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THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE:
MUSIL, SVEVO, JOYCE
AND THE LITERARY INVENTION OF A POSTCOLONIAL COMMUNITY

by

SALVATORE PAPPALARDO

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School – New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

Written Under the direction of

Professor Fatima Naqvi

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

MAY, 2011

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The United States of Europe:

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By SALVATORE PAPPALARDO

Dissertation Director:

Professor Fatima Naqvi

This dissertation is a comparative study of literary Europeanism in the late-Habsburg Empire. The biographies and aesthetic projects of Robert Musil, Italo Svevo and James Joyce are deeply embedded in the multinational fabric of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and their novels become part of what might be defined as a “transnational Habsburg literary canon.” Their works create a highly politicized, fictional projection of multicultural Austria—and by extension, of a multicultural Europe—anchored in the polyglot border town Trieste. The primary texts I examine are Musil’s *The Man without Qualities* (*Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*), published between 1930 and 1942, Svevo’s 1923 novel *Zeno’s Conscience* (*La Coscienza di Zeno*), and Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* of 1939.

I read these texts against the background of Austrian history and in combination with current theoretical debates on nationalism. I argue that the origins of a cultural and political Europeanism in the Habsburg Empire can be traced back to forms of early modern regional patriotism, which was divorced from national identity and characterized by loyalty to the local

traditions of linguistically and culturally heterogeneous territories or cities. The rise of nationalism in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions largely replaced these earlier forms of regional allegiance. I examine the survival of vestigial remnants of this pre-national logic in the literary representations of Trieste, a city at the crossroads of German, Italian and Slovene cultures. The high modernist fiction of Musil, Svevo and Joyce conjures an image of Trieste as a microcosm of the multinational empire and an urban experiment of a future United States of Europe. Their fictional characters not only subscribe to a cultural and political Europeanism, but refuse, through their flexible loyalties and shifting allegiances, to fully commit to the concept of nation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this dissertation has been a journey of self-discovery. It has been, among many other things, an attempt to make sense of my own experience. I was looking for answers to many questions about my multicultural upbringing and about the meaning of European identity.

I grew up as the son of Italian immigrants to Germany, speaking Sicilian at home and the Southern German dialect of Baden at school and with my friends. As a result, I feel at home in both Italian and German, as well as in the dialects and regional cultures in which I grew up. I started thinking about Europe when I was a teenager, when it was not always easy to define oneself. Trieste, where I went to college, was the ideal habitat for me: an Italian city with solid roots in the German-speaking world, which is also home to a large Slovene community. Living and studying there was an important step in getting to know myself.

I would like to thank all the people that have helped and encouraged me along the process of this dissertation. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Fatima Naqvi, the best *Doktormutter* I can imagine. She has guided me with her exemplary scholarship and dedication as a teacher, with great generosity and warmth, unfaltering optimism and an uplifting sense of humor. I would also like to thank my committee: Professors Paola Gambarota, Elizabeth Leake and Jean-Michel Rabaté. All four professors have provided me with constant support, generous encouragement, and challenging criticism. Among the many things they have taught me is the fact that getting a doctorate is a lot of hard work, but also a lot of fun to share, enjoy and celebrate.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Elin Diamond, for her constant support and encouragement as Director of Comparative Literature at Rutgers. I would like to thank her for everything she has done for Comparative Literature in all these years. My deep

gratitude also goes to Professor Richard Serrano, who welcomed me to the Program and to the Rutgers community. *Grazie mille* also to Professor Alessandro Vettori, who taught and guided me as Acting Director of the Program.

I would like to thank Uri Eisenzweig and the Transliterations Project for the very generous support during my graduate studies. The fellowship provided me with the time to read and research, as well as the opportunity to gain invaluable teaching experience. I would also like to thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the generous support of my research. A research summer grant and a Dissertation Completion Fellowship have helped me tremendously in this project.

I would like to thank the German and Italian departments at Rutgers, who have very generously welcomed and adopted me, each providing an additional home for me. In the German Department I would like to thank Martha Helfer, Nicholas Rennie, Michael Levine, and Peter Demetz. In the Italian Department my gratitude goes to Laura Sanguineti White, Andrea Baldi, and David Marsh. In Comparative Literature I would like to thank Janet Walker, Andrew Parker, César Braga-Pinto, Jorge Marcone, Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel, and Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregi. I would also like to thank Timothy Martin, from the English Department at Rutgers Camden. In Italy, I would like to thank Giuseppina Restivo and John McCourt for encouraging me to pursue my graduate studies in the United States.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow graduate students at Rutgers, from Comparative Literature and other disciplines. I would like to thank especially Roberto Nicosia, Maria Kager and Lara Santoro.

Parts of this dissertation have been accepted for publication and are forthcoming in 2011. A section of my third chapter will appear as “Waking Europa: Joyce, Ferrero, and the Metamorphosis of Irish History” in the Winter 2011 issue of the *Journal of Modern Literature*. Parts of my conclusion will appear as “Dockings on *Danubio*: Claudio Magris and the Rhetoric of Submerged Europe” in a volume of essays *Re-Mapping Europe: History, Memory, Identity in Claudio Magris’s Narratives and Plays* edited by Sandra Parmegiani and published by the University of Toronto Press.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Elizabeth. She has helped, encouraged and supported me in every possible way. Her emotional support, intellectual challenge, and loving generosity are the backbone of this dissertation.

This dissertation is also dedicated to Hector, who has been physically, emotionally and playfully present at every stage of my writing.

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Introduction

At the outbreak of World War I, a remarkable diversity and mixture of languages, local cultures and religions characterized the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire. The imperial provinces extended over a vast territory that today includes the modern states of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro. With the formation of nation-states in Central Europe, literary works from this heterogeneous area began to be studied within the compartments of national literary traditions. The empire has consequently been perceived as a fragmented space, containing a variegated mosaic of national literatures. Nevertheless, the multilingualism of the Habsburg Empire should not be considered a challenge to its literary cohesion: a thematic unity within a multiethnic and polyglot context can be found in Habsburg literature, which invites comparative approaches. One reason for a comparative study is, among many others, the presence of consistent concerns that emerge from the very multiplicity of languages. An important topic of this Habsburg literary culture that crosses linguistic and national boundaries is the conceptualization of Europe. Europe and the theorization of a European persona is a crucial *topos* in a common literary culture that extends well beyond the crumbling of the empire and continues in the (also problematic) memorialization of its legacy.

A transnational Habsburg literary canon presents the idea of Europe as a central topic. Inherent in the canon is a debate about the coexistence of the diverse ethno-linguistic groups and conceives of a future United States of Europe as the democratic continuation of the multicultural and multilingual empire. Authors of this multilingual

canon combine their literary interrogations of the empire's European mission with reflections on their own mixed background and multiple allegiances to different linguistic, cultural and religious communities. An explicitly theorized Habsburg Europeanism can be observed in the texts of eighteenth-century authors such as Caroline Pichler; late-nineteenth-century pacifist Bertha von Suttner; German Austrian modernists such as Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Austro-Czech novelist Franz Kafka; Italian turn-of-the-century writers of Slovene origin like Scipio Slataper and Giani Stuparich; Italian Dalmatian linguist and essayist Niccolò Tommaseo; and twentieth-century authors that explore the memory of the Habsburg Empire after World War II. Among these authors figure the German Austrian Ingeborg Bachmann, the Triestine novelist Claudio Magris, Franco-Czech writer Milan Kundera, and the Slovenian author and essayist Drago Jančar. This list is by no means exhaustive, but shows how heterogeneous the Habsburg canon is.

In this dissertation I explore the Europeanism of Robert Musil, Italo Svevo and James Joyce. The biographies and aesthetic projects of these authors are deeply embedded in the multinational fabric of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Their works create a highly politicized, fictional projection of multicultural Austria—and by extension, of a multicultural Europe—anchored in the polyglot border town of Trieste. The primary texts I examine are Musil's *The Man without Qualities* (*Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*), published between 1930 and 1942, Svevo's 1923 novel *Zeno's Conscience* (*La Coscienza di Zeno*), and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* of 1939.

The choice of these three very different authors is dictated by specific motivations. First, the analysis of their work provides a theoretical vocabulary that can

conceptualize, against nationalist readings of Central Europe, cultural integrity in an area characterized by linguistic multiplicity. A discussion of the literary strategies employed by Musil, Svevo and Joyce, combined with recent historiography and studies on nationalism, will show how the literary representation of Habsburg Trieste becomes a metaphor for a European community. The example of the Adriatic city illustrates how the multiethnic regionalism in the empire constituted a subversive element in the construction of monolithic national ideologies and the emergence of the nation-state.

The chapter on Musil provides a theoretical foundation for the European of Habsburg origin. While his writings exemplify the crisis of the modern subject, they simultaneously theorize the emergence of an Austro-European identity. Musil's subject is hollow and does not express preordained natural qualities. Only the concentration and the intersection of social forces determine the subject's individuality. As a result, Musil's European is not an essentialist identity originating from within the subject. Musil's identity is European by virtue of the external and contingent socio-historic conditions in the multiethnic empire that permeate the subject's empty inner space.

Musil's novel also offers insights into the unique role that Trieste played in the Austrian literary imaginary, an aspect that has not been sufficiently studied. By exploring the close relationship of the old Austrian aristocracy to the Adriatic city, Musil shows how the rise of Italian nationalism in Trieste signifies the end of the empire's pre-national mentality. This paradigm shift is so forceful that even the internationalism of the Trieste mercantile bourgeoisie succumbs to German economic protectionism.

In many respects, the protagonist of Svevo's novel *Zeno* resembles the characters of Musil's narrative. Sharing the lack of qualities of Musil's protagonist Ulrich and the

Triestine mercantilism of the character Leo Fischel, Zeno suffers the social pressure exercised by Italian cultural nationalism. In the novel, Irredentism is invested in aligning the local international traditions of Habsburg Trieste with the national culture of the Italian kingdom. The language philosophy of Antonio Gramsci is useful in illustrating the hegemonic pressure of the Italian standard language over the “spontaneous grammar” spoken by the dialectophone characters.

In addition, the chapter on Svevo seeks to reposition the Triestine author on the map of European literature. Against traditional scholarship, I emphasize Svevo’s liminal status as an Austrian subject writing in Italian, rather than viewing him as an exclusively Italian author. In addition to an examination of his novel, an analysis of his shorter fiction and critical writings reveals the cautiously hidden agenda of a cultural politics supporting a Europe of regions, rather than nations, in which Habsburg Trieste can preserve its multiethnic character.

The presence of James Joyce demonstrates how openly I conceive of the Habsburg literary canon. By placing the Irish novelist in an Austrian context, I follow the direction of Joyce scholars, who in the last decade have emphasized the profound debt his works owes to his stay in Trieste. In particular, the polyglot pastiche and semantic cross-fertilizations of *Finnegans Wake* echo the extraordinary linguistic diversity of Habsburg Trieste. By rewriting Ovid’s mythological tale of Europa’s abduction, Joyce asks the uncomfortable question of what it means to identify a foundational myth of European civilization in the rape of a woman. Punning on the Phoenician etymology of the term “Europe,” Joyce construes the European project as both a male and colonial gaze onto the

feminine and ethno-linguistic other, and a vision for a democratic and anti-colonial future.

In this introductory chapter I will provide a critical lens through which we can read the following chapters on Musil, Svevo and Joyce. Once I discuss the survival of a pre-national logic in the form of what historians call *Landespatriotismus*, I claim that an urban variant of this local loyalty is recognizable in the municipal consciousness of Habsburg Trieste. After tracing a brief history of the Adriatic city, I will turn to a discussion of Claudio Magris's notion of the Habsburg myth. The application of this myth to the multicultural character of the city will help assess the relevance of Habsburg Trieste in the literary constructions of an anti-national Europe. Out of this literary and historiographic context I will define the theoretical vocabulary of my investigation, focusing on the key concepts of metropolitan *Landespatriotismus*, "glottopolitics," Trojan Nationalism and the epistemology of the vernacular.

The Literary Invention of Europe: Habsburg Trieste between *Landespatriotismus* and Trojan Nationalism

I argue that the origins of a cultural and political Europeanism in the Habsburg Empire can be traced back to forms of *Landespatriotismus*, an early modern regional patriotism divorced from national identity and characterized by loyalty to the local traditions of linguistically and culturally heterogeneous territories or cities. In both rural and urban areas of the empire, bi- and multilingualism, intermarriage, and opportunity for upward social mobility determined a general indifference to national identity. Historians agree that after the 1848-49 revolutions the emergence of a more virulent ethnic and

linguistic nationalism largely replaced these forms of regional patriotism.¹ I examine the survival of vestigial remnants of this pre-national logic in the literary representations of border town Trieste, a city at the crossroad of German, Italian and Slovenian cultures.² The high modernist fiction of Musil, Svevo and Joyce conjures an image of Trieste as a microcosm of the multinational empire and an urban experiment of a future United States of Europe.³ Their fictional characters not only subscribe to a cultural and political

¹ For the historiography of the Habsburg Empire I consulted classics such as Robert Kann's *The Multinational Empire*, Oscar Jászi's *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, and A.J.P. Taylor's *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918*. For more recent books, see Charles Ingrao's *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815* and Pieter Judson's *Exclusive Revolutionaries*.

² The Triestine writer and essayist Scipio Slataper (1888-1915) becomes a spokesperson for the municipal transnationalism of Trieste. In a letter dated February 8, 1912 he writes: "Trieste is my country (*patria*). Every day I discover in me more of Trieste" (424-425). Notice the urban *Landespatriotismus* of this brief passage. Trieste is his *patria*, his homeland. He employs a term that is usually used in the description of a country. Slataper also attributes a precise mission to his native Trieste: "I clearly see that the historical task of Trieste is to be a crucible and a promoter of civilization, of three civilizations in particular. It is wonderful and it makes me almost dizzy to think that in our little corner of Europe we are faced with the forces and the most pressing problems of the Western world today: Germanism and Slavism, the Balkan question, commercial hegemony, Austrian future – and Italian character" (*Scritti politici* 168). Slataper saw this multi-cultural composition not only in the fabric of the city, but also at the level of the individual. In an often-quoted letter to his wife Gigetta, Slataper comments on his own multi-cultural background: "You know that I am Slav, German and Italian" (*Alle Tre Amiche* 421). The question that arises concerns the relationship between these three ethnic groups. Slataper's family was of Slovenian origin (hence the name) and so one would think the order of ethnic groups is listed in order of importance. Given, though, that Slataper writes in Italian, the order might be following the logic of a climactic ascendance.

³ Umberto Saba, Scipio Slataper and G. Stuparich were among the main Triestine contributors to the magazine *La Voce* (1908-1916), founded and edited by Giuseppe Prezzolini. On the pages of the review, the Triestine writers argued that the Adriatic city should play the role of intercultural mediator among the ethnic groups in Habsburg Trieste. The group of *Vocianti* in Trieste was arranging for a publication entitled "Europa," aimed at collecting studies of continental cultures. The idea was never realized. The first issue was planned to come out in 1914, but the outbreak of World War I put an abrupt end to the project. Giani Stuparich (1891-1961) publishes his autobiography *Trieste nei miei ricordi* in 1948. After the experience of the two world wars, Stuparich offers an account of Habsburg Trieste through his personal memories. His autobiographical narrative shows many common traits with Stefan Zweig's *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. Stuparich writes: "Of what magnificent mixtures Trieste has been capable. She found Europe here, in this Italian climate and Italy at the center of Europe. Trieste was a city in which European minds like Riccarda Huch and Julius Kugy and universal spirits like James Joyce became Italianized" (9). He continues emphasizing how "in order to become European, the Italian mind has to pass through Trieste" (32-33). The translations from Slataper and Stuparich are mine.

Europeanism, but refuse, through their flexible loyalties and shifting allegiances, to fully commit to the concept of nation.⁴

In his study *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* the historian Pieter Judson offers a lucid analysis that illustrates this regional attachment divorced from national affiliation. Although he never explicitly uses the term *Landespatriotismus*, his book provides ample evidence of the social dynamics underlying this non-national sense of belonging. Judson shows how nationalists in the late-Habsburg Empire manipulated local social conflicts in German and Czech bilingual rural areas into battles between allegedly hostile national groups. Through pamphlets and local newspapers nationalist associations constructed a public narrative that framed quotidian skirmishes among inhabitants in terms of national conflicts, placing speakers of different languages into separate national groups. These accounts ignored the multiple attachments of bilingual speakers and families. Judson takes issue with the concepts of language frontier and endangered border culture, claiming that such concepts were the creation of a successful nationalist rhetoric. For national activists, these linguistically heterogeneous areas became ideological battlefields. The bilingual inhabitants, often at home in different cultural and religious contexts, were on the contrary largely indifferent to national identification.

According to the historian, the successful strategies by which 19th century nationalists associated language use with national affiliation enjoy much currency even today, influencing the way modern studies of nationalism are conducted. Judson laments that “studies of nationalism, for all their gestures to constructedness, [continue S.P.] to

⁴ For a study of diverging loyalties in the Habsburg Empire see the collection of essays *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, edited by Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky.

treat nations as real entities” (6). While we recognize that that nations are “imagined communities,” to use Benedict Anderson’s felicitous expression, historians generally tend to view nations as natural when it comes to the study of ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous areas. Judson insightfully continues to point out that

Even historians and social scientists who study frontier regions today can find few adequate terms that treat the experience of their inhabitants as somehow normal rather than exceptional . . . This line of thinking shares with nationalist activists a belief that differences in language use constituted a significant basis for self-identification among people who lived in linguistically mixed regions. (21)

This methodological paradigm invites revisionist interpretations of linguistically and ethnically diverse regions and, in particular, of the last decades of the Habsburg Empire. In fact, the major suggestion of Judson’s book is that we do not relegate non-national phenomena such as Habsburg *Landespatriotismus* to a pre-modern era, specifically to the period preceding 1848, but see how its effects well extend into the early 20th century. In the last decades of the Habsburg Empire, the rise of nationalism did not abruptly supplant non-national affiliations, but coexisted with a non-national sense of belonging. As Judson puts it, “Phenomena such as bilingualism, apparent indifference to national identity, and nationally opportunist behaviors expressed the fundamental logic of local cultures in multilingual regions, a logic that neither nationalist activism nor so-called modernization processes were capable of destroying” (3). National affiliations were certainly defined by ideas of ethnic and linguistic communality, but also by social customs such as religious affiliations, intermarriage, friendships, or even more prosaic and contingent circumstances, such as which particular tavern one frequented. Judson also shows how difficult it is to identify national attachments that often were in flux,

changing according to contingent circumstances and opportunities of upward social mobility:

Many other bilingual individuals and families rejected even a rudimentary national identity, preferring to name themselves according to their region or religion and vacillating from year to year when required to report a single language in the imperial census. As we have seen in earlier chapters, nationalists angrily accused such “hermaphrodites” of opportunistic side switching even as they competed to draw the offenders into their own national communities. (102)

While Judson offers a comprehensive picture of non-national loyalties and attachments, other historians discuss how regional patriotism in the Habsburg Empire was perceived especially in the immediate aftermath of World War I. As late as 1920, residues of this pre-national logic in the empire still baffled political analysts. In her book *Paris 1919*, a study of the Peace Conference that led to the Treaty of Versailles, the historian Margaret MacMillan offers an illuminating anecdote. She illustrates the diplomatic efforts of American president Woodrow Wilson who attempted to ensure that all nations enjoyed the right to self-determination. Wilson had famously suggested a reorganization of Europe in his Fourteen Points. He offered, however, a vague definition of the principle of national self-determination, which required diplomats and political scientists to examine the possibility of its practical application. The questions that needed to be addressed were manifold. How should borders between these nations be drawn? How can the international community determine who belongs to what nation? Who has the right to vote if questions of nationality were to be solved by democratic election? In particular, Macmillan describes Central Europe as “a protean world of shifting allegiances” (207). For international observers one quite unexpected hurdle in the geopolitical emancipation of nations under former Habsburg rule was the frequent lack of national identification. She reports the following reactions from Central European

territories, where “a modern ethnic nationalism superimposed itself on an older, different world” (240):

And what if the locals did not know which nation they belonged to? In 1920, when an outside investigator asked a peasant in Belarus, on the frontier where Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Byelorussians and Ukrainians all mingled, who he was, the only answer that came back was “I am a Catholic of these parts.” What do you do, asked American experts in Carinthia in the Austrian Alps, when you have people “who do not want to join the nation of their blood-brothers, or else are absolutely indifferent to all national questions?” (12)

For all its anecdotal character, the passage offers at least a partial indication about *Landespatriotismus* and national indifference in rural Central Europe. In the two brief examples, the complete lack of concern with the nation is explained by religious affiliation, rather than language or ethnicity, that functions as an identity marker. The inhabitants of the Habsburg Empire were divided by their religious denominations: Roman Catholics, Protestants and Ashkenazi Jews in the West, Jewish communities and Christian Orthodox in the East, and Islam in the South and in former territories of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the individual identifies with the immediate territorial surroundings (“from these parts”), asserting a sense of belonging not to an imagined nation, but to a tangible and geographically restricted area.

This lack of national identification was widespread also in other former Habsburg territories. In the effort of re-mapping Central Europe, international diplomacy was presented with the challenge of drawing national borders around populations previously unresponsive to the propaganda of nationalist ideology. Macmillan reports the difficulties in the foundation of Yugoslavia that was to include southern Slavs such as Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, associated by cognate languages, but distrustful of each other after centuries of cultural and religious diversification: “The practice of defining oneself by

nationality was so new that many inhabitants of the Balkans still thought of themselves primarily in terms of their region or clan or, as they had done under the Turks, of their religion” (123). Finally, despite the identification with separate regional cultures, a kingdom uniting these populations was proclaimed in the name of ethnic proximity.

German Austrians were certainly no exception to this general tendency. During the war and in its aftermath, Austria lacked a strong sense of nationalism. Always integrally connected to other Habsburg provinces, Austria’s statehood was a quirky historical novelty. This explains the allure of political unification with Germany, a topic to which we will return in the Musil chapter.

Judson and MacMillan’s examples of *Landespatriotismus* are mainly taken from rural areas of the Habsburg Empire. In expanding this discussion, I argue that one can observe an urban form of *Landespatriotismus* in the municipal context of Habsburg Trieste. While loyalty to a local culture has been associated with ethnically diverse civic contexts – one thinks of Kafka’s Czech-German Prague – the history and literature of Trieste are usually placed in an exclusively Italian cultural tradition. Historians and literary historians alike have generally dismissed the trilingual *Landespatriotismus* in Trieste, underscoring vehemently the Italian character of the Adriatic city. An alternative approach to the question has, however, gained ground in recent years. In his book *Fra Nazione e Impero. Trieste, gli Absburgo, la Mitteleuropa* the historian Angelo Ara describes the complex relationship between Trieste and the Habsburg Empire. In a chapter dedicated to the Italian presence in the Austrian monarchy between 1850 and 1918, Ara underscores that in these years “the consensus or at least neutrality towards the Habsburg state is much more widespread than [the Italian] nationalist ‘mythology’ has

claimed in the past” (266).⁵ Ara’s harsh critique demotes Italian nationalist historiography on Trieste, heavily influenced by the Fascist appropriation of the *Risorgimento*, to mere mythology.

In her article “Trieste, 1830-70: From Cosmopolitanism to the Nation” Anna Milo offers an explanation of the metropolitan consciousness developed in Habsburg Trieste and its unique character articulated in multiple allegiances. The historian sees the upper class of the urban center as divided between Austrian loyalism and Italian separatism:

The specific, international character of the port, the concrete interventions by the Austrian state to sustain its position, the close collaboration between Triestine businessmen and the Habsburg administration, the degree of municipal autonomy accorded by the central government – all these factors help explain the substantial consensus around the assertion of a “Triestine” identity combined with allegiance to Austrian institutions. (77-78)

Her contribution is part of a collection of essays entitled *Different Paths to the Nation: Regional and National Identities in Central Europe and Italy, 1830-1870*, that features recent studies on multi-national regionalism in the Habsburg Empire.⁶ The coexistence and competition of regional, national and cosmopolitan allegiances in the Habsburg Empire is now the general consensus in studies pertaining to central Europe.

The Habsburg Myth in Trieste: Imperial Nostalgia or European Utopia?

The reason for this understanding can be found in the history of Trieste. After tracing a brief history of the city, I will show how the historiographic approaches

⁵ All translations from German and Italian are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

⁶ In the same collection Dominique Reill published the study “A Mission of Mediation: Dalmatia’s Multi-national Regionalism from the 1830s-1860s” in which she traces the development of a regional cosmopolitanism that is comparable to the situation in Trieste.

discussed above relate to current literary debates on Habsburg internal colonialism and Magris's concept of the Habsburg myth in Austrian literature.

For most of its modern history – from 1382 to 1918 – Trieste was under the imperial authority of the Habsburg Empire. The only major commercial seaport in the entire empire, Trieste held a privileged, pivotal status in the Austrian economy. The city on the Adriatic flourished under Habsburg rule and became “the fourth most important city of the Empire after Vienna, Budapest and Prague” (Schächter 6). In order to understand the strong allegiance of the Triestine bourgeoisie to the empire, it is important to note that the prosperity of the city did not spring from a spontaneous economic development, but was artificially created as the result of precise economic and political choices made by the Austrian government.

In 1382 Trieste, still a small fisher town, subjected itself voluntarily to the rule of the Habsburg monarchy to escape the aggressive expansionist politics of the growing sea power Venice. Emperor Charles VI gave the first major boost to the economy of the city in 1719. The ruler granted Trieste the status of free port, supporting the settlement of merchants from all over Europe in the city and allowing the growth of a merchant class. In 1782, Emperor Joseph II promulgated the Edict of Tolerance, promoting the integration of ethnic minorities in the empire. As a result, a flourishing Jewish community settled in the city, soon occupying positions as merchants and bankers. Under Maria Theresia and Joseph II, the Habsburgs expanded the city with an ambitious project of inner-city development, introducing new urban segments and modern infrastructure to the medieval centre of the town. These neighbourhoods are still known as the *borgo teresiano* and *borgo giuseppino* today.

Enjoying an ever-growing prosperity under Habsburg rule, Trieste came to fully realize how its wealth depended on Austrian policy when the city was under Napoleonic occupation between 1809 and 1814. The French regime ended the free port status and the ensuing restrictions on commerce made it clear that Trieste could not maintain its economic status without Austrian leadership. As Anna Millo puts it: “Napoleonic occupation had taught a sharp lesson: the city did not have the capacity to sustain its port-based economy on its own. The connection to Austria was thus viewed as essential to Trieste’s very existence” (66). Over the next 100 years, this realization had a profound impact on the relationship between Trieste and Austria, down to the outbreak of World War I.

Because of this economic privilege, Trieste declared itself loyal to the crown during the 1848-49 revolutions, earning the honorific title of *urbs fidelissima*, most faithful city. In October 1849 the city was given the status of *Reichsunmittelbare Stadt*, “meaning it was answerable directly to the authority of the central government, without any intervening level of administration. In that it made the city the equivalent of a province both in terms of administration and political representation” (Millo 70). The concession of bureaucratic posts to Italians in Trieste made the inhabitants feel they were an active part of the official administration and they enjoyed ample local autonomy. Paradoxically, the Italian state employees later lead the nationalist protest demanding more rights. At this point in time, however, neither the Habsburg administration nor the Italians in Trieste were concerned about nationalism in the Adriatic city. The historian A.J.P. Taylor comments on the Austrian policy that supported an involvement of the local

population in city government: “It occurred to no one, not even the Italians, that Trieste ... would one day be claimed by Italian nationalists” (164).

The opening of the *Südbahn*, or Southern Railway, that connected the city to Vienna in 1857 changed the role of Trieste from international emporium to transit port, making of the city the essential provider of imported goods of the empire. The direct railway connection with the Austrian capital also assumed a highly symbolic value. The bond between Vienna and Trieste was now solid, physically present and difficult to sever.

This physical and symbolic connection would prove strong over time. In fact, while the bulk of historiography is invested in studying the relationship between Trieste and Italy, it is equally important to emphasize the role of the Adriatic city within the social and political imaginary of the German Austrian establishment. In Musil’s novel, we will see how the Austrian aristocracy considers Trieste an indissoluble part of the imperial territories. The strong bond between the Austrian administration and Trieste was certainly dictated by strategic, political and economic considerations, but also by an emotional affection. Even when, during World War I, when the dismemberment of the empire was well under way and recognized as inevitable, Austria did not want to relinquish its loyal city until the very end. Taylor reports how in 1915 the Austrians were coming to terms with the loss of its imperial provinces:

Even now the German Austrians, though practically at war with Italy and certainly not at peace with the Poles, were ready to recognize the claims of the “master races,” and proposed to cede Galicia to Poland, Dalmatia to Italy: by thus surrendering half a million South Slavs to Italy, they hoped to cheat Italy of the south Tyrol and Trieste. (234)

Austria was hoping to retain Trieste even after its dismemberment and the formation of a new geopolitical order in Central Europe.

Trieste as a whole benefited greatly from its advantaged commercial relationship with Vienna, but the microeconomic reality in the city did not provide equal prosperity among the diverse ethnic groups. The socioeconomic stratification in Trieste around the turn of the century was based on ethnic grounds. First, along with the Italian state employees, there was an Austrian administrative class of government clerks and public officials. In addition, Trieste had a large Italian middle class made up of merchants and entrepreneurs whose economic wealth allowed in some cases access to a local aristocratic elite. Following, there was a small (about 4% of the inhabitants), but active and prosperous Jewish Ashkenazi community that in 1912 was able to build a beautiful synagogue, which was to replace four smaller ones. The largest synagogue in Europe at that time, its construction was paid by generous donations from the local Jewish community (Schächter 47). Also, a lower class of day laborers and servants, mainly Slovenes but also Serbs and Croats, moved into the city from the rural *Hinterland*. Soon the Slovenes participated in the active cultural life of Trieste, opening an important cultural center. The different communities were very active publishing newspapers in their native languages. These groups were not self-contained, but intermarried. John McCourt in his biography of James Joyce's years in Trieste reminds us that next to the these main ethnic and linguistic groups, Trieste attracted and hosted at the same time Armenian, English, Spanish, Turkish, Sicilian, Maltese, German, Hungarian, Czech and Greek communities that continued to speak their native languages (51). Trieste, the "microcosm of the empire" (Morris 112) was "a living encyclopedia of cultures, nations and languages that had been assimilated by the city" (McCourt 52). The local city culture acted as a syncretic force for the many cultures of the empire. McCourt continues to

describe the different communities in Trieste in terms of manifold cultural connections, according to the logic of multiple attachments: “Despite close links with their home nations and the continued use of their native languages, especially in their homes, members of these ethnic groups all became Triestines and learned ... the local *lingua franca*, the dialect of *Triestino*, the linguistic glue that bound the city together” (51).

Trieste was a dialectophone community; the inhabitants of Trieste spoke the local dialect as their first language. Thanks to the demographic explosion of the 18th and 19th century, chiefly encouraged by the Habsburg policy of transforming the city into an international market place, the Triestine dialect integrated and assimilated much semantic material from the incoming linguistic communities. At the beginning of the 20th century *Triestino* was a hybrid speech, at the intersection between regional dialect with its roots in Venetian and an international, Esperanto-like language, capable of absorbing, and ultimately incorporating words, idioms and accents. Standard Italian, on the other hand, was an acquired speech, the language of letters. The language of the locals was a hybrid linguistic mixture, spoken in a culturally syncretic space.

Starting in the 1880s and 1890s, the vociferous nationalist organizations, numerically in the minority, framed the Italian situation in Trieste as one of exile from the newly united Italy. In parallel fashion, the interethnic encounter between Italians and other groups in the city was characterized by discrimination against minorities, fuelled by a growing anti-Slavic and anti-Semitic feeling. This essential syncretic nature of the Adriatic city is what makes Trieste “a city of paradox” (Schächter 5), a city fundamentally split between its Italian cultural heritage and its pro-Austrian pragmatic merchant mentality. Against the traditional *Risorgimento*-flavoured historiography that

reads the history of Trieste as a continuous struggle to be reunited with the Italian *madre patria*, acute critics such as Elizabeth Schächter has offered a more complex interpretation of Triestine allegiances. Schächter argues that “some historians now argue that the Triestines did not wish to relinquish the protection of Austria with whom they enjoyed ‘a peaceful and serene relationship’; that the Irredentist movement was but a minor event, ... that Irredentist histories of Trieste should be dismissed” (36). Habsburg Trieste was trapped in a double arrangement of cultural and political allegiances, where the Italian Triestines were keenly aware of the fact that their economic well-being depended on Austrian policy and that a connection to Italy would certainly fulfill the Romantic dream of national deliverance, but would at the same time imply a renunciation of their privileged economic status. It is precisely this paradoxical nature of Trieste, suspended between national aspirations and economic privileges that make the city, in the words of Jan Morris, an “allegory of limbo, in the secular sense of an indefinable hiatus” (Morris 20). Morris’s poetic definition is certainly compelling inasmuch as the concept of limbo suggests a certain indecisiveness amidst multiple ideological forces.

In recent years, a fruitful ramification of postcolonial studies has produced insights into the cultural politics of the Habsburg Empire, opening a debate on whether it is possible to study the Habsburg Empire alongside other colonial powers such as the British and French empires. In the Austrian context, so the argument goes, the colonies are not located overseas, but territorially contiguous, contained within the borders of the empire. These internal colonies are, from the German Austrian perspective, the hetero-ethnic and alloglot peripheries of the Habsburg Empire. Essay collections such as *Habsburg Postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis* and *Kakanien*

Revisited: Das Eigene und das Fremde (in) der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie

have taken up the challenge of comparative approaches between Austria and other empires. Historians such as Pieter Judson and Allison Frank show how the economic asymmetry that defines the colonial relationship between prosperous metropolitan centers and exploited peripheries does not apply easily to the Habsburg Empire. Local economies, driven by oil fields or seaports for instance, developed growth along with the capital Vienna. Literary historians, however, are more interested in a discursive colonialism and find a postcolonial approach to aesthetic questions and the literary representation very useful. In *Kakanien Revisited* Wolfgang Müller-Funk offers a concise description of colonial dynamics in literary representations:

The political, legal, cultural-symbolic disparity among European ethnic groups is not based on the dichotomy of Europe versus non-Europe, but along different parameters, that are also valid in the meeting between European and non-European cultures: the degree of industrial and technological development (“progress”), that in an inner European context moves along a West-East axis, in brief the whole complex that is called “civilization”: the opposition between Protestantism and Catholicism on one hand, Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy on the other hand; in the Central European context the difference between German and non-German.⁷ (20)

The postcolonial approach to Austrian literature finds in this relationship between German and non-German cultures fertile ground for further investigation. To that end, Clemens Ruthner invites us to read anew Claudio Magris’s notion of the “Habsburg myth” in modern Austrian literature. Although Magris’s *Il mito asburgico nella letteratura austriaca moderna* is quite old (the first edition dates back to distant 1963), Ruthner maintains that the study still preserves an important status in recent discussions about the discursive colonialism of German Austrian literature. With respects to Austria’s “small Orientalism“ (98), Ruthner suggests that “a new examination of Magris’s ideas is

⁷ My translation.

inevitable” (102). Ruthner’s assessment is certainly accurate inasmuch Magris defined the political and ideological function of the mythologizing process he describes. Ruthner interprets Magris’s Habsburg myth as the construction of a hegemonic elite whose literary self-representation obliterated the ethnic heterogeneity of the empire, in the name of a peaceful *felix Austria* (102).

With his study, Magris broke new ground in the understanding of nineteenth and twentieth century Austrian literature, offering a broad, panoramic view of literary expressions of what he defined as the Habsburg myth. As a powerful literary creation, the Habsburg myth is, according to Magris, the idyllic vision of an imperial past, and the nostalgic reconstruction of social and economic stability by an intellectual elite. Furthermore, it is “not the simple process of transfiguration of the real, typical of all poetic activity, but the complete substitution of a socio-historical reality with a fictional and illusory reality, the sublimation of a concrete society into a picturesque, safe and orderly world of fables” (15). Toward the end of his study Magris also dedicates a brief chapter to what he insightfully defines as “Austro-Europeanism” (296) and specifically as the “Habsburg Europeanism” of Stefan Zweig, Franz Theodor Csokor and Friedrich Schreyvogel (294-99). The works of these authors are invested in the nostalgic reflection of the Habsburg past as a model for a future European *Heimat*. Magris dismisses their Austro-Europeanism as motivated by a “vague Christian humanitas” constructing a “blurry and confused Europe” (296 and 297). Magris also offers chronological coordinates for the development of an Austro-Europeanism, recognizable in the late stage of the empire, precisely in the bittersweet agony of the *finis Austriae*: “The last phase of the Habsburg civilization appears to be comprised between two poles, between a

melancholic awareness of decline, endured with tacit dignity, and a lighthearted, operetta-like frivolity” (185), a frivolity that elsewhere David Luft has defined as “the passivity and value-emptiness of the gay apocalypse” (12).

Through the lens of critical categories that developed later, we can see how Magris’s acknowledgement of the political implications in the representation of the “world of yesterday” smoothly leads to a present interpretation of the Habsburg myth as a silencing of subaltern voices. To be sure, Magris returns to a similar topic in *Trieste: Un’identità di frontiera* of 1982, written together with the afore-mentioned historian Ara. Exposing the myth of a cosmopolitan and tolerant Trieste, the book constitutes a natural continuation of Magris’s more famous investigation of the Habsburg myth.

This study remains an essential contribution in the extensive critical production on the intellectual and literary history of Trieste. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Ara and Magris’s work was to confer upon Trieste the status of a “capital of world literature” (35).⁸ According to the authors, the reasons for bestowing upon a relatively small and peripheral city the dignity of a literary and cultural capital are manifold. One motivation resides in the city’s density of writers whose literary importance transcends local and national boundaries. In addition, the critics argue that as a city at the crossroad of German, Latin and Slavic populations, Trieste constitutes a microcosm of the Habsburg Empire (7). Ara and Magris illustrate how the local tensions among ethnic, linguistic and religious groups as well as the attempts of peaceful cohabitation and political collaboration were the symptoms of a larger state of affairs in the empire. By the

⁸ It is interesting to note that the German translation of the book, this cosmopolitan status of the city is strongly emphasized by the title, describing Trieste as a literary capital of Central Europe: *Triest. Eine literarische Hauptstadt von Mitteleuropa*.

same token, they caution against the enthusiastic celebration of Trieste as a place of multicultural tolerance and religious freedom: “The multinational culture of Trieste is, above all, an aspect of the elite ... it is the exception and not the rule” (19).

This discussion of the status of multicultural Trieste has returned to the forefront of current debates thanks to developing theories on transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. In this critical tradition, Pamela Ballinger applies Magris’s notion of the Habsburg myth to the cultural history of Trieste in her recent article “Imperial Nostalgia: Mythologizing Habsburg Trieste.” She cautions against a retrospective projection of notions such as transnationalism and tolerance and in general against an “interpretation of Triestine history that reflects ‘our’ own contemporary concerns with multicultural societies and cosmopolitanism” (89). Her main criticism is directed towards those critics (Lois Dubin, John McCourt and Jan Morris) that in her opinion misleadingly offer a one-sided reading of Trieste by overemphasizing the tolerance of a cosmopolitan city. Against this portrayal of the Adriatic city, she underscores the fact that “diversity and tolerance coexisted [in Trieste] side by side with ethnic and class conflict, with individuals capable of adopting cosmopolitan and nationalist outlooks in different realms (political, economic, cultural) and moments” (99). While her conclusion is appropriate, the methodological weakness of her article lies in her critique of three books that belong to different textual categories. Lubin’s *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste* (1999) is a historiographic monograph (with which she seems to agree); McCourt’s *The Years of Bloom* (2000) is a biography of James Joyce that looks at Trieste through the works of the Irish author, and Morris’s *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere* is a personal memoir. While we cannot ask literature to become historiography, it is important to bear in mind

that the literary myth of a cosmopolitan Habsburg Trieste does not correspond to what we can reconstruct as historical reality. Ballinger also seems to ignore certain historically documented aspects of Habsburg Trieste that are certainly in line with present cosmopolitan concerns and that thus would be welcomed by a modern readership today. For instance, in Trieste resident foreign nationals were permitted to vote in municipal and provincial elections. The legislation that promoted immigration to the free port made it clear that commercial activity and participation in public life would not be adversely impacted by foreign citizenship or religion affiliation. Citizenship and religion were left to the discretion of each individual.⁹

In this debate, Luiza Bialasiewicz clarifies that as a literary representation, the notion of a cosmopolitan Trieste operates in a realm that is separate from historiography. In addition, in her article “Europe as/at the border: Trieste and the Meaning of Europe” she emphasizes that a retrospective evaluation of Habsburg Trieste and its mission of mediation between different culture in Europe does not necessarily and exclusively imply an attitude of imperial nostalgia. She says that a certain idea of Trieste, “just like Europe, was at particular moments of its existence an incredibly *powerful metaphor for a certain vision of society*; a powerful ideal ‘container’ for the projection of certain myths and understandings of politics, economy, society” (320, emphasis in the original). Bialasiewicz’s emphasis on the metaphoric nature of such visions of society is indicative of the literary character of European utopias.

The Habsburg myth is a retrospective transfiguration of history, a literary creation that operates in the realm of cultural and political imagination. In the case of Trieste, the myth of the multicultural city is grounded in the past – hence the notes of imperial

⁹ See Anna Milo’s book *L’elite del potere a Trieste: Una biografia collettiva, 1891-1928*.

nostalgia – but is at the same time a project for the future. I build on these contributions that see Habsburg Trieste as a locus in which cosmopolitan and nationalist projects coexisted. I argue that the construction of the myth of cosmopolitan Trieste did not exclusively stem from imperial nostalgia, but from democratic and federalist positions as well. As mentioned at the beginning, many intellectuals saw in a future federation of Europe the fruits of a Habsburg legacy. In the context of Trieste, this imagined continuity between Habsburg multiculturalism and European transnationalism assumed great importance in the definition of a municipal identity.

Trojan Nationalism. Glottopolitics and the Epistemology of the Vernacular

In order to fully grasp the relevance of multiple loyalties and projects of a federated Europe it is necessary to consider the potentially subversive force that a regional patriotism assumes within the nation-state. For this reason I suggest that we read *Landespatriotismus* as a form of “Trojan nationalism.” I borrow this latter notion from the socio-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who proposes a theory of internal subversions within the ethnically and linguistically monolithic nation-state. In his article “Patriotism and its Futures” contained in the book *Modernity at Large*, he offers a definition of this concept:

Such nationalisms actually contain transnational, subnational links and, more generally, nonnational identities and aspirations. Because they are so often the product of forced as well as voluntary diasporas, of mobile intellectuals as well as manual workers, of dialogues with hostile as well as hospitable states, very few of the nationalisms can be separated from the anguish of displacement, the nostalgia of exile, the repatriation of funds, or the brutalities of asylum seeking. (160)

The complex network of emotional attachments to different communities present in Habsburg Trieste is articulated through the three main forces that coexist along with Italian nationalism. First of all, there is a strong local dialectophone culture, which identifies itself with the local community and regional dialect of Venetian (and Friulan) as opposed to the Tuscan-based Italian standard. Second, one can observe the city's transnational identity illustrated by a set of multiple attachments to German, Italian and Slovene cultures. Third, Triestine intellectuals around the turn of the century subscribed to a supranational project, a United States of Europe, mainly nourished by 19th century Europeanism and federalist projects in the Habsburg Empire. This set of local, transnational and supranational attachments, while existing alongside Triestine Irredentism, was often employed as a means to undermine or circumvent the logic of the nation-state. These non-national identities function through circumvention since subnational allegiances are ideally located beneath the nation, while supranational attachments are above it. While regional and supranational attachments operate as vertical vectors, transnationalism, on the other hand, operates horizontally, by establishing links between national communities.

Let us consider for a moment the far-reaching implications of Appadurai's insightful formulation that involves the ancient myth of the Trojan horse. According to canonical versions of the episode, the siege of Troy proved unsuccessful until Odysseus devised the subtle stratagem of the horse, presented as a gift to the Trojans. Once within the walls of Ilion, the Greek soldiers that had hidden in the hollow structure of the horse exited overnight to take military control of the city. Odysseus's scheme operates on two semiotic levels. First, through mimicry he intends to flatter the Trojans and pretends to

pay homage to their local tradition of equine taming. Secondly, what motivates Odysseus' gesture is a logic of substitution, in which the horse functions as a symbolic, fetishistic compensation for the loss of prince Hector who, as Homer's epithet goes, is the quintessential "breaker of horses."

Analogous to its function in classical Greek mythology, the image of the Trojan horse represents an internal threat that is not immediately perceived as such by the host community. Exploiting the isomorphism between regional and national loyalties, Appadurai's notion of Trojan Nationalism functions through mimicry, i.e. through an imitation of allegiance to the nation-state. Trojan nationalisms are intrinsic to the structure of nations, and their subversive mimicry can be understood as the intersection of two axes of similarity and difference. Their similarity rests upon the fact that regional patriotism and supranational allegiances often pre-exist or develop in national contexts. Their difference, on the other hand, originates in their claims to transculturation, *métissage* and hybrid cultures. Eroding the nation-state from within, local and transnational loyalties have the potential to subvert monolithic and essentialist conceptions of race and ethnicity, redirect political desire, and deploy a complex network of parallel allegiances, eventually leading to what Jürgen Habermas terms a "postnational constellation" in which the nation-state becomes obsolete.

Appadurai's tripartite schema of a subnational, national and supranational context echoes Benedict Anderson's famous collocation of the nation as an "imagined community" between a regional framework and a broader context above the nation. Anderson famously maintains that "national consciousness" comes as the result of a linguistic intervention, specifically of "print-capitalism," which bestowed language with

a “new fixity” and thus created “unified fields of exchange and communications below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars” (44). Reading Appadurai’s notion of Trojan nationalism through the lens of Anderson’s linguistic agency, it is clear that the major operational factor in the subversion of the nation is the deconstruction of a hegemonic, standardized language. The following table illustrates this interaction between political attachment and linguistic agency.

Table 1

	Language	Politics
Supranational level:	Multilingualism, polyglot pastiche, Esperanto	Supranational state, e.g. the United States of Europe
National level:	Standard language	Nation-State
Subnational level:	Regional dialect, Vernacular	<i>Landespatriotismus</i> , regional loyalties

Transferring this chart onto the map of modernist literature, I hope to demonstrate how the construction of European utopias was staged through aesthetic and literary representation. Musil’s utopian essayism, Svevo’s epistemology of the vernacular and Joyce’s multilingual cross-fertilizations are deeply concerned with topics of Habsburg *Landespatriotismus*, Trojan nationalism and their role in the idea of a European federation.¹⁰

In my approach to the texts, I suggest we analyze the works of Musil, Svevo and Joyce through what I call the “glottopolitics” of modernist aesthetics. With the term glottopolitics I mean the dynamic interdependency and mutual interpenetration between

¹⁰ Joyce’s work in particular, has been read as subversive. In his essay “Joyce’s Trojan Horse: *Ulysses* and the Aesthetics of Decolonization” Richard Begam comments on the “Trojan” and subversive function of literature. He maintains: “With *Ulysses*, Joyce’s greatest bequest to the English literary canon, he reminds us that Greeks are not the only ones who bear gifts, and that Trojan horses can be made of words as well as wood” (189).

polyglot literary language and political aesthetics. Musil's essayistic style, Svevo's tension between dialect and standard language, and Joyce's linguistic experimentation are questions that are aesthetic in nature, but that transcend the realm of aesthetics in order to interrogate political subject matters. While Musil's theorization of the European is embedded in his philosophical prose, in Svevo and Joyce the presence of dialect and polyglot pastiche becomes the signature of the rise of a transnational and international consciousness. In other words, modernist language experimentation becomes the signifier for the political utopia of a united Europe. In their introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Semicolonial Joyce*, Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes elucidate the implicit political significance of modernist style: "To write in this way is not to reduce politics to language, but to use linguistic forms to stage political issues" (3).

This glottopolitical matrix constitutes what Rebecca Walkowitz in her recent book defines as a "cosmopolitan style," a set of "aesthetic strategies of literary modernism [that] are relevant to projects of antiracism and decolonization" (23). Walkowitz maintains that "modernist narrative strategies can be adapted for various political enterprises" (4). She describes cosmopolitanism in terms of "multiple or flexible *attachments* to more than one nation or community, resisting conceptions of allegiance that presuppose consistency and uncritical enthusiasm; and a vernacular or popular tradition that values the risks of social deviance and the resources of consumer culture and urban mobility" (9). While my definition of "glottopolitics" shares the features of antiracism and anti-colonial sentiment with Walkowitz's "cosmopolitan style" I believe the introduction of a new term is nonetheless necessary. Walkowitz's definition stresses narrative strategies. My terminology instead emphasizes how the political message is

inseparable from the multilingual nature of modernist prose. The political message is not simply embedded; it is intrinsic to the very structure of multilingualism.

Within my glottopolitical interpretation, the interdependency between languages and their political meaning is mediated through an epistemology of the vernacular, or to put it in Joyce's terminology of the *Wake*, an "epistlemadethemology" of the "vermicular" (*FW* 374.17 and 82.12) that undermines and destabilizes hegemonic regimes of representation. Here, the term "vernacular" is used in a double sense, indicating both a regional dialect and a deviation from normative standards. By an epistemology of the vernacular I mean a mode of alternative perception, the capacity to re-imagine community from below, from the standpoint of the colonized subaltern. This epistemological framework offers a different experiential mode, an alternative grasping of the truth, a subaltern knowledge production. In *Notebook 25*, Antonio Gramsci defined the state of subalternity as perceptions of mental inferiority, along with established habits of subservience and obedience, which develop in situations of domination. Gramsci adds that "often subaltern groups are originally of a different race (other culture and other religion) from the dominant group and are often a mixture of different races" (2286). We will see how in the literary texts we discuss Habsburg subjects of ethnically mixed backgrounds will be seen as alien to the hegemonic discourse of essentialist identity. An epistemology of the vernacular opposes this cultural hegemony. Only through this vernacular philosophical outlook can we conceive of the utopian modernism that broke with the paradigm of nationalism in order to envision a democratic, anticolonial and federalist European project that originates from below. Again Walkowitz elucidates the relationship between linguistic medium and epistemological function. According to the

scholar, a cosmopolitan style “registers the limits of perception and the waning of a confident epistemology, the conflict between the exhaustive and the ineffable, the appeal of the trivial, the political consequences of uniformity and variousness in meaning, the fragmentation of perspectives, and the disruption of social categories” (20). Dialect and polyglottism defy national standard languages and produce splintering ruptures of viewpoints. In the literature that follows, the emergence of an anti-colonial Europe sprouts from its internal marginalized peripheries, from the point of view of the other, which in the case of Musil, Svevo and Joyce are respectively Czech, Jewish and Phoenician.

Chapter 1

Robert Musil and the Janus-faced Empire: Old and New Europe in *The Man without Qualities*

Überhaupt gewährt Triest, sowohl vom Berge herab, an dem es liegt, als von der Seeseite betrachtet, einen außerordentlich schönen Anblick. Das Meer in seiner Herrlichkeit, die zahllosen Masten der Schiffe, das Gewimmel von Menschen aller Kleidung und Sprache, alles ist ansprechend und neu.
(Franz Grillparzer, *Tagebuch aus der Reise nach Italien*, 1819)

From both the mountaintop and from the sea, Trieste offers an extraordinarily beautiful sight. The sea in its glory, the countless masts of ships, the multitude of people of all clothing and language, everything is appealing and new.
(Franz Grillparzer, *Diary from the Trip to Italy*, 1819)

In Opschina bin ich zwei Studen Morgens auf einem Hügel gesessen. In Triest habe ich Stunden verbracht, um in das freie weite Meer zu sehen.
(Adalbert Stifter, Brief an Johann Ritter von Fritsch, 1857)

In Opicina I spent two hours in the morning sitting on a hill. In Trieste I spent hours gazing into the wide open sea.
(Adalbert Stifter, Letter to Johann Ritter von Fritsch, 1857)

In the time span roughly covering the period between 1848 and 1945 a great number of intellectuals associated their reflection on European identity with the political unification of the continent, voicing very dissimilar interpretations of the European universalism of the Enlightenment project. An example of a modernist intellectual engaged in the theorization of European identity is Paul Valéry, who in 1922 tried to offer a definition of what he calls the *Homo Europaeus*. Valéry suggests that the “European subject is not defined by race, nor by language or customs, but by the desires

and the amplitude of its willpower” (156).¹¹ Valéry’s notion is illustrative of the debate in the 1920s, which was largely embedded in Europe’s self-perception as an imperial and colonial force, in which a political union would mainly safeguard the strategic and economic privileges on the world stage. In the discussion that opposed European identity to its non-European colonized counterpart, this model projected ethnocentric assumptions of Western cultural superiority. Although the cultural-political dynamics in the Habsburg Empire gravitated around the same nationalist and imperialist logic of turn-of-the-century Europe, centuries of forced cultural exchange and ethnically endogamous marital practices had forged a new kind of ethnically hybrid and polyglot European.

While these reflections on European identity and the political future of Europe can be observed all over the continent, in the Austrian context the debate is conducted in conjunction with topics pertaining to the multicultural and multilingual Habsburg Empire. The debate is articulated in two main discussions. One discussion concerns the Habsburg subject as cultural hybrid at ease in different cultures and languages. The other regards constitutional reforms of the empire into a European federation of peoples and then, in the post-war period, the idea of how the empire could function as a model for a future federal union. In his *Pan-European Manifesto (Das Paneuropäische Manifest)* of 1923 Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi vehemently supports the formation of the “United States of Europe” as the only possible form of government that can guarantee continental peace and constitute a proper home for what he calls “die europäische

¹¹ For a discussion of Valéry’s idea of Europe, see Champagne, Roland A. “The European Spirit: Paul Valéry’s Cultural Vision for the European Union.” *European Studies Journal* (Fall-Spring 2001): 85-97. Print. See also Blüher, Karl Alfred. „Paul Valéry’s Idee des ‚homo europaeus‘.“ *Forschungen zu Paul Valéry / Recherches Valéryennes* 9 (1996): 5-48. Print.

Menschheit” (quoted in Foerster 233) [“European humanity”].¹² The Count supports the realization of a project among whose progenitors he counts figures such as Kant, Mazzini, Nietzsche but also, quite revealingly for its imperialist undertones, Napoleon Bonaparte.

Within this intense debate on the Habsburg Empire and Europe, Robert Musil plays a particularly important role as he articulates a specific vision. As we will see in the course of this chapter, for Musil the idea of Europe remains suspended between the burden of its imperial legacy, fueled by a belligerent nationalism, and an anti-colonial project whose democratic foundation allows for the possibility of a more humane future in a postcolonial community. Musil recognizes in the ethnically and linguistically mixed Habsburg individuals the slow crystallization of an alternative paradigm of identity, fluid, open-ended and capable of incorporating cultural alterity.¹³

¹² David Luft notes that “Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi ... later praised Musil’s vision in having advocated ‘the pan-European idea from the beginning, when most people looked upon it as utopian’” (Luft 131). The Manifest is reprinted in Coudenhove-Kalergi, Richard. “Das Paneuropäische Manifest” *Die Idee Europa 1300-1946: Quellen zur Geschichte der politischen Einigung*. Ed. Foerster, Rolf Helmut. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965. Print. For a recent discussion, see Villanueva, Daniel. “Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi’s *Pan-Europa* as the Elusive Object of Belonging”, *Rocky Mountain Review* 59.2 (Fall 2005): 67-80. Print.

¹³ I argue that Musil’s concept of identity can be elucidated by Adorno’s philosophy of non-identity thinking. We will see how in the course of his career, Musil develops a critique of nationalism that is comparable to Adorno’s philosophy. Sharing Adorno’s profound distrust of essentialist categories, Musil develops a theory of the subject without qualities that defies nineteenth-century paradigms of subjectivity. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno develops the concept of non-identity thinking as a critique of conceptual thought. Adorno conceives his negative dialectic in as a critique of the idealist tradition in philosophy (starting with Plato and reaching Kant and Hegel). We think and conceptualize objects by placing them in universal categories. In this classificatory epistemology, we know what a dog is because its description falls under the general category designated for dogs (149). This conceptual categorization, Adorno notes, does not offer any knowledge about a particular canine, and what makes a given dog unique. Adorno calls this “identity thinking.” He criticizes this classificatory thinking because it ignores the unique character of a particular object. The reason for such philosophical critique is that in addition to constituting an epistemological limit, the categorization imposes violence upon the classified objects. The universal categories of identity thinking are associated with the domination of nature. Subsuming the particular under the general manipulates and controls objects. As an instrument, conceptual thinking is a form of mastery. Adorno stresses that every object possesses what he calls a non-identical side, which makes each object different from the other objects within their category of sameness. The basis of non-identity thinking is the notion that things are different from, and not identical to, the object that fall under the same category. The advantage of this new paradigm of knowledge is that we identify objects more precisely. With extreme

Musil exposes the subject as a hollow shell, lacking any predetermined and innate qualities. The subject is not a positive affirming self, but is characterized by negativity and empty space. It has no substance and no intrinsic essence. Musil's interrogation crystallizes around a fundamental question: If the subject is determined by negative space, by emptiness and the lack of qualities, according to what dynamics is identity formed? Musil conceives of identity as the product of a socio-historically determined process. Identity is the result of social and ideological forces that saturate the empty space or, as Stefan Jonsson puts it, "a force field where several non-personal elements ... are temporarily coordinated and crystallized, and then once again dissolved" (79). Identity is the "more or less permanent stabilization of subjectivity" (Jonsson 155) that recognizes itself in its social roles. Only the simultaneous concentration and the intersection of social forces determine an identity that enables, covers and fills the amorphous subject. Instead of possessing essential traits, the subject is the haphazard agglomeration of norms, conventions, roles and qualities imposed by society.

Musil illustrates this point in several instances. One example is, as we will see in more detail later, the essay "Die Nation als Ideal und Wirklichkeit," in which he famously argued that the main bond between human beings was their profession, which ultimately shapes their contribution to society. To demonstrate his point Musil says, quite provocatively for his time, that a German peasant has a stronger bond to a French farmer than to a compatriot. Another famous illustration is the passage in *The Man without*

caution, Adorno insists that he is not offering a definition of non-identity, because this would mean to treat singularity itself as a universal category (136). Adorno's philosophical materialism postulates a "priority of the object" (183-97) meaning that objects play a far more important role in the definition of conceptual categories than concepts impose their universality on objects. For a discussion of Adorno and his relationship with the Frankfurt School, see Martin Jay's book *The Dialectical Imagination*. For the concepts of identity and non-identity see Mary Caputi's article "Identity and Nonidentity in Aesthetic Theory," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 8.3 (1996): 128-147. Print.

Qualities, in which the narrator says that the inhabitants of any country possess an entire set of at least nine social and psychological characters: “einen Berufs-, einen National-, einen Staats-, einen Klassen-, einen geographischen, einen Geschlechts-, einen bewußten, einen unbewußten und vielleicht noch einen privaten Charackter” (*MoE* 34) [“a professional, a national, a civic, a class, a geographic, a sexual, a conscious, an unconscious, and possibly even a private character” (*MwQ* 30)].

In my analysis I build on the work of Stefan Jonsson. His book *Subject without Nation* places Musil within the history of modern conceptualizations of identity. Jonsson shows how Musil liquidates what the scholar calls the essentialism of the “expressivist paradigm” according to which the subject expresses its internal qualities in a fixed identity. Instead, Musil conceives of a “subjectivity degree zero” as a starting point from which modern identity is formed. While Jonsson traces the relationship between Musil’s notion of negative identity and a wide variety of modern theories of subjectivity, I expand on his conclusion that Musil’s identity firmly opposes its placement and integration into nationalist and imperialist communities. I follow Jonsson cue:

The intercultural predicament in Austria at the beginning of the twentieth century allowed Musil . . . to elaborate a notion of transculturation that anticipates fundamental features of the concepts of hybridity, border culture, and métissage, which have been developed in late-twentieth-century post-colonial theory. *The Man without Qualities* projects a universal or transcultural society, its driving force being the subject of negativity. (265)

Jonsson briefly elaborates on this process of transculturation by identifying in the protagonist Ulrich a transcultural subject without a nation. According to the scholar, in a world that believes in the natural existence of the nation, Ulrich’s lack of patriotic commitment makes him the object of suspicion and a transgressor: “Musil’s narrator evokes a society in which the multiplicity of cultures, histories, and identities enables the

individual to go beyond them” (264). Following from this, I argue that Musil’s transcultural society is the literary invention of a European community. Differently from many contemporary thinkers who associated European identity with the essence of a superior Western subject, Musil conceives of the European by virtue of the external and contingent socio-historic conditions in the multiethnic Habsburg Empire. For Musil, the ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity of the empire has produced an amalgamation that implies polyglot and multicultural identities, displaying multiple allegiances to regional, national and international communities. Musil’s European is not an idealist construction of essentialist subjectivity, since it is concretely linked to the material reality and the historic conditions of the empire. While Musil kept ideological agendas at bay, it is difficult to ignore that his pragmatic approach is deeply anchored in the tradition of philosophical materialism. With their personal identifications and shifting allegiances, every Habsburg European retains their own uniqueness and individuality and thus escapes strict categorizations in the name of an essentialist conception of the European.

In an attempt to fill critical lacunae in Musil scholarship, this chapter explores Musil’s reflections on Europe in his essays, by analyzing the sophisticated network of rhetorical strategies where he implicitly postulates an Austro-European identity. Linking the rhetorical density of the essays to the narrative structure of the novel, I will then turn to a study of the narrative projection of Habsburg Trieste in *The Man without Qualities*, as well as the conflicting forms of cultural and political Europeanism to which the characters in the novel subscribe. In the novel, this conflict is epitomized by the rivalry between the protagonist Ulrich, who subverts the logic of nationalism, and the industrialist Arnheim, a personification of the old colonial paradigm.

Traditional scholarship on Musil's *The Man without Qualities* focused on the author's deft and insightful analysis of a European cultural crisis, but generally failed to go beyond a description of Musil's diagnostic impulse.¹⁴ The merit ascribed to Musil was that he was able to put what Stefan Zweig called "the world of yesterday" and post-war Europe on an ideological continuum, despite not having the benefit of historical distance necessary to place events in an appropriate focus. Many of his contemporaries, such as Zweig, Roth and Hofmannsthal, considered the outbreak of the war a sudden rupture with the socio-cultural values of a European intellectual elite. Musil, on the contrary, soon came to understand that the conditions for the war matured in that very elite, exposing the continuity between the empty pacifist rhetoric of the antebellum period and later nationalist justifications of World War I. According to Musil, even within liberal circles that advocated for continental cooperation, a belligerent nationalism and an unapologetic jingoism were intrinsic to political projects of a united Europe. The Parallel Campaign in *The Man without Qualities*, at first conceived as a pacifist endeavor and then slowly transformed into the preparation for an aggressive imperialist war, is Musil's extraordinarily rich depiction of the ambiguity of Europeanist projects. In her book *The*

¹⁴ I am referring to the early scholarship on Musil, when his work was rediscovered in the aftermath of World War II. Musil was considered a writer who had predicted the catastrophic direction into which European society was headed. Ulrich's nihilism was read as the existential void of an entire generation. A philological debate also focused on the correct interpretation of Musil's intentions on how to finish the novel. The novel's lack of a proper ending was seen as symptomatic of an existential void. For a reading of Musil combined with psychoanalytical theory and existential thought, see Frederick Peters. *Robert Musil: Master of the Hovering Life*, published in 1978. For the great Musil scholar Adolf Frisé the monumental novel could only end with the outbreak of war. This debate on the possible endings of the novel continues until today. For a recent psychoanalytical contribution see Catherine Rising. "Ulrich Redux: Musil's Design for his *Man without Qualities*" *American Imago* 65.4 (Winter 2008): 523-545. Print. On the other hand, another influential Musil scholar like Helmut Arntzen suggested that Musil's satirical style was the vehicle for a larger social and cultural critique. In line with this effort to place Musil in conversation with a crisis of European culture, David Luft offered in his book *Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture 1880-1942* a reading of the cultural, aesthetic and philosophical influences on the Austrian novelist.

Void of Ethics: Robert Musil and the Experience of Modernity Patrizia McBride points out how Musil's insightful position represented a novelty in his time:

Musil's claim that all that occurred during and after the war had its roots in the prewar period would have startled many contemporaries, who would have rather agreed with observers like Stefan Zweig in seeing the war as an event of cataclysmic proportions that had ushered in a modern world of unbridled appetites and senseless violence that bore no meaningful connection to the old European order it had displaced. (75)

Other recent critical contributions have shifted the focus from Musil's complex diagnosis of the Habsburg past to the author's future-oriented political imagination, recognizing a mutually beneficial interdependency between his cultural criticism and the utopian essayism of his major novel. In his book *Robert Musil, Literatur und Politik* Klaus Amann has recently argued that Musil's independence of thought never translated into political indifference, but was firmly grounded in the author's liberal positions. Although Musil never fully committed to any ideological agenda, Stefan Jonsson in his *Subject without Nation* identifies him as a left-leaning internationalist, with political tendencies close to socialist utopianism. In his essay "Cultural Nationalism in the Twilight of History: Robert Musil's Austrian ImagiNation," Markus Zisselsberger has demonstrated how Musil exposes the nation as socio-political imaginary, or *Einbildung*, arguing that the Austrian author can be considered a forerunner of Benedict Anderson, whose analysis sees the nation as an "imagined community." In the book *In the Shadow of Empire* Malcolm Spencer appropriately explains how the democratic Musil showed sympathy for the lack of nationalist commitment in the old Habsburg aristocracy.

Building on these recent interpretations, I argue that Musil believed that the traditional heterogeneity of the Habsburg Empire had produced an Austro-European identity, characterized by a multiple set of loyalties and emotional attachments to ethnic,

cultural and linguistic communities. He recognized in the survival of this pre-national mindset a potential antidote to the virulent excesses of nationalism and a possible paradigm of identity for a future European community. In a quite paradoxical gesture, Musil combines a future-oriented utopianism with a somewhat nostalgic rehabilitation of an aristocratic cosmopolitan elite that declared itself alien to the logic of nationalism. For Musil, the old monarchy is a Janus-faced Empire, from whose original pre-national mission Europe can imagine its future survival.

While Musil scholarship has certainly taken the discussion into a welcome direction by focusing on the author's relationship to nationalism, it has largely failed to comprehensively address the rhetorical intricacies of Musil's Europeanism and its narrative exploration through the depiction of Habsburg Trieste. To my knowledge, the question of Trieste's role in *The Man without Qualities* is a topic that has not been broached in Musil scholarship. This lack is indeed surprising since Trieste was economically, politically and strategically too important a city to occupy only a marginal role in a monumental novel with the ambitious objective of offering a panoramic picture of the social milieu of pre-war Austria and its capital Vienna. In the attempt to fill lacunae in Musil scholarship, this chapter explores the narrative projection of Habsburg Trieste in *The Man without Qualities*, as well as the conflicting forms of cultural and political Europeanism to which the characters in the novel subscribe. I argue that *The Man without Qualities* portrays the city of Trieste as the ultimate repository of a pre-modern Habsburg *Landespatritismus* that challenges national identification. In the characters of the aristocrat Count Leinsdorf and the Jewish banker Leo Fischel, Musil illustrates respectively the city's dwindling dynastic patriotism and the supranational

mentality of its mercantile bourgeoisie. By depicting the Adriatic city as the last, crumbling bastion of pre-national allegiances, Musil models Trieste into a synecdoche for the empire's fate, making the city a microcosm for the Habsburg state.

The Essays

Musil's vast essayistic production extends over a wide thematic spectrum. The range of topics covered by the author includes literary criticism, philosophical inquiries into aesthetic and scientific epistemology, and reflections on the historical transformations of his time, as well as cultural critiques of contemporary social phenomena, and an analysis of more markedly political questions. The diverse composition of Musil's essays has been analyzed by an equally variegated scholarship that looks at his critical writings from different perspectives.¹⁵

The study of Musil's political essays has recently produced significant contributions. It received a crucial impulse in the mid-1990s when the process of European political and economic integration, accelerated by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), sparked great interest in the study of Europe's intellectual genealogy. In 1994 David Midgley suggested that we read Musil's essays anew, in light of the author's concern about the future of European civilization. In his article "Das hilflose Europa: Eine Aufforderung, die politischen Essays von Robert Musil neu zu lesen," the scholar places Musil's cultural criticism within a European dimension. Midgely reviews the

¹⁵ For the relationship between Musil's essayism and modernity, see the studies by Thomas Harrison and Birgit Nübel. Nicole Streitler analyzes Musil's activity as a literary critic. Patrizia McBride analyzes the relationship between Kantian ethics and Musil. Florence Vatan looks at Musil's engagement with anthropological questions. For the intersection of aesthetics and science in Musil's essays and his major novel, see Thomas Sebastian's study.

author's unsystematic treatment of the idea of Europe, pointing to the complexity of Musil's "partial answers." Midgley also appropriately argues that Musil's Europeanism is largely indebted to Nietzsche, who represents one of the most important influences on the Austrian writer. Nevertheless, the article is limited to a largely summarizing paraphrase of the political essays and fails to extract or define Musil's idea of Europe. To be sure, the difficulties of assessing Musil's views are manifold and are mainly syntactic, semantic and ideological in nature. Musil's long, hypotactic prose is embellished with an original usage of terminology, through which the author infuses common concepts with a highly personal meaning.

Exactly a decade later, Markus Zisselsberger faces the same challenges. In his article "Cultural Nationalism in the Twilight of History: Robert Musil's Austrian ImagiNation" the scholar comments on Musil's convoluted style and acknowledges the difficulties in assessing the author's political essays: "The abstruseness of Musil's scientific-technical rhetoric makes it at times difficult to determine clearly which political realities might have informed his view of the state" (29). In reading the political essays from 1914 to 1921 Zisselsberger emphasizes the ideological complexity and originality of Musil's thought, an originality that dismayed many of the author's contemporaries. Contrary to a widespread belief among intellectuals of his generation, Musil believed that nationalism was not a cause that inevitably led to the outbreak of World War I, but that nationalist sentiment was one of war's cultural symptoms. Musil, according to Zisselsberger, "rejected the common view that the conflict between the ethno-linguistic groups in the Habsburg Empire had led to the fragmentation of culture and eventually to the destruction of the monarchy" (29).

Musil was convinced that a specifically German Austrian culture did not exist. Instead, the writer believed that Austria was part of a larger linguistic community and saw the Austria after World War I as necessarily part of the German-speaking world. As a consequence, Musil's advocacy of an *Anschluss* with Germany in the aftermath of the war should not be interpreted, as we will discuss later, as a proto-fascist gesture. In this sense, Zisselsberger aptly underscores how Musil in the essay "Die Nation als Ideal und Wirklichkeit" sees the nation as an illusion. Again, Musil's choice of words can be misleading. Instead of indicating with the German term "Ideal" a lofty ideal to which one can and should aspire, Musil employs the term ironically to indicate a delusion. Nations with citizens that have common interests and goals do not exist: "Wir sind Kapitalisten, Proletarier, Geistige, Katholiken ... und in Wahrheit viel mehr in unsere Sonderinteressen und über alle Grenzen hinweg verflochten als untereinander" (*GW* 1070) ["We are capitalists, workers, clerics, Catholics ... and in truth we are, thanks to our special interests, more intertwined beyond all borders than we are among us"].¹⁶ According to Musil, a capitalist or a member of the working class has more in common with another capitalist or worker in a different country than with a compatriot belonging to a different social class. Zisselsberger compellingly glosses this passage as follows: "Musil concluded that the nation was an illusion, a 'fantasy'; instead of being a place for the cultural *Bildung* of its citizens, it had become a mere 'Einbildung,' an internalized obsession" (37). This does not mean, however, that Musil dismissed the popular feeling that nations were empirically identifiable entities, grounded in a common history. The early enthusiasm for World War I, however disturbing, could not be dismissed as mass

¹⁶ All the quotes from Musil's essays and from scholarship in German are my translations, unless otherwise indicated. As for the quotes from Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, I always quote from Burton Pike's translation.

hysteria. The nation, however, was a socio-historical phenomenon whose popular and political allure was bound to gradually vanish in the future. Zisselsberger shows how Musil believed in a future that would mark the gradual disappearance of the concept of nation. In Zisselsberger's view, Musil "envisioned a European future in which individual states would first assist in the creation of 'common interests'; once such interests were established however, the significance of states would gradually diminish by itself"(30).

In this vision of a post-national Europe both Midgley and Zisselsberger recognize how the study of Musil's political essays is relevant to a broader debate on European civilization. Some question that both scholars leave unanswered concern Musil's general attitude towards politics itself and how Musil's work as an essayist intersects with his literary activity. Klaus Amann offers a comprehensive answer to these questions with a study of Musil's political views in the 1930s. In his book *Robert Musil – Literatur und Politik*, published in 2007, the scholar studies the relationship between politics and literature in Musil, reading Musil's political essays after World War I and especially the author's later and more mature speeches. One of Amann's main objectives is grounded in the larger critical debate surrounding Musil. Musil's early reception focused on the essayistic and philosophical aspects of *The Man without Qualities*, written by an allegedly apolitical novelist. According to Amann, Musil earned his reputation as an apolitical intellectual with his unfavorable reception at the International Writers' Congress for the Defense of Culture, held in Paris in June 1935, where Musil held a speech. The Paris Congress was officially not affiliated with any political party, but was organized under the auspices of Communist intellectuals who saw in the Soviet Union the only valid opposition to Nazi Germany. In his speech Musil warned about the perils of

totalitarian regimes, and his critique was “applicable to Communism and National Socialism alike” (*Literature and Politics* 79). His equal distrust of both Communism and Nazi-Fascism was interpreted as a lack of political commitment. Further evidence of Musil’s unwillingness to subscribe to ideologies was also seen in a diary entry, written in late 1933 when Hitler had recently ascended to power. Musil writes: “Ich nehme nicht Stellung, ich weiß nicht, wo ich stehen werde, wohin wird mich der Geist führen? Ist das Daimon oder Objektivität?“ (*Tagebücher* 852) [“I will take a stance, I don’t know where I will stand. Where will my spirit lead me? Is this a Daemon or objectivity?”].

Musil’s political essays were seen as separate reflections, triggered by the radical transformations of his time, where the author expressed his discontent but refused to fully commit to one ideology or the other. Against this erroneously perceived dichotomy between political engagement and literary practice, Amann demonstrates the author’s profound concern with contemporary politics starting with the outbreak of World War I and peaking with Hitler’s power grab in 1933. Amann is confronted with the same hermeneutic challenges that previous scholars such as Midgley and Zisselsberger have faced. The critical misunderstanding of previous interpretations that saw Musil as an apolitical writer are to be found in the author’s unconventional use of language:

It is this unorthodox usage of the term apolitical [*unpolitisch*] that has always led to misunderstandings. Musil sees the term ‘apolitical’ as synonymous with ‘autonomous’ and ‘independent.’ ‘Apolitical’ means independent from the pragmatic constraints, claims, and obligations of politics seen as a social institution. Musil always fought for this independence, for this autonomy of literature, which he saw as necessarily grounded and guaranteed in the independence and autonomy of the individual. (96)¹⁷

Musil was an individualist, incapable of committing to the agenda of a given political party. This, however, never meant that Musil was disinterested in politics.

¹⁷ My translation.

Amann describes Musil as interrogating himself about the responsibilities the intellectual has towards society and about the possibilities of intervening in the political arena. As such, Musil writes and speaks programmatically in relation to the community, state or nation by placing his role outside of society. For Amann Musil “speaks differently from party intellectuals and political opportunists of his time, not with the support of the establishment, but from the margins of literature” (*Literatur und Politik* 43).¹⁸ The Musil that Amann deftly presents is a writer who believes that literary activity and cultural and political criticism are inseparable: “the separation of the realms of politics and literature is hardly possible.” What characterizes the two spheres is a “difference in function” (Musil quoted in Amann 96). The centrality of this relationship between literature and politics in Musil’s *Weltanschauung* is underlined by one of his aphorisms, to which the author gives special emphasis by putting it in a frame in the manuscript. The maxim goes as follows: “Der Dichter spricht: Ich war nie Partei. Ich war immer einsam. Ich habe meine Pflicht getan. Aber jetzt will man mich hindern, sie zu tun. Darum stehe ich da” (quoted in Amann 144) [“The poet speaks: I was never biased. I was always lonely. I performed my duty. But now they want to prevent me from doing so. For this reason I stand here.”]¹⁹ When Musil claims to never have been biased, he says “Ich war nie Partei” which describes the lack of prejudice, but also suggests a political party. Amann describes Musil’s collection of aphorisms as literary-political, or “literaturpolitisch” (44). In Musil’s diary entries Amann finds the following: “Der Dichter eilt der polit.[ischen] Entwicklung voraus. (Was Dichtung ist, ist etwas später Politik.)“ (quoted in Amann 25) [“The poet anticipates political developments. (What is

¹⁸ My translation.

¹⁹ The German original is more ambiguous than my English translation might reveal. The German “Darum stehe ich da” is also an idiomatic expression, indicating “to be left in the cold.”

now literature becomes later politics)]. This programmatic statement of a political aesthetics is crucial for the understanding of Musil's novelistic project. Crucially, it invites political readings of *The Man without Qualities*. Amann describes Musil's work on the novel as "politically motivated" (47), while Allen Thiher has emphasized how Musil conceived of his novel as a "form of total cultural criticism" (230). Musil's statement also assigns to the novel a "utopian epistemological function" (*Tagebücher* 933). Literature anticipates, almost prophetically, changes in the political arena. Philip Payne suggests that Musil, equating ethics and aesthetics, "sees his writing as a force for change. The impetus behind his novel is to persuade his readers of the need for renewal of civilization and to prompt them to think about the direction that might be followed" (34).

The political essays I would like to examine more closely roughly cover the decade between 1913 and 1923. Lacking any kind of systematic organization, the essays appear as a series of theoretical attempts, shifting points of view, drafts and thought experiments that chronicle the author's intellectual work in progress. These "experimental textual sites" (Zisselsberger 39) describe a trajectory of conflicting reflections, encompassing an initial commitment to democratic values, a flirtation with proto-fascist rhetoric, an occasional proximity to socialist ideas, and a final deconstruction of nationalist ideas of ethno-racial purity. Musil once commented on the paradoxical nature of his political views, defining himself as a "conservative anarchist" (GW 1011). Amann explains these evident contradictions in the author's critical writings with Musil's "pragmatic and disillusioned grasp [*Zugriff*] of politics." According to Amann, Musil's essayistic methodology is analytical, radical, devoid of taboos, and

dynamic (40). Amann continues to point out that Musil's "political approach is functional. He [Musil] judges political movements, parties and the governmental form of parliamentary democracy point by point and independently from the overarching ideology, looking at how they approached, solved or negated concrete problems" (28). Despite its ideologically incoherent and thematically erratic nature, Musil's experimental cultural criticism during this decade is of paramount importance. First of all, a chronologically progressive reading of the essays offers insights into the evolution of Musil's thought in response to events such as World War I and the end of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Second, the texts show how the author contributes in an original way to contemporary debates concerning Austrian identity and the Europeanist mission of the defunct multinational empire. Most importantly, the decade that spans from 1913 to 1923 coincides with Musil's preparation of *The Man without Qualities*, offering a glimpse into the preliminary thought process that leads up to the novel. Franz Blei reported as early as April 1913 that Musil was collecting material and starting to work on an important novel (Corino 823), an occupation that was intensified in the early 1920s when Musil began to dedicate more time and energy to his project.

In the course of this section, I argue that Musil postulates in his essays what I call the *homo europaeus habsburgensis* – a multifaceted being that is influenced by Nietzsche's notion of the "good European," inspired by the identity politics of Austro-Marxism, and receptive to ongoing conversations regarding Austrian distinctiveness within the context of the German-speaking area. Nietzsche's postulation of a mixed European race, his notion of the "good European," laid the philosophical foundations for modernist definitions of European identity. For Musil, the emergence of a new

transnational hybrid subject needed a proper context, in which the European would be free to express his or her multiple emotional attachments and cultural allegiances to several regional, national, and supranational communities. This transnational context assumed the form of a political unification of a federated or confederate Europe.

Building on recent scholarship, in this section I will first address the question of genre in Musil's essays. In the subsequent discussion of the essays, I will show how Musil was influenced by pre-war debates concerning constitutional reforms of the empire, aimed at transforming the Habsburg monarchy into a democratic federation. In particular, with their suggested reform of the empire, the Austro-Marxists Otto Bauer and Karl Renner influenced Musil's reflections on the European character of the empire.²⁰

Despite the fragmentary and experimental nature of Musil's critical writings one can identify in the overarching theme of Europe, a subject matter to which the author constantly returns. Let me suggest that in these years Musil's typical essay can be read as what Paul Michael Lützeler has insightfully described as the "Europe-essay" (*Europaaufsatz*), an essayistic form whose central topic is the discussion of a cultural and political Europe.²¹ Lützeler has defined the "Europe-essay" as a genre in its own right.²²

²⁰ For a discussion of the Austro-Marxists see Johnston, William. *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. Print.

For Musil's relationship to Austro-Marxism see Hüppauf, Bernd. "Von Wien durch den Krieg nach Nirgendwo. Nation und utopisches Denken bei Musil und im Austromarxismus" *Text und Kritik* 21/22 (1983): 1-18. Print

²¹ The critical contributions of Paul Michael Lützeler have partially filled the gap regarding a history of the idea of Europe. Lützeler has been working on the idea of Europe in the German speaking area, offering a remarkable contribution to our understanding of Europeanist projects in the literary history of the continent. Here, I am referring to three of his books, namely *Plädoyers für Europa. Stellungnahmen deutschsprachiger Schriftsteller 1915–1949* published in 1987; the more recent *Die Schriftsteller und Europa: von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*, published in 1998 and his latest *Kontinentalisierung : das Europa der Schriftsteller*, published in 2007. His work on the idea of Europe, that spans over twenty years, has demonstrated the historical continuity between concepts of Europe starting with the Enlightenment, the aftermath of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Era, and the 1848 revolutions in Europe to the united Europe envisioned during the two world wars, the post-war era, to finally the current debates on European identity with Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Jacques Derrida.

He describes the idea of Europe in the German speaking area, offering a remarkable contribution to our understanding of pan-European projects in the literary history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This textual category simultaneously comprises “unique interweaving of historical analysis, cultural-philosophical interpretation and political vision” (Lützel 24). In addition, Lützel attributes to the genre of the Europe-essay a changeable nature with three main characteristics. Like the mythological figure of Proteus, the genre presents a) a heterogeneity of forms and shapes; b) a character that escapes strict categorizations, a character that is elusive to a firm critical grasp; and c) an oracle-like quality since what was asked of Proteus was to decipher the past and predict the future (Lützel 30). Musil’s essays are largely concerned with democracy, the rise of belligerent nationalism and with the means by which the Habsburg legacy informs the socio-political dynamics of a European cosmopolitanism. While essays such as “Europäertum, Krieg, Deutschtum“ (1914) and “Das hilflose Europa“ (1922) explicitly indicate as their object of investigation the cultural and political coordinates of Europe, other articles of the same decade are no less concerned with the political reorganization of the continent.

Musil publishes the essay “Europäertum, Krieg, Deutschtum” in *Die Neue Rundschau* in 1914 as an answer to the outbreak of World War I. The text, published in September, is thus an immediate response to the war, whose first hostilities began in August, after the Triple Alliance issued a declaration of war to Serbia at the end of July. Musil conceives of the essay as a “geistiges Testament” (GW 1020) [“spiritual testament”] and as the attempt to come to terms with what he perceives as the end of a

²² In support of Lützel’s definition see Musil’s diary entry where the Austrian author calls “Das hilflose Europa” the “Europaaufsatz” (*Tagebücher* I, 694).

common European cultural history. As a document of Musil's early political perspective, the essay represents perhaps one of the most complex and controversial pieces in the author's essayistic canon. The brief article has often been regarded as Musil's troubling flirtation with pan-German belligerent nationalism, a "hymn to the war" (Lützel 1998, 228) – a strident, albeit momentary, exception in the critical writings of a generally moderate and pacifist intellectual. With its dynamic and effect-seeking hypotactic organization, the syntax of the essay exhibits a high degree of rhetorical stylization. The systematic adoption of nationalist rhetoric is troubling as it ominously anticipates Fascist discourse of later decades. It is also very surprising inasmuch Musil in the essay "Politisches Bekenntnis," dated November 1913, states his democratic faith. "Du selbst bist schon ... ein Geschöpf der Demokratie und die Zukunft ist nur durch eine gesteigerte und reinere Demokratie erreichbar" (*GW* 1011) ["You are already ... a creature of democracy, and the future is reachable only through a higher and more pure form of democracy"]. To the young engineer, even the progress of scientific knowledge is linked to a process of democratization: "Wissenschaft [ist] ein Ergebnis der Demokratie" (*GW* 1011) ["Science is a result of democracy"]. As David Luft puts it: "Musil was conscious of belonging to an elite, which was virtually an aristocracy itself, and yet was the product of two hundred years of democratization" (Luft 118-9).

In the essay written less than a year later, Musil engages in a partial reexamination of Friedrich Nietzsche's cultural criticism, an aspect I would like to emphasize since it represents Musil's momentary departure from Nietzsche's idea of Europe and a first step in his own critical elaboration of European identity. Reading Nietzsche had a profound impact on the young Musil, an impact that the author will late

define in terms of a self-discovery. In a letter to Roy Temple House, dated 12 August 1938, Musil counts Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* und *Genealogie der Moral* among the "Bücher, ... die ich in meiner Jugend dazu mißbraucht habe, mich selbst zu erkennen" (*Briefe*, 837) ["Books, ... I abused in my youth in order to know myself"].

Nietzsche had postulated the emergence of a European subject as the result of a historical progression. According to the philosopher, the inbreeding of different nationalities in the course of the centuries would eventually produce a future culturally hybrid European subject and consequently a departure from the nationalist paradigm. In 1878 Nietzsche observes in the section "Der europäische Mensch und die Vernichtung der Nationen" ["The European Man and the Destruction of Nations"] of *Menschliches*,

Allzumenschliches:

Der Handel und die Industrie, der Bücher- und Briefverkehr, die Gemeinsamkeit aller höheren Cultur, das schnelle Wechseln von Ort und Landschaft, das jetzige Nomadenleben aller Nicht-Landbesitzer, – diese Umstände bringen nothwendig eine Schwächung und zuletzt eine Vernichtung der Nationen, mindestens der europäischen, mit sich: so dass aus ihnen allen, in Folge fortwährender Kreuzungen, eine Mischrasse, die des europäischen Menschen, entstehen muss. Diesem Ziele wirkt jetzt bewusst oder unbewusst die Abschliessung der Nationen durch Erzeugung nationaler Feindseligkeiten entgegen, aber langsam geht der Gang jener Mischung dennoch vorwärts, trotz jener zeitweiligen Gegenströmungen ... so soll man sich nur ungescheut als guten Europäer ausgeben und durch die That an der Verschmelzung der Nationen arbeiten: wobei die Deutschen durch ihre alte bewährte Eigenschaft, Dolmetscher und Vermittler der Völker zu sein, mitzuhelfen vermögen. (I, 475)

Commerce and industry, traffic in books and letters, the commonality of all higher culture, quick changes of locality and landscape, the present-day nomadic life of all nonlandowners—these conditions necessarily bring about a weakening and ultimately a destruction of nations, or at least of European nations; so that a mixed race, that of the European man, has to originate out of all of them, as the result of continual crossbreeding. The isolations of nations due to engendered national hostilities now works against this goal, consciously or unconsciously, but the mixing process goes on slowly, nevertheless, despite these intermittent countercurrents ... he should be undaunted in presenting himself as a good European, and should work actively on the merging of nations. The Germans,

because of their age-old, proven trait of being the nations' interpreter and mediator will be able to help in this process. (*Human, All Too Human* 228).

In this passage Nietzsche seems to suggest a concept of history in the course of which the "good European," would, against all nationalist odds, finally emerge. Nietzsche attributed to German culture the role of translator and cultural mediator, through which it could contribute significantly in the synthesis of nationalities. In parallel fashion, Musil maintains that before the war it was considered impossible that European nations would have been convinced to wage war against each other. A growing awareness of a shared European culture was bringing European nations closer and closer. Musil, however, recognizes his own myopia and the general shortsightedness of liberal intellectuals who failed to notice that European diplomacy was in fact preparing for warfare. Sardonicly Musil notes that the "Spiel des Allianzsystems" ["game of alliance system"] appeared as a "diplomatisch sportliche Veranstaltung" (GW 1020) ["diplomatic sports event"]. With the inception of a European war, Musil comes to perceive Nietzsche's notions of a common European culture and of the good European a mere theoretical construct, an abstract and idealistic notion:

Trotzdem bleibt ungeheuer, wie die plötzlich erwiesene Möglichkeit eines Krieges in unser moralisches Leben von allen Seiten umändernd eingreift, und wenn heute auch nicht der Zeitpunkt ist, über diese Fragen nachzudenken, wollen wir, vielleicht auf lange hinaus letzten Europäer, in ernster Stunde doch auch nicht auf Wahrheiten bauen, die für uns keine mehr waren, und haben, bevor wir hinausziehen, unser geistiges Testament in Ordnung zu bringen. ... wir haben nicht gewusst, wie schön und brüderlich der Krieg ist, teils mit unserer Absicht, denn es schwebte uns ein *Ideal des europäischen Menschen* vor, das über Staat und Volk hinausging und sich durch die gegenwärtigen Lebensformen wenig gebunden fühlte, die ihm nicht genügten. (GW 1020, emphases added)

Despite all this, it remains astounding how the suddenly proven possibility of a war intervenes from all sides to change our moral life. Even if today is not the time to think about these questions, we, for a long time to come the last

Europeans, in this grave hour will not build upon truths that for us were no longer such. We have to bring order to our spiritual testament without procrastinating ... we did not know how beautiful and fraternal this war is, which was partly our intention, since an ideal of the European persona materialized before our eyes: an ideal which went beyond state and nation and which was little tied to present forms of life, perceived as insufficient.

The war shatters Musil's trust in Nietzsche's notion of the good European. In the passage above Musil seems to adapt Nietzsche's European to the Austrian context. While with the expression indicating the "ideal of the European persona" Musil unmistakably refers to Nietzsche, the self-referential notion of the "we, the last Europeans" Musil implies that the Habsburg Empire, with its multicultural organization, epitomized the last bastion of a European community under German leadership. Once the European mission of the empire has utterly failed, the ideal of a European subject becomes insufficient, which is why Musil resorts to a conceptual retreat into a full identification with the German *Volk*.

The rhetorical devices employed in the text convey a sense of identification with the German nation. For Musil the European subject that transcends the nation-state is only a distraction from the fundamental patriotic principles: "Treue, Mut, Unterordnung, Pflichterfüllung, Schlichtheit, – Tugenden dieses Umkreises sind es, die uns heute stark, weil auf den ersten Anruf bereit machen zu kämpfen" (GW 1020) ["Loyalty, courage, submission, performance of duty, sobriety – virtues of this sort make us strong today, since their call prepares us to fight"]. With great rhetorical dexterity, Musil strategically places this paratactic asyndeton at the beginning of the third paragraph. He enumerates the alleged virtues of the German nation omitting the conjunctions, but coordinating them syntactically in order that the reader is forced to pause and briefly dwell on these

intrinsically German qualities. This emphasis represents the propagandistic core of the essay. Musil, it seems, employs the catalog of German qualities to show the righteousness of waging war and joining the battle against other European nations.

The war had incontrovertibly demonstrated that antinational and pacifist conceptions of European identity were untenable postulations. It had shaken the grounds of widely accepted assumptions about a pan-European political and cultural tradition. Kant's project of perpetual peace in a federalist Europe as well as a cosmopolitan *société des lettres* suddenly assumed the features of empty and naïve utopias. Musil, torn between his allegiance to a European cosmopolitanism in crisis, his belonging to "einer oppositionellen europäischen Minderheit" (GW 1021) ["a European oppositional minority"] of intellectuals and his patriotic solidarity to the idea of German-speaking *Kulturnation*, cannot help but recognize the collapse of the dream of European unification. While other Austrian intellectuals such as Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal before the war believed in a super-national Europeanism, Musil realizes the constructedness of such a notion.²³ As Patrizia McBride has appropriately argued: "Musil found that the war had finally cleaned the slate of the humanist notion of a European community, whose essential humanity was inscribed in presumably innate values that transcended national borders" (91). The proto-fascist language Musil employs

²³ In his autobiography *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers* Stefan Zweig chronicles the dramatic changes that swept across Central Europe, covering half a century that saw the decline of the old Habsburg Empire, World War I, the uncertainty of the interwar years, the rise of Hitler and the breakout of World War II. A sense of loss of his European *Heimat* pervades Zweig's autobiographic and historical account. During his lifetime, Zweig published essays and gave speeches, advocating for the constitution of a United States of Europe. For a collection of the essays see *Die Schlaflose Welt. Essays 1909-1941*. In similar fashion, Hugo von Hofmannsthal was a staunch supporter of a united Europe that should imitate the Austrian imperial model. In the essay "Die österreichische Idee," written in 1917 during World War I, Hofmannsthal maintains that "The Europe that wishes to constitute itself needs an Austria, a formation of genuine elasticity, of a true organism flooded with its own internal religiosity, without which no bond among living forces is possible" (my translation). It is likely that Musil exploited Hofmannsthal's idea of a necessary continuity between Austria and Europe as the model for Diotima.

in the brief essay indicates that the author surrendered to an almost tribal and atavistic regression. The tone becomes hyperbolically apocalyptic:

Als gieriger mit jeder neuen Stunde Todesfinsternis um unser Land aufzog und wir, das Volk im Herzen Europas und mit dem Herzen Europas, erkennen mußten, daß von allen Rändern dieses Weltteils eine Verschwörung herbrach, in der unsre Ausrottung beschlossen worden war, wurde ein neues Gefühl geboren. (GW 1021)

As a deadly darkness swept across our land, eagerly approaching with every passing hour, and we, the nation in the heart of Europe and with the heart of Europe, had to recognize that from all corners of the world a conspiracy was brooding against us, intending our extinction, a new feeling was born.

The proto-fascist rhetoric of this passage will later cause Musil much embarrassment. It is truly difficult to reconcile Musil's sharp analyses and the "terse, epigrammatic style" (Payne 24) of his literary criticism in such propagandistic, tumid and bombastic prose. This eagerly approaching "deadly darkness" that assaults the land and the global conspiracy to bring about the "extinction" of the Germans stimulate the emergence of a slumbering, atavistic force that motivates sacrifice for the fatherland. The "Urart" (GW 1021), the primordial mode of the German spirit, and the "Urmacht" (GW 1022) ["primal might"], along with the "elementalen Leistung den Stamm zu schützen" (GW 1022) ["the elemental feat to protect the tribe"] represent the most explicit departure from Nietzsche's nationalist critique and postulation of European subjectivity. Musil's use of the term "Stamm," signifying both a tribal community and a tree trunk also conveys the idea of sedentary immobility, of rootedness in the native territory. These ideas are in sharp contrast to Nietzsche's "nomadic life" (I, 475) of the European, described in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* Nietzsche argues for the process of European identity formation and expresses a caustic criticism of

those who oppose it. He criticizes the “dumpfe zögernde Rassen ... welche in unserm geschwinden Europa halbe Jahrhunderte nöthig hätten, um solche atavistischen Anfälle von Vaterländerei und Schollenkleberei zu überwinden und wieder zur Vernunft, will sagen zum 'guten Europäerthum' zurückzukehren“ (VIII, 241) [“dull and sluggish races who would require half a century even in our rapidly moving Europe to overcome such atavistic attacks of fatherlandishness and soil addiction and to return to reason, meaning 'good Europeanism'” (*Beyond Good and Evil* 174)]. In the passage, one can recognize all of Nietzsche's mordant sarcasm, both fiercely mocking and sharply critiquing patriotic excesses. Reading Musil through the Nietzsche he so much admired, one can see how in 1914 the Austrian author abjured the belief in a cultural and political Europeanism, responding with an emotional outburst that clouded his judgment and that led to a narrow and nationalist outlook.

Musil, the generally cosmopolitan and liberal intellectual, is caught in a surprising crisis of European consciousness. For the author, however, pan-Germanism and pan-Europeanism cannot be reduced to a system of binary oppositions. Already in 1914, Musil opposed the definition of national culture in terms of political states. The author saw himself as being the member of a German-speaking community, what he later will call a “sprachliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft” (GW 1348) [“linguistic association”]. Musil underscores with a syntactic anaphora that the German Austrians, the “we” in the text, were “das Volk, im Herzen Europas und mit dem Herzen Europas” (GW 1021). The centrality of the empire in Europe is not simply geographic in nature. It corresponds to a precise cultural politics that advocates German leadership in Europe. At this point for Musil, it is still the multinational empire that holds the key to a European political

community under German guidance and attacking the German *Kulturnation* is a means to undermine any project for a future United States of Europe.

From today's historical perspective, the notion of Austrian unification with the German neighbor summons the specter of the *Anschluss* with Nazi Germany. For Musil, however, the political union with Germany remains a crucial step in the process of a geopolitical reorganization of a European community of states. David Luft explains Musil's idea of belonging to a broader sphere of German-speaking culture:

Within the larger task of overcoming the state and creating a European community, Musil argued that the immediate task for Austria was to overcome its own defunct state-idea and unite with Germany ... Musil recommended union with Germany as a constructive response to the dissolution of the Empire, a gesture against the endless multiplication of states, and a way-station in the development of a European or even a world community. (131)

While Luft portrays these ideas as representative of Musil, it is useful to point out that the author reaches these conclusions about the necessity of a European community of states only after the war.

For all its momentary vehemence, Musil's culturally inflected nationalism represents a brief parenthesis in the course of his essays. Already in the immediate aftermath of the war Musil starts elaborating his ideas anew, in an essay in which he calls into question his pan-German positions by evaluating the historical legacy of the multinational empire. These are years of transition for Musil and many of his contemporaries, and it is not easy to distill a definite and unambiguous political position in Musil's essays. A general and profound disillusionment with the war, turned from a supposedly heroic and rapid *Blitzkrieg* into an extended carnage in the trenches, made Musil reconsider his glorification of warfare, while the utterly unrealistic terms of reparations imposed on the defeated by the Versailles Treaty left Austria and Germany

with the specter of social, economic and political uncertainty. A new political order had to be sought, a future project whose foundations could paradoxically be found in the Habsburg past.

In an untitled essay fragment, dated 1918 and conventionally referred to as “Das Ende des Krieges,” Musil drafts his post-war reflections.²⁴ Their main focus is the analysis of the origin of the war. This search for the causes becomes a starting point for a complete revision of the ideas expressed four years before. Musil’s approach changes drastically inasmuch as he abandons the logic that opposes Austria and Germany to a hostile Europe. Proceeding methodically, he first analyzes the symptoms of what he defines as a “mass psychosis” in the camps of both friend and foe: “Da die Erscheinungen bei Freund und Feind gleich waren, muß die Ursache eine europäische sein“ (GW 1343) [“Since the appearance was the same in the camps of friend and foe, the origin must be European”]. In his draft, Musil seems to have in mind a European-wide audience, since he ideally speaks to those who assign exclusive responsibility of the war to Germany. The rise of militarism, he concludes, is not a German phenomenon, but a European one: “daß der Militarismus zum deutschen Ideal avancierte, ist ... kein deutscher Fehler, sondern ein europäischer gewesen“ (GW 1345) [“the fact that militarism became a German ideal was not a German but a European mistake”]. By identifying in European militarism the causes of war Musil does not intend to relieve Austria and German from their objective responsibility, but recognizes that other European forces share such responsibility.

²⁴ For the purpose of identification, Adolf Frisé, the editor of Musil’s collected works, assigns to Musil’s untitled essays a conventional title and puts it in square brackets.

In addition to his interest in international politics, a powerful motivation that seems to drive Musil to speculate on the origins of the war is the disconcerting circumstance that he himself was attracted by the rhetoric of war propaganda. Musil realizes how he himself participated in the feverish enthusiasm for the war. Precisely the nationalist rhetoric, previously adopted by Musil himself, is listed as one of the most disturbing aspects of the war. Musil now believes that the conflict has turned into a disgusting affair, identifying the most disconcerting characteristics in the profiteering, the unequal distribution of the war burden and the nationalist war rhetoric: “Der lange Krieg hat eklige Erfahrungen gezeigt. Den Kriegswucher, Unausgeglichenheit der Lasten, die Kriegsphraseologie“ (GW 1341) [“The long war has shown disgusting experiences: war profiteering, imbalance in the distribution of burdens, war phraseology”]. For a writer whose interest lies in the use of language, the abuse of the linguistic medium in propaganda rhetoric, or “war phraseology” as Musil describes it, counts among the horrifying aspects of the war period.

In the fragment, Musil envisions only two viable options for the geopolitical balance in Europe: “Es gibt zwei Möglichkeiten: Machtfrieden oder Auflösung des Staats in einer europäischen oder Weltgemeinschaft“ (GW 1341) [“There are two possibilities: an armed peace or the dissolution of the state in a European or world community”]. Musil sees in the dismantling of the nation-state a necessary condition for a European or world community. Musil persevered in this opinion for many years. In a letter to the chief editor of the *Prager Presse*, dated April 1921, Musil insists on the creation of a European community, pointing out that such an endeavor must break with the punitive and vindictive logic of the Versailles Treaty:

Uns Deutschen ist ein unerträgliches Unrecht zugefügt worden. Es ist unvermeidlich, dass wir nach einer Neugestaltung Europas streben. Es ist unvermeidlich, daß wir eine Revision der Frieden fordern. Aber sie soll keine *restitutio in integrum* sein, sondern sie muß aus der Machtpolitik und Revanchekette hinausführen. Statt einer Konstitution Europas in rivalisierenden Bestialstaaten muß eine Form der Vereinigung der in sich geeinten Völker untereinander gefunden werden, überstaatlich und möglichst unstaatlich. (*Briefe I*, 227)

An intolerable injustice was inflicted upon us Germans. It is inevitable that we strive for a reconfiguration of Europe. It is inevitable that we demand a revision of the peace terms. We do not wish a restoration to Europe's original condition, but a peace that defies the logic of power politics and retaliation. Instead of a constitution of Europe articulated in rivaling beast-states, we must find a form of unification of united nations, supranational and preferably not linked to the state.²⁵

Here, Musil calls for a revision of the peace treaties. His advocacy for a continental reorganization entails the redrawing of state borders on the map of Europe. While this approach suggests the constitution of an Austro-German state apparatus and that, consequently, nations should be separated in discreet administrative units, the author also implies that the state should wield limited power over individual choices in matters of nationality. This new Europe should be “unstaatlich,” by which Musil means that the state apparatus renounces its coercive power of appellation, i.e. the nation's calling upon the individual, determining to what nation a given person belongs. Nationality should not be imposed by the state apparatus, but should be subject to personal choice. A supranational Europe would leave behind the coercive aspects of the emergent nation-states. Musil's ideas about the freedom from administrative coercion in nationality matters stems from the author's formative years in the Czech-German city of Brno/Brünn, a bilingual and bicultural town that in 1899 became the appropriate setting for the Austro-Marxist Congress, which was invested in reshaping the cultural politics in

²⁵ My translation.

the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. It is very likely that Musil was aware of the proceedings of the congress, as his essays deal questions that seem directly inspired by the Austrian Social Democrats.

In the 1919 essay “Buridans Österreicher,” written immediately after the war, Musil returns to the question of Austria’s choice between an *Anschluss* with Germany or a Danube Federation. Musil puns on the classical philosophical paradox, in which an ass cannot decide between two equidistant and equally attractive haystacks and thus starves to death. Such is the situation for Austria, Musil believes, since Austria cannot decide between a pan-German state and its Central European calling. For Musil Austrian culture is “either international by nature or encoded in the German language” (Thiher 173). The polyglot and multicultural Habsburg Empire, in his view, could have functioned as a model for a pan-European transnationalism. He is at the same time keenly aware of the fact that this political potential remains largely unexpressed: “Wir hätten theoretisch mit unserer Völkerdurchdringung der vorbildlichste Staat der Welt sein müssen; mit solcher Sicherheit, daß sich eigentlich gar nicht sagen läßt, warum wir praktisch nicht darüber hinausgekommen sind, ein europäisches Ärgernis zu sein, gleich hinter der Türkei” (*GW* 1031) [“With our ethnic interpenetration, we should have been – in theory – the most exemplary country in the world, with such certainty that it is impossible to say why we were not able to put this theory into practice, becoming instead a European nuisance, right behind Turkey”]. The idea of Austria as a role model for Europe is a topic that Musil had already addressed before the war. As early as December 1912, Musil had written in the essay “Politik in Österreich” that the empire could have been a site of a new world order: “Österreich könnte ein Weltexperiment sein” [“Austria could be a

global experiment”]. It could have been the model of a “kulturellen Symbiose verschiedener Völker” (GW 993) [“cultural symbiosis of different peoples”]. The term “Völkerdurchdringung” suggests interpenetration, permeability and infusion. Identity is not relegated to a realm of static order, but is in continuous motion, molded by historical contingency. Through this cultural and ethnic interpenetration of the diverse populations in the Habsburg Empire, Musil revisits Nietzsche’s idea of the European persona, adapting it to the Austrian context. To understand the relationship between the terms “unstaatlich” and “Völkerdurchdringung” one needs to place the concepts within the context of debates on nationality in the late-Habsburg Empire.

According to Robert Kann, empire reformism “represented a psychological trend in Austrian politics rather than a definite theoretical program” (197). The person that came close to a presentation of the movement’s theories was the Hungarian Romanian Aurel Popovici who in 1906 proposed a United States of Great Austria (*Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich*). Popovici’s plan was to divide the empire in 15 federal member states, partly coinciding with the old crown lands, partly defined on ethno-linguistic grounds. A devoted subject to the Crown, Popovici showed an “unchallenged devotion to ... the dynasty,” envisioning a “monarchical federal empire” (Kann 198 and 202). In “Buridans Österreicher” Musil strongly cautions against a Danube Federation since it appears to him as the anachronistic and decrepit replica of a mourned Habsburg Empire. The author dismisses the idea of the federation, since it would be faced with the same problems as its constitutional predecessor. This is why Musil welcomes the idea of unification with Germany: “Die Idee ist jedenfalls besser als der Einfall, Österreich unter dem Namen Donauföderation als europäischen Naturschutzpark für vornehmen Verfall

weiterzuhegen” (GW 1032) [“The idea is certainly better than the notion to continue developing Austria into a posh European sanctuary under the name of Danube Federation”]. While the Habsburg Empire had created subjects that could be at home in different languages, religions and cultures, the rise of nationalism forced Habsburg subjects to artificially choose one nationality over another. For Musil, the most appropriate solution to the choice of nationality was offered by Austro-Marxism, a movement with which he became acquainted around the turn of the century.

From 1898 to 1902 Musil studied at the *Deutsche Technische Hochschule Brünn*, and enjoyed the cultural offerings of the German-Czech town. These years were important formative years for the author, who studied engineering while immersing himself in literature and philosophy. He frequently went to the local theatre and eagerly attended art exhibits. Philip Payne describes the small German-Czech city as a “provincial town [with] a vibrant cultural life; in addition to music, opera and the theater, it was open to influences from outside Austria-Hungary” (12). In Musil’s fiction the image of the Brno/Brünn appears as Ulrich’s nebulous background in *The Man without Qualities*. In 1899, while Musil was living there, the Austrian Social Democrats held their national party convention. The party members drafted an ambitious proposal of constitutional reform, articulated in five major points.²⁶ First, Austria should be transformed into a *Nationalitätenbundesstaat*, a democratic federation of nationalities. Second, an ethnic federalism was to replace the traditional crown land partitions, a point that represented a major shift in the internal organization of the empire. Third, each ethnic group should enjoy cultural autonomy and administer their internal affairs.

²⁶ For a discussion of the 1899 Congress see Kann, Robert. *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918*. New York: Octagon Books, 1970. Print.

Moreover, in each national division, the rights of linguistic and national minorities should be protected by appropriate legislation throughout the Empire. In order to avoid national privileges, the last point demanded that no state language should be recognized. While this request did not clarify if and how a language of mediation was to be put in place, it implicitly assumed a polyglot political establishment (Kann 155).

As the historian Robert Kann indicates, the proposal of a constitutional reform based on an ethnic federalism was not a new political concept, as it became part of public discussion during the 1848 revolutions. The convention, however, represented a starting point for the reflections of the two major theorists of the party, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer. Renner, who was looking at the United States and Switzerland as models for a new Austria, believed that the multinational state could tame the excesses of nationalism. He insisted on the creation of eight national governments as a replacement of the obsolete seventeen crown lands, whose estates had been established during the Middle Ages. In their federal reorganization of the empire into discrete national administrative units the Austrian Socialists had to address the thorny question of culturally, linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous areas (Kann 162). The pressing issue concerned the protection of minorities and the national status of subjects that felt at home in more than one culture or language. The large presence of migrant workers in the empire added to the complexity of the situation.

With the Brünn resolution as a starting point, Otto Bauer published *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage* in 1907, where he suggested that inhabitants of border areas often could develop multiple cultural allegiances, becoming members of different nations. Recognizing that nationality is an arbitrary concept – far

from the supposed natural character that nationalists were attributing to national membership – Bauer believed that the choice should be left to the individual. He introduced the radically democratic concept of personal autonomy in matters of nationality, arguing that each individual should have the freedom to choose his or her own nationality. Nationality would become a matter of personal choice, not an inescapable biological necessity. Bauer further suggested that, ultimately, members of two nations belong to neither nation, and that the “mixture of cultural elements creates a new character” (Bauer 54). Musil’s Austro-European subject and his views on a future multinational federalism in Europe owe much to Bauer’s notion of personal autonomy, an idea that reappears also in his essays of the early 1920s.

Musil’s process of maturation as a liberal intellectual, gifted with an acute intelligence and non-dogmatic thinking, reaches its climax in his essays between 1921 and 1923. In these articles, ambitiously broader in scope, he adopts a point of view that is ideologically independent, bordering nonetheless a sort of socialist internationalism. The essay “Die Nation als Ideal und Wirklichkeit,” written in December of 1921, is one of the most illuminating pieces in his essayistic canon. According to Allen Thiher, this essay is one of the earliest articles of the twentieth century to express a negative critique of racism (182). The rather long essay is an unforgiving criticism of systems of thought that have proved inadequate to the challenges that arose at the beginning of the century. The Catholic Church, socialism, racism and imperial nationalism have utterly failed. Musil’s fierce attack is mainly directed towards nationalism, which he associates with German Idealism. In his essays, the combination of logical rigor and caustic sarcasm also reminds us of Nietzsche’s writings.

Musil deconstructs racist assumptions of ethnic purity by stating in a quite Nietzschean manner that nations are “Rassengemische” (GW 1063) [“racial mixtures”]. With its witty imagery, his occasional comic tone reveals the talent of a humorous writer, a talent he would later employ in the pages of *The Man without Qualities*. Musil criticizes nationalist rhetoric that attributes moral virtues to all Germans: “Es wird dem Einzelnen vorgeschmeichelt, er besitze alles Wünschenswerte, so er sich nur auf die Tugenden seiner Rasse besinne: offenbar ein moralisches Schlaraffenland, unser glückliches Deutschland, wo die gebratenen Tugenden ins Maul fliegen!” (GW 1065) [“The individual is flattered with the idea that he or she possesses all things desirable, so that we reflect only on the virtues of our own race. Our happy Germany is evidently a moral paradise, where fried virtues fly into one’s mouth! ”]. The humorous criticism is accompanied by a theoretical analysis about the source of nationalism.

Musil continues to critique nationalism on philosophical grounds: “Auf [dem] Wege des Idealismus ist der Rassengedanke zur deutschen Selbstbeschädigung geworden” (GW 1065) [“Following the path of Idealism, racial theory became German self-harm”]. Musil’s criticism is subtle and radical at the same time. His condemnation of Idealism is not directly addressed to any individual philosopher. The consequence of Idealism is the belief in universal categories, in innate characteristics and unchanging essences, all elements that are the foundation of racism. If racism is detrimental to the Germans, then the Idealist tradition of which they are so proud has contributed significantly to this harm. In this genealogy of ideas (in itself a Nietzschean idea) one is reminded of Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, in which the philosophers traced the instrumentalization of reason, back to the Enlightenment

tradition.²⁷ While discussing the nationalist popular literature with its widely distributed pamphlets and improvised social criticism, Musil offers a concise summary of its themes and objectives:

Sie hat nicht Schädelindizes, Augenfarbe und Skelettproportionen, was nur wenig Menschen anlockt, zum Gegenstand, sondern Eigenschaften wie religiösen Sinn, Rechtlichkeit, staatsbildende Kraft, Wissenschaftlichkeit, Intuition, Kunstbegabung oder Toleranz des Denkens, von denen wir insgesamt kaum anzugeben wissen, worin sie bestehen, und spricht sie mit Hilfe eines anthropologischen Küchenlateins den angeblichen Rassen zu oder ab, weil sie glaubt der Nation Würde durchs Ohr zu flößen zu können, wenn sie mit der Stimme der Jahrtausende vor ihr bauchredet.
Man wird nicht leugnen können, daß ein gut Teil unseres nationalen Idealismus in dieser Denkkrankheit besteht. (GW 1064)

Its topics do not include skull indices, eye color and skeletal proportions, which attract only a small readership, but qualities such as religiosity, justice, nation-building force, science, intuition, artistic talent or tolerance of thought, all of which we hardly know what they are. If it ventriloquizes the voice of millennia, this literature supports or disqualifies the so-called races with the help of an anthropological dog Latin, in the belief it can bestow dignity upon the nation by funneling it through the ear.

One cannot deny that an important component of our national Idealism resides in this mental pathology.

Musil's sophisticated analysis operates on three levels. He undermines the philosophical foundation of nationalism, by defining German Idealism as a pathological manifestation of the mind. He then criticizes the pseudo-scientific pretense of medical disciplines, which operate under the assumption that racial characteristics are embedded in the anatomic structures of people. Skull measurements, chromatic variations of the iris, and the disposition of bones in the body are taken as indicators of scientific truth in the assessment of a racial group. Musil's invective reaches deeper and looks at the popular dissemination of such ideas. This coarse journalism does not bore its readership with

²⁷ A study of Musil's critique of Idealism allows for such historical approaches, which obviously lie beyond the scope of this dissertation.

pseudo-scientific explanations that the general public would not understand. It emphasizes, instead, the alleged moral integrity that comes with the purity of the race. By doing so, this propagandistic machine produces a literature of self-aggrandizement that also has a significant impact in the magazine's sales statistics.

Musil suspects that these ideological constructions are produced by “das Blendwerk des Kapitalismus” (GW 1061) [“the illusion of capitalism”], as the economy of production requires the mass consumption of commodities and the ideas that come with them. The ideas of illusion, delusion and imagination also come to inform his conception of the nation itself: “Gerade gesprochen, ist die Nation eine Einbildung in allen Fassungen, die man ihr gab” (GW 1071) [“Truthfully, the nation is an imagination in all its aspects”]. The fictional nature of the nation does not indicate, for Musil, that the concept should be dismissed. He recognizes the powerful allure that the idea of nation exerts on people and its capacity to mobilize the masses. This means that the national paradigm, for all its faulty and constructed nature, characterizes the present *Zeitgeist*. Musil explains the objective of the essay at the very end. We do not know what the political future holds. However, the only path that allows us to imagine, and that can ultimately lead to a future, post-national world is stripping the nation of its aura of natural and inevitable existence and the recognition that the nation is an imagined community.

In 1922 Musil publishes “Das hilflose Europa oder Reise vom Hundertsten ins Tausendste,” in which he attempts a broad diagnosis of the postwar period, a “historical psychoanalysis of his time” (Roth 15). In discussing the helpless condition of Europe, he resumes his discussion of European identity, reaching a turning point in his theoretical reflection. He criticizes the historicist notion that historical ages produce and articulate a

coherent human type that consistently expresses the monolithic ideology of its time. Musil points at the impossibility and the actual absurdity of a human type coherently expressing the values of its epoch. His attack is directed towards conceptualizations of the European as a coherent Western subject, being innately superior.

For Musil, humanity is not what it is, but what it does. External forces determine its behavior and not internal dispositions. He likens the human to a wanderer and the social, political and historical forces that influence his or her decisions to a madhouse: “Es ist ein babylonisches Narrenhaus; aus tausend Fenstern schreien tausend verschiedene Stimmen, Gedanken, Musiken, gleichzeitig auf den Wanderer ein, und es ist klar, daß das Individuum dabei der Tummelplatz anarchischer Motive wird, und die Moral mit dem Geist sich zersetzt” (*GW* 1088) [“It is a Babylonian madhouse. A thousand different voices, thoughts and music simultaneously scream out of thousand windows on the wanderer. It is clear that the individual becomes the playground of anarchical motifs, and that morality decomposes in the mind”]. Human beings become playgrounds for philosophical and ideological forces. In every individual these forces concentrate in different arrangements, and express themselves to different degrees. The result of such diversity is that humans are “fähig der Menschenfresserei wie der Kritik der reinen Vernunft” (*GW* 1081) [“capable of cannibalism or the Critique of Pure Reason”]. The conclusion that Musil draws is that human beings can be convinced to participate in the most extreme experiments such as the carnage of World War I and then easily move back to their everyday lives.

Musil expands his criticism of nationalism to Eurocentric chauvinism. Many supporters of a common European cultural tradition believed that their pacifism placed

them on a higher moral ground. Musil, however, shows that their Europeanism shared an ethnocentrism that was common to the very nationalists they were criticizing.

Through a concise and veiled allusion to Hermann Hesse, whom he never explicitly mentions in the text, Musil disparages the position of the German writer:

Ich erinnere mich noch recht gut des sympathischen Aufsatzes eines repräsentativen deutschen Dichters, in dem dieser staunte, daß der Mensch doch nicht so sei, wie er ihn, sonder so böß wie Dostojewskij ihn gesehen habe. Andre mögen sich vielleicht der Bedeutung erinnern, welche in unseren Moralsystemen dem "Charackter" zukommt, das ist der Forderung, daß der Mensch mit sich als mit einer Konstanten rechnen lasse, während eine komplizierte moralische Mathematik nicht nur möglich, sondern wahrscheinlich nötig ist. (GW 1080)

I remember very well a peculiar essay by a representative German writer, in which he marveled that human beings were not as good as he had imagined but as wicked as Dostoevsky had seen them.²⁸ Others might perhaps remember the meaning we attribute in our moral systems to "character," i.e. the claim that human beings can be reduced to a constant, while a more complicated moral mathematics is not only possible, but probably also necessary.

Advocating a "more complicated moral mathematics," Musil sees the necessity for a more scientific approach to the study of humankind. He opposes easy generalizations and stereotypes that attribute constant characteristics to nations or larger ethnic groups. He personally remembers an essay by a famous German writer who had made the alleged anthropological discovery that humankind was as evil as Dostoevsky's characters. With his almost cryptic comment, Musil makes a mockery of Hesse's Europe-essay "Die Brüder Karamasow oder Der Untergang Europas" written in 1919. Influenced by Oswald

²⁸ For Musil Dostoevsky was an important literary model. Josef Strutz analyzes the influence of the Russian novelist in Musil's novel. See "Dostojewskis *Dämonen* und *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*" *Dostojewski und die russische Literatur in Österreich seit der Jahrhundertwende*. Ed. A. Belabratow and A. Zerebin. St. Petersburg: Fantakt, 1994. 225-39. For a recent discussion on the relationship between Musil and Dostoevsky see Kraus, Justice. "Setting Dostoevsky Straight. Moral Murder and Critical Aesthetics in Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*" *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*. 46.4 (Nov 2010): 383-401.

Spengler and motivated by a post-war anti-Slavic resentment, Hesse denounced the alleged ‘Slavification’ of the European spirit:

Das Ideal der Karamasows, ein uraltes, asiatisch-okkultes Ideal, beginnt europäisch zu werden, beginnt den Geist Europas anzufressen. Das ist es, was ich den Untergang Europas nenne. Dieser Untergang ist eine Heimkehr zur Mutter, ist eine Rückkehr nach Asien, zu den Quellen, zu den Faustischen Müttern, und wird, ... wie jeder Tod auf Erden zu einer neuen Geburt führen. (321)

The ideal of the Karamazov brothers, of a primordial, Asiatic and occult ideal is becoming European, and is starting to erode the European mind. This is what I call the Decline of Europe. This decline is a return to the mother, a return to Asia, to the sources, to the Faustian mothers and will lead ... like every earthly death to a new birth.

Hesse attributes the decadence and ultimate downfall of Europe to the “Russian Man,” embodied by the sum of Dostoevsky’s Karamazov brothers. With ethnocentric condescension, Hesse characterizes “the Russian” as the primary cause for the demise of European civilization. The passage is rife with the stereotypes of an Orientalist tradition. He equates Russia with Asia, establishing a dichotomy between an enlightened West opposed to an occult and mysterious Orient. The Orient is the feminized Other, unchanging and timeless. Hesse sees the return to the mother as a dangerous regression to a matriarchal order that destabilizes European patriarchy and also implies an infantilization of Europe. This going back to the source of civilization is possible because historical change does not affect the East. According to Hesse, the decadent Russian mind is influencing the European West in what appears to be a menacing cultural invasion. This contamination risks being fatal as it is eroding the European spirit. It is literally gnawing on it (“anfressen”), eating it piece by piece. The rebirth and spiritual purification through a regression to the East, placed outside of history, is a typical

Orientalist trope that refuses to attribute to the eastern other the privilege of historical development and hence social and political progress.

The title of Hesse's article echoes Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* and with this gesture the author consciously places himself in the tradition of Spengler's criticism. Hesse's proximity to Spengler's cultural pessimism must have triggered Musil's caustic remarks. In March of the year before, Musil had published an essay "Geist und Erfahrung" with the witty subtitle "Anmerkungen für Leser, welche dem Untergang des Abendlandes entronnen sind" (GW 1042). Spengler represented everything Musil rejected with force. Most dangerous in Spengler's analysis was the scientific pretense of his dogmatic thinking. As an anti-Enlightenment thinker promoting myth, Spengler was promoting right-wing nationalist ideology that devalued liberal democratic values (Thiher 167). At this point of Musil's intellectual maturation, the Austrian author could not be farther removed from Spengler, Hesse's exclusionary essentialism and the general post-war rhetoric of identifying a scapegoat for World War I. Hesse's explanation of the moral degradation that shattered the utopia of a spiritual and political union in Europe through the malevolent influence of decadent Russia can only meet Musil's biting sarcasm.

Musil's major criticism is that the European is not annihilated by an external threat, but by causes that are intrinsic to Europe's cultural morphology and that were expressed also in his very own nationalist and proto-fascist remarks of his 1914 essay. A decade-long thought process, in fact, links the two essays. Only if the two essays are put side-by-side one can understand why Musil criticizes Hesse in such a manner. The passage certainly does not suggest any confession, but Musil's mockery nevertheless is a

kind of self-redemptive gesture with which he can distance himself from his own nationalist position of 1914. He tries to divest himself once and for all from a compromising intellectual burden, making peace with his liberal conscience. For Musil, Europe stagnantly dwells in a helpless state not only because of the rise of nationalist ideologies, but especially since the intellectual elite shares the same idealist philosophy. According to Musil, Hesse is attempting to save a lofty European ideal, but does not realize that he himself – through his Western European chauvinism – is the cause for such a crisis.

Musil's criticism of Spengler and Hesse continues in successive writings. A year later, in a fragmentary draft for the essay "Der deutsche Mensch als Symptom," the author notes that the European mind is not doomed, but, on the contrary, is still immature: "Der heutige Zustand des europäischen Geistes ist meiner Ansicht nach kein Verfall, sondern ein noch nicht vollzogener Übergang, keine Überreife, sondern Unreife" (GW 1367) ["The present state of the European mind is, in my opinion, not one of decadence, but of a not yet fully developed transition, not one of overripeness, but immaturity"]. Far from the apocalyptic tone of a cultural criticism that sees the imminent downfall of European civilization, Musil sees Europe in transition towards a new but still unknown configuration.

In an earlier draft for the same article, Musil maintains that Germany's response to the war was symptomatic for a larger state of affairs in Europe. The development in science and technology, and the improvement of social conditions caused a general optimism in the betterment of humankind. The advancement of the art and sciences, Musil claims, was an international phenomenon. Progress was hence associated with

internationalism, and closer cooperation between nations was desirable. The disillusionment caused by the war was devastating, since the conflict shattered an entire worldview. According to Musil, this profound disappointment caused a “seelische Verzweiflung” (GW 1356) [“psychological despair”]. Resuming the “moral mathematics” of his anthropological investigation, Musil offers a concise definition, which bears the scientific precision of a mathematical formula: “Ich habe nun wiederholt versucht, diese Verzweiflung, die sich in den verschiedensten Formen geäußert hat, zu ergründen. Ich möchte als Hauptformel dafür anführen, dass sich europäisches Leben und europäische Ideologie nicht decken” (GW 1356) [“I have now repeatedly tried to comprehend this despair that has been expressed in the most different forms. I would like to suggest the main formula, according to which European life and European ideology do not correspond”]. Musil’s experimental cultural criticism culminates with the formulation of a diagnosis. The explanation for the outbreak of the war, an event that took the European intellectual elite by surprise, is to be found in a mismatch between political theory and social practice, in the divergence of European life from European ideology. According to Musil, a certain European way of life, a growing identification with a cosmopolitan internationalism, does not correspond to the main ideologies in Europe, markedly nationalist and racist in their agenda. Musil’s perception of the war is certainly influenced by the experience of the Habsburg Empire, where the multilingualism and intercultural dialogue of everyday life constituted the concrete practice of Europeanism. The quotidian negotiations between people speaking different languages were a reality and a necessity that did not require the subscription to a theory of Europe.

Musil's evaluation of Europe is informed by the philosophical materialism inherent in empirical observation. He makes this clear in a sketch for the article "Das Theorem der Gestaltlosigkeit," where he states: "Es zeigt sich, daß die Frage des europäischen Menschen: was bin ich? eigentlich heißt: wo bin ich? Es handelt sich nicht um die Phase eines gesetzlichen Prozesses und nicht um ein Schicksal, sondern einfach um eine Situation" (GW 1375) ["It is evident that the question of the European persona: "what am I?" actually is, "where am I?" It is not the phase of a legal process and not a destiny, but simply a situation"]. Musil returns to his previous argument about a Europe that is "unstaatlich," claiming that the European persona does not correspond to the stage of a legal process that constricts a person into stereotypical or national categories. By insisting on the geographical and situational nature of the European question, Musil seems to have in mind the Habsburg local identities with their multiple ethnic, religious and linguistic allegiances described by Pieter Judson.

For Musil modernity has produced an ever-growing specialization in the realms of knowledge. For the individual this means that identification with larger groups (national and otherwise) gives way to series of small niches that together constitute the mosaic of modern identity. The expansion of scientific knowledge and the rapidly increasing specialization of a growing number of disciplines made the world unmanageable and made notions of European universalism untenable (*Modelle* 597).

Musil had recognized the end of European universalism in an essay fragment entitled "Literary Chronic," probably written around 1914. He had offered a definition of the new European that challenges obsolete paradigms of subjectivity. Discussing the myriad of literature whose target is an ever-specializing audience, Musil claims: "Der

Europäer war einst Christ oder Jude, heute ist er Neufriesianer, Wirtschaftsgeograph oder Farbchemiker auch mit der Seele” (GW 1338) [“The European was once a Christian or a Jew; today he is a follower of the new Frisian philosophy, an economic geographer or a color chemist also with a soul”]. The intent here is not to discount a European Judeo-Christian tradition, but to emphasize that its values have to work together with new identity markers.

An acutely subtle reader of his time, Musil had by this time come to the full realization that the European was torn between Europe’s utopian aspiration to an anti-colonial, federalist democracy and the growing reality of belligerent nationalism. The same contradiction, Musil believed, had characterized the late-Habsburg Empire. By the time of the essay in 1923, Musil was already working more systematically on drafts of his monumental novel, in which a broader characterization of the *homo europaeus habsburgensis* culminates in its fictional projections, which are Ulrich and Arnheim in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.

European Politics in Fiction: *The Man without Qualities*

The common metaphorical language directly links Musil’s political essays to *The Man without Qualities*. In the economy of the novel, Musil’s Europeanism can only be understood in its relation to Musil’s skillful portrayal of anti-nationalist sentiments and in conjunction with the representation of Habsburg Trieste. The pre-national logic of Leo Fischel and Count Leinsdorf has to be placed on a narrative continuum with young Ulrich’s radical subversion of nationalism and the never fully consummated incest with his sister Agathe. I will show how Ulrich undermines the patriarchal foundation of the

empire in an early school essay. Subsequently, I shall discuss the political implications of the incestuous relationship between Ulrich with his sister, where the narrator puns on the trope of a “European family of nations.” I then turn to the characters of Fischel and Leinsdorf and their relationship with Trieste, through which Musil partially rehabilitates the empire’s lack of nationalist commitment. In addition, I will explore the empty humanism of Diotima, who believes in a Europeanist mission of Austria; the capitalist imperialism of Arnheim, who works in collaboration with the Russian czar at the Peace Conference in The Hague (an event often praised by the fervent Europeanist Stefan Zweig) and simultaneously plans the colonial exploitation of Galician oil fields; the highly ineffective pacifism of Friedel Feuermaul, and the comic militarism of General Stumm von Bordwehr, whose stubborn and obsolete adherence to the doctrine of a European balance of powers appears as a faint echo of the post-Napoleonic order established with the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

The attempt at a cultural and political diagnosis of prewar Europe that had occupied Musil’s critical writings puts on a fictional garment in *The Man without Qualities*. At the very incipit of the monumental novel, Musil sets the narrative within the geographic space of continental Europe and employs tropes from his essays. In an essayistic fragment of 1918, in which Musil comments on the end of the war, Musil employs a meteorological metaphor to describe the mood in Europe: “Eine ungeheure Flaute lag über Europa und wurde wohl am drückendsten in Deutschland empfunden” (GW 1343) [“An enormous depression hung over Europe and it was felt probably most oppressively in Germany”]. Later in the text, Musil quite prophetically warns that “wenn der Krieg ohne die Verwirklichung einer neuen Idee endigt, so wird ein unerträglicher

Druck über Europa lasten bleiben“ (GW 1345) [“if the war does not end with the realization of a new idea, then an unbearable pressure will continue to hang over Europe”]. In the famous beginning of *The Man without Qualities* Musil deploys the same imagery: “Über dem Atlantik befand sich ein barometrisches Minimum; es wanderte ostwärts, einem nach Rußland lagernden Maximum zu, und verriet noch nicht die Neigung, diesem nördlich auszuweichen (MoE 9) [“A barometric low hung over the Atlantic. It moved eastward toward a high-pressure area over Russia without as yet showing any inclination to bypass this high in a northerly direction” (MwQ 3)]. The barometric low does not simply indicate a meteorological condition, but also a depressive mood that hangs over Europe. This geographic context of Europe functions as the stage for the geopolitical destiny of what the author calls *Kakaniien*, a pun on the name of the imperial and royal monarchy, officially designated after the 1867 Compromise with Hungary as “kaiserlich und königlich” and “kaiserlich-königlich.”

Musil’s work of fiction is an essayistic novel with large parts of the narration developing as theoretical reflections of the narrator or as philosophical musings of the protagonist Ulrich. In his comparative study *Essayism: Conrad, Musil, and Pirandello* Thomas Harrison defines Musil’s essayism as a “paradigm for both thinking and acting,” and recognizes in the “ontology of the essay” a firm “ground for an ethical and cognitive methodology” (4) that pervades all of Musil’s writings. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental discrepancy between Musil’s essays proper and his essayistic novel. While in the essays the point of view of a monothematic argumentation tries to unravel the intricacies and contradictions of European politics, the novel displays a multiplicity of conflicting viewpoints that range from a an imperial idea of Europe to fascist, democratic

and/or federalist conceptions of the continent. In this sense, McBride rightfully reads the novel through the Bakhtinian perspective of polyphony and heteroglossia:

When considered in light of these Bakhtinian categories, Musil's essayistic texts appear to be carried by a monolithic authorial voice. That is to say, they display a fundamentally monological quality that allows for a minimal degree of ambiguity. The novel, by contrast, exemplarily embodies the Bakhtinian idea of heteroglossia in that it stages a cacophony of rivaling perspectives, entrusted not only to different characters but also to an extremely elusive narrating voice that often imperceptibly blends into the interior monolog of the character. (131)

The multifarious collection of characters in the novel moves along a wide spectrum of political positions. The discrepancies, however, are not constructed around oppositions between characters inclined towards federalist democracy versus nationalist totalitarianism, or Austro-Marxism versus Pan-Germanism. They are often contained within individual characters that display fundamental ideological ambiguities, in which Musil portrayed the profound contradictions of his time. The actions, desires and aspirations of all main and secondary characters revolve around and move towards the inescapable *telos* of World War I, as well as its cultural and geopolitical implications in Austria and Europe.

The destiny of Europe is inextricably entangled with the project of the Parallel Campaign, the plan, as we will see later, for a celebration of the seventieth jubilee of the Emperor Franz Joseph. In its evolution, the Parallel Campaign takes a paradoxical course. It is initially conceived of as a patriotic celebration of the emperor and a peace conference. It gradually turns, however, into a spiral of half-heartedly planned endeavors, such as a symbolic affirmation of Austria's imperial mission, in which the safeguarding of colonial interests gains in prominence; a public expression of a xenophobic nationalism that denies constitutional rights to the non-German populations of the

empire; a risky act of diplomatic gambling, with the intention of showing off Austria's military strength to the rest of Europe. Finally the haphazard planning reaches its climax with declarations of open belligerence, since the Campaign's function was, in Musil's intention, the prelude to the declaration of war.

In addition to chronic procrastination, an overwhelmingly dysfunctional bureaucracy and sheer incompetence, the variously assorted and often conflicting motivations of the committee members prevent anything from getting accomplished. Different forms of patriotism, nationalism, imperial and democratic federalism, along with a pacifist Europeanism make up the wide range of politically charged motivations that contribute to the stagnation in the committee's decision-making process. As we will see shortly, among these standpoints the pre-national logic of *Landespatriotismus* adds to the numerous political positions and ideological directions that ultimately paralyze the plans of the Parallel Campaign. In chapter 22 of book I Count Leinsdorf gives a starting impulse and an initial direction to the Parallel Campaign, articulated in four fundamental points that revolve around the figure of the Emperor as a guarantor of peace, the role of Austria within a European framework and aristocratic and bourgeois values. The initial roadmap of the Campaign is therefore: "Friedenskaiser, europäischer Markstein, wahres Österreich und Besitz und Bildung" (*MoE* 87) ["Emperor of Peace, European Milestone, True Austria, Property and Culture" (*MwQ* 88)]. We will see how the different members of the Campaign interpret these four guiding principles. They are all keenly aware of the diplomatic implications of the Campaign and how the political life of the Dual Monarchy was an "Ansteckungsherd für Europa" (*MoE* 136) ["a focus of infection for Europe" (*MwQ* 143)]. Among the characters directly involved in the planning of the Emperor's

jubilee, Ulrich is an outsider who is not politically invested. At the beginning of the novel, Ulrich has just returned from abroad. He is an outsider and his aging father, for the sake of social and professional connections, urges him to partake in the meetings of his distant cousin Diotima, whose salon hosts the most distinguished personalities of the Austrian upper class.

In the novel, the narrator famously discusses Austrian identity in the Habsburg Empire. According to the narrating voice, the Habsburg was often faced with the difficult question of self-definition. To the question who the Austrian really is, the preferred answer was: “Ich bin ein Pole, Tscheche, Italiener, Friauler, Ladin, Slowene, Kroat, Serbe, Slowake, Ruthene oder Wallache, und das war der sogenannte Nationalismus” (*MoE* 451) [“I am a Pole, a Czech, an Italian, Friulian, Ladino, Slovene, Croat, Serb, Slovak, Ruthenian, or Wallachian – and this was his so-called nationalism” (*MwQ* 491)]. Musil emphasizes the multiple attachments of any given subject of the monarchy, who could simultaneously identify with different ethnic and linguistic groups. In the Habsburg Empire it did not constitute a contradiction to identify with the Austrian German-speaking culture, feel at ease with multiple languages, be at home in multicultural areas such as Bohemia or Trieste, and belong to the Czech nation. The irony that the narrator points out is that this *Landespatritismus* is mistaken for the “so-called nationalism.”

The relationship between the protagonist Ulrich and the Austrian homeland is what makes him first and foremost a man without patriotic qualities. At the beginning of the fifth chapter, the narrator recounts an episode during the protagonist’s schooling, when an essay written by a teenage Ulrich on patriotism in Austria (*Vaterlandsliebe*) stirred up much controversy. Ulrich offers an interpretation of love of country that

dismays parents and educators alike. Much to his father's chagrin, young Ulrich shows early on a tendency towards free thinking and antipatriotic cosmopolitanism. Ulrich is convinced that "ein ernster Vaterlandsfreund sein Vaterland niemals das beste finden dürfe" (*MoE* 18-9) ["anyone who really loved his country must never regard it as the best country in the world" (*MwQ* 13)]. Carried away by what seems to him a profound thought, the young student continues with an additional insight with wide-ranging implications:

Ja mit einem Blitz, der ihn besonders schön dünkte, obgleich er mehr von seinem Glanz geblendet wurde, als daß er sah, was darin vorging, hatte er diesem verdächtigen Satz noch den zweiten hinzugefügt, daß wahrscheinlich auch Gott von seiner Welt am liebsten im Coniunctivus potentialis spreche ... denn Gott macht die Welt und denkt dabei, es könnte ebensogut anders sein. (*MoE* 18-9)

Then, in a flash of inspiration that seemed to him especially fine, although he was more dazzled by its splendor than he was clear about its implications, he added to this dubious statement a second, that God himself probably preferred to speak of His world in the subjunctive of possibility ... for God creates the world and thinks while He is at it that it could just as well be done differently. (*MwQ* 13-4)

Ulrich's school essay is not met with approval. The boy is suspected of calumny against the fatherland and blasphemy against God. The paternal chastisement for Ulrich's insubordination could not be more ironic. He is transferred to a Belgian private school, where he will nurture even more his cosmopolitanism. Quite contrary to his father's intention, the son, instead of correcting and redeeming himself, continues to nurture his dubious ideas: "Dort lernte Ulrich, seine Mißachtung der Ideale anderer international zu erweitern" (*MoE* 19) ["There Ulrich learned to give his disdain for other people's ideals international scope" (*MwQ* 14)].

Ulrich's intercultural and transnational citizenship subverts the ideological foundations of social practices, politics and religion as represented by his triptych of father figures. The narrator presents in this early characterization of the protagonist a

tendency that Ulrich will develop further in his adult life. Young Ulrich might have not fully grasped the reasons that motivated his harsh punishment. Ulrich's intention was to simply express his opinions, driven by the innocence of a child who does not realize the far-reaching implications of his statements. In a single school essay Ulrich simultaneously subverts three pillars of society, undermining patriarchal authority, the legitimacy of the imperial government, and a foundational theological principle. In his attack against the trinity of fathers made up of his *pater familias*, the imperial *Kaiservater* and God Father, he challenges the validity of institutions such as family, state and church. The key of interpretation of Ulrich's school essay is offered by a diary entry of the late 1930s. Musil writes: "Vater, Landesvater, Gottvater: es war die Tonleiter des alten Österreich in der Kindheit meines Vaters ... Und während die Kinder aufwuchsen, wandelte sich das alte Österreich; Gottvater tat der Autorität des Landesvaters Abbruch" (*Tagebücher*, 1: 963) ["Father, Father of the Nation, God Father: this was the scale of old Austria during my father's childhood ... And while the children grew up, old Austria was transforming itself, God Father was questioning the authority of the Father of the Nation"].

Ulrich distances himself from the patriotic and patriarchic values of the empire and his own close connections to the government. The father is angered by the calumny against the *fatherland*, which indirectly calls into question his authority as head of the family and his own close connection to the government. This school paper initiates the intergenerational conflict between the conservative father and Ulrich, who constantly questions traditional values. With his "Möglichkeitssinn," the sense of possibility, Ulrich introduces the notion of a theological and cosmological skepticism, which also calls into

question the political doctrine of royalty by divine right and in this way undermines the emperor's entitlement to the throne. Young Ulrich's challenge of the emperor's right to rule is a touchy subject, after the Compromise (*Ausgleich*) of 1867 between Austria and Hungary, which downgraded the Austrian emperor to Hungarian king. In Ulrich's destabilizing logic it is not surprising that later, in one of his attempts to become a great man, he admires and chooses as his inspiration Napoleon "der Europa auf den Kopf zu stellen versuchte" (*MoE* 35) ["who had tried to turn Europe upside down" (*MwQ* 31)], a political profanity in the Austria built upon Metternich's Restoration. The circumstance that Ulrich develops these ideas in his Belgian exile adds insult to the injury. One cannot help but noticing that Napoleon's critical defeat occurred in Waterloo, a city in Belgium. It looks as though Ulrich wishes to resume, in his boyish fantasy of conquest and grandeur, Napoleon's work exactly where the French emperor interrupted it. The years in the school, in the end, destabilize all such dreams of glory.

In addition to Ulrich's indifference to the fatherland, the young boy fuels his father's anger with a theological profanation, which subverts the biblical myth of creation in Genesis. According to biblical tradition, God reacts to the creation of the world with recurrent satisfaction: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1,13). Re-writing the creation myth is nothing less than utter heresy in the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to Ulrich, the order of the world is not supported by philosophical necessity, but by a fundamental contingency whose origin has a divine stamp of approval. God could create things in one way, or in a radically different fashion.

The questions of Ulrich's essay are not simply theological in nature, but extend to the political relationship between Catholic Austria and the Church. The Concordat

between the Habsburg monarchy and the Holy See of 1855 gave the Roman Catholic Church ample powers over matters of education. Teachers in Catholic schools were placed under the supervision of the bishops. Political pressure from the liberals forced Emperor Franz Joseph to repeal the highly controversial agreement in 1870.²⁹ While the novel does not give precise dates about Ulrich's school years, at the time of Ulrich's essay the Concordat must have been at least a topic of heated debates, whether it was still enforced or had already been repealed.

The episode exposes the irreconcilable generational conflict between fathers and sons in the late-Habsburg Empire. In the rest of the novel, the physical absence of the father relegates the parent to a peripheral role. The reader almost never perceives his presence, except for the "briefliche Ermahnung" (*MoE* 77) ["letter of admonition" (*MwQ* 77)] he sends to Ulrich. The formal, stiff and bureaucratic tone in the letter's language shows an emotional distance that reveals the father's inability to understand the needs and aspirations of an entire generation. The letter that Ulrich's father sends to his son is a reversal of Kafka's *Letter to the Father*, in which the son addresses his parent. Together with Freud, who attributed a central role to the conflictual relationship with the father figure in psychoanalysis, these literary documents testify to the disintegration of a precise social order. In a society based on gerontocracy, the political power of the aging monarch was reflected in the assumed moral authority of seniors. The static world of the patriarchy, based on the privilege of the aristocracy, was now giving way to the rise of a new bourgeois order, characterized by the dynamics of social mobility.

²⁹ For liberal opposition to the 1855 Concordat see Pieter Judson's *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire 1848-1914*. Jackson: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Ulrich's essay epitomizes the crisis of an old world that is not only under attack, but also irremediably destined to vanish. Politically, the old Habsburg world is facing its ultimate process of destabilization. The regional *Landespatriotismus*, a remnant of an older feudal system and social order, is about to be swept away by the swift rise of nationalism associated with the younger generation (of which Gerda Fischel and Hans Sepp are important examples in the novel). The imperial structure creaks under the pressure of democratic demands on the one side and larger ethnic autonomy on the other.

The father's futile attempt to exert any influence on Ulrich appears as the fainting echo of patriarchal rule. Their father's death represents a liberation for Ulrich, but especially for his sister Agathe, who feels emboldened to leave her husband. After their father's death the siblings falsify his testament and thus reject even his last wish. In the falsification of the document, which obviously constitutes a crime under Austrian law, Ulrich and Agathe commit a symbolic patricide. This killing of the father is followed by a retreat from society and its moral constraint, which allows for the exploration of an alternative sexual morality in the form of incest.

The episode in Ulrich's school years is crucial, since these early socio-political positions are an important indicator for developing tendencies in his adult life. The school paper is particularly useful in understanding the political implications of the incestuous relationship between Ulrich and his sister Agathe. Musil confirms the connection between the incest and war in his notes: "U-Ag [Ulrich and Agathe – S.P.] ist eigentlich ein Versuch des Anarchismus in der Liebe. Der selbst da negativ endet. Das ist die tiefe Beziehung der Liebesgeschichte zum Krieg" (*MoE* II, 1976) ["Ulrich and Agathe is

really the attempt of anarchism in matters of love. Which ends negatively. This is the profound relationship to the war”].

Musil first explores the incest *topos* in the poem “Isis und Osiris” published in 1923 by *Die Neue Rundschau*. The brief poem represents a rare literary document among the numerous pages of a novelist more at ease with prose and drama. Yet, the elegant and compelling fusion of lyric and elegiac tones reveals Musil’s strong aptitude to poetic expression. The poem’s setting is a mythic and cosmic space in which the siblings consummate their love amidst the sun and the stars. Their celestial wanderings are a result of their brothers’ chase of Osiris, who intend to slay him. In the cyclical moment of reunion, the physical union between Isis and Osiris is not only sexual but also consummated through the act of eating their respective organs. This is an original interpretation of the myth. As Genese Grill puts it: “Musil’s interpretation of the myth adds a new element to the traditional story: his poem imagines the ultimate union of the sibling lovers through an erotic theophagic exchange. The god and goddess eat each other” (340). In the traditional version offered by Plutarch, Osiris was slain by his jealous brother Seth, who cut him into 14 pieces, throwing his remains into the Nile. Their sister Isis mourns the death of Osiris, and seeks the dismembered corpse of her brother-husband. She is able to recover all parts, with the exception of his genitals, for which she moulds a substitute of wax. This wax penis becomes the symbol of Osiris in his function of god of corn and crops.

In Musil’s diaries, the author identifies in the Egyptian creation myth of the siblings Isis and Osiris the narrative nucleus of the relationship between Ulrich and Agathe. He writes: “An Isis-Osiris-Gedicht erinnert. Es enthält in nucleo den Roman.

Man hat dem Roman Perversität vorgeworfen: Entgegnung: Das Archaische und das Schizophrene äußern sich künstlerisch übereinstimmend, trotzdem sind sie total-verschieden. Ebenso [das] kann das Geschwistergefühl pervers [,] und es kann Mythos sein” (*Tagebücher* 847) [“Reminds me of the Isis-Osiris poem. Contains the novel in a nutshell. It has been accused of perversity. Answer: In artistic expression, the archaic and schizophrenic overlap, are however totally different. In the same way a sexual feeling for a sibling can be pervert or mythological”].³⁰ In the novel, the siblings do not grow up together and reunite only after their father’s death. In the novel, the death of the parent does not also signify the end of patriarchal constraints, but also carries implications in Ulrich’s outlook on nationalism. In chapter 24 of Book II, the narrator filters Ulrich’s reflections on the nature of incest:

Ein inneres Verbot, eine Blutsverwandte nicht mit männlicher Liebe anzusehen, gibt es ja nicht, das ist nur Sitte oder auf Umwegen der Moral und Hygiene begründbar; auch hatte der Umstand, daß sie nicht gemeinsam erzogen worden waren, zwischen Ulrich und Agathe das sterilisierte Geschwisterempfinden, wie es in der europäischen Familie herrscht, am Entstehen verhindert. (*MoE* 897)

There is, after all, no such thing as a natural inhibition against looking at a blood relation with sexual interest; it is only a matter of custom, or to be explained by the detours of morality or eugenics. Also, the circumstance that they had not grown up together had prevented the sterilized brother-sister relationship that is prevalent in European families. (*MwQ* 973)

The expression “European family” in the passage offers a historico-political key of interpretation. The narrator refers to a traditional family nucleus in Europe, but the reference to the widespread expression indicating the European state family previously at

³⁰ Musil’s fascination with the sister figure has a biographic background. His older sister Elsa died before he was born. The author mentions a “cult” for her in his diaries. For the Isis-Osiris myth in Musil’s poem and novel see Götz, Müller. “Isis und Osiris: Die Mythen in Robert Musils Roman *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 102 (1983): 583-604. Print and von Jagow, Bettina. “Liebe und Tabu: Zum Kulturtransfer des Isis-Osiris-Mythos in die Moderne: Ingeborg Bachmanns *Der Fall Franza* und Robert Musils *Isis und Osiris*“ *Orbis Litterarum* 58 (2003): 116-134. Print.

the center of General Stumm von Bordwehr and Count Leinsdorf's diplomatic arguments,³¹ adds a sociopolitical layer to the passage that blurs the boundaries between Ulrich's interior monologue and the narrative voice. According to a political interpretation of the passage, a sterilized emotional connection seems to be dominant also among the members of the European state family. Only sexual relationships among the members of these ethnic families enable the potential for a fruitful, European hybridity. For Ulrich, incest is the gateway to the Other Condition ("der andere Zustand"), a mystical and ecstatic order or a "state of pure innerness that may either be like a mystic's state or may be like an experience of art in which art replaces temporarily the everyday world" (Thiher 198). The Other Condition may be "experienced as much by the thinker as by the lover or religious enthusiast" (Harrison 149), and is at the same time "a secularized equivalent to the realm of freedom and morality" that breaks the dominant paradigm of interpersonal and national separation (McBride 107). Musil exposes the highly ambiguous nature of the widespread metaphor that sees European countries as a large family of nations. With its origins in diplomatic lingo, the expression implies strong cultural and political ties between nations, connections so close that they appear reminiscent of familial bonds. A family of European countries suggests kinship, a brotherhood and sisterhood of nations striving towards common goals. At the same time, however, the familial logic of this relationship entails the taboo of incest that operates

³¹ The metaphor of a European family of nations is a common trope in the speeches of Stumm von Bordwehr (*MoE* 171 and 180) and Count Leinsdorf. The count, quite interestingly for the discussion on Arnheim, shows the ambivalences within the "family" by excluding Prussia: "Wenn Seine Erlaucht von einer europäischen Staatenfamilie sprach, die sich jubelnd um den greisen Kaiser-Patriarchen scharen sollte, so nahm er immer und stillschweigend Preußen aus. ... Es gibt gewisse Familiengefühle, die besonders heftig sind, und dazu gehörte die vor dem Krieg in der europäischen Staatenfamilie allgemein verbreit gewesene Abneigung gegen Deutschland" (*MoE* 512) ["When His Grace spoke of a European family of nations that was to throng joyfully around the venerable Emperor Patriarch, he always tacitly excluded Prussia ... There are certain family feelings of a special intensity, and one of these was the widespread dislike of Germany among the European family of states" (*MwQ* 558 and 559)].

according to a categorical imperative of prohibition. If the nations of Europe enjoy brotherly and sisterly relations, incest prohibits the mixing that Nietzsche had envisioned in his concept of the ethnically mixed “good European.”

In the mystical and erotic tendencies moving towards the consummation of incest, the siblings quite unknowingly revive the traditional sexual politics of the Habsburg monarchy expressed in the motto “*Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube*” [“Let the others wage war, you happy Austria, marry!”]. According to a practice that dated back to the Middle Ages, the Habsburg monarchy sought favorable diplomatic relations and peaceful coalitions with other European powers through the strategic placement of inter-dynastic marriages. Ulrich and Agathe’s incest operates within the recuperation of a pre-national diplomatic logic, based on the political instrumentalization of sexuality practiced by the Habsburg monarchy. In the pre-national political order, marital practices in the aristocracy were subordinated to the reason of state. With the rise of nationalism, the incest taboo promotes ethnic separation and prohibits the amalgamation of nations. Ulrich projects the “Other Condition” into the future of Europe by recuperating the potential for an ethnically hybrid society in the Habsburg past. Already in the earliest drafts of the novel, Musil associates incest with Nietzsche’s notion of the good European, placed beyond the bourgeois concepts of good and evil. In an outline for a later scene, Anders, the prototype for Ulrich, engages in sexual intercourse with his sister – a coitus that is never consummated in the final versions of the novel. After the “*Coitus bei wundervollem Sonnenuntergang*” [“Sexual intercourse with beautiful sunset“] a brief note adds: “*Wir guten Europäer*” (*MoE* II, 1958). In Musil’s note sheets to the novel,

Ulrich and Agathe's incest replicate the incestuous practices of the Habsburg aristocracy and becomes the precursor to a ethnically hybrid, post-national Europe.

In the preceding chapter, we have assessed not only the economic and commercial centrality of Trieste in the Habsburg Empire, but also its eminent presence in the copious production of cultural memory regarding the former Austro-Hungarian state. The city of Trieste also occupies a central role in Musil's novel. From the biographic accounts it appears that Musil briefly visited Trieste as a child, while on vacation with his parents. It was common for Austrian families of privilege to spend their holidays in Trieste, Fiume (today Rijeka) and other vacation resorts along the Adriatic coast (Frisé 185). As an adult, Musil came to understand Trieste's importance first hand.³² In her book *Robert Musil and the Culture of Vienna*, Hannah Hickman traces Musil's activity as a lieutenant of an infantry regiment during World War I, reporting that the author "spent the first three years of the war in the then Austrian region of the Dolomites and on the frontier north of Trieste, the whole area being threatened by the claims of the Italian Irredentist movement" (77). His battalion was strategically stationed in the vicinity of the road that connected Trieste to Ljubljana (*Tagebücher* 195).

Musil's military service on the Italian war front must have been one of the reason that will later draw him to the literature of Trieste, namely to Italo Svevo's *La Coscienza di Zeno*, where the Italian novelist fictionalizes the very war battles in which Musil actively participated. In a diary entry from 6 January 1930 Musil notes that he and his wife Martha are reading Svevo's *La Coscienza di Zeno* in German translation: "Sowohl

³² Another prominent Austrian writer that visited Trieste is Franz Kafka. Kafka worked from October 1907 to July 1908 in the Prague branch of the *Assicurazioni Generali*, an insurance company based in Trieste. Fleeing from his fiancée Felice Bauer, Kafka visited Trieste in September 1913. At that time Joyce was living in the Adriatic city, but it does not appear that the two writers met there.

Martha wie ich haben in den letzten Tagen mit großem Vergnügen *Zeno Cosini* von Italo Svevo gelesen“ (*Tagebücher und Aphorismen* 309) [“In the last days, both Martha and I have read with great pleasure *The Confessions of Zeno*”]. Four days later, the diary entry shows that Martha continues to read Svevo, this time with less enthusiasm: “Lese seit vorgestern *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Martha liest Svevo, *Senilità*, ist aber lange nicht entzückt wie von *Zeno Cosini*“ (311) [“Since the day before yesterday I am reading *The Last Days of Humanity*. Martha is reading *As a Man Grows Older* but was significantly more delighted with *Zeno Cosini*“]. While reading Svevo’s novel triggers Martha’s curiosity about the Triestine novelist, Musil starts reading Karl Kraus. Musil must have been interested in Svevo’s description of World War I because the next book the Austrian author reads is Karl Kraus’s depiction of the war’s absurdity.

Quite typically for Musil, the character development of secondary and allegedly minor figures in *The Man without Qualities* becomes the vehicle for the author’s political reflections, into which feeds his interest in Trieste.³³ The Jewish banker Leo Fischel identifies with the multi-ethnic merchant middle class of Habsburg Trieste, where he was raised. Fischel’s Europeanism is an unlikely combination of economic calculations and a liberal-humanist tradition of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. The city’s paradigmatic character within the larger Austrian context is further made explicit in what I call the “Trieste chapter” of the novel, where Count Leinsdorf bitterly complains about the growing Italian Irredentism in the city. In the narrative progression towards the

³³ In his book *Politik und Literatur in Musils Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Am Beispiel des Dichters Feuermaul* Josef Strutz argues that especially marginal characters in the novel are paradigmatic for Musil’s intellectual subtlety and political thought [(“Gerade an Randfiguren zeigt sich modellhaft die gedankliche Hintergründigkeit, die Musil erreichen will“ (12)]. Through the pacifist Friedel Feuermaul, Strutz argues, Musil channels his own critique of a naïve and abstract pacifism that is devoid of any diplomatic and political currency. By the same token, Musil’s socio-political commentary regarding Trieste is channelled through the secondary characters of Fischel and Leinsdorf.

destructive *telos* of World War I, the nationalist demonstrations in Trieste become ominously predictive of events to come. The narrating voice comments on the growing tension in the Fischel family, made up of a Jewish father, an anti-Semitic mother, and a proto-fascist daughter:

Dieser Glaube an die unerschütterlichen Richtlinien der Vernunft und des Fortschritts hatte es ihm lange Zeit ermöglicht, über die Ausstellungen seiner Frau mit einem Achselzucken oder einer schneidenden Antwort hinwegzugehen. Aber da es das Unglück gewollt hatte, daß sich im Verlauf dieser Ehe die Zeitstimmung von den alten, Leo Fischel günstigen Grundsätzen des Liberalismus, den großen Richtbildern der Freigeistigkeit, der Menschenwürde und des Freihandels abwandte, und Vernunft und Fortschritt in der abendländischen Welt durch Rassentheorien und Straßenschlagworte verdrängt wurden, so blieb er auch nicht unberührt davon. Er hatte diese Entwicklung anfangs schlechtweg geleugnet, genau so wie Graf Leinsdorf gewisse “unliebsame Erscheinungen öffentlicher Natur” zu leugnen pflegte; er wartete darauf, daß sie von selbst verschwinden würden. (*MoE* 204)

The faith in immutable guidelines of reason and progress had for a long time enabled him to dismiss his wife’s carplings with a shrug or a cutting retort. But since misfortune had decreed that in the course of this marriage the mood of the times would shift away from the old guidelines of liberalism that had favored Leo Fischel—the great guiding ideals of tolerance, the dignity of man, and free trade—and reason and progress in the Western world would be displaced by racial theories and street slogans, he could not remain untouched by it either. He started by flatly denying the existence of these changes, just as Count Leinsdorf was accustomed to deny the existence of certain “unpleasant political manifestations” and wait for them to disappear of their own accord. (*MwQ* 219)

Fischel’s blind faith in the Enlightenment values of equality and tolerance leads him to simply ignore the rise of racial theories, which are also gaining ground in his own household. Leinsdorf, the narrator underscores, is equally myopic believing that the changes in the political climate are transitory. Fischel and Leinsdorf have in common the same nostalgia for a liberal Trieste that was unresponsive to the allure of nationality. They also share the same political shortsightedness that prevents them from recognizing the evident fact that these times of national indifference are slowly coming to a bitter end.

In the novel, the narrator emphasizes that Leinsdorf and Fischel are like-minded characters. Let me first trace Fischel's background before analyzing Leinsdorf's disappointment with the nationalist turn in Trieste.

Leo Fischel is first introduced in chapter 35 of Book I as an old acquaintance of the protagonist Ulrich. Fischel is unenthusiastically surprised to find in the side compartment of his briefcase an invitation, extended to him by Count Leinsdorf, to the meetings of the Parallel Campaign. The Austrian elite learns that Prussia intends to celebrate in 1918 the thirtieth year of Kaiser Wilhelm II's reign. Motivated to outshine the Prussians, the Austrians plan to celebrate the seventieth jubilee of the Emperor Franz Joseph, which occurs in the same year. The request to participate in the preparations for the emperor's jubilee was contained in a circular missive to which Fischel had not responded "weil sein gesunder Geschäftssinn vaterländischen Aktionen, die von hohen Kreisen ausgingen, abhold war" (*MoE* 133) ["because his sound business sense disinclined him from having anything to do with patriotic movements originating in high circles" (*MwQ* 139)]. Fischel's antiracism emerges later, in chapter 37 of book II in the context of the patriotic actions, where he scolds General von Bordwehr: "Man muss die Menschen nicht nach der Rasse unterscheiden, sondern nach Verdienst" (*MoE* 1015-6) ["People must be judged not by their race, but on their merit" (*MwQ* 1103)].

As the managing director of the Lloyd Bank, Fischel considers sound business acumen utterly incompatible with nationalist propaganda. Fischel's free-market liberalism operates on a supranational level. According to the banker, nationalist interests, and the economic protectionism it entails, harm international business transactions. Count Leinsdorf seems to appreciate the perceived dichotomy between good

business practices and nationalist fervor, as he uses Fischel's bank for his dealings on international stock markets (*MoE* 133, *MwQ* 140). Fischel's suspicions of the Parallel Campaign reside in the slogans that Diotima had suggested. He "stellte sich unter wahrer Vaterlandsliebe und wahrem Österreich überhaupt nichts vor" (*MoE* 135) ["could form no concept at all of true patriotism or the true Austria" (*MwQ* 142)]. Fischel's distrust of the nationalist direction of the Parallel Campaign needs to be read in the context of a global capitalist mentality. It is significant that Musil makes Fischel the director of the Lloyd Bank, a British banking institution founded in the 18th century. The name of the bank, in fact, inspired the designation of the Austrian Lloyd Steamship Company (in German *Österreichischer Lloyd*), a navigation company founded in 1836 from the merger of several insurance companies in Trieste. The company possessed its own shipbuilding yards and was the biggest navigation firm in the empire. After the Austrian Lloyd was declared property of the Habsburg monarchy, it became the symbol of the empire's global maritime commerce. Its commercial routes extended to the Suez Canal, later including, among other destinations, lines to Constantinople, Bombay, Singapore and Hong Kong.³⁴

Fischel's deep preoccupation with international commerce is largely due to his upbringing in Trieste. We learn of the character's background relatively late in the novel, in chapter 102 of Book I. The chapter describes the generational and ideological conflict between Fischel and his daughter Gerda, who is receptive to the allure of pan-German nationalism. Gerda's anti-Semitic friends gather in Fischel's house. Among them there is

³⁴ For the sea commerce of the Habsburg Empire, see Dieter Winkler and Georg Pawlik. *Die Dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft Österreichischer Lloyd, 1836–1918*. Graz: Weishaupt Verlag, 1986 and Lawrence Sondhaus. *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867–1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994.

Gerda's boyfriend Hans Sepp, a militant pan-German nationalist. Their discussions about the racial purity of the German nation increasingly irritate the accommodating Fischel, to the point in which father and daughter have a heated argument:

“Ich kann mit unter Menschheit nichts vorstellen, Papa“ erwiderte Gerda, wenn er ihr Vorhaltungen machte, “das hat heute keinen Inhalt mehr; aber meine Nation, das ist körperlich!”

“Deine Nation!” begann dann Leo Fischel und wollte etwas von den großen Propheten sagen und von seinem eigenen Vater, der Rechtsanwalt in Triest gewesen war.

“Ich weiß” unterbrach ihn Gerda. “Aber meine Nation ist die geistige; von der spreche ich.” (*MoE* 479)

“The word ‘humanity’ is meaningless to me, Papa” Gerda said, when he tried to reason with her. “The life seems to have gone out of it. But ‘my nation’—now, that’s a physical reality.”

“*Your nation!*” Leo Fischel began, meaning to say something about the biblical prophets and his own father, who had been a lawyer in Trieste.

“I know,” Gerda interrupted, “but my nation in a spiritual sense is what I am talking about.” (*MwQ* 521-22)

The passage, however succinct, is rich in indications about the character Fischel. First of all, from his thwarted attempt to respond with a cogent counterargument to his daughter's nationalist tirade, we learn that Fischel's father had been a lawyer in Habsburg Trieste. The implied assumption is that young Fischel grew up in the Adriatic city as well, making him and his family part of Trieste's German class of lawyers, bankers and administrative clerks. In addition, with its Jewish background, the Fischel family could have easily been integrated into the prosperous Jewish community of Trieste. While the passage does not give indications of whether the Fischels were secular or religious Jews, his attempt to resort to the example of biblical prophets indicates a strong familiarity with the Scriptures. The quotes from the Bible and the image of his father appear in immediate

succession in his train of thought, indicating a mental association of ideas that strongly connects his Jewish background with his Triestine upbringing.³⁵

Secondly, Fischel's education in Trieste, his Jewish background and liberal internationalism are muted in the discussion with his daughter. In the vehement debate, mainly rendered in direct speech, these ideas remain verbally unexpressed. There is merely a vague hint of a response to Gerda in his thoughts. He meant to say something about the prophets in the Bible, his father and Trieste, but his answer remains suffocated and does not develop into a full thought. His daughter interrupts him brusquely with her defense of the "germanische Christbürgergemeinschaft" (*MoE* 479) ["Christian-Germanic commune"] (*MwQ* 522)]. Gerda's interruption, the narrator seems to imply, is indicative of a larger state of affairs. The rhetoric of nationalism disrupts, silences and disarms the voice of older values. Fischel's rhetoric powerlessness emerges at the end of the discussion when he, unable to counter his daughter, disengages from the verbal confrontation and sends her to her room. When ordered to stay in her quarters until she regains some *Vernunft* (*MoE* 479), she leaves with a "stillen Märtyrereigensinn" (*MoE* 479) ["an air of stubborn martyrdom"] (*MwQ* 522)]. Against this nationalist doctrine, inflated by a pan-German, pseudo-religious mysticism, Fischel's resort to the Enlightenment values of reason, tolerance and cosmopolitanism. This strategy assumes the contours of a feeble gesture, symbolic not only of Fischel's oratory defeat, but also indicative of the liberal failure to oppose the rise of xenophobic proto-fascism. Musil's narrative subtlety rests upon the circumstance that this ideological dispute occurs within the domestic walls of a Jewish-German household – a household that in the course of the

³⁵ For the Jewish community in Habsburg Trieste please see Lois C. Dubin. *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999.

narration becomes the besieged “Kampfplatz zweier Weltanschauungen” (*MoE* 204) [“battleground of two contending philosophies of life” (*MwQ* 219)].

Critics have generally considered Fischel’s positions as the fictional projection of Musil’s own convictions and thoughts. Galin Tihanov claims that in the depiction of the Fischel family Musil “offers a reversed projection of his own marital circumstances ... to suggest the disturbing extent to which anti-Semitism has penetrated even family life.” Tihanov reminds us that Musil was never an anti-Semite; his own wife was Jewish, emphasizing the author’s “growing discomfort with Austrian anti-Semitism, particularly after 1938, [which] was a major contributing factor to his voluntary exile” to Zurich (*Companion* 131). In *The Curtain*, a collection of essays on Central European literature, Czech writer and critic Milan Kundera associates Fischel with Musil’s authorial voice: “Musil tells us what he himself is thinking as he levels his long gaze on Leo Fischel ...” (70). Malcolm Spencer reaches a similar conclusion in his book *In the Shadow of Empire: Austrian Experiences of Modernity in the Writings of Musil, Roth and Bachmann*, where he says: “Musil’s sympathy clearly lies with the old liberal Leo Fischel, who is forced to listen to a new, unwelcome vocabulary in his salon” (131).

Spencer argues that in addition to Musil’s sympathetic approach to Fischel, one can recognize a comparable relationship with Count Leinsdorf.³⁶ It might be surprising to see the liberal Musil sympathizing with an ultraconservative imperialist like Leinsdorf. Spencer, however, convincingly explains this unlikely association through the friendship between Ulrich and the Count. The critic places Ulrich’s growing sympathy for the old aristocrat in the context of the supranational empire: “Nationalism, like dynasticism before it, will eventually become outmoded. The supranational thinking of old aristocrats

³⁶ Musil also manipulates our sympathies by painting an unflattering portrait of Sepp and Gerda.

like Leinsdorf will need to be reactivated at a later, post-national stage of modernity” (Spencer 93). The reason for such partial rehabilitation of the empire is Musil’s conviction that what needs to be saved from the old regime is its non-national structure. As Spencer points out, for Musil “dynastic conservatism has some unintentionally progressive results: by an involuntary irony, Kakanien, the land of the past, points forward to a post-national, multicultural future” (98).

In the Trieste chapter of *The Man without Qualities* the protagonist Ulrich pays a courtesy visit to the conservative aristocrat Count Leinsdorf. Ulrich, curious about the progress of the Parallel Campaign, has just returned from a temporary leave of absence, during which he attended to the funeral of his father. The burial of the protagonist’s parent represents a watershed moment in the novel and foreshadows the imminent denouement of the Habsburg *ancien régime*. Despite the near end of a historical era, Musil shows in the character of Leinsdorf how the values of the traditional aristocracy still enjoy much social currency. Upon Ulrich’s arrival, the ultraconservative aristocrat is somewhat distressed, even taken by surprise, by the recent events that have shaken the empire. Leinsdorf complains about vociferous pro-German demonstrators rioting outside his palace windows, the increasingly pressing demands of Czech nationalists and, more alarmingly, the dwindling loyalty of Italians in Habsburg Trieste. Leinsdorf is complaining about municipal employees in the Adriatic city:

Das tut die österreichische Stadt Triest nun schon seit Jahren, daß sie nur Reichsitaliener in ihre Dienste nimmt, um damit zu betonen, daß sie sich nicht zu uns, sondern zu Italien gehörig fühlt. Ich bin einmal an Kaisers Geburtstag dort gewesen: nicht eine einzige Fahne hab ich in ganz Triest gesehen, außer auf der Statthalterei, der Steuerbehörde, dem Gefängnis und den paar Kaserndächern! Wenn sie dagegen am Geburtstag des Königs von Italien etwas in einem Triester Büro zu tun haben, so werden sie keinen Beamten finden, der nicht eine Blume in seinem Knopfloch hat. (*MoE* 840)

For years the Austrian city of Trieste has been hiring only Italians, subjects of the King of Italy, in its civil service, to make a point that their allegiance is to Italy, not to us. I was there once on His Majesty's birthday: not a single flag in all Trieste except on the administration building, the tax office, the prison, and the roofs of a few barracks! But if you should have any business in some municipal office in Trieste on the King of Italy's birthday, you wouldn't find a clerk anywhere without a flower in his buttonhole! (*MwQ* 913)

The controversial appointment of local administrators on an ethnic basis, favoring Italians over German Austrians and Slovenes, happens despite the fact that Kakania is blessed, according to the mocking narrative voice, “mit der besten Bürokratie Europas” (*MoE* 33) [“the best bureaucracy in Europe” (*MwQ* 29)]. Here Musil offers a fictional adaptation of actual events that occurred in Trieste in August 1913. The municipal governor of Trieste (*Statthalter*) attempted to remove all non-Austrian subjects from civil service in the city, a decision that stirred up much protests among Italian nationalists.³⁷ Musil confers a comic twist to the episode, turning the protests into a matter of regal birthday celebrations. To Leinsdorf, however, this local and apparently rather benign form of protest is a very serious matter. It is an unacceptable betrayal of dynastic allegiance. For someone who identifies with the supranational ideal of the empire, and even held a seat in the Bohemian Diet, the rise of nationalist demands appears as a radical political idea that lies beyond his comprehension. Profoundly indebted to a pre-1848 way of thinking, Count Leinsdorf quite simply “does not understand nationalism,” and “is impervious to the many forms of ideological thinking Ulrich encounters” (Spencer 87, 92).

This dynastic patriotism and lack of nationalist identification is what makes Leinsdorf a *homo austriacus*. In *The Ambivalence of Identity: the Austrian Experience of Nation-Building in a Modern Society*, Peter Thaler discusses how Austrian monarchists

³⁷ See Spencer 112.

“displayed only limited interest in questions of nationalism” because “their loyalties were attached to a very different concept of allegiance” (72). Thaler offers a definition of the Austrian man that well characterizes Count Leinsdorf:

This *homo austriacus* was described as a supranational mediator between nationalities, as polylingual, adaptable, art-loving, and deeply immersed in the traditions of the Habsburg empire. It is fair to say that this conception more accurately reflected the image of its aristocratic and haute-bourgeois creators than of Tyrolean mountain farmers or Styrian factory workers. The *homo austriacus* represented the ideal of the courtly nobleman or top-level bureaucrat who administered a multi-national empire in the service of his prince. (72)

Leinsdorf is particularly distraught by the demands of Italian separatists in Trieste because of the city’s historical loyalty to the crown. Trieste had traditionally been a bastion of dynastic patriotism, an allegiance to the crown that had been resolute even during the 1848 nationalist upheavals. The Count’s disappointment stems from a profoundly felt connection with the city, an association that is affective, economic and even constitutional. The narrator alludes to this association at the very inception of the chapter, where Leinsdorf is defined by his official status of “reichsunmittelbarer Graf” (*MoE* 839) [“Imperial Liege-Count” (*MwQ* 912)]. The German term *Reichsunmittelbarkeit*, roughly translating into “imperial immediacy,” indicates a privileged feudal relationship between the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and a lord, city or territory. This relationship is direct without any intermediary vassalage, which means that anyone enjoying this privileged status responds directly to the emperor. Count Leinsdorf and Trieste enjoy the same juridical status. Trieste was declared *reichsunmittelbare Stadt* (Free Imperial city) after the Napoleonic wars. Later, during revolutions of the 1840s Trieste remained faithful to the crown, choosing economic

advantages over nationalism, and earned the honorific appellation of *urbs fidelissima*, “most faithful city.”

In a mix of genuine affection and economic calculations the count calls the city “*unser Triest ... das Hamburg des Mittelländischen Meeres*” (*MoE* 845) [“our Trieste ... the Hamburg of the Mediterranean” (*MoE* 918)]. The possessive adjective “our” expresses a twofold judgment towards Trieste. First, it expresses an awareness of the economic importance of the city. Secondly, it casts a historically determined political judgment, underscoring the city’s dynastic patriotism. Parallel to this dynastic loyalty, Trieste developed an urban variant of Habsburg *Landespatriotismus*, recognizable in the pride that many intellectuals took in the city’s unique ethnic and linguistic diversity. This civic identity fostered the notions of Trieste as a microcosm of the empire and as an urban experiment for a future United States of Europe. In the early 1900s the supranational mentality of imperial mercantile bourgeoisie was challenged by an ethno-linguistic nationalism that proved an aggressive and formidable adversary. Next to a strongly felt allegiance to the Austrian monarchy, a new wave of Italian Irredentism, fueled by Italy’s independence in 1861, radically changed the political landscape in the city.

Musil skillfully portrays the paralysis of Austrian rule in dealing with the Triestine question. Ulrich asks what measures the imperial authorities will adopt to counter these nationalist demands. Against this civil disobedience, Leinsdorf explains, the approach adopted by the Austrian government is a non-interventionist policy, in the hope of soothing nationalist feelings and avoiding more aggressive forms of protest. Despite the foreseeable ineffectiveness of this policy, Leinsdorf praises the

“implementation” of this laissez-faire attitude as particularly magnanimous and easy-handed, in opposition to the more repressive and interventionist Prussian neighbor:

“Wenn die Regierung die Gemeinde zwingt, ihre ausländischen Angestellten zu entlassen, dann heisst es gleich, daß wir germanisieren. Und diesen Vorwurf fürchtet eben jede Regierung. Auch Seine Majestät hört ihn nicht gern. Wir sind ja keine Preußen!” (*MoE* 840) [“If our government forces the city to discharge its foreign staff, we will immediately be accused of Germanizing. That is the reproach that every government fears. Even his Majesty doesn’t like it. After all, we’re not Prussians!” (*MwQ* 913)]. Musil’s sarcasm surfaces in the German phrase: “Wir sind ja keine Preußen!” Even the remote possibility of being compared or associated with Prussia causes profound dismay in Leinsdorf and the Emperor himself also does not like to hear what the Crown and the aristocracy apparently perceive as deeply insulting slander. In accordance with the general spirit of the Parallel Campaign, opposition to the Prussian neighbor – and its aggressive nationalism – is what defines Austria.

The meetings of the Parallel Campaign are hosted in the Tuzzi residence, a household that already suggests the ethnic and linguistic variety in the empire. Tuzzi is not a “dull-witted career diplomat” (cf. *Thiher* 243), but an able administrator who occupies the position of Section Chief in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. His last name strongly suggests an Italian origin, but despite his surname he first learned Italian as part of his diplomatic training. The narrator points out that Tuzzi is called with the German Hans, and not with the corresponding Italian name Giovanni, as one might suspect. The narrator describes Tuzzi:

Er war in einem Ministerium, das als Ministerium des Äußern und des Kaiserlichen Hauses noch viel feudaler war als die anderen Regierungsbüros, der

einzig bürgerliche Beamte in maßgebender Stellung, leitete darin die einflußreichste Sektion, galt als die rechte Hand, gerüchtweise sogar als der Kopf seiner Minister und gehörte zu den wenigen Männern, die auf die Geschicke Europas Einfluß hatten. (*MoE* 92)

He was the only commoner in a position of authority in the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was even more feudal than the other government departments. There Tuzzi was the head of the most influential section, was considered the right hand – even the brains, it was rumored – of his Minister, and was one of the few men who could influence the fate of Europe. (*MwQ* 94)

A successful bourgeois amidst the ranks of government positions almost exclusively occupied by aristocrats, Tuzzi represents the vital connection between the nebulous projects and halfhearted ideas of the Parallel Campaign and the Austrian government.

When he sleeps or is absent from the discussions, hosted by his wife, Tuzzi is

“eingewiegt von dem Gedanken, daß während seiner verdienten Geistesabwesenheit von acht Stunden in Europa nichts von Wichtigkeit vor sich gehen könne” (*MoE* 426)

[“cradled by the assumption that during his well-earned eight hours of mental absence nothing of importance could be happening in Europe” (*MwQ* 463-4)]. The reader will recognize the narrator’s irony here, since the members of the Parallel Campaign are unknowingly already deciding the very future of Europe. The irony is also that able diplomats are unable to control such social activities and their political repercussions.

History always happens elsewhere.

A multilingual veil of mystery also shrouds the identity of Tuzzi’s wife.

Throughout the novel she is known as Diotima, a name that Ulrich chooses for her after the female character in Plato’s *Symposium*. The narrator adds that “in reality” her name is Ermelinda Tuzzi, but “in truth” her name is Hermine, pointing out that the two names are not a translation of each other. The exotic character of the name, which incidentally

couples well with the last name Tuzzi, determines the choice of Ermelinda over Hermine. The biographic models that inspired her creation can explain Diotima's multicultural background. Karl Corino sees Diotima as a composite figure, largely inspired by acquaintances of Musil, among whom figure Stefanie Tyrka-Gebell and Eugenie Schwarzwald. Musil frequented Tyrka-Gebell's salon in his early years and used to send her letters until he moved to Stuttgart (Corino 590). Schwarzwald, née Nussbaum, was born in Polupanowka, today's Ukraine, but part of Austrian Galicia in Musil's time. Her multicultural background—she studied in Czernowitz, Vienna and Zurich—may explain Diotima's characterization.

Diotima's multiculturalism is, however, only nominal, a fact that is literally demonstrated by the constellation of her names, but also by her naïve political positions. She hosts the meetings of the Parallel Campaign because she is an enthusiastic supporter of its guiding principles. She feels inspired by such lofty ideals and insists on a celebration of the seventieth jubilee of the Emperor as a celebration of European pacifism. She envisions the celebration of a "weltösterreichisches Jahr, wo der europäische Geist in Österreich seine wahre Heimat erblicken könnte" (*GW* 231) ["World-Austrian Year, in which Europe could recognize Austria as its true spiritual home" (*MwQ* 248)]. Diotima considers the multicultural and polyglot Habsburg Empire a spiritual microcosm of Europe, a sociopolitical model that a unified Europe should imitate. Musil shares this utopia with his character. He nevertheless disagrees with her painting an idealistic picture of Austria-Hungary as a spiritual community, ignoring the growing ethnic tensions and economic asymmetries among the different national groups that inhabit the empire. The wife of Section Chief Tuzzi celebrates an ideal Europeanist

spirit centered on a peaceful comity of nations, both internal to Austria and within the larger continental context, and overlooks the pragmatic opportunism in the name of national interests that is the reality on the geopolitical stage. A true reflection on the power dynamics among different nationalities and ethnicities lies beyond Diotima's horizon. Diotima is a complex character. On the one hand, her equation of multicultural Austria with a utopian future of Europe is reminiscent of Musil's own position. On the other, she subscribes to an essentialist idealism that the author sharply criticized in his essays. As a character she epitomizes the common position among Austrian intellectuals like the ones expressed by Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal who saw in a future United States of Europe an ideal continuation of the Habsburg Empire.

Diotima is entangled in a "platonic love story" (McBride 140) with the Prussian businessman and polymath Paul Arnheim, a relationship that is based on a perceived like-mindedness in the ambitious plans of the Parallel Campaign. Diotima projects her Europeanist positions onto Arnheim, whom she sees as the quintessential European:

Schließlich sagte sie, Arnheim sei ein Europäer, ein in ganz Europa bekannter Geist, die Leitung der Staatsgeschäfte in Europa geschehe zu wenig europäisch und viel zu ungeistig, und die Welt werde nicht Frieden finden, ehe ein welt-österreichischer Geist sie so durchwehe, wie die alte österreichische Kultur sich um die verschiedensprachigen Stämme auf dem Boden der Monarchie schlinge. (*MoE* 201)

Finally, she said that Arnheim was a European, a thinker known throughout Europe, that the conduct of affairs of state in Europe was not sufficiently European, not spiritual enough, and that the world would find no peace until it was as permeated by a universally Austrian spirit as the ancient Austrian culture that embraced all the peoples, with their different languages, within the borders of the monarchy. (*MwQ* 215)

Diotima holds the completely unjustified conviction that Arnheim is in perfect accord with her worldview, which sees the empire as the harbinger of peace in Europe and that

the term “European” is synonymous with “spiritual.” Arnheim’s Europeanism is informed by the political and economic pragmatism of a magnate more at ease with an approach bordering on cynical *Realpolitik*. A German fluent in five languages, intelligent, well read and active in the armament industry, Arnheim is living as “ein vor ganz Europa lebender Mensch” (*MoE* 383) [“a man conscious of living with the eyes of all Europe upon him” (*MwQ* 416)]. Musil conceives of Arnheim as a counterpart to Ulrich, his own fictional projection. As Philip Payne points out, “Ulrich and Arnheim are engaged in a polite, but no less intense struggle for intellectual supremacy in the *Parallelaktion*” (38). Their rivalry is based on a difference in outlook. While Ulrich subverts the traditional societal values of the empire—an attitude that might be mistaken for nihilism—Arnheim supports the imperial *status quo*, trying to exploit the Parallel Campaign to gain control over the Habsburg oil fields in Ukrainian Galicia.³⁸ Ulrich’s transnational background constitutes the basis for his critical attitude towards nationalism and imperialism. Arnheim’s Europeanism, on the contrary, is fundamentally informed by a colonialist logic. Musil projects onto the character Arnheim his own earlier nationalist sympathies. During one of the meetings Arnheim maintains: “Wir Deutschen ... sind ein unseliges Volk; wir wohnen nicht nur im Herzen Europas, sondern wir leiden auch als dieses Herz” (*MoE* 587) [“We Germans ... are an ill-fated nation. Not only do we live in the heart of Europe, we even suffer the pains of this heart” (*MwQ* 641)]. This sentence clearly echoes Musil’s pan-Germanist ideas expressed in “Europäertum, Krieg, Deutschtum,” where the author defined the German and Austrian people as “das Volk im Herzen Europas und mit dem Herzen Europas” (*GW* 1021) [“the people in the heart of Europe and with the heart

³⁸ For a discussion of the Galician oil fields see Alison Frank. *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005. Print.

of Europe”]. Musil places in Arnheim’s mouth words that he associates with his own nationalist rhetoric that he abjured after the war.

With great cunning Arnheim makes the members of the Parallel Campaign believe that he participates in the meetings as a pacifist intellectual, eager to pair the celebration of the Emperor with the organization of an international peace conference. Sources from the Foreign Ministry Office tell Tuzzi that Arnheim’s unofficial task is to steer the committee in the direction of conflict with Russia. Arnheim is allegedly working closely with the Russian Tsar (*MoE* 589). Tuzzi himself is planning an Austrian contribution to the peace conference, by decorating the Palace in The Hague with paintings of Austrian artists (*MoE* 196), a plan that he reveals to Diotima.

Musil is fictionalizing a real event. In 1899 the Russian tsar Nicholas II organized a Peace Conference in The Hague that brought together intellectuals from all over the continent. One of the organizers was the English journalist W.T. Stead, who in the same year wrote *The United States of Europe on the Eve of the Parliament of Peace*, whose ideas James Joyce incorporated into his characters in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stefan Zweig praised the intention of the peace conference and especially the discussion of a federal project for a United States of Europe. After the end of World War I, however, Zweig in his essays looked back at the failure of this conference with bitter disillusionment.³⁹

Arnheim’s political orientation is far from the sort of democratic anti-colonialism that constitutes Ulrich’s outlook. As the subcommittees of the Parallel Action multiply, Arnheim voices his concern about the decision-making process to Diotima. He is concerned that he won’t be able to steer the organization towards his financial interests:

³⁹ See Zweig, Stefan. *Die Schlaflose Welt. Essays 1909-1941*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003.

“Nicht leicht ... werde auf diese Weise etwas Großes zustandekommen; nicht eine Demokratie von Ausschüssen, sondern nur einzelne starke Menschen, mit Erfahrung sowohl in der Wirklichkeit wie im Gebiet der Ideen, würden die Aktion lenken können!“ (MoE 109) [“No democracy of committees but only strong individual personalities, with experience in both reality and realms of ideas, would be able to direct such a campaign! (MwQ 113)]. In these self-promoting claims Arnheim reveals quite explicitly his political inclinations. He believes that democracies cannot be effective when it comes to making decisions. Only strong individuals, leaders of the masses, should wield any decision making power. In these apparently passing remarks, he is disparaging democracy and promoting dictatorial regimes. Ulrich had embraced similar positions in his school years when he chose Napoleon as his hero. While Ulrich has grown out of his boyish fantasies, Arnheim still holds authoritarian positions.

For most of the meetings, Ulrich assumes the position of an outside observer of human behaviour. While talking to Tuzzi, a sudden realization dawns upon him thanks to which he is able to unmask Arnheim’s intrigue and true motivation for his scheming presence at the Campaign meetings. He now recognizes the entire intricate network of colonial interests and geopolitical machinations that the members of the Parallel Campaign are establishing:

“Natürlich hast du mit den Öllagern zu tun!” stellte Ulrich in plötzlicher Erleuchtung fest. “Das ist noch eine Frage, die eure Marinesektion angeht wegen der Schiffsfeuerung, und wenn Arnheim die Bohrfelder erwerben will, muß er auch das Zugeständnis machen, euch billig zu liefern. Andererseits ist Galizien Aufmarschgebiet und Glacis gegen Rußland, also müsst ihr vorkehren, daß die Ölförderung, die er dort in Schwung bringen will, im Kriegsfall besonders geschützt wird. Also wird euch wieder seine Panzer-Blechfabrik bei den Kanonen entgegenkommen, die ihr haben wollt: Daß ich das nicht vorhergesehen habe! Ihr seid doch geradezu für einander geboren!” (MoE 774)

“Of course you’re involved with the oilfields!” Ulrich burst out, suddenly seeing the light. “It’s a problem that concerns your naval branch because it needs fuel for its ships, and if Arnheim wants the drilling fields, he’ll have to concede a favorable price for you. Besides, Galicia is deployment territory and a buffer against Russia, so you have to provide special safeguards in case of war for the oil supply he wants to develop there. So his munitions works will supply you with the cannons you want. Why didn’t I see this before! You’re positively born for each other!” (*MwQ* II, 841)

General Stumm von Bordwehr, as a representative of the imperial armed forces obviously understands the scheme and its military implications. The general also slowly comes to the realization: “Denn wenn der Arnheim die galizischen Ölfelder und einen Liefervertrag mit dem Militärärar hat müssen wir die Grenze natürlich schützen. Wir müssen auch an der Adria Ölstützpunkte für die Marine errichten und Italien beunruhigen ... Das ist es, was der Arnheim will!“ (*MoE* 1005-6) [“For if Arnheim has the Galician oil fields and a contract to supply the Army, we naturally have to protect our frontier. We also have to install oil bases for the navy on the Adriatic, which will upset the Italians ... That’s Arnheim’s real objective (*MwQ* 1092)]. Von Bordwehr puts together the missing pieces and reveals Arnheim’s reasoning. Arnheim is conscious of the fact that his economic scheme will provoke a domino effect on the international stage and that his interests coincide with more than a military provocation. It is a potential *casus belli*.

With the exception of Ulrich, Arnheim is certainly the most complex and well-rounded figure in the novel. The genesis of the character Arnheim is remarkable. He is modelled on Walther Rathenau, the Jewish industrialist and statesman who served as Foreign Minister in the Weimar Republic and was assassinated in 1922 while in office. Musil met Rathenau in person and developed a personal rivalry, probably also motivated by Musil’s jealousy for successful men of his generation (Musil was also envious of Thomas Mann’s literary success). Payne identifies two major reasons for Musil’s

antipathy. First, the scholar reports the impressions of Elias Canetti, who was present when Musil and Rathenau met:

Elias Canetti reported that when Rathenau met Musil, the former put his arm over the latter's shoulder in a gesture that was perhaps intended to be friendly but was also patronizing. Canetti believed that it was this action that, given Musil's hypersensitivity (and perhaps also the taboo on physical contact between males in polite society), provided the impetus behind the fictional conflict that preoccupied Musil for many years. (38)

This event is fictionalized in the novel, when Arnheim offers Ulrich a position as junior partner in his business and puts his arm around him (*MoE* 643 / *MwQ* 701-2). The second reason was Musil's dislike of Rathenau's book *Zur Mechanik des Geistes*, a book that the Austrian writer reviewed. Rathenau opposed *Seele* (soul) to *Geist* (spirit), maintaining that the latter exerted an exaggerated and negative influence on Western civilization. Musil was in fundamental disagreement with Rathenau's analysis, which lacked, in Musil's opinion, "academic rigor and credibility" (Payne 39).⁴⁰

In addition, what makes Arnheim a true European is, in the eyes of Diotima, not his polyglot education or his well-rounded humanist and scientific background, but his physical characteristics. During the meetings, she admiringly observes him from a distance. Her observation is based on assumptions of early twentieth century racial theories: "Sie bemerkte, daß er nicht im geringsten jüdisch aussah, sondern ein vornehm bedachter Mann von phönikisch-antikem Typus war" (*MoE* 109) ["She noted that he did

⁴⁰ Yet, Musil was profoundly fascinated with Rathenau's complex and charismatic personality. This fascination lead him to explore in his fiction the profound ambiguity of this historical figure. Like Rathenau, Arnheim "embodies the contradictions of a major industrialist who is also a humanist intellectual at the time of the triumph of liberal capitalism" (Thiher 258). McBride explains the figure of Arnheim: The strident discrepancy between the pan-cultural effusions of Arnheim the intellectual and the ruthless practices of Arnheim the industrialist is all too obvious. Arnheim preaches one thing and does the opposite ... Yet Arnheim is not a cardboard figure, a mechanical personification of the harmful tendencies of his time. The empathy and grace with which he is portrayed in the novel – as a man of great vanity and conceit, but also of uncommon intelligence and sensibility – reflect Musil's intricate attraction to the historical Rathenau, whose work he had reviewed. (138)

not look in the least Jewish but was a noble-looking, reserved man of the classic-Phoenician type“ (*MwQ* 112)]. The racialization of Arnheim finds resonance in Ulrich’s description of Arnheim’s “phönikisch harte[m] Herrenkaufmannschädel” (*MoE* 178) [“the industrial baron’s hard Phoenician skull” (*MwQ* 190)]. Diary entries of 1914 suggest that Musil was very familiar with phrenology and perhaps believed in the underlying assumptions of it. In a diary entry, dated 11 January 1914, Musil makes annotations about Walther Rathenau. He writes:

Etwas Negroides im Schädel. Phönikisches. Stirn und vorderes Schädeldach bilden ein Kugelsegment, dann steigt der Schädel – hinter einer kleinen Senkung, einem Stoß – rückwärts empor. Die Linie Kinns Spitze – weitestens Hinten des Schädels steht beinahe unter 45° zur Horizontalen, was durch einen kleinen Spitzbart (der kaum als Bart sondern als Kinn wirkt) noch verstärkt wird. Kleine kühne gebogene Nase. Auseinandergebogene Lippen. Ich weiß nicht wie Hannibal aussah, aber ich dachte an ihn. (*Tagebücher I*, 295)

Something Negroid in his skull. Phoenician. Forehead and anterior cranial vault form a spherical segment. Then the skull – behind a little decrease, a pile, moves up backwards. The chin line, furthest back from the skull, is almost less than 45 degrees to the horizontal line, which is emphasized by the small goatee (functioning more as a chin than as facial hair). Small, bold, aquiline nose. Curved lips apart. I don’t know what Hannibal looked like, but I had to think of him.

In it is not surprising to read this statement of 1914, when Musil still believed in racial stereotypes. Our discussion of the essays has shown how Musil distanced himself from such positions. In the 1920s, when he was working on the novel, Musil’s attitude had changed. Spencer explains that by this time Musil “dismisses the pseudoscience of racial theory with impressive lucidity. It is not so much the measuring of skulls and skeletal proportions or the recording of eye color that is dangerous. Rather, it is the attribution or entirely abstract qualities to ‘races’ such as religious faith, artistic and scientific ability, and the power to form states – none of which can be defined in any way” (125).

Contrasting the passage above with Musil's positions of the 1920s, summed up here by Spencer, makes us appreciate once again Musil's evolution of thought from the pre-war period to the interwar years. Just as with Arnheim, whose ideas echo Musil's nationalist language of his 1914 essay, Diotima's description is a reverberation of ideas Musil had recorded in writing in his diaries. Chronologically appropriate, these ideas that Musil will reject after the war emerge in the characters of the novel that live in pre-war Austria.

The question that arises at this point is how to interpret the passages that make Arnheim a Phoenician. The fact that Musil is reminded of Hannibal, the military commander of the Phoenician colony Carthage, offers some insight. As we will explore in more detail in the chapter on Joyce, in modernist interpretations of ancient mythology the term Phoenician is synonymous with European. The term Europa – a term that in the Phoenician language indicated the West – designates the maiden raped by Zeus/Jove and by extension that continent named after her. Musil seems to be well aware of this connection. Let me suggest that through the racist logic of his phrenological analysis, attributing a Phoenician origin to his fictional character, Musil makes Arnheim “racially” European. As we have seen, Arnheim is often defined as the “European,” as “der neue Typus Mensch, der berufen ist, die alten Mächte in der Lenkung der Geschicke abzulösen” (*MoE* 330) [“the New Man, destined to take over the helm of history from the old powers” (*MwQ* 357)] and ultimately as a specimen of the “europäische Menschheit” (*MoE* 488) [“European humanity”]. Through his characterization as Phoenician, Arnheim's European character is defined also in racial terms, becoming the European subject. Musil employs the trope of the mythological rape of Europa early in the novel: “die Muskeln und die Nerven springen und fechten mit dem Ich; dieses aber, das

Körperganze, die Seele, der Wille, diese ganze, zivilrechtlich gegen die Umwelt abgegrenzte Haupt- und Gesamtperson wird von ihnen nur so obenauf mitgenommen, wie Europa, die auf dem Stier sitzt“ (*MoE* 28-9) [“Muscles and nerves leap and fence with the 'I'; but this 'I'—the whole body, the soul, the will, the central and entire person as legally distinguished from all others—is swept along by his muscles and nerves like Europa riding the bull” (*MwQ* 24)]. Muscles and nerves violently sweep away the whole person, made up of body, soul and willpower in the same way the bull carried away Europa. The simile might be reminiscent of the Platonic dualism between body and soul, but what the narrator here opposes with medical precision are only muscular and neurological strings that take over the rest of the person. The subject carried away is the maiden Europa, trying to hold her equilibrium on the raging bull.

It is certainly ironic that Arnheim, whose aggressive colonialism will lead to war, is the most European character in the novel. His capitalist scheme in Galicia will set in motion events with disastrous consequences. The passage that sees Europa swept away on the bull functions as a prophetic preamble to how Europe and European balance will be shaken by the course of the Campaign. Diplomats and military officers in the meetings discuss how to keep this balance. Allegedly, the expert in the diplomatic doctrine of the geopolitical balance in Europe is General Stumm von Bordwehr. We will see, however, how the representative of the Austrian military, a highly comic figure, assumes the traits of a tragic figure as well.

For Musil, von Bordwehr is a character that affords the opportunity to explore the sincere devotion of public servants to the crown and the military culture of the Habsburg Empire. In addition, the general becomes the vehicle for much of Musil's humor. In his

book *The Dear Purchase: A Theme in German Modernism*, Joseph Stern, commenting on the Stumm von Bordwehr's fictional role as the "chief purveyor of disappointed expectations," defines him "one of the great comic creations of our time" (160). Stern offers a succinct description of the general:

Stumm is a little general with an embonpoint, a ceremonial sword that constantly gets in his way, and an important-looking attaché case which is empty but for a small loaf of black army bread. He is as unlike the notorious 'fesch' ('smart') Austrian officer as can be, and the only reason for his appointment to the General Staff College is that, while serving with the cavalry, he developed an obsessive fear of horses. It is typical for Stumm's bumblingly agreeable incompetence that he almost fails to get on to this all-important Committee, his invitation being mislaid by the machinations of Rachel, Diotima's pert maid ... (160)

Once the military gets wind of the imminent start of the Campaign's organizational machinery, Stumm turns up uninvited. Among military ranks, he is considered an intellectually inclined general, which is why he seems to be the most appropriate person to participate in the meetings. His task is one of military espionage, of discreet surveillance.⁴¹ Here Musil comments on the military's general distrust of higher education. In his seminal work *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, Carl Schorske explains the military's profound suspicion:

For years the University dwelt under the shadow of its role in the Revolution of 1848. The Academic Legion, composed of faculty and students of the University and other institutions of higher learning, had been the heart of revolutionary Vienna's organized fighting force. The imperial army could not forget nor forgive its own ignominious withdrawal in the face of the intelligentsia-in-arms. (Schorske 38-9)

The irony and its ensuing comic effect stem from the fact that for an important mission the military sends a highly incompetent and clumsy general. To be sure, sheer incompetence is widespread among the members of the Parallel Campaign, where

⁴¹ For a discussion of the general and his attempts at understanding the intellectuals he is dealing with see Chardin, Philippe. "Einige Überlegungen zur Inspektion der Staatsbibliothek von Wien durch General Stumm von Bordwehr" *Musil-Forum* 30 (2007): 128-138. Print.

imperial bureaucrats, members of the military and career diplomats do not seem to know the tools of their own trade. The suspicion arises, though, that characters like Stumm von Bordwehr, Tuzzi and Count Leinsdorf are far more competent than the narrator wants us to believe.

In the general discussions about the geopolitical balance in Europe, Count Leinsdorf offers, perhaps intentionally, a very vague opinion:

Wenn wir einen nicht zu übersehenden Hinweis auf unsere Kraft und Einigkeit wünschen, so tun wir dies durchaus auch im internationalen Interesse, da ein glückliches Verhältnis innerhalb der europäischen Staatenfamilie auf gegenseitigem Respekt und Achtung vor der Macht des anderen beruht. (*MoE* 171)

If we wish to give unmistakable proof of our strength and unity, we do so entirely in the interests of the wider world, since a happy relationship among the European family of nations is based upon mutual esteem and respect for one another's power. (*MwQ* 181-2)

By the same token, Section Chief Tuzzi admits that the doctrine of European equilibrium, ironically sanctioned in the very capital of *Kakania* in 1815, is somewhat elusive to grasp: “Wir beruflichen Diplomaten wissen es alle nicht. Es ist das, was man nicht stören darf, damit nicht alle übereinander herfallen. Aber was man nicht stören darf, weiß keiner genau” (*MoE* 809) [“We professional diplomats have no idea – none of us do. It is what mustn't be disturbed if people are not to be at each other's throats. But what it is we mustn't be disturbed, no one knows exactly” (*MwQ* 879)]. Nobody can explain what has kept Europe under relatively stable rule for almost a century. Tuzzi can only explain it in negative terms, indicating what should not be done to upset it. His admission reveals how the European balance of powers, which is perceived to be a solid principle that guarantees peace, in reality is a very precarious equilibrium based on a haphazard state of

affairs. To Tuzzi's quite honest proclamation of ignorance, Ulrich responds with one of his usual sarcastic and paradoxical witticisms: "Wenn man das europäische Gleichgewicht so auffassen darf, dann drückt sich in ihm ja aufs beste der europäische Geist aus!" (*MoE* 809) ["If that's what the European balance of powers comes to, then it's the best possible expression of the European spirit!" (*MwQ* 880)]. In chapter 20 of book II Graf Leinsdorf, finally concludes "daß man dem zitternden Gleichgewicht der Ideen, auf dem das nicht minder zitternde Gleichgewicht der europäischen Mächte ruhte, einen Stoß geben müsse. 'Es ist beinahe Nebensache, was für einen!'" (*MoE* 848-9) ["that the trembling balance of ideas upon which the no less trembling balance of power in Europe rested must be given a push. 'It hardly matters what kind of push'" (*MoE* 922)]. The premises for the outbreak of World War I that undermine the foundations of a European dream are finally given.

One might wonder how such a change in direction is possible and how the members of the Campaign have radically changed their minds, turning from the commitment to a pacifist endeavor to the very threshold of war. The response to this question lies in the deceptively harmless and unassuming figure of Stumm von Bordwehr, who in all this has provided the Austrian elite with the necessary strategic and diplomatic tools that prepare for the prelude to war. In the discussions about the current state of European diplomacy, General von Bordwehr is unable to provide more than catchy aphorisms that he occasionally intersperses with military braggadocio at the Campaign meetings. Resorting to textbook knowledge, the general makes claims about outdated theories of political science and old-school military manuals. In particular, one of the general's maxims condenses his militaristic worldview. Stumm quotes the *De rei*

militari by Vegetius, admonishing “Si vis pacem para bellum” (*MoE* 180) meaning that, whoever wishes for peace, should make preparations for warfare. An echo of this general view can be found later in the novel when the general comments disparagingly on the alleged dilettantism of pacifists: “Mit dem Pazifismus Militärpolitik zu treiben, beschäftigt heute in Europa die gewiegtsten Fachleute” (*MoE* 1013) [“Conducting military politics with pacifism is the task confronting the greatest diplomatic experts in Europe at this moment” (*MwQ* 1098)”. This sentence pronounced by the general in chapter 36 of book II provides material that allows for a retrospective question: Is it possible that for the political establishment, the Parallel Campaign has been nothing but the protracted and gradual unfolding of a military plan, shrewdly camouflaged as a pacifist, Europeanist endeavor? At least for some character, such as Arnheim, Stumm von Bordwehr, Gerda Fischel and Hans Sepp,⁴² such an interpretation could be substantiated.

Once the committee has abandoned the initial, half-hearted pacifist plans in favor of a more pragmatic display of military power, a controversy arises among the members of the Campaign. Within the constantly growing circle of Campaign members, a new guest causes much debate. The new guest is Friedel Feuermaul, an idealist and pacifist poet whose positions are met with suspicion first and open hostility later. Josef Strutz in his book *Politik und Literatur in Musils Mann ohne Eigenschaften: Am Beispiel des Dichters Feuermaul* identifies him as Franz Werfel and his “ivory tower inwardness” (23). The scholar shows how Musil equates Feuermaul’s fashionable philanthropic pacifism with Werfel’s positions. A personal acquaintance of Musil, Werfel held

⁴² Gerda Fischel is Leo Fischel’s daughter, who will embrace Pan-German nationalism and anti-Semitic positions. Her boyfriend Hans Sepp introduced her to these ideas. In the Fischel home, they hold meetings of their “Christian-Germanic” group, while reading the poems of Stefan George. George, with his emphasis on mystical experiences, heroic deeds, and loyalty to a strong and powerful leader became very popular under the Nazi regime.

positions that never move beyond empty professions of pacifism and that never engaged deeply in social and political questions. As Strutz points out: “Musil also recognizes that Werfel was only superficially interested in socio-political questions” (68).

Werfel’s fictional alter ego attempts to impress a pacifist turn on the project with his “expressionist Messianism” (Strutz 35). Friedel Feuermaul, whose name suggests a Jewish background and a fiery albeit ineffective rhetoric, is quickly dismissed as *persona non grata* by general Stumm von Bordwehr, who exerts more and more of an influence in the decisions made by the campaign committee. According to the general, Feuermaul represents a serious threat to European peace with his amateur pacifism. Once asked if he knows what Feuermaul’s books contain, Stumm replies: “Ich weiß, was darin steht: Friede, Freundschaft, Güte und so” (*MoE* 1001) [“I know what he writes about: peace, friendship, goodness, et cetera” (*MwQ* 1086)]. Leo Fischel, on the other hand, defends Feuermaul’s positions and criticizes the growing xenophobia of the committee. Fischel is dismayed at unbelievable sentiments towards “andersdenkende und vornehmlich andersnationale Menschen” (*MoE* 1011) [“people of different convictions and above all of differing nationalities” (*MwQ* 1098)]. Musil frames the opposition between democratic liberalism and totalitarian nationalism in terms of an intergenerational conflict. Not only is Fischel at odds with his daughter Gerda, but Feuermaul also has a politically complex family history. At one of the meetings, Ulrich informs the committee members of Feuermaul’s background: “Sein Vater hat in Ungarn mehrere Betriebe” erwiderte Ulrich. “Ich glaube, irgendwas mit Phosphor, wobei kein Arbeiter älter als vierzig Jahre alt wird: Berufskrankheit Knochennekrose” (*MoE* 1018) [“His father owns some factories in Hungary,” Ulrich answered. “I think it has something

to do with phosphorus, since none of the workers lives past forty. Occupational disease: necrosis of the bone”(*MwQ* 1106)]. Once again, Musil shows a profound discrepancy between generations. Feuermaul’s pacifist idealism clashes with his father’s ruthless capitalism that poisons his workers in an economic system built upon the exploitation of non-German areas, which in this case very much look like internal colonies of the empire. The narrator does not fail to mention that Feuermaul’s father is deeply mortified by his son’s activity. Strutz offers a psychoanalytic explanation of this intergenerational conflict, claiming that in Feuermaul the world of the father is neurotically repressed. The fact that his father poisons his workers is “a truth constantly to be held out of [the son’s] consciousness” (Strutz 85-6). Feuermaul, according to Strutz, tries to overcome this traumatic truth through the compensation of a utopia. Whatever the motivations for Feuermaul’s philanthropist inclinations, Musil judges them by their social relevance. As the construction of characters in the novel once again shows, Musil’s non-dogmatic thinking examines all positions and thus it should not come as a surprise that he can be equally critical of warmongers and pacifists.

In the novel, Musil records with seismographic precision the almost imperceptible tectonic movement from an old Europe to the opportunity of a new order. The inception of what appears as a paradigm shift to Musil opens up the possibility of a European community that presents itself as a more humane civilization, in which individuals are liberated from nationalist constraints. In this emancipated Europe of the future, citizens are able to express freely their mixed cultural background. Differently from the essays, the novel explores these utopian possibilities. Musil, however, is always aware of the fact that *Kakanien* is a literary transfiguration of the empire, not a historiographic account of

it. At this stage the new Europe is nothing more than a literary invention. The historical conditions for a European political unification will start evolving later, in the aftermath of World War II. Despite the specific local premise of *Kakanien*, Musil's Europe is far more than a geographic expression. Europe becomes a laboratory in which negotiations between identity and alterity are can be tested, a theoretical site of experimentation in social theory and political philosophy.

Chapter 2
Trojan Trieste:

Italo Svevo and the Epistemology of the Vernacular in *The Confessions of Zeno*

Nach der ersten Heimat,
ist ihm die zweite zwitterig und windig.
(Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duineser Elegien*, Achte Elegie)

After that first home,
The second is to him hybrid and windy.
(Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, Eighth Elegy)

In the last chapter we saw how in his essays and major novel Robert Musil focused his attention on what I called the emergence of the European person of Habsburg origin. The individual's multicultural background that translates into multiple loyalties and shifting allegiances across linguistic and ethno-cultural divides characterizes this Austro-European identity. In this chapter, I suggest that the Triestine writer Italo Svevo, alias Aaron Hector Schmitz, represents an example of Musil's *homo europaeus habsburgensis*. Emphasizing his emotional attachments to Italian and German literary traditions, as well as his Jewish background, Svevo perceives his native Habsburg Trieste as an experimental site for a future United States of Europe. While his novel undermines Italian nationalism in the Adriatic city, his critical writings pair a theory of continental peace with the project of a European single market.

It is striking how Musil's discussion of *Völkerdurchdringung*, the ethnic interpenetration that occurred in the Habsburg Empire, readily applies to the case of Svevo.⁴³ Already some of Svevo's friends drew attention to Svevo's European character.

⁴³ This is not the only point of contact between Musil and Svevo. The protagonist of Svevo's novel *The Confessions of Zeno* is a sort of man without qualities himself. In the novel Zeno says: "No doubt I felt

Leo Ferrero,⁴⁴ for instance, offers a description of Svevo's hybrid background, a description that is solidly rooted in late nineteenth-century racial theories:

La sua faccia era un curioso controsenso: perchè la natura gliela aveva fatta tedesca, un accomodamento tra Hindenburg e Thomas Mann: due sopraccigli mefistofelici e ben segnati facevano un bizzarro Y sul naso ebreo, e la bocca era incorniciata da baffetti grigi: ma gli occhi scintillavano di malizia latina ... (quoted in Ghidetti 286)

His face was a curious contradiction. Nature had made his face German, a mixture between Hindenburg and Thomas Mann. Two well marked, Mephistophelian eyebrows formed a bizarre Y over his Jewish nose. His mouth was framed by a little grey moustache, but his eyes sparkled with Latin mischief ... (My translation)

Ferrero's portrayal is reminiscent of Musil's description of Arnheim, who in *The Man without Qualities* is European by virtue of his Phoenician skull. Ferrero does not resort to the pseudoscientific pretensions of phrenology, but evidently believed in racial stereotypes.

We will discuss how Svevo adopts a literary pseudonym, rendering public his literary transnationalism. This double cultural citizenship suggests that reading his work in the contexts of an Italian and German literary tradition are not mutually exclusive hypotheses. As an author situated in the cultural and literary topography of the Habsburg *Mitteleuropa*, Italo Svevo better fits the transnational categorization of an Austrian novelist writing in Italian, more than the description of an author writing in an exclusively Italian tradition.

immediately, in some obscure way, that if I wanted to appeal to Ada I would have to be a bit different from what I was; I thought it would be easy for me to become what she wanted" (78). In addition, he explicitly comments on his lack of qualities: "I bestowed on her all the many qualities I lacked and whose need I felt ..." (81). In an interview that appeared on 24 January 1962 in the magazine *L'Europeo*, Jean-Paul Sartre compares Svevo to Musil saying: "The Italian novel has a great tradition, not only in the works of Pirandello, but also in the works of the great novelist Italo Svevo, whose importance is certainly greater than the one of his contemporary Musil" (quoted in Ghidetti 324). While I don't wish to add to Sartre's contest of literary merit, I nonetheless find his association between Svevo and Musil significant.

⁴⁴ Leo Ferrero (1903-1933) was a younger friend of Svevo. He is not to be confused with his more famous father Guglielmo, who we will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Adopting Gramsci's theory of linguistic and political hegemony as a critical lens, I hope to demonstrate how in Svevo's *The Confessions of Zeno* what I call an epistemology of the vernacular is at work: it challenges the Italian cultural nationalism of Irredentist Trieste. The novel is presented to the reader as a diary that the narrator is asked to write by his psychoanalyst. While the genre would suggest a personal and intimate tone for Zeno's confessions, the narrator is keenly aware of the fact that his therapeutic autobiography is also a public document. Not only will the doctor read it, but he also publishes it to punish Zeno's disbelief in psychoanalysis. In this tangle of conceit and lies, Zeno constantly reassures his readership of his Italian loyalty. A closer reading, I suggest, reveals a set of rhetorical strategies that aim instead at undermining the very cultural politics of Italian nationalists to which Zeno allegedly subscribes. Mimicry, through which Svevo imitates the cultural logic of Italian Irredentism, becomes a stratagem of resistance in order to destabilize Italian cultural hegemony. The subversive mimicry constitutes the foundation of Svevo's Trojan nationalism. Through a set of parallel regional and supranational allegiances Svevo stages a Trojan Trieste, in which the author undermines the city's prewar longing for unification with Italy and envisions instead a Europe without borders through Triestine eyes. This Trojan nationalism is mediated through Zeno's allegiance to Trieste's metropolitan identity and the city's non-national *Landespatriotismus*. In addition, the notion that the truth can only be spoken in the local dialect reinforces Svevo's identification with the urban culture of Trieste. While the confessions are written in standard Italian, many instances in the novel indicate that the dialogues are consistently and systematically conducted in the local dialect. A

political reading of Svevo's text also suggests that Zeno perceives Italian cultural nationalism as a colonizing presence in Habsburg Trieste.

In the course of this chapter I also attempt to demonstrate how Zeno's destabilization of Italian cultural nationalism helps adjust our critical understanding of Svevo. Before discussing the novel, I relate Gramsci's theories to Zeno's uneasiness with Italian. I then briefly recapitulate the history of Svevo's reception, placing my contribution in the context of more recent scholarship. Svevo's early reception was determined by highly negative reviews that took issue with his literary language. Elena Coda summarizes this critical uneasiness with Svevo's language:

On a linguistic level, the ambiguity, the "strangeness" of a language that was not the canonized language usually employed in literary texts, a language that was instead contaminated by the introduction of foreign words, dialectal expressions and syntactic ruptures, was not appreciated by critics who were interested in a unified, and aestheticized linguistic form. (41)

Against a traditional reading that framed Svevo as an ardent Irredentist in Trieste on the one hand, and a peripheral novelist with a regretfully limited mastery of Italian on the other, literary critic Mario Lavagetto suggests for Svevo an alternative position on the critical map of European literature. The scholar provocatively claims: "if somebody wanted or had to tell the story of Italian literature of the twentieth century, they could begin their story with Austria, more precisely with Trieste" (*Saba* 237). Lavagetto's approach has disputed nationalist and centralist views of Trieste and its authors, placing the city and Svevo within the context of the Habsburg Empire. With an insight that is both thought provoking and provocative, Giuseppe Camerino has defined Svevo an "Austrian Jew writing in Italian" (quoted in Annoni 253). In his book he ascribes the traditional image of Svevo to an Italian nationalist historiography and literary history that

offered a distorted image of Habsburg Trieste. He denounces the “the old and false image of our nationalist historiography that was invested in finding at all cost a strong and rooted tradition of independence movements in Trieste” insisting that we should, instead, look for the “bond that linked the city to the world of the Habsburgs” (186). My interpretation of Svevo’s work follows this later trend and is mainly based upon the understanding of Svevo as a writer presenting multiple allegiances.

Before discussing current criticism, it is necessary to review earlier contributions that laid the foundation for the present debate on Svevo. After my review I discuss Svevo’s choice of his literary pseudonym. I then turn to two other texts that generally receive less attention by Svevo scholarship, but are nonetheless important for the assessment of his cultural and political Europeanism. The parable “La tribù” sheds light on Svevo’s peculiar Socialist positions and his identification with Jewish literary production, as well as the influence of Guglielmo Ferrero on Svevo. An essay fragment, entitled “On the Theory of Peace,” in which the author drafted a theory of continental peace, well illustrates Svevo’s subscription to the idea of a federal reorganization of Europe.

Svevo embeds in his novel a palpable tension between dialect and standard Italian. I illustrate this linguistic tension with the help of the socio-political language theories of Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci, who started writing his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935) a few years after Svevo published *The Confessions*. This parallel development should not come as a surprise. Svevo and Gramsci’s common interest originates in their shared experience. As two intellectuals coming from peripheral regions

(Trieste and Sardinia), their deep concern with the Italian language question stems from the marked difference between their native dialect and the Tuscan-based Italian standard.

Later postcolonial theorists elaborate on Gramsci's theories of hegemony and subaltern groups. In the *Notebooks*, a network of fragmentary observations, Gramsci analyzes how the state imposes its rule through coercion and consent. He develops a theory of hegemony as the exercise of power without direct coercion (75). Instead of exercising power only with the monopoly of violence, a dominant group obtains the consent of the subaltern classes by imposing customs and modes of thinking, and by constructing social and cultural prestige. As already mentioned, Gramsci maintains that subaltern groups, which are often ethnically and linguistically different from the dominant class, are characterized by perceptions of mental inferiority and long-established habits of obedience (2286).

Gramsci was a linguist by training. Accordingly, Gramsci's political theory owes much to his language philosophy. He maintains that linguistic issues are inextricably linked to other social and political phenomena:

Every time the question of language arises ... other problems are coming to the fore; the formation and enlargement of the governing class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words [the] reorganiz[ation] of cultural hegemony. (*Cultural Writings* 183)

Gramsci conceives of hegemony as a primarily linguistic phenomenon, and in particular as the relationship between what he calls dominant "normative grammar" and "immanent or spontaneous grammar" (Ives 50). Gramsci's linguistic theory is contained in Notebook 29 of the *Prison Notebooks*. Here he defines spontaneous grammar as those linguistic patterns that are unconsciously followed by every speaker. It is a grammar that is

immanent in our speech and that does not require any formal training. The concept of normative grammar, instead, describes the reciprocal censorship, surveillance and monitoring attention that speakers in a linguistic community impose as regulatory practices on each other. A normative grammar establishes what linguistic forms are socially acceptable and correct. Dialects are examples of spontaneous grammars, while standardized languages are instances of normative grammars (2343).

Gramsci was very critical of the language politics of the newly founded Italian state. In a country that was divided by a myriad of local dialects, linguistic unity was imposed by the adoption of Tuscan as the standard. The choice was motivated by the cultural prestige of a literary production in the Tuscan dialect, among which figure authors such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. The cultural politics of the new state was invested in disseminating the knowledge of the Italian language, which had to compete with the long-standing tradition of the local dialects. Gramsci was conscious of the necessity of a normative grammar as a unifying element in Italy, inasmuch as it granted all citizens access to politics and to the institutional structure of the state. For Gramsci, the knowledge of dialect alone limits access to a larger public sphere:

Someone who only speaks dialect, or understands the standard language incompletely, necessarily has an intuition of the world that is limited and provincial, which is fossilized and anachronistic in relation to the major currents of thought which dominate world history. (*Selections* 325)

He recognized an uneven power dynamic between the prestigious Tuscan language and the disparaging attitude towards dialects, which were considered of inferior status.

Precisely in this dichotomy of cultural prestige and inferior social status Gramsci saw the social mechanism of hegemony and subaltern dialectophone groups.

Nevertheless, Gramsci, himself a speaker of Sardinian, maintains that there is a strong emotional bond between a speaker and his or her dialect. He claims that “between the dialect and the national literary language something changes: precisely the cultural, political-moral-emotional environment” (*Selections* 178). Dialect and national language operate in different cultural and emotional spheres. The adhesion to a national culture should not sever attachments to local traditions.

The solution that Gramsci suggests implies the creation of a unified language that is aware of local traditions to which it needs to be linked. Gramsci is vague about the actual formation of this national language that contains a plurality of local traditions. One reason for this elusiveness is the circumstance that “one cannot foresee or establish” the formation of a language that needs to form “through a whole complex of molecular processes” (*Selections* 350). The formation of this unified language entails a profound transformation in the relationship between normative and spontaneous grammars. Instead of imposing an alien language on the Italian population, Gramsci’s solution requires a democratic normative language that diffuses the frictions between standard and dialect, recognizing the validity of its numerous regional and dialectophone cultures.

In *The Confessions of Zeno*, Svevo stages the conflict between the local dialect of Trieste and the national standard in a fashion that well illustrates Gramsci’s analysis. In exposing the tension between dialect and Italian, Svevo demonstrates a keen political awareness. He reminds his readership that a dialect is never a dialect as such; it is a dialect only in relation to a standardized language. The adoption of a linguistic system as the standard is always a political choice, dictated, in the case of Tuscan-based Italian, by the cultural prestige of a literary tradition.

What complicates and exacerbates this conflict is the fact that the local idiom in Habsburg Trieste is not simply a peripheral regional dialect of Italian. It is also the *lingua franca* of an ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous population. As we have seen, the Triestine dialect incorporated elements from the foreign languages spoken in the city. While Gramsci described subaltern groups as either regional or foreign with respects to the dominant culture, we see how Svevo's subalternity is two-pronged, vernacular and foreign at the same time.

In the novel, an epistemology of the vernacular offers a different experiential mode, an alternative grasping of the truth, a subaltern knowledge production. Only through this vernacular philosophical outlook can Svevo conceive of the utopian modernism that breaks with the paradigm of nationalism in order to envision a democratic, anticolonial and federalist European project. Precisely this project of the United States of Europe is what makes Svevo an author deeply anchored in the Habsburg world. The confederation of Habsburg nations in a different political and constitutional organization of the Empire is a project that envisions a Europe of regions, rather than nations.

At this point, the following question arises: If Svevo perceives hegemonic Italian standard as an almost colonial imposition, why does he choose to write in Italian? One answer is offered by Svevo's biography, which confirms the validity of Gramsci's analysis of dialect speakers. Svevo was attracted by the prestige of Italian and its literary tradition. He was the member of an entire generation of Triestine writers whose literary aspirations lead them to visit Tuscany, where they could improve their Italian. Another plausible answer lies in the fact that "the subaltern can only break into the master's house

with the master's keys" (Levinson 28). In other words, in order to effectually subvert the hegemonic discourse, one has to employ the instruments offered by the dominant culture. This is the key to my interpretation of Svevo. Rather than merely imitating a linguistic and literary model, Svevo challenges Italian nationalism and the notion that dialects are of inferior social status precisely through writing in Italian. For Gramsci the subaltern classes, in the attempt to create a new dominant social culture, are not simply counter-hegemonic, but pre-hegemonic. By the same token, what remains implicit in Svevo's criticism is a future re-evaluation of the relationship between dialect and Italian, as well as foreign languages and Italian. Svevo's new hegemony is a Europe in which dialects, standard languages and foreign idioms coexist with equal social dignity.

Before discussing Svevo's novel and his reception, let me provide some biographic background that is necessary for the understanding of what will become *il caso Svevo*, "the Svevo affair." Italo Svevo, the literary pseudonym that the Triestine businessman and industrialist Aaron Hector Schmitz adopts, expresses a double cultural identity. The author perceives himself to be both Italian (Italo) and at the same time German (Svevo meaning Swabian). Born in the border town Trieste, at that time part of the Habsburg Empire, Svevo spoke the local dialect, a variation of Venetian with a Friulian substratum, as his first language. Trieste was dialectophone, and the Tuscan-based Italian standard was perceived as a closely related, but different, linguistic system. In Habsburg Trieste, Italian was known as *regnicolo*,⁴⁵ the language spoken in the Kingdom of Italy. Svevo's secondary education took place in the German town Segnitz, close to Würzburg, where he learned to speak German fluently and studied Italian as a

⁴⁵ The term, coined by the Italians of Austria, literally indicated a person from the kingdom (*regno*) of Italy. It also indicated Italian standard, as opposed to the Triestine dialect (McCourt 53).

foreign language.⁴⁶ He learned standard Italian only later in life, after a literary pilgrimage to Florence, where he wished to learn proper Italian in order to satisfy his ambitions as an Italian novelist.

In a diary entry of Elio Schmitz,⁴⁷ Svevo's brother, we learn about their father's decision to send his young sons to Germany in order to learn the language. Elio remembers his father saying: "You have to study, and become good young men in order to help me with our family business. A good businessman must know superficially at least four languages. The businessman in Trieste must know two languages perfectly. This is why you will study in Germany, in a German school. You can learn Italian in Trieste" (*Opere* xcvi).⁴⁸ What is striking is not only the polyglot education that Mr. Schmitz has in mind for his sons, but also his statement that Italian can be learned in Trieste. The assumption that the standard can be picked up in Trieste implies that learning how to speak Italian is not a natural occurrence in dialectophone Trieste. It can be learned there, but it does not come as a natural fact. The knowledge of Italian needs to be actively pursued and requires an effort, albeit minor. Svevo's education in Germany coincided with his early years of literary apprenticeship. His favorite authors at that time were Schiller and Goethe, rather than Dante and Petrarch (Gatt-Rutter 29). Later in life he develops a strong appreciation for Schopenhauer, while Claudio Magris suspects that Grillparzer also influences Svevo (quoted in Ghidetti 314). His biographer John Gatt-

⁴⁶ The source for this information is Serge Vanvolsem and his article "La lingua e il problema della lingua in Svevo: Una polimorfia che non piacque" contained in the proceedings of the international conference on the Triestine writer *Italo Svevo scrittore europeo*. Vanvolsem defines Svevo as an "actual dialectophone and potential Italian speaker" (434).

⁴⁷ The diary of Elio, Ettore's brother, is a good source for the writer's early years in Germany. For the years of Svevo's marriage, see *Vita di mio marito*, translated in English as *Memoir of Italo Svevo*, written by his wife Livia Veneziani.

⁴⁸ My translation.

Rutter frames his discussion of Svevo in terms of a double life, emphasizing the “contradictions in his existence” (5). The contradictions move

[...] between his literary vocation and his lifetime spent as a bank-clerk and a factory manager; between his Jewish origins, his atheistic convictions and his nominal Catholicism, between his German name and background and his chosen Italian nationality; between his nationalist aspirations for Trieste’s union with Italy, his internationalist sympathies, and Austrian business interests. The demands and allegiances multiply, and the conflicts between them intensify, as the course of Ettore Schmitz’s life carries him towards, through and beyond the cataclysm of the Great War. (5)

Gatt-Rutter emphasizes Svevo’s multiple allegiances that were typical for the empire, as we have seen with Pieter Judson. In the particular case of Trieste, economic interests played an important role for the middle class, whose wealth was linked to the destiny of the empire. Svevo embodied the tensions and conflicting interests in Trieste. Traditional scholarship has glossed over these conflicts in order to provide a simpler, more cohesive critical narrative that framed Svevo as an Italian.

In recent years, methodological, historiographic and ideological differences among critical contributions have produced a disparity of interpretations of Svevo’s life and works.⁴⁹ These divergences are at the core of a veritable polemic in studies pertaining to Svevo. Rather than stressing Svevo’s unique position and the productive encounter between languages, cultures and literary traditions, traditional approaches insisted on the image of Svevo as an awkwardly placed outsider in the Italian literary tradition. This kind of literary criticism, which stresses the linguistic contamination from languages other than Italian in Svevo’s prose, is informed by a *Risorgimento*-flavored historiography that

⁴⁹ For an overview of Svevo criticism in Italy from the early reception until the 1970s see Nanni, Luciano. *Leggere Svevo. Antologia della critica sveviana*. Another useful study is the collection of essays *Il caso Svevo*, edited by Giuseppe Petronio. Articles from the early 1970s in the United States are Renata Minerbi Treitel’s “Zeno Cosini: The Meaning Behind the Name” and Thomas Staley’s “Svevo and the Ambience of Trieste.”

reads the history of Trieste as a continuous struggle to be reunited with the Italian *madre patria*. This agenda has also offered a distorted vision of Svevo, who was believed to be a fervent nationalist. Svevo's biographer Gatt-Rutter offers some insight into the reason for such an unjustified depiction of Svevo as a zealous nationalist. Svevo's *Profilo autobiografico*, his autobiographical note from 1928, was tainted by the ideological climate of its time. It was published at the height of the Fascist regime and drafted by Giulio Cesari, Svevo's old friend and lifelong nationalist. The *Profilo* is elusive about Svevo's German and Austrian family members, such as his paternal grandfather, Adolfo Schmitz, an Austrian government employee at Treviso. With unconcealed discomfiture the text also glosses over the author's culturally hybrid pseudonym, which dangerously seemed to imply a brotherhood between the Italian and Germanic races. It belittles Ettore's schooling in Germany and "makes the most of his credentials as an Italian patriot" (Gatt-Rutter 16-17).

The early reception of Italo Svevo was rather unfavorable. Local critics in Trieste offered a lukewarm response to his first novel *A Life (Una Vita)*, published in 1892. While reviewers were not particularly hostile to Svevo, their praise was very scarce. A review that appeared in December of that year in the Milan-based *Il Corriere della Sera* was an opportunity for Svevo to become known in Italy, but Domenico Olivieri, the reviewer, gave an unenthusiastic account of the novel. In 1898 Svevo published *As a Man Grows Older (Senilità)*, which was widely ignored by critics. This complete indifference left a strongly discouraged Svevo in a literary limbo in which he continued to write in secret, but refused to submit his material for publication.

The turning point in his literary career was his meeting of James Joyce in 1907. Hired as a private English teacher, Joyce soon became Svevo's friend and confidante. Joyce encouraged Svevo to pursue his literary interests, rekindling his long-lost enthusiasm. In addition to boosting Svevo's confidence, Joyce also helped Svevo to become known in European literary circles, especially in Paris. After the publication of *Zeno's Conscience* (*La Coscienza di Zeno*), Joyce, Valéry Larbaud and Benjamin Crémieux started a successful campaign to promote the work of Svevo. The Triestine writer soon enjoyed international fame. This sudden literary glory flattered and surprised the aging Svevo himself.

While Svevo enjoyed his international fame, his reception in Italy still lacked the enthusiasm observable in the rest of Europe. A famous exception is the 1926 review of Eugenio Montale, who is credited with being the first to make the "Svevo affair" known in Italy. In 1926 Montale had already published his collection of poems *Ossi di Seppia*. The favorable review therefore came from an emergent critic and fellow writer. This sympathetic assessment, however, was a brief peak in Svevo's reception in Italy. Montale emphasized Svevo's position in European literature:

Zeno's Conscience is the contribution of our literature to that group of ostentatiously international books that sing the smiling and desperate atheism of the newest Ulysses: the European Man. In Svevo's novel there are no cosmopolitan visions, exceptional figures or other such recourses. The bourgeois characters are, however, abundant with a non-confessed history; they are the heirs of a millennial evil and greatness; scraps and *outcasts* of a civilization that exhausts itself. (*Leggere Svevo* 144)⁵⁰

Thanks to Montale's sincere appreciation, Svevo was ranked as an Italian author that contributed to the conversation between the Italian literary tradition and its larger European context. With a judgment that is reminiscent of Spengler's idea of the

⁵⁰ My translation. The term in italics is in English in the original Italian text.

progressive decline of European civilization, Montale saw Svevo's figures as literary representations of the *homo europaeus*, not by virtue of their internationalism, but because of their shared existential crisis. For Montale, Svevo's awkward, socially inept and suicidal figures were symptoms of a larger European state of affairs.

With the rise of Fascism, Svevo, a writer of Jewish origin was soon ignored again. In his book *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, Guido Bonsaver illustrates Svevo's status under the Fascist regime: "Despite being a Jew who had published after World War I, [Svevo] was never on the Fascist's lists, either as Svevo or as Ettore Schmitz. Despite this omission, he was 'unwelcome' nonetheless" (212). On a national level, Svevo was ignored by the regime's censorship. Locally, however, an outburst of Fascist violence was directed towards Svevo's commemorative statue erected in the city park. In his hometown Trieste, Svevo's memory had been the target of Fascist vandalism: the statue in his honor was smashed by a group of Fascists on 21 September 1939. The beheading of Svevo's bust is symbolic for the cultural politics of the Fascist regime. The criteria for choosing representative writers of Italy obviously had nothing to do with literary merit; a writer had to conform to a narrow and monolithic model of identity by being of racially 'pure' Italic stock.

Notions of linguistic purism informed Svevo's reception in Italy after World War II. In these years, critics were faced with a conundrum. Due to his peculiar language, Svevo was perceived as never fully integrated within a codified Italian literary tradition. As many critics argued with unconcealed irritation, Svevo's prose is rife with semantic and syntactic calques from German and the Triestine dialect, occasional Gallicisms of literary origin, an awkwardly employed business Italian, as well as archaic Tuscan

expressions fished out from a dictionary that reveal Svevo's tendency to overcompensate his uneasiness with Italian. On the other hand, Svevo could not be totally ignored. His prominent position in the European literary constellation of the great masters of modernist prose such as Proust, Joyce, and Mann offered luster to the Italian tradition. As we have seen, Montale's review framed Svevo's work as the Italian contribution to the great literary movements in Europe. Hence the evident uneasiness of many leading Italian scholars with what continued to be *il caso Svevo*, "the Svevo affair."

The position of the scholar Leone De Castris in 1959 is helpful in reconstructing Svevo's ambiguous critical reception. Although De Castris acknowledged that only a "purist prejudice" could demand that Svevo's language conform to the Italian standard, he strongly emphasizes Svevo's "unique position with respect to our tradition and his moving in an eccentric area which is, nonetheless, bound to become innovation in the habitual patterns of our narrative language" (*Leggere Svevo* 88).⁵¹ De Castris is struck by Svevo's "inability or lack of willingness to adapt to the official language," a circumstance that he explains with his belief that Svevo "was never able to speak well any language" (89). What is striking in De Castris's judgment is that the scholar placed Svevo outside of the Italian literary tradition. Given the dialectophone tradition of Habsburg Trieste, "our tradition" and "our narrative language" become exclusionary realms to which Svevo is denied access with his linguistic *mélange*. De Castris showed how Svevo admired the Tuscan-based standard and strove to continuously perfect it through the numerous revisions of his texts.

Particularly revealing of the general critical disposition towards Svevo's language is the contribution of the famous literary critic Giacomo Devoto. His article "Decenni per

⁵¹ My translation.

Svevo” was first published in 1938 and then reprinted in 1950 in his volume *Studi di Stilistica*. Devoto, who had a background as a linguist and lexicographer, was invested in denouncing and correcting Svevo’s deficient Italian. Devoto distinguishes two kinds of corrections that Svevo makes to his novels. In the first category the scholar enumerates the successful revisions that Svevo made to correct his shaky Italian or to improve the stylistic grace of the text. The second category contains unjustified alterations of the text, in which Svevo mistakenly corrects an impeccable sentence. Oddly enough, in his critical commentaries, the scholar himself engaged in full-scale corrections of sentences that sounded awkward to him, forcing Svevo’s prose to conform to the rules of normative language. On occasion, Devoto also corrected Svevo’s style, even when linguistic register was technically correct and when the authority of grammar rules was respected (“regole grammaticali, toni di vocabolario non paiono offesi”). An example is the the following sentence that Devoto quotes: “Entrò vestita semplicemente di una vestaglia nera, la capigliatura nel grande disordine di capelli sconvolti, e forse anche strappati da una mano che s’accanisce a trovar da fare qualche cosa, quando non può altrimenti lenire” (194) [“She entered the room, simply dressed in a black night gown, her mane in a great disorder of uncombed hair, maybe also pulled by a hand that relentlessly looks to do something, when it cannot soothe”]. Evidently dissatisfied with the allegedly awkward style, Devoto rewrites the sentence in the Italian in which Svevo should have written in the first place: “Entrò vestita semplicemente di una vestaglia nera con i capelli disordinati, sconvolti; forse anche strappati da una mano che, non potendo lenire, si era accanita nella ricerca di qualche cosa da fare” (*Leggere Svevo* 194) [“She entered the room, simply dressed in a black night gown and with uncombed, messy hair. Her hair

may also have been pulled by a hand, which was incapable of soothing, and thus was relentlessly looking to do something”].⁵² Besides the pedantic nature of such a suggestion, two elements are striking in Devoto’s critical approach to Svevo. First, what is remarkable is the blurred distinction of the separate roles and functions of a creative fiction writer on the one hand and the ones of a critical commentator on the other. Secondly, it is apparent that Devoto’s critique owes much to a nationalist ideology that places linguistic purity at the center of literary criticism: the criteria for literary merit are based on the conformity to a linguistic model opposed to a deviation from traditional norms.

Devoto’s fastidiousness with Svevo’s deficient Italian was influential in later decades. As late as 1973, Bruno Maier continues in Devoto’s tradition of dissecting, analyzing, and tearing apart Svevo’s sentences, eagerly enumerating grammatical mistakes. In his monograph *Italo Svevo*, Maier emphasizes the writer’s confusion with verb tenses. The writer used the present perfect and the simple past interchangeably, and Maier rightfully suspects a German influence here. The scholar offers a crucial psycholinguistic insight when he claims that Svevo’s syntax and verb usage seem to be a translation from German (*Leggere Svevo* 305). The notion that Svevo was really translating from a linguistic construct other than Italian, however conjectural and unverifiable, is a compelling working hypothesis that might explain his literary language. Other critics have offered interpretations in line with Maier’s comment on Svevo’s alleged translation process. Mario Lavagetto claims that Svevo’s Trieste was a city in which “Italian was almost a foreign language” (*Cicatrice* 191). By the same token, Giuseppe Camerino, stresses that Svevo was “more than is usually believed, generally

⁵² The translations from Devoto are mine.

inclined to think in German” (265). While these positions seem to converge to depict a composite image of a writer who is at home in more than one cultural tradition, they nevertheless stem from methodological approaches that assess Svevo’s hybridity differently.

In his 1992 biography *Italo Svevo: La coscienza di un borghese triestino* Enrico Ghidetti emphasizes Svevo’s life as a bourgeois merchant in Trieste, divided between his activity as a businessman and his literary aspirations. Not much is made of Svevo’s culturally composite background. For instance, the scholar categorically opposes any deeper connection between Svevo and the Jewish tradition.⁵³ Curiously enough, while acknowledging the importance of German classics such as Goethe and Schiller in Svevo’s literary formation, Ghidetti absolutely dismisses the idea that Svevo could be read in the context of a German Jewish tradition. Ghidetti openly criticizes Giuseppe Camerino and his book *Italo Svevo e la crisi della Mitteleuropa*. Ghidetti says that Camerino “makes of Svevo a representative of the crisis of Habsburg literature, a crisis embodied by Roth, Musil, Kafka, Doderer, Stefan Zweig” (310). He adds that placing Svevo in the tradition of German-speaking authors of the Habsburg Empire is a “questionable argument” to be quickly dismissed. He also opposes Camerino’s connection between Svevo and the tradition of Eastern Judaism:

The last representative of Jewish literature in Trieste, Giorgio Voghera, indirectly refutes this questionable argument by saying that, ‘it is evident that the spirit of Rabbinical or Eastern Judaism had no influence whatsoever among the Jews in Trieste that attained literary fame, since they did not know or knew very little of it. (310-11)⁵⁴

⁵³ To justify this claim Ghidetti quotes Giacomo Debenedetti: “The Jewish element, remained obscure and almost unknown in the name Schmitz, which he [Svevo] never used as a writer” (31). It is important to note that Debenedetti, Svevo’s friend and a Jew himself, wrote this in 1929, under Fascist rule, thus conforming to the requirements of the regime.

⁵⁴ My translation.

Ghidetti continues with his criticism of Camerino when he comments on Svevo's parable "La tribù" (1897). In the story, as we will see later, Svevo expresses through the members of a tribe of nomads a socialist critique of Western capitalism. Ghidetti once again fundamentally disagrees with Camerino, who, according to Ghidetti, "interprets with evident inaccuracy the meaning of the parable, and its staged opposition of Western capitalist society to the Hasidic community, in light of the Eastern Jewish tradition" (336). To be sure, Svevo had a complex relationship with his Jewish background. He officially gave up the Jewish faith and converted to Catholicism to marry his wife, Livia Veneziani, who came from a family with a solid Catholic background. He converted, however reluctantly, for different reasons. First, he wanted to meet his future wife's wishes and secondly, at the time, it seemed an important step on the path to full assimilation. As the epistolary correspondence of these years show, he later regretted his conversion. While Camerino analyzes Svevo's intricate rapport with the religion of his ancestors, Ghidetti shows evident difficulties in accepting the circumstance that Svevo can be analyzed in conjunction with Jewish writing and in open conversation with Austrian German authors.

Camerino sees Svevo's experience as fundamentally linked to the assimilated Jews in the Habsburg Empire. Quoting Svevo's letters, the scholar shows the writer's relationship with his own Jewish origin. In a letter to Livia, dated 26 May 1898, he writes: "With regards to our engagement, Olga does not seem to mind that I could look elsewhere. She did not tell me, but I guessed it. I understand that from there, as we Jews say, the Messiah is not coming" (133). In 1903, after the conversion and subsequent wedding, Svevo comments on his condition with his usual jocular tone that nonetheless

reveals a bittersweet finish. On 21 November of that year, while away from home, he writes to his wife: "Give a kiss to my Titina and remind her that her father, as she says, is not a Jew anymore, but more than ever wandering" (133). Even after his conversion, Svevo privately still identified himself with the medieval figure of the Wandering Jew. It is difficult to assess how much of this expression is intended as a joke or a more serious comment about the perception of himself. Perception is an issue that is also broached in a letter of 7 June 1913, in which Svevo writes to Livia: "Antonio Fonda wrote to me that I pass unnoticed everywhere. He probably did not admit that I am Aaron. He still lives in that age in which everyone looks like a Christian to him" (133). Here Svevo reminds his wife that his first name is the Jewish Aaron, even though he goes by Hector or Ettore.

Additionally, in his effort to dispel the myth of a nationalist Svevo, close to the Irredentist movement in Trieste, Camerino argues that the writer's nurtured Socialist sympathies. An "authentic internationalist, Europeanist and obviously republican spirit" (185) characterized the agenda of the Italian Socialist Party in Austria, influenced more than other Socialist parties of the empire by the Austro-Marxism of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer. Camerino reminds us that "the goal of the Socialists in Trieste was not a dismantling of the empire, but to transform it into a democratic federation of all the peoples in Austria. This was supposed to be, following the example of Switzerland, a first concrete step towards a unity of Europe" (185). According to Camerino, Svevo's adherence to the internationalist program of the Socialists was less motivated by political conviction than by his Jewish background. Quoting Magris, the scholar points out that "it is obvious that the Jews, a foreign nation among the others, identified with less difficulty

with a supranational state, which was based, at least partially and theoretically, on the idea of superseding the principle of nationality” (quoted in Camerino 187).⁵⁵

In recent years, many other critics have contributed to redress the critical balance, mainly loosening the connection between Svevo and nationalism in Trieste, even though they generally fail to highlight the author’s cultural and political internationalism.

Commenting on the friendship between Svevo and Joyce, John McCourt notes that “Schmitz, despite being a member of the Lega Nazionale and the Ginnastica Triestina and contributing articles and reviews to the rather high-brow Irredentist daily *L’Indipendente*, always remained somewhat at a remove from the rather crude nationalist attitudes that dominated so many of the cultural and political activities in Trieste” (88).

Like McCourt, Mario Lavagetto, the editor of Svevo’s 2004 edition of his collected works, emphasizes how alien Svevo was to the excesses of nationalism in Trieste.

Discussing Svevo’s essay fragment on pacifism “Sulla Teoria della Pace” (“On the Theory of Peace”), a text widely ignored, Lavagetto maintains that the text

[...] should suggest caution to those who have tried (and still try) to transform Mr. Schmitz into a passionate Irredentist. To be sure, the author was always cautious and even if he wrote in Italian and looked for legitimization within Italian culture, one should not ignore neither his sympathy for socialism that in Trieste was staunchly opposed to the “Redemption” and to the war, nor the contradictions and internal tensions in a border city where Irredentism (before Trieste’s annexation to Italy) had always been in minority. (*Racconti cxvii*)⁵⁶

Lavagetto writes in the wake of new historiographic assessment of Trieste that demonstrates how the Irredentist movement, however boisterous and eventually successful, was in reality conducted by a loud minority. In her book *Origins and Identity: Essays on Svevo and Trieste* Elizabeth Schächter summarizes recent historical re-

⁵⁵ Magris makes this point in *Lontano da dove* (17).

⁵⁶ My translation.

evaluations of Trieste around the turn of the century, stating that “some historians now argue that the Triestines did not wish to relinquish the protection of Austria with whom they enjoyed ‘a peaceful and serene relationship’; that the Irredentist movement was but a minor event, ... that Irredentist histories of Trieste should be dismissed” (36). Elena Coda in her unpublished dissertation *Between Borders: Reading Illness in Trieste* suggests a similar perspective:

[E]ven the Italian nationalist movement was not accepted dogmatically by the Italian Triestines, who were perfectly aware that their economic power depended upon their belonging to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. This is the “double soul” [of Trieste –S.P.]: the impossibility to subscribe completely, without question, to one set of beliefs, be it the ideological irredentist movement, or the more pragmatic economic interest of the city. (18)

Coda describes a Habsburg Trieste trapped in a double arrangement of cultural and political allegiances, where the Italian Triestines were keenly aware of the fact that their economic well-being depended on Austrian policy and that a connection to Italy would fulfill the Romantic dream of national deliverance, but would at the same time imply a renunciation of their privileged economic status. It is precisely this paradoxical nature of Trieste, suspended between national aspirations and economic privileges that makes the city an “allegory of limbo, in the secular sense of an indefinable hiatus” (Morris 20).

When in 1892 Aaron Hector Schmitz publishes his first novel he adopts the *nom de plume* Italo Svevo. Schmitz settles on the name Italo Svevo after having published newspaper articles with two other pen names, Erode, after the Jewish king Herod, and Ettore Samigli.⁵⁷ The choice of publishing under a culturally hybrid name is a gesture of

⁵⁷ Marina Beer in “Alcune note su Ettore Schmitz e i suoi nomi: per una ricerca sulle fonti di Italo Svevo” (quoted in Ghidetti 321-22) suggests a possible origin for the earlier pseudonyms Herod and Ettore Samigli. The figure of Herod, the biblical Jewish king, is the protagonist of the 1850 drama *Herodes und Mariamme* by Friedrich Hebbel. The young Schmitz, according to Beer, probably read the drama. As for the pseudonym “Samigli,” Beer suggests that it is a transliteration from the Hebrew equivalent of Schmitz and

ostentatious performance that exhibits the author's double cultural citizenship. In Svevo's literary pseudonym the syncretic dynamic of the multicultural Habsburg state allows for a productive fusion of cultural identities. The inextricable bond between Italian and German background expressed in the pseudonym should not be interpreted as a hierarchical relationship, but rather as a dialogic exchange, a meeting point of the two literary traditions. According to Gatt-Rutter, it was a courageous gesture for Svevo to choose and insist, in the early 1890s and also after World War I, on the choice of a pseudonym that suggested a multiplicity of allegiances, implicitly attributing to Trieste the role of mediator between Italians and Germans: "His adopting the pseudonym Italo Svevo was bound to be seen in Trieste as provocatively internationalist" (117). The biographer also notes that the pseudonym

[S]uggests a kinship of the peoples, but not of dynasties of the Triple Alliance. The latter were the Hohenzollern, the Habsburg and the Savoy, while the Swabian Hohenstaufen were the rivals of the two. In the thirteenth century, moreover, in the person of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, they initiated Italy's first vernacular culture (the so-called Sicilian School), as well as the truly international culture of the imperial court in Palermo. Svevo also chose his pseudonym as a joke about his Italian style, on account of which his friends used to call him the 'Ostrogoth.' (113)

Svevo's pseudonym shows how his multiple cultural allegiances are anchored in a pre-national era and specifically associated to a culture that was both vernacular and international at the same time. Such an act of inclusion and display of multiple transnational attachments can be, however, far from being a simple gesture of addition, as it may imply an act of omission as well. The public display of this composite European identity could at the same time be interpreted as an act of exclusion that tends to conceal,

its Yiddish forms *Shlemil* and *Shlemazl*. Again, Svevo had in mind German models: Adalbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemils wundersame Geschichte* and Heinrich Heine's poem "Yehuda Ben Halevy" whose protagonist bears the middle name Shmuel. In Yiddish, shlemil designates a clumsy, inept and unlucky person, much like Svevo's protagonists in his novels.

if not to obliterate completely, Svevo's Jewish background. After all, with the new and definitive pseudonym, the reference to Herod is lost. With the exception of an early article entitled "Shylock" Svevo rarely mentions explicitly his Jewish background in his public writings. Nevertheless, according to Giuliana Minghelli the Jewish component survives and marks an invisible presence in the author's pseudonym. In her recent book *In the Shadow of the Mammoth: Italo Svevo and the Emergence of Modernism* she elucidates the writer's choice of the different pseudonyms that he adopted. She comments on Svevo's effort to "assimilate progressively a German-Jewish origin into a desired Italian identity," where the "pureness of the latter may not have been Svevo's true goal" (6). She adds to her analysis the following explanation:

The pseudonym *Italo Svevo* evokes a border that both severs and joins two pure and separate elements. But behind its orderly façade lurks the now hidden, yet defiant, code name 'Erode' to remind us of a subterranean contamination within the asserted hybrid of Italian and German identities. Our journey through the artist's poetics finds a necessary point of departure in the ambiguous symbiosis expressed by the writer's names, the 'from where he speaks', namely turn-of-the-century Trieste. (7)

If we accept Minghelli's notion that Svevo's Jewish identity remains present "within" the process of self-naming in the form of a "subterranean contamination," the Jewish heritage becomes a necessary ingredient in the author's affirmation of a composite European identity. Svevo is well aware of the intrinsic double cultural citizenship that the Jewish Diaspora in Europe had produced. Let me suggest that Svevo's pseudonym works like a palimpsest from which the trace of the Jewish experience and its inherent internationalism cannot be erased. Moreover, however hidden, Svevo's Jewish origin performs an adhesive function that facilitates and allows the hybridity emphasized in the pseudonym. In Svevo's pseudonym Jewish transnationalism becomes the necessary

premise for his multiple cultural allegiances. The Wandering Jew that Svevo has suggested as a description of himself in his 1903 letter has found a home in a European consciousness and in the cultural and literary traditions that the double name evokes.⁵⁸

Svevo's literary autopoiesis, the construction of identity through writing, is invested in the display of multiple allegiances. The cultural politics underlying the adoption of his pseudonym might suggest that Svevo wished to relegate his Jewish background to a closeted, strictly private sphere. While it is true to a certain extent, it would be nonetheless incorrect to maintain that Svevo's literary production of his identity is completely bereft of a Jewish tradition. The text that suggests how Svevo perceived himself also as a writer in the Jewish tradition is the Hasidic parable "La tribù."

"La tribù:" A Hasidic parable in a Socialist magazine

In Svevo's political allegory "La tribù," a tribe of nomads settles down in a fertile oasis after a long march in the desert. The passage from nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle is accompanied by the transformation from a rural economy to industrial capitalism. Hussein, the community leader, is asked to rule in a dispute between two neighbouring farmers who disagree over the harvest. He soon realizes that the tribe's legislation is inadequate and that the attempt to build a just society fails as socio-economic inequality progressively increases. The prophets in the tribe claim that the young Achmed is

⁵⁸ In the years to come Svevo's Jewish background will be associated with Europe. This is partially confirmed by Luisa Passerini's book *Love and the Idea of Europe* where she writes on the Europeanism of Giorgio Quartara, Denis de Rougemont and Leo Ferrero, son of Guglielmo. Leo Ferrero reviewed works by Jewish writers in Trieste such as Svevo and Umberto Saba in the Europeanist magazine *Solaria*. Passerini notes: "The reference to Judaism and its European significance is implicit in both Leo Ferrero's cultural work and the family tradition. His engagement with the literary magazine *Solaria* contributed to its Judaism ... and associated Judaism with an openness to Europe" (136).

destined to bring wellness and glory to the community. The council of elders therefore decides to send him to study law in Europe with the intention that upon his return he can establish a proper government. When Achmed returns after years of study, he enters what now is a small city on horseback. From that privileged, almost regal position he notices the profound changes the community has undergone: “La legge economica non perdeva della sua forza neppure nel centro del deserto; e le piccole linde cassette, che avevano da prima sostituite le tende, erano scomparse per far posto a sontuosi palazzi e a luride catapecchie” (*Racconti* 53) [“The economic law did not lose any of its force, not even in the middle of the desert. The neat little houses that initially had replaced the tents had disappeared to make room to sumptuous palaces and filthy hovels”].⁵⁹ Upon his return, Achmed justifies this inequality with his recently acquired Social Darwinism. The community, he claims, will receive an economic advantage if in the class struggle the rich outmatch the poor. After his studies in Europe, Achmed’s economic priority has shifted from the well being of the community to the financial gains of the individual. In order to accelerate the transition from agrarian to industrial capitalism he suggests building a factory, through which he would increase his profits and exploit the working class. Hussein recognizes Achmed’s ruse and deeply regrets his decision to transform the life of the community from a nomadic existence into a modern industrial civilization. It is unclear whether in the end Hussein, who attributes social inequality to their newly found sedentary life, decides to return to their nomadic life style. The final epilogue casts retrospective light on the narrative:

Un europeo, stanco della sventura del proprio paese, bussò un giorno alla porta di Hussein e chiese d’essere ammesso a far parte di quella tribù felice.

⁵⁹ My translation.

– Impossibile! – disse Hussein. Abbiamo sperimentato che la nostra organizzazione non fa per voi europei.
 Offeso, l' europeo osservò: – Non siamo stati noi a immaginare le vostre leggi?
 – Le avete immaginate, ma non sapete comprenderle né viverle. Abbiamo dovuto scacciare da noi persino un arabo, certo Achmed, che aveva avuto la sfortuna di essere educato da voi. (*Racconti* 58)

One day, a European, tired of the misfortune of his country, knocked on Hussein's door and asked to be admitted to the happy tribe.

“Impossible!” said Hussein. “We have experimented that our organization does not work for you Europeans.”

The European felt insulted and said: “Was it not us who imagined your laws?”

“You have imagined them, but you are unable to understand them or to live according to them. We even had to expel an Arab, one Achmed, who was unlucky enough to be educated by you Europeans.”⁶⁰

The physical expulsion of Achmed, who is singled out as an Arab, complements the tribe's rejection of his capitalist model. The appearance of the European is particularly striking in this final section. An unhappy European attempts to join the tribe but is not admitted on the grounds that tribal and regional organization does not suit Europeans and their industrial capitalism. According to Hussein, Europeans have envisioned the laws that govern regional and agrarian societies without being able to apply them in practice. What Svevo seems to imply here is not only the inadequacy of an aggressive capitalist revolution in traditionally agrarian economies, but also that European nationalisms are incompatible with historically developed regional identities. This latter notion is suggested by the itinerary of the European, who wishes to leave the misfortune of his country to join a regional community. The European attempts to abandon the national paradigm in order to return to a pre-national *Landespatriotismus*. Hussein, however, makes it clear that this reversal is impossible.

Svevo publishes the parable in the November 1897 issue of the fortnightly *Critica Sociale*,⁶¹ the “leading Socialist periodical” (Gatt-Rutter 117) to which the writer had a

⁶⁰ My translation.

subscription.⁶² It is significant that Svevo chooses to publish his story in this particular venue. Let me suggest that the journal constituted a forum that was potentially more receptive (and at least not hostile) to a Jewish parable. The reason for this is twofold. First, the Socialist journal was a fitting venue for Svevo's Marxist critique of capitalism. More importantly, the collaborators were open to Jewish culture. Among them ranked a young and promising intellectual, Guglielmo Ferrero, who in the years to come was to grow into a prominent sociologist, historian and political writer. In the same year Ferrero had published *L'Europa giovane*, a comparative study of European culture and politics. Ferrero was a staunch Dreyfusard, opposed to anti-Semitism and convinced that the Jews were an integral and necessary part of Europe. In the following section, let me first address Svevo's socialism, then turn my attention to Ferrero and finally discuss the Hasidic characteristics of Svevo's parable.

Gatt-Rutter suggests that the author's choice of signing the parable with his *nom de plume* Italo Svevo constitutes a bold move asserting his internationalism. Ghidetti, instead, describes with great insight a more complex picture that shows Svevo erring on the side of caution. Svevo had a slight presence in patriot associations in Trieste such as the Lega Nazionale and the Circolo Artistico. He also published in *L'Indipendente*, the daily newspaper of the Irredentist movement. It would have been unwise for him to publish "La tribù" in the other Socialist newspaper *Il Lavoratore*, which in 1895 had officially become the mouthpiece of the Triestine Socialists, who were opposed to Irredentism, arguing that Trieste should remain under Habsburg rule in a federal and

⁶¹ *Critica Sociale* was founded in 1891 by Filippo Turati, who a year later also founded the Italian Socialist Party.

⁶² According to Ghidetti (158), the story must have had an impact on Antonio Gramsci, who mentions as late as 1934 Svevo's parable in the 23rd Prison Notebook.

democratic reorganization of the Empire. As Ghidetti puts it: “Turati’s magazine offered him [Svevo] the possibility ... of expressing his opinions and avoiding the thorny problems of the local situation in Trieste. Hence yes to Socialism, but in the Italian context, not in Austria. Svevo’s Irredentist conscience and reputation were saved” (161-62).⁶³ Svevo’s choice was dictated by political prudence. His positions in fact, as we will see later in his critical writings, were closer to the federal and democratic internationalism of the Austro-Marxists.

As I have already pointed out, *fin-de-siècle* Socialism in Trieste was primarily and specifically concerned with the nationality question within the Habsburg Empire. In addition to this Austro-Marxist imprint, Triestine Socialism was also influenced by the ideas of the liberal and Europeanist political thinker Giuseppe Mazzini. In the Adriatic city “many intellectuals were to be attracted to Socialism, which might well appear to them the natural and necessary development of classical nineteenth-century liberalism or Mazzinianism” (Gatt-Rutter 116), even though many radical followers of Mazzini remained hostile to Socialism. Because of the widespread Mazzinianism in the Adriatic city, socialism in Trieste, more than anywhere else, was markedly internationalist and Europeanist in outlook.

The reason for such a profound interest in the political theory of Mazzini is that the Triestine Socialists were offered a model that escaped the nationalist rhetoric of Irredentism and the narrow scope of cultural imperialism. Mazzini’s cultural and political patriotism, however fervent, lacked the rhetorical violence of xenophobic nationalism. He placed his vision of a political unification of Italy in the context of European

⁶³ My translation.

democracies. With some adjustments,⁶⁴ Mazzini's philosophy of the nation was a fitting theory for the needs of the Triestine Socialist intelligentsia, eager to combine a moderate Italian cultural patriotism with the multicultural fabric of the Habsburg Empire.⁶⁵

One should not mistake Svevo's sympathy for Socialist ideas as a subscription to militant proletarian class struggle.⁶⁶ Ghidetti identifies in Svevo influences of the ethical and humanitarian Socialism of German theoretician Eduard Bernstein's who postulated his ideas in the German Socialist theoretical journal *Die Neue Zeit* (164). Gatt-Rutter offers a different definition, suggesting that "Svevo was not immune to the spell of the somewhat Utopian or Platonic Socialism preached by Zola and Tolstoy" and that Svevo's parable "shows a weakness for this rather literary brand of Socialism" (115). To these Socialist currents, I include an additional source for Svevo's personal interpretation of Socialism, namely the European internationalism of Guglielmo Ferrero.

I argue that Ferrero's influence can be traced also in "La tribù" where Svevo associates Judaism with European identity. Ferrero was a regular contributor to *Critica Sociale*, where he published articles and reviews. Ferrero also often visited to publicly speak in Trieste. A favorite forum for Ferrero was the "Circolo di Studi Sociali" where the Triestine Socialists organized lectures by local and visiting intellectuals. Besides

⁶⁴ Mazzini advocated the construction of a future federation of democracies, the United States of Europe. According to Mazzini Italians should work closely with the Slavic populations on the Adriatic. He also hoped for the destruction of the Habsburg Empire, arguing that the Austrian monarchy was oppressing the right to nationhood to many populations in Central Europe. While the Socialists in Trieste agreed with Mazzini's democratic and federal Europeanism, and the collaboration with Croats and Slovenes, they disagreed with his wish for the destruction of the empire. Irredentists, instead, focused on Mazzini's message of national deliverance, while ignoring his sympathy for the Slavs.

⁶⁵ Mazzini's Europeanism heavily influenced many intellectuals of that time in Trieste, such as Scipio Slataper and Giani Stuparich.

⁶⁶ In his book *La coscienza borghese. Saggio sulla narrativa di Italo Svevo* Giampaolo Borghello suggests that Svevo knew well the theories of Marx. According to him, "Svevo was rationally and intellectually convinced of the fairness and accuracy of Marx's analysis, but he lacked a practical counterpart to this conviction. He lacked a real, direct and emotional sympathy with the struggle of the Proletarian movement" (quoted in Ghidetti 336). This should not come as a surprise given Svevo's background as a bourgeois industrialist.

Ferrero, other leading intellectuals who gave talks at the “Circolo” were figures such as Cesare Lombroso, Gaetano Salvemini, Antonio Labriola and Adolfo Zerboglio (Gatt-Rutter 183). It is very likely that Svevo read *L’Europa giovane* right before writing “La tribù.” Ferrero wrote his work in the spring of 1897 and published it immediately, becoming a huge success almost overnight. In September Ferrero’s book was already quoted and praised by social scientists.⁶⁷ Svevo wrote the short parable in October and published it on 1 November in the magazine.

Ferrero’s study had a profound impact on Svevo. In their commentary on Svevo’s London writings, John Gatt-Rutter and Brian Moloney maintain: “Ferrero’s account of England in his *L’Europa giovane* (1897) particularly impressed him and echoes of it are to be found in *Confessions of Zeno* in Ada’s account of English women and their public roles” (183).⁶⁸ Svevo, just like Joyce, was struck by Ferrero’s philo-Semitism that emphasized an association between Jewish transnationalism and Europe. Also, Ferrero’s belief that anti-Semitic hatred was one of the factors that made a more just Europe realizable only in the future certainly would have resonated with Svevo.

Ferrero had travelled extensively in Europe, and he organized the notes from his trip into a sort of social and political study of different European populations. For Ferrero, the Jews were among the various European ethnic groups the most “representative people.” The historian defines the Jews as “an ethnic Proteus” that, under persecution, was able to save itself “assuming all nationalities, disappearing and

⁶⁷ Filippo Ermini in the article “Michele Cerulario e lo scisma d’Oriente” praises Ferrero’s book (520). See the article in *Rivista Internazionale di discipline sociali e discipline ausiliari. Pubblicazione periodica dell’Unione Cattolica per gli Studi Sociali in Italia*. 5.15 (September 1897): 505-22.

⁶⁸ See Svevo, Italo. “*This England is so Different ...*” *Italo Svevo’s London Writings*. Eds. and trans. Gatt-Rutter, John and Moloney, Brian. Leicester: Troubador Publishing, 2003. Print. In “Men and Things in a District of London,” an essay contained in the essay collection, Svevo refers to the historian as “our Ferrero”.

reappearing in different countries in all its forms” (350).⁶⁹ Ferrero here identifies a characteristic that for Svevo is particularly important. The protean character of Jewish identity allows adaptation to a national character, but also to a regional context: “The Jewish genius ... assumes the character of the people among whom it lives ... it Germanizes itself in Germany, Italianizes in Italy ... and in the different regions of a country, assumes its regional character” (372). It is striking how in the illustration of his point, Ferrero uses as examples German and Italian national characters, as well as regional identities. It is obvious that Svevo could fully identify with this description. His Jewish background allowed for the incorporation of Italian and German identities in the *Landespatriotismus* of Habsburg Trieste. Moreover, it is entirely possible that Ferrero, when writing about Jews assimilated into German and Italian cultures, had in mind someone just like Svevo – if not Svevo himself.⁷⁰ In the same piece, Ferrero continues to emphasize the European character of the Jews: “Today the Jew has absorbed the very essence of our civilization. Though he interprets it in his own way, he is not a foreign enemy anymore, but an original contributor, gifted with precious qualities for him and for us” (411). For Ferrero, Jewish assimilation occurred gradually over time and now a group that was considered foreign and an enemy nonetheless, is an integral part of Europe’s composite identity.

⁶⁹ All translations from Ferrero’s *Europa giovane* are mine.

⁷⁰ At this stage of my research it appears to be very likely that Svevo and Ferrero personally knew each other, even if it is unclear when and under what circumstances such a meeting occurred. Svevo read Ferrero’s work and must have discussed it with Joyce, who was also an interested reader of the Italian journalist and historian. Leo Ferrero, Guglielmo’s son, used to visit Svevo in his home in Trieste and wrote favorable reviews in the literary magazine *Solaria*. Among Ferrero’s letters and unpublished documents held at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University there is a letter fragment signed by Ettore Schmitz. The fragment consists of a torn piece of paper, which seems to correspond to the bottom part of the letter. No header and no date are visible, which makes it impossible to determine to whom Svevo addressed the letter and when. Its presence in the Ferrero papers would obviously suggest that Svevo wrote to Guglielmo. The content, as far as discernible, regards the possibility of publishing some novellas in a book or in *Solaria*. This reference might lead us to suspect that the letter was addressed to Leo.

Ferrero's collaboration with *Critica Sociale* might have encouraged Svevo to submit his parable. The publication of a fictional text in a journal that discusses, with a highly theoretical approach, social and political matters is a very unusual event. *Critica Sociale* published articles, essays and reviews, which in turn produced responses and open discussions among contributors and readers. Svevo's fictional contribution can be justified and explained by the fact that it is a Hasidic parable. In the tradition of Hasidic parables, theoretical and doctrinal topics were taught through fictional stories. With his parable Svevo was participating in the journal's theoretical discussion by addressing an audience that could fully understand the Socialist commentary embedded in his fiction. Svevo stages the conflict that divided Italian Socialists at the time. Some believed that encouraging capitalist development in Italy would create the premises for a Socialist state, while others maintained that it was possible to realize Socialism without necessarily going through all the phases of capitalism. Fabio Vittorini argues that Svevo's parable does not offer a solution. The end of society will be "enigmatically similar to the beginning, analogous to the tribal state that precedes capitalist organization of work" (9).⁷¹

In addition to the theoretical underpinning in the story, the setting, biblical motifs and structure unequivocally identify the influence of Hasidic parables on Svevo's narration. In his book *The Hasidic Parable*, Aryeh Wineman maintains that the literary production of Hasidism "continued the bipartite structure of the earlier rabbinical parable (found in the Talmud and Midrash) consisting in the *mashal*—the parable itself—and the *nimshal*—the application or the significance of the story as supplied by the teller of the story" (xv). "La tribù" shows these very structural features: a storyline that develops the

⁷¹ My translation.

plot followed by a brief epilogue that contains a commentary illustrating the meaning of the story. This narrative organization serves a precise didactic purpose. Wineman points out: “The structure of those Hasidic parables makes possible a transformation in thinking” (xvii). The story develops around notions of acceptance or rejection of drastic changes in a traditional society:

This kind of literary structure testifies to Hasidism’s essentially unconventional spiritual consciousness . . . That core structure of the Hasidic parable suggests that Hasidism’s own strong and natural identification with Jewish tradition and traditional Jewish society conceals its own radical transformation of that tradition as it was conventionally understood.

In this way the parable can be likened to a guide directing a person from a lower level of understanding and awareness to a higher level. (Wineman xvii)

Through this rhetorical organization of the parable Svevo intervenes in contemporary debates concerning Socialism. The parable shows Svevo’s interest and engagement in social and political questions of his time. By the same token, a decade later the author decided to intervene in the public discussion on European peace.

Svevo’s Theory of Peace: An Essay Fragment

With the breakout of World War I, Svevo begins to write an essay in which he expresses his support for an Italian participation in the League of Nations, attempting to elaborate a theory of peace and a new socio-economic structure for Europe. Svevo’s ideas on peace in Europe share Ferrero’s economic approach. Svevo’s Europe is, among other things, an economic union envisioned as a single market. Besides economic motivations, Svevo’s project of continental peace is mainly conceived as the synergy of Italian and German intellectual traditions. Originally intended to be a large essayistic endeavor, the

essay only survives as a fragment, since Svevo soon abandons the plan in order to embark upon the novelistic enterprise of *The Confessions of Zeno*. Despite its fragmentary character, the essay offers significant insights into Svevo's political reflections. The manuscript is composed of two parts. There is a larger part, which comprises a sort of introductory outline of the main topics and a successive development of these ideas, and a second smaller collection of pages. The content of the collections indicates a chronological discrepancy between the two parts, the first part presumably written during the war and the second in the aftermath of the conflict. In the manuscript a title for the essay is missing. Early commentators established its present title "On the Theory of Peace," by which the essay is generally known today. The essay is a crucial testimony to Svevo's reaction to the war, which he elsewhere defines as "la grande tragedia europea" (*Teatro e Saggi* 1165) [the "great European tragedy"].

Immanuel Kant and Dante Alighieri also inspire Svevo's essayistic project for the theory of peace. Kant's idea of a peaceable coexistence of nations expressed in the 1795 work *Perpetual Peace (Zum ewigen Frieden)* was the basis upon which the League of Nations was built. In Svevo's text, the echo of Kant's essay is evident in an initial statement where the author justifies the purpose of the League as "un'Istituzione che se anche non sembra mirare ad una pace eternal pure tenta di ritardare lo scoppio di altre guerre" (860) ["an institution that, even if not aiming at a perpetual peace, nevertheless works to postpone the outbreak of other wars"]. It is evident that Svevo aspires to resume Kant's work, by adjusting its utopian and impractical goal towards a more pragmatic approach that seeks to defer war. The Neo-Kantian Walther Schücking, who inspired

Svevo,⁷² was a follower of Kant's ideas of a federal Europe living in peace. Dante's pacifism is complementary to Kant's project: "Una teoria completa e perfetta se anche non più applicabile alle nostre circostanze fluì dalla nobile mente di Dante" (860) ["A complete and perfect theory flowed from Dante's noble mind, although it is not applicable to our present circumstances"]. Among his contemporaries, Svevo also admired the Austrian Jewish pacifist Alfred Hermann Fried. A prominent supporter of Esperanto, which the League of Nations considered adopting as a language, Fried had written the pacifist novel *Die Waffen Nieder (Lay Down Your Arms)* together with Bertha von Suttner. Giuseppe Camerino has recognized some commonalities between Svevo's fragment and Fried's 1895 essay "Elsass-Lothringen und der Krieg: Ein Friedenswort" (Camerino 181). Unsurprisingly, Svevo's models for a future Europe are to be found in Italian, German and Austrian sources.

The rationale of the essay is to support Italy's membership in the League of Nations, established in the aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles. According to Svevo, for Italy and its people the adherence to the principles of a peaceful community of nations comes as a natural desire since "il nostro popolo è per sua essenza pacifico. Non conosce né intolleranze né xenofobie" (860) ["our people are essentially peaceful. They do not know intolerance or xenophobia"]. The projection of this utopian essentialism onto Italians should not be read as a naïve enthusiasm dictated by nationalistic pride or by a blind faith in the fundamental moral integrity of his fellow citizens. Svevo personally experienced episodes of racial discrimination because of his Jewish origin. Moreover, Svevo's critical engagement with the questions of his time demonstrates a deeper understanding of the complex issues, as becomes clear in the course of his essay. What

⁷² Lavagetto quotes Svevo's wife, Livia Veneziani as a source for this information (*Teatro e Saggi* 1641).

appears as a bland generalization in reality seems to correspond to a precise rhetorical strategy. Svevo originally intended to publish the essay in an effort to convince Italians of the necessity adhering to the League. In other words, in addressing a public that believes in the coherent and immutable character of nations, Svevo claims that given the essential peaceful nature of Italians, it is only fitting that Italy joins the League of Nations. Soon, in fact, Svevo's essay assumes the features of an original proposal. The Triestine author suggests the addition of a section within the international organization that should study what he calls "the Theory of Peace" ("la Teoria della Pace"). Remarkably, he proposes that this subdivision should be composed of scientists and delegates from universities rather than professional diplomats who, in his view, fail to envision political roadmaps that stretch beyond short-term solutions (859, 861). Svevo thus suggests taking the destiny of the continent out of the hands of traditional diplomacy in order to find a scientific solution to the question of warfare. In this openly declared distrust in European diplomatic circles one can sense an ill-concealed criticism towards the Treaty of Versailles itself. The treaty, signed in 1919, was presented as a peace treaty but the harsh economic terms it imposed on Germany made it assume the features of a punitive peace. Svevo emphasizes the necessity of a new peace treaty, implying that the current one is not satisfactory enough for all the parties involved: "Gli uomini d'Europa combattono oramai tutti per la loro felicità ed è questa che bisogna loro offrire per addurli alla pace. Il prossimo trattato di pace ha da trovare la felicità di tutti, vincitori e vinti e neutrali" (874-5) ["The men of Europe fight for their happiness and it is this happiness that needs to be offered in order to take them to peace. The next peace treaty must find everyone's

happiness, for the winners, the defeated and for those who remained neutral”]. Against the imposed imbalance of Versailles, Svevo hopes for a compromise, acceptable for all.

The essay gravitates around questions of border culture, free movement and hybridity within a united Europe. In his essay Svevo becomes the advocate for a new Europe, in which porous borders permit the free movement of individuals and goods. According to Svevo, “il liberismo solo può assicurare la pace” (866) [“only economic liberalism can guarantee peace”]. Svevo envisions the “possibilità di attenuare i confini perché non provochino la guerra e ammettano la gara” (859) [“possibility of minimizing borders so that they do not provoke war and allow for competition”].⁷³ Borders within Europe should not be completely abolished, but they should “not obstruct the free flow of life” (865). Svevo adds:

Per ammettere i popoli alla libera gara che già esiste fra gl’individui queste frontiere dovrebbero ridursi in modo da non essere più neppure tali, semplici segni che avvertono che certe leggi vi regnano e chi le varca deve ottemperarvi, quali quelle p.e. fra’ diversi Cantoni della Svizzera o Stati dell’America. (865)

In order to admit populations to the free competition that already exists among people these borders should be reduced to the point in which they are not such any longer. They should be mere signs, informing about the laws enforced within the borders. Whoever crosses these borders has to abide by these laws; in the same way this happens among the cantons of Switzerland or the states of America.⁷⁴

In the reference to multilingual Switzerland and federal America, Svevo identifies the constitutional models for his future United States of Europe. In the second part of the manuscript, presumably written later, the author assumes a more radical position: “E prima o poi la frontiera diventa un impedimento alla vita” (876) [“Sooner or later, the

⁷³ Svevo’s uncensored Italian sounds awkward and reveals his typical calques from German. The term “gara” is evidently a translation from the German term *Wettbewerb*, that indicates both contest and (economic) competition. This outline bears resemblance to the principles of the Schengen Agreement that introduces the gradual abolition of internal borders in the European Union.

⁷⁴ My translation.

border becomes an obstacle to life”]. Anticipating a foreseeable opposition to such novelty in a nationalist and protectionist Europe, Svevo wishes that at least an agreement on a “programma minimo” [“a basic program”] could be found, that ensures the basic right to appeal against “dazio lesivo” [“harmful custom duties”] and a generally protected right to travel and cross borders freely. Svevo claims: “Questo programma minimo dovrebbe essere attuato in tutto il mondo e, se non si può fare altrimenti, in un vasto territorio compatto, un Continente” (867) [“This minimal program should be applied to the entire world or otherwise, if the application is impractical, in a vast united territory, a Continent”].

Once he has proposed a rudimentary prototype for a European single market and established a federalist political paradigm as the most suitable solution for a continental peace, the author moves on to identify a historic precedent for this new Europe. Svevo sees in King Alfred the Great a forerunner of a United Europe, since the medieval monarch is credited with unifying a divided England in the 9th century and restoring trade after the Viking invasions. According to Svevo, the England of King Alfred was, thanks to the “fusione delle varie nazionalità” [“mingling of various nationalities”], “una piccola Europe” (869) [“a small Europe”]. The successive colonial history of England has produced, according to Svevo, ambivalent results. If on the one hand, Wales still gives the nation poets and statesmen, on the other “nel Cornwall l’ultima persona che balbetta il dialetto di quella provincia morì vent’anni or sono” (869) [“in Cornwall the last person that babbled the dialect of that region died twenty years ago”]. Svevo is aware of the manifold dynamics of colonial rule that might cause the irretrievable destruction of regional cultures. What Svevo here has in mind is his own dialectophone Trieste, whose

linguistic individuality is not threatened by Austrian German, but by Italian. Svevo notes that the Habsburg rule of Trieste changed the linguistic makeup of the Adriatic city, fostering its hybrid composition. Before the Habsburgs decided to expand the city, Friulian, an Eastern Ladin dialect, was spoken in Trieste. With the massive immigration of Venetian workers from the surrounding areas, an immigration wave encouraged by the need of transforming a small fisher town into an imperial port, the dominant dialect soon became Venetian, which supplanted Friulian. “Today,” Svevo asserts, Trieste “parla il veneto con un ritmo che tuttavia ricorda l’antica parlata” (870) [“speaks Venetian with a rhythm that is suggestive of the ancient vernacular”]. Now that former Friulian-speaking areas of the Habsburg Empire are reunited with its Italian provinces, Svevo argues, the competition between Friulian-speakers and Venetians will not escalate in a regional conflict. Here again, the author sees an analogy with Switzerland, where Swiss French and Swiss Germans do not quarrel, despite the sworn enmity of neighboring France and Germany. This healthy competition between different ethnic and linguistic groups, however, is different from the general pattern in the late Austrian Empire:

La gara fra i popoli dell’Austria non appartiene qui perché veramente e consapevolmente preludiava alla guerra. Però si può notare che accanto agli svantaggi (l’odio cieco fra di loro) quella gara apportò qualche beneficio alla cultura delle singole Nazionalità. Non un’alta coltura (esclusa dalla mancanza di libera coscienza nazionale e da un distacco forzato dalla propria più grande nazione che sola questa cultura poteva elaborare) ma una cultura diffusissima. Basti ricorda che fra le reclute della Venezia Giulia in questi anni l’analfabeta mancò del tutto. (870)

The competition among the nations in Austria does not belong into this context because it really and consciously was a prelude to the war. However, one can observe that next to the disadvantages of this situation (the blind hatred between the nations) that competition produced some advantages to the culture of every particular nationality. Not a different culture (excluded by the absence of free national consciousness and by a forced detachment from one's greater nation that was the only agent that could possibly theorize it), but a very widespread alphabetization. Among the soldiers of the Julian March in these years everyone knew how to read and write.

Svevo recognizes a paradoxical situation in the Habsburg Empire. The “unredeemed” nations benefited from a schooling system that fostered the growth of national consciousness. Knowing how to read and write in one's own language did not only heighten the awareness of cultural distinctiveness but also carried socio-political implications. Once an ethnic group within the Austrian Empire pushed for the recognition of their language as an officially used idiom, the speakers of that language gained access to employment in the administration of the Empire. This situation is portrayed, as we have seen, in Musil's *Man without Qualities*, where Ulrich and Counts Leinsdorf discuss the question of the local administration in Trieste that employs only Italian speaking clerks (*MoE* 840). With border town Trieste in mind, Svevo suggests a solution that challenges the nationalist obsession with the border as a protective perimeter of vital space: “Perché non si aprono i confini fra due paesi limitrofi per provare la libertà della gara? Per evitare delle gelosie da bel principio dovrebb'essere aperto l'accesso alla stessa libertà a tutte le Nazioni” (870) [“Why not opening the borders of two neighboring countries in order to test the freedom of competition? To avoid rivalries from the very beginning we should grant access to the same liberties to all Nations”]. Svevo suggests that this opening of state borders should be experimented in the most hotly contested area in Europe, confident that equal access to resources brings to an end the territorial disputes

between France and Germany. The competition is not naturally conducive to war, Svevo argues, adding in a somewhat obscure fashion: “E non è decisiva neppure la capacità di propaganda e di persuasione che ogni Europeo subisce nella lingua francese” (871) [“And neither is the capacity of propaganda and persuasion decisive that every European experiences in the French language”]. What Svevo intends in this last passage is frankly hard to guess. One interpretative possibility of the “propaganda in the French language” might be the punitive peace of the Versailles Treaty. Svevo might mean the persuasive effort of the exorbitant payments imposed on defeated Germany. In this case, he was as myopic as the rest of his generation in the belief that the “French propaganda” of Versailles would not help lead to another war. In describing the European, Svevo capitalizes the term as to imply for the European the status of a supranational collective. In the relationship between French and Germans Svevo acknowledges the potential for a Nietzschean European hybrid race: “Non ho paura che le due razze si mescolino più di quanto non lo sieno già” (871) [“I am not afraid of the fact that the two races intermingle more than they already have”].

This European subject is the measure of Svevo’s new democratic and post-national Europe. Svevo’s Europe is a Europe founded on the individual, and not on the state: “L’individuo è una costituzione più naturale dello Stato” (861) [“The individual is a more natural foundation than the State”]. In his critique of the belligerent nations Svevo maintains: “La Guerra è e resta una cosa turpe per ogni uomo equilibrato e morale. La sua turpitudine non è diminuita né dal patriottismo né dall’eroismo. È moralmente inferiore al duello dove il sentimento di giustizia ... più facilmente penetra nelle relazioni fra individuo e individuo” (873) [“For every balanced and moral person, war is and

remains a repugnant circumstance. Its repugnancy is not diminished by patriotism or heroism. War is morally inferior to a duel, in which ... a sense of justice penetrates easier in the relationship between individuals”]. In the relationships between individuals it is easier to administer justice, whereas disputes among nations are hardly regulated by just decisions. Circumventing the nation is the key to a process that leads to peace.

Sympathetic to the Triestine Austro-Marxist version of socialism and its support for a future United States of Europe as a solution to the ethnic tensions in the Habsburg Empire, Svevo saw Italian culture as part of a larger European context. Following Italian Europeanists such as Giuseppe Mazzini and Guglielmo Ferrero, Svevo, together with his friends Carlo and Giani Stuparich, Scipio Slataper and also James Joyce believed in a European supranational state, a federalist United States of Europe.

La Coscienza di Zeno: Svevo’s Confession of an *Écriture* habsbourgeoise

In Svevo’s novel *La Coscienza di Zeno* (*Zeno’s Conscience*), published in 1923, the main character Zeno Cosini, a heavy smoker and an incorrigible hypochondriac, narrates his own life in order to perform a psychoanalytic analysis of himself. The narration is presented in the form of a diary that Zeno writes by order of his psychoanalyst. The doctor recommends to his patient to recount the crucial events in his life so that Zeno can recover a lost sense of integrity: “Scriva! Scriva! Vedrà come arriverà a vedersi intero” (628) [“Write it down! And you’ll see yourself whole! Try it!” (7)]. Since Zeno is doubtful of the doctor’s effectiveness and threatens to quit the

sessions, the fictional psychoanalyst takes revenge on his patient by publishing Zeno's diary.

In his own search of lost time Zeno tries to recover long-forgotten memories. At the very inception of the novel, the narrator claims: "Oggi scopro subito qualche cosa che più non ricordavo. Le prime sigarette ch'io fumai non esistono più in commercio. Intorno al '70 se ne avevano in Austria di quelle che venivano vendute in scatoline di cartone munite del marchio dell'aquila bicipite" (*Romanzi* 628) ["Today, I discover immediately something I had forgotten. The cigarettes I first smoked are no longer on the market. Around 1870 in Austria there was a brand that came in cardboard boxes stamped with the two-headed eagle" (*Conscience* 7)]. Zeno's memories crystallize around the heraldic image of the double-headed Habsburg bird of prey. By emphasizing the Austrian cigarettes, Svevo reminds his reader that the cultural politics of the Habsburgs was largely informed by their political economy. He is smoking the cigarettes produced by the Imperial Austrian Tobacco Monopoly (*Kaiserlich-Königliche Tabakregie*), founded in 1784 by Emperor Joseph I. The monopoly established that only the Austrian state was entitled to raise, manufacture and sell tobacco (*Habsburg History* 119). Joseph I is the same monarch who promulgated the Edict of Tolerance, promoting the integration of ethnic minorities in the empire and allowing the demographic and economic expansion of Trieste.

The coat of arms of the Austrian Empire on Zeno's beloved pack of cigarettes initiates the flow of memories and thus the narration itself. The doctor forbids him to smoke and the protagonist remembers how as a young man he already smoked against the wishes of his father. Zeno comments on his clandestine activity: "Ricordo di aver fumato

molto, celato in tutti i luoghi possibili”(631) [“I remember I smoked a great deal, hiding in every possible corner” (10)]. Zeno acknowledges the unhealthy habit, and pledges not to smoke ever again, except for one last, endlessly deferred, cigarette: “Giacché mi fa male non fumerò mai più, ma prima voglio farlo per l’ultima volta” (632) [“It’s bad for me, so I will never smoke again. But first, I want to have one last smoke” (10)]. Enjoying the intensity of the one final cigarette, Zeno will smoke countless last cigarettes in the course of the novel. The doctor attempts to break Zeno’s smoking habit with unconventional methods. One of these methods consists in putting Zeno in a prison-like clinic. His prison ward Giovanna, however, is swayed to offer him alcoholic beverages and cigarettes. He likes her because she offers him company during his therapeutic prison stay, while she appreciates that Zeno listens to her complaints. After they have drunk heavily, Zeno has difficulties understanding her slurred speech: “Non saprei ripetere esattamente quello ch’essa mi disse, dopo aver ingoiati varii bicchierini, nel suo puro dialetto triestino, ma ebbi tutta l’impressione di trovarmi da canto una persona che, se non fossi stato stornato dalle mie preoccupazioni, avrei potuto stare a sentire con diletto” (647) [“I couldn’t repeat exactly everything she said to me, in her pure Triestine dialect, after she had drained all those glasses, but I had the profound impression of being with a person to whom, if I hadn’t been distracted by my own concerns, I could have listened with pleasure” (25)]. The pleasure comes from her pure Triestine dialect, not contaminated by Italian. She also offers cigarettes, but instead of his beloved Austrian cigarettes, she offers “Sigarette ordinarie, ungheresi” (650) [“Ordinary cigarettes, Hungarian” (28)] which Zeno dislikes because they are nauseating. Preferring Austrian

cigarettes to the cheap Hungarian ones carries obvious political overtones in a novel set in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Zeno's secret smoking habit bears a striking resemblance to the clandestine writing that accompanied Svevo's life. In the novel Zeno associates smoking with writing. Commenting on another method suggested by the doctor, Zeno says: "Impose quel libretto anche a me, ma io non vi registrai che qualche ultima sigaretta" (657) ["He imposed that notebook method on me, but in mine I jotted down nothing except a few last cigarettes" (35)]. Gatt-Rutter refers to the author's early writing: "Ettore had already developed a clandestine taste for reading fiction, in the face of his father's disapproval. His psychological independence was gradually to be transferred from reading to writing" (26). Especially after the bitter failure of *Senilità* and his commitment to dedicate his energies fully to business activities, Svevo thought of giving up writing which the Triestine author in a diary entry of 1902 defined as "quella ridicola e dannosa cosa che si chiama letteratura" (*Pagine* 818) ["that ridiculous and unhealthy thing they call literature"]. Svevo is clearly associating writing with the unhealthy activity of smoking. In support of this interpretation, Fabio Vittorini considers in his discussion of Svevo's novel, Zeno's cigarette as a "degeneration of the pen" (91), as a symbolic manifestation of Svevo's literature.⁷⁵ In the way he is forever smoking one "last" cigarette, he is forever writing a "last" page of literature.

As a result, the act of smoking Austrian cigarettes assumes a crucial importance not only because it functions as a seminal episode in the narration, but also because it signals the liminality of the novel within the literary landscape of European modernism. Let me suggest that among Zeno's multiple confessions, the admission to his clandestine

⁷⁵ For a discussion of smoking in the novel, see also the article Freccero, John. "Zeno's Last Cigarette."

smoking of Austrian cigarettes stands out as Svevo's own meta-narrative 'confession' of being an Austrian-Italian novelist. As a 'confession,' Svevo's subscription to a Habsburg literary tradition is not a particularly secretive or coded message. With the heraldic image of the Austrian double-headed eagle, he offers his readership an unmistakable key of interpretation.

If we accept this scriptural transfiguration of the protagonist's Austrian cigarette, Zeno's combined smoking and writing becomes the signature of an *écriture habsbourgeoise*, through which Svevo inscribes himself in an Austrian literary tradition. This smoky identity, revealing a subject shrouded in mist, an intangible and impalpable self is what makes Svevo an Austrian novelist writing in Italian. Zeno's smoking habit is an embedded commentary on Svevo's literary activity. Smoking Austrian cigarettes corresponds to writing with an Austrian pen. Italian, in fact, is not seen as the language of the Kingdom of Italy, but as one of the many languages that constitute the Habsburg multilingual monarchy. This should not come as a surprise if we consider how Svevo constructs the identity of his protagonist. Zeno's name not only evokes the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea, but is also one of Svevo's etymological puns. Zeno comes from the Greek *xénos*, meaning "stranger." As Vittorini rightfully suggests, the Italian speaking Zeno is a stranger to himself (70). This description of Zeno resonates with Svevo's own dialectophone experience, summarized by Mario Lavagetto, who in *La Cicatrice di Montaigne* claims that "standard Italian is almost a foreign language for Svevo" (191-92).

The notion that Italian is almost a foreign tongue to the Triestine Svevo is confirmed by an often-quoted passage in the novel. Zeno makes a startling claim in what appears to be the most important confession in the economy of the narration:

Il dottore presta una fede troppo grande anche a quelle mie benedette confessioni che non vuole restituirmi perché le riveda. Dio mio! Egli non studiò che la medicina e perciò ignora che cosa significhi scrivere in italiano per noi che parliamo e non sappiamo scrivere il dialetto. Una confessione in iscritto è sempre menzogna. Con ogni nostra parola toscana noi mentiamo! Se egli sapesse come raccontiamo con predilezione tutte le cose per le quali abbiamo pronta la frase e come evitiamo quelle che ci obbligherebbero di ricorrere al vocabolario! È proprio così che scegliamo dalla nostra vita gli episodi da notarsi. Si capisce che la nostra vita avrebbe tutt'altro aspetto se fosse detta nel nostro dialetto. (1050)

The doctor puts too much faith also in those damned confessions of mine, which he won't return to me so I can revise them. Good heavens! He studied only medicine and therefore doesn't know what it means to write in Italian for those of us who speak the dialect but can't write it. A confession in writing is always a lie. With our every Tuscan word, we lie! If only he knew how, by predilection, we recount all the things for which we have the words at hand, and how we avoid those things that would oblige us to turn to the dictionary! This is exactly how we choose, from our life, the episodes to underline. Obviously our life would have an entirely different aspect if it were told in our dialect. (404)

In the novel, Zeno's paradox becomes a linguistic conundrum.⁷⁶ In Zeno's fictional autobiography, written in standard Italian, the assertion according to which every Italian word presupposes a mendacious statement radically undermines any presumption of truthfulness in the novel. Near the end of *The Confessions of Zeno*, the reader is told that the entire narration is based on a language that cannot possibly express any truth. What is said in Italian is a lie, and the truth can only be spoken – and not be written – in the Triestine dialect.

Zeno's statement is far more radical than it might appear at first glance.

Attributing truthfulness to the spoken language, excluding the written medium, is

⁷⁶ The name of Svevo's protagonist is reminiscent of Zeno of Elea, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher famous for his paradoxes concerning Achilles and the tortoise and the arrow never reaching its target. Svevo's Zeno is hence a figure epitomizing paradox.

particularly significant for a language such as Italian. For many centuries, Italian was a written language that very few members of an elite spoke.⁷⁷ It existed as a literary language, as the imitation of medieval models. Zeno's claim has far-reaching implications, as it casts a retrospective judgment onto the history of an entire literary tradition. The production of texts in Italian is an artificial imitation of a linguistic model that is not spoken by the people that write in it. Zeno calls attention to this state of affairs, and emphasizes the artificial nature of his own literary endeavor in Italian. His autobiography is not much different from authors that did not speak, but imitated Italian.

Since dialect is the sole adequate expressive medium for veracity, Zeno can grasp the truth only through an epistemology of the vernacular. The passage discloses a manifold pattern of epistemological instabilities that constitute the speculative backbone of the novel. An epistemological instability affects both questions of language and politics. The passage reveals what I have previously called the "glottopolitics" of Svevo's modernist aesthetics, i.e. the dynamic interdependency and mutual interpenetration between literary language and political aesthetics. Linguistically, the narrator introduces an epistemological instability into the narrative apparatus, exposing a profound psycholinguistic dilemma: the linguistic impossibility of speaking the truth. The narrator cannot speak the truth unless a dictionary is at hand, in the same way one speaks a foreign language, the mastery of which is, in this case, far from being satisfactory. From a political standpoint, in addition to exposing this communicative barrier and undermining the shared communicative apparatus of the Italians as a linguistic community, the protagonist calls into question the alleged united front of prewar

⁷⁷ In 1861, the year in which Svevo was born and Italy became politically unified, only about 2.5% of Italians spoke what could be termed as Italian (De Mauro 43). In the same year, analphabetism was as high as 78% (Migliorini 603).

Irredentism in Trieste. Zeno does not only address the synchronic dimension of the language, the flawed everyday use of it, but also the diachronic aspect: the literary history of Italian, the language of Dante and Manzoni, upon which Italian cultural and political unity was substantially constructed.

With Zeno's confession that the book could have been written in dialect, or German for that matter, Svevo underlines that the book is not Italian by virtue of an inescapable cultural necessity. It could have been written in a different linguistic medium, which would have not been a translation of the Italian version we are reading. A version of *Zeno's Conscience* in the Triestine dialect would have told the protagonist's life from a different perspective. It would have been an autobiography in which other episodes would have determined a different personal profile for Zeno. Since the choice of episodes to narrate changes according to the linguistic medium, we would have known a different Zeno. This is why Zeno's account does not correspond to an absolute truth, but to a linguistically and culturally determined account of reality. Imagining his diary in a multiplicity of versions – for instance in Italian, dialect or German – opens up the possibility of parallel universes that exist simultaneously. This implication is certainly the starkest contradiction to what his psychoanalyst says at the beginning of the novel, when he recommends writing the diary so that Zeno can feel “whole” again. Instead, Zeno writes the diary and discovers exactly the opposite. His life is fragmented as a result of his different cultural allegiances. Zeno does not consider this fragmentation, or multiplicity, as a pathological condition. For him multiculturalism and linguistic border crossing constitutes the norm. Elena Coda insightfully comments on Zeno's language and its inherent epistemological relativism in *Between Borders: Reading Illness in Trieste*.

She discusses the implication that the diary would have told a completely story if Zeno had written it in dialect of in German:

[A]s the physicians are unable to order and cure the mental and physical disorders of the protagonist, so the readers, in front of Svevo's novel, and more generally, in front of a text, must recognize the impossibility to interpret it in an exhaustive manner. However, *the epistemological and existential relativism* suggested by Svevo's last novel does not lead to a nihilistic interpretation of life. Instead, it allows for a re-evaluation of human experience within the labyrinthine and deceptive realm of existence. (241, my emphasis)

An important narrative strategy through which Svevo achieves this final *coup de théâtre* is irony. The reader reaches the last chapter of the novel, only to find out that the entire narration is flawed in its very linguistic foundations. As a consequence, this instability affects and infects also the reliability of what is reported in the novel. Svevo's narrator is what the narratologist Wayne Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* defines as an "unreliable narrator." According to Booth, the unreliable narrator is "potentially" or "deliberately deceptive" (159, 295) and "embraces falsehood as a necessary part of [the narrative – S.P.] method" (295). The scholar points out that "unreliability" is not "ordinarily a matter of lying, although deliberately deceptive narrators have been a major resource of some modern novelists" (159). This definition perfectly fits Svevo's narrator, who is not intentionally mendacious since the linguistic instability expresses itself as what might be defined as "an implied lie," a lie that is not intentional, but ontologically necessary given the fundamental epistemological impossibility of standard Italian to become a vehicle of truth. Another narrative strategy that Svevo adopts, as will be discussed later, is mimicry, based upon the general assumption that the interpersonal relationships within *La Coscienza*, and also his earlier novels *Una Vita (A Life)* and *Senilità (As a Man Grows Older)* take place in the Triestine

dialect and that the narrator, in recounting the events, performs an implied and tacit translation into Italian. The protagonists of his novels only at first appear to be zealous Irredentists, proud of their linguistic heritage. A closer reading reveals, however, how Italian is constantly perceived as a socio-linguistic imposition and therefore strategically undermined. On the level of textual ideology, by which I mean the set of values expressed in the novel as operating principles moving the narration, the themes of mendacity and disease introduce a narrative instability into the contract between implied author and readership. In *La Coscienza* mendacity and disease offer an alternative epistemological paradigm.

This epistemological instability is not the only unsettling aspect of the novel. Within the economy of the narration, our reading of Zeno's confessions is a clandestine act. The diary is a private document that the narrator is unwilling to disclose to his psychoanalyst, much less to a wider public. However, in the logic of narration, the writing of the confessions should perform a therapeutic function and finally restore the narrator to health. This therapeutic function of the text generates an unsettling effect on the extradiegetic level, since the effect that the confessions produce is a frustration of the reader's expectations. Through this exposure of traditional expectations Svevo unmask the arbitrariness of his own narration. In this sense, the passage offers an interpretative key to the cultural politics of Svevo's literary canon. As Elena Coda puts it: "In *La Coscienza* illness loses its negative connotations and becomes a paradigm for the fluidity and the openness of an existence devoid of pre-established purpose" (219). The pathological insecurity and psychosomatic manifestations of a hypochondriac constitute much of the lack of purpose in a man without qualities. The reader is invited to accept,

together with Zeno, this alternative and experimental mode of existence. For Coda, Habsburg Trieste is the appropriate setting for Zeno's open personality:

Zeno's paradox is that health is indeed more detrimental than any illness. Learning how to live and function within an open, cosmopolitan, often contradictory environment such as the city of Trieste before World War I is for Zeno the healthiest and the most enriching way to conduct one's existence. The possibility to engage in an open epistemological process depends on the acceptance of the inherent indefiniteness of the meaning of reality, where nothing can be conceived in isolation. (245)

One of the apparent contradictions of Zeno's Trieste is the fact that the city combines a financial and cultural cosmopolitanism with a strong municipal identity. The Triestine dialect is the main linguistic medium in the city, split between its regional identity and its *fin-de-siècle* cosmopolitan character.

The tension between Italian standard and Triestine dialect is a veritable *leitmotif* in Svevo's works. In *Una Vita*, his first novel published in 1892, Svevo makes a mordant mockery of a pedantic Italian teacher. Alfonso Nitti, the protagonist, falls in love with his boss's daughter Annetta, who is receiving private lessons from a certain Mr. Spalati, an older professor of Italian language and literature. Alfonso describes him as follows: "Era un verista a credergli ma viceversa poi, quando si trovava alle prese con uno scrittore italiano, indagava pedantescaemente se usava parole non legittimate dal Petrarca" (110). ["He was a realist, if you believed him, but then every time he read an Italian author, he would pedantically investigate if the writer had used words sanctioned by Petrarca" (111)]. The irony here is that, if the professor were truly a follower of the Italian *Verismo* (following the example of Giovanni Verga for example) he would certainly not look for literary terms in the Petrarchan tradition, but for everyday expressions and a literary

language that heavily borrows from the dialect. He evidently subscribes to the literary trends of his time only formally, emphasizing the need for a unified Tuscan-based Italian.

In the history of the Italian language, Pietro Bembo first codified the standard by maintaining in his *Prose della Volgar Lingua* (1525) that the linguistic model for prose and poetry should respectively be the 14th century Tuscan authors Giovanni Boccaccio and Francesco Petrarca. These rigid codifications established what terms were proper Italian and what was an unacceptable influence from the various regional dialects. This Tuscan linguistic model served as the main identity marker well before the political unification of Italy and was adopted as the standard when Italy became an independent and sovereign state in 1861, the year in which Svevo was born. Describing Spalati's pedantic corrections and his adhesion to a strict Petrarchan vocabulary, Svevo makes a clear statement about the politics of the professor. According to an engrained cultural nationalism, good and acceptable Italian should be devoid of influences from the dialect. Svevo's protagonists – Emilio, Alfonso and Zeno – perceive this emphasis on Tuscan purity as an imposition of cultural hegemony with a strong colonial flavor. Paradoxically, the Austrian empire is much more even-handed in its approach to linguistic matters. Italian is among the languages that were recognized as official languages of the empire after the reforms in the 1860s. No Austrian official would think of correcting a speaker of *Triestino* if their speech did not meet requirements of Tuscan purity.

The conversations in Svevo's novels, rendered in Italian direct speech, in reality occur in dialect. Towards the end of *Una Vita*, Alfonso tries to console the wife of an English colleague who is desperately trying to find her husband. Although all direct and indirect speech is rendered in Italian (in which the novel is written), Alfonso remarks that

this English woman speaks the dialect perfectly (324). This statement implies that this particular conversation, although rendered in Italian, has to be imagined as spoken in dialect. Svevo surprises the reader by destabilizing the linguistic frame of his novel, reminding his readers that the plot is set in Trieste.

In 1898 Svevo publishes *Senilità*, a novel in which the opposition between Tuscan-based Italian and Triestine dialect is mentioned, even though marginally. The protagonist Emilio Brentani falls in love with the deceiving Angiolina, the daughter of a well-to-do businessman who flirts with the protagonist but ends up eloping with a banker. Emilio falls for the young woman, but dislikes an affected mannerism in her speech: “Ella toscaneggiava con affettazione e ne risultava un accento piuttosto inglese che toscano. ‘Prima o poi’ – diceva Emilio, – ‘le leverò tale difetto che m’infastidisce’” (453). [“She used to try and talk the Tuscan dialect, but in such an affected manner that her accent was more English than Tuscan. ‘Sooner or later,’ said Emilio, ‘I must cure her of that habit; it is beginning to irritate me’” (34-35)]. In order to emphasize her social prestige, Angiolina tries during her salon meetings with the upper crust to speak Tuscan-based Italian. According to Emilio, her attempts are rather unsuccessful and fail because her accent sounds more like English than Italian. English, a foreign language, is closer to Angiolina’s affectation than Italian itself, which is supposed to be the “national” language of Italians in Trieste. Svevo continues to highlight the differences in quality between Italian and Triestine dialect. Stefano Balli, Emilio’s friend, flirts with Angiolina by being impertinent with her. Commenting on Balli’s impudent expressions, the narrator notes: “Dapprima s’era accontentato di dirglike in toscano, aspirando e addolcendo, e a lei erano sembrate carezze, ma anche quando le capitarono addosso in buon triestino,

dure e sboccate, ella non se ne adontò” (469) [“At first he used to come with them in Tuscan, in such softly breathed accents that they seemed to her a caress; but even when they came pouring forth in the Triestine dialect, in all their harsh obscenity, she showed no sign of offence” (76)]. Here Svevo probably stages common socio-linguistic perceptions of those members of the upper class in turn-of-the-century Trieste that were sympathetic to Irredentism. Tuscan is associated with a pleasant inflection, while the local dialect sounds like an unrefined drawl.

Zeno’s Conscience is the novel in which this linguistic tension assumes a crucial role in the narration. As we have seen, Zeno’s admission that with every Italian word he automatically lies is the most important confession that carries wide-ranging implications for his entire autobiography. Zeno returns to the notion of linguistic mendacity later in the text. He fails to mention to the doctor that there is a lumberyard owned by him and Guido that is close to the house where he practices his psychoanalytic sessions:

Quest’eliminazione non è che la prova che una confessione fatta da me in italiano non poteva essere né completa né sincera. In un deposito di legnami ci sono varietà enormi di qualità che noi a Trieste appelliamo con termini barbari presi dal dialetto, dal croato, dal tedesco e qualche volta persino dal francese (*zapin* p.e. non equivale mica a *sapin*). Chi m’avrebbe fornito il vero vocabolario? Vecchio come sono avrei dovuto prendere un impiego da un commerciante in legnami toscano? (1060-61)

This omission is simply the proof that a confession made by me in Italian could be neither complete nor sincere. In a lumberyard there are enormous varieties of lumber, which we in Trieste call by barbarous names derived from the dialect, from Croat, from German, and sometimes even from French (*zapin*, for example, which is by no means the equivalent of *sapin*). Who could have given me the appropriate vocabulary? Old as I am, should I have found myself a job with a lumber dealer from Tuscany? (414)

Zeno reiterates his idea that an admission in Italian cannot be comprehensive or truthful. He places this idea in the context of transnational business practices that make Trieste an

important economic center in the empire. The technical terms for the great variety of lumber come from different foreign languages associated with imperial trade. He goes on to indicate that nobody in Trieste has knowledge of the Italian translations corresponding to this specialized vocabulary. Zeno seems to imply here that an Italian influence would only slow down or even harm business practices in Trieste. It is significant, however, that the narrator uses the term “barbarous,” which has a negative connotation, in lieu of the more neutral term “foreign” to describe the language of his trade. Still faking that he is an Italian Irredentist, Zeno raises a point that even the most fervent nationalist in Trieste could not ignore. With the final rhetorical question in the passage, Zeno seems to wonder what the financial and economic implications are when Trieste joins Italy.

Since a confession in Italian cannot guarantee truthfulness, in the novel a true confession can only occur in the dialect. Despite the fact that all characters supposedly speak in the vernacular, dialect occurs only once in the entire novel when the narrator quotes a popular folk song. In the course of the novel, Zeno becomes acquainted with a young singer, Carla, who eventually becomes his mistress. His attraction to Carla is facilitated by her foreign speech pattern:

La sua voce aveva qualche cosa di musicale quando parlava e, con un'affettazione ormai divenuta natura, essa si compiaceva di stendere le sillabe come se avesse voluto carezzare il suono che lei riusciva di metterci. Perciò e anche per certe sue vocali eccessivamente larghe persino per Trieste, il suo linguaggio aveva qualche cosa di straniero ... Era proprio tutt'altra pronuncia di quella di Ada. Ogni suo suono mi pareva d'amore. (809)

There was a musical quality in her voice when she spoke, and with an affectation by now a part of her nature, she deliberately elongated her syllables as if she wanted to caress the sound she put into them. For this reason, and also because of certain vowels, excessively broad even for Trieste, her speech had something foreign about it . . . Her pronunciation was something quite different from Ada's. Her every sound seemed to be the one of love. (178)

As with Angiolina in *Senilità*, Carla speaks with noticeable affectation. Differently from Emilio, though, Zeno enjoys it for its alleged musical quality. Zeno is by no means an expert in music. Early in the narration, his friends and fiancée receive ample demonstration of his amateurishness when he plays the violin for them. With Carla, however, he can pretend to possess great musical talent. He decides to impart music lessons with the help of a music theory book. Since she does not understand Italian completely, he has to translate it for her into the dialect: “Io leggevo le teorie del Garcia in italiano, poi in italiano glielle spiegavo e, quando non bastava, glielle traducevo in triestino, ma essa non sentiva moversi niente nella sua gola e una vera efficacia in quel libro essa avrebbe potuto riconoscere solo se si fosse manifestata in quel punto” (820) [“I read the theories of Garcia in Italian, then in Italian I explained them to her, and when that wasn't enough, I translated them into Triestine, but she felt nothing happen in her throat, and she could have found that book's true efficacy only if it had then become manifest”(188)]. Zeno is attracted to Carla for different reasons. In addition to the erotic thrill of having a mistress, Zeno has the financial means to support her, which places him in a position of social power. In her working class background Zeno believes to have found a more authentic Triestine spirit, embodied by the demotic folk songs that she sings. For the protagonist, the only true confession lies in her Triestine song:

La canzonetta triestina:
Fazzo l'amor xe vero

*Cossa ghe xe de mal
Volè che a sedes 'ani
Stio là come un cocal ...*

è una specie di racconto o di confessione. Gli occhi di Carla brillavano di malizia e confessavano anche più delle parole. Non c'era paura di sentirsi leso il timpano ed io m'avvicinai a lei, sorpreso e incantato. Sedetti accanto a lei ed essa allora raccontò la canzonetta proprio a me, socchiudendo gli occhi per dirmi con la nota più lieve e più pura che quei sedici anni volevano la libertà e l'amore. (871)

The Triestine song she sang,
*Fazzo l'amor xe vero
Cossa ghe xe de mal
Volè che a sedes 'ani
Stio là come un cocal ...*⁷⁸

is a kind of story or confession. Carla's eyes shone slyly and confessed even more than the words. There was no fear of shattered eardrums, and I went over to her, surprised and enchanted. I sat beside her and she then retold the song directly to me, half-closing her eyes to say, in the lightest and purest tone, that the sixteen-year-old wanted freedom and love. (235-36)

Zeno finds a true confession in the oral tradition of Triestine dialect songs. The song has the ability to astonish and enchant him as though the words were a magic spell. Zeno's improvised singing lessons to Carla are an excuse to spend time together, and her songs in dialect not only provide a pastime, but also provide a bonding experience in their relationship. Later, the crisis in the love affair coincides with Carla's improvement in her singing technique and her abandonment of local folklore in favor of a national and Habsburg repertoire. Once Carla receives lessons from an actual teacher who had studied in Vienna, Zeno notices that “non cantava più le canzonette Triestine e poi neppure le napoletane, ma era passata ad antiche canzoni italiane e a Mozart e Schubert” (881) [“she no longer sang the little Triestine songs and then not even the Neapolitan one, but had

⁷⁸ The song appears in the Triestine dialect in the English translation of the text. It translates as follows: “I make love, that's true / what's wrong with that / Do you want that by sixteen / I sit there like a seagull ...” In Triestine the term *cocal*, derived from the Greek *kaukalis*, designates the seagull, an animal that still today is an important part of the maritime cityscape. By extension it means “stupid.”

moved on to old Italian songs and to Mozart and Schubert” (244)]. Once she abandons her Triestine songs, their relationship comes to an end.

Zeno’s extramarital relationship with Carla shows how much romantic relationships are mediated through considerations of a linguistic nature. Notions of linguistic purity and contamination frame social interactions from the beginning and assume particular relevance in interpersonal relationships. Zeno is a highly comic figure that stumbles from one misadventure to the other. Once he is introduced to the household of Giovanni Malfenti, his older friend and mentor, Zeno meets his four daughters, one of whom he hopes to marry. Since his name starts with the last letter of the alphabet, he becomes immediately aware of the fact that the daughters – Ada, Augusta, Alberta, and Anna – have names that start and end with the first letter of the alphabet. The common letter in their names suggests to Zeno that they are all equivalent and that he can choose any of them. At the same time, he realizes how distant he is from them, by virtue of the first letter of his name: “L’iniziale diceva anche qualche cosa d’altro. Io mi chiamo Zeno ed avevo perciò il sentimento che stessi per prendere moglie lontano dal mio paese” (693) [“The initial also said something else: my name is Zeno and I therefore had the sensation I was about to take a wife very far from my own country” (68-9)]. The ideal distance between the first and last letter of the alphabet is likened to a visit to a foreign territory and implies a linguistic regionalism mapped onto letters. Zeno emphasizes his alterity again when he tries to propose to Ada:

Avrei detta una frase che forse si trova anche in qualche grammatica di lingue straniere, bell’e fatta peer facilitare la vita a chi non conosca la lingua del paese ove soggiorna: “Posso domandare la sua mano a suo padre?” Era la prima volta che’io volevo sposarmi e mi trovavo perciò in un paese del tutto sconosciuto ... Ma non arrivai a dire neppure quelle poche parole. (712)

I would have uttered the sentence that is perhaps found even in certain foreign-language phrase books, ready-made, to facilitate the life of those who don't know the language of the country where they are staying: May I ask your father for your hand? This was the first time I wanted to marry, and so I found myself in a totally foreign land ... But I didn't manage to say even those few words. (87)

Again Zeno feels like a foreigner in a land of appropriate language use. He would like to extend a marriage proposal to Ada, but is at a loss for words. This time he does not invoke the help of a dictionary that could be beneficial in the correct choice of single words. Instead a tourist guide would be more helpful with its ready-made phrases and appropriate expressions, catalogued according to circumstances that are more likely to occur.

Zeno's courtship of Ada continues to be plagued by linguistic doubts. He has serious difficulties deciphering his feelings and verbalizing them with the correct word choice. After much meditation, he manages to find the verb that appropriately describes his feeling: "Io amavo Ada! Non sapevo ancora se quel verbo fosse proprio e continuai l'analisi ... Finii col concludere che il verbo fosse proprio quello: Io amavo Ada" (722) ["I loved Ada! I didn't yet know if that was the right verb ... I concluded the verb was correct: I loved Ada" (96)]. What transpires in this verbal epiphany is a sort of linguistic determinism. Finding the correct verb determines and reveals to Zeno what he is feeling.

Zeno's anxiety over correct language use affects his interpersonal relationships and romantic encounters, and assumes wider, social and political implications in his public interactions. An example of Zeno's socio-linguistic concerns is the interaction with his mentor Mr. Malfenti, who is a successful businessman and will later become his father-in-law. At the beginning of their acquaintance, Zeno meets with him in the Tergesteo café and attempts to elicit some business secrets that might later be helpful in

his own commercial activity. Through this friendship, Zeno is introduced into the Malfenti household, where he falls in love with Ada. Once Zeno decides to ask Ada's father for her hand, he wonders in what kind of language he should propose: "Bastava dirgli la mia determinazione di sposare sua figlia ... Mi preoccupava tuttavia la quistione se in un'occasione simile avrei dovuto parlare in lingua o in dialetto" (723) ["I had only to inform him of my resolve to marry his daughter ... Yet I was troubled by the problem of whether, on such an occasion, I should speak to him in dialect or standard Italian" (97)]. Italian is the language that Zeno would use in a formal and official context, since he associates dialect with lower education and lower class status. It is important to note that in this particular scene Giovanni Malfenti had gone to the Tergesteo, a historic café that is still open today, which was also a favorite meeting place for Irredentists. Speaking Italian there assumes a further meaning, as it would have been interpreted as indicative of nationalist political leanings.

In a comic turn of events, Zeno ends up marrying Augusta, Malfenti's other daughter, who falls in love with Zeno. Ada instead will marry Guido Speier. The scene in which Zeno is first introduced to Guido reveals much of the identity politics and its underlying social mechanisms that govern the interactions in the novel. Zeno, who is more at ease with the dialect, is jealous of Guido's mastery of Italian and immediately develops a dislike for his future brother-in-law:

Si chiamava Guido Speier. Il mio sorriso si fece più spontaneo perché subito mi si presentava l'occasione di dirgli qualche cosa di sgradevole: - Lei è tedesco? Cortesemente egli mi disse che riconosceva che al nome tutti potevano crederlo

tale. Invece i documenti della sua famiglia provavano ch'essa era italiana da varii secoli.

Egli parlava il toscano con grande naturalezza mentre io e Ada eravamo condannati al nostro dialettaccio. (735)

His name was Guido Speier. My smile became more spontaneous because I was immediately offered the opportunity of something disagreeable to him: “You are German?”

He replied politely, admitting that because of his name, one might believe he was. But family documents proved that they had been Italian for several centuries. He spoke Tuscan fluently, while Ada and I were condemned to our horrid dialect. (109)

Zeno is fully aware of the anti-Austrian sentiment of the Irredentists and consequently mimics their social strategies. By asking whether Guido is of German origin, he intends to insult him. Guido replies to Zeno’s offensive remark with suspiciously calculated aplomb. His gracious answer sounds as though it has been rehearsed over and over again. While admitting that it would be reasonable to assume that he is German, he seeks refuge in an alleged bureaucratic evidence of his century-long Italian character. Without probably realizing it, Guido’s justification is an implicit admission that his family is from German stock. To compensate his lack of a pure Italian identity, he has learned perfect Tuscan, and eagerly shows it off. Later, the reader learns that Guido in fact speaks German very well (283), just as Zeno speaks it, too (429). In narrating the episode, Zeno opposes Guido’s competence with standard Italian with the “horrid” dialect to which Ada and he are condemned. In denigrating the dialect and wishing for better competence in Italian, Zeno is adopting a dissimulating strategy similar to Guido’s. As mentioned earlier, Zeno knows that he is writing his confessions upon his doctor’s request and that his private diary is really a public document, subject to the scrutiny of official medical discourse. This explains his circumspect treatment of the nationality question and his careful avoidance of politics in his diary. Zeno stages himself as a self-loathing Triestine,

constantly, sick, condemned to speak an ugly drawl, longing to speak better Italian and to implicitly prove his political allegiance to Italy. One wonders how much Svevo projects his personal situation into the identity politics of the characters. While Zeno's attitude is generally equated with Svevo's positions, it is important to point out that Guido's attempt to hide his German background bears a striking resemblance to Svevo's own strategy of assimilation.

The image that Zeno conveys of himself is also the picture of someone afflicted by multiple ailments, real or imaginary. Zeno constructs his identity through a literary endeavor, a therapeutic autobiography ordered by his psychoanalyst. One of Zeno's many pathologies presents an important linguistic feature. Language, in fact, does not only assume the function of diagnostic and therapeutic medium. It becomes a disease itself. Once he realizes that he has fallen in love with Ada, Zeno recognizes that he suffers from what he calls the "disease of words," an inability to appropriately articulate or convey his thoughts. Shortly after Zeno is admitted to the Malfenti household, Ada tells him about her vacation to England and her admiration for the socially and politically engaged women speaking in public, in a description that Gatt-Rutter and Moloney attribute to Svevo's knowledge of Ferrero's *Europa giovane*. Zeno is in turn fascinated by her own rhetorical strengths:

Io amavo la sua parola semplice, io, che come aprivo la bocca svisavo cose o persone perché altrimenti mi sarebbe sembrato inutile di parlare. Senz'essere un oratore, avevo la malattia della parola. La parola doveva essere un avvenimento a sé per me e perciò non poteva essere imprigionata da nessun altro avvenimento. (700)

I loved her simple speech – I, who, when opened my mouth, got things wrong or misled people because otherwise speaking would have seemed to me pointless. Without being an orator, I suffered from the disease of words. Words for me had to be an event in themselves and therefore could not be imprisoned in any other event. (76)

Zeno's conversations are misleading because the meaning of what he says is always unstable and open to multiple interpretations. A speech act has to be an event in itself because his words can serve, at best, a vague communicative purpose. A public performance, like the speeches of English suffragettes, would be a prison for him because he would have to place words in the more complex context of social rights and political struggle. In this passage one can observe two main characteristics of Zeno. First, he places himself at a safe distance from any political struggle. Secondly, he reiterates his preference for the spoken word, a preference he had already pointed out at the beginning of his medical history: "La malattia è una convinzione ed io nacqui con quella convinzione. Di quella dei miei vent'anni non ricorderei gran cosa se non l'avessi allora descritta ad un medico. Curioso come si ricordino meglio le parole dette che i sentimenti che non arrivarono a scotere l'aria" (635) ["Disease is a conviction, and I was born with that conviction. Of the disease I had at twenty, I would remember very little if I hadn't had it described for me at that time by the doctor. It's odd how you remember spoken words better than emotions, which cannot stir the air" (14)]. In his psychoanalytic recovery, the memory of past ailments is triggered by the doctor's descriptions of the diseases, by the spoken words that provoke in Zeno a stronger effect than emotions. Zeno here reveals how much of a hypochondriac he is, since without the doctor's verbal narratives he probably would not have recognized his medical conditions as such. The belief in his imaginary diseases is triggered by oral accounts, by the spoken words and

not by written texts. This clearly echoes Zeno's confession according to which truth can be grasped only in oral statements, i.e. in the dialect that lacks a codified grammar and orthography, and not in written language, which is associated with standard Italian.

Zeno's chronic insecurity and the fact that his mastery of Italian leaves much to be desired create an almost pathological blockage in his speech articulation. He is struck by an intermittent aphasic condition that impedes his speech. Ironically enough, Zeno laments being at a loss for words, but never fully realizes that this might actually be a real condition that affects him. To be sure, occasional aphasia already afflicted his dying father. Reporting to the doctor about his dying parent, Zeno remarks: "Non gli riferii i discorsi strani di mio padre ... Raccontai però che papà non arrivava ad esprimersi con esattezza e che pareva pensasse intensamente a qualche cosa che s'aggirava nella sua testa e ch'egli non arrivava a formulare" (671) ["I did not report my father's strange talk ... But I did say that Papà had not managed to express himself with precision, at that he seemed to be thinking intensely about something going on in his head that he couldn't put into words" (48)]. The speech impediment of Zeno's father might be caused by his rapidly declining health – he is about to die after all – but might also be similar to Zeno's linguistic dilemma. The social and political pressure of learning standard Italian in a linguistic context dominated by the overwhelming presence of dialect must have caused this inability to articulate speech fluently. The origin of such a blockage might be some psycholinguistic refusal to submit to this socio-linguistic pressure. In the generation of Zeno's father, more integrated into the Habsburg Empire and less exposed to the pressure of Italian cultural nationalism, the forced diglossia and consequent code switching between dialect and standard must have exerted even more stress. Zeno experiences this

blockage in several occasions. He struggled to convey his true feelings for Ada and once he thought of revealing his love to her, he hesitates: “Come spiegare poi la mia lunga esitazione di parlare chiaro e dire alla fanciulla: Risolviti!” (706) [“How to explain, then, my long hesitation in speaking clearly and saying to the girl: Make up your mind!” (82)].

In general, for him even the most common articulation of speech is the cause of great anxiety. Often second-guessing his language, he wonders about how his words come out and if they convey the message he intends to communicate: “Diffidavo di me stesso, sentivo il bisogno di analizzare ogni parola prima di dirla” (865) [“I held myself erect and spoke little. I distrusted myself, I felt the need to analyze every word before saying it” (229)]. Later, his attempt to establish a second extramarital affair with his secretary Carmen ends in a bitter linguistic failure. She rejects him and he is unable to talk:

Invece mi mancò la parola. La mia gola – credo – era chiusa dal rancore solidificatosi e non potevo parlare ... Invece di una risposta non mi sarei trovato pronto che a digrignare i denti, cosa poco comoda dovendo celarla. Forse mi mancò la parola anche pel dolore di veder così recisamente esclusa una speranza che tuttavia accarezzavo. (935)

Instead, words failed me. My throat – I believe – was blocked by a lump of bitterness and I was unable to speak ... Instead of uttering a reply, I would have been prepared only to grind my teeth, hardly comfortable, as I had to maintain silence. Perhaps speech failed me also because of the pain at seeing firmly denied a hope I still cherished. (295)

Zeno’s language disease is truly psychosomatic. It has deep psychological roots, but expresses itself in tangible manifestations in the body. The lump in his throat and the grinding of teeth are all symptoms located in the areas of the articulatory apparatus. Carmen’s rejection causes a complete glottal closure that blocks Zeno’s speech. This episode suggests that Svevo’s glottopolitics, i.e. the interaction between his literary

language and political message, is deeply embedded in his character, to the point that it produces a glottal stop in Zeno.

Towards the end of the novel, Zeno finally starts embracing his peculiar personality. Accepting his unjustified anxieties and his quirky hobbyhorses helps him overcome his chronic insecurity. He decides that he is finally cured, enjoying great health. True, he suffers some pains, “ma mancano d’importanza nella [sua] grande salute” (1082) [“but they lack significance in the midst of [his] great health” (434)]. When Zeno says that his medical disorders lack significance in the context of an otherwise healthy constitution, he describes his diseases in terms of language devoid of meaning. The passage from being sick to being healthy is a semantic shift. This full acceptance of disease as a paradigm of life represents a Nietzschean reversal of values that makes him come to peace with himself. Minghelli appropriately notes: “The final recognition that the disease is the cure introduces a potential reversal of the meaning of the sickness. The desire to heal, whether pursued through capitalist enterprise, a faith in progress, Social Darwinism, or psychoanalysis, is the very expression of the modern sickness” (196). Zeno’s acceptance of disease carries political implications, because it represents a bold rhetorical move against nationalists in Trieste that frame the internationalism of the city in terms of a pathological degeneration. In her study, Coda claims that in Svevo the opposition between disease and health has to be read in the context of turn-of-the-century national rhetoric, especially in conjunction with Max Nordau’s concept of degeneration:

[T]he medical rhetoric of degeneration became useful to Italian nationalists in Trieste as a way to condemn the city’s cosmopolitan environment. In this political context the international quality of the city was interpreted as an illness that should be eliminated. The nationalist rhetoric that wanted Trieste to be annexed to

Italy effectively linked the cosmopolitan, fluid environment of Trieste to images of infections that can be prevented only by raising strong national borders. The desire to become part of a homogenous nation was interpreted in the nationalist propaganda as a barrier against outside influences. (5)

With great insight, Svevo associates Zeno's diseases with the multicultural composition of Habsburg Trieste. The final acceptance of his pathological personality also signifies Zeno's appreciation of the internationalism in Trieste and his coming to peace with his own foreignness to the rhetoric of Italian cultural nationalism. In the end, Zeno accepts that his identity is strongly rooted in the multiculturalism of the Habsburg Empire. Zeno's initial perception of the war is that of a nuisance that interrupts the routine of his life. He firmly believes that war is something utterly alien and remote to the spirit of Trieste. Even before the outbreak of the conflict, he wishes for the war to be fought elsewhere, transferring this remoteness from an ideological to a geographic dimension: "Asserii che se anche la Guerra fosse scoppiata, non sarebbe stata combattuta colà. C'era prima di tutto il mare dove era ora si battessero, eppoi oramai in Europa non mancavano dei campi di battaglia per chi ne voleva. C'erano le Fiandre e varii dipartimenti della Francia" (1073-74) ["I declared that even if war had to break out, it wouldn't be fought up here. First of all, there was the sea, where it was high time they did some fighting; and besides, in Europe there was no lack of battlefields for anyone who wanted them. There was Flanders, there were various departments of France" (426)]. Zeno's belief that the war couldn't possibly involve Trieste assumes an apotropaic function that is invested in exorcizing this tragic turn of events. As possible battlefields he suggests Flanders, a hotbed of inter-ethnic strife in Europe or French overseas departments, located at a safe distance in the ocean. One might be tempted to think that Zeno does not realize that the multicultural composition of Flanders with its Flemish and Francophone populations

presents similarities to Trieste. The description of his interaction with an imperial soldier, however, suggests otherwise. Perhaps believing in some sort of Triestine exceptionalism, Zeno seems to consider the Adriatic multiculturalism as a space in which coexistence is possible. In a highly comic scene in which he gets temporarily arrested, Zeno is relieved to find an Austrian officer that speaks German well and with whom he can reason: “Era una barbarie d’essere costretto di trattare con un tomo simile, ma intanto si aveva il vantaggio ch’egli parlava correntemente il tedesco. Era un tale vantaggio che, ricordandolo, riusciva più facile di parlargli con dolcezza” (1076) [“It was barbaric to be forced to deal with such an idiot, but at least there was the advantage that he spoke proper German. It was such an advantage that, remembering it, I found it easier to speak to him politely” (428-29)]. After admitting in his diary that he was very comfortable with German, Zeno immediately feels the need to reassure his Italian reader that his command of the German language was not impeccable: “Peccato che io non parlavo abbastanza correntemente quella lingua perché altrimenti mi sarebbe stato facile di far ridere quell’arcigno signore” (1076) [“Too bad I didn’t speak that language more fluently, for in that case it would have been easy for me to make that surly gentleman laugh” (429)]. The irony here is that, while Zeno points out his allegedly shaky German, his Italian sounds awkward as well. Soon the army officer hands his eccentric prisoner, *der dumme Kerl*, “the stupid guy,” as Zeno is called in German (428), to a corporal. The description of the soldier is revealing:

Il caporale era uno slavo che parlava discretamente italiano. Gli parve di dover essere brutale in presenza dell’ufficiale e, per indurmi a precederlo nella discesa, mi gridò: – Marsch! – Ma quando fummo un pò più lontani si fece dolce e familiare. Mi domandò se avevo delle notizie sulla guerra e se era vero ch’era imminente l’intervento italiano. Mi guardava ansioso in attesa della risposta. (1077-78)

The corporal was a Slav who spoke rather decent Italian. He felt he had to be brutal in the officer's presence, and to encourage me to descend the hill, he shouted "*Marsch!*" at me, but when we were a bit distant he became gentle and friendly. He asked me if I had news of the war, and if it was true that Italian intervention was imminent. He looked at me anxiously, awaiting my reply. (430)

Svevo here shows the almost schizophrenic identity of the Austrian imperial army. It is evident that the officer holding Zeno in temporary custody is torn by the multiple loyalties that were so common in the Habsburg Empire. He is a Slav that speaks Italian well, which places his probable origin in either Trieste or the Istrian and Dalmatian coasts. He is fighting for the Austrian army, working with German as his primary language, but is concerned about Italy's entrance in the war. His anxiety stems from the certainty that in an Italian intervention in the war the political destiny of Trieste would be the highest stake. Unfortunately, the English translation misses to emphasize how familiar these multiple loyalties are to Zeno. In the original Italian, the attitude of the concerned corporal becomes "familiare." The adjective indicates also how the corporal treats Zeno in a familiar way, as if part of one family.

Zeno lives these moments with a light-hearted optimism that borders on sheer naïveté. He is untroubled by the unfolding events, since he cannot imagine a Trieste severed from its Austrian connection. In his descriptions he paints a picture of Trieste that is solidly anchored in the German-speaking world. He learns about the war while he is away on a short trip outside of Trieste. As he is taking a stroll in the fields, he performs some gymnastics for the lungs: "facevo la ginnastica pulmonare del Niemeyer che m'era stata insegnata da un amico tedesco" (1072) ["I performed the Niemeyer pulmonary exercises, which a German friend had taught me" (425)]. He is referring to Felix von Niemeyer (1820-1871), a famous German physician who published the *Textbook of*

Practical Medicine (Handbuch der praktischen Medizin), which became a very popular and widely read medical guidebook in Germany. Zeno's recovery from his ailments also has a German source. On his journey back home, Zeno's train "s'era fermato in mezzo alla cosiddetta Sassonia di Trieste" (1080) ["stopped in the midst of what is called the Saxony of Trieste" (432)], a remarkable description that emphasizes once again the strong ties of Trieste with the German world. The expression is obviously reminiscent of Count Leinsdorf's definition of Trieste as the "Hamburg of the Mediterranean," in which the Hanseatic and the Adriatic city occupy similar positions among the maritime centers of the German-speaking world. In the entire description of the war section of his diary, Zeno describes the conflict from the point of view of the Habsburg Empire: "La piaga cancrenosa (come in Austria si appellò subito la fronte italiana) s'era aperta e abbisognava di materiale per nutrire la sua purulenza" (1080) ["The gangrenous wound (as the Italian front was immediately called in Austria) had opened and needed materiel to nourish its purulence" (432-33)]. This is a remarkable statement that emphasizes, until the very end, how Zeno is unable to adopt the Italian perspective in the conflict over Trieste. To the final pages of his therapeutic autobiography, Zeno's account is full of unwavering pacifist optimism: "Alla frontiera non era morto ancora nessuno e perciò la pace si poteva rifare" (1081) ["On the frontier no one had died yet, and therefore peace could be regained" (433)]. His primary concern, not surprising for a Triestine businessman, is the reestablishment of commercial relations in a federal union.

Zeno's words clearly echo Svevo's peace theory drafted before he started working on the novel: "Il commercio rinascerà quando ci sarà la pace. L'Olivi dalla Svizzera mi fece pervenire dei consigli" (1081) ["Trade will be reborn when we have peace. From

Switzerland, Olivi had some advice transmitted to me” (433)]. The fact that the advice comes from a friend who has sought refuge in neutral Switzerland is important for its political and economic overtones. In this agreement between his and Zeno’s pacifist positions, one can observe a fictional projection of Svevo’s authorial self.

One should not, however, make the mistake of uncritically equating Svevo’s positions with Zeno’s. For all the similarities, Zeno is not Svevo’s novelistic double. Like a great painter who indulges in a gesture of vanity by placing a small self-portrait in the corner a large canvas, Svevo inscribes into the novel a perfect representation of himself. He briefly introduces a minor character, inconsequential for the further development of the plot, named Nilini whom Zeno meets at the bourse. Nilini takes pleasure in educating Zeno in the matters of international politics, in which he was deeply versed thanks to his activity on the stock exchange (358). He introduces Zeno to the Great Powers, explaining shifts between peaceful relations and sudden warfare in international diplomacy. Svevo constructs a character whose ideas about international relations are deeply informed by economic transactions, an element that suggests an authorial projection in the character. Nilini’s name is obviously a pun on the Latin word *nihil*, meaning “nothing” and a variation on Zeno’s last name Cosini that indicates “small things.” Zeno and Cosini share a social ineptness, a profound clumsiness in matters of interpersonal relationships.

More importantly, however, Zeno befriends Nilini because he smuggles the protagonist’s beloved cigarettes: “Mi procurava delle sigarette di contrabbando e me le faceva pagare quello che gli costavano, cioè molto poco” (1002) [“He procured contraband cigarettes and charged me only what they had cost him, namely very little” (358)]. Here Svevo’s Habsburg aesthetic comes to a full circle. These illegally imported

cigarettes are reminiscent of Zeno's clandestine smoking habit that he described at the beginning of the novel. Stealing his father's cigarettes is analogous to illicitly procuring cigarettes from the symbolic father figure represented by the emperor, who was also called *Landesvater* in the imperial propaganda. The references to smoking at the beginning and at the end of the novel act as a narrative frame that contains Zeno's life and encapsulate Svevo's literary activity at the border between Austrian and Italian traditions. In fact, while Zeno's Austrian cigarettes at the beginning of the novel can be read as a metaphor of Svevo's status as a Habsburg author, now the contraband cigarettes are again associated with his status of a transnational writer. With a few, masterly strokes Svevo paints in the brief characterization of Nilini his own self-portrait:

Potei accorgermi ch'egli era un italiano di color dubbio perché gli pareva che per Trieste fosse meglio di restare austriaca. Adorava la Germania e specialmente i treni ferroviarii tedeschi che arrivavano con tanta precisione. Era socialista a modo suo e avrebbe voluto fosse proibito che una singola persona possedesse più di centomila corone. (1003)

I could divine that he was an Italian of suspect coloration because it seemed to him Trieste would be better off remaining Austrian. He adored Germany and especially German railway cars, which arrived with such precision. He was a socialist in his own way, and would have liked any individual person to be forbidden to possess more than one thousand crowns. (358-59)

This little vignette reveals Svevo's peculiar position in the complex network of allegiances in Habsburg Trieste. In the construction of this minor character, the author projects his biographic information. Nilini's profile reads like a summary of Svevo's loyalties and beliefs. First, Nilini's Italian loyalty is called into question by his economic entanglement with Austria. He represents the common opinion that Trieste's prosperity is linked to Austrian economic policies and that the city's unification with Italy would signify its commercial decline. Svevo's business activities depended largely on producing

and selling anti-corrosive paint for ships to the Austrian navy. He continued to sell the products of his company to the Austrian military even after Italy and Austria were formally at war. In addition, Nilini's sympathy for Germany clearly reflects Svevo's attachment to his German background. The third element that suggests Svevo's self-portrait here is the character's personal interpretation of Socialism, a political sympathy we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

Svevo never felt any sympathy for Italian nationalism, and was never an *austriacante*, to use the epithet with which Irredentists disparagingly called pro-Austrian Triestines. He saw Trieste as placed in a pre-national dimension, proud of its urban *Landespatriotismus*, an identity of its own that was never completely Austrian and never fully Italian. In an age in which the rhetoric of nationalism gains social and political currency, this pre-national logic is highly suspect, since its non-national loyalty possesses a highly subversive character that turns the city on the Adriatic into a Trojan Trieste.

Svevo's Trojan Trieste is a microcosm dwelling under a double colonial yoke that however defies both the imperialism of the Habsburgs and the nationalism of the Irredentists. At the same time, it does not fully reject Austria or Italy as it tries to embrace both. His patriotic sympathies and financial pragmatism of an experienced businessman makes Svevo long for an Italian Trieste with greater cultural autonomy, solidly anchored within an Austrian economy. The Habsburg imperial policy of relative tolerance with respects to the Jewish community makes Trieste a location in which a future free of anti-Semitism could be conceived. Historical events, however, took a different turn. With his transnational background, Svevo became an "Italian of suspect coloration" to those contemporaries who saw Trieste as an exclusively Italian city and afterwards to those

Italian scholars who believed that conformity to a national linguistic standard is the measure of literary merit. Svevo best expresses this existential condition of being a foreigner at home in the *Confessions*. In the novel, the origin of Zeno's chronic anxiety and social clumsiness has deep psycholinguistic origins. Zeno the foreigner is constantly attempting to protect himself from any suspicion that he might be insufficiently Italian. His autobiography is therapeutic inasmuch as it is a shrewd stratagem to ward off any such suspicion and to undermine the colonizing presence of Italian nationalist extremism.

We have seen how Gramsci's notions of linguistic and political hegemony and subalternity can be employed as useful analytic tools to read Svevo's novel. By the same token, a reading of the text shows how Svevo's transnational identity can be read in the terms offered by Stuart Hall and his notion of identity as a dynamic process, as a combination of being and becoming. Hall explains: "Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (234). According to this framework, Svevo constructs his identity by a literary autopoiesis. The cultural practice of writing fiction in Svevo becomes the strategy of representation and also a performance of his transnational cultural identity. With this transnational production of his cultural identity Svevo stages an anti-colonial cosmopolitanism that did not only confront the nationalist paradigm of his time, but that still constitutes a challenge within Italian national identity, still struggling to come to terms with its colonial legacy outside and inside its national borders.

Chapter 3
“And trieste, ah trieste ate I my liver!”:
James Joyce and the construction of Europe in *Finnegans Wake*

Es ist gar nicht sicher, daß es so kommen muß, aber solche Vorstellungen gehören zu den Reiseträumen, in denen sich das Gefühl der rastlosen Bewegung spiegelt, die uns mit sich führt ... Zum Beispiel eine ganz langsame, mit einem schleierig wallenden, meerschneckenhaft geheimnisvollen Glück und dem tiefen Kuhblick, von dem schon die Griechen geschwärmt haben.

(Robert Musil. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Kapitel 8)

It is by no means certain that this is the way it has to be, but such ideas belong to those travel fantasies reflecting our sense of incessant movement that carries us along ... something quite slow-moving, with a veiled, billowing, sea-slug-like, mysterious happiness and the deep, cow-eyed gaze the ancient Greeks admired.

(Robert Musil. *The Man without Qualities*, Chapter 8)

In the course of this chapter I argue, following recent developments in Joyce Studies, for a new critical frame for James Joyce as a Habsburg author that integrates but certainly does not exclude our understanding of Joyce as an Irish novelist. Joyce's eleven-year long stay in Habsburg Trieste was crucial in his development. Here, as in the case of Svevo, we should not perceive different literary traditions as two mutually exclusive contexts. The fact that Joyce's artistic direction and aesthetic maturity owes so much to his Habsburg experience does not uproot him from the Irish tradition. On the contrary, the multicultural fabric of Habsburg Trieste triggered in Joyce a reflection about what place Ireland should occupy in a modern Europe. Joyce considered the Europeanization of Ireland as a way to escape the yoke of English colonialism. In the Adriatic city he completed or started most of his works. In this chapter, I expand on John McCourt and Peter Hartshorn's work, in which they have convincingly demonstrated the crucial role of Joyce's Triestine years. In particular, McCourt argues that the metamorphic language of

Finnegans Wake can be considered as an explosion of the Triestine dialect with its tendency to incorporate all the languages of the empire.

I will start this chapter by placing Joyce within the context of Habsburg Trieste, discussing the profound impact his stay had on his writing. The solid friendship of Svevo and Joyce is particularly significant. The two authors exerted a mutual influence on each other, in a productive exchange of ideas that – quite surprisingly – has not been sufficiently studied. A comparative analysis between Svevo’s relationship to Italian and Joyce’s feelings about the English language show the embedded anti-colonial message that both authors inscribe into their works. In addition, both writers chose two literary pseudonyms that assert a hybrid identity. My discussion of *Giacomo Joyce*, a short prose poem that echoes Svevo’s culturally polyvalent pseudonym, will also introduce Joyce’s idea of Europe, initially conceived of as a male colonial gaze that later becomes a vision for an anti-colonial future. Joyce never organized his ideas on Europe clearly. The place in which he articulates his political theory most explicitly is in the “Circe” episode of *Ulysses*, in which the hallucination of an uncensored Bloom paradoxically lays out a very lucid program for a future Europe.

Furthermore, I argue that Joyce in the first chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, specifically in the section entitled “pre-History of Ireland,” rewrites the rape of Europa as told by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* and moulds Jupiter’s ethnic rape of the Phoenician maid into a foundational myth for Ireland. In establishing a parallel between the English colonization of Ireland and the Roman colonization of Phoenicia, Joyce realizes the quirky ethnographic premises of his 1907 lecture “Ireland: Island of Saint and Sages,” given in Trieste, in which he argued that the Irish descended from Phoenician settlers. In

this respect, I will also assess the influence that the Italian historian Guglielmo Ferrero, who was active in Trieste, exerted on the young Joyce. Finally, I conclude the chapter by returning to Europe as vision, in the Phoenician and Greek etymologies studied by another ancient historian, Victor Bérard, whose work inspired Joyce's novels.

An Encounter in Trieste: Joyce and Svevo

In his monumental biography of Joyce, Richard Ellmann followed the opinion of Joyce's brother Stanislaus, according to whom Trieste had not provided much stimulation for the Irish writer. For this reason, among many others, the significance of Joyce's years on the Adriatic was widely underestimated. More recently, however, a new wave in Joyce criticism has redressed the balance, demonstrating quite convincingly that the years spent in Habsburg Trieste were of crucial importance in the personal and artistic maturation of the Irish writer. Critical contributions that testify to this effort are Peter Hartshorn's book and especially John McCourt's groundbreaking biography of Joyce's years in Trieste that now stands as a crucial addition to Ellmann's biographical account. Franz K. Stanzel, who has researched the Austrian elements in Joyce's work and Renzo S. Crivelli, who has reconstructed Joyce's itineraries in the Adriatic city, have offered other crucial contributions. This new approach has led to reconsider many generally held assumptions about the relationship between Joyce and Trieste.⁷⁹ Most famously the sentence in *Finnegans Wake* "And trieste, ah trieste, ate I my liver!" (FW 301.16) was read as a testimony to the financial and artistic difficulties Joyce had to face in the Adriatic city.

⁷⁹ In the context of this revived interest in Joyce's years spent on the Adriatic the *James Joyce Quarterly* also published an issue entirely dedicated to Joyce and Habsburg Trieste in 2001.

While the expression seems to be a pun based upon the assonance between Trieste and the Italian adjective *triste*, indicating sadness, and an Anglicization of the Italian idiomatic expression *mangiarsi* (or also *rodarsi*) *il fegato* (literally, to eat one's liver, i.e. to torture oneself), the polysemantic structure of the language in the *Wake* allows for another interpretation that has been put forward (Cary 10). The sentence parodies Paul Verlaine's verse "triste, triste était mon âme" and, in light of this French quotation, it has been suggested that we should also read it as "Trieste était mon livre." This interpretative glossing of the sentence that associates the city on the Adriatic with the writing of a book finds support in the fact that Joyce drafted, wrote and designed most of his works there. Joyce wrote *Stephen Hero* (1904-06), *Giacomo Joyce* (1907), the greater part of the stories that comprise *Dubliners* (1914), as well as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Exiles* (1918) and important sections of *Ulysses* (1922) in Trieste. Even the language of *Finnegans Wake* (1939), written long after Joyce had left Trieste, unmistakably echoes the multilingual dialect spoken in Habsburg Trieste.

The friendship between Italo Svevo and James Joyce was a very productive one. The occasion that allowed their initial acquaintance was Svevo's need to refresh his English language skills. During his sojourn in Trieste that extended from 1904 to 1915, Joyce was always on the lookout for Italian students to whom he could give private language lessons. The two writers met in 1907, briefly after Joyce and Nora returned from an unhappy stay in Rome, where Joyce worked in a bank. The lessons were supposed to focus on commercial English, but soon the two writers discovered their affinity and common literary vocation, a circumstance that changed the nature of their meetings. Joyce's friendship with Svevo was one of the highlights of his stay in the

Adriatic city. The somewhat formal but very amicable rapport stimulated a prolific exchange of ideas. Joyce was instrumental in the literary reawakening of Svevo. As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, Joyce's encouragement after reading the widely ignored novels *Una Vita* and *Senilità* sparked new confidence in the hesitant Svevo. This newly found enthusiasm helped Svevo resume his literary ambitions and later lead to the writing of *La Coscienza di Zeno*. The Triestine author said that Joyce had performed on him "il miracolo di Lazzaro," the miracle of Lazarus, in resurrecting Svevo's enthusiasm and literary talent from agonizing slumber. In similar fashion, Svevo boosted Joyce's confidence when the Irish writer felt disheartened. Svevo persuaded Joyce to continue his work on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a book project that Joyce had abandoned, as he was discouraged by the enormous difficulties in getting *Dubliners* published. In addition, it is well known that Svevo represented one of the main models for Joyce in the construction of Bloom in *Ulysses*.⁸⁰ In their long conversations that often reached well into late night, Joyce used to inquire quite insistently about Jewish customs, exploiting Svevo as a precious source of information. Livia Veneziani, Svevo's wife, later became the inspiration for Anna Livia Plurabelle in *Finnegans Wake*. Apart from the early accounts of Ellmann's monumental biography of Joyce, more recently, John McCourt in *The Years of Bloom. James Joyce in Trieste 1904-1920* and Neil Davison in his *James Joyce, Ulysses and The Construction of Jewish Identity* have given detailed accounts of the friendship between the two authors. Gatt-Ruttner's *Italo Svevo: A Double Life* and Enrico Ghidetti's *Italo Svevo – La coscienza di un borghese triestino* have provided an invaluable critical counterpart that sheds light on the interpersonal relationship between Svevo and Joyce from the point of view of the Triestine writer.

⁸⁰ Another model for Bloom was, among others, Theodor Mayer, a Hungarian living in Trieste.

Quite surprisingly, however, the critical accounts of their friendship seldom reach beyond the reconstruction of the purely biographic aspects and anecdotal material, neglecting the interplay between their respective literary works. Apart from few exceptions,⁸¹ a deeper comparative study of their texts is missing so far.

In this chapter, I would like to underscore the similar approaches adopted by the two authors in the literary realization of Europe. A reading of the glottopolitics of their texts shows how both responded in similar fashion to a linguistic colonization. Both were moved by an anticolonial sentiment towards a language that was familiar and yet at the same time uncannily foreign. The thematization of this linguistic uneasiness is not without consequences. We have already seen how Svevo deploys a set of rhetorical strategies to undermine the Italian that in Trieste was often, almost disparagingly, referred to as *regnicolo*. Even in the later versions of his novels, painstakingly expurgated of the regional dialect and German-based vocabulary and syntax, Svevo leaves traces of a concealed rebellion. Let us briefly recall the passage of *La Coscienza di Zeno* discussed in the previous chapter. For the sake of comparison, I will quote the passage again in its full length:

The doctor puts too much faith also in those damned confessions of mine, which he won't return to me so I can revise them. Good heavens! He studied only medicine and therefore doesn't know what it means to write in Italian for those of us who speak the dialect but can't write it. A confession in writing is always a lie. With our every Tuscan word, we lie! If only he knew how, by predilection, we recount all the things for which we have the words at hand, and how we avoid those things that would oblige us to turn to the dictionary! This is exactly how we choose, from our life, the episodes to underline. Obviously our life would have an entirely different aspect if it were told in our dialect. (404)

⁸¹ For a comparative approach of their works, see Hollington, Michael. "Svevo, Joyce and Modernist Time" in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. (Eds.) *Modernism: 1890-1930*. Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin, 1976. Also see Davison, Neil. "Joyce's Homosocial Reckoning: Italo Svevo, Aesthetics and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" *Modern Language Studies* 24.3 (Summer 1994): 69-92. Print.

Through Zeno, Svevo voices a psycholinguistic dilemma that ensues from a cultural colonization. The *regnicolo* appears as a linguistic medium incapable of making Zeno feel at home in Italian. This passage shows a striking similarity with the famous passage in *A Portrait*, in which Stephen laments the paradoxical nature of his relationship with English. In a conversation between Stephen and the dean of his school, they notice a lexical difference between English and Irish. Stephen does not understand the word “funnel” whereas the dean had never heard of the corresponding Irish term “tundish.”

Stephen cannot help but notice how foreign English is:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master* on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (205)

After interrupting his work on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in April 1908 Joyce returns to the manuscript in 1909, enthusiastically encouraged by Svevo, who had read a draft of the first three chapters.⁸² Is it possible that in their conversations at this time Joyce and Svevo had broached the question of linguistic colonization? We have evidence that in these years this language issue occupied the mind of the Irish writer. In one of his occasional articles on Ireland entitled “La Cometa dell’Home Rule,” published in December 1910 in the evening edition of the Triestine daily *Il Piccolo della Sera*, Joyce makes a similar point to the one expressed by Stephen by stating that “She [Ireland] has abandoned her own language almost entirely and accepted the language of the conqueror without being able to assimilate the culture or adapt herself to the mentality

⁸² McCourt gives the details in his biography of Joyce’s years in Trieste. For this particular timeline see page 89.

of which this language is the vehicle. She has betrayed her heroes, always in the hours of need and always without gaining recompense” (CW 159). This passage clearly echoes and reformulates another of Stephen’s harsh critiques against his fellow Irish compatriots in *A Portrait*: “My ancestors threw off their language and took another. They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?” (205-6). In the novel, Stephen’s tone oscillates between the intimate and meditative mood of his reflections and the irate outburst that shock his fellow students. Zeno’s general attitude is more tranquil. Stephen’s acrimonious fits of anger are utterly alien to him. Both characters, however, present psycho-linguistic dilemmas that are conspicuously analogous. For Stephen, and to some extent also for Joyce as one can appreciate in his article, the causes for this “unrest of spirit” in the Irish consciousness arises from the adoption of “Beurla” (*U* 9.367), the language of the Anglo-Saxon conqueror. For the author, there is a profound discrepancy, a tragic mismatch between the Irish mentality and its Anglo-Saxon linguistic medium, which is an incongruous vehicle for the cultural specificity of the Gaelic universe. A similar experience can be observed in the case of Svevo, who wrote in Italian, but thought in the local dialect and German. Svevo’s Zeno makes a similar point by opposing the hybridity of Trieste’s ethnic and linguistic matrix to the notions of purity associated with Tuscan-based Italian.

Early commentators had already pointed out Joyce’s subversive use of the English language in *Ulysses*. In a short article published in 1927 by the avant-garde magazine *Transition*, William Carlos Williams offers an insightful and felicitous formulation of Joyce’s treatment of English. Commenting on the linguistic experimentation of the Irish

writer, Williams pointed out Joyce's "delight to unEnglish" (76) the language in which he was writing. In his "Note on the Recent Work of James Joyce," Williams declares his admiration for Joyce's style and the "universality of his growing language which is no longer english." (78) By spelling "English" in the lower case, Williams best expresses the creative process through which Joyce strips the English language from its cultural hegemony. In the *Wake*, the following sentence is revealing: "You will say it is most unenglish and I shall hope to hear that you will not be wrong about it" (*FW* 160.22-3). The idiom of the *Wake* is a "slanguage" (*FW* 421.17), suggesting slang and slander, and a "sinscript" (*FW* 421.18), a language coded as a transgression of moral authority. The different languages in the *Wake* compete to turn English on its head and destabilize it by infiltrating it through new meanings. In fact, in the *Wake* de-capitalizing also means decapitating.⁸³ We will see later the epistemological questions that this language raises. In *A Portrait* the divergence between Irish mind and English language does not assume the features of an epistemological inquiry yet. It is an utterly spiritual question, where words cannot be spoken without "unrest of spirit" and without the "soul [that] frets in the shadow of [the English] language."

One other crucial parallel between Svevo and Joyce that seems to be generally overlooked is the adoption of a literary pseudonym that expresses their European hybrid identity. As discussed earlier, with the adoption of a *nom de plume* Svevo wished to express his double cultural citizenship and to distinguish the literary persona Italo Svevo

⁸³ If London is the capital of a large empire, the *caput mundi* of the British colonies if you will, Joyce dethrones the city and makes Dublin one of the cultural capitals of Europe. Joyce capitalizes on his language skills to make Dublin the center towards which all thoughts are headed. This is why in the opening of the book the "riverrun" returns to "Howth Castle and Environs" (*FW* 3.1-3), a synecdoche for Dublin as well as the protagonist HCE (Here Comes Everybody) in disguise. Later in the novel, the reader is invited to see HCE in the guise of "Huges Caput Earlyfouler" (*FW* 197.8) and "how he used to hold his head as high as a howeth" (*FW* 197.2-3).

from the bourgeois businessman Ettore Schmitz.⁸⁴ It is highly probable that Svevo's renaming of himself exerted a crucial influence on Joyce's choice to adopt a similar pseudonym in *Giacomo Joyce*. In his introduction to the short prose poem published posthumously in 1968, Richard Ellmann suggests that Svevo might have given Joyce the idea for a work set in Trieste: "The impulsion to write it out may well have come from his friend Svevo, who in a letter to Joyce of June 26 [1914] ... asked, 'When will you write an Italian work about our town? Why not?' Joyce liked to be prompted, and he had reason to pay particular attention to a prompting from Svevo" (xvi). McCourt proposes a slightly different timeframe, suggesting that the work might have been written sometime between 1911 and 1914, a time line that would exclude Svevo's direct influence.

Whatever the exact date of composition, it is impossible to ignore the parallel isomorphism and structural correspondence of the names "Italo Svevo" and "Giacomo Joyce," both expressing a state of cultural liminality, both asserting a hybrid identity, both being the literary projection of a European writer. Even if Svevo's suggestion to write about Trieste came after Joyce had jotted down notes for *Giacomo Joyce*, the Triestine writer, who had adopted his pseudonym long before they first met, might very well have been the inspiration for Joyce.

After its publication, critics were debating about the textual categorization of *Giacomo Joyce*, with suggestions covering a wide range of literary genres. The interpretations extended from highly polished prose poem to short novelette, while it was often considered an unpretentious notebook to be ransacked for Joyce's allegedly more

⁸⁴ In the last chapter, we saw how Svevo occupies a space of double liminality. It is, first of all, what Gatt-Ruttner has called Svevo's "double life," the dual occupation of the respected and well-established businessman on the one hand, and the persistent and often clandestinely nurtured ambition of a literary career on the other. Secondly, with his pseudonym Svevo refashions himself as a *homo europaeus*, a hybrid European that lives across languages and literary traditions.

important works. Fritz Senn has rightfully suggested that *Giacomo Joyce*, like all of Joyce's works, is a work *sui generis* and that there is "no adequate label for it" (in Armand/Wallace 17). In the last decades the work has been secured a solid position in the Joyce canon thanks to the persuasive interpretations of Vicki Mahaffey and Joseph Valente.

The plot of *Giacomo Joyce* revolves around the aesthetic sublimation of the protagonist's erotic desire for a young female student that belongs to the Triestine upper class, generally identified with Joyce's Jewish student Amalia Popper. According to both Mahaffey and Valente, Joyce started to experiment with visual desire. The protagonist casts a desiring, male gaze onto a feminine and Orientalized Other. The critics underscore the troubling aspects of Joyce's erotic fantasy and his adoption of an anti-Semitic and colonizing perspective. In following Mahaffey and Valente's suggestions, I argue that the visual eroticism and colonizing gaze of *Giacomo Joyce* provided the author with an understanding of the politics of visual desire, an understanding he would later exploit not only in *Ulysses*, but especially in his reading of Ovid's myth of the rape of Europa and the subsequent interweaving of the episode into *Finnegans Wake*. In this way, I suggest that *Giacomo Joyce* represents the initial moment in a genealogy of visual desire that informs Joyce's conception of Europe as vision. Joyce will articulate this idea of Europe as vision according to spatial and temporal coordinates: as a male/colonial gaze and as a constant vision for a future.

Giacomo Joyce tells the vicissitudes of a penniless language teacher and his spurned infatuation with a wealthy student. The protagonist is attracted to this confident and elegant young woman of the Triestine upper class and her mixed ethnic background.

She is Jewish, speaks in what he calls a “Viennese Italian” and is growing up in a family unsure of its national loyalties. She undergoes an appendicitis operation, and the protagonist likens the penetration of the surgical knife into her body to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The brief and episodic plot is framed by the cultural entertainment her family indulges, such as opera. The protagonist’s imploration to love him and his umbrella characterizes the end.

In her work, Vicki Mahaffey has emphasized the voyeuristic nature of Giacomo’s desire and its political implications. In articles that date back to the late 1980s, Mahaffey was the first to suggest that the work carried misogynist and anti-Semitic implications. Later, in her book *States of Desire: Wilde, Yeats, Joyce, and the Irish Experiment* she argues more compellingly that

Giacomo Joyce has sexist and anti-Semitic overtones that are essential to an understanding of the operations of prejudice and the power of art; in it Joyce found himself to be inconsequential and undesirable in the eyes of an attractive Jewish woman and responded by instinctively and shamefully defending himself by appealing to the traditional privilege of man, a Gentile and a writer to help him contain her power. Clearly Joyce used *Giacomo Joyce* as a way of testing his own conditioned defenses against differences of race, sex, and class, and he found his initial defense to be a strong counteroffense, waged in an arena where he had greater skill and authority. (150)

Mahaffey’s point is corroborated in the text. Giacomo visits the Jewish cemetery in Habsburg Trieste to attend a funeral of a woman that took her life. In a gesture that is reminiscent of Otto Weininger’s feminization of the Jews, the narrator equates a feminine character with the Jewish community: “Corpses of Jews lie about me rotting in the mould of their holy field. Here is the tomb of her people, black stone, silence without hope ... Pimply Meissel brought me here. He is beyond those trees standing with covered head at the grave of his suicide wife” (*GJ* 6). Mahaffey argues that the appendicitis operation that

the female character undergoes represents a shift in the text. Before the intervention of the surgeon, she is depicted as a passive character. After the operation she becomes a *femme fatale* that spurns Giacomo's courtship. Joyce equates her rejection to the refusal of the Jewish people to recognize Christ as their Messiah: "*Non hunc sed Barabbam!*" (*GJ* 16, italics in the original).

In her more recent essay "Giacomo Joyce," published in the collection of essays dedicated to the work *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*, Mahaffey develops her argument of Joyce's Orientalism, sexism and colonialism by arguing that they are perpetrated by "the eroticism of the sense of sight" (25). Here Mahaffey regards *Giacomo Joyce* as an experimental site, in which Joyce's Orientalism constitutes but a brief parenthesis. Erotic desire is mediated through fleeting glimpses, secretive glances, and spying observation. Giacomo constantly looks at and looks for her eyes. The mysterious and anonymous lady in the text is introduced as wearing quizzing glasses. The male gaze projected onto her is associated with sexual imagery: "The long eyelids beat and lift: a burning needleprick stings and quivers in the velvet iris" (*GJ* 1). The phallic needle prick suggests an image of visual and sexual penetration, while the fire seems to suggest an act of purification. Giacomo's gaze projects racial stereotypes onto her and her Jewish family: "Her father and his son sit in the carriage. They have owls' eyes and owls' wisdom. Owlsh wisdom stares from their eyes brooding upon the lore of their *Summa contra Gentiles*" (*GJ* 8). For Giacomo, her eyes are also markers of an Orientalized sensuality: "Here, opening from the darkness of desire, are eyes that dim the breaking East, their shimmer the shimmer of the scum that mantles the cesspool of slobbering James" (*GJ* 9). Within Giacomo's sexual politics of vision, blindness becomes a

metaphor for his inability to seduce her: “*Mine eyes fail in darkness, mine yes fail / Mine eyes fail in darkness, love*” (*GJ* 3, italics in the original).⁸⁵ Mahaffey suggests that Joyce realized his complicity in matters of racism and sexism, “his own unintentional arrogance” (*States* 144) early in his career, gaining a more mature and complex perspective on these issues. Joyce’s investigation of voyeurism and castrating blindness “anticipates the more comprehensive exploration of the importance of vision that Joyce embarks upon” (*Envoys* 29) later.

Joseph Valente offers a similar interpretation of the text and its relation to Joyce’s other works. In his book *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice: Negotiating Sexual and Colonial Difference*, Valente combines psychoanalytic and postcolonial approaches to identify what he calls an “imperialist abjection” in *Giacomo Joyce*. The critic contrasts the logic of Orientalist/colonial and sexist/patriarchal discourse in the text with Joyce’s future “deliberate opposition to ... sexual, racial and cultural imperialism” (71, 70). In Valente’s insightful reading the phallic I coincides with the eye, i.e. the male gaze corresponds to an imperial perspective that objectifies the colonized other. The artist’s privilege of vision and perspective makes Giacomo a colonizing subject. In Giacomo’s role as educator the critic recognizes the “empire’s self-appointed civilizing mission in which Joyce undeniably implicated himself with the writing of *Giacomo*” (87). The different roles that Joyce adopts put him in a position of social prestige:

The comparative social authority he enjoyed as a mature, Gentile, Western, pseudo-Aryan, northern European pedagogue confronting a young, Jewish,

⁸⁵ Joyce’s obsession with eyesight and blindness pervades the text, and so Joyce’s daughter Lucia represents an intermediary between the voyeur and the object of vision: “A flower given by her to my daughter. Frail gift, frail giver, frail blue-veined child” (*GJ* 3). Lucia was named after the patron saint of vision. Joyce had the name Lucia in mind already during Nora’s pregnancy of Giorgio, their first-born son. The protective role of Lucia in the text is linked to Joyce’s superstitious choice of the name Lucia, a gesture that was a way to invoke protection for his failing eyesight.

Orientalized, southern European female student was further reinforced by his role as a de facto agent of the strongest empire on earth, toward which he nonetheless remained, ethnically and confessionally, a subaltern. (71)

In Valente's interpretation, he shows how Joyce is ambivalent about identifying only with the colonizer. In Trieste Joyce started to see parallels between Irish emigration and Jewish diaspora – an analogy that will be fundamental in the construction of Bloom in *Ulysses*. Since Joyce's depiction of Amalia resonates with the English representation of the Irish, Valente argues, Joyce identifies also with the colonized other. In his depiction of Amalia, Joyce realized his own involvement in a certain Irish (or West Briton) collaborationism (Valente 117). The author's identification is thus split between Giacomo and Amalia, who represents another fictionalized projection of himself: "Whereas Stephen Dedalus represents Joyce's alter ego, a fictionalized version of authorial consciousness, another self, Amalia proves to be Joyce's sub-alter(n) ego, a fictionalized variant of authorial unconsciousness, an other-self" (Valente 105).

Valente is correct in pointing out the questions of authorial identifications in the text. He and Mahaffey note that Joyce's here first experiments with the notion of a transgendered and multicultural identity. The erotic fantasy of the text also offers glimpses into the whimsical habits of the sophisticated aristocracy in Habsburg Trieste, and the hybrid composition of the Adriatic city. As far as the language is concerned, it is the first work in which Joyce systematically experiments with a polyglot text that includes, apart from English, Italian, German and the Triestine dialect.

But what is, to paraphrase McCourt, "the importance of being Giacomo?"⁸⁶ The Irish critic has put forward an interpretation according to which "in choosing a hybrid Italian-Irish title for his slim volume Joyce was suggesting a more complex vision of

⁸⁶ McCourt, John. "The Importance of Being Giacomo." *Joyce Studies Annual* 11 (Summer 2000): 4-26.

himself,” a vision that saw the author “comfortably acclimatised to life in Trieste, steeped in Italian culture, literature and language.” According to McCourt, Joyce becomes in Trieste “an Italianised Irishman” (197), eager to join the virtual company of prominent Italian figures bearing Giacomo as a first name, i.e. the poet Giacomo Leopardi, Joyce’s beloved composer Giacomo Puccini and the writer, philosopher and womanizer Giacomo Casanova. Like Svevo, Joyce stages himself as a *homo europaeus habsburgensis*, a European subject of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Documents show that in Trieste Joyce was often referred to as Giacomo⁸⁷ and more than that, as Joyce’s letters and postcards demonstrate, the Irish author occasionally utilized the Italian version of his name James as a semi-serious and playful signature of his missives. The appellation Giacomo becomes “Giacomone,” or the Triestine diminutive “Giacometo,” significantly in a letter to Svevo, “S. Giacomo in Monte di pietà” (*LI*, 211-12), playing with the name of a Triestine city district, “Jacomino del Oio, sudito botanico” (*SL*, 268-9), a distortion of “suddito britannico” meaning “British subject” and “Giacomo Giocondo” (*LIII*, 353), where Joyce puns with his last name as well, building on the assonance between Joyce, the term “joyful,” and the Italian popular name of Leonardo da Vinci’s Monna Lisa, whose enigmatically timid smile makes her usually known with the appellation “La Gioconda.”

The adoption of an Italian identity never occurs at the expense of Joyce’s Irishness. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce’s fictional projection of the authorial self takes the name of Shem, the Irish version of James. The playful dimension of onomastic metamorphosis, already seen in Joyce’s letter, is thematized in *Finnegans Wake*: “Shem

⁸⁷ Again McCourt provides examples for such instances, such as Nora’s hospital bill after their daughter’s birth, Lucia’s birth certificate and several mentions in the *Guida di Trieste*, a city guide book that advertised Joyce’s occupation as an English teacher (198).

is as short for Shemus as Jem is joky for Jacob” (*FW* 169.1). In the novel, the act of writing is Shem’s main activity as his epithet “Penman” suggests. In one of the many transpersonal migrations, Shem the Penman assumes a Slavic identity, becoming “Shem Skrivenitch,” who annoys his brother Shaun by “always cutting my prhose to please his phrase” (*FW* 423.15-16). Shem Skrivenitch is based on Alois Skrivanich, a Croatian student of Joyce in Trieste. Here again, Joyce reshapes his literary alter ego in the image of a Habsburg subject. The epithet “Skrivenitch” is of course parallel to “Penman,” since it suggests the English term “scribbling,” the Irish “scríobh” and the Italian “scrivere” (to write) as well as “scrivano” meaning scribe. Anna Livia Plurabelle undergoes a similar Slavification when she becomes “Annushka Lutetiavitch Pufflovah” (*FW* 207.08-09). Her patronymic is also a pun on Lutetia, the Gallo-Roman name of an early settlement on the river Seine that will later become Paris. James, Giacomo and Shem are respectively the English, Italian and Irish transcultural embodiments of Joyce’s eclectic and composite identity. Through this tripartite nomenclature Joyce paints an image of himself what could be called a portrait of the European artist as a culturally hybrid self. This projected image is both a triptych of successive pictures, but also a portrait that responds to the cubist logic of juxtaposition of fragmented “multiple Mes” (*FW* 410.12).

In addition to staging the author’s projection into a fictional character, *Giacomo Joyce* appears as a sincere homage to the multicultural and polyglot composition of the city on the Adriatic. The mysterious lady in the protagonist’s fantasy metonymically mirrors the “docile Trieste” (*GJ*, 10). The narrative voice describes the socio-cultural context from which hybrid figures such as Svevo would emerge. The text insists on the composite character of Trieste, its interethnic composition, the centrifugal and centripetal

social forces at work in the city. In a short paragraph, the narrator describes the enigmatic woman: “Rounded and ripened: rounded by the lathe of intermarriage and ripened in the forcing-house of the seclusion of her race” (*GJ*, 2). Interethnic marital practices were common in Trieste and this brief passage testifies to the paradox that ensues from the mixture of different groups and the simultaneous tendency to separate them. This hybrid character is not confined to ethnic groups, but to the very everyday-spoken language. In a lesson held by the autobiographical language teacher, the German-influenced Italian surfaces inevitably: “Her classmate, retwisting her twisted body, purrs in boneless Viennese Italian: *Che coltura!*” (*GJ*, 1). In the ears of the narrator, the cultural and economic prestige of the Austrian capital is absorbed into the Italian spoken in Trieste, but remains, despite its undeniable presence, boneless, i.e. without a supporting structure. This Viennese Italian is precisely the language that Svevo spoke. The fur in which these young aristocratic women are dressed (“A pale face surrounded by heavy odorous furs” [*GJ*, 1]) renders them cat-like creatures. The purred Viennese Italian matches the feline flexibility of their twisted bodies, a purring that anticipates Bloom’s speaking cat in the “Calypso” episode of *Ulysses*.

Cats are not the only animals in the text. Irredentists are likened to depressed bugs that hide in houses covered by roofs that recall tortoise shells: “Trieste is waking rawly: raw sunlight over its huddled browntiled roofs, testudiform; a multitude of prostrate bugs await a national deliverance” (*GJ*, 8). The image of the protective turtle shells, into which the bugs can crawl in search for shelter and isolation from the outside world, seems to suggest Joyce’s commentary on the close-mindedness of Irredentists in Trieste. This interpretation is supported by the mocking commentary on the profound uncertainty in

the identification of a homeland: “She thinks the Italian gentlemen were right to haul Ettore Albini, the critic of the *Secolo*, from the stalls because he did not stand up when the band played the Royal March. She heard that at supper. Ay. They love their country when they are quite sure which country it is” (*GJ*, 9). The narrator comments on a manifestation of zealous Irredentism in Trieste, and sarcastically exposes the flimsy nature of an ever-shifting definition of a home country. In a text in which definite meanings are erotically concealed and playfully withheld, the value of “when” indicates a temporal deferral in the definition of home that is not yet found. Joyce is aware of the multiple cultural and political allegiances in Trieste and how such loyalties are contingent, always shifting. What Joyce depicts in *Giacomo Joyce* is a Trieste that assumes the features of a modern, urban experiment of a European community *in nuce*, torn between a xenophobic nationalism and the cosmopolitan aspirations of an anticolonial internationalism.

The early beginnings of Joyce criticism used to describe the author as an intellectual eager to inscribe himself in a European cultural and literary tradition and later, with the wave of New Criticism, as a fundamentally apolitical writer. The French critic Valéry Larbaud commented, shortly before the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922, on Joyce’s work: “avec l’œuvre de James Joyce, et en particulier, avec cet *Ulysse* qui va bientôt paraître à Paris, l’Irlande fait une rentrée sensationnelle dans la haute littérature européenne” [“with James Joyce, and in particular, with *Ulysses*, which is about to be published in Paris, Ireland makes a sensational re-entrance into high European literature” (my translation)].⁸⁸ Many years later, Ellmann famously follows this critical direction. In the opening of the sixth chapter in Joyce’s biography, the critic claims that “before

⁸⁸ Larbaud, Valéry. “James Joyce” *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 18 (April 1922): 385-405.

Ibsen's letter Joyce was an Irishman; after it he was a European"⁸⁹ (Ellmann 78). This line of interpretation that depicted Joyce as an apolitical European represented a mainstream position. In the last two decades or so, studies in postcolonial theory, in a sometimes slightly polemical stance towards the Europeanist Joyceans, stressed the specific Irish character of Joyce's work and the political nature of his writing. A postcolonial approach has also been adopted in books such as Enda Duffy's *The Subaltern Ulysses*, Vincent Cheng's *Joyce, Race, and Empire*. Another pioneering contribution in the understanding of Joyce's political sympathies has been Dominic Manganiello's *Joyce's Politics*, a book that despite being nearly 30 years old, still occupies an important position within the critical panorama of Joyce Studies. This situation has delineated a somewhat paradoxical situation, one that opposes the aestheticism of a "European Joyce" to the political commitment of an "Irish Joyce."

In my approach to Joyce these two directions are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are interweaving threads spinning into a more coherent interpretative fabric that embraces Joyce's Irish roots and the European aspirations of his texts. First of all, in the light of an interpretation that emphasizes Joyce's typically modernist political aesthetics, the opinion according to which an analysis of the more "European" aspects of Joyce's work are incompatible with a political reading is as utterly untenable. Secondly, a reading that opposes Joyce's textual performance of his European identity to his specifically Irish distinctiveness appears as a blunt misreading as well. Joyce's Europe is imagined from an Irish point of view and, as we will see shortly, the longing for a United

⁸⁹ In 1900 Joyce published a review of Henrik Ibsen in *The Fortnightly Review*. Moved by Joyce's praise, Ibsen wrote to the literary magazine to thank the young author of the review. Since Ibsen did not speak English, Joyce decided to learn enough Dano-Norwegian in order to write a letter to Ibsen in 1901. The English draft of this letter is contained in Ellmann's *Selected Letters of James Joyce*.

States of Europe is grounded precisely in Joyce's Irish anti-colonial sentiment. Joyce's self-imposed exile on the continent and his crucial experience in Trieste certainly take him onto a European dimension, but this widening of the horizon does not obliterate his Irishness, as he perceives himself as a person of "Iro-European ascendances" (*FW* 37.26).⁹⁰ While the entire Joyce canon engages in a thematization of the European question, *Finnegans Wake* is the work in which Europe is ultimately performed textually, according to two major rhetorical strategies, i.e. linguistic metamorphosis and a metempsychosis of the characters. These two rhetorical strategies revolve around the employment of a metamorphic language and a construction of a plot driven by the metempsychotic reincarnation of different historical figures. According to Maria Dibattista, in *Ulysses* "metempsychosis ... is always transcultural" (Dibattista in Lawrence 21)⁹¹ and the same principle can easily be applied to the *Wake* as well. In Joyce's last work, Europe is articulated by a reading of Ovid and an interpretation of Vico's *corsi e ricorsi storici*. But before reaching its climax, the thematization of Europe in Joyce's work travels a long textual journey.

In his 1907 lecture "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages" delivered in Italian to a Triestine crowd of interested listeners, who could draw a parallel between the foreign occupation of Ireland and their own, Joyce attributes Ireland's cultural isolation to English imperialism. The marginal status of Ireland within the European context is not due to its peripheral geographic location, since it once was an active center of a flourishing intellectual life that gave the continent fine thinkers such as Columbanus, who

⁹⁰ To be sure, Andrew Gibson in his recent book *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* intends to move beyond the dichotomy between a "European and international Joyce" and "Irish and/or colonial context" (Gibson 19).

⁹¹ DiBattista, Maria. "Joyce's ghost: the bogey of realism in John McGahern Amongst Women." Lawrence Karen R. (ed) *Transcultural Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

later appears in Stephen's remembrance of his mother's reproach in *Ulysses*. According to Joyce, the English colonization of Ireland has forced Ireland into an exile from European intellectual life. The recuperation of Ireland's status in continental cultural affairs does not simply respond to the wish of a fashionable Europeanization, but is driven by the will to renew Ireland's intrinsic and long lost position as a European civilization:

It may seem strange that an island such as Ireland, so remote from the centre of culture, should have become a school for apostles. However, even a superficial review shows us that the Irish nation's desire to create its own civilization is not so much the desire of a young nation wishing to link itself to Europe's concert, but the desire by an ancient nation to renew in a modern form the glories of a past civilization. (CW 111)

In the lecture Joyce emphasizes the fact that in the past Ireland enjoyed a closer relationship to continental Europe than it did with Britain. From the beginning of his literary career, Joyce wished to reestablish both through his critical writing and his fiction this interrupted connection between an Irish and a European cultural and literary tradition. He sought, however, to give his own imprint.

The preliminary draft for *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Stephen Hero* was mainly written in Trieste between 1904 and 1906, a year before Joyce delivered his lecture. Like his speech, the novel is presents a cultural and literary Europeanism. Speaking of Henrik Ibsen, Stephen states that "here and not in Shakespeare or Goethe was the successor to the first poet of the Europeans, here, as only to such purpose in Dante, a human personality had been found united with an artistic manner which was itself almost a natural phenomenon" (*SH* 41). Through this evaluation of the classics, and the inspiration that he draws from them, Stephen engages in the cultural politics of inscribing his art into the domain of European literature. Stephen's rebellious spirit is less

concerned with specific political questions than it is performing a cultural critique. (“But surely you have some political opinions, man! – I am going to think them out.”[SH 56]) This does not mean that Stephen is not aware of the political forces at play in the cultural isolation of Ireland. According to Stephen, the Sassenach, the Anglo-Saxon invader, and the Catholic Church have turned Ireland into an “afterthought of Europe” (SH 53) and as a consequence he is “living at the farthest remove from the centre of European culture” (SH 194). Much of this material is carried over in the more mature *Portrait*, where Stephen’s literary and cultural models now include Gerhart Hauptmann, Guido Cavalcanti, Ben Jonson, Aristotle and Aquinas.

An important overarching topic in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* is Stephen’s disagreement with his college friend McCann, based on Joyce’s close friend Francis Skeffington, who attended University College in Dublin with Joyce. Joyce saw Francis as “the cleverest man at University College” (cited in Ellmann 63) and used his fictional projection as the spokesperson for the ideas of W.T. Stead, a pacifist and editor of the *Review of Reviews*. During their university years, Skeffington introduced Joyce to the ideas of the English journalist, who was also his friend. Through the character McCann, Joyce brings a political subject into the novel. A staunch pacifist, Stead believed in the political project of a federated Europe. He became famous for supporting the pacific settlement of international disputes and international disarmament. In 1899 Stead was involved in the organization of a peace conference in The Hague with the Russian Czar. For his work, Stead was nominated for the Peace Nobel Prize five times (1901, 1902, 1908, 1909, and 1912). In his *The United States of Europe* the English journalist claimed that “this question of the United States of Europe has been one of the ideals towards

which I have constantly, in fair weather and in foul, directed my course” (488). Stead recognized Joyce’s talent very early. Grace Eckley reminds us that Stead “published the first criticism of James Joyce – a review of his essay ‘Ibsen’s New Drama’” (4).

In *Stephen Hero*, McCann is introduced as a “serious young feminist” and as a “blunt, brisk figure, wearing a Cavalier beard and shooting-suit, and a steadfast reader of *The Review of Reviews*” (SH 39). Skeffington’s feminism as a source for McCann’s is confirmed by a letter from Joyce to his brother Stanislaus dated 12 July 1905, where the Irish author says that “it is only Skeffington, and fellows like him, who think that woman is man’s equal” (SL 67). Later in the novel, Stephen will refuse to sign McCann’s petition to support Stead and the Russian Czar. In *A Portrait*, the figure of W.T. Stead returns: “McCann began to speak with fluent energy of the Czar’s rescript, of Stead, of general disarmament, arbitration of international disputes, of the signs of the times, of the new humanity ...” (213). Shortly before this passage, McCann makes a statement that sounds much like a programmatic declaration: “Dedalus, you are an antisocial being, wrapped up in yourself. I’m a democrat: and I’ll work and act for social liberty and equality among all classes and sexes in the United States of the Europe of the future” (P 191-2). Now, it would be ill advised to conflate Stephen’s youthfully naïve rebellion with Joyce’s own positions. While the construction of Stephen’s character certainly draws much on Joyce’s biographical background, the protagonist is only a partial fictional projection of the authorial self. Joyce distances himself from Stephen and McCann’s reproach to Stephen resembles much more Joyce’s own positions. In particular, what seems to coincide with Joyce’s vision is the support of a democratic and anticolonial federation of European

nations, and socialism, a political doctrine Joyce flirted with for at least three years while he was living in Trieste.

In her book *The Steadfast Finnegans Wake*, Grace Eckley has argued that Stead exerted a crucial influence upon Joyce. According to the scholar, Stead's influence is recognizable in Joyce's poetry and reaches its climax in Joyce's last work. She demonstrates how Stead plays an important role in Joyce's work, especially for its Europeanist internationalism. Sometimes, however, one receives the impression that her emphasis on Stead's influence is overstated. She considers Stead to be "the 'spiritual father' of Stephen Dedalus," "the original Earwicker" who provides "a context for the multiple languages, the literary sources, for Earwicker's internationalism" (46). The above-quoted passage in which McCann's Europeanism constitutes the basis for the criticism directed at Stephen seems to disprove her point that Stead was Stephen's "spiritual father." Stead might well have influenced Joyce, but this influence does not seem to be channeled into the construction of Stephen's character.

McCann's interest in "social liberty and equality among all classes and sexes in the United States of the Europe of the future" appears to include the very program of Joyce's drama *Exiles*, published in 1918, two years after *A Portrait*. Largely inspired by his stay in Trieste and his interactions with the local intellectual intelligentsia, Joyce's Ibsen-inspired drama revolves around the topic of female emancipation in interpersonal relationships and experiments with the questions of exile and betrayal, topics that will later be explored at more length in *Ulysses*. In a crucial passage, Richard and Robert discuss about politics. Richard represents Joyce's fictional alter ego, whereas Robert is based upon Roberto Prezioso, the vice-director of the local newspaper in Trieste II

Piccolo della Sera. Robert seems to provide a summary for the political conclusions that Joyce's has reached in Trieste:

[Richard selects a Virginia cigar from the box on the table and hands it to him {Robert} with the straw drawn out]

Robert

(lighting it) These cigars Europeanize me. If Ireland is to become a new Ireland she must first become European. And that is what you are here for, Richard. Some day we shall have to choose between England and Europe. I am a descendant of the dark foreigners: that is why I like to be here. I may be childish. But where else in Dublin can I get a bandit cigar like this or a cup of black coffee? The man who drinks black coffee is going to conquer Ireland. And now I will take just a half measure of that whisky, Richard, to show you there is no ill feeling. (*Poems and Exiles* 158)

In this somewhat deservedly less celebrated work of Joyce, one finds revealing material for the analysis of Joyce's conception of the relationship between Ireland and Europe. In the first place, what is striking is Joyce's use of the term "Europeanize," which is mentioned only twice in Joyce's works. Here and in the *Wake*, where the term reappears in the expression "Europeanised Afferyank!" (FW 191.04) Joyce is making use of a recently coined term in the English language. The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates the first recording of the term in 1849, some sixty years from the publication of *Exiles*, which not only means that Joyce is employing a relatively recent neologism. In addition, the choice that Ireland has to make between England and Europe – read between English colonial domination and a democratic and federalist United States of Europe – requires the very process of re-inscribing Ireland onto a European tradition, an intention present as early as Joyce's 1907 lecture in Trieste on Ireland and its depiction as an island of saints and sages. The alignment with a European political union is for Joyce also the way of freeing Ireland from the yoke of English imperialism. In the eyes of Robert, this is Richard's cultural task: "This is what you are here for, Richard" (159).

Ireland's independence from England in 1922, four years after the publication of the drama, proves the prophetic character of Joyce's statement. Another remarkable aspect lies in the circumstance that it is a Virginia cigar that Europeanizes Robert. We know from Joyce's letters⁹² and Herbert Gorman's account⁹³ that Joyce enjoyed smoking the long, Italian Virginia cigars, a habit that is documented in Trieste (see McCourt 85) and also later in Paris. This scene might have inspired the scene in which Svevo's Zeno steals half-smoked Virginia cigars from his father.⁹⁴ The drama *Exiles* shows how Joyce's developed his idea of Europe in Trieste. In fact, W.T. Stead's *United States of Europe* exerted an early influence on Joyce, reaching back to his years of study at the university in Dublin.

The influence of W.T. Stead is properly explored in criticism, although the role of his political Europeanism seems to be somewhat underestimated even in Eckley's book. Differently, the approach to a non-canonical figure such as Ferrero and especially of his *Europa giovane* has produced only a very small number of contributions. As mentioned before, in *Stephen Hero*, the narrator presents McCann as a "steadfast reader of *The Review of Reviews*" (SH 39). The adjective "steadfast" is clearly a pun, playing with the name Stead, who was the editor of *The Review of Reviews*.⁹⁵ In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce comments on Stead's pacifist engagement, exploiting the similarity between the name and the adjective. In the long question of I.6, the narrator wonders what "took place before the internatural convention of catholic midwives and found stead before the

⁹² Letter of 28 December 1934

⁹³ Gorman Herbert S. *James Joyce*. New York and Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939. p.348

⁹⁴ In *La Coscienza di Zeno*, the narrator remembers: "My father used to leave half-smoked Virginia cigars lying about on the edge of a table or a chest of drawers" (8).

⁹⁵ The title of Eckley's book of Stead and *Finnegans Wake* exploits the same pun. Eckley, Grace. *The steadfast Finnegans wake: a textbook*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994.

congress for the study of endonational calamities” (FW 128.26-29). A similar hidden reference to W.T. Stead can be found at the very end of *A Portrait*. After the programmatic statement of Stephen’s mission to create the consciousness of his race, the last diary entry states: “27 April: Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead” (276). Given Joyce’s meticulous attention to words and the keen awareness of their use, it seems highly improbable that the last word in the novel is a homophone to Stead’s name by a merely fortuitous coincidence. It seems that Joyce consciously punned on Stead’s name as he did in *Stephen Hero* and would later do in *Finnegans Wake*. Through this final word – a final self-blessing *Amen* if you wish – Stephen puts his creative mission under the auspices of a spiritual father, invoking Stead in the same manner a Catholic would invoke the spiritual assistance of a patron saint. In the end of this novel, Stephen’s last epiphany coincides with Joyce’s own literary and cultural mission, to Europeanize Ireland.

In *Ulysses* Stephen’s cultural politics will give way to Bloom’s political manifesto and the Esperanto of the *Wake*. On this topic, McCourt appropriately argues that “more than any Irish writer before him, Joyce was embarking on a literary adventure that was utterly European. When he came to write *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, he would consciously and effectively reconnect Ireland with Europe and attempt to circumvent the narrow English-Irish stalemate” (118-119). In *Ulysses*, the European Bloom becomes the embodiment of a *homo europaeus* that has his origins in the Hungarian parts of the Habsburg Empire. Joyce’s definition of the novel as the “epic of two races (Israelite –

Irish)” (*LI* 146)⁹⁶ implies a different model of European identity, one that includes persecuted minorities and colonized nationalities such as the Jewish and Irish.

The “Cyclops” episode has usually been regarded as the section in which Bloom engages politics, in a dialectical battle with the nationalist Citizen. Bloom’s attempt at a definition of the nation produces apparently clumsy results. His response that a nation “is the same people living in the same place” (*U* 12. 1422-3) a heterogeneous place that integrates difference, meets the mockery of his interlocutors at the pub. As Benjamin Boysen puts it, “Compared to nationalist dreams of battle and revolution, Bloom’s pragmatic cosmopolitanism stresses mutual recognition” (144).⁹⁷ The definition of nation and Europe are left to the garrulous and xenophobic nationalist Citizen, who considers Europe a common trading space, a prototype of a European single market. The Citizen laments that English colonialism is responsible “for our ruined trade” (*U* 12. 1255) and hopes for the reinstatement of long-lost trading area in which the Irish economy would flourish again: “Where are the Greek merchants that came through the pillars of Hercules, the Gibraltar now grabbed by the foe of mankind, with gold and Tyrian purple to sell in Wexford at the fair of Carmen?” (*U* 12. 1248-50). Unknowingly, the Citizen paints a nostalgic past of transnational commerce that fostered communication with foreign people and the settlement of these foreigners on Irish shores. His somewhat admiring comment of the Tyrian purple, the most well known Phoenician good, implicitly welcomes the arrival of the Phoenician-Greek Ulysses i.e. the Irish-Israelite Bloom. The irony is that the Citizen does not recognize in Bloom’s Jewish background the common Semitic roots of the Phoenician he so much admires. Blinded by nationalist hatred and

⁹⁶ Letter to Carlo Linati (Letters I 146)

⁹⁷ Boysen, Benjamin “I call that Patriotism. Leopold Bloom and Cosmopolitan *Caritas*.” *The Comparatist* 32 (2008): 140-156.

seeing, at best, through a very narrow one-eyed perspective, the Citizen is not aware of the internal contradiction of his argument. In any case, Joyce does not construct a character that has to be condemned completely. His economic theory is the sound premise for a United States of Europe.⁹⁸

I would like to stress the specifically Habsburg genesis of Bloom. The formulation of the nation as “the same people living in the same place” seems to indicate a context in which ethnicity, language and religious beliefs are not priorities in the entitlement to citizenship and civic rights, a context that is highly suggestive of the kind of urban *Landespatriotismus* Joyce encountered in Habsburg Trieste. Bloom’s often-quoted formulation loses much of its alleged naïveté if this pre-national logic is taken into account. More than in “Cyclops,” a reader should look in the “Circe” episode for more telling clues of what Joyce has in mind. The depiction of reality in the “Circe” episode follows the medieval logic of the Carnival, intended as the temporary suspension of social conventions and the provisional state of contravention to normative standards. In “Cyclops” the verbal aggression of his adversaries kept in check the unfolding of Bloom’s ideas, which remain largely unexpressed. Only in “Circe” is Bloom able to articulate the repressed fantastic utopia of his subversive political theory, in which the regime of surveillance is suspended. In his hallucination, Bloom imagines himself as a social reformer, founder of a utopian city, the “new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future” (*U* 15. 1544-5). First, the capital Bloomusalem is obviously a portmanteau that combines the name of Bloom with the city of Jerusalem, a city that is sacred to

⁹⁸ In fact, the Citizen’s economic Europe resembles Svevo’s idea of a borderless European trading space, postulated at the same time at which Joyce’s novel is published. Joyce publishes *Ulysses* in February 1922, and Svevo works on his article, where he proposes an economic solution to European conflict, between 1919 and 1921.

Christians, Muslims and Jews. This inter-religious city is placed in the larger context of a New Ireland that retains its past legacy, hence the Latin denomination Hibernia. Bloom's Nova Hibernia represents a new stage in the evolution of Robert's "new Ireland," (*Exiles and Poems* 158) postulated in *Exiles*. Also, the formulation "Nova Hibernia of the future" displays a mirror-like structure to McCann's expression in *A Portrait* "the United States of the Europe of the future." Both expressions seem to be recurrently ringing echoes of Ferrero's prediction of a "future cosmopolitan society" (*L'Europa giovane* 119). This set of correspondences demonstrates a coherence and continuity of thought on these issues that span several of Joyce's works.

Bloom's description of his utopian city becomes more detailed. In his fantastic hallucination, Bloom is finally given the keys to the city. The following passage appears as Bloom's acceptance speech that functions also as a sort of political manifesto:

I stand for the reform of municipal morals and the plain ten commandments. New worlds for olds. Union of all, jew, moslem, and gentile. Three acres and a cow for all children of nature. Saloon motor hearses. Compulsory manual labour for all. All parks open to the public day and night. Electric dishscrubbers. Tuberculosis, lunacy, war and mendicancy must now cease. General amnesty, weekly carnival with masked licence, bonuses for all, esperanto the universal language with universal brotherhood. No more patriotism of barspongers and dropsical impostors. Free money, free rent, free love and a free lay church in a free lay state. (*U* 15.1685–93)

The passage strongly suggests that the urban model for Bloom's commitment to "reform municipal morals" is Joyce's experience of polyglot, multicultural and inter-religious Habsburg Trieste. Joyce witnessed the cohabitation of members of the three major monotheistic religions present in Europe in the city on the Adriatic. In Trieste the notion of *Municipalismo* corresponded to the conviction that the city could be home to different peoples and cultural traditions. Bloom's plea for "mixed races and mixed marriage" (*U*

15.1699) does not only reflect his own relationship with a Spanish-blooded Molly, but also hints at the hybridity of Trieste and at Svevo's marriage into a Catholic family. The adoption of Esperanto as the universal language of "Bloomusalem" again points at the Habsburg origin of this utopia. In chapter I, we have already discussed how Esperanto was the product of Habsburg anxiety over the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups, encouraged by political activists like W.T. Stead. Joyce encountered Esperanto in his stay in Trieste. The founding of the *Circolo Esperantista* in 1910 testifies to the great interest in the artificial language. The association had courses in the Civica Scuola on via Giotti, a school where Joyce also held lessons. Also, the newspapers in Trieste showed an interest in Esperanto (McCourt 262). In "Eumaeus" Bloom explains to Stephen his idea on peaceful living in a multiethnic and multilingual community. Bloom's ideas bear a striking resemblance to Zamenhof's rationale behind the effort to create an artificial international language to prevent ethnic hatred:

I resent violence and intolerance in any shape and form. It never reaches anything or stops anything. A revolution must come on the due instalments plan. It's a patent absurdity on the face of it to hate people because they live round the corner and speak another vernacular, in the next house so to speak. (*U* 16. 1101-3)

Pacifism, acceptance of diversity, and an anti-colonial stance constitute the basis for the Europeanism of the culturally hybrid Bloom. The father-son atonement between Stephen and Bloom in "Ithaca" is possible inasmuch as they share a like-minded European identity: "Both preferred a continental to an insular manner of life, a cisatlantic to a transatlantic place of residence" (*U* 17.21). The two share a common "disbelief in many orthodox religious, national, social and ethical doctrines" (*U* 17.24-25). But while Stephen is the product of an Irish Europe, Bloom's hybridity is clearly the product of an

ethnic Habsburg Europeanism. The “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses* provides a variegated genealogy for Bloom:

What reminiscence had he of Rudolph Bloom (deceased)?

Rudolph Bloom (deceased) narrated to his son Leopold Bloom (aged 6) a retrospective arrangement of migrations and settlements in and between Dublin, London, Florence, Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Szombathely, with statements of satisfaction (his grandfather having seen Maria Theresa, empress of Austria, queen of Hungary), with commercial advice (having taken care of pence, the pounds having taken care of themselves). Leopold Bloom (aged 6) had accompanied these narrations by constant consultation of a geographical map of Europe (political) and by suggestions for the establishments of affiliated business premises in the various centres mentioned. (*U* 17.1905-15)

Bloom’s Austro-Hungarian ancestry makes him an embodiment of a *homo europaeus habsburgensis* in Irish exile. The premature death of Bloom’s only son Rudy signifies that there is “none now to be for Leopold, what Leopold was for Rudolph” (*U* 14.1076-77). Leopold and Rudolph are very typical names in the Habsburg dynasty. The most prominent are Rudolph I of Germany (1218-1291), and the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705). The name Leopold is especially significant in the Habsburg family since one major branch is also known as the Leopoldine line, a branch that comprised Dukes of Styria, Tyrol, and Carinthia, this former region being a province adjacent to the Italian possessions of the Empire.⁹⁹ Leopold I in particular was known for his tolerant policy towards the Jewish minority in Trieste, a circumstance that might have inspired Joyce to name Bloom after the Habsburg emperor. In criticism F.K. Stanzel has offered invaluable contributions to Bloom’s European background, as for instance in his “All Europe Contributed to the Making of Bloom: New Light on Leopold Bloom’s

⁹⁹ For a lengthier discussion of the role of the Habsburg Empire in *Ulysses* see Ungar, Andreas. *Joyce’s Ulysses as National Epic. Epic Mimesis and the Political History of the Nation State*. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2002.

Ancestors.”¹⁰⁰ I take issue, however, with the framing of European Bloom through Joseph Conrad’s quote that describes Kurtz’s origin. In Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator Marlow describes the personality of Kurtz as follows: “His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz” (61). Stanzel’s reference is misleading, because it incorrectly places the pacifist and anti-colonial Bloom in the same category of Conrad’s imperialist Kurtz.

In the construction of Bloom, the Irishman with a Hungarian background, Joyce was drawing a parallel between Ireland’s colonial status in the British Empire and the destiny of Hungary within the Habsburg Empire. A book published by Arthur Griffith in 1904 entitled *The Resurrection of Hungary* encouraged the Irish to follow the example of Hungary, which in 1867 had achieved a high degree autonomy in the Habsburg Empire thanks to a constitutional reform known as the *Ausgleich* (or Compromise). In Griffith’s opinion, the Hungarian reform should have worked as a model for the Irish Home Rule, and should have dispelled, in addition, any scepticism about the political feasibility of such autonomy. Specifically, Griffith suggested the creation of a dual monarchy, called the “Anglo-Irish Empire,” a name explicitly recalling the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Already in *Stephen Hero*, Joyce thematized this contemporary discussion: “A glowing example was to be found for Ireland in the case of Hungary, an example, as these patriots imagined, of a long-suffering minority, entitled by every right of race and justice to a separate freedom, finally emancipating itself” (60). In *A Portrait*, Stephen will be attracted to a Europe of nations that share Ireland’s same colonial history. Looking at the clouds in the sky, he will follow the path of a cloud formation: “They [the clouds] were

¹⁰⁰ Stanzel, F.K. “All Europe Contributed to the Making of Bloom: New Light on Leopold Bloom’s Ancestors” *James Joyce Quarterly* 32 (Spring and Summer 1995): 619-30. Print.

voyaging across the deserts of the sky, a host of nomads on the march, voyaging high over Ireland, westward bound. The Europe they had come from lay out there beyond the Irish Sea, Europe of strange tongues and valleyed and woodbegirt and citadelled and of entrenched and marshalled races” (172). Hungary was one of these “marshalled races” and the term “citadelled” suggests an urban siege, like the occupation of Budapest – and also of Trieste – by the Austrian Empire. The origin of Bloom’s Irish-Hungarian identity is also grounded in this analogy between Ireland’s aspiration to Home Rule and Magyar autonomy within the Habsburg Empire.¹⁰¹

In the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen is described as a person “distrusting acquacities of thought and language” (*U* 17.240). Here Stephen’s distrust seems to mirror Joyce’s own discomfort with the English language since for the occasion the author coined a neologism like “acquacities.” Speaking of Joyce and his distrust in language, Declan Kiberd claims in his compelling introduction to the 1992 Penguin edition of *Ulysses*: “Joyce’s distrust of written English might have been predicted of a man who grew up in an essentially oral culture, but it had its source in his sense of trauma at the loss, in most parts of Ireland through the nineteenth century, of the native language” (37). Kiberd places Joyce within an Irish literary tradition that has to come to terms with the collective traumatic experience originating in the loss of the native Irish Gaelic. We have already seen in *A Portrait* how Stephen struggles with English, a language that he does not consider his own. At the same time, Stephen, like Joyce, does not speak Irish. But if Joyce’s coining of a neologism in the face of Stephen’s distrust in language is an

¹⁰¹ Bloom’s utopian vision of a new Ireland disproves Enda Duffy’s argument in her *Subaltern Ulysses*, where the critic claims that “we might infer that Joyce’s refusal at the end of *Ulysses* to postulate a new community in solidarity was prescient about the actual conditions in the independent postcolonial state that was founded after the treaty of 1921” (173). A new Irish community in solidarity, albeit utopian, is postulated in Bloom’s carnivalesque hallucination.

indication of the author's general response to an Irish cultural aphasia, one can only infer that Joyce's linguistic creativity was a conscious reaction to the traumatic loss of Irish. Stephen's mission at the end of *A Portrait* to "forge the uncreated conscious of [his] race" might be understood as a linguistic endeavor. In the mythological condensation at work here, the protagonist of the novel does not appear solely as the Christian hero Stephen and the artificer Dedalus, but also as Hephaestus in the guise of a wordsmith.

At this point, let me suggest that the neologizing language of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's invention of an "intimate and poetic Esperanto" (Melchori 151), originates from the need to come to terms with what Kiberd describes as the Irish trauma of having lost the native language. Joyce's invention of his own language is an intimate Esperanto and thus also the language of a future European utopia that compensates the loss of language. Lucia Boldrini, in her excellent book *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations*, argues that Joyce was inspired by Dante's linguistic creation that later laid the foundations for modern Italian. The critic suggests that after the Babelian *Ulysses*, Joyce leads us into a post-Babelian realm, as Boldrini defines *Finnegans Wake*. The confusion of Babel originated from the division of languages. The language of the *Wake* is post-Babelian inasmuch as it tends to be a synthesis of languages. The reverse movement from division to synthesis is suggested in the question "And shall not Babel be with Lebab?" (*FW* 258.13) A theoretical model for the Wakean language is the portmanteau that needs to be unpacked, the multiple meanings being unfolded like clothes. Joyce himself suggested he was "working in layers" (quoted in Ellmann 559). Nevertheless, Stephen's forging suggests a different interpretative model for the structural organization of Joyce's linguistic creation in the *Wake*. In chapter VII of Part I Shem the Penman is accused by

his brother Shaun of being a “forger,” in the sense of “counterfeiter.” The term forger also suggests a worker at a furnace, an echo of Stephen’s image as a wordsmith.

Hephaestus appears in the *Wake* in the guise of his Roman counterpart Vulcan. Joyce makes the association between a volcano as the working site of a blacksmith and literary activity in the phrase “Ethna Prettyplume” (*FW* 318.12), a personification of Sicily’s volcano Mt. Aetna, whose epithet combines aesthetics and writing. This notion of writing as forging implies the fusion of meanings, and a re-structuring of morphology, in which a polyglot and alchemic amalgamation blurs morphological barriers, integrating morphemic components to be fused into semantic alloys. I am suggesting that a reading, which sees the various linguistic components as melted and amalgamated, better suits the notion that the idiom of the *Wake* is a European transnational language. The interpretation that considers the language in the *Wake* as a sort of alchemical writing stresses the indivisible nature of polyglot verbal units; they are seen as indissoluble phonemic, morphological and semantic entities. Applying the metaphor of alloy metal to the language of the *Wake* is useful in the understanding of this language as an intrinsically cross-cultural hybrid, whose components cannot be taken apart without necessarily dissolving the entire structure.

In the light of this interpretation, it becomes clear that besides representing a personal compensation for the linguistic loss of Irish Gaelic, the language of *Finnegans Wake* is the idiom of Joyce’s anticolonial conception of Europe. In *Finnegans Wake* Europe is realized linguistically. The *Wake*’s “pan-European Esperanto” is a “celtelleneteutoslavzendlatinsoundscrip” (*FW* 219.17), a language that ideally embraces Indo-European languages such as Celtic, Hellenic, Teutonic, Slavic, Zend, Latin, and

Sanskrit. The roots for this language are grounded in Trieste. At the time of Joyce's sojourn, the languages spoken in Habsburg Trieste included most of the idioms spoken in the empire (Italian, German, Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian, Czech) along with languages spoken in the adjacent Ottoman Empire (Turkish, Armenian, Greek).¹⁰² Strong commercial ties with the Mediterranean basin brought Spanish, Sicilian and Maltese into the city. English, whose importance as an international language of trade was growing, was spoken as well. The local dialect *Triestino* became a sort of *lingua franca* among the diverse populations that inhabited the city. This meant that the dialect was spoken by a large number of non-native speakers, who pronounced it with different accents, and intonations, adding a rich and colourful collection of semantic borrowings from their respective mother tongues. McCourt describes the local dialect of Trieste as "a living encyclopaedia of the cultures, nations and languages that had been assimilated in the city" (52). It is easy to understand how polyglot Joyce was struck by the linguistic wealth in the city. The critic further suggests that the international language of *Finnegans Wake* is "an exaggerated, exploded version of *Triestino* ... which itself was used and misused, understood, half-understood, sometimes misunderstood at all" (McCourt 52-3). In the *Wake*, we find an echo of this Triestine linguistic "chaosmos" (*FW* 118. 21) in the description of "intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators" (*FW* 118.25-26) who speak a language that is a "variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns" (*FW* 118.26-28). In the polyglot situation of Trieste, Italian constituted the substratum. Likewise, English remains the

¹⁰² Joyce will comment on their presence in Trieste in the *Wake*: "not even the Turk, ungreevable in purscent of the armenable" (*FW* 181.22-3)

primary language of the *Wake*, onto which the author forces different languages and accents.

This responds to a precise choice of counter-colonizing the English language. When Joyce described his language experiments to others, his word choice usually falls into the semantic field pertaining to empire and warfare. In a letter dated 11 November 1925 to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce wrote: “What the language will look like when I have finished I don’t know. But having declared war I shall go on *jusqu’au bout*” (Letters I, 237). This shows that already at an early stage of his project Joyce considered his linguistic enterprise as a declaration of war. In the *Wake* several passages suggest a belligerent use of language: “The war is in words” (FW 98.34-35) and “tong warfare” (FW 177.05). The results of this openly declared war on the English language varied in time. Later, in a letter to Max Eastman, Joyce used a more reassuring tone: “They really needn’t worry and scold so much. I’ll give them back their English language. I’m not destroying it for good” (quoted in Ellmann 559). Once again, Joyce stresses the perceived alterity of English that remains *their* language, relinquishing any kind of ownership or deep emotional attachment to it. The belligerent vocabulary is still crucial to Joyce’s description. He promises not to destroy it completely. Ellmann also reports a conversation between Joyce and John Eglinton, in which the Irish author said: “I write in that way simply because it comes naturally to me to do so, and I don’t care if the whole thing crumbles when I have done with it” (quoted in Ellmann 559). What is remarkable here is the use of the term “crumble,” which, with an expressly anticolonial stance, suggests the crumbling of an empire. The glottopolitical matrix of this language is recognized also in criticism. Laurent Milesi claims that Joyce’s multilingual literary

language, his own “artificial tongue with a natural curl” (*FW* 169.15-16) sets an “aesthetic standard alongside a ‘political’ one” (Milesi 22), suggesting that what Esperanto and Volapük performed at a political level, Joyce’s polyglot literary language achieves in the domain of literature.

The subversive vehemence of Joyce’s language functions in parallel fashion to Svevo’s epistemology of the vernacular that undermines Italian cultural nationalism. In *Finnegans Wake* this epistemology of the vernacular through which Joyce’s European transnational style subverts English cultural hegemony shifts to become an “epistlemadethemology” (*FW* 374.17) of the “vermicular” (*FW* 82.12). The first term turns the concept of epistemology into an “epistle-made theology,” i.e. a religious philosophy based on letters, doubtless an allusion to Anna Livia Plurabelle’s letter. In his *Joyce’s Book of the Dark* John Bishop reads in the expression an indication of the “collapse of representational epistemologies” substituted by a “dark” epistemology, one in which “the status of language and letters (‘epistles’) will unrelentingly be ‘made [a] theme’” (18). The term also suggests an internal destabilization carried on by a *Made*, a German word indicating a maggot or the larval stage of an insect. If we accept this other semantic dimension, one can read the term as suggestive of an epistle that is hollowed out from the inside by a wood-boring larva. The maggot assumes the function of a Trojan horse that destroys the host from within. This internal eating of the maggot is paralleled by the vermicular, a term that turns the regional dialect of a vernacular into a worm-like language.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ “the same man (or a different and younger him of the same ham) asked in the vermicular” (*FW* 82.11-2)

Waking Europa: Joyce, Ferrero and the Metamorphosis of Irish History

In the “pre-history of Ireland,” an early section of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce compiles a Hiberno-Punic mythography through which he rewrites the rape of Phoenician Europa as told by Ovid. Joyce believed that the Irish descended from Phoenician merchants, a conviction that predisposed him to the early works of the Italian historian Guglielmo Ferrero. Ferrero’s discussion of trading habits and sexual mores of the ancient Mediterranean population provided Joyce with historical insight upon which the author would later elaborate in the reconstruction of a nebulous Irish past. The key to glossing the “annals passage” is Joyce’s historic parallel between the Roman colonization of Phoenicia and the English colonization of Ireland. The cultural politics of this poetic history aims at the separation of Ireland from the Anglo-Saxon colonizer and its placement within the context of a future United States of Europe.

The influence that the Italian historian Guglielmo Ferrero (1871–1942) exerted on James Joyce has not been adequately assessed. This unfortunate state of affairs is largely due to the fact that Ferrero, once an internationally known and respected intellectual, today remains a marginal, non–canonical figure. The cultural and political ostracism of the Fascist regime consigned the liberal Ferrero to a historiographic oblivion from which he still needs to be rescued. Another reason why we have not fully appreciated Ferrero’s influence on Joyce is that the 1897 *Europa giovane* – for Joyce a crucial text he read with great interest – was reprinted in a very few successive editions and has never been translated into English. The initial success of Ferrero’s comparative study of European mores was soon overshadowed by his more mature works such as *Il Militarismo* (1898) and the monumental *Grandezza e Decadenza di Roma* (1902–1906). Critics have

associated Ferrero with Joyce's positions on contemporary issues such as anti-Semitism, militarism and socialism, shedding light on his imprint in *Dubliners*, *A Portrait* and the construction of Bloom in *Ulysses*. While illuminating the relationship between Ferrero and Joyce, critics have, however, generally failed to register at least two aspects: Ferrero's influence on Joyce as a classical historian and his background presence in *Finnegans Wake*. Ferrero's influence was not only immediate but also continuous throughout the literary activity of the Irish writer. *L'Europa giovane*, in particular, stimulated in Joyce an enduring reflection about what place Ireland should occupy in a modern Europe.

I argue that Joyce, combining Ferrero's association between militarism and sexual politics with the trope of a young Europe, the rape of Europa as told by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, moulding Jupiter's ethnic rape of the Phoenician maid into a foundational myth for Ireland. In establishing a parallel between the Roman colonization of Phoenicia and the English colonization of Ireland, Joyce realizes the quirky ethno-linguistic premise of his 1907 lecture "Ireland: Island of Saint and Sages," in which he argued that the Irish descended from Phoenician settlers. Joyce's poetic rewriting of Irish history exploits the intrinsic colonial subtext underlying the tale of Europa's rape. By means of this Hiberno-Punic mythography Joyce separates Ireland from the connection with the British Empire and places Irish identity in a wider European context, one of "Iro-European ascendances" (*FW* 37.26). First, I will show how Ferrero's discussions of Phoenician history informed Joyce's reception of the ancient population. Subsequently, my analysis will shift to Ferrero's *L'Europa giovane*. I then turn to Ovid's rape of

Phoenician Europa, and its textual metamorphosis in the *Wake*, where the episode reappears as a Viconian *ricorso* in the “annals passage” (*FW* 13.33–14.15).

Joyce was an enthusiastic reader of Ferrero,¹⁰⁴ who was reaching his peak in popularity around the turn of the century. As a young and brilliant student, Ferrero was taken under the wing of Cesare Lombroso, whose daughter Gina he eventually married. Joyce became familiar with Ferrero’s works in Habsburg Trieste, where the historian gave public lectures and published in the local newspaper.¹⁰⁵ Despite his popularity in the Adriatic city, where Ferrero enjoyed the friendship of many leading intellectuals including Silvio Benco and Umberto Saba, the historian caused much controversy in the recently proclaimed Italian kingdom. His early works earned him a reputation, but drew much pugnacious criticism in conservative circles. In their judgments Italian intellectuals were quite unforgiving of Ferrero’s critical attitude towards historical figures who were traditionally celebrated as embodiments of political and national virtues. Julius Caesar, for instance, was in the eyes of Ferrero more of a Machiavellian opportunist and the demolisher of a republican tradition than a noble and shrewd statesman. Ferrero drew a parallel between the socio-cultural and political decadence of the Roman Empire and the contemporary crisis of Italian liberalism. The departure from traditional interpretations of

¹⁰⁴ The few critical contributions on Joyce and *L’Europa giovane* that are available have helped a great deal in the understanding of how the work influenced the Irish writer. Critics that have elucidated Ferrero’s role in Joyce are Manganiello, Humphreys, Spoo, Scholes and McCourt. While Manganiello and Humphreys both individuate the presence of Ferrero in the textual genesis of *Ulysses* and especially in the Jewish Bloom, the critics disagree on one particular aspect. Manganiello sees in *L’Europa giovane* a crucial source for “Two Gallants,” whereas Humphreys believes that Ferrero’s *Il Militarismo* should be considered the most likely resource for the short story. Spoo agrees with Manganiello, adding to the corpus of texts directly influenced by Joyce’s reading of *L’Europa giovane* another story contained in *Dubliners*, namely “A Little Cloud.” Spoo suggests that Joyce read *L’Europa giovane* twice: a first and more superficial reading in late 1905 or early 1906 and a deeper engagement in November of 1906.

¹⁰⁵ During Joyce’s stay in Trieste, Ferrero is mentioned several times in the author’s letters. The first time Joyce mentions the historian is in his letter of 5 May 1906 to the unwilling publisher Grant Richards to explain the rationale behind the story “Two Gallants.” A few months later, in a letter dated 13 November 1906, Joyce informs his brother Stanislaus that he had “just read” (128) Ferrero’s history of Rome and his *Europa giovane*.

history was grounded in a novel methodological approach. He believed that the positivist impulse to collect and categorize data necessitated answering precisely formulated research questions and guiding hypotheses that would bestow meaning upon an otherwise dry taxonomic classification of unrelated historical events. The historian's research agenda had to be grounded in contemporary problems, since only the point of view of the present could offer a functional key of interpretation for history. According to Ferrero's philosophy of history, the object of study should not be the analysis of distinct episodes but the organic concatenation of these very events. This historiographic epistemology required an interdisciplinary approach, according to which the synergy of political, economic and social factors could provide a deeper understanding of historical transformations.

In these years Ferrero believed that Italy, in sharp contrast to the development of industrial capitalism in northern Europe, was still paralyzed by the socio-political quagmire of "Caesarism," by which he meant a corrupt society founded upon militarism and an agricultural economy. Economic systems played a significant role in Ferrero's analysis of past and present, to the extent that even his pacifism was informed by economic considerations. For the young and at this point somewhat naïve historian, militarism was a phenomenon occurring mainly in ancient and pre-industrial societies, in which waging war constituted a means of accruing wealth. With the rise of industrialism, Ferrero argued, capital tended to be channeled toward investments useful for the multiplication and improvement of technological equipment. Warfare was thus an anachronistic remnant that would disappear with industrial development.

Ferrero's immediate success was accompanied by manifold criticism. In the eyes of his critics, Ferrero's stylistic grace and narrative talent, necessary tools in his reconstruction of past events, cast doubt on the scientific rigor of his work. Methodological differences aside, Ferrero's detractors were motivated by political reasons. Leaning towards socialism at the beginning of his career, Ferrero harshly criticized the colonial aggressiveness of the governments of the conservative Crispi and their handling of the "southern question." More generally, Ferrero's open criticism of national problems, his unflattering depiction of Italy and his admiration of foreign role models were all positions that were difficult to accept in a country that had gained independence a few decades before. Years later the proposal to institute a Chair in Philosophy of History at the University of Rome, to be occupied by Ferrero, was adamantly opposed by many intellectuals, amongst whom famously figured no less than Benedetto Croce. After the advent of Fascism, Ferrero's condemnation of Latin decadence, together with his internationalism, earned him the status of *persona non grata* among officials of the regime. Teaching history at a university was possible only abroad: in 1929 Ferrero accepted a professorship in Geneva. He died in his Swiss exile in 1942.

By the time Joyce was lecturing at the Università Popolare in Trieste, he might not have read Ferrero's massive five-volume history of Rome in its entirety, but certainly significant portions of it. In his lecture on Irish saints and sages Joyce's mention of Ferrero's historical revisionism is a clear attempt to capture the audience's benevolence: "Ferrero now tells us that the discoveries of these good German professors, as far as concerns the ancient history of the Roman republic and of the Roman empire, are mistaken from beginning to the end, or almost" (*Occasional* 109). With a still somewhat

shaky Italian, Joyce was hoping to predispose an audience receptive to Ferrero. In fact, while Charles Vallancey's essay on the Phoenician origin of the Irish mainly informed Joyce's linguistic ethnography,¹⁰⁶ Ferrero provided a fitting methodological paradigm. Joyce embraced a revisionist history of the ancient world claiming, just a few lines down from his reference to Ferrero, a linguistic, ethnic and cultural continuity between the Phoenicians and the Irish:

This language [Irish] is eastern in origin and has been identified by many philologists with the ancient language of the Phoenicians, the discoverers, according to historians, of commerce and navigation. With their monopoly over the sea, this adventurous people established a civilization in Ireland, which was in decline and had almost disappeared before the first Greek historian took up his quill. It jealously guarded the secrets of its science, and the first mention of the island of Ireland in foreign literature is to be found in a Greek poem of the fifth century before Christ in which the historian reiterates the Phoenician tradition. (*Occasional* 110)

Reminding his audience that the Phoenicians are credited with the invention of the alphabet, a writing system later adopted by the Greeks, Joyce asserts Ireland's long-lost cultural prestige with this "Orientalist" genealogy.¹⁰⁷ However peculiar this Hiberno-Punic ethnography may sound today, the notion of a Phoenician origin represented an important *topos* in the cultural politics of Irish Revivalists, invested in demonstrating ethnic otherness and cultural superiority with respect to the English colonizer. The alleged Phoenician lineage of the Irish clearly predisposed Joyce to Ferrero, whose texts offered historical insights into Phoenician mores. We have usually looked at Victor Bérard's *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee* as the main source for Joyce's knowledge of the Phoenicians. The close association between Ferrero's revisionism and Joyce's discussion

¹⁰⁶ I am referring to Charles Vallancey's *An Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish Language, being a Collation of the Irish with the Punic Languages* from 1772.

¹⁰⁷ For a recent discussion of Joyce and the Phoenicians, see Cullingford. She offers a rich and useful account of the Phoenician presence in Joyce, focusing on Joyce's 1907 essay, *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*.

of the Phoenicians, however, suggests that Ferrero contributed substantially to Joyce's knowledge of the ancient population. As is well known, Bérard's work was influential in Joyce's construction of a modern Phoenician Odysseus. In parallel fashion, Ferrero provides Joyce with the interpretative coordinates for another Phoenician character, young Europa.

Ferrero never wrote a dedicated monograph about the Phoenicians, but he believed that the origin of Western civilization was to be found not only in the Greco-Roman tradition, but in the Phoenician thalassocracy as well. The Punic wars of Rome, waged against the Phoenician colony Carthage, occupied an important section of Ferrero's historical inquiry. Economic and cultural exchange between the two populations dated back to early Roman history. In the first volume of *Grandezza e Decadenza di Roma*, Ferrero maintains that early Roman trade was exclusively entertained with the neighboring Etruscans and the Phoenicians: "Perciò Roma comprava poco fuori: Ceramiche per le costruzioni pubbliche e metalli in Etruria; ninnoli artistici, punici o fenici; gingilli di avorio; profumi per i funerali e porpore per gli abiti da cerimonia dei magistrati; qualche schiavo" (*Grandezza* I, 4) ["It was little enough, therefore, that Rome required to buy from abroad: Terracottas for the decoration of her public buildings and some imports of metal came in from Etruria, Phoenicia and Carthage, besides ivory work and ornaments, perfumes for funerals, purple for the ceremonial robes of the magistrates, and a few slaves" (*Greatness* I, 3)]. In *Ancient Rome and Modern America: a Comparative Study of Morals and Manners*, Ferrero continued to underscore the fundamental role of the Phoenician contribution to the Western world. In his comparison between antiquity and modernity, the Italian historian maintains that

together with Roman militarism, Christian morality and Greek philosophy, the Phoenician economy is one of the four founding pillars of Western civilization: “In war, we fight like the Romans, and in peace, we turn our eyes away from bloody spectacles. We should hold the gladiatorial games in no whit less horror than the most pious of Christian monks. We trade like the Phoenicians and we love knowledge like the Greeks” (112). Already in the much earlier *Il Militarismo*, which Susan Humphreys identifies as a main source for Joyce’s works, Ferrero attributes to Phoenician trade a primary role in ancient Mediterranean civilizations:

Il mercante fenicio sbarca sulla costa greca; trae dalla nave molte mercanzie del suo paese e le espone sulla spiaggia: ecco allora dai villaggi vicini vengono donne e fanciulle a guardare, e intorno ai campioni di una industria più raffinata i primi bisogni di un lusso più eletto nascono negli spiriti semplici dei barbari. (*Il Militarismo* 421)

The Phoenician merchants landed on the Greek shores, took from their ships the merchandise of their country, and exhibited it; then from the neighboring villages came troops of women and girls to gaze at them, and through these samples of a more refined industry, the desire for more luxurious things took birth in the minds of the barbarians. (*Militarism* 299)

The Phoenicians were a Western Semitic maritime tribe, related to the Jews, and famous for their commercial activities in the Mediterranean. Ferrero discusses the establishment of colonies and trading posts, adding that, upon the merchants’ arrival, the first to inspect the foreign goods are troops of women and girls who develop a “desire” for these luxury items. The semantic fields of militaristic language and sexual desire overlap in Ferrero’s description. Temptation and satisfaction of desire continue to frame this commercial transaction. The display of exotic goods produces an inexorable drive to purchase: “poi tutti se ne sono invogliati e hanno comperato, credendo di soddisfare senza danno un desiderio innocente. Ma il sacco del mercante era inesauribile; ogni

giorno ne usciva qualche cosa nuova, qualche sorpresa più strana, e intorno ai nuovi oggetti le voglie resistevano sempre meno alle tentazioni rinnovate” (*Il Militarismo* 422) [“until all bought a specimen, thinking that they thus satisfied an innocent desire. But the merchant’s treasure–bag was inexhaustible. Every day he produced thence some new object, and the temptation to indulge in them grew ever stronger” (*Militarism* 300)]. To Ferrero, female sexual desire appeared as an economic drive regulating the contacts among different populations in the ancient world.

The association between Phoenician sexual mores and ancient politics had occupied Ferrero’s mind since the beginnings of his career. In Cesare Lombroso’s seminal *La donna delinquente: la prostituta e la donna normale*, first published in 1893, Ferrero is listed as the co–author.¹⁰⁸ In their interdisciplinary approach, Lombroso and Ferrero divided up research topics according to their respective competence and areas of specialization. Lombroso delineated the theoretical framework, grounded in psychiatry and anthropology, whereas Ferrero was responsible for the historic and juridical ramifications of their argument.¹⁰⁹ In their discussion of female criminology and prostitution, the authors make an excursus into what they believe is the historical background of their object of investigation. Ancient sexual customs entailed a tripartite socio–behavioral pattern, articulated in secular, hospitable and sacred prostitution. The two latter forms of prostitution were a phenomenon that could be observed in Phoenician culture:

Secondo Erodoto, tra i Babilonesi le donne nate nel paese erano obbligate, una volta almeno nella vita, ad andare al tempio di Venere, ed ivi abbandonarsi a uno straniero; né potevano tornarsene a casa se prima qualche forestiero non avesse

¹⁰⁸ As a promising but inexperienced intellectual, Ferrero was little more than a research assistant to the more experienced Lombroso.

¹⁰⁹ For the division of their research topics, see Calloni.

loro gettato danaro sulle ginocchia e non le avesse invitate al coito fuori del luogo sacro: questo danaro diventava sacro.

Tra i Fenici esisteva la prostituzione ospitale e sacra; essi, secondo le affermazioni di Eusebio, prostituivano le figliuole vergini ai forestieri a maggior gloria dell'ospitalità. (*Donna delinquente* 220-21)

According to Herodotus, Babylonian women were obligated to go at least once to the temple of Venus and abandon themselves to a stranger; they were forbidden to return home until a foreigner had thrown coins in their laps and invited them to have intercourse outside the holy place. This money became sacred.

The Phoenicians practiced both hospitable and sacred prostitution. According to Eusebio, they prostituted their virgin daughters to foreigners to demonstrate their hospitality. (*Criminal Woman* 102)

Given Ferrero's training as a classical historian and his specific interest in Phoenician history, this passage can without any doubt be attributed to his pen. Ferrero's historical contribution to Lombroso's study in criminology must not have escaped Joyce, always eager to acquaint himself with Phoenician lore. Motivated by a keen interest in the history of sexuality and sexual degeneracy, Joyce was familiar with Lombroso's theories, which partially intersected with Ferrero's early positions. In a letter dated 19 August 1906, written to his brother Stanislaus, Joyce indicates that he was aware of this close association between Lombroso and Ferrero. At the time Joyce was working as a foreign correspondent in a bank in Rome and, while commenting on his unhappy residency in the Italian capital, recounts an incident in the office: "I absorbed the attention of the three clerks in my office a few days ago by a socialistic outburst. One of them is a German and he was ridiculing Lombrosianism and antimilitarism. ... I think he was surprised not to find an ally in an Inglese" (*SL* 97). Joyce is clearly defending the positions of Lombroso in close association with Ferrero's positions.

Ferrero would later develop further this association between sexuality and militarism in *L'Europa giovane*. In his study, the Italian historian maintained that the

male tradition of belligerent nationalism envisions sexual encounters as dominated by brutal violence and conquest instead of the courteous gallantry expected by the female counterpart. Vincent Cheng and Dominic Manganiello have shown how Joyce employed these ideas in *Dubliners*, particularly in “Two Gallants” and “The Dead.” In addition, however, Ferrero maintains that this connection between sex and war is particularly evident in the ancient world, where one can observe in the sexual politics of rape a deep analogy to the imperial politics of conquest. Examples in classical literature, Ferrero believes, support this argument. The narrative nuclei of both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* associate sexual violence with colonialism. The rape of Helen carries military and colonial implications, as it becomes the reason (or excuse) for Greeks and Trojans to wage war against each other. The quarrel over Briseis between Agamemnon and Achilles responds to the same logic. By the same token, when Odysseus finally returns to Ithaca, he has to fight the suitors, who intend to usurp his nuptial bed along with his throne.

Besides Joyce’s interest in the interlocking dynamics of sexual violence and colonial politics, the Irish author paid particular attention to Ferrero’s other lines of argumentation. The Italian historian discussed Irish affairs, especially the case of Parnell, within a larger, European context. Ferrero saw an affinity between Italian and Irish emigration patterns (*L’Europa* 116), an affinity that complemented Joyce’s opinion about similarities between the Irish claim to independence and Irredentism in Trieste. Ferrero was a Dreyfusard and his pages on anti-Semitism were conceived as an intervention in the debates around the *Affaire*. Joyce was struck by Ferrero’s examination of Jewish identity contributing to a European cultural transnationalism and the implicit assumption

that anti-Semitic hatred was one of the factors that made a more just Europe realizable only in the future.

While Ferrero's influence is recognized in *Ulysses*,¹¹⁰ traces of *L'Europa giovane* in *Finnegans Wake* are generally not acknowledged. And yet, a passage in the first chapter of Ferrero's study exhibits a paradigmatic character for the multilingual explosions in the *Wake*. Ferrero starts his book with the unmistakable imprint of a Nietzschean analysis. He claims that the success of many great statesmen – such as Napoleon, Parnell and Bismarck – is to be found in what he calls the “law of singularity” (5). According to Ferrero, the moral and intellectual character of these leaders is different from that of the people they govern. As an example illustrating this theory, Ferrero argues that one of the reasons for this difference was the leaders' mixed ethnic origin. European leadership is thus identified with Nietzsche's mixed race, the “good European.” In particular, the “intellectual exoticism” (17) of Bismarck's writing style strikes Ferrero:

E così questo fanatico patriota tedesco non fu mai, in lingua, un purista; anzi egli mostra una inclinazione fortissima all'esotismo filologico, a mescolare il linguaggio di motti e frasi straniere, specialmente francesi, non trovando spesso nella lingua patria l'espressione acconcia per il suo nervoso e preciso pensiero. (*L'Europa* 17-18)

Thus, this fanatic German patriot was never, with respects to language, a purist. On the contrary, he shows a strong inclination to philological exoticism, mixing his language with foreign mottos and phrases, especially French, since he often does not find in his own language a suitable expression for his nervous and clear-cut thought. (My translation)

Let me suggest that this passage may have functioned as a programmatic incipit for the “philological exoticism” and multilingual structure of the *Wake*.¹¹¹ It is indeed

¹¹⁰ Joyce elaborated the vital role the Jewish community played in the definition of European identity later in the construction of Bloom.

¹¹¹ Joyce was an extremely attentive reader of Ferrero's work. Several critics have attested to Joyce's close reading and creative use of Ferrero's text. Spoo claims that the title of “A Little Cloud” in *Dubliners* is

very likely that Joyce's own mixing of different languages, the constant search for the *mot juste*, reflecting the expressive inadequacy of the very English language in which the author is writing, owes much to Ferrero's analysis of Bismarck's style. Although Joyce did not identify with the Prussian statesman, the rhetorical strengths Ferrero ascribed to Bismarck must have appealed to Joyce. The question of Joyce's polyglot pastiche, I believe, needs to be addressed in the context of the writer's formative years in Trieste. I accept McCourt's idea that Trieste's multifaceted dialect struck polyglot Joyce, and would add that Ferrero's passage offered the writer an aesthetic and linguistic program to be realized in the *Wake*.

In addition, one should not overlook the pregnant title of Ferrero's study that carries further political implications. Ferrero's *Europa giovane* echoes Giuseppe Mazzini's 1834 movement *Giovine Europa*, in a gesture that represents an implicit rehabilitation of the nineteenth-century intellectual and his advocacy for a European political unification. After the proclamation of the Italian kingdom in 1861, Mazzini's democratic republicanism bequeathed monarchic post-unification Italy with an uneasy legacy. Despite his zealous patriotism and indefatigable propaganda Mazzini was branded an unwelcome antagonist, one to be excluded from the secular pantheon of Italy's founding figures. Both Mazzini and Ferrero were advocates for a future Europe of federated democracies, and their allusion to the young Europe of mythology is suggestive of an audacious political project, albeit one still in its infancy.

much indebted to Ferrero's somewhat whimsical expression "una piccola nuvoletta" used by the Italian historian in his book (Spoo, "Nuvoletta" 405). Scholes even goes so far as to maintain that Stephen's intention to "forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race" is an almost literal translation of a passage in *L'Europa giovane* (Scholes 101).

In *Finnegans Wake* young Europe embodies one of the many semantically cloaked and morphologically blurred *dramatis personae* of the narration. Ferrero's discussion of the interconnection between sexual violence and colonial conquest in *L'Europa giovane* informs Joyce's construction of the maiden. At the very inception of the work, the semantic coordinates of young Europe oscillate between geographic expression and fictional character. The opening lines introduce a seafaring Tristan, embarked upon a quest of dubious romance and warfare: "Sir Tristam, violer d'amores, fr'over the short sea, had passencore rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war" (*FW* 3.4-6). Tristan's epithet is indicative of an amorous violator. Sexual violence is also suggested in the image of a recurrent (German *wieder*) wielding of a penis, the male member brandished like a sword in battle. The *Wake* constantly envisions the human body as an inscribable map, which makes it possible to read "Europe Minor" as a geographic expression and its own personification at the same time. Europa's oscillation between onomastics and geography appears to be analogous to Homeric Greek and its "anthropomorphic interpretation of Phoenician toponomy" (Gilbert 223) that Stuart Gilbert identifies in his early commentary on *Ulysses*. In fact, while Europe indicates a young maiden in Greek mythology, its etymology derives from the Phoenician term *Ereb*, "the land of the setting sun," thus indicating the West. Joyce was aware of the Phoenician toponymic etymology of Europa: "The phaynix rose a sun before Erebia sank his smother!" (*FW* 473.16) "Europe Minor" also indicates the region of Asia Minor, associated with the expression "Phenicia or Little Asia" (*FW* 68.29) that occurs later in the text. The expression also cues the maiden Europa as a transfiguration of

ALP/Issy/Iseult. In the text, the erotic tension between land and sea reaches its climax in the archetypal violence perpetrated on Europe's raped and colonized body. In physical geography an isthmus is a thin strip of land in a larger body of water that connects two territories. The "scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor," the place where the sexual warfare is waged, is evocative of Europa's hymen, the very locus of male sexual violence.

The vestiges of a Phoenician origin of Ireland appear repeatedly throughout the *Wake*.¹¹² The ethnic and geographic distinctions between Ireland and Phoenicia are blurred and often undistinguishable. Tristan's recurrent homecoming to Dublin is a "return to the atlantic and Phenitia Proper" (*FW* 85.20). His vessel re-emerges at later stages both as a "punic judgeship" (*FW* 90.36) and the "gran Phenician rover" (*FW* 197.31). The alleged and undefined transgression of HCE takes place in Phoenix Park and the protagonist is described as a "foenix culprit" (*FW* 23.16), an ambiguous expression that puns on the Christian theological concept of the *felix culpa*. In the economy of the text, the transgression in Phoenix Park is a felicitous, albeit sinful, fault as it functions as a narrative catalyst.

Ferrero's *Europa giovane* materializes as Europe Minor, and returns in Shaun's vilification of his brother Shem. In describing his sibling "Shem Skrivenitch" (*FW* 423.15) Shaun says: "Then he caught the europicolas and went into the society of jewses. With Bro Cahlls and Fran Czesch and Bruda Pszths and Brat Slavos" (*FW* 423.36-424.1). The "europicolas" are an allusion to Ferrero's work, but also a pun on *Il Piccolo*, the Triestine daily newspaper in which the Italian historian, and also Joyce, published a series of articles. The "society of jewses" mixes Jesuits and Jews, pointing at the religious

¹¹² In his short article "Awake, Phoenician Too Frequent" Schork discusses very briefly the presence of the Phoenicians in the *Wake*. The association between the Phoenician Europa as cow and my successive reading of the diary products as her offspring has not been broached in criticism.

diversity of Habsburg Trieste. Shaun's accusation of European internationalism is framed as an infectious disease, a syndrome that makes Shem an outcast. Shem joins the "European family" (*U* 12.1202) presented as an interethnic brotherhood. John McCourt has appropriately glossed this passage, pointing out, among other things, Joyce's reference to the complex and difficult relationship with his brother Stanislaus, the first to recognize Joyce's talent as a writer. The prefixes "Fra-(n)," "Bro," "Brud" and "Brat" are all variations on the Indo-European root *bhráter, meaning brother. The expression "Franczech" is suggestive of the Italian *francese* and also Czech brother. "Bruda Pszths" and "Brat Slavos" are a pun on a Slavic brotherhood and the Habsburg cities of Budapest and Bratislava.

To Ferrero, Ovid was not only the "poet of rakes and mistresses" but also the literary interpreter of Rome's rise to geopolitical prominence in the Mediterranean (*Grandezza* V 303). Joyce was certainly not unreceptive to this political reading of the Latin poet. In his guide *Latin and Roman Culture in Joyce*, R.J. Schork writes, "There are many references to Ovid and his work in Joyce's fiction. A few (like the epigraph to *Portrait*) are acknowledged; others were embedded in various levels of the text, especially during the complex formation of *Finnegans Wake*" (154). Schork maintains that uncovering allusions, quotes and the "highly camouflaged references" (158) pertaining to Ovid requires an "exercise in literary archaeology" (154). Before discussing the appropriate passage in the *Wake*, let me digress in an excursus of textual archaeology that allows us to reach the underlying sediment of Joyce's reinterpretation of the rape of Europa.

In Books II and III of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid places the mythical account into a frame of colonial discourse. Ovid's source for the Europa episode was the Sicilian Greek poet Moschus (2nd century BCE), who thematized in a short epic poem the early encounter between Greeks and Phoenicians. Moschus was drawing inspiration from contemporary exchanges between the Greek colonial settlements in Eastern Sicily and Phoenician trading posts located in the Western part of the island. Similarly, Ovid gave mythical and poetic substance to Rome's colonization of Ptolemaic Egypt that included Phoenician territories. The victorious Battle of Actium (31 BCE) secured these territories for Rome. In addition, the Punic wars against the Phoenician city Carthage, waged two centuries before Ovid's time, were still a vivid part of the cultural imagination in Rome. In fact, some thirty years before Ovid's poem, Virgil had fictionalised the Roman–Phoenician encounter through Aeneas and Dido of Carthage in the *Aeneid*. Given their status as economic and military archenemy, capable of threatening the geopolitical integrity of the Empire, the presence of Phoenician figures in Ovid's poem constitutes a political subtext for discourses associated with colonial dominance.

According to Ovid, Europa is the daughter of Agenor, the Phoenician king of Tyre. She is a beautiful maiden, whose comeliness attracts the attention of Jupiter. One day, as the virgin is playing along the shore, the god metamorphoses into a snow–white bull and browses around her. The girl is struck by the docility of the handsome bull and once she overcomes her initial diffidence she pets the animal, plays with it and adorns its horns with flowers. While playing, the tame bull reclines and invites the princess to mount its back. In a sudden move, bovine–shaped Jupiter runs off with the virgin on his

back and swims to Crete. There, according to various other mythographers, she will bear him two (Minos and Rhadamanthus) or three sons (including Sarpedon).

Ovid's poetic narration of the divine abduction, however, does not terminate at Europa's seizure, but continues to recount the aftermath of the rape, which coincides with the Phoenician foundation of Thebes. In Ovid's seamless narrative continuum, Cadmus's colonization represents an episode in its own right, but also serves as an explicatory appendix to the rape of Europa, providing an interpretative key to Jove's abduction in the preceding episode. Agenor sends out Europa's brother Cadmus in order to find her, admonishing his son that if he fails to find his sister, he will be banished into exile. Cadmus's search is fruitless and given his status of expatriate, he looks for a land to colonize. The oracle of Phoebus advises him to look for a heifer, one that has not known the yoke yet and that has not penetrated the earth with a curved plow. According to the oracle, he should follow the young cow and build his home where she finally rests. When the heifer at last lies down, Cadmus kisses the foreign earth and honours the unknown landscape. He promptly discovers a virgin timber that conceals a cave with an underground source of fresh water. With the swift narrative pace of Ovid's poem the following episode already leads into the process of colonization of Thebes. The heifer that Cadmus follows is clearly a mythic transfiguration, an implicit and tacit metamorphosis of Europa herself. Both are virgins and both are mates for a bull. When Cadmus finds the heifer, he symbolically accomplishes his mission since, after all, finding the mate for a bull was the ultimate goal of his explorative mission. Cadmus's quest is described through a pervasive sexual imagery. The heifer is explicitly described as not having borne the yoke, one that has "not broken up the earth with a curved plow"

(*Met.* III, 14-15). The earth is coded as a female body, as he kisses the ground and when the underground cave, a uterine symbol, conceals water, an image of vaginal liquid and more generally signifying the fertility of the soil. The plow breaking up the earth is highly suggestive of sexual violence. The image of the yoke, by the same token, unambiguously suggests colonial subjugation. Agenor and Cadmus proceed according to a misogynist and colonial logic that operates in a parallel fashion to Jupiter's ethnic rape of Phoenician Europa. Her impregnation will give life to Greek individuals, not to barbarians.

A close reader of Ovid, Joyce exploited the colonial subtext of this myth in order to draw a Viconian parallel, a historic *ricorso*, between the colonial history of the Phoenicians and the Irish colonial experience.¹¹³ In the *Wake*, the episode is placed within the context of a parody of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, who undergo a textual metempsychosis and reappear in the Mamalujo quartet. In *La donna delinquente* Ferrero indicated Herodotus as a source for sexual mores in antiquity. Not surprisingly, then, the source for Joyce's poetic history is the "herodotary Mammon Lujus in his grand old historiorum" (*FW* 13.20-21). The term "herodotary" conflates the ancient historian Herodotus with notions of heredity and erudition. Herodotus's historiography famously chronicled the introduction of Egyptian and Phoenician civilization to Greece. The ancient historian recognizes a factual event behind the myth of Europa's rape: "Some Greeks landed at Tyre in Phoenicia and abducted the king's daughter Europa. The Persian sources are not in a position to name these Greeks, but they were presumably Cretans" (*Histories* 3). This episode is part of Herodotus's introduction to the Persian wars, in

¹¹³ In *The New Science*, Vico argues that civilization develops in recurring cycles. Three ages constitute each cycle: the divine, the heroic and the human. Joyce used this cyclical model of history to have his characters embody different versions of themselves throughout historical ages.

which the abduction of four mythical women constitutes the origin of military conflicts.¹¹⁴ From the notesheets that Joyce prepared for the composition of *Ulysses*, we know that Joyce had read Herodotus's *Histories* and had taken notes from its initial pages: "Herodotus opens hist with Phen. version of rape of Helen" (quoted in Schork *Greek*, 20). The association between rape and colonial conquest is central to the annals passage, worth quoting at length:

1132 A.D. Men like to ants or emmets wondern upon a groothwide Whalfisk which lay in a Runnel. Blubby wares upat Ublanium.

566 A.D. On Baalfire's night of this year after deluge a crone that hadde a wickered Kish for to hale dead turves from the bog lookit under the blay of her Kish as she ran for to sothisfeige her cowrieosity and be me sawl but she found hersell sackvulle of swart goody quickenshoon and small illigant brogues, so rich in sweat. Blurry works at Hurdlesford.

(Silent.)

566 A.D. At this time it fell out that a brazenlockt damsel grieved (*sobralasolas!*) because that Puppette her minion was ravisht of her by the ogre Puropeus Pious. Bloody wars in Ballyaughacleeaghbally.

1132 A.D. Two sons at an hour were born until a goodman and his hag. These sons called themselves Caddy and Primas. Primas was a santryman and drilled all decent people. Caddy went to Winehouse and wrote o peace a farce. Blotty words for Dublin. (*FW* 13.33–14.15)

Devoid of a distinct and linear chronology, the quadripartite structure of the chronicle indicates the record of four different versions of the same mytho–historical event. The chiasitic disposition of the narration stages two competing versions of the respectively consensual and forced sexual encounters. The first and fourth vignettes appear to function as a prologue (the arrival of the foreigner) and the aftermath (the birth of offspring) to the coitus proper.

The dates 1132 and 566 AD, while alluding to events in Irish history, provide clues to a blurry and uncertain time continuum, suspended between competing

¹¹⁴ The four abducted women were: Io of Argos by Phoenician traders, the Phoenician princess Europa by Cretans, Medea at the hands of a crew led by Jason and Helen by the Trojan prince Paris.

chronologies, gaps in the timeline and numerical symbology. Throughout the text the number 1132 is associated with virility and its numeric half 566 stands for a female principle. For all their symbolic meaning, the dates provide important thematic clues. The setting is clearly Dublin, as each of the four versions of the toponym indicates.

“Ublanium” evokes the ancient settlement of Eblana, but also suggests the notion of oblivion. “Ballyaughacleeaghally” indicates the ancient Gaelic name of the city, Baile Átha Cliath, meaning Town of the Ford of Hurdles. 566 AD is the year in which the Irish High Kings Domnall and Forggus mac Muirchertaig, who reigned jointly, die in a battle close to the Liffey. Laurence O’Toole, the patron saint of Dublin, was born in 1132. In 1132, Diarmaid Mac Murchadha, also known as Dermot Macmurrough, Irish king of the province of Leinster, burned the abbey at Kildare and ordered the rape of the abbess. In his attempt to become High King of Ireland, Dermot sought English help. Taking advantage of the political and military instability of Ireland, the English king Henry II was convinced to invade Ireland. Traditional readings consider Dermot responsible for the English invasion and thus a betrayer of the Irish cause. Catholic defenders of Dermot took a more moderate stance, emphasizing his association with Church reform. In fact, in the same year St. Malachy is consecrated archbishop of Armagh, with the intent to impose Roman liturgy on the independent Irish Church.¹¹⁵ 1132 is the year in which Ireland becomes “servant of two masters ... an English and an Italian” (*U* 1.638).

In his lucid study *Joyce and the Invention of Irish History* Thomas Hofheinz claims that “Joyce stages a semantic scrambling in the passage that reflects problems faced by Irish nationalist historians as they dug for Ireland’s past in the ruins of Gaelic history. He strips back these problems in order to discover deeper ones within them,

¹¹⁵ For the historical background, see Gardiner and Wenborn.

primal motives locking the Irish into a constant repetition of misery” (106). Vico’s archetypal family, Hofheinz continues, articulates the cyclical recurrence of these historical patterns associated with patriarchy, incest and misery in the vicissitudes of HCE, ALP, Issy, Shem and Shaun. This historical chronicle narrates “cycles of events grand and national” (*FW* 13.31-32), assuming the features of a creative storytelling, constantly playing a variation on the themes in a spiral timeline, always producing “another tellmastery repeating yourself” (*FW* 397.7-8). The *Wake*’s poetic chronicle is not solely indebted to Vico’s philosophy of history based on the cyclical returns of social configurations. Ferrero’s historiographic methodology, in evident conversation with Vico, emphasizes the recognition of parallel patterns between the present and the past as a crucial instrument for the deeper understanding of contemporary history. Joyce’s reading of Ferrero reinforces the status of Vico in the *Wake*. The archetypal coitus occurs between a male principle, associated through HCE with patriarchal and colonial violence, and a female principle, embodied by the “daughterwife” (*FW* 627.2) cluster of ALP/Issy. Underneath the morpho–semantic encrustations of the language and a family structure of systematically metamorphosing characters one can extrapolate yet another underlying narrative nucleus. The mythical rape of Hiberno–Punic Europa, perpetrated by the ogre and placed in the pre–history of Ireland, foreshadows the sexual union of an Irish woman with a foreign master. In the annals passage, Europa is associated with both Issy and ALP: the former inasmuch as she represents a young maiden, the latter for her childbearing attribute.

Joyce, however, is far from simply lamenting Ireland’s status of colonial victim. The two sections dated 566 AD describe the same scene (hence the same date) but from

different perspectives. Joyce introduces a double vision of Irish history, presenting his own annals as a mytho-poetic record that puts into focus two competing interpretations. The term “silence” represents the axis of symmetry and functions like a mirror between the two sections. In the first section one can observe a Europa seeking out the sexual encounter, a Europa “willing to be done,” as a probable female version of the Duke of Willingdone. The following section is indeed a mirror-like distortion of the preceding narrative. What is emphasized here is the rape of Europa. Before adopting this rhetoric of victimization, Joyce depicts the complicity of Ireland in its own colonization. He places Ireland’s collaboration first, giving in this way priority to a revisionist approach to Irish history.

In the first section of the episode the whale stranded in the narrow waterway cues the coitus. The stranded whale furthermore suggests the Viking invasion and their arrival on the Irish shore. Significantly, in “Proteus” Stephen wanders along the shore of North Bull Island, associating in his aimless reverie the arrival of Danish invaders in Ireland with the stranding of whales in 1331. The meat of the cetaceans provided sustenance for a famine–stricken population:

Dane vikings, torcs of tomahawks aglitter on their breasts when Malachi wore the collar of gold. A school of turlehide whales stranded in hot noon, spouting hobbling in the shallows. Then from the starving cagework city a horde of jerkined dwarfs, my people, with flayers’ knives, running, scaling, hacking in green blubbery whalemeat. Famine, plague and slaughters. Their blood is in me, their lusts my waves. (*U* 3.301-7)

The autochthonous dwarfs of Stephen’s daydream turn into colonizing ants, highly reminiscent of the mythological Myrmidons. Once again, Ferrero’s *L’Europa giovane* provides a key to the passage. The ants are also associated with emigration and colonization. For Ferrero, the term colonization is often synonymous with nineteenth-

century mass emigration. He identifies three forms of colonization: plasmatic, typical for the English; adhesive, characteristic of Chinese, Italian and Irish emigration; and diffusive, distinctive of the Germans. The German diffusive emigration pattern is likened to an anthill, from which the antlike emigrants move to colonize and inhabit new territories: “Dovunque si dovrà colonizzare un continente deserto, ... verranno subito le lunghe processioni delle pazienti formiche tedesche” (119) [“Wherever a barren continent needs to be colonized ... the long processions of the patient, German ants will at once arrive” (my translation)].

In the expression “Baalfire’s night” Joyce inserts a Nordic layer in an already existing context of cultural and religious syncretism between the Phoenician and Roman worlds. Baal is a Semitic fertility god and the name of several kings of the Phoenician city Tyre, home city of Europa (Aubet 56–57). In Heliopolis of Phoenicia, today the Lebanese city of Baalbek,¹¹⁶ a temple dedicated to the syncretic deity Jupiter–Baal, also known as the Heliopolitan Zeus, was built when the Romans colonized the city in the first century CE. The nexus linking Roman Jupiter to Phoenician Baal is the common tradition of their secondary bovine nature, a common characteristic among bull-worshipping cultures in ancient Mediterranean traditions.¹¹⁷ The vowels in the term “Baal” suggest the Hebrew letter aleph, the pictographic image of which is the bull or ox. The association between the letter aleph and the bull reappears later in the character of “Olaph the Oxman” (*FW* 132.17–18), a spin on the Northern “Oxman” (*FW* 15.6) and the metonymic toponymy of “Oxmanstown” (*FW* 47.24), suggestive of North Bull Island in Dublin Bay. “Baalfire’s night” also suggests Walpurgis Night, a Northern European

¹¹⁶ In the *Wake* the city of Baalbek figures as “Bullbeck” (*FW* 627.2).

¹¹⁷ Besides the Greek and Roman traditions, bull cults are present in Egyptian, Minoan, Mesopotamic and Ugaritic cultures.

fertility rite celebrated at the beginning of spring with nightly bonfires. It is probable that Joyce was aware of Sir William Betham's comparative analysis of Gaels and Phoenicians. Betham was well known as a member of the "Gaelophile-Phoenicianist school of Irish antiquarianism" (Nadel 156), to which Vallancey also belonged. In his book *The Gael and Cymbri; or an Inquiry into the the Origin and History of the Irish Scoti, Britons, and Gauls*, published in Dublin in 1834, Betham argues that "Baal ... has the precise meaning in Gaelic as in Phoenician – the lord of heaven" (226). Baal is thus presented as an Irish–Semitic god, the "bog," Slovenian for god, to whose sexual prowess the "Kish," from the Hungarian adjective *kis* meaning "little," succumbs.

The annals continue to record the sexual encounter between Europa and the foreigner. Ferrero's account of hospitable and sacred prostitution, described as a customary practice among the Phoenicians in *La donna delinquente*, provides the cultural coordinates for the characters' behavior in this first section dated 566 AD. The crone is pushing her daughter to hail and welcome the divinity, suggesting that the mother looks favorably upon her daughter's sexual encounter. The alteration of "herself" into "hersell" strongly reinforces the notion of ritualized prostitution (FW 14.3). Europa is eager to offer her sexual favors, for which she receives a dowry of shoes and elegant robes. This version symbolically represents an Ireland cooperative in its own colonization, receiving only a meager compensation in the economic transaction. The outcome of this sexual encounter is a pregnancy: "she found hersell sackvulle" indicating that she was full of seed from his scrotum (*Hodensack* in German), but also gifted with a dowry, in the form of a sack full of black (swart from the German *schwarz*) and elegant shoes. The sack of goods she receives alludes to Ferrero's passage in *Il Militarismo*, in which the Phoenician

women buy a specimen of the merchant, “thinking that they thus satisfied an innocent desire. But the merchant’s treasure–bag was inexhaustible. Every day he produced thence some new object, and the temptation to indulge in them grew ever stronger” (*Militarism* 300). Shoon is archaic plural for shoes, whereas brogues were heavy leather shoes worn in Ireland. The term “brogue” also indicates a strong Irish accent in English, indicative of the Gaelic substratum of the Hibernian dialect. In the “Finnegan’s Wake” ballad, Tim Finnegan is said to have “a beautiful brogue, so rich and sweet” (Hutchins 214).¹¹⁸ The Hiberno–English intonation is another clue suggesting a colonial dynamic.

For their intercourse the maid approaches the bull in order to “sothisfeige her cowrieosity” (*FW* 14.2-3). This portmanteau registers a confluence of manifold meanings. McHugh’s annotations indicate that Sothis is the Egyptian of Sirius, the star of Isis. The cow would consequently be the cow that is sacred to Isis. More meanings, however, can be extracted. First of all, the expression is a phonological distortion suggesting the phrase “to satisfy her curiosity,” while at the same time indicating her bovine nature. The phrase again emphasizes her active role in the sexual encounter. It is likely that Joyce had also read about Europa taking the initiative in Wilhelm Roscher’s *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, an encyclopaedia of classical mythology the author had consulted. In Roscher the entry concerning Europa stresses her audacity, depicting her as courageous and daring: “Europa, die schönste und übermütigste von allen, [welche] es sogar wagt, sich auf den Rücken des reizenden Tieres zu setzen” (1410) [“Europa, the most beautiful and audacious of all, [who] even dares to

¹¹⁸ There are several versions of the ballad that slightly differ from each other. In the version quoted by Patricia Hutchins in 1957 Tim Finnegan has “a beautiful brogue, so rich and sweet.” Richard Ellmann, and with him the majority of Joyce scholars, rely on a version that reads, “He had a tongue both rich and sweet” (Ellmann 543).

sit on the back of the handsome animal” (my translation)]. The term “cowrieosity” can be glossed in two ways, indicating a cow and at the same time a cowrie. Her bovine nature makes Europa the appropriate match for the bull, with whom she can satisfy her curiosity and sexual appetite. I shall discuss Europa’s cow-like reappearance in the text shortly.

For now, suffice it to say that the maiden’s characterization as a cowrie is yet another element that unmistakably identifies her as Phoenician Europa. The Phoenician thalassocracy was famous in the Mediterranean for the production of a highly priced purple dye, a cloth colorant produced from a cowrie, i.e. the marine gastropod *Murex brandaris*. Given its laborious production process, the purple dye became a luxury item in antiquity.¹¹⁹ The Greeks identified the Phoenicians with their purple dye production to the extent that their name comes from the Greek *phoinós*, meaning reddish purple. In Ancient Greek, the toponym Phoenicia indicates “the country of purple cloth” (Aubet 7).¹²⁰ Accordingly, Issy/Europa later makes another veiled appearance in the text as the “purple cardinal’s princess” and “cowmate” (*FW* 243.30 and 32).

In the section described as “annadominant” (*FW* 14.17) Europa is described as a “brazenlockt damsel.” This marks a shift from her bold initiative. Chastity takes the place of her audacity if we take the expression as suggestive of brass-locked, the description of the closing mechanism of a chastity belt. The term damsel is evocative of medieval courtly love and the ideal of a distant and unreachable lady.

In this passage, Joyce masterfully stages the paradox of multiplying the identities of the god and the girl, while at the same time stripping them of any secondary traits attaining a minimalist reduction to their sexual organs. Rapist and victim, the “ogre

¹¹⁹ Purple robes became a status symbol in imperial Rome and evolved into “royal” purple. The color was later also incorporated in the chromatic symbolism of religious garments.

¹²⁰ For more details on the history of the Phoenicians, see Aubet.

Puropeus Pious” and “her minion” are reduced to a penis (*peos* in Greek) and a vulva (*mouni* in Greek). She expresses her grief *sobre las olas*, above the waves, another reference to the ancient myth, in which Europa is taken across the sea to the island of Crete.

The raping god is presented as “Puropeus Pious,” a pun that signals the convergence of Vico and Nietzsche as primary sources. The pure and pious qualities of the god hint at Vico’s religious wars of the Heroic Age, characterized with the Latin formula *pura et pia bella* in the *New Science*. This reference to Vico, however, is a successive layer that Joyce added. The earliest version of this passage reads “Europeus Pius” (*First-Draft* 53), an allusion to Nietzsche’s notion of the “good European” echoed in the “goodman and his hag” (*FW* 14.11-12). Their union produces the birth of Caddy and Primas, mythic precursors of Shem and Shaun and embodiments of the tension between Ireland and its colonial masters. Once again, Joyce makes a Phoenician character prefigure an Irish one. The prehistoric Caddy – whose name is a diminutive for Cadmus, Europa’s mythological brother – appears as a pacifist author and thus foreshadows the later appearance of Shem the Penman. Shem’s rival brother Shaun undergoes a dual characterization as a belligerent archbishop – the Primate drilling all decent people – who personifies Ireland’s two masters, in the form of English military aggression and the ecclesiastical power of the Catholic Church.

In a text rich with interpenetrating personalities and blurring borders, where everyone has their own “multiple Mes” (*FW* 410.12) the Phoenician/Irish maiden undergoes a “doublin” (*FW* 3.8, 578.14) or “Doubling” (*FW* 97.9, 197.5, 290.16, 295.31, 413.25, 462.19), metamorphosing from a female and ravished Europa into a male

ravisher Europa: young Europa is paradoxically ravished by her own masculine double, by that “Puropeus Pious” who epitomizes the colonial imagination of a European imperial project. Ferrero’s historical sketch of Phoenician sexuality provides the textual background to this transformation: “I templi della dea Astarte a Tiro, a Sidone e nelle principali città della Fenicia, erano consacrati alla prostituzione: Astarte nelle sue statue scolpiva gli organi maschili e femminili a significare il travestirsi degli uomini in donna, e delle donne in uomini, allorchè celebravansi le notturne feste della Dea” (*Donna delinquente* 221) [“At Tyre, Sidon and the major cities of Phoenicia the temples of the goddess Astarte were consecrated to prostitution, and her statues depicted the goddess with both male and female sexual organs to signify the cross-dressing of men into women, and women into men, when the goddess’s nocturnal festivals were celebrated” (my translation)].

The *Wake* also offers an alternative account for the masculine metamorphosis of Europa into Europe: for someone who is associated with the ancient clothing trade, it is not surprising that the transgendering process occurs through transvestitism. The maiden puts on different clothes; Europe becomes “Newrobe” (*FW* 155.5). Cross-dressing constitutes an underlying subtext in different episodes of the *Wake*, a recurrent leitmotif whose overtones are associated with Europe’s double characterization as male and female. In the “Burrus and Caseous” episode, which will be discussed in more detail shortly, Europe the “new robe,” despite being a “*seducente infanta*,” is unable to “conceal her own more masculine personality by flaunting frivolous finery over men’s inside clothes, for the femininity of that totamulier will always lack the musculink of a *verumvirum*” (*FW* 166. 23–26). The ambiguous status of Europa’s androgynous character

cluster is suspended between the poles of a masculine and aggressive militarism associated with the bull and a feminine, pacifist anti-colonialism associated with the image of the cow. Depending on her dress code, Europa can assume a more feminine personality to hide the masculine aspects of her character, even though as a total woman she lacks true virility. Clothes and militarism are also associated in ALP's letter. The envelope of ALP's letter "exhibits only the civil or military clothing of whatever passionpallid nudity or plaguepurple nakedness may happen to tuck itself under its flap" (*FW* 109.10-13). ALP's letter, clothed by a semi-transparent envelope, is an over-written palimpsest from which only fragments of Europa's tale can be recognized. The "military clothing" and "plaguepurple nakedness" are the vestigial traces of the rape of Phoenician Europa.

The bull and the cow make a systematic return in the text. The metempsychotic reincarnation of archetypes in history associates the figure of the bull with colonial conquest as can be seen with "Ivaun the Tauribble" (*FW* 138.17), a condensation of Ivan the Terrible and a *taurus*, which is Greek and Latin for bull. Another association between military conquest and a bull is made in the passage that introduces "Ussur Ursussen of the viktaurious onrush," described "as bold and as madhouse a bull in a meadows" (*FW* 353.12-13). A few lines down, this "viktaurious bull" is described as "Deo Jupto" (*FW* 353.18), as the raping Jupiter/J Zeus. In the archetypal bull one cannot help but also recognize a zoomorphic adaptation of John Bull, the personification of England in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century propaganda,¹²¹ as well as a comment on the papal

¹²¹ In political and satirical cartoons, the figure of John Bull was represented as a stout man. In his depictions, he was usually dressed with a waistcoat that displayed the Union Jack.

bull *Laudabiliter* that in 1155 sanctioned the English invasion of Ireland. In that year, Ireland was “bulledicted” (*FW* 458.3) to English rule.¹²²

Europa has to be “Playing bull before she bears” (*FW* 522.15), meaning that she has to become a bull before she can bear his children. Later, the theme of a young Europe, carried over the sea and bearing the offspring of a bull, returns in a passage in which a sympathetic narrative voice says, “Poor little tartanelle, her dinties are chattering, the strait’s she’s in, the bulloge she bears!” (*FW* 583.3–4) The “cowrymaid” (*FW* 164.8) appears as a maternal figure for later appearances such as “Sweet Margareen” (*FW* 164.19) and the brothers “Burrus and Caseous” (*FW* 165.12).¹²³ The offspring of the cow–maid, respectively butter and cheese, are personified dairy products.

These multifaceted names combine matrilineal genealogy with a patrilineal logic of descent. While the children retain maternal characteristics in their names, Europa’s union with the Ovid–inspired Jupiter produces avatars of Brutus and Cassius, markedly Roman offspring. Burrus is presented as “full of natural greace” and quite paradoxically also as “obsoletely unadulterous” (*FW* 161.16 and 17). Burrus is full of greace—as well as full of grace like the Virgin—and absolutely unadulterated. But then, this unadulterated state appears to also be obsolete. This adulterating mixture of butter with greace is already foreshadowed by the accusations made to HCE in chapter I.3. Among the 111 allegations to the father figures the claim that he mixes butter with greace: “*Grease with the Butter*” (*FW* 71.13). When the rumours about HCE’s transgressions attain international scope in the “*Casaconcordia*” (*FW* 54.10) he is accused of dishonest

¹²² With the *Laudabiliter* papal bull, pope Adrian IV (an English pope) gave king Henry II of England the right to assume control over Ireland.

¹²³ This morphological reconstruction contradicts Schork’s assertion, according to which “it would be pushing allusion to the limits to claim that ‘cowrymaid’ ... refers to the metamorphosis of Io,” a priestess of Hera transformed into a heifer by Zeus to hide his infidelity (Schork, *Greek* 2).

business practices that take the form of “cowhaendel” (*FW* 54.27). The term suggests the German *Kuhhandel*, literally cow-business, that indicates devious bartering exchanges, and *Händel*, meaning “brawl”. Burrus’s sibling Caseous is “obversely the revise” (*FW* 161.18) of his brother. The Phoenician origin of the offspring of Europa as a “cowrymaid” is emphasized twice in the “Burrus and Caseous” episode. First in the sentence: “The older sisars (Tyrants, regicide is too good for you!) become unbeurable from age” (*FW* 162.1–2). The two Caesars become Tyrants and unbearable, with a pun of the French *beurre*, butter. The term “Tyrants” is to be understood in two ways: in the sense of oppressor, but also in the sense of being citizens of the Phoenician city Tyre, legendary birthplace of Europa. The same concept is reiterated shortly afterwards, in the passage “Caseous, the brutherscutch or puir tyron” (*FW* 163.8–9). These references to the Phoenician city Tyre conveniently overlap with Tyrone, one of the traditional counties of Ireland. In this expression Joyce makes Phoenicia and Ireland overlap again. At this point it is probably useful to bear in mind that the etymology of the term “butter” mediated through Germanic languages derives from the Latin *butyrum*, borrowed from the Greek *boutyron*, which appears to be a combination of *bous*, meaning “ox, cow,” and *tyros*, “cheese.” Joyce must have been aware of this etymology and exploited it for the construction of the children and Shem, Shaun and Issy that here become Burrus, Caseous and the mother/sister Margareen (*FW* 164.14).

This “emended food theory” (*FW* 163.36) that regulates the interpersonal dynamics of the family with a pronounced “eatusup complex” (*FW* 128.36) is linked to the Habsburg Empire and Europe. The Austrian–Hungarian monarchy becomes “old Auster and Hungrig” (*FW* 464.27–28), Joyce’s own comment on his precarious life in

Trieste and the meager food supply in the early years of his stay on the Adriatic (*hungrig* meaning “hungry” in German). Given the fact that Joyce and Nora in Trieste lived well beyond their means (at the expense of Stanislaus) it seems likely that the oysters (German *Austern*) mentioned refer to the lavish spending the couple indulged in whenever the possibility arose. The ghostly appearance of the crumbled Habsburg Empire is regulated by a recurrent cycle of destruction and Phoenix-like resurrection, since history “moves in vicious cycles yet renews the same” (*FW* 134.16-17). Joyce’s last work is not only the wake for Finnegan, but also the “the wrake of the hapsurus” (*FW* 557.6). While the expressions cues Henry Longfellow’s poem “The Wreck of the Hesperus,” it also suggests the “wake of the Hapsburgs,” in terms of a funeral, or “funforall” (*FW* 458.22), the post-mortem wake after a funeral, and the wreckage of the Austrian monarchy. After the demise of imperial Habsburg Joyce envisions the possibility of a resurrection of the multicultural and polyglot state as becomes clear in the expression “Osterich, the U.S.E.” (*FW* 70.1). Here Joyce makes the explicit connection between *Österreich*, i.e. Austria, and the United States of Europe. Joyce’s stay in Central Europe, or “Zentral Oylrubber” (*FW* 69.1) has informed Shem’s preference to “far sooner muddle through the hash of lentils in Europe than meddle with Irrland’s split little pea” (*FW* 171.5–6).¹²⁴ Joyce’s description of the European empire and Ireland in terms of victuals suggests an association with the basic alimentary concerns of a writer who had lived through days without food.

Although in Ferrero’s historiography the Phoenicians do not occupy a position as prominent as in Bérard’s, the high esteem in which Ferrero held them made the books of

¹²⁴ Thanks to the double meaning of *irren/Irren* in German, Ireland becomes the land of error, but also the land of the insane.

the Italian historian a crucial source for Joyce's permanent interest in the ancient population. I have suggested not only that we read Ferrero's Philo-Semitism in close connection with Bérard's theories, but also that Ferrero's influence rivals Bérard's in importance. The reason for this suggestion is that Ferrero's sympathetic, albeit occasionally racist, attitude towards Semitic populations translated into two main arguments. First of all, as a historian, he considered the Phoenicians as important as Greeks and Romans in the genealogy of Western civilization. With the exception of nineteenth-century Ireland, this position was far from common in continental ancient historiography, which was eagerly invested in downplaying or blatantly denying any significant encounter or a Semitic influence on the West.¹²⁵ Predisposed by Ferrero, Joyce reads Ovid's tale of Europa as the mytho-poetic elaboration of Roman colonization of Semitic Phoenicia. In addition, in *L'Europa giovane* Ferrero considered the Jews, culturally and linguistically very close to the Phoenicians, as an integral and indivisible part of contemporary Europe. Reading Ferrero corroborates Joyce's acceptance of the idea that the Semitic Phoenicians are Irish progenitors, hence Europeans.

As far as contemporary politics are concerned, Ferrero's early work was largely driven by late-nineteenth-century optimism, a misguided faith in continental peace that represented a powerful allure to an entire generation of young Europeans. In 1906 Joyce was certainly not immune to the appeal of a new Europe and the prospect of a new continental order that would redefine the future role of Ireland. The most immediate effect of Joyce's engagement with Ferrero was his reclaiming of an allegedly more authentic Irish identity within the context of a European cultural cosmopolitanism. The

¹²⁵ For the position of Phoenicians and Egyptians in classical studies of the nineteenth century, see Bernal's *Black Athena*.

early Ferrero provided Joyce with a pacifist and anti-colonial notion of Europe, envisioned as a confederation of democracies. Such utopia of a “United States of the Europe of the future” (*Portrait* 191-92) allowed Joyce to imagine an Ireland free from the yoke of English imperialism and represented an alternative to the nightmarish contours assumed by contemporary history.

Joyce’s commitments to political projects and ideological agendas were always half-hearted at best, first timidly embraced but ultimately marked by a profound distrust. By appropriating and exploiting the colonial subtext of Europa’s rape for his Irish pre-history, Joyce craftily exposes a fundamental problem in what has been considered a myth of foundation by Western tradition. The author challenges his audience not simply with an audacious language and plot, but asks the uncomfortable question of what it means to consider a rape the foundational myth for a civilization. In this way, the sexual politics leading to imperial conquest would be intrinsic to the very notion of Europe. The subtle political commentary embedded in the passage evokes a critique of European imperialism, which puts Europe on a path of self-destruction. Joyce had already voiced such a concern in the early poem “Dooleysprudence” in which “Poor Europe ambles / Like sheep to shambles” (*Poems and Exiles* 81). For the later Joyce, however, this appears to be only a partial depiction. In the annals passage the tension between Ireland’s status as imperial victim and the image of eager collaborator in its own colonization subsumes a highly ambiguous role for Europe, suspended between the old imperial paradigm and the promise of an anti-colonial future.

The polyglot cross-fertilizations of the *Wake* appear as an attempt to capture in memory the multilingual fabric of Habsburg Trieste, an attempt to “regain that absendee

tarry easty, his città immediata” (FW 228.22-23), considered by many Triestine intellectuals of that time a microcosm of the multinational empire and thus an urban experiment of a future United States of Europe. Joyce hopes, not without moments of imperial nostalgia, that the Habsburg state will once again rise like Phoenix out its ashes in the new form of a confederation of European democracies. As a united Europe was still far from its political realization, *Finnegans Wake* is, under Ferrero’s influence, a playful textual rehearsal of a young and polyglot Europe.

The name of Europa itself is the expression of a colonial logic. From the beginning the maiden is presented as displaying a hybrid, composite identity. She is simultaneously a βάρβαρος – a barbarian, a Phoenician princess, and a Greek figure. The Greek pantheon’s colonial conquest of the Semitic aristocratic lineage is rendered explicit through the process of naming the princess with a Greek name. Europa is ultimately turned into a Greek mythological character, once a Greek appellation is imposed upon her. The etymology of the term Εὐρώπη is somewhat uncertain. The dominant theory, however, suggests that the name *Europa* is derived from the Ancient Greek roots meaning “broad” (*eur-* or *eurus-*) and “eye” (*op-*, *opt-*) or “face” (*ops-*), hence “wide-gazing” or “she of the wide eyes” or “she of the broad countenance” (Kerenyi 109). In all probability, the name also has semantic connections with *Europos*, meaning “wide expanse of land” (Klein 188). As a result, in ancient mythology the primary function of Europa’s character is described in her very name. With her name signifying big eyes and large land, her identity is associated with vision and territoriality, with a colonial gaze that looks over vast portions of land. In his article “Euryopa: Le regard au loin,”¹²⁶ the

¹²⁶ Nancy, Jean-Luc. “Euryopa: Le regard au loin” *Contributions*. Leipzig: University of Leipzig Press, 1994.

critic Jean-Luc Nancy has also suggested a similar interpretation of this etymology, constructing a theory of Europe as an idea of vision. Rodolphe Gasché, in his book *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept* dismisses Nancy's etymology as "admittedly questionable" (Gasché 11). Nevertheless, what sustains our reading is the already mentioned ancient Greek inclination to an "anthropomorphic interpretation of Phoenician toponymy" (Gilbert 223). The term Europe in fact appears to derive from the Phoenician term *Ereb*, indicating "the land of the setting sun" thus indicating the West. The Greeks personified this toponymy in Europa's mythological character. A concept of territoriality was associated with the mythological personification of Europa and the colonial dimension of her rape.

The source for Joyce's awareness of this etymology is Victor Bérard's *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee* (1902-03). Joyce famously subscribed to Bérard's interpretation of the *Odyssey* and his postulation of a Phoenician Odysseus, an interpretation that was crucial in the narrative design of *Ulysses*. In addition, through Bérard's toponymic etymologies Joyce must have learned about the "Oriental" and Phoenician origin of Europa and the initial topographic source of the name. In his introductory chapters, Bérard indicates the methods through which Phoenician toponymy would assume anthropomorphic traits in Greek. The French classicist names three processes of linguistic transference. The first is transcription, a more or less systematic process in the Greek adoption of the Phoenician alphabet. The second is translation, when it was possible to identify semantic equivalences. Often though, Bérard argues, when a Phoenician term could not be translated, the process of linguistic transference did not limit itself to simple transcription, but engaged in an attempt to interpret, often incorrectly, the received

linguistic material. Bérard calls this pseudo-etymology a “calembour populaire” (Bérard I, 49) a semantic association based upon homonymy and homophony. Bérard believed that in the Mediterranean basin such pseudo-etymologies, loanwords and calques used to travel from one thalassocracy to the other. In order to reduce the margin of error in etymological reconstructions, Bérard introduces what he defines as “la règle des doublets” (Bérard I, 49) based on the assumption that often a terminological pair, Phoenician-Greek for instance, used to describe major geographic names.¹²⁷ The classicist applies this method to substantiate his argument about the Phoenician origin of many Greek names. The following passage is where Joyce must have learned about the Phoenician origin of Europa:

Il y a longtemps que l'on a découvert des etymologies sémitiques pour les grands noms de la légende thébaine, *Kadmos*, *Europè*, etc. Mais on n'a pas suffisamment dit que ces noms forment entre eux un système complet et que tout ce système se peut expliquer par une hypothèse unique. Kadmos et sa sœur Europè sont nés de Phoinix ou d'Agénor et de Téléphassa. ... l'Astre du Matin, serait empruntée à la racine קדם, *kadam*, מִדְּקָ, *Kedem*, signifie l'Orient. De même c'est la racine בָּדַע, 'arab,' et la forme participiale ou substantive עֲרֹבָה, 'eroba' qui désignerait le couchant. *Erobe* nous conduit à *Europè*, Εὐρώπη, par un calembour populaire qui, pour la compréhension de ce mot étranger change le β en π: Εὐρώπη, dit Hésychius ... *Europè est l'occidentale, la sombre*. (Bérard I, 224)

Long ago, we discovered Semitic etymologies for the great names of the Theban legend, such as Cadmus, Europe etc. However, we have not said enough about the fact that these names form together a complete system, which can be explained thanks to a one hypothesis. Cadmus and his sister Europa were born from Phoenix or Agenor and Telephassa ... the term for the Morning Star is borrowed from the root קדם, *kadam*, מִדְּקָ, *Kedem* that indicate the East. The same can be said for the root בָּדַע, 'arab,' and the participial form or noun עֲרֹבָה, 'eroba' that would indicate the West. *Erobe* leads us to *Europè*, Εὐρώπη, by way of a popular pun, which, to allow the understanding of this foreign word, exchanges β for π: Εὐρώπη, says Hesychius ... Europa is the Westerner, the dark one. (My translation)

¹²⁷ In the *Odyssey*, for instance, Scylla and Charybdis are the sea monsters in what today is the Strait of Messina. The terms, however, are Phoenician indicating respectively a rock and a whirlpool. As in the case of Europa, elements of physical geography are anthropomorphized into mythological figures.

In the second volume, Bérard adds another layer to the origin of Europa, explaining the Egyptian origin of the rape myth: “cette Belle Dame du Couchant, ἡ χαλί Εὐρώπη, n’est que la traduction phénicienne de la Belle Amentet, *Amentet nefert*, des Égyptiens ... Le taureau de la belle Europè n’est que le taureau de la belle Amentet” (Bérard II, 81) [“This beautiful lady of the West, ἡ χαλί Εὐρώπη, is the Phoenician translation of the beautiful Amentet, the Egyptian *Amentet nefert* ... Europe’s bull is none else than the bull of the beautiful Amentet” (my translation)].

In his discussion of Joyce’s application of his classical sources, Schork points out that Bérard and Roscher primarily “contribute to the verbal complexity and texture of a passage” (Roscher 1998, 115). This is certainly true in *Finnegans Wake*, where the diachronic density of the language owes much to Bérard’s pseudo-etymologies.¹²⁸ In the case of Joyce’s etymological interpretation of the name Europa as vision, the related puns and etymologies decidedly point towards the direction that the Irish author was fully aware of an understanding of Europe as vision. Joyce gives proof of his understanding in the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses*. The origin of the term Cyclops is “round-eyed,” from the Greek *kyklos* meaning round (from which originates the modern term cycle) and the root *op(s)*- indicating the eye. Joyce was of course aware of this, as the episode abounds in puns and references to Odysseys’ ocular offence to one-eyed Polyphemus. In his *erlebte Rede*, the narrator of the “Cyclops” episode refers to the Italian “signior Brini” as an “eyetallyano” (*U* 12.1066-7), a phonetic pun on the Italian self-descriptive term *italiano* and the English pronunciation of the word. Joyce shrewdly inserts this reference to optical matters, having his own situation in mind. In Trieste, Joyce becomes an Irish-

¹²⁸ Joyce had great admiration for Bérard. Among classicists, however, the validity of Bérard’s theory of Phoenician origin of Odysseus was questioned from the beginning. Even today, Bérard’s

Italian European, a phenomenon of which “eyetallyano” is a cross-linguistic aesthetic performance. Besides being a pun on his European character, the expression also refers to Joyce’s concern with eyesight, whose pathological weakness afflicted him during his entire life.

An even more explicit association between Europe and vision and eyesight is offered in *Finnegans Wake*. In III.1 the narrator comments on European written and oral cultural tradition: “How farflung is your fokloire and how velktingeling your volupkabulary. *Qui vive sparanto qua muore contanto*. O foibler, O flip, you’ve that wandervogl wail withyin! It falls easily on the earopen and goes down the friskly shortiest like treacling tumtim with its tingtingtaggle” (FW 419.10-14). Here the visual component of Europe is matched by the “earopen,” i.e. an open ear to the sounds of an international and European language such as Volapük. The “volupkabulary,” the vocabulary of Volapük, is “velktingeling,” well sounding. The passage, however, comments on the failure of this artificial language through a distortion of the Italian proverb *Chi vive sperando, muore disperato*, a popular adage claiming that an excessively hopeful life ends in a state of desperation. Joyce turns the final term into *contanto*, suggestive of *cantando*, the Italian gerund of *cantare*, to sing – a feast for the European ear. In the final chapter of the *Wake*, the *Ricorso*, Joyce again makes Europe’s “ineluctable modality of the visible” (U 3.1) overlap with its “ineluctable modality of the audible” (U 3.13). The concurrence of acoustic and visual perception is expressed in the term “earopen” (FW 598.15), a word that puns on Europe, the ear and the Greek root *op(s)-* for eye. In the passage “Hearing. The urb is orbs” (FW 598.28) the text suggests not only the acoustic and visual perception of a city. The expression is obviously a

reference to the Latin term for city, and the orbital cavity that contains the eye. Here, the narrative engages in the pseudo-scientific discipline of “comparative accoustomology” (FW 598.23-4) focusing on the study of the “Homos Circas Elochlannensis”¹²⁹ (FW 600.29). HCE becomes an abbreviation for the Linnean taxonomy of a human species that is defined by the ear, specifically by the cochlea, an organ located in the inner ear. The “Homos Circas Elochlannensis” is a transfiguration of the *homo europaeus habsburgensis* inasmuch Earwicker is a “earopean.”

Joyce’s idea of Europe and the textual construction of himself as a European originate at the intersection of three cultural factors: his identity as a writer operating in an English-speaking tradition, a new model of Irishness that recuperated its ancient European relations, and an adopted continental identity developed in Habsburg Trieste. This not unproblematic overlapping of languages and cultures that constituted his experience is best expressed in *Finnegans Wake*, where the author offers a definition of himself as a “semi-semitic serendipitist” and a “Europeanised Afferyank” (FW 191.2-4). While the expression has been read as an indication of a global personality including Europe, Asia, Africa and America (“yank” as in Yankee), the universality of this phrase is however based upon very local matters. A more convincing way to “idendifine the individuone” (FW 51.6) that “frequently altered its ego” (FW 51.2) is to see that this process of making someone more European refers to an *Affe*, German for monkey. The German term *Affe* and the English *ape* are of course cognates, but also what in linguistics is called a pair of false friends, two terms with a clearly visible shared etymology, but whose meanings have shifted. While *ape* refers to a human-like primate, an *Affe* indicates a less intelligent monkey (the German word for *ape* is *Menschenaffe*). In the reference to

¹²⁹ “Elochlannensis” is also suggestive of the Hebrew term *elochai*, an invocation to God.

the monkey, Joyce is referring to English colonial and racial propaganda that disparagingly depicted the Irish as monkeys. Famous are cartoons such as “The British lion and the Irish monkey,” drawn by Dickens-illustrator John Leech and published in 1848 in the magazine *Punch*, which depicted John Mitchell, the editor of “The United Irishman,” as a small-sized monkey that needed to be put down by a lion wearing a crown.¹³⁰ Especially in the *Wake*, Joyce playfully as well as aggressively subverts these colonial stereotypes, implying that stronger cultural and political connections to continental Europe can liberate Ireland from the English imperial yoke.

If a new European Ireland can get rid of the smothering grip of one master, the English, it can also be influential in liberating it from the cultural dominance of the other, the Roman Catholic master. In the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen has a vision of his mother reproaching him for leaving for Europe: “You were going to do wonders, what? Missionary to Europe after fiery Columbanus” (*U* 3.192-3). In *Finnegans Wake* it is another Irish Catholic saint that is asked to liberate Ireland through a European connection: the already mentioned Saint Laurence O’Toole (1128-1180), archbishop of Dublin and saint protector of Ireland is invoked with the prayer “Beate Laurentie O’Tuli, Euro pro nobis” (*FW* 228.25-26). It should not come as a surprise that this prayer for Europeanisation is connected with the wish to “regain that absendee tarry easty, his città immediata” (*FW* 228.22-3) – a nostalgic remembrance informing the wish to return to an absent and long lost Habsburg Trieste and its association with the east. The concept of the tarry and thus filthy character of the city returns in the vision of the continent as a “Evropeahahn cheic house” (*FW* 205.29) which suggests the German *Scheißhaus*, a

¹³⁰ See Fegan, Melissa. *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845–1919*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 2002.

rather crude and graphic way to describe a toilet. Again, Joyce sees Trieste as a microcosm for a pan-European space. Speaking of tar and Trieste, Joyce repeats the association in the term “Tarriestinus” (*FW* 157.02), indicating a Triestine citizen in a hilarious mock Latin. The narrative principle of the *Wake*, according to which individual archetypes reincarnate themselves into different characters in a Viconian cyclical model of history, is applicable also to cities. A remarkable interpenetration of Dublin and Trieste is performed in the binomial description of a metropolitan area that is seen as “The Troia of towns and Carmen of cities” (*FW* 448.11-12). This description makes Dublin and Trieste overlap. *Troia* is a reference to Troy and the Trojan, i.e. stealthily subversive status of Dublin and Trieste in their respective empires. *Troia* means sow in Italian, a textual echo of Ireland, the “old sow that eats her furrow” (220) in the *Portrait*. By association, the term *troia* is in Italian a common description for a prostitute and this seems to be a reference to Joyce’s whoring habits in the Adriatic city.

The fair of Carmen was a trade event held at Wexford in antiquity. In the “Cyclops” episode, the Citizen chauvinistically brags about Ireland’s role as an international marketplace. He reminds his audience that “gold and Tyrian purple” (*U* 12.1250) were sold at the fair of Carmen. While Carmen stands for the international market in which the Irish traded with the Greeks and Phoenicians merchants, it also refers to Trieste, where Joyce, as McCourt suggests, saw Georges Bizet’s opera *Carmen*, as it was featured in the various theatres in the Adriatic city.¹³¹

The “Carmen of cities” reminds us of the fact that Joyce’s aesthetic construction of Europe oscillates between the acoustic pleasure of being “european” and the visual

¹³¹ In *Exiles* Richard is also fond of Bizet’s opera. McCourt, John. “Joyce’s Trieste: Città Musicalissima” Sebastian D.G. Knowles (ed.) *Bronze by Gold. The Music of Joyce*. Taylor and Francis, 1999.

dimension of Euro-optics as a vision for a democratic future. Joseph Valente confirms that “the transnational optic thus conjoins Joyce’s aesthetic method and social analysis in a fully synthesized or ‘binocular’ vision. Without this ‘doublin,’ without the impacting of multiple, nationally inflected discourses within a contested site of Irishness” (Valente in Rabaté 93)¹³² it would be impossible to grasp Joyce’s European project. Joyce’s reclaiming of an allegedly more authentic Irish identity moves along the pathway of a European cultural cosmopolitanism, along a textual journey that allows the audacious exploration of the expressive possibilities of the English language. The author can only reach “Dublire, per Neuropaths” (*FW* 488.26), the Irish capital via European paths or via neurological pathways. In fact, these European paths are strongly associated with neuropathy, an association that Joyce makes again in the expression “engels opened to neuropeans” (*FW* 519.01), where Joyce seems to suggest next to neurotic Europeans also the creation of new Europeans.

For Joyce the rationale behind writing *Finnegans Wake* was to explore alternative epistemological possibilities through language experimentation, imagining a grasping of the truth not through normative categories of perception and linguistic understanding, but through poetic genealogies and an epistemology of the vernacular. According to Finn Fordham, the mental illness of Joyce daughter Lucia played a crucial role in the construction of this language as it attempts to open a channel of communication between Joyce and his daughter. In one of the rare occasions in which Joyce accepted the severity of Lucia’s condition, Joyce attributed her state to an effect of his literary talent:

“Whatever spark of gift I possess has been translated to Lucia and has kindled a fire in

¹³² Valente, Joseph. “Joyce’s Politics: Race, Nation, and Transnationalism” Rabaté Jean-Michel. (ed.) *Palgrave advances in James Joyce studies*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2004: 73-96.

her brain” (quoted in Valente 1995, 102). If we accept this interpretation, the epistemological implications of this language appear to make more sense.

As for Svevo, this epistemology of the vernacular is primarily based on the deconstruction of standardized linguistic conventions. At the same time, the epistemological novelty introduced by psychoanalysis – the idea that truth lies in the hidden shadows of a subconscious – provides structure to the opposition against widespread medical and cultural discourses revolving around Max Nordau and Otto Weininger’s ideas of cultural degeneration. Nordau and Weininger associated disease with moral degeneration and nationalist movements were eager to apply this medical rhetoric to their xenophobic agenda. Joyce’s European transnationalism (as well as Svevo’s) appears as a project that invests in a vernacular epistemology that combines departures and deviations from linguistic norms with a validation of alternative modes of cultural perceptions. Both elements contribute to the establishment of a modernist politics of identity, one that reflects James, Giacomo and Shem Joyce.

While in Joyce images of Habsburg Trieste recurrently appear in *Finnegans Wake*,¹³³ Musil offers at the beginning of *The Man without Qualities* visions of the imperial capital Vienna. In the famous eighth chapter of the novel – in which the narrator describes *Kakania*, the literary transfiguration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – Vienna is described as a cosmopolitan metropolis, bustling with its commercial activities and the overwhelming traffic of modern cars. The narrator suspects that the fast pace of modern

¹³³ In the final passages of the *Wake*, Joyce offers another compelling description of Trieste. The reference to the city is made through an onomatopoeic rendering of the Bora. The Bora is a strong north-eastern wind on the Adriatic that regularly blows with exceptional fury in Trieste: “the Boraborayellers, blohablasting tegolhuts up to tetties and ruching sleets off the coppeehouses, playing ragnowrock rignewreck, with an irritant, penetrant, siphonopterous spuk” (*FW* 416.34-417.1). The passage can be glossed as follows: The yelling and howling Bora, blowing and blasting roof tiles (Italian *tegole*) off the roofs (Italian *tetti*) and pulling slates off the typically Austrian coffeehouses, playing spider rock, causing shipwreck, with an irritant, penetrating, siphoning spook.

life could distract city dwellers from their pursuit of happiness and suggests that they pause, looking for the “meerschneckenhaft geheimnisvollen Glück und dem tiefen Kuhblick, von dem schon die Griechen geschwärmt haben” (*MoE* 32) [“sea-slug-like, mysterious happiness and the deep, cow-eyed gaze the ancient Greeks admired” (*MwQ* 27-28)].¹³⁴ As the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter indicated, happiness is to be found in a momentary break from the modern world, at which we should look through the bovine eyes that our Mediterranean ancestors held in esteem.

Musil’s “cow-eyed gaze the ancient Greeks admired” is obviously the glance of Joyce’s Europa. It is clear that in their utopian vision of a future Europe, both Musil and Joyce resorted to similar tropes, based in the common appreciation of ancient mythology. Despite their profoundly different aesthetic sensibilities, the two authors re-interpreted Europa’s tale in similar fashion. A long tradition of patriarchal readings of the tale identified with the point of view of the male ravisher. As mentioned earlier, Ovid read Europa’s tale as the mythological elaboration of colonial conquest. Later, medieval theological interpretations construed the episode in Christian terms. In the *Divine Comedy*, for instance, Dante sees the rape in terms of God’s benevolent seizure and salvation of the human soul.

In their modernist efforts to “make it new,” Joyce and Musil adopt the point of view of the female victim, from whom they learn an important lesson. After the abduction, Europa is stranded on a new shore, Crete, where the god abandons her to raise their offspring. She is thus faced with a vision, her own vision, of a new home. This home will take her name and will become, in the centuries to come, Europe. Joyce and

¹³⁴ In the chapter on Musil, we have already discussed his metaphor of the body and soul, which are swept up by the muscles and nerves, just like Europa was abducted by the bull (*MwQ* 24 and *MoE* 28-9).

Musil understood that their questions, and our questions today, are the same as Europa's:
how to make a just Europe.

**Conclusion:
Claudio Magris and the Re-mapping of Europe**

What new perspective does this study of Habsburg literature open up? An implicit concern of this work is an invitation to read Central European literature anew. This re-evaluation of Habsburg literature should focus on the study of the linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic devices of a literary Europeanism across today's national cultures that emerged in the territories of the former empire.

I will briefly show how the questions in this dissertation can be further elucidated through the fiction of Triestine writer and scholar Claudio Magris. With his emphasis on the necessity of re-mapping the Europe of the former multicultural Habsburg territories, Magris testifies to the literary legacy of the empire. His work demonstrates the powerful allure that the multilingual empire still exerts in contemporary literature. It also shows how Trieste, after almost a century of political unification with Italy, still produces meaningful contributions to a literature that reflects the border cultures of the Habsburg Empire. The literary elaboration of the city's liminal status still occurs in Italian, a language that is not necessarily associated with Central Europe.

Claudio Magris places his fiction in the tradition of Musil and Svevo, and sees himself as the heir of a Habsburg literary culture. In the essayistic novel *Danubio* (1986) the variegated Danubian riverscape, already an important symbol in the iconography of Habsburg culture, becomes a metaphor for Europe's regional identities. The concept of *Mittleuropa* is a synecdoche for pan-European totality, and the murky waters of the Danube metonymically mirror the troubled state of Europe. The novel was published on the thirtieth anniversary of the armed Soviet invasion of Budapest. It addresses Cold-War

anxieties about the geopolitical balance in Europe, and revitalizes late-Habsburg utopias of a future united Europe. The narrator explains that a certain nostalgia for the Habsburg Empire originates in the recognition that the Nazi and Soviet regimes made the old empire appear as comparatively benign. The narrating voice further maintains that while the Habsburg myth can become the vehicle of a political imaginary, it is the history of Central Europe that guards us from alluring promises of an all-too easy cosmopolitanism.

In the novel, the narrator embarks upon a journey following the course of the river and keeping a travelogue in which he records his impressions along the way. Jotting down notes, he claims that Europe is a literary invention. Nourished by the fleeting pages of fiction, “lo spirito europeo si nutre di libri” (312) [“the European spirit feeds on books” (265)]. The text emphasizes the literary genealogy of the idea of Europe by describing this fictional creation as a utopian nostalgia that looks back to the Habsburg Empire in order to imagine a better future for Europe. Europe’s legacy resides in the last years of the empire, when no future was in sight: “Ogni erede absburgico è un vero uomo del futuro, perchè ha imparato, prima di tanti altri, a vivere senza un futuro, nell’interruzione di ogni continuità storica, e cioè non a vivere ma a sopravvivere” (313) [“Every man of the Habsburg era is a true man of the future, because he learnt, earlier than most others, to live without a future, in the absence of any historical continuity; and that is, not to live but to survive” (266)]. Reading this passage through the lens of Musil, one could say that Magris’s construction is a Europe without qualities.

The narrator reflects on the alternating fortune of the populations that inhabited the Danube regions. In particular, the narrative voice explores the history of the encounter between the Roman Empire and Germanic tribes. Close to Regensburg, the

Romans constructed the Limes, the sturdy stonewall that functioned as the frontier between the civilized Empire and the barbarians, in an attempt to contain the migratory flux of Germanic populations. In the description of the Limes, the narrator does not simply insist on the materiality of the fortified barrier, but also emphasizes its aura of impenetrability and its psychological function as sharp line of separation between one world and system of beliefs and another. And yet, the frontier failed to hold back the barbaric invasions, the Empire crumbled and thus “i disprezzati barbari sono diventati i fabbricanti della nuova Europa” (113) “[t]he despised barbarians became the artificers of the new Europe” (98)]. The history of this region shows how the crossing of a border seems to be a necessary condition for a regeneration of European identity. In other words, the historical development of the idea of Europe appears to be the result of a paradigm of construction and subsequent destruction of a border. Or: it is a process that dissolves the dichotomy that opposes identity to alterity and incorporates what previously was perceived as otherness. Earlier in the text, the narrator had clarified the stages of this metamorphosis, in a passage that is reminiscent of Italo Svevo’s composite cultural identity: “Acquistare una nuova identità non significa tradire la prima, ma arricchire la propria persona di una nuova anima” (45) [“To acquire a new identity does not mean betraying the first one, but enriching one’s own with a new soul” (43)]. For a composite European identity the notion of a border, be it a physical boundary or a conceptual barrier, is a necessary element inasmuch as it ought to be crossed and transcended. The narrator of *Danubio* makes this point explicit by adding: “La nostra storia, la nostra civiltà, la nostra Europa sono figlie di quel Limes” (113) [“Our history, our culture, our Europe are daughters of that Limes” (98)]. The idea of Europe represents the apex of a

climactic progression, emphatically foregrounded by the rhythmic structure of an anaphora. Despite the climax, the narrator does not subscribe to a teleological model of history, to the necessity of a Hegelian unfolding of the Spirit. For the narrator, history is written in the subjunctive, abiding by the laws of Musil's *Möglichkeitssinn*, a skeptical sense of possibility, according to which things could develop in one way or, else, may follow a radically different historical path. The development of a European consciousness is not a necessity. It is, at best, a historical accident. Because of its contingency and precariousness, the idea of Europe needs to be nourished by literature in order to survive.

In his journey, the narrator fills his travelogue with annotations concerning the local histories of long-lost tribes and peoples like Goths, Pannonians, Huns, Avars, Pechenegs and Magyars, who once inhabited these regions. The former linguistic and ethnic boundaries make up an alternative map of Europe, as they do not coincide with contemporary borders. By including these populations into his re-mapping of Europe, the author reclaims what the Czech novelist and critic Milan Kundera provokingly called the "European Orient" as an integral and indivisible part of the historical, cultural and literary legacy of Europe.¹³⁵ Magris's discussion rests upon the notion that the political pressures

¹³⁵ In "The Tragedy of Central Europe," published in the *New York Review of Books* two years before the publication of *Danubio*, Kundera engaged in a sharp polemic that was triggered by a book review comparing his prose to the style of Dostoevsky. Kundera said that the comparison with the Russian novelist was certainly flattering, but that he also vehemently opposed such association. The reason for such misrepresentation is the postwar division of the continent, ensuing from the Yalta Agreement that had artificially split Europe in two parts. Kundera denounced what he calls a widespread inner-European Orientalism, i.e. the association of Eastern European texts with the Russian literary tradition. According to the Czech writer, the political influence of Soviet Russia in Eastern Europe produced in the West the erroneous conviction that the literature written in Slavic languages and Hungarian is not European. He claims that there is only one Europe, and the division between East and West is an artificial separation imposed by the Cold War. Kundera claims that the history of Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes and Hungarians (who are not Slavic) is entirely Western. They participated in the discovery of the classics during the Renaissance, saw the rise of Gothic architecture, shared the Baroque experience, had close contacts with the Germanic world and suffered in the struggle between Catholicism and the Protestant Reformation (*The Curtain* 43-44). To the common experience of these historical moments, one might add

of the Cold War have contributed to a revisionist rewriting of the cultural history of the Habsburg Empire.

Magris re-claiming of the “Eastern Orient” as a vital part of Europe is an important gesture towards a more detailed understanding of the Habsburg canon. In its anti-colonial conceptualization of Europe, the Habsburg canon provides a proper context for the study of mixed cultures and intercultural dialogues of areas that traditionally have been neglected. In addition to the discursive colonialism of literary representations that frame the “Other” as an alien entity, a study of the relationships between Western-most and Eastern-most areas can emphasize the negotiations between identity and alterity, sameness and difference. More comparative studies are necessary to compensate for this lack of scholarly attention, studies that focus on the interaction of German and Italian literatures with Slavic and Hungarian traditions.

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---. *Die Schlaflose Welt. Essays 1909-1941*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003.

Curriculum Vitae
Salvatore Pappalardo

Education

2005 – 2011 PhD., Comparative Literature, Rutgers University
1998 – 2003 B.A., Translation Studies, University of Trieste, Italy

Occupations and Positions Held

2010 – 2011 Andrew W. Mellon Fellow, Rutgers University
2009 – 2010 Transliterations Fellow, Rutgers University
2006 – 2009 Teaching Assistant, Program in Comparative Literature, Rutgers University
2005 – 2006 Transliterations Fellow, Rutgers University

Publications

2011 (forthcoming) “Waking Europa: Joyce, Ferrero, and the Metamorphosis of Irish History,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 34.2 (forthcoming Winter 2011)

2011 (forthcoming) “Dockings on *Danubio*: Claudio Magris and the Rhetoric of Submerged Europe,” *Re-Mapping Europe: History, Memory, Identity in Claudio Magris’s Narratives and Plays*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

2011 (forthcoming) Review of Massimo Baioni’s Risorgimento in Camicia Nera. Studi, Istituzioni, Musei nell’Italia Fascista *Italian Culture* 29.1 (forthcoming 2011)

2010 Review of Simon Jander’s Die Poetisierung des Essays. Rudolf Kassner, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Gottfried Benn *Modern Austrian Literature* 43.1 (2010): 87-9.

2010 Review of Allen Thiher’s Understanding Robert Musil *Modern Austrian Literature* vol. 43.3 (2010): 84-5.