di essi quando si diparte ci lascia in eredità un compito sacro e tremendo: "O voi che sopravvivete-ci gridano di là della morte-raccogliete la nostra fede e la nostra forza; e fate ch'esse trionfino per virtù del nostro sacrificio e della vostra costanza. Noi volemmo conquistare per noi, per la patria, pel mondo, una libertà più sincera, una giustizia più pura, un più perfetto avvenire; e siamo caduti nella lotta, con l'arme in pugno...Molti son già tornati con le membra rotte, col corpo straziato; conservino essi quel tanto di fiamma sprituale, quel tanto di energia e di fortezza e di abnegazione che è necessario per condurre avanti l'opera nostra.(1)⁷³

The voices of the fallen are juxtaposed with those of the soldiers returned from the front who fill the recovery wards. Both remind the mutilated veteran of the obligation to continue the struggle for national renewal, casting it as a continuation of the war. This time the enemy is not Austria, but the return to the "tradizioni decrepite" of the old parties and the "tentazioni della pigrizia e della vanità". The broken and twisted bodies of the war mutilates signals their election as the inheritors of the responsibilities of the fallen and those still at the front. They become the new subjects of a new Italy, transformed in the act of mutilation, but still under threat of destruction:

Prima andavamo incontro alla morte; la morte ci ha sfiorati, e da quell'istante siamo andati incontro alla vita. Con membra mozze, con ossa stritolate, con vene esauste, con nervi recisi; ma incontro alla vita...Fratelli del fronte, noi siamo ancora con voi. Il mutilato è ancora un combattente...Mutilati e combattenti devono essere un sol fascio compatto di energie temprate ad ogni prova, una sola volontà, una sola fede. Noi vinceremo la guerra, e la nuova Italia sarà. (1)

In my final chapter, I look back to an earlier expression of what we may call D'Annunzio's "philosophy" of politics with respect to mass society. An important element of my argument is that D'Annunzio's treatment of political community with regard to the Fiume question represents a change in way in which the multitude is understood as a

⁷³ The bulletin is reprinted in Sabbatucci, *La stampa del combattentismo*, cit.

constitutive element of the nation. I locate D'Annunzio's turn toward a posthumanist conception of the body politic in the recognition of the collectivity as the primary unit of social organization, and I identify a shift in the evaluation of the masses found in his earlier novels. It is in the context of this later treatment of the crowd, however, that I want to investigate the occupation of Fiume in the present chapter.

This preoccupation with the place of aesthetics in politics leads us to ask: what, then is its place in the occupation of Fiume? The answer, though complex, seems to lie in the relationship between symbolic violence and collective identity, though not in the way that their identification would seem to suggest. What occurs in D'Annunzio's speeches at Fiume is almost alchemic amalgamation of foundation mythoi, Christian mysticism, nationalist rhetorical device and body politics that attempts to constitute a postliberal, postdemocratic community. Of these elements, the recurrent appearance of the Christian rhetoric of sacrifice and redemption embodied in the figure of the mystical body of Christ encapsulates the others while conditioning the dissolution of the individual. This mystical body, however, is not properly that of Christ, but rather the agglomerated bodies of martyred and wounded soldiers whose very corporality is dissolved into the unredeemed lands of the Adriatic coast, and whose spirit infuses the people of Fiume (citizens and occupiers) with the communal spirit of the *Patria*. As Wittman demonstrates, this communal body then becomes tangible in the form of common sites and objects of national identity like monuments and flags (Wittman 212-30).

In a speech titled “Non abbiamo sofferto abbastanza” delivered on September 11th, 1919 (one day prior to the marcia di Ronchi), D'Annunzio writes:

Per l'Italia di qua dal mare i morti sono morti, l'ossame è ossame. Ce ne sono tuttora di insepolti nell'Alpe, a centinaia; e sappiamo i nomi dei luoghi deserti. Le domande d'un tempo atroci possono essere iterate; le visioni lugubri possono essere risollevate nella memoria. C'è tuttora in quella fòiba del Carso, di là del Vallone del Sangue, laggiù, verso Nova Villa, quello scheletro scoperto dalla frana, lavato dalla bufera, rimasto in piedi contro il terriccio rosso, con i buchi del teschio rivolti contro il nemico? C'è tuttora, là, presso l'Osservatorio delle Bombarde, a ponente del Veliki, in quello scheggione d'inferno, quel braccio levato fuori dei sassi, col pugno chiuso, tutto un seccume tenace di cartilagini, di tendini e di ossi, rivolto contro il nemico? Ma non bastano due occhiaie, non basta un pugno. Il nemico è da per tutto: davanti, dietro, a destra, a manca. I morti, per difendersi, fanno il cerchio e il quadrato, in mezzo alla nazione. (909)

The speech begins by invoking the image of the fallen soldiers, fallen though not defeated, along the Italian front of the war, and signaling the continued threat to the recognition of their sacrifice from within the nation itself. He goes on to tell of how one day, the mothers and sisters and lovers of the fallen heroes will use the soil of Fiume's territory to consecrate graves of the soldiers. He then recounts an episode of fervent nationalism demonstrated at Fiume as a pilot is shot down amidst the excited clamor:

Nel principio d'agosto del 1916 apparve sopra il porto una squadriglia da bombardamento nostra. Tutti i cuori balzarono al rombo, come se si approssimasse l'Italia, come se l'aria a un tratto diventasse tricolore. Contro gli ordini aspri del Comando austriaco, in onta alle ripressioni

brutali, tutte le vie e tutte le piazze si riempiono d'un fervore incoercibile. La città fu una sola faccia levata, un solo sguardo appassionato, un'ansia sola, un solo anelito, mentre le batterie tonavano e l'azzurro si lacerava di scoppio in scoppio. Ma il grido dei petti superò ogni tuono, ogni stridore. Uno degli apparecchi, colpito, precipitava al suolo. Dallo schianto e dal mucchio balzarono due combattenti illesi. Impigliato nei rottami un corpo sanguinoso restava immobile; e della tela, del metallo, del legno faceva una sola cosa umana, un solo strazio umano, come se tutto fosse scheletro e carne della Patria, essenza e sangue della Patria. (910)

The story serves as background to another anecdote recalling how a Fiuman woman risked her life by breaking into the fallen pilot's tomb for "un momento d'estasi nel guardare la faccia del primo eroe italiano caduto dal cielo della città"(114). Rhetorically, however, this passage is as interesting as what follows it. Here there is a marked dissolving of the borders separating the external and the internal that touches bodies and territories alike, but are nevertheless part of Italy. The bodies of the fallen soldiers, stripped of their external flesh but statuesque in the defiant carnality of their tendons, cartilage and bones continue to stand against the foreign enemies of the Patria. Their counterparts, buried within the nation, are still under siege. Only a ritual consecration of their graves will equal the faith that sustains the fallen, but it requires the soil of Fiume in the hands of Fiuman women. Again, the external and the internal meld into one, Fiume consecrates Italy just as the appearance of Italy in the sky over Fiume unifies and edifies the communal spirit at Fiume.

What occurs is a double act of incarnation. The city of Fiume becomes "una sola faccia levata, un solo sguardo appassionato", one communal body awakened by liberating spirit of Italy (even cutting open the sky to reveal its tricolored-ness). The soldier's body (here that of a pilot), in turn achieves another kind of carnality that transcends the limits of the physical body as it is enmeshed with the cloth, metal and wood of his wreckage, becoming the body and essence of the Patria. What can be learned from this kind of discourse? Subjects are created in acts of heroism, but the very nature of subjectivity is its subjected-ness to the larger whole of the nation. What stands out is the centrality of violence in the act of becoming, precisely because it is not the daring act of violence that defines the patriotic subject, but subjection to the violence of an act of patriotism.

This is the level on which D'Annunzio's political project demonstrates elements of a trend toward the post-human in its configuration of what, I argue, is a semiotic corporality. By that I intend a recognition, at least within the political sphere, of the constructed-ness of political subjectivity through the manipulation of signs and symbols such that the association between self and physical singularity is supplanted by the association of selfhood with social presence as the basis for communal organization and the derivation of rights guaranteed therein. The shift from an active embodiment of violence as constitutive, to embodiment as conditioned by violence, and therefore essentially passive, deviates from the traditional reading of the formulation of the body politic that finds its roots in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and the *Critique of Judgement* (1790).

In Kant's formulation, an economy of force regulates the organization of individuals into a contractual agreement by which the right to violence is surrendered to the authority of the state. Thus violence and authority define the mechanisms by which the body politic operates. State authority regulates the use of force through the coercion of its parts, but it also submits to coercion in that the regulation of the use of force constitutes a material ordering beyond the capability of the state as a non-rational entity. It is thus at the mercy of those who willingly subject themselves to its authority. What is important, however, is that violence is both constitutive of, and perpetrated by, the state. In abandoning the state of nature, itself a "state of injustice [*Unrechts*] and violence [*Gewaltätigkeit*]", we submit to the "constraint of the law [*gesetzlichen Zwange*]", trading one kind of violence for another (B 780). This kind of violence is not one exerted by the individual, but rather one that involves individuals as it opens the space of possibility for the organizing force of reason.

Violence thus operates both at the level of the physical and the discursive as an always present force that continually founds *present-ness* as a physical property of the body. It is not violence alone, however, that ushers in the present-ness of the body politic. Rather, the subjection to authority willingly entered into by the polity is premised on the condition that the state's embodiment of constitutive violence is tempered by reason. Reason conditions the operability of the body politic because it coerces individuals to abandon speculative violence in favor of the protection of its authority.⁷⁴ Rights, then stem from the ordered and rational unfolding of critical debate among actors whose intent is the maintenance of individual freedom such that it is equal to the freedom of all individuals. At the base of the formation of the body politic, then, the violence sustained is the rupturing of the will to act outside of the accord of others.

Kant's figuration of the body politic is taken up in the liberal tradition as a commonwealth of reason that elides the status of violence as an ontological category, and emphasizes reason as a form of recognition of mutual benefit in the pursuit of "the good". In that sense it opposes contractual accord to natural association, and citizenship to communalism (Rawls 302-3).⁷⁵ While certainly not a political philosopher, D'Annunzio's writings exhibit a strong disdain for a form of political community grounded in the rational delineation of rights, favoring instead a community established through consanguinity and historically rooted moral obligation. None of this is particularly shocking, given the preponderance of work already done on D'Annunzio's literary output, its racializing tactics, and its associations with a strain of nineteenth century thought concerned with the examination of the physiological processes of the body as a marker of social identity.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Devoid of the faculty of deliberative critique, that which defines reason's authority within the social contract, we return to "a state of injustice and violence, and we have no option save to abandon it and submit ourselves to the constraint of law, which limits our freedom solely in order that it may be consistent with the freedom of others and with the common good of all." (Kant, B780).

⁷⁵ John Rawls, perhaps the most influential exponent of Kantian liberalism in the twentieth century, argues that a rational polity is one in which citizens recognize that liberty is attainable in a society in which individuals are able to pursue, define, and develop their own theory of "the good" provided that they also recognize, through the promulgation of a theory of justice that provides for the equal distribution of rights, the ability of others to do the same.

D'Annunzio's figuration of violence takes on the quality of a material force of organization both on a social and individual level. Its function as a constitutive element of the body politic is superior to the unfolding of reason, if not in outright opposition to it. It basis its claim to transform the contours of the living body as it does the social body on the recourse to a *retro*-actualization of force, a common "having happened to" whence is derived the status of the polity. Thus transfiguration is the mode by which form is realized instead of transcendence. A rendering of the body, its disintegration and penetration by the atrocities of war, refashions the social organism just as it refashions the individual. This is contained in the motto D'Annunzio dedicates to the artist Adolfo de Carolis who illustrated the first edition of D'Annunzio's wartime memoir *Notturmo: Dant vulnera formam*.⁷⁷

Ultimately even the Christian, or Christological, rhetoric of sacrifice, suffering, and redemption that runs throughout D'Annunzio's writings is transfigured into an aesthetic of suffering that reinforces both the heroic and communitarian aspects of the legionnaires at Fiume. In the attempt to redefine the status of the wounded and fallen soldiers the discourse of mutilation and that of Christian redemption come together in D'Annunzio's treatment of the city as a metonym of a metonym, paradoxically linked through their status as fragmented limbs of the nation. It must be said, after all, that D'Annunzio was clearly less interested in Fiume in and of itself than as a political symbol that could powerfully act upon disparate strains of nationalist sentiment, political forces contrary to the sitting Italian government, and the geo-political interests of the whole of Europe and the United States.⁷⁸ What his speeches might better represent, then, is an important shift in the way in which symbolic violence constitutes the founding and maintenance of political community in the early twentieth century. This is nowhere more apparent than in the recurrence of allusions to the body of Christ in D'Annunzio's speeches.

On the 12th of August, 1920, nearly one year into the occupation of the city, D'Annunzio's article in *La Vedetta d'Italia* speaks of the need for a great act of sacrifice given the movement's failure to spread across the whole of Italy. In this article, for the first time, D'Annunzio refers to the city not as the *città di vita* as he had previously, but in terms of its rhetorical status as the embodiment of sacrifice:

Avevo detto, per la Pentecoste: "Sanno gli Italiani che, nell'oscuramento di tutte le forze ideali, v'è un solo luogo del mondo ove rimane accesa la bellezza eroica, ed è un luogo d'Italia? È la Città Olocausta, la città del sacrificio totale, la rocca del consumato amore: quella che riempie di

⁷⁶ On the treatment of the body as both mode and product of nineteenth century discourses on health, race and gender see: Barbara Spackman, *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Rhiannon Welch, "From Generation to Mutilation and Back Again", in *Under the Shadow of Our Flag: Race and (Re)Productivity in Liberal Italy*, Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley 2008):112-158.

⁷⁷ "Le ferite foggiano la forma".

⁷⁸ For all of the deeply patriotic fervor with which D'Annunzio confronted the Fiume situation, it is clear now that his initial objective was the destabilization and overthrow of the Nitti government. While the annexation of Fiume had figured into that plan, it was not the primary goal until the appeal to lead the expedition into Fiume was extended to D'Annunzio by the leaders of the Fiuman legionnaire's movement and the leaders of the anti-Nitti forces in Italy, among them the industrialist Oscar Sinigaglia. An appeal, it should be noted, extended after considering the potential leadership of another famous Italian poet and dramaturge with strong irredentist ties, Sem Benelli (De Felice 5-7; Bonadeo 185-96).

fuoco le occhiaie bianche di tutti i nostri morti marini radunati nel Carnaro a mirarla e a bearsi". (1181)⁷⁹

The transition from *città di vita* to *Città Olocausta* is an important one, and will receive special attention in the following chapter. At present, what leaps out is the characterization of the city as both soldier and sacrificial lamb, as D'Annunzio simultaneously compares the city to the sacrificial body of Christ and to the very soldiers he is addressing. Certainly, as Timothy Campbell has written "the introduction to the term thus ought to be joined in the speeches to attempts to re-inscribe sacrifice at Fiume within a Christian narrative". The assertion that this narrative transforms the city into "one big offering to an ideal *patria*", however, is arguable.⁸⁰

Rather than understanding D'Annunzio's rhetoric as offering Fiume to the Patria, I would argue that the term *città olocausta* operates as a terminological locus for both the ideal soldier and the redeemer. Here a totalizing association between the occupiers of the city, the space of the city itself, and the ideal image of the hero (with both Christian and pagan overtones) occurs, and instead of re-inscribing Fiume within the framework of *irredentismo* actually moves beyond its borders to stage Fiume as a space of both momentary sacrifice and ever-present redemption. Thus D'Annunzio later declares in "Domando alla città di vita un atto i vita":

Se beato è quel discepolo che avanza il maestro, più beata è quella figlia che avanza la madre. Ora Fiume è l'esempio d'Italia: è l'onore della nostra coscienza, l'onore della grande coscienza latina *che sola nei secoli formò e oggi forma i veri uomini liberi*...La vostra vittoria è in voi. La vostra salvezza è in voi. Nessuno può salvarvi, nessuno vi salverà: non il Governo d'Italia che è insipiente e impotente come tutti gli altri antecessori; non la nazione italiana che, dopo la spasimosa vendemmia della sua guerra, si lascia pigiare dai piedi sporchi dei disertori e dei traditori come un mucchio di vinacce da fare l'aquerello (1181-83).⁸¹

Fiume here is a space formed of, but distinct from, Italy. This divide, as previously stated, will be of particular importance in the following chapter, but suffice it to say that what this speech demonstrates in addition to the transformation of the city into a redeeming sacrifice *in and for itself* as well as for Italy, is the central function of violence not enacted but rather experienced. Again, here, I would agree with Spackman that the Christological rhetoric on one level "offers itself as an archaizing strategy" in its appeal to a common cultural history.

⁷⁹ Gabriele D'Annunzio, "Domando alla Città di vita un atto di vita", in *Scritti Giornalistici 1889-1938*, Eds. Annamaria Andreoli and Giorgio Zanetti (Rome: Mondadori, 1996). All references to D'Annunzio's newspaper articles are drawn from this volume.

⁸⁰ Campbell offers an insightful reading of the relationship between technology and political discourse at Fiume in which the "apocalyptic tone" of D'Annunzio's rhetoric involves this very Christianization of the *sacrificial* act. Campbell provides the brief semantic history of the term *holocaustus*, which appears in the work of Giorgio Agamben on the Shoah. For the original discussion on the term, see Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2003): 30; See also Timothy Campbell, "D'Annunzio and the Marconigram: Crowd Control at Fiume", in *Wireless Writing*, cit., 40.

⁸¹ (emphasis in the text).

What's more, the function of blood throughout D'Annunzio's speeches clearly reveals an important semiotic project to redefine the terms of victimhood loss and at the heart of his rhetoric (Spackman 222). I argue, however, that at the level of political organization, the Christological rhetoric to be found in D'Annunzio's speeches also serves a largely teleological strategy as well that involves the aggregation of the crowd and its transubstantiation into the body of Christ itself. On this level, violence and incarnation are bound up in the rhetorical atemporalization of the body politic. Together they are (re)generative of community. As such, D'Annunzio uses the past to project into a futurity that is defined as by a living body (*the città di vita*). This body is in turn powered by the eternal blood of the *patria*, rendered thus in the city's (now metonymically substituting for the legionnaires) holocaust (now metonymically substituting for the "martyrdom" of Italian soldiers during the war).

Even prior to the invasion, Fiume is cast in "Dalla loggetta del Sansovino nel giorno di San Marco" (1918), as the embodiment of an *italianità* that "dal fondo dei secoli comanda al futuro, come il gesto di quel condottiero che è ritornato"(793-4). Again history and the a-temporal space of redemption fall into each other within the borders of a personified Fiume. Two months later, and four months prior to the invasion of the city, the redeeming blood of the martyrs is replaced with the redeeming blood of the city's of Italy's eastern front which stand in place of the Adriatic territories, chief among which is Fiume. In an extensive speech on the war and Italy's aftermath entitled "L'Italia alla colonna e la vittoria col bavaglio" (1919), D'Annunzio draws the connection between the social organism that is the nation, Fiume and the Adriatic coast as the agents which usher in a new form of polity, and battle sites as eucharistic sites. As it is quite a long speech, I shall here break it into smaller subsections for analysis.

The speech opens with a call to silence as constitutive of *romanità*, and thus of *Italianità*:

Romani, Italiani,
 Se oggi la volontà di tutti gli uomini liberi nella nazione ingannata e sopraffatta deve parlare per la bocca di un solo, ritorni nel nostro cuori il silenzio sublime della notte di maggio, della prima notte di guerra, quando Roma tacque-dopo tanto tumulto, dopo tanto sforzo, dopo tanta ambascia-tacque; e del suo silenzio umano e del silenzio che riempie la bocca dei suoi Archi, dei suoi Fòri; delle sue terme, dei suoi Circhi fece una potenza nuova, una potenza vivente e formidabile. (824)

Jeffrey Schnapp has argued that silence functions as a kind of "immobile gestuality", that proposes itself in opposition to writing as an act of virile commemoration.⁸² While true, it is important to qualify the relationship between virility, writing and commemoration. In the passage above, the silence that fills the hearts of the crowd is itself a form of mutilation, and like the deployment of physical mutilation elsewhere it is figured as an edifying loss. In that sense, the potentiality of silence doesn't define its virility. Rather, silence functions as a disarticulating strategy that conditions the association between violence and collective identity as it breaks down the possibilities of individual speech and replaces it with collective hearing. Thus the ears of the multitude become synonymous with the Roman topography, and the silence paradoxically fills their hearts as it does the mouths of its ruins.

⁸² Jeffrey Schnapp, "Le parole del silenzio", in *Quaderni D'Annunziani*, 3-4, (1988): 35-59.

This disarticulating strategy is at the heart of D'Annunzio's political project, and it forms the basis of his political aesthetic in the Fiuman writings and speeches. Its figuration as an edifying silence is coupled with Christian imagery and ritual in a way that, I argue, is less geared toward the "apocalyptic tone" advanced by Timothy Campbell, and more toward fashioning a kind of political time/space that is characterized by simultaneous experience. Time and space are collapsed into a primarily sensual consciousness of nationhood, underscored by the double meaning of the verb "sentire" as both "to feel" and "to hear" in a later passage :

Volgiamo sentire la nostra romanità e la nostra Italianità sino alle infime radici, sino al rudere più profondo, sino all' più occulta testimonianza. Vogliamo sentire la nostra Italianità in tutto il tempo, in tutto lo spazio degli evi, sino al crepuscolo in cui i nostri mari cominciarono a essere illuminati dalla bellezza dei nostri lidi, sino all'ora fatale in cui per la prima volta su la spiaggia latina sonò dall'alto di una prua il nome d'Italia, e sino alla rivendicazione e alla rivincita di domani, e sino alla fecondazione e alla conquista del più remoto avvenire. Siamo Italiani dall'eternità e per l'eternità. (825-6)

The speech goes on at length deploying Christian imagery in order to reinforce the connection between suffering, mutilation and redemption as the chief consequences of Italy's participation in the war. Toward the middle of the text, an important shift occurs from a concentration on the suffering of physical bodies as a metaphor for the body politic, to the suffering of the body politic itself as a function of Italy's status vis-à-vis other European nations:

La guerra fu bandita dal popolo generoso, con un impeto di generosità fraterna che giunse a dimenticare ogni rancore, ogni esperienza, ogni diffidenza. Dimenticammo Nizza e la Corsica, dimenticammo Mentana, dimenticammo l'amarezza di chi aveva combatutto e vinto a Digione, lo stupore di chi s'era lasciato prendere ingenuo nel laccio di Tunisi...Dimenticammo le avversioni palesi e nascoste alla gesta d'oltremare, all'impresa di Libia...Dimenticammo i nostri morti di Amba Alagi e di Adua, stesi nella sabbia dalle armi giunte in Etiopia attraverso i porti di Francia e d'Inghilterra...Tutto dimenticammo, per non ricordare se non il "latin sangue gentile" e per non obbedire se non alla necessità di salvare la Francia e l'Europa... (828)

The evocation of the results a half century of Italian forays into international affairs as acts of injustice, generously ignored by the Italian people casts the country's involvement in the war in terms of a fulfilling of a duty among equals that eschews not only the relationship between warfare and colonial expansion, but that between European powers within geo-political balance of power. Moreover, it transitions the previous a-temporality of the discourse into a historical specificity that makes recourse to national and international rights. Despite the indignities suffered by the nation in regard to its colonial exploits and the losses suffered in the unification process, in the interest of preserving the integrity of Europe, Italy entered the conflict. As such, its heroic victory not only redeems it (as well as those "unredeemed" territories) through the magnitude of its suffering, but now also as a result of international accord. In this

second section the more properly political flavor of D'Annunzio's rhetoric begins to play out around the concept of a "people" and the derivation of its rights.

Whereas in previous speeches the focus on the body as a conduit of the heroic nature of the Latin race centered on the mutilation of individual bodies, in this text a sense of collective wounded-ness is more pronounced. More to the point, what occurs in this second section of the speech is a conflation of rhetorical registers that connect through the allusion to the mutilated, or wounded body of the *popolo*. In the first register, the mythification of national identity is structured around the substitution of ancestral blood for ancestral *virtù*, activated by the commemorative silence that links the Romans of the contemporary period to those of the Ancient world. This, again, serves as the basis of a disarticulating strategy which posits symbolic violence as a source of embodiment in the call to silence and its rupture by the words of the *Commandante*. In the second register, the sacrifices and losses of the nation are equated with generosity of spirit and Christian dutifulness that are incarnate in the association of Italy with the suffering body of Christ on the cross:

E, se il Figliuol d'uomo- il vivo che fu rimesso orribilmente in croce dal nemico di ieri ed è ribadito dai nemici di oggi, il Cristo delle nostre battaglie, che vedemmo nel crocicchio sotto il fuoco perdere i due piedi come un fante colpito da una grossa scheggia e rimaner tuttavia fisso al legno per mano sinistra, e protendere contro l'avversario la mano destra tutt'ora irta dal chiodo come di un'arme disperata- se il Figliuol di Dio dovesse eleggere un monte per una nuova Trasfigurazione, io dico che eleggerebbe quello. Lo elegge l'Italia, che nell'ora oscura ci parve avere un volto somigliante a quel volto, quando senza prezzo pativa e lottava pel riscatto del mondo. (827)

Christ is at once the suffering body of the soldier and the suffering body of the nation, the son of man and the son of God, creating a tripartite consciousness reminiscent of the Mystery of the Trinity to which the Italians are called in communion. This second register replaces the Christian act of transcendence with an act of transfiguration, signaling moving into a new kind of bodily presence whose traditional boundaries have been dissolved. This is a presence founded rights, however, and not on faith as later on the character of the *popolo* is defined in purely secular, juridical terms as the product of acts of national and international accord. This rhetorical shift engages in the same secularization of the mystical body that is described by Ernst Kantorowicz as a central element in the development of modern political figurations of the body politic (308-24).⁸³

Toward the end of the section, historical time is reinserted into the life-span of the nation as a recasting of the experience of the First World War. This is not the retelling of the war from the ground up that recurs in D'Annunzio's writings and speeches. Beyond the physical trauma of the war and the associations of the soldier's body with that of the

⁸³ The secular body of the nation comes to define the mode by which physicality and nationhood are associated in the modern period. The work of Ernst Kantorowicz has demonstrated the centrality of the body metaphor in Western society from the Ancient period through the early modern period, revealing its connective strands to formulations of both the nation and the state in modernity. See: Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, "Pro *Patria Mori* in Medieval Political Thought", in *Collected Studies* (Locust Valley, NY.: J.J. Augustin, 1965).

nation in texts like *Notturmo*, there is a question of textual trauma in form of unrecognized and unacceptable agreements between nations. The notion of a "vittoria mutilata" encapsulates a wounding that occurs at the peace table as well as on the battlefield. Moreover, the rhetorical equation of this official, institutional mutilation and the physical mutilation of the body underscores an important fact about the development of mass politics in this particular postliberal moment: the representation of the body as political metaphor operates within the discursive constellation of nationhood and opposes itself to the institutions of democratic society that it has traditionally embodied.

Thus, when D'Annunzio locates the derivation of Italy's rights with respect to its expectations and its deserved position at the peace table, he locates it not in the free association of rational beings bound together in the pursuit of a common good, but as the product of pain, suffering, and the rending of the flesh:

Le nostre pretese non sono se non i diritti d'un milione di morti e d'invalidi, i diritti di un milione di feriti e d'infermi, i diritti di due milioni di Italiani puri sacrificati, senza mescolanze né colori: i diritti del patimento e della pertinacia, della povertà e della gloria, del sudore e del sangue, e anch delle lacrime. (833)

Such rights are indelibly written on the body, and like the path toward salvation the fleshiness of suffering renders an abstract concept like redemption material though no less purely textual. Its textuality, however, trumps the contractual texts that characterize the liberal state, invalidating the words of the negotiators in Paris and nullifying the sovereign power of the parliament.

Mutilation, then, becomes both cause and effect for D'Annunzio. It encapsulates the betrayal of an entire political order that compromises the realization of Italian primacy in the Adriatic, its overdue process of unification, and its equal stature among the great nations. At the same time it conditions the emergence of the heroic body of the nation, reflected in the mobilization of new political subjects whose bodies know no borders or boundaries and whose individual disarticulation allows for infinite collective growth.

Chapter 4

Corpus Separatum: The Post-liberal City and the Cosmopolitan Body Politic at Fiume

By September of 1920, almost exactly one year into the occupation of the city of Fiume, public opinion of D'Annunzio and his legionnaires had fallen substantially in comparison with where it had been at the start. Within the Italian peninsula, as within Fiume itself, the palpable distinctions between the occupiers and the occupied revealed the fact that Italy had not so much regained a measure of geopolitical integrity as it had been exposed as a nation whose contours existed in a seemingly permanent state of rupture. As I argued in the previous chapter, these distinctions boiled down to the different ways in which political subjectivity was conceived of at Fiume in D'Annunzio's written and speeches.

The crowd becomes for D'Annunzio the primary unit of social organization, ushering in an important yet brief moment of what I call a post-liberal, anti-humanist politics. The physical integrity of the individual subject ceases to function as the primary metaphor for the national community in Italy as in other countries most affected by the destructiveness of the war.⁸⁴ Rupture as a category of political ontology necessarily assumes a complex relationship between plurality and presence within the social sphere.

In this chapter, I look at how the organization of society and the production of a political discourse proper to Fiume are influenced by the relationship between the social body of the crowd and the physical body of the individual. I argue that the city becomes, in its official constitution as well as in the writings of its *commandante*, both a corporeal structure in its own right, and a site where the discursive production of bodies tends toward a proto-totalitarian model of the citizen. Furthermore, this model should be understood as particular to the Italian context because it is, in large part, informed by the confluence of two social discourses that influence the dissemination of Italian national identity from the Risorgimento through to the collapse of the Fascist regime: irredentism and colonialism. At Fiume, these related though distinct modes of constructing the nation in relation to space reveal their highly performative natures in the ways they engage bodies and represent the bonds and borders of the polis.

Before continuing with my argument, I want to briefly outline the position that Fiume occupies in the geopolitical landscape of post-WWI Europe. Unlike the other areas that properly constituted *Italia irredenta* in the northeastern Adriatic (the Dalmatian coast, Friuli, Trento and Trieste), the city of Fiume did not figure prominently

⁸⁴ This is particularly the case not only for Italy, but for France and Germany as well. In both these countries, as in Italy, the difficult process of reintegrating wounded and mutilated veterans into the social structure was further complicated by changing attitudes toward the role of technology and the ability of science to impact the representation of the body and its place in society. The notion of "being prosthetic", then, becomes a crucial element in a comprehensive understanding of how the interactions of mass politics, social fantasy, and technological advancement influenced the rebuilding, and gradual reordering, of the popular and political cultures of European nation-states between the World Wars. In particular see: Roxanne Panchasi, "Reconstructions: Prosthetics and Rehabilitation of the Male Body in World War I France", in *Differences*, vol. 7, no. 3, (Fall 1995): 109-140; Boaz Neumann, "Being Prosthetic in the First World War and Weimar Germany", in *Body & Society*, vol. 16, no. 3, (Sept. 2010): 93-126.

in the discourse of either Risorgimento or liberal nationalism within Italy until the first decades of the twentieth century.⁸⁵ Owing to its historical status as a self-governing entity within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the culture of Fiume generally tended toward a less nationalistic form of communal representation both politically and culturally. An important exception to this is the role of a small group of intellectuals, students and professionals who, operating through the auspices of the journal of the irredentist association *La Giovine Fiume*, worked for a greater recognition among Fiumans and Italians of the long standing cultural bonds between them.⁸⁶

Following the end of the war and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the largely pro-Italian *Consiglio Nazionale* voted overwhelmingly to join the Italian state rather than declare Fiume's total independence under the protection of the victorious allied states. This move has been seen to reflect an anxiety on the parts of both Italian nationalists and less ideologically charged Italian financial interests about the possible takeover of the city by Hungary or the growing Yugoslavian state (Ledeen 22-5). Regardless of the particular interests that led to the declaration of Fiume's desire to be annexed by Italy, its occurrence on October 30th 1918 was based upon the right of the city's inhabitants to exercise their right of self-determination as a people. What the event is symptomatic of is the already problematic relationship between nationalist sentiment and geopolitical strategy that defines the Fiume episode.

The Italian government had a vested interest in the expansion of its borders into the eastern Adriatic coast. That this interest moved beyond the question of national identity is demonstrated by the provisions contained in the Pact of London signed on April 26th 1915, guaranteeing Italy's entry in the war on the side of the Allies. According to articles 4 and 5 of the treaty, Italy was to receive not only the Alto-Adige, Trentino, Venezia-Giulia, Istria, one third of the Dalmatian territories (including Zara, Sebenico, and its coastal islands), an Italian protectorate in central Albania, and interests in Anatolia in return for opening up a second front against the Central Powers.⁸⁷ As the historians Antonella Ercolani (63-76) and Roberto Vivarelli (173) have demonstrated, these provisions were formulated with the intention of preventing the consolidation of pan-Slavic interest in the Balkans and reinforcing Italian strength against Russia.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Robert L. Hess has argued that further provisions allowing the extension of Italian interests in Libya, Somaliland, and Eritrea demonstrate the colonialist intentions at root in Italy's negotiation of the treaty.⁸⁹

In all of this, the position of Fiume remained of little importance to the Italian government in its initial negotiations. It had been of importance, however, to the

⁸⁵ On the relative indifference towards Fiume by Italians see Emiliano Loria, "Per Fiume italiana: la propaganda degli irredentisti fiumani nelle carte dell'Archivio Museo Storico di Fiume (1910-1915), in *Fiume. Rivista di studi adriatici*, no.18, (July-December, 2008): 2-3.

⁸⁶ Among well-known Italian supporters of Fiuman irredentism were Giovanni Pascoli and Giuseppe Prezzolini, the latter having repeatedly published articles by Fiuman patriots in the journal *La voce* (Loria, 7).

⁸⁷ The text of the Pact of London can be found in: Michele Toscano, *Il patto di Londra. Storia diplomatica dell'intervento italiano 1914-1915*, (Bologna, 1934).

⁸⁸ See Antonella Ercolani, *Da Fiume a Rijeka. Profilo storico-politico da 1918-1947* (Saveria-Mannelli: Rubbetino Editore, 2009); Roberto Vivarelli, *Il dopoguerra in Italia e l'avvento del fascismo. Dalla fine della Guerra all'impresa di Fiume* (Naples: Istituto per Gli Studi Storici, 1967).

⁸⁹ See Robert L. Hess, "Italy and Africa: Colonial Ambitions in the First World War", in *Journal of African History*, IV, I, (1963):105-26.

nationalists who had seized upon the Adriatic question, and the fate of Fiume in particular. Through the efforts of a range of nationalist and irredentist journals and associations who worked to publicize the *italianità* of the city and the threat it faced by the looming Slavic invasion, the addition of Fiume to the list of *terre irredenti* was achieved in the popular opinion by the end of the war (Pisa 320; Roccucci 318).⁹⁰ Be it on the part of the Italian government, or on the part of the various nationalist and irredentist forces behind the popularization of the annexation of Fiume, what we can read is an ambiguous relationship between the discourse of Italian irredentism and that of Italian colonialism. As we have seen, the discourse of mutilation in D'Annunzio's political rhetoric serves to obscure the lines between expansionist desire and the ideologically charged sense of national integrity that Fiume's absence from the body politic would threaten. As we shall see, the status of the city as a separate entity is fundamental to the construction of both its *italianità* and the eventual redefining of *italianità* into a cosmopolitan, rather than a purely nationalist mode of identity.

An important element of what in the preceding chapter I call the post-liberal moment represented by the Fiume occupation is the reformulation of the concept of bodily presence as a primary legitimating factor in the derivation of rights. In the transition from the individual to the mass as the main subject of social organization, the recourse to natural law as a source of rights fades as the textuality of those rights challenges their stability. Composite and consolidated units of organization (parties, associations, mobs) thus assume a greater measure of political agency because of their ability of both perform and enforce their perceived rights. As we have seen in D'Annunzio's speeches, this transition is largely defined by the turn toward a mythologized community founded and maintained through history by a common suffering that is projected onto the wounded bodies of Italian soldiers following the First World War.

Such a community is constructed in opposition to the sort that is produced in the liberal-democratic tradition of rational consensus, undertaken to preserve foundational rights to life, moral freedom (as in Kant) or property (as in Locke). Ironically, what a reading of D'Annunzio's speeches reveals is the basic contrast between a tradition of contractual, and thus textual, rights that are discursively projected backwards into pre-civilization, and an attempt to project the primacy of the nation and its "natural" right by performing the same operation. The difference lies in the mythologization of the origins of a national community that precludes the notion of rights preceding peoples. That the physical body itself becomes the site on which this latter phenomenon plays out in post war Italian culture seems most fitting then, for what the occupation of Fiume demonstrates is the ambiguous role of embodiment as both constitutive of, and a limit to, autonomy in the political realm prior to the advent of fascism.⁹¹

⁹⁰ These groups included not only the major nationalist newspapers including "*L'idea nazionale*", but well-funded organizations like L'Associazione Pro Dalmazia founded in 1915, L'Associazione Dante Alighieri, and the Comitato Permanente di Agitazione Pro Fiume e Dalmazia, founded in January of 1919. Their influence in spreading pro-Fiume sentiment in Italy must be taken into account when considering the growth of anti-liberal politics in Italy during and after the war.

⁹¹ My understanding of autonomy in this context is informed by its tenuous relationship with agency in modern culture. In recent years the concept of autonomy has played a central role in a series of debates in the fields of ethics, law, moral philosophy and sociology. This is also the case at the beginning of the twentieth century, during which time the question of national independence regarding a number of

This of course has an important effect on the dynamic between the individual and the collective, and it represents a major departure from the kind of political engagement that defines D'Annunzio's earlier career. As early as his highly political novel *Le vergini delle rocce* (1895), D'Annunzio's treatment of the crowd constitutes an important element of his literary and political aesthetics. The novel is often cited as proof of his precursor status vis-à-vis fascist ideology because of the novel's easy associations with the sort of right-wing, pseudo Nietzschean social theories that circulated in the late nineteenth century.⁹² *Le vergini delle rocce* must, however, also be read as participating in a distinctly Italian debate on the role of crowds and mass culture in the formulation and dissemination of a popular national character.⁹³

At first glance, the novel contains a series of cogitations on the character of the crowd as a proper social force, though one that is of a distinctly lesser order. The novel's protagonist, Caludio Cantelmo is openly disdainful of the effect of the crowd on the psychology of the individual:

A giudicarne dalla qualità dei tuoi pensieri, tu sembri contornato dalla folla o preso da una femmina. Per avere attraversato la folla che ti guardava, ecco, tu già ti senti diminuito dinnanzi a te medesimo. Non vedi tu gli uomini che frequentano divenire infecondi come i muli? Lo sguardo della folla è peggio che un getto di fango; il suo alito è pestifero. Vattene lontano, mentre la cloaca si scarica. (41)

The association of the crowd with the feminine character, itself equated with mental instability, foregrounds the phonetic similarity between *folla* (crowd) and *folia* (insanity). Furthermore, the effect of becoming part of the crowd is one of sterilization, robbing the individual of his creative force. It would not be incorrect to read the treatment of the masses as part and parcel of an already anti-democratic, proto-authoritarian outlook that is embodied in the character of Cantelmo, and which reflects a constellation of popular ideas regarding the natural inequality of the masses and the cultural "elite". Indeed, the novel exhibits a similar brand of antiparlamentarianism to that which we find in the writings immediately following the war and during the Fiume occupation. The crucial difference between them, however, is the centrality of the

European states following the war took precedence in discussions of international affairs. Beyond its genesis as a "term of art", autonomy in the immediate post-war period becomes largely synonymous with autarky in nationalist discourse, suggesting a mutually dependent relationship between liberty and self-sufficiency. On the origins and interpretations of the notion of autonomy see: Alan Patten, "The Autonomy Argument for Liberal Nationalism", in *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 5, no.1, (1999):1-17; Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁹² Besides the virtual entirety of studies on D'Annunzio's political philosophy that rightfully point to the influence of Nietzschean ideas, filtered through the writings of a number of French and Italian intellectuals of the period, on the formulation of his thought and its possible links to the advent of totalitarian ideologies in the twentieth century, for important (if fraught) works that discuss the place of Nietzsche in D'Annunzio's literary output see: Guy Tosi, "D'Annunzio découvre Nietzsche, 1892-1894", in *Italianistica*, 2-3, (September-December, 1973): 481-513; Peter Caravetta "Dopo Zarathustra: Temi e figure tra Nietzsche e D'Annunzio", in *Quaderni dannunziani*, 3-4, (1988): 223-49.

⁹³ Despite its origins in the France in the works of Le Bon and Tarde, the field of collective psychology that grew in influence in the nineteenth century owed a great deal to the work of theorists like Sighele and Enrico Ferri with whom D'Annunzio's prose fiction greatly resonated and in whose texts was, in fact, featured. See: Daminano Palano, *Il potere della moltitudine: L'invenzione dell'inconscio collettivo nella teoria politica e nelle scienze sociali italiane tra Otto e Novecento* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2002): 269-275.

crowd, in the latter, as an effective countermeasure to the “bestia elettiva” that is the parliamentary system.⁹⁴

Of course, what D’Annunzio is getting at through the speeches at Fiume is less the valorization of the popular spirit of the crowd than a widening of the category of the *superuomo* into a mode of popular representation that transcends the usual trappings of the liberal-democratic order. In the move from the individual to the collective as the basic unit of political subjectivity, the hierarchy of essential being that appears in D’Annunzio’s earlier works is maintained in the distinction between Fiuman citizens and legionnaires in the first phase of the occupation. The legionnaires, by now entirely identified as *Arditi*, represented in their collective moral and physical heroism the true spirit of Italy. To be among them for D’Annunzio is “come entrare nel fuoco, è come penetrare nella fornace ardente” (967).⁹⁵ The sewer that characterizes the masses in *Le vergini* becomes a fiery furnace at Fiume: clean, bright, a site of both destruction and creation.

But how, then, does this different notion of the crowd inform the representation of the body? As I hope to have demonstrated, mutilation as a political metaphor has a dual function in D’Annunzio’s rhetoric. First, it reinforces the collective national suffering in the representations of wounded and mutilated soldiers that is deployed in individual (consciousness), interactional (political association/representation) and overtly textual (treaties and international accords) moments of national signification. Second, it proposes a kind of political subjectivity that presents itself as an alternative to liberalism, anti-liberal nationalism, and Marxist internationalism by appealing to a current of distinctly modernist thinking on the dissolution of boundaries and form.

For example, whereas Marinetti’s brand of political subjectivity centers around the prosthetic function of technological discourses of embodiment, D’Annunzio’s instead attempts to find in the fragmented body of the mutilate an ontological basis for society. It is important to note, however, that the transition toward an image of the body that represents of the people does not necessarily translate into an image of the body politic. D’Annunzio’s contribution to the development of an Italian body politic is indeed the product of a specific set of circumstances (Italy’s post-war situation) informed by generations of writings alluding to the wounded body of the Italian nation, but the general outline of a social organism that was produced at Fiume and codified in the *Carta del Carnaro* by D’Annunzio and Alceste de Ambris represents a major shift from the vindication of the Italian body politic to the imposition of the separate, self-sufficient body of a new state.

⁹⁴ The term *bestia elettiva* derives from an essay written by D’Annunzio in 1892 that further denigrates the notion of popular democracy given the natural inequality of men. The essay belongs to an important trajectory of antiparliamentarian discourse that also informs the development of social psychology in Italy. D’Annunzio’s essay first appears in *Il mattino* in September of 1892. As Barbara Spackman and Jeffrey Schnapp both explain, parts of it had been taken from an earlier essay written by Jean de Néthy entitled “Nietzsche-Zarathustra” for *La revue blanche* in April of the same year, and it appears in edited form in *Le vergini delle rocce*. See Schnapp’s introduction to “La bestia elettiva” in *D’Annunzio a Yale: Quaderni dannunziani*, 3-4,(1988): 48-50; Spackman, *Fascist Virilities* (82-3; n. 16,173). The essay goes on, however to become a major influence on the writing of Scipio Sighele’s essay *Contro il parlamentarismo. Saggio di psicologia settaria*, (Milan: Treves, 1895), which was later reformulated into the section “Il Parlamento e la psicologia della folla” in the second edition of his *L’intelligenza della folla* (Turin: Bocca, 1911) 121-65.

⁹⁵ D’Annunzio, “Alla mensa degli arditi”, in *Prose di ricerca*, cit..

As much is demonstrated in the communique released by the high command at Fiume upon the arrival of Admiral Umberto Cagni, sent by the Nitti government to negotiate the end of the occupation in September of 1919:

L'Ammiraglio Cagni è giunto a Fiume con l'incarico di chiedere al Comandante d'Annunzio s'egli sia disposto a trattare col Governo. Il Comandante d'Annunzio ha risposto ch'egli non riconosce il Governo antitaliano di Francesco Saverio Nitti e che rifiuta qualunque trattativa. (970)⁹⁶

The announcement signals the beginning of the breakdown in communication between the government and the occupying forces, and the first sign of a lack of interest on D'Annunzio's part in eventually ceding control of the city to the Italian government in exchange for its annexation.

More than that, what it reveals are both the profound enmity that D'Annunzio feels toward the Nitti government, and the traces of a rhetorical line that will set up the corrupt, destructive body of Nitti against the vibrant, though wounded bodies of the legionnaires. We see, what will later become an important step in the gradual disassociation of the city from the Italian body politic:

Essere "fiumano", confessare la fede "fiumana" significa esporsi al dispregio, al sopruso, all'ingiuria, ai castighi più odiosi. Marinai nostri e nostri fanti erano maltrattati e ammanettati come ladri, trasportati come bestiame vile, chiusi per settimane e settimane in prigioni fetide. Nostri ufficiali, gloriosi di segni azzurri, di belle ferrite, di grandi mutilazioni, erano considerate come malfattori comuni, umiliati con tutte le arti, oltraggiati senza ritengo...L'uomo che non s'è peritato di abboccarsi col nemico inconciliabile, l'uomo che s'è intrattenuto cordialmente col mozzorecchi jugoslavo arricchitosi commerciando vini adulterate e truffando client ingénue, quell'uomo stesso ha rifiutato di accogliere due italiani integerrimi che rappresentano la città di Fiume al Congresso della Pace. Lecca la barba gialla del signor Trumbić vinattiere e truffiere ma ha l'orecchio duro per i liberi consoli di Fiume, l'un de'quali è un fiero capo dif anti mutilato. Non importa. Quel cattivo chirurgo di Vandea non riuscirà a mettere i suoi ferri nella nostra carne viva. (1019-22)⁹⁷

Nitti, or "Cagoia" as D'Annunzio made him known at Fiume, is described as an evil surgeon, set to mutilate the gain made at Fiume by D'Annunzio and his men in the same manner that Italy's victory in the war is "mutilated" at the Peace conferences. As the head of the government, Nitti stands metonymically in D'Annunzio's rhetoric as the Italian state itself, bloated, corrupt and destructive. The soldiers of Fiume, those who have heard the call and now profess the faith that is Fiume; represent that very faith in their destroyed bodies. They represent the only honest attempt to protect Italy's national interests, internally and externally, for D'Annunzio chronicles in the article their attempts to reason with both Nitti and with the French prime-minister Clemenceau. Their wounds provide them with "gloriosi segni azzurri", that render their now living flesh immune to the injurious acts perpetrated by the state, and deserving of recognition at the peace table.

⁹⁶ For an easily accessible reprint of the bulletin, see: D'Annunzio, "Comando Dell' Esercito Italiano in Fiume D'Italia", in *Prose di ricerca, cit.*

⁹⁷ D'Annunzio, "Le Brache di Cagoia", in *Scritti giornalistici, cit.*

Fiume, *the città di vita*, reinvigorates the bodies of its inhabitants and becomes the site of the true Italy, opposing itself to “l’Italia vile” (1029).⁹⁸ Thus, city opposes itself to state, and the body of the polis, however imagined, opposes itself to the body of parliament.

The city as a site of national identity has a long standing importance in D’Annunzio’s writings. In his *Laudi* (1903), D’Annunzio employs a thematic of the silent city (*le città del silenzio*) of Italy’s great past such as Padova, Assisi, Ferrara or Rimini that resembles the disarticulating silence I pointed to in the previous chapter:

Rimini, dove la cesarese/ Aquila gli occhi dubbii al Fato avulse/
col rostro e il diede al Sire che l’impulse/ verso Roma sì cieco alle
contese,/

in te non cerco I segni delle imprese/ ma le tombe cui semplici ti
sculse/pe’I Vati e I Sofi quei che al genio indulse/ pur tra il furor delle
mortalì offese. (370)

Here the city is anything but living. More than a static monument, it is a tomb that holds a still living memory waiting to be voiced. The image of the communal form, a body left unable speak its own glorious past, is translated through the war-time experience into a communal body incapable of defending itself. In an article for the *Corriere della Sera* from the 23rd of April, 1917, D’Annunzio’s call for the defense of Bologna’s towers bridges the gap between a notion of the city as emblem of past glory (in the *Laudi*) and a notion of the city as site of living glory (Fiume):

Questa divina e spietata Guerra, che cancella interamente col medesimo acciaio le facce degli uomini e quelle dei luoghi, has reso in noi più patetico il senso della vita murale costruita e nutrita dai secoli e dalle generazioni, non imitabile né sostituibile mai. Il lamento delle città distrutte ci è parso talvolta salire anche più alto che lo stesso pianto dei popoli martoriati e tratti in schiavitù. (691)⁹⁹

Though the article is written with the intention of casting the medieval towers of Bologna as emblems of Italy’s ancient dedication to freedom and struggle, what it demonstrates is the liminal position that the image of the city occupies as both microcosm of the nation and totalizing metaphor for the nation. Cities are spaces of civilization that reflect, in the article from the 1917, a national character devoted to traditional ideals and forms of representation. What will occur at Fiume, and I would argue precisely as a consequence of the war and ensuing peace that sparked the writing of the article from 1917, is the reinterpretation of the semiotic power of the communal space as an ideological marker of national identity. Fiume changes from a site of ancient municipal glory during the first days of the occupation, when it is still hoped that annexation might occur, to a site of cosmopolitan dynamism that opposes itself to historical determinism, tradition, and subjection to the nation-state.

This is apparent both in the shift in tone that occurs between 1919 and 1920 in D’Annunzio’s writings, and in the decisions undertaken with regard to the administration

⁹⁸ D’Annunzio makes the distinction between Italia vera and Italia vile in the midst of a pledge to represent, at Fiume, Italy’s honor and its glory. The pledge is made to the governing counsel of the city and reprinted in the Fiuman newspaper *La Vedetta d’Italia* on the 27th of January 1920 under the title “Ferrum est quod amat”. See: Gabriele D’Annunzio, *Scritti Giornalistici*, cit..

⁹⁹ D’Annunzio, “Per la salvezza di tre storiche torri bolognesi”, in *Scritti Giornalistici*, cit..

of the city. The substitution of D'Annunzio's long time ally, the right-leaning Giovanni Giurati, by the anarcho-syndicalist Alceste de Ambris as chief of staff in January of 1920 speaks strongly to this point.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the decidedly left-wing tone that the occupation takes in this later period bespeaks an important point relating to the argument that the Fiume episode represents a brief moment in which a trend toward a kind of discursive practice oriented by a proto-posthumanist conception of subjectivity occurs. That is, we can locate certain similarities between the development of revolutionary-syndicalist notions of the corporate organism and the development of notions of individuation and embodiment in theoretical work grounded in post-humanist methodology.

What the Fiume episode reveals is the intersection of these disparate fields of thought at a historical moment in which the practice of politics is largely defined a consciousness of representation as equal to, if not more important than, organization in the social sphere. Put simply, corporatism necessarily assumes the de-individuation of the subject, and its translation into a set of discursive practices capable of governance requires a reinterpretation of the role of the physical body as a marker of social subjectivity. Thus, at Fiume the aestheticization and ritualization of politics can only be understood as occupying that ambiguous space, neither right nor left, that Zeev Sternhell defines as the locus of fascism.¹⁰¹ Or rather, it occupies a space that is, as Alice Kaplan might put it, both right and left.¹⁰²

It is right-wing, because it assumes the totalization of individual consciousness to be a necessary function of state operability. It is left-wing, because it makes recourse to forms of social organization and representation that undermine the ability of the state to control, at least through repressive measures, its subjects.¹⁰³ Moreover, as Claudia Salaris has shown, the distinctly cosmopolitan style of those charged with the running of the city following the appointment of de Ambris as *capo di gabinetto* in January of 1919 firmly aligns the discursive constructions of form, physiological and municipal, with the anarchic style of the Dadaists and early futurists.

The dynamic between cosmopolitanism and embodiment is indeed a critical component of the Fiume episode. As a critical term cosmopolitanism requires some

¹⁰⁰ Ferdinando Gerra shows how the basic motivations, ideals and strategies involved in the occupation of the city changed radically following the substitution of Giurati by de Ambris following the latter's resignation after the breakdown in negotiations with the Italian government in December of 1919. Gerra writes that with Giurati's departure there follows an influx of "elementi di più acceso spirito rinnovatore", and that in this period designs of a large scale revolutionary movement stemming from Fiume and directed at the Italian peninsula are discussed among D'Annunzio and a range of left and right-wing supporters (Gerra, 258-64).

¹⁰¹ Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Left nor Right: Fascist Ideology in France*, Trans. David Maisel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

¹⁰² Alice Y. Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

¹⁰³ Fredric Jameson's account of the nature of protofascism as involving a split between staunchly anticapitalist and anticommunist stances that allows the protofascist to engage in a critique of "the various middle class ideologies and of the parliamentary system in which they find representation", opening up "an ambiguous space in which a critique of capitalism can be displaced and inflected in the direction of the characteristic features of classical petty-bourgeois ideology", springs to mind (Jameson, 15). What complicates a judgment of D'Annunzio's occupation of Fiume as being protofascist is the shift in his calls for annexation to the *madre-patria*, to calling for the essential independence of Fiume, and its resolutely internationalist political program.

specification when it is employed in the context of political aesthetic tied to a thoroughly modernist project such as that undertaken at Fiume by D'Annunzio and his followers. Taking as a rudimentary starting point Walter Dignolo's characterization of cosmopolitanism as a "set of designs toward planetary conviviality", I mean to designate a set of practices geared toward the erasure of geo-political, cultural, racial or epistemological borders as they are traditionally applied in regards to social organization and the arts, but which nevertheless retain to some extent the problematics of encountering otherness.¹⁰⁴

In this sense, I use the term cosmopolitan in describing various manifestations of supranational thought at Fiume that seek to contest traditional formulations of social organization, subjectivity, and embodiment through appeals to a kind of bodily presence that defines itself through fragmentation, mobility, formlessness, and universality. Rather than seeking to engage in a kind of critical reflection on the discursive structures that define western society's appeal to difference as justification for imperialist endeavor, which Rebecca Walkowitz sees as characteristic of writers and theorists such as Salman Rushdie or Homi Bhabha, it is a kind of uncritical cosmopolitanism that views multiplicity and plurality as reinforcing rather than destabilizing forces.¹⁰⁵

Therein lays the crux of the strategy of cosmopolitan embodiment that develops in D'Annunzio's speeches and in the writings of his more "ardent" followers in the last year of the occupation. It is a strategy by means of which Fiume is constructed as a deterritorialized utopian space, borderless yet endowed with form by virtue of its inhabitants. What dooms the formulation of an alternative mode of national identity as produced in the first phase of the occupation is the attempt to articulate such a space (Fiume) according to modes of communal representation already proper to the existing system of power relations (consanguinity, Catholicism, irredentism).

Here the disarticulated body politic, present in the rhetorical equation of the mutilated body to the social organism, is reconstituted as an immortal, inviolable spirit. Flesh and blood become offerings to the city, which is figured as a site of transgressive redemption. As such, the space of the city reflects what Margaret Kohn deems "a principle of political emancipation, and a model of social transformation, a locus of self-fashioning (91). But it is a space that requires the total dissolution of self into the life of the city.

As we shall see, not only do D'Annunzio's speeches in the final months of the occupation belie such a stance, but so too do the writings and actions of his followers such as Guido Keller, and Léon Kochnitzky in the establishment of the *Associazione Yoga*. What the various *manifesti*, proclamations, and speeches demonstrate is the important role that modernist aesthetic arguments play in the gradual disintegration and reformulation of notions of community following the war. If we move beyond interpretations of D'Annunzio's impact on the ritualization of politics that for many has defined the relationship between subject and power in the totalitarian dynamic, and

¹⁰⁴ This is a kind of border crossing that moves beyond the formulation of the cosmopolitan as a form of transnational or "planetary humanism" as conceived by theorists like Paul Gilroy or Martha Nussbaum, though in the case of the latter I do mean to include a critical reevaluation of the distinction between nationalism and patriotism as it is destabilized in D'Annunzio's writings (Gilroy 356; Nussbaum 1-17).

¹⁰⁵ See Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia Press, 2006).

which is often at the base of analyses of his representation of Fiume as the *città olocausta*, we can see that an analysis of the rhetorical construction of Fiume as *città di vita* that simultaneously occurs in his rhetoric yields productive results.

In a speech entitled “Italia e vita”, marking the anniversary of the armistice as well as the anniversary of the pro-annexation declaration of the *Consiglio Nazionale di Fiume*, the governing municipal body prior to the occupation, D’Annunzio rhetorically fuses the independence of Fiume with Italy’s victory thus equating its freedom with its annexation:

Nel Campidoglio di Roma il podestà, divenuto primo sindaco di Fiume, fece sacramento alla Madre di tutte le genti latine e per voi rinnovò il grido “Italia o morte”. Ripetere quella sentenza in quel luogo era come incidere in una lapide solenne e perenne. Infatti, subito dopo, il Consiglio Nazionale si costuì nei suoi poteri e assunse il governo della città, del porto e del distretto, proponendosi di esercitarlo fino alla sanzione plebiscite. Erano passati dieci giorni, quando-a rendere più gravi su i cittadini il fastidio e l’onta di tollerare l’intrusione di truppe straniere-il Comando francese volle istituire nel porto una sua base navale. E le nuove torture incominciarono... Allora si vide una volontà aperta lottare contro il sopruso quotidiano, contro la calunnia odiosa, contro l’ingiuria bassa, contro ogni sorta di insidie e di forzamenti. Allora si vide una gentilezza latina, schietta come nel vostro Comune del Trecento, libera come quell’ache ornava la vostra antica Loggia, risplendere contro la ribalderia d’una soldataglia ubriaca alleata col nemico contro l’alleato. (1004-5)¹⁰⁶

The representation of the city as a living space and as a source of life contains within an appeal to a highly idealized notion of the public sphere that is both constitutive and redemptive. The historicization, or indeed mythologization, of Fiume’s *italianità* by way of its *latinità* and the allusion to its history as a commune marks the city as a space of action in which the strength of the community (its *gentilezza*) is opposed to foreign aggression (*ribalderia*). Here, as elsewhere, the city is represented as a purely Italian space, whose municipal power is indicative of its connection to the *madre-patria*. It is not yet the space that represents suffering to the world, but the space that represents Italy’s mutilation. What is important, however, is the fact that the city is the emblem of freedom. He further characterizes this municipal spirit as the opposition of dignity to bestiality, faith to perfidy.

That the *Fiumani* should be naturally endowed with such characteristics seems to be less at issue than that the city itself should remain a constant source of these characteristics to the inhabitants of “Italia vile”, that they may shake off the oppressive yoke of Nitti’s government, and liberal-democratic government in general. The autonomy of the public sphere is at once highlighted and obscured by a formulation of national community that assumes a deterritorialized unity, but which can only function in the maintenance of national integrity. On the other hand, the equation of Italy’s treatment in the peace process with that of Fiume as an independent city-state, a recurrent theme that we have seen throughout D’Annunzio’s postwar writings, assumes a common marginalized status. The mutilated soldiers/emissaries embody it, and it

¹⁰⁶ Gabriele D’Annunzio, “Italia e Vita”, in *Prose di ricerca*, cit..

contradicts the very appeal to fragmentation as constitutive of community by which Fiume gains legitimacy as an independent social sphere. If the extemporal bonds of courage, suffering, and resurrection produce community then it cannot be degraded by mere treaty or accord.

Such is, at base, reflected in the attempt to appeal to a form of transnational *italianità* in the article “Agli Italiani degli Stati Uniti” from October 1919:

E so che voi, Italiani degli Stati Uniti, siete con noi, tutti. Ne abbiamo ogni giorno i segni più chari, le testimonianze più nobili. Raccogliete di là dall’Oceano il grido di Fiume e sollevatelo...Ora la vittoria è costata all’Italia un milione di morti e di mutilati, un altro milione di feriti e d’invalidi: due milioni d’Italiani puri, senza mescolanze né colori. (993-6)¹⁰⁷

Both as political tactic and as a mode of reinforcing a kind of borderless nationalism that conflates irredentism with diaspora, D’Annunzio’s call to the Italians of America employs a direct appeal to a racialized and historical continuity that requires allegiance. At the same time it casts the Italian diaspora as the embodiment of the ideals of freedom and justice for which America, whose government having betrayed these principles in the act of opposing Fiume’s annexation, is supposed to stand.

Similarly, in the article from December 1919, entitled “Agli Italiani di San Paolo”, the diaspora is again called upon to legitimize the suffering of the national community.

Sentimmo che voi dall vostra riva oceanic, come noi da questa riva adriatica, attraverso la distanza la solitudine e la tristezza, vedevate la faccia dell’Italia bella, quella medesima che la Guerra aveva a voi ravvicinata nello splendore del sangue. Lontani, avevate subito compreso quel che i prossimi mal comprendono o disconoscono: la nostra sanguinosa e fangosa Vittoria essersi esiliata col fiore dei combattenti in questa terra dove lo spirit di sacrificio abita una gente non mia sazia di patire e non mai sazia di attendere. (1033)¹⁰⁸

Common to both appeals is a notion of ethnic, rather than civic, nationalism that calls upon the consanguineous bonds of the community rather than collective spatial or temporal proximity and organization, in effect treating nationality as a biological trait.¹⁰⁹ Paradoxically, the effect is that of deterritorializing the national community, transforming nationality into a mobile network of representative iterations. This is the beginning of the transition away from the nationalist irredentism of the immediate postwar situation, and

¹⁰⁷ D’Annunzio, in *Prose di ricerca*, cit..

¹⁰⁸ in *Prose di ricerca*, cit..

¹⁰⁹ The distinction between ethnic and civic forms of nationalism has been in operation since the late nineteenth century, though between the two there has been a great deal of conceptual ambiguity given their tendency to overlap. Even throughout D’Annunzio’s writings we can distinguish moments in which the distinction between a deterministic view of nationality and a largely contractual, and by that is meant textual, network of representation is blurred, as we saw in the previous chapter. On the differences between forms of nationalism and their development from the nineteenth century to the present day see in particular: Andrew Thompson and Ralph Fevre, “The National Question: Sociological Reflections on Nation and Nationalism”, in *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 7, no. 3, (July, 2001): 297-315; Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates About Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000); Rogers Brubaker, “The Manichean Myth: Rethinking the distinction between “Civic” and “Ethnic” Nationalism”, in *Nation and Nationality: the European Experience in Perspective* (Zurich: Verlag Rüegger, 1999) 55-72.

toward an anti-liberal cosmopolitanism, which defines the second phase of the occupation.

A crucial element in this shift is the way in which distance and proximity are represented within D'Annunzian rhetoric. Their manipulation is a major factor in the dissemination of cosmopolitan discourses of governance as it relates to the notion of urban regeneration throughout the twentieth century, and particularly at Fiume. As a functioning body politic, the cosmopolitan community operates by way of a dialectical relationship between self and other, nearness and farness in order to produce the ethical, juridical, and moral bonds that constitute communal interaction. Working with a concept of distance that is borrowed from Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, sociologist Roger Silverstone defines proper distance as:

Understanding the more or less precise degree of proximity required in our mediated interrelationships if we are to create and sustain a sense of the other sufficient not just for reciprocity but for a duty of care, obligation, and responsibility, as well as understanding. Proper distance preserves the other through distance as well as through shared identity. (46)

Though Silverstone's work is based on understanding the role of media in the construction of a globalized community, his basic point holds true when applied to the weak cosmopolitan style employed at Fiume. Whereas for Silverstone, the maintenance of distance (through media) might produce the effect of a kind of proximity to the other that evokes a moral obligation a decentering that allows the individual to identify with the plurality while remaining distinct from it, D'Annunzio's use of distance occludes the pluralization of experience required to achieve a thoroughly cosmopolitan society. Instead, the expansion of individual singularity into a monolithic cultural singularity folds back into a kind of communitarianism that reinforces its borders rather than dissolving them.

For that reason the irredentist line that is woven throughout D'Annunzio's writings is constantly at odds with the defensive rhetoric of preservation:

O gente mal redenta fra il Timavo e il Carnaro, non ho ritegno a propagare per tutta la Venezia Giulia l'allarme che sores dalla nostra radunata tumultuosa. Se i governatori austriaci, se i commissarii italiani non v'hanno fatta un'anima servile irrimediabilmente, fratelli, bisogna che vi rivoltiate contro l'ignominia, bisogna che vi prepariate a ricombattere. Sapete di che si tratta. E non è il caso di mostrarvi sopra una carta il confine ditto "linea di Cagoia" nella storia comica della strategia moderna. Sapete che, con quel confine, il cittadino di Trieste libera, salendo su una delle colline che incoronano San Giusto, potrebbe domani scorgere a occhio nudo sopra la Porta d'Italia la bandiera di quell nemico che non cessa e non cesserà mai di agognare il grande porto incurvato verso il mare dogale. Sapete che quel confine lascerebbe l'Italia aperta a tutte le insinuazioni e a tutte le violenze e che tutta la Venezia Giulia sarebbe ridotta, con Fiume, "una boccheggiante agonia italiana dentro un cerchio spietato". (1057)¹¹⁰

The moral imperative implied by an irredentist rhetoric would refer to the recuperation of territory while the defensive rhetoric would refer to the preservation of a people under threat. In the first case, the mobility of borders threatens the stability of the

¹¹⁰ D'Annunzio, "Il libro chiuso", in *Scritti giornalistici*, cit..

community because it confuses ethnic boundaries. Austrian governors and Italian commissaries become interchangeable faces of the same malevolent force. In the second, the permeability of borders threatens the survival of the nation, 'metonymically identified by the territories in question at the peace table in Versailles. Both lines of argumentation rely on a formulation of the national community as a vulnerable body, but they differ in where they place the locus of the communal threat with one placing it within the nation and one outside the nation.

Regardless of where the threat originates from, distance and proximity are again manipulated in order to reestablish the contours of a national community. The confusion, however, of the internal threat posed by the Nitti government and the liberal democratic system with that of an imagined cabal of foreign powers seeking to weaken Italy leads underscores the importance of differentiating "Italia vera" from "Italia vile". This is the primary characteristic of the first phase of the occupation lasting from the Marcia di Roncchi in Spetember 1919, until the failure of the Nitti government to reach an accord with D'Annunzio (the so-called *modus vivendi*) and the establishment of the *Reggenza Italiana del Carnaro* in January 1920.

In the first phase of the occupation, what we might call the nationalist-insurrectionist phase, the staging of community relied on a primarily temporal characterization of distance as equivalent to history, as we have seen in the references to the *latinità* or *romanità* of the Adriatic coast and the allusions to the medieval communes. Even the preamble to the constitution of Fiume, the *Carta del Carnaro*, begins by declaring the historical legitimacy of Fiume's Italian character under the heading "Della perpetua volontà popolare":

Fiume, libero commune italico da secoli, pel voto unanime dei cittadini e per la voce legittima del Consiglio nazionale, dichiarò liberamente la sua dedizione piena e intiera alla madre patria, il 30 ottobre 1918. Il suo diritto è triplice, come l'armatura impenetrabile del mito romano.

Fiume è l'estrema custode italic delle Giulie, è l'estrema rocca della coltura latina, è l'ultima portatrice del segno dantesco. Per lei, di secolo in secolo, di vicenda in vicenda, di lotta in lotta di passion in passion, si serbò il Carnaro di Dante. (103)¹¹¹

Time is virtually of the essence here. Both the recent past and the distant past are invoked as proof not only of the cultural patrimony to which Fiume belongs, but of the literally perpetual will of its people to be recognized as Italian. The reference to Dante serves as both cultural and territorial justification for its *italianità*, as the gulf of Carnaro is briefly mentioned in Canto IX of the *Inferno* as the far end of Italy's border:

Sì come ad Arli, ove Rodano stagna,
sì com' a Pola, presso del Carnaro
ch'Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna (IX.112-117)

Regardless of the fact that Dante here is referring to the necropolis in the town of Pola (Pula) near Fiume rather than to Fiume itself, the association of Dante with D'Annunzio the poet lends further cultural credibility to an argument that actual historical evidence could not bear out.¹¹² Thus D'Annunzio at once constructs a cultural-chronological bond

¹¹¹ D'Annunzio, "Disegno di un nuovo ordinamento dello stato libero di fiume", in *Prose di ricerca*, cit..

¹¹² Indeed Fiume's longstanding position as a separate, self-governing body formally under Austro-Hungarian rule, a status known as "Corpus Separatum" granted by Empress Maria Theresa in 1799, had

that legitimates the occupation, while closing the gap between Fiume's imagined past and its present situation.

In the second phase of the occupation, what I shall call the cosmopolitan-revolutionary phase, community is just as ever founded on a notion of *italianità*, but one that finds its basis in position rather than in time. As in the letters to the Italians of America and Brazil, Fiume represents a separate community of Italians whose national identity is realized by moral and spiritual values rather than solely by blood. These values become portable, and able to be shared by anyone who professes the "fede di Fiume". Thus, the biological contours of the community are at once dissolved and erected as purely discursive acts, allowing even the identification of other races with the essence of *Fiumanesimo*.

In the article "Saluto all ospite d'oriente", the recognition of the participation of Harukichi Scimoi, a professor of Japanese literature, in the actions of the legionnaires bespeaks the move away from a nation-based conception of social identity toward an internationalist stance:

Noi vogliamo stasera onorare in Fiume d'Italia un ospite dell'Estremo Oriente venuto a noi con un gruppo di grandi pensieri come quegli stormi di gru chiarosonanti che fendono il cielo del suo paese...E, se fino a ieri egli ebbe nel suo piccolo petto un grande cuore italiano, ha oggi sotto la stella di Fiume un ardentissimo cuore fiumano. E già ama le nostre isole del carnaro come quelle del suo innumerevole archipelago...Parlavamo dell'Italia dolorosa, parlavamo del nostro sacrificio, del nostro sangue, dei giorni disperati e delle speranze invite. Se ne ricorda Scimoi? Vidi a un tratto due lacrime vive sgorgare dai suoi sconosciuto occhi di straniero. E subitamente lo riconobbi fratello, come tutti lo riconosciamo qui. E il cuore mi si aperse.¹¹³

As we can see blood still counts a great deal. Its sacralization, and the recognition of its shedding is key to entry into the community, but it is precisely in the *recognition* and not in the possession. The two tears that Scimoi is purported to have shed, upon hearing of the suffering and sacrifice of these "true" Italians identifies him as more than simply an ally, for in his chest beats the ardent heart of a Fiuman. More than mere rhetorical embellishment, I would argue that this principle holds true for the notion of political community that develops at Fiume in this second phase.

As an element of its revolutionary program, the rejection of racial categories is mirrored by the rejection of capitalist and, though to a lesser extent by 1920, Marxist models of social organization. By deterritorializing *italianità*, D'Annunzio effectively identifies it with any movement of the oppressed regardless of location, race, or creed. More than the vindication of Italy's position in Europe, the aim of the occupation in this second phase is the redefinition of Italy itself. Once the connection between the body politic and the institutions of the state is fully severed, Italy (now Fiume) resides in the hearts and minds of its faithful. The result of this is a) the destabilization of nationality as

functioned under a majority Slavic population for most of its history. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century does the Italian population of the city begin to grow such that it would become the majority by 1910 (Volpi, 51-52).

¹¹³ D'Annunzio, in *Scritti Giornalistici*, cit..

marker of physical identity, and b) the transformation of Fiume into the locus of an international movement.

Thus, later in “Italia e vita” from the 24th of October 1919, D’Annunzio’s rhetoric jumps between a highly territorialized justification for the occupation and a notion of *Italianità* that is divested of the territorial bond upon which the irredentist claim stands:

La causa del suolo ha i suoi limiti. E, poiché soltanto a Fiume oggi si parla franco e rude fra tanto balbettio senile, persistiamo nella franchezza e nella rudezza...Se l’Italiano prende radice dove si trova-e l’Italiano ha una divina facilità di radicarsi e di fiorire anche nel terreno più ingrato-, l’Italia può soggiungere un’altra sentenza romana: *Possiedo quia possiedo*, “posseggo perché posseggo”. Non avete voi udito parlare d’una sottile striscia litoranea, d’un esiguo passaggio per pedoni modesti, che dovrebbe congiungere la terra di San Vito a un’altra stretta zona di costa istriana? Noi abbiamo visto più d’una volta, nella Guerra, un braccio o una gamba al taglio d’una scheggia di granata rimaner penzoloni per un solo filamento rosso, per la fibre d’un muscolo o per il cordone di un tendine, mentre il corpo si dissanguava a fiotti e la faccia del ferito si faceva smorta. Tenete in mente l’immagine. Fiume è piena di gloriosi mutilati; ma non sarà mutilata, pur rimanendo gloriosa per sempre. (1009-10)

However, like the body of the mutilated soldier, what holds Italian territory together in the face of international and domestic machinations is but a strand of connective tissue, nothing can outshine the glory of Italy’s victory embodied in its possession. At the same time, however, that very principle, possession justified by possession itself, undercuts the natural (and supernatural) bond between the body and the land, between italiano and Italia. Instead, it is in the declaration “posseggo perché posseggo”, the discursive recognition of terrestrial possession that like the other motto of the legionnaires “qui rimarremo ottimamente”, again reveals the textual basis of national identity.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, and similar to the treatment of mutilation that we saw in Marinetti, D’Annunzio does not equate territorial integrity with corporeal redemption. Rather, mutilation functions as a kind of ontological category of being, from which a new politics can emerge.

Though the refusal to allow Italy’s victory to be “mutilated” foregrounds the discursive strategies by which the body of the wounded soldier is equated to the body politic, the conceptual flesh of the latter is productive only insofar as it remains in a state of disarticulation. Mutilation thus signifies the transformation from a political community that is represented as material *body* (unitary, monolithic) to a community that is defined as immaterial *flesh* (connective, fragmentary). That is, it situates the social organism in between the experience of static composure indicative of the position of the subject, and the realization that nationality operates as a fluid network of symbols. It does not, however, operate in a kind of a “one or the other” way. Rather, what we can see in

¹¹⁴ An identity based largely in reaction to the circumstances that both weakened Italy’s ability to gain colonial power on par with other European nations, and on the practice of mass emigration that occurs throughout Liberal Italy’s history. As Rhiannon Welch has aptly demonstrated, the haunting specter of emigration plays an important part in the recasting of Italian migration in the light of an ancient heroic intrepidity that reinterprets the irredentist desire in terms of both liberation and colonial appropriation. (Welch 151, n.166).

D'Annunzio's writings is a kind of simple abstraction of the incarnate subject into a transcendental multitude that is based on what Merleau-Ponty calls a "philosophy of reflection" that attempts to master the physicality of the body "by undoing it in order to remake it" (31). D'Annunzio's own mode of reflection, simultaneously historicizing and de-historicizing the cause of Fiume and its supposed *italianità*, produces a new social sphere, in which the disarticulation of the subject effects the incarnation of the body politic.

Laura Wittman has demonstrated how, in the period prior to and during the first phase of the occupation, the radical materiality both of being and nothingness is represented as a trauma that is countered by the spiritualization of the self, and the re-symbolization of the corporeality of the *patria*.¹¹⁵ In the second phase, however, there is a marked shift away from the reintegration of the body politic with that of the nation, to the establishment of an independent state at Fiume that would represent the "real" Italy. This is likely as much due to the ultimate failure of the occupation to achieve its primary goals of annexation to Italy and the overturning of the Italian political order, as to the more internationalist political goals of the leading members of the occupying hierarchy.¹¹⁶ As D'Annunzio quite plainly states, Fiume is full of mutilates, but will not itself be mutilated. It will remain forever in a state of glory by virtue of its mutilated populace. Its utopian quality is conditioned by the disarticulated of the subject, and the disembodied multitude that populates it.

This is also the source of its power as a cosmopolitan space. More than an anarchic, bacchanal of avant-garde political practices, the second phase of the occupation represents a serious attempt to transform the politics of national identity at a moment when the distinction between the concept of nationality and that of national identity was crucial to the reordering of the international balance of power. This is already apparent at the beginning of the occupation when D'Annunzio links the cause of Fiume to those of other freedom fighters around the world towards the end of the speech "Italia e vita":

Noi potremo tutti perire sotto le rovine di Fiume; ma dalle rovine lo Spirito balzerà vigile e operante. Dall' indomito *Sinn Fein* irlandese alla bandiera rossa che in Egitto unisce la Mezzaluna e la croce, tutte le insurrezioni dello spirit contro i divoratori di carne cruda e contro gli smungitori di popoli inermi si riaccenderanno alle nostre faville che volano lontano.
(1014)

The legionnaires at Fiume are rhetorically transformed in an oppressed people fighting an anti-colonialist struggle against the "devourers of human flesh". Likewise, the question of the relatively imperialistic claims of Italian irredentism to Adriatic territories is eschewed by the characterization of the legionnaires as an anti-imperialist force opposed to the international machinations of the Allies. Thus, the fluidity of Fiume allows not only cultural exchange, as in the case of Scimoi, but also its identification

¹¹⁵ See Wittman, *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, cit.

¹¹⁶ Such is the judgment of De Felice who writes that as a result of the inability of the Fiume enterprise to cause either the downfall of the Nitti government or a deepening of support among Italians "l'impresa di Fiume perse rapidamente ogni vero valore politico". See: Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965) 557. On the internal politics of the legionnaire's movement at Fiume see: Ercolani, 104-12; De Felice, 579; see also: Renzo De Felice, *Sindacalismo rivoluzionario e fiammesimo nel carteggio D'Annunzio-De Ambris* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1966).

with a network of similarly “oppressed” communities that would operate under the sign of a global city.¹¹⁷ Thus D’Annunzio proclaims in a letter to Giuseppe Giulietti, secretary of the federazione dei lavoratori del mare and an important ally, dated January 6th, 1920:

Oggi, qualunque sforzo di liberazione non può partire se non da Fiume. Per una più vasta impresa sociale, io debbo partire da qui. [...] La nuova parola parte di qui. Qui le nuove forme di vita non soltanto si disegnano ma si compiono. [...] In nessun luogo della terra si respira la libertà come in questo Quarnaro che è simile a un “mare futuro”. [...] Io sono rientrato nel popolo che mi generò. Sono mescolato alla sua sostanza. Vivo coi soldati semplici, semplice soldato. Divido il rancio con loro. Cammino al loro fianco. Canto le loro canzoni. Parlo il loro linguaggio. Divento il loro inerprete rude. Se tu assistessi a certi spettacoli umani, qui, comprenderesti che la vera “novità” di vita non è là dove la dottrina di Lenin si smarrisce nel sangue. Il cardo bolcèvico si muta qui in rosa italiana: in rosa d’amore.¹¹⁸

There are two important observations to be made from this letter. The first reinforces the notion that a process of de-individuation must occur in order for the subject to integrate into the new form of life that Fiume represents. D’Annunzio himself becomes one with the masses, the people that “generates” him. He describes a kind of communitarianism that to an extent serves as a constitutive element of cosmopolitan subjectivity, though it also functions as a block to the actualization of a purely cosmopolitan social sphere in the preclusion of the experience of otherness that signifies the cosmopolitan. This is a key problem that the postliberal politics of Fiume represents and one of the reasons why its moment is so brief, only to devolve into the proto-totalitarian practices for which it is largely remembered.

Moreover, D’Annunzio is unable to maintain the sense of equality that distinguishes this new form of life. After all, it cannot be forgotten that as *Comandante* it is his voice that gives form to the community. Though he mixes with them, becomes one of them, his alone is the power to interpret the “novità di vita” at Fiume, both to the world, and to the legionnaires themselves. As a conduit instead of a cog, he demonstrates that the textual body politic cannot exist without authorization. The very sense of literary *auctoritas* that, as Spackman argues constitutes the first half of *Le vergini delle rocce*, and which situates D’Annunzio within the category of a generator of Italian culture, is in effect at Fiume as well (84).¹¹⁹

The second observation concerns the notion of disembodiment that I have been proposing, as it relates to the centrality of blood in D’Annunzian rhetoric. Whereas, in the first phase of the occupation, the sacralization of spilled blood is a primary rhetorical vehicle for the justification of the Fiume enterprise as well as a mode of reconstituting a potent form of national identity, by the second phase the physical connection to the land

¹¹⁷ Such is the motivation behind the establishment of the “Lega di Fiume”, an international body formed to, in the words of the Fiuman secretary of “exterior” affairs Leon Kochnitzky, “raggruppare in un fascio compatto le forze di tutti gli oppressi della terra: popoli, nazioni, razze, ecc., ecc., e di poter con questo mezzo combattere e vincere gli organismi soprafattori ed imperialisti [...]”. See: Renzo De Felice, *D’Annunzio politico*, cit., 73.

¹¹⁸ This text comes from a letter reproduced in Gerra, cit., 232-33.

¹¹⁹ Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, cit., 84.

is a secondary concern. Embodiment as the recognition of nationhood is supplanted by disembodiment as the marker of communal transfiguration. Thus blood is unable to render sacred heroic violence that is devoid of spirit, such as the “dottrina di Lenin” that simply looses itself amongst the blood. The physicality of suffering is transubstantiated into the ephemerality of emotion as the cardinal red of Bolshevism changes into “rosa italiana” or “rosa d’amore”.

At the level of the individual subject’s relation to the social body, the emphasis on a kind of universal, disembodied consciousness is manifested in the foundation of the “Associazione Yoga, Unione di spiriti liberi tendenti alla perfezione”, founded by two of D’Annunzio’s closest followers, Guido Keller and Giovanni Comisso, at the beginning of 1920.¹²⁰ Though not an organized political party, the association brought together an array of politically charged left-wing factions, and served as a counterweight to the influence of the more right-leaning elements of the legionnaire’s movement (Salaris 47-55).¹²¹ Its members, in particular its guiding members like Keller, engaged in a politics of spectacle and the spectacular that from the outset attempted to introduce elements of eastern transcendentalism into the practice of social life. Writings in his memoir *Le mie stagioni* (1951), Comisso explains the inspiration for the group thusly:

Durante le nostre passeggiate notturne, decisi di rompere l’inerzia estiva, avevamo pensato di organizzare un gruppo tra i legionari più intelligent e di preparare con adunati e discussion un movimento per scalzare dal Comandante tutta la gente pesante e arruffona. Tra i seguaci di Keller vi era anche un ufficiale veneziano, mezzo mistico e mezzo posatore al misticismo, il quale aveva una certa conoscenza di religioni indiane. Keller pensava a una divisione degli uomini secondo la Potenza dello spirit, l’altro suggerì di creare le caste come in India. Così il nostro movimento venne chiamato Yoga e Keller vi aggiunse questa formula: “Unione di spiriti liberi tendenti alla perfezione”. (75)

In the group’s call to oppose the more traditional forms of political and artistic expression there is much to identify as decidedly avant-garde, and indeed even markedly leftist.¹²² However, I would argue that beyond its particular political orientation, what the *associazione Yoga* represents is a general trend among early twentieth century social movements towards a politics of universal subjectivity in which the physical body is no longer understood as a marker of the constitutive subject. It posits a form of transcendental subjectivity as the foundation of political community, thus redefining intersubjective relationality as primarily sensual rather than rational. Paradoxically, this model of social action defines itself as primarily designed for the total

¹²⁰ For a detailed historical account of D’Annunzio’s most active associates at Fiume, see: Salaris, cit., 17-36.

¹²¹ These elements included Futurists, supporters of the Dada movements in Germany and Switzerland, and younger members of the *Arditi*, forming what Salaris calls the “sinistra legionaria”.

¹²² Certainly, as Salaris has demonstrated, the strategic use of irony is a hallmark of many avant-garde movements throughout the 20th century. More often than not, it’s use also lines up with the more left-wing moments in the histories of such movements, in particular the Futurists. Michael Ledeen describes Keller as a “true contemporary of the Dadaists” for his daring and at times bizarre public undertakings. Umberto Carpi characterizes the *Yoga* group as part of an “estrema avanguardia “ (Salaris 48-9; Ledeen 143-45); See also Umberto Carpi, *L’estrema avanguardia del Novecento* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985): 68-9.

manifestation of the individual subject's being by emphasizing primitive, intuitive, or "natural" modes of expression outside of traditional moral categories.

The role of eastern mysticism, often evident in practices of bodily awareness such as nudism or drug-induced sensory experiences, links movements like the *associazione Yoga* to currents of modernist thought that idealize a return to pre-societal forms of living. The appeal to spiritual harmony involves the construction of a sense of organic wholeness that transcends the body while becoming part of a new, more pure one that is both reflective of artistic modernism and the anti-modern politics of utopianism.¹²³ These are more often than not modeled on a kind of orientaling logic of the transcendent, that misinterprets eastern religious practices as forms of communal life that deconstruct western, bourgeois individualism. Such are the basic tenets of *Yoga* as described in the manifesto *Fondazione a Fiume della Yoga*:

Yoga=unione! Unione di che cosa? Dei nostri principi umani che sono differenziati dalle nostre statiche ovagrigiastre perplessità di artificiosi costruttori di più o meno idiote *tavole di valore* allo scopo d'insegnamento di quell volapuk delle passion che è chiamato MORALE...

Un certo numero di spregiudicati fiumani si riuniscono per iniziare una potente lotta contro le persone, lotta che sarà vinta dagli individui.

Cercano di dare sfogo alla loro intuizione artistic letteraria morale eccetra. E di orientare tutto il movimento contro il dottrume: [...] Contro tutti i limiti di spazio e di tempo. Ben inteso: tempo passato e tempo futuro!!!

Decidono questi sciagurati che vogliono guarire l'epidermide terrestre dalla noiosa malattia dermosifilopatica chiamata UOMO PERSONALE, decidono questi patrocinatori del SUPERUOMO, questa gente libera dalla modestia (=orgoglio di essere modesti come tutti gli atipaticissimi genii) [...]

Decidono di dare ad ognuno la responsabilità della creazione del Superuomo cioè di esseri sempre meglio adatti all'ambiente, più fluidi più sviluppati negli infiniti organi latent in noi [...]¹²⁴

From the outset the attempt to devise an alternative mode of social life that disassociates the self from embodied reality, structured as it is by artificial processes of signification be they moral, juridical, or physical. The "volapuk delle passioni" counters the unbiased, open-mindedness of the legionnaires who have given themselves to a kind of sociality based on expressive dynamism, the only cure for the infected carapace of the earth.¹²⁵ The rejection of the personal, the particular, and its substitution with the

¹²³ Ledeen links *Yoga* founder Guido Keller to a strain of anti-modern, naturalist German social movements such as the *Wandervogel*. Such groups promoted utopian visions of organic harmony that emphasized the natural beauty of the body as a metaphor for social balance. The critic Willfrid van der Will has shown the deep-seeded links between the propaganda of these movements and the political propaganda of fascist organizations, particularly the Nazis (20-21).

¹²⁴ The manifesto is cited in Gerra, *L'impresa di Fiume*, cit., 482-83; Salaris, *Alla Festa della rivoluzione*, cit., 51-2.

¹²⁵ The reference to Volapük is interesting because it reinforces the group's opposition to the artificiality of social mores and moral values, but by likening them to an artificial language developed in order to

“superuomo”, now understood as a multiplicity of beings fused together by common sentiment produces a subject defined by a system of relations with concepts and objects rather than by time, space, or materiality:

Chi sono I component della Yoga? Uomini in buona fede, d’Arte, di scienza, privi di pregiudizi, privi di senso di arrivismo personale, convinti che la mentalità concreta distrugge la Realtà artistica, e decidono perciò dotati di senso analogico metafisico, di senso di unità, di non forma, di distruggere il distruttore, di orientarsi verso il Sublime matematico-artistico (matematico in senso largo della parola). Sublime comprendente alla sua volta il Sublime dinamico creatore del Bello!¹²⁶

This is the same disarticulating strategy that we saw in the previous chapter, operating in the space between creation and destruction so as to project both as elements of a single dynamic potentiality (i.e. Fiume) that is opposed to static placidity (i.e. dominant state and civic institutions, i.e. Nitti). D’Annunzio projects the agonistic quality of social relations outward however, in the Fiuman model, be it in the principles of the Associazione Yoga, or the popular addresses. It thus glosses over issues of class, race, and (to a lesser extent) gender, while setting internal social anxieties on the international stage as a struggle between oppressed peoples and oppressive governments. The disembodied community is thus omnipresent and eternal. It is able to exist within the borders of the nation, because it is defined as a body politic whose form has been corrupted, mutilated, and outside of the nation because it is no longer tied to the structural integrity of the nation to survive. It becomes a body of “infiniti organi latenti”, lacking in form, but not in unity.

By December of 1920, the ability of the legionnaires to hold onto the city had faltered as the result of a lack of resources brought on by the blockade of the port of Fiume by the Italian navy, and a dwindling base of support for D’Annunzio and his command. The signing of the Treaty of Rapallo on November 12th, 1920 guaranteed the independence of Fiume in exchange for Yugoslavian control of important areas surrounding the port. Though undercutting the city’s primary means of financial stability, the majority of the population grudgingly accepted the terms in order to begin the transition back to normal city life after fifteen months of occupation (Ercolani 113). The refusal by D’Annunzio to accept the treaty without the recognition of the legitimacy of the *Reggenza Italiana del Carnaro* underscored the dichotomy between the desires of the city’s autonomist inhabitants and the reality of the political system controlled by D’Annunzio and the legionnaires.¹²⁷

promote the same values of universality that Yoga purports to promote. Developed by Johann Martin Schleyer in 1879-80, Volapük combined elements of French, German and English to create an operational language not dissimilar to modern-day Esperanto. See: Klas August Linderfelt, *Volapük: An Easy Method of Acquiring the Universal Language Constructed by Johann Martin Schleyer* (Milwaukee: Caspar, 1888).

¹²⁶ Reprinted in Gerra, 483.

¹²⁷ Perhaps the figure who most embodied the autonomist position at Fiume in opposition to the political model represented by D’Annunzio and the legionnaires is Riccardo Zanella. As the leader of the pro-independence movement Zanella represented, as the historian Giovanni Dalma writes, those who saw in Fiume “un episodio importante della lotta per i principi della libertà, della democrazia e del progresso sociale, una posizione da difendere ad ogni costo contro le forze irrazionali del totalitarismo nazionalista”. See Giovanni Dalma, “Testimonianze su Fiume e Riccardo Zanella”, in *Fiume. Rivista di studi fiumani*,

The forceful expulsion of the legionnaires over the span of five days in late December, known as the *natale di sangue*, follows the collapse of the cosmopolitan nationalism that runs throughout D'Annunzio's rhetoric, and the dissolution of the post-liberal body politic that it produces. Prior to the expulsion, D'Annunzio delivered a speech entitled "Un uomo è perduto, un uomo resta", in which the mutilated subject D'Annunzio constructs is identified not as the city, but as D'Annunzio himself:

Per Fiume, per le isole, per la Dalmazia, noi otterremo tutto quell che è giusto. Ma, se questo non potessimo ottenere, se non potessimo superare l'iniquità degli uomini e l'avversità delle sorti, io vi dico sul mio onore di soldato e di marinaio italiano che tra l'Italia e Fiume, tra l'Italia e le isole, tra l'Italia e la Dalmazia resterà per sempre il mio corpo sanguinante.¹²⁸

The use of the future tense returns D'Annunzio to a traditional mode of representing the nation. Where the *Reggenza del Carnaro* represented the infinite present achieved in the transcendence of spirit over form, the notion of a victory to come, of results that *will* be obtained re-temporalizes the struggle. The immaterial flesh of the post-liberal body politic reverts to the physical body of the mutilated soldier, ultimately situating the dannunzian subject between an unstable liberalism and a burgeoning totalitarianism.

no.2, (Oct., 1981):1-26. On the opposition to the legionnaire's movement at Fiume see: Amleto Ballarini, *L'antidannunzio a Fiume - Riccardo Zanella* (Trieste: Edizioni Italo Svevo, 1995).

¹²⁸ Gabriele D'Annunzio, "Un uomo è perduto, un uomo resta", in *La penultima ventura. Scritti e discorsi fiumani*, Ed. Renzo De Felice (Milan: Mondadori, 1974) 407.

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