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Dominique Kirchner Reill. *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire.* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9780674244245 (hardcover, \$35.00/£28.95/€31.50).

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 INTRODUCTION BY PIETER M. JUDSON, EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

In November of 1918, German nationalist activists and regional administrators in the northern Bohemian cities of Reichenberg/Liberec and Teplitz/Teplice proclaimed an independent “Deutschböhmen” or “German Bohemia.” Their goal was to join this new state formation to a post-war German Austrian Republic and eventually, through an *Anschluss*, to another empire, the German *Reich*. Deutschböhmen existed for barely a few weeks, however, and historians, when they mentioned it at all, consigned it to the dustbin of curiosities made up of failed post-war nationalist projects. Anyone who uses the Austrian State Archives to investigate this short-lived “German Bohemia” however, will encounter what seems a surprising omission. A few official documents do make loud nationalist assertions about the necessity of keeping the region in the hands of “Germans.” Most documents, however, reveal administrative efforts to manage impossible crises of human survival faced by the local population in December 1918. Petitions flooded in from starving, freezing, and ill constituents, while letters from local administrators protested the regular loss of electricity in their offices, and German Bohemia’s government begged Vienna to supply them not with soldiers, but with coal.

Within a month, Czechoslovak troops and administrators had arrived to establish their own regime and assume the challenges of feeding people and keeping the electricity running. Historians who dismiss this case as a failed nationalist effort, however, may be missing the larger lessons this incident can teach us about the meaning of the post-war moment to the people who experienced it. Of course, German Bohemia didn’t stand a chance at the Paris Peace Conferences, but most of its citizens were emphatically not thinking about nationhood. They needed a functioning administration to get them through a harsh post-war pandemic winter. Familiar imperial administrators seemed to offer a better guarantee for survival than the promises of a brand-new experimental state proclaimed far-away in Prague. Their need, and not their nationalist emotion, explains why they engaged with the remaining administrators and bureaucrats who stayed on in their posts after the formal collapse of Imperial Austria. At the same time, those administrators, as well as the Czechoslovak ones who later replaced them, closely followed the effective bureaucratic practices that had worked well for their Habsburg predecessors, even as they publicly rejected empire and all it had stood for.

Dominique Reill’s *Fiume Crisis* constitutes a brilliant and timely intervention that provides historians the tools to integrate histories like that of Deutschböhmen into broader narratives about nationalist politics, state building, and postwar survival that will help us better understand Europe’s interwar history. Her book challenges the work of generations of historians who have been transfixed by—or perhaps complicit in reinforcing—the apparent ideological triumph of nationhood over empire in 1918. Her story examines the local as a way to re-think the general. And Fiume is the perfect choice for that. The city was at the very center of diplomatic controversies and crises immediately after the war. Yet until now, historians have generally ignored the strategies and practices pursued by Fiumians themselves, preferring to focus instead on the antics of poet-soldier Gabriele D’Annunzio, the governments of Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, or the efforts of the diplomats at Paris. In so doing, historians rendered invisible the many practical imperial continuities that continued to structure people’s daily lives, their hopes, and their expectations for the future after empires like the Habsburg Monarchy had been replaced by self-styled nation states or national empires.

How exactly did formerly imperial populations respond to the needs of the moment and locate the possible avenues for pursuing a better future? How did they relate to questions of nationhood and empire as they contemplated a future without Austria-Hungary? In making the people of Fiume her subject, Reill takes us on a radically different journey, one that renders the familiar alien and proposes a profoundly different and historically contingent understanding of what happened after empires collapsed. In doing so she also offers us a sobering reminder that nationalism works in many—often seemingly contradictory—ways, that it doesn’t always mean what we think it means today, and that it can serve many local ends. And all of this in a book that—refreshingly—is clearly not about nationalism.

Is it really so difficult for historians to look at Fiume and not see D’Annunzio and the shadow of fascist leader Benito Mussolini? This classic misdirection—seeing the Fiume crisis as a story about fascism’s origins and character—prevents us from understanding the Fiume crisis on its own terms, and in its particular context. Fiume may have had a large Italian-speaking population, but Reill reminds us that it was also a city that had asserted a particular imperial identity in its recent

history. As a provisional *corpus separatum* since 1870, Fiume had occupied a place of privileged political and economic autonomy within the Kingdom of Hungary. Its status as an autonomous port in the Austro-Hungarian empire (Europe's largest free-trade zone) connected it to global trade networks that assured it increasing prosperity and rapid demographic expansion before the war. The Hungarian government invested vast sums to build up its infrastructure, partly to rival Austria's Trieste, so that by 1914 Fiume was one of Europe's ten largest port cities.

As Reill repeatedly shows, in every aspect of social, political, economic, and cultural life, Fiumians knew the benefits they reaped from their semi-autonomous status within a global empire. Even nationalists within the city oriented their local demands to the particular status of their city. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary, like many former subjects of empire, Fiumians now sought to replicate as best they could their former status in the context of the new world. As Reill deftly illustrates, Italian and Croatian speakers (among others) did not simply seek to attach the city to Italy or to the new South Slav state for nationalist reasons. Continuing the city's global status meant successfully joining their city to another empire, and for many practical reasons Italy seemed the best candidate. But this did not at all require succumbing to the demands of Italian nationalism or seeking to destroy the city's multi-national and multi-confessional character, not to mention its recent tradition of autonomy, all things Reill points to in the context of almost every conceivable aspect of social, political, economic, and cultural life in Fiume.

If, as Aimee M. Genell points out, Reill's story doesn't simply involve a "persistence" of Habsburg institutional structures and administrative practices but rests instead on *active* decisions made by Fiumians to preserve imperial institutions and regain the city's prewar prosperity and autonomous status, then historians need drastically to reconsider their views of the post-war years in Europe. What if imperial structures lived on in the successor states not simply out of force of habit, or because they were "available," but because local people actively chose them? And as Genell asks forcefully, what are the consequences for us historians of having gotten this story wrong for so long? All four of the insightful scholars who comment on Reill's book raise critical questions and demonstrate why this book matters so much. But it is Genell's question about the stakes for historians that come closest to my own sense of the book's importance. Reill is one of several prominent historians right now who ask us to rethink our understanding of the post-war moment, the end of empire, and the significance of the new creations that replaced it, all from the bottom up, so to speak. Her commitment to linking on-the-ground stories of typical individuals in Fiume to the larger significance of these events constitutes a masterclass in how to do a persuasive and meaningful global history. More than that, it reminds us of the severe consequences to our own world of having substituted for so long narratives originally crafted by nationalists themselves for a more complex analysis that might explain the key, often hidden continuities between the world of empires and that of self-styled nation states. In the words of Ágnes Ordasi in this forum, this book should be translated into as many languages as possible, and I will add, as quickly as possible.

Participants:

Dominique Kirchner Reill received her Ph.D. with Distinction from Columbia University. Currently she is an Associate Professor in History at the University of Miami. Her first book, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2012 and was awarded the Center for Austrian Studies' Book Award and Honorable Mention from the Smith Award. Her next book, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* came out in 2020 with Harvard University's Belknap Press and received an Honorable Mention from the Jelavich Book Prize. Currently she is working on her next manuscript "The Habsburg Mayor of New York: Fiorello LaGuardia" while also serving as an editor for the Purdue University Press book series *Central European Studies*, Associate Review Editor for the *American Historical Review*, and Steering Committee Member of the *Modern European History Collective*.

Pieter M. Judson is Professor of nineteenth and twentieth-century history at the European University Institute in Florence. His most recent book, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Harvard University Belknap Press 2016) has been translated into eleven languages. Judson served as editor of the *Austrian History Yearbook* for ten years and is currently president of the

Central European History Society. His books have won several prizes, including the Karl Vogelsang award from the Austrian government for *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Harvard 2006). Judson is currently co-editing the *Cambridge History of the Habsburg Empire*, and with Tara Zahra completing a history of the First World War in Austria-Hungary for Oxford University Press.

Giulia Albanese is Associate Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Padua. Her research focuses on fascism, political violence and authoritarian cultures in the interwar years, and more recently with citizenship in the same context. She is the author of *The March on Rome. Violence and the Rise of Italian Fascism* (Routledge 2019; a first edition was published in Italian in 2006), and *Dittature mediterranee. Sovversioni fasciste e colpi di stato in Italia, Spagna, Portogallo* (Laterza, 2016). With Roberta Pergher she edited *In the society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Aimee M. Genell is an assistant professor of history at the University of West Georgia. Her manuscript, "Empire by Law: The Ottoman Origins of the Mandates System in the Middle East," (Columbia University Press, forthcoming), traces the Ottoman roots of the post-imperial political order in the Middle East. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University and held a Postdoctoral Fellowship in International Security Studies at Yale University.

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Ágnes Ordasi majored in History at the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (Budapest) and received her degree in 2014. She is now a Ph.D. candidate at the same university. She is about to defend her dissertation titled "Social Conflicts and Political Development in Fiume in the Era of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy." At the same time, she works as an archivist at the Hungarian National Archives in Budapest. Apart from the history of Fiume during the nineteenth century, she is also interested in the methodology, social and political networks, the use of power within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Habsburg expansion in the Balkan region.

Nevila Pahumi, Ph.D., is an independent researcher who specializes on the history of the Modern Balkans. Her work focuses on broad issues encompassing borderlands, empire, nationalism, gender, religion, and education. Most recently she was a Nash Fellow in Albanian Studies at University College, London and she also taught Advanced Placement European history in Charlottesville, Virginia in the United States. Pahumi is currently a reference librarian in Greek and Albanian at the Library of Congress.

REVIEW BY GIULIA ALBANESE, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA; TRANSLATED BY SERGIO KNIPE

The very title of Dominique Kirchner Reill's book suggests that this volume intertwines two different narratives, or two ways of telling the same story. The first part, *The Fiume Crisis*, which is the main title, evokes the diplomatic as well as political conflict which kept much of Europe – and certainly Italy – in suspense in the aftermath of the War, particularly between September 1919 and Christmas 1920. The subtitle, *Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*, instead recalls a different story: that of the successor states which redefined themselves in the aftermath of the First World War and the Habsburg Empire's defeat. How can the pieces of this story be put back together again in such a way as to leave room for both of these historical itineraries? How can this historical moment be rethought by intellectually setting it at the crossroads of different problems, languages, and perspectives? This is the aim of Reill's volume, yet the weaving back together again of these two histories is far from easy. Until very recently, the history of the post-war period in Fiume was almost exclusively presented as the tale of the occupation carried out by D'Annunzio and his legionaries. The agency of citizens/residents and their daily lives were neither part of the narrative nor of the problem.¹ Rather, as the city of non-conformism and of a new kind of politics and reflecting a broader plan to develop a new political language, Fiume was seen as one of many possible European revolutions in the fraught post-war period – as the spearhead and capital of Italian nationalism.² In its most extreme representations, the Fiume experience has even been interpreted as anticipating 1968 in terms of being a staging of a transgressive, utopian, and festive way of living fifty years earlier.³

Reill looks at Fiume from a different perspective. She describes the decision made by the city's political ruling class to declare their Italianness and the ways in which this Italianness and Italianisation were conceived, envisaged, and realised in the crucial months between the end of the war and Christmas 1920, when D'Annunzio's experiment was brought to an end for good by the Italian Army's shelling of the city and expulsion of its occupiers. In order to reconstruct these events, the author analyses the socio-economic history of the city, addresses the question of who the inhabitants of Fiume were, and investigates what they wanted, how they acted, and how they dealt with the issue of their Italianness in their everyday lives. In those years, as Reill observes, Fiume was largely inhabited by people who were not official residents and who had never been overly concerned about their status as foreigners without documents attesting to the legality of their residence in the city. But with the political reorganisation of those years, as Reill notes, these individuals became increasingly exposed to the risk of deportation – although this measure was often difficult to implement – and increasingly aware (like people throughout Europe, one might say) of the need to have documents and statements proving their legal citizenship rights.

In this context, Reill argues that different coinages were circulating, not all of them legal tender, and at first no attempt was even made to adopt a uniform monetary policy: in fact, it was assumed that maintaining a mixed coinage would aid the economies of the cities. But it is not just the circulation of coinage that reveals a more complex and less defined reality than we might imagine. In Fiume, at least until 1920, the legislative framework as well was only vaguely connected to Italian legislation. By contrast, the author argues, some of the Empire's civil and social rights, such as divorce, were maintained and new ones were attained, such as female suffrage, which Italians only came to enjoy decades later. What we have, then, in Reill's analysis, is a deeply multi-ethnic city – in terms of its customs and everyday life – in which most of the population spoke at least a couple of languages and switched from one to another depending on the circumstances (this was also true in the two years of D'Annunzio's rule). In this context, politics was incapable, and in many respects even unwilling, to launch a

1 One exception within this historiographical picture is Raul Pupo's recent volume, which traces a long-term history of multicultural Fiume, particularly in its difficult unfolding across the 20th century: see Pupo, *Fiume città di passione* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2018).

2 Particularly significant is Michael Arthur Ledeen, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

3 Claudia Salaris's volume *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D'Annunzio a Fiume* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008) is particularly explicit in this respect, but the topic has been variously taken up by other scholars too, including – most recently – Pupo.

policy of complete linguistic Italianisation. In Fiume, not even school curricula were legally required to conform to Italian ones, and in any case the transformation of the imperial curricula did not necessarily entail that they be taught by native Italian speakers. Hence, even the most ardent pro-Italian nationalists did not feel the need to Italianise their names as a marker of ethnic homogeneity reflecting their political project: most chose to keep their original surnames rather than change them.

What we are dealing with, then, is a context in which fluid identities were inevitably part of everyday life, and in which the city's Italian-ness was envisaged in terms of the preservation of an autonomous status that would enable the unfolding of a process which was locally defined, yet largely unconnected to the centralised state which Italy represented and which Fascism was later to champion in a far more rigid way.

The study of these phenomena enables the author to engage with different research methods so as to navigate the various aspects of the nationalisation of Fiume's inhabitants by investigating their choices in the light of economic history, the history of citizenship and rights, and the history of education and language. Reill proves capable of nimbly finding her way across different historiographical levels and sources, allowing the reader to view similar phenomena from different perspectives. Reill reconstructs a complex picture which also provides some original ideas for a reinterpretation of post-war Europe, which over the last few decades has been chiefly defined as a period of violence and conflict (something it undoubtedly was) rather than as a context also marked by the development of new political proposals and experiments.⁴ Reill's book illustrates the existence of various possible ways of interpreting these historical events: accounts which do not necessarily end with the experience of the nationalist and Fascist extremism that emerged in the interwar period. This is not to say that Reill aims to partly rehabilitate nationalism, but simply that in her scholarly trajectory she is once again revealing, as she did in her previous volume, – the presence of distinct currents within the great stream of nationalist thought and political practice in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries⁵.

The Fiume Crisis is a fine book: well-written and full of insights and food for thought. It is a study that makes the most of a season of significant historiographical innovation that has placed the deconstruction of the process of nationalising the masses and the nation-state at its centre in order to provide a ground-up reconstruction of what the building of a nation-state meant for the millions of people affected by this process, and how ambiguous the process of appropriating certain catchwords was.⁶ Reill thus succeeds in highlighting how, even among the most fervent nationalists, we often find ambiguities, non-conformist everyday choices, and a complex range of contradictions in which individuals' economic, social, and daily interests and feelings were not always in line with their ideological drive.

⁴ See, for a general overview, Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux 2016), but also Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Borut Klabian, "Borders in Arms: Political Violence in the North-Eastern Adriatic after the Great War," *Actae Histriae* 26:4 (2018): 985-1002.

⁵ Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists who Feared the Nation. Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste and Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁶ One must refer here to those studies which have analysed the end of empires and the role played by nationalisation processes in their defeat by carefully examining the issue of 'national indifference': for a discussion of this topic and its implications, see T. Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69:1 (Spring 2010): 93-119. One of the first works to address this aspect was Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); see also Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole. Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); and Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

Reill's volume belongs to a historiographical period that places everyday ways of living and social aspects at the centre of the historical narrative, in contrast to the self-narrative of the ruling classes – or at any rate with the aim of presenting the political sphere as something more complex than this self-narrative. However, it is not the case that the picture of social and culture relations she draws leaves no room for politics at all. On the contrary, Reill shows how, at the crossroads between imperial politics and national politics, in the space between national and supra-national political entities, a political project took shape that partly differed from the classical nationalist one: a project for the autonomy of a city that was combined with the endorsement of an Italianisation project, which nonetheless was not perceived in terms of assimilation into the Italian State.

The Fiume Crisis is therefore an important volume which sheds light on hitherto completely neglected aspects of the history of a crucial symbolic event for post-war Italy, without overlooking what the study of Fiume and its history has meant from a historiographical and symbolic standpoint for the history of Italy and Fascism. Particularly significant in this respect is the far from obvious choice to end the book by recalling the case of the police officer Giovanni Palatucci, the invention of his role as anti-Nazi rescuer of the city's Jews and designation by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous among the Nations, and the real reasons why he was imprisoned by the Nazis and sent to Dachau, namely: his attempt to negotiate with the Allies a future of political and administrative autonomy for the city of Fiume.⁷ Once again, this is a way for the author to recall the different trajectories of nationalism in Fiume and beyond, and the intertwining of different histories, motivations, passions, and interests.

Within this framework, however, what is felt to be missing is an attempt to stitch these two histories together: the book does not fully illustrate the relationship between the legionaries and their political project on the one hand, and the residents of Fiume – who carried on with their everyday lives – on the other. Reill repeatedly refers to the intertwining of the local inhabitants' lives with those of D'Annunzio and his legionaries when she speaks of the impact of the September 1920 Carnaro constitution, the encounter between Fiumans (particularly women) and legionaries, and of how daily life continued to unfold more or less as usual and without major disruptions even in the aftermath of the Christmas 1920 shelling. Yet, Reill perhaps does not sufficiently discuss the long-term developments in the post-imperial daily life of Fiume's citizens in relation to the short-term presence of the legionaries in the cities and their political action. So while noting with admiration the important research carried out, one is also eager to learn more about the interaction between these two worlds in order to be able to weave together the threads of these two histories during the complex post-war years.

⁷ See Marco Coslovich, *Giovanni Palatucci: Una giusta memoria*, Bibliotheca (Atripalda: Mephite, 2008), beside many article on the Italian an international press, such as Patricia Cohen, "Italian Praised for Saving Jews Is Now Seen as Nazi Collaborator," *New York Times*, June 20, 2013.

Ghost States of Empire

On 30 October 1918, the Italian National Council, which was composed of leading members of Fiume's municipal government, proclaimed that the ethnically diverse Habsburg port city would be annexed to Italy in the name of Wilsonian self-determination. But the American President, Woodrow Wilson, had other plans. Fiume (today Rijeka, in Croatia) was awarded to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in the name of future economic viability—a position that prompted the Italian Delegation to leave the Paris Peace Conference. Nearly a year later, in response to Wilson's refusal to support Italian territorial claims, the nationalist poet-soldier, Gabriel D'Annunzio, and his paramilitary forces entered the city under the banner of "Italy or Death," and unleashed a fifteen-month occupation which only ended with the creation of the Free State of Fiume—a mini-state backed by the League of Nations, under Italian protection. "The Fiume Question," as it was known, more often than not has been understood as a harbinger of what was to come: the rise of fascism and the failure of the liberal order created at the Paris Peace Conference.⁸ On the surface, the Fiume Crisis might look like a tale about nationalism supplanting empire, but what if that wasn't the main story in the turbulent years following the collapse of the Habsburg Empire? More importantly, what are the historical consequences of getting this interpretation wrong?

Dominique Kirchner Reill's beautifully written monograph, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*, reexamines the process and consequences of undoing empire in this autonomous port town on the Adriatic, and does so through a stunning, archivally grounded analysis of how locals managed to recreate their world after imperial collapse. Instead of understanding the Fiume Crisis as a dress rehearsal for Benito Mussolini's March on Rome and the triumph of nationalism in post-World War I Europe, Reill argues that in the critical three-year period between 1918 and 1922, Fiumians revived imperial structures to stay afloat in a nationalizing world. She frames this augment through the idea of the "ghost imperial state" (20). It wasn't just that some Habsburg structures persisted, but that Fiumians actively preserved, and at times reworked, imperial institutions in order to revive the city's prewar autonomous political status and economic prosperity. To show precisely how the empire lived on in "the smallest of the postwar successor states" (22), the book is structured around the pillars of the state. Each chapter takes up pressing issues in the chaotic shift from empire to state: money, law, citizenship, propaganda and nationalism.

Why does the idea of the ghost state of empire matter for this particular history? Before the First World War, Fiume had a special legal and political status within the Hungarian half of the empire. Local elites vied with Budapest to gain more autonomy and economic control. At the same time, by the 1890s, Fiume was a booming industrialized port town. For locals after 1918, remaking the state in the image of the empire was a pragmatic move, and one that was designed to preserve local autonomy and recover the wealth of the prewar economy. Reill's interpretation helps explain why so many Fiumians—including Hungarians and Croatians—wanted to be annexed by Italy. It had much less to do with nationalism, and much more to do with continuing to exist as an autonomous city within a larger, more affluent empire. In the search for economic and political stability, locals opted for what they knew rather than for what was revolutionary. The ideas and institutions of empire did not simply vanish overnight; instead imperial structures lived on in the successor state—and not just because they were available, but because locals actively chose them.

While the ghost state of empire persuasively shifts how we have come to understand the Fiume Crisis, for non-specialists the book offers an opportunity to think about what this approach might mean, not just for Fiume and the other Habsburg successor states, but for all the states and mandates that were created out of the vanquished empires in 1918. As Reill herself notes, "Over half of Europe's residents found themselves suddenly without a governing body to administer their economy, their laws, or their benefits...Fiume's on-the-ground history is emblematic of the demands and strategies employed in a world whose ruling empires had dissolved without new states ready to replace them" (21). Imperial subjects across the

⁸ Reill provides an excellent overview of the historiographical debates in Italian and English. See her introduction and chapter 1.

Habsburg, Romanov, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman empires suddenly found themselves facing similar economic, legal, and political crises as the fifty thousand inhabitants of Fiume.

As a legal historian of the late Ottoman empire and the modern Middle East, I can offer some thoughts on the implications of Reill's argument for the Ottoman case. Before the First World War, the Ottoman empire stretched across three continents. Like the Habsburg empire, the empire was multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse—the population was about three-quarters Muslim.⁹ By November of 1918, the Arab provinces were under British control. The imperial capital, Istanbul, was divided into three occupation zones governed by the British, the French, and the Italians. Only inaccessible areas in central and eastern Anatolia were not under direct Allied control. A year later, two governments, one in Istanbul and one in Ankara, vied for control of the state. What might the ghost state of empire have looked like in Istanbul, the empire's provincial capitals Baghdad and Jerusalem, or its rich port cities İzmir/Smyrna, Beirut and Kuwait, or in villages in Anatolia and the Arabian Peninsula? How did Arabs, Turks, Armenians, Kurds, and Greeks remake their understanding of state? What currencies did people carry in their wallets in Istanbul? How did Ottoman laws shape the process of constitution making in Damascus? Who counted as a citizen? What kind of state did Ottoman subjects imagine and want in 1918?

One could argue that it is impossible to consider the portability the ghost state model to the Ottoman empire, given the radically different outcomes of imperial defeat in Europe versus the Middle East. While former imperial subjects in Europe were awarded states, Britain and France divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire between themselves as mandates guaranteed by the League of Nations. In much of post-Ottoman Middle East, former citizens received a new iteration of empire—the mandatory powers abolished rights Ottoman Arabs had possessed to political participation and parliamentary representation.¹⁰ The Republic of Turkey, the main successor state to the Ottoman Empire, only secured independence and recognition through continuing the war, by fighting against the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) and the various Allied regimes of occupation in the capital and across much of the empire.

At the same time, the war in the Middle East looked rather different than in Europe. For starters, the Ottoman First World War began with the Italian invasion and occupation of Libya and the Dodecanese islands in 1911 and continued unabated through the fall of 1922. The war profoundly rearranged the demographic map of the former Ottoman lands, most profoundly in the new Turkey. The ratio of Muslim and non-Muslim populations in cities like Beirut, Salonika, İzmir, and Istanbul fluctuated wildly between 1918 and 1923. Ottoman Salonika, which had been the only Jewish majority city in Europe, was already deeply Hellenized by the mid 1920s. Beirut, which had always had a large Christian population, received an influx of Armenian refugees who escaped the genocide. Istanbul was suddenly much less diverse and cosmopolitan. After years of continuous warfare, the influx of refugees from the Balkans, the deportation and massacres of the Armenians, and

⁹ In the last few years, several new works have been published on the Ottoman First World War, as well the fraught political period leading up to it. For an overview of the war, and the social composition of the late Ottoman empire see Mustafa Aksakal, "The Ottoman Empire" in Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War, 1911-1923*, edited by (New York: Oxford: University Press, 2015); Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: University Press, 2010); Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford: University Press, 2018); Melanie S. Tanielian, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021). For recent works on political debates among the various ethnic groups of the empire see Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). For population statistics see Cem Behar, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ve Türkiye'nin Nüfusu, 1500-1927* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1996).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Thompson, *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs: The Syrian Arab Congress and the Destruction of its Historic Liberal-Islamic Alliance* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020).

the internationally sanctioned population transfer between Greece and what would become Turkey, the demographic map of Ottoman lands was radically transformed between 1911 and 1923.

Despite these differences between the wartime and post-war experiences in the Middle East and Europe, Reill's approach has much offer historians of the late Ottoman Empire—both in terms of underlying assumptions about the role of nationalism in state making during the Armistice era (1918-1923), and more importantly, the reworking of Ottoman political, legal, and administrative institutions in the successor states.

The Armistice in the Middle East, as in Europe, was a period of economic and political instability and chaos. Throughout this brief period, the future of the state was bitterly fought over between Ottoman subjects, and against Allied occupiers who were determined to win territorial compensation for wartime sacrifices.¹¹ Historians have largely treated 1918 as a sharp dividing line between the Ottoman past and the emergence of the Arab Middle East—a division that has shaped the field of Middle Eastern history in profound ways, determining research languages and the archives that historians might access.¹² For the most part, the historiography has assumed that elites who controlled the Ottoman state in 1918 wanted nothing more than to establish a Turkish nation-state in its place, and to finally be freed from the burdens of empire.¹³ By 1918 in the face of imperial collapse, all of the subject nationalities wanted out. While there were absolutely Ottoman subjects who dreamed of the nation in 1918, the reality on the ground was far more complex and remained so through 1923—when the final peace treaty was signed between the Allies and what would become the new Republic of Turkey.

This is where I would argue that Reill's book can help us to rethink some of our stickier suppositions about the Armistice period in the Middle East. By focusing on local inhabitants and examining their practical calculations as much as how imperial mentalities shaped particular visions of the state, we might start to make sense of some of the stories that do not fit comfortably into the triumph of the Wilsonian nationalist narrative. For instance, little substantive work has been done on

¹¹ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19-20.

¹² Modern Middle Eastern historiography is generally divided between before and after 1918—a division that extends not just chronologically but also linguistically. While many historians on both sides of 1918 might know Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, the post-Ottoman era is dominated by works based on Arabic sources. Nineteenth century Ottoman historians rely heavily upon documents from the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, as well as local archival and printed sources in all the major languages in the empire, including Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Ladino, Bulgarian, Kurdish, Albanian, Romanian, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian, as well as Turkish sources written in the Greek and Armenian alphabets.

¹³ The idea of the Turkish nation-in-waiting is embedded in the official historiography of the Republic of Turkey, best represented by Mustafa Kemal's six-day speech on the founding of the Republic. Known simply as *Nutuk* ("speech"), Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), *Nutuk: Gazi Mustafa Kemal tarafından* (Ankara: Türk Tayyare Cemiyeti, 1927). For an early English translation see *A speech delivered by Ghazi Mustapha Kemal* (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1929). In post-World War I memoirs, several late Ottoman intellectuals who ultimately supported the Republic, replicated Mustafa Kemal's views—although a close reading of what these same intellectuals wrote during the early years of the Armistice period presents a more complicated picture. See for example, Halide Edib (Adivar), *The Turkish Ordeal* (New York: Century Company, 1928) and *Türk'ün Ateşle İmtihanı* (İstanbul: Can, 2016); Ahmed Emin (Yalman), *Turkey in the World War* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1930), *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim* (İstanbul: Yenilik Basımevi, 1970). While the debates on the founding of the republic and the collapse of the empire are much more extensive in Turkish than in English, the idea that most everyone from high state officials to non-Muslim subjects were ready to ditch the empire in 1918 (if not before) is a persistent theme in the historiography. Finally, compared to earlier periods in Ottoman history, there are far fewer works on the mechanics of the collapse of the empire, and fewer still on the Armistice in English. See Nur Bilge Criss, *İstanbul Under Allied Occupation 1918-1923* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). The excellent new work on Ottoman First World War generally ends with the signing of the Armistice in 1918.

elites in the imperial capital who early on attempted to work with the Allied occupation.¹⁴ In the literature, these figures are treated as little more than bumbling traitors who desperately clung to power and tried to sell out the Turkish nation. Yet, the Istanbul government and its supporters were composed of liberal bureaucrats and intellectuals who had forged strategies and procedures for dealing with European demands on deeply uneven terms.¹⁵ State officials were used to pragmatic politics and getting what they could out of negotiations with Europe and many tried desperately to hold onto the empire. It wasn't until March of 1920, when Britain effectively dissolved parliament after Ottomans rejected Allied partition, that many of these figures jumped ship. We know much less about everyday life under the varying regimes of Allied occupation across the empire and the kinds of practical compromises and maneuvering former subjects made in order to make sense of their radically changed worlds—not just in Istanbul, but especially in the Arab and Anatolian provinces.

Reill's ghost state model is perhaps even more compelling to consider in terms of the afterlives of Ottoman imperial institutions in the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Middle East. We might consider not only how locals refashioned and embedded imperial economic, political and legal institutions into new state structures, but also how Britain and France recast Ottoman institutions within the mandates. The Ottoman Civil Code (the *Mecelle*), which attempted to codify Islamic law in the late nineteenth century, persisted in various forms throughout post-Ottoman Middle East.¹⁶ While the Republic of Turkey ditched the Civil Code in 1926, it wasn't supplemented in many cases until well after the Second World War and remains in a handful of places. There were massive debates at the end of the war about what should happen to the Capitulations, those unequal treaties that exempted Europeans residing in the Ottoman Empire from local law.¹⁷ They existed in various forms in Egypt until 1949 and vestiges of unequal legal treatment between locals and resident Europeans and Americans continued.¹⁸ But again, as Reill shows us in her study of Fiume, what mattered is not so much that imperial institutions remained, but rather that activist locals revived and reshaped these institutions to their own pragmatic ends.

¹⁴ There are exceptions, and this is an area in which new work will soon be published. See Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul*; Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı'da son Tartışmalar: Mondros'tan Mudanya'ya* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008); Faruk Gezgin, *Ali Kemal: Bir Mühâlifin Hikayesi*, (İstanbul: İSİS, 2011); Ali Kemal, *Ömrüm* (İstanbul: İSİS, 1985); Erdağ Gökner, "Reading Occupied Istanbul: Turkish Subject-Formation from Historical Trauma to Literary Trope," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55:3 (2014): 321-341.

¹⁵ Until recently, historians have not focused on the empire-to state or mandate divide in the Middle East. I will discuss a few new works that have opened new avenues of research below. There was some earlier work, mostly biographical in nature, that attempted to explain the rise of Arab nationalism. See William Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' Al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) and *Islam Against the West Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

¹⁶ Ahmet Şimşirgil and Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, *Ahmed Cevdet Paşa ve Mecelle* (İstanbul: KTB Yayınları, 2013).

¹⁷ Debates on the Capitulations were intense at both the Paris and Lausanne Peace Conferences. See Great Britain, *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs 1922-1923: Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace* (London: HMSO, 1923) [Turkey no. 1 (1923); Cmd. 1814]; H. Temperley's *History of the Peace Conference*, vol. V, "Economic Reconstruction and Protection of Minorities," (London: H. Frowde, 1920-24). Laura Robson's excellent forthcoming article in the *American Historical Review*, "Capitulation Redux: The Imperial Genealogy of the Post-WWI 'Minority' Regime," argues that the Capitulations supplied the groundwork for the Minority Rights treaties at Paris.

¹⁸ See Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in Alexandria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). For some of the unpredictable ways in which the Capitulations continued to structure politics after the death of the Ottoman empire see Beth Baron, *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Stanford: University Press, 2014) and Shana Minkin, *Imperial Bodies: Empire and Death in Alexandria, Egypt* (Stanford: University Press, 2019). See too Abdeslam M. Maghroui, *Liberalism without Democracy Nationhood and Citizenship in Egypt, 1922-1936* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Recent work that bridges the empire-state divide has already shown that we get more out of embracing an approach that looks back at the Ottoman empire as a generative source, and not just towards the successor states that replaced it. Michael Provence has argued that Arab and Turkish nationalism was forged in Ottoman military schools. After the war, nationalists from both camps had an equal investment in forgetting the Ottoman past once the political boundaries of the region were hammered in place in the 1920s—an investment that was driven by practical on the ground realities.¹⁹ Elizabeth Thompson's work shows why it is so critical to look at what locals wanted in the chaotic aftermath of the war. After promising Arabs an independent state, Britain and France seized the Arab provinces and recast former imperial subjects, with rights and political representation, as colonial subjects stripped of these privileges. Arab liberals who were deeply committed to democracy, abandoned constitutionalism and left international law behind with grave consequences for the region.²⁰ Christine Philliou's recent book, *Turkey: A Past Against History*, profoundly challenges the rupture thesis between empire and state, and shows how political opposition in the imperial period was reconfigured in the Turkish Republic.²¹ In each of these cases, we are reminded that nationalists had pragmatic reasons, grounded in the politics and chaos of state collapse, to erase their imperial pasts. But as Reill shows too, there are serious interpretive consequences if follow the nationalists' lead.

In closing, Reill's book makes us rethink what we thought we knew about the end of empire—not just in Europe but far more broadly. *The Fiume Crisis* doesn't just provide a more nuanced local interpretation that balances the stories we know about D'Annunzio, Woodrow Wilson and the Fiume question at Paris. Instead, Reill's book challenges readers to consider deeply unsettling questions about how historians have approached state formation during the interwar years, and the dismantling of empire and the construction of successor states. All of the successor states to the Habsburg, Ottoman, German, and Russian empires dealt with similar, if not the same crises—as far as currency, law and constitution making. After reading *The Fiume Crisis*, it isn't possible to read the post-war period in the same way.

¹⁹ Michael Provence, Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Arab East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, [IJMES] 43, special edition, June 2011; *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

²⁰ Elizabeth Thompson *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs: The Syrian Arab Congress and the Destruction of its Historic Liberal-Islamic Alliance* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020); *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

²¹ Christine Philliou, *Turkey: A Past Against History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022). Hasan Kayali's new will book will add much to the debates: Hasan Kayali, *Imperial Resilience: The Great War's End, Ottoman Longevity, and Incidental Nations* (Berkeley: University of California, 2021). There are other newer works attempting to bridge the empire to nation-state divide. Cyrus Schayegh considers the ways in which economic and geographic networks in Ottoman Syria continued to structure the possibilities in the post-war period. Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Harvard: University Press, 2017); Awad Halabi, "Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence, 1919-22," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41:3 (Spring 2012): 19-37.

REVIEW BY ZACHARY MAZUR, COLLEGE OF EUROPE IN NATOLIN AND IH PAN
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In the aftermath of the First World War, the sovereignty emanating from central and eastern Europe's imperial capitals disappeared practically overnight, but the transition to successor states was far more drawn out. Broad overviews of the period imagine that nationalism and national-states replaced (or erased) empire.²² But at the local level, there was an entirely different process taking place. From the Adriatic to the Baltic seas, dozens of cities and towns declared their independence and their right to self-rule. In 1919, the German-majority village of Schwenten announced the establishment of a 'Freistaat' to stave off Polish expansion. The Hutsul Republic attempted to escape Hungarian absorption and establish Ruthenian control in a sub-Carpathian county, before ultimately succumbing to Czechoslovakia. And the Habsburg Duchy of Teschen/Cieszyn/Tešín experienced competing claims between local Czech and Polish groups, resulting in a protracted war and Inter-Allied intervention.²³ Each community made novel claims of power in the name of a nation or society, but imperial laws remained in force, the old civil servants stayed in their posts, and the imperial currency was traded for goods and services, often for years beyond 1918.

The Habsburg-Hungarian port city Fiume (Rijeka, Croatia today) was yet another mini-state that emerged out of the postwar order. In October 1918, as the grip of the Habsburg monarchy slipped away, at least four different "governments" claimed to take control of the city. There were three clear futures laid out for the town: it could remain a city-state under international protection, join the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, or join the Kingdom of Italy. Acting upon the stated principle of "self-determination," President Woodrow Wilson and other diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference decided that Fiume would become a free city like Danzig on the Baltic coast. Neither Italy nor the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – despite a desire to annex the city – was willing to cross the Allies' decision. Italy, in particular, was awkwardly placed between a popular movement calling for Fiume to join the Kingdom on the one hand, and the Great Powers' verdict on the other. What happened next determined the way that Fiume has been discussed for the past century. The popular nationalist Italian writer Gabriele D'Annunzio led a rag-tag group of veterans, deserters, and youths in a parade across north eastern Italy and into the city. With this act, Reill writes, "D'Annunzio supplanted the local Fiume government and declared himself the duce of Fiume, insisting that he was holding it as a regency until Italy claimed it as its own" (5). This dramatic gesture has taken centerstage in the history of the Fiume Crisis, trapping the city in a web of meta-narratives.

Dominique Kirchner Reill's vibrantly written new book boldly takes on (at least) two established convictions in the historiography of Europe's twentieth century. The first relates to the 'disappearance' of empire in a wave of nationalism following the First World War.²⁴ The second distills the story of Fiume, and poet-firebrand D'Annunzio's takeover, into a preview of the rise of fascism.²⁵ Reill utilizes police reports, court records, official correspondence, and many other primary sources from Croatian, Italian and American archives to dismantle both of these fundamental 'truths' from below.

²² See, for example: Konrad H. Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 2009).

²³ On small republics and local power: Gábor Egry, "Unruly Borderlands: Border-making, Peripheralization and Layered Regionalism in Post-First World War Maramures and the Banat," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 27:6: 709-731; Tomas Balkelis, *War, Revolution and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 136-157.

²⁴ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁵ Raoul Pupo and Fabio Todero, *Fiume, D'Annunzio e la crisi dello stato liberale in Italia* (Trieste: Irsml Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2010).

The author aptly untangles the interpretations that Fiume has been subjected to in the first chapter, “Concealing Histories.” She highlights three prevailing tales in particular: the diplomatic side, the local account, and the D’Annunzio-fascist-rehearsal version.²⁶ After establishing the frameworks surrounding these events, Reill then tells this well-known story from a new perspective, putting Fiumians in focus and turning away from teleological readings. Instead she uncovers the historical, geographic, and cultural context without buying into romanticized idealizations. She does so, first and foremost, by refuting the idea that Fiume was an Italian city.

From the outset, the author calls attention to Fiume’s multifaceted character. Far from being an Italian island trapped outside the motherland, the city was a true Habsburg imperial amalgam. The specters of D’Annunzio and fascism effectively hid the city’s mix of languages and traditions. The book underlines the fact that Fiume continued to function on its own terms thanks to the lingering “imperial ghost” that hung over interpersonal and legal proceedings (14). While this served as a societal glue that could not be easily washed away, it was also, Reill claims, the reason that Wilson’s vision for Europe ultimately failed. A Wilsonian peace could not be achieved precisely because the American president did not understand “the long-standing imperial frameworks and mindsets that persisted after the empires that created them had vanished” (17).

The three middle chapters cover the various ways that the Fiumian mini-state actually operated. This is no easy task, but the execution is impeccable. Reill examines money, law, and citizenship (or legal belonging) in separate chapters. Each one teases out the local, national, and international layers of this micro-story through colorfully written anecdotes. The fleeting problems of individuals come to life on the page, with struggling smugglers, frustrated merchants, and scorned divorcees attempting to find their way through a fluid situation where what was allowed on one day could be prohibited the next. All of the chapters’ subjects are fascinating and have implications well beyond this discrete historiography, but the stand out is the chapter on law and the source(s) of sovereignty.

Prior to the war, Fiume held a special status within the Habsburg Hungarian Kingdom, maintaining a certain level of autonomy. Fiume enjoyed a “tripartite authority structure... the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (loyalty to the king), Budapest (laws of the kingdom), and Fiume itself (Statute of Fiume)” (111). In the empire, Fiumians did not have to show fealty to all laws and provisions; “instead the Fiume municipal government had the right to consult on the application of Hungarian laws to Fiume’s ‘special circumstances’” (112). Reill shows how unique legal operations in Fiume managed to continue, even in extraordinary circumstances, thanks to people who were experienced in navigating various layers of law and multiple sovereignty claims. D’Annunzio and the Italian National Council maintained Hungarian law while preparing to join Italy in other ways. During this limbo period, with the city’s future uncertain, administrators and judges maintained authority “over day-to-day life” in spite of the military and diplomatic pressures exerted on them (117). This was evident in the ways that Fiumian law conflicted with Italian law, such as divorce, which was legal in the port city, but illegal in King Victor Emmanuel III’s realm. Reill reveals an uncomfortable truth for the nationalist narrative about the city, namely that the city’s government intended to maintain a *corpus separatum* precisely because the city was not Italian and could not flip a magic switch to become Italian. Fiume had its own history, traditions, and society. Looking at San Marino as the example, “Fiume elites believed they could wrangle a similar deal” (132). At least for a time, the city managed to carry on its tripartite legal arrangement, simply replacing ‘Hungary’ with ‘Italy.’ Pushing beyond the figurative realm, the empire carried on in very real ways.

The last full-length chapter moves beyond the analysis of the mini-state’s functioning and into the question of identity, and how it was formed through symbols, education, and naming policies. Here Reill puts another nail in the coffin of the Italian nationalist narrative by showing that the city did not become a site for oppressive national intolerance (though there certainly were individual incidents of it). Italian became the statutory language of public life, but this did not mean that

²⁶ For diplomacy: Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001); the local story: Giovanni Stelli, *Storia di Fiume: Dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Pordenone: Edizioni biblioteca dell’immagine, 2016) and for the fascism rehearsal story: Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918-1925* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005); Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *Gabriele D’Annunzio, Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War* (New York: Knopf, 2013).

elites attempted to make the city's population "Italian" or remove national "others." For example, non-Italian urban officials "were not pushed out of the civic order... They kept their jobs: some received translators to bridge the language gap; others, including schoolteachers, received the necessary training to function in an Italianized civic culture" (222). In the field of education, the next generation was not taught chauvinism, instead "schools taught Fiumians that, though circumstances had changed, Fiume remained the real 'Patria,' one that could be incorporated into the Italian Kingdom much as it had been into the Hungarian Kingdom" (218). Though the propaganda produced at the time might indicate otherwise, there was no attempt at nationalization or Italianization. The imperial city continued down its prewar path, navigating a multilingual and multicultural society, without explicit exclusion baked in.

This all came to an abrupt end when the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini took over the state, and the city was finally absorbed into Italy. The book's purview also stops here, as Fiume became a minor port in the Italian Kingdom.

Having thoroughly shaken off the conventional stories told about the Fiume Crisis, Reill's conclusions focus on what this micro-study can tell us about wider phenomena of the period. She argues that "this scramble to create a state out of structures of empire did not just shape Europe's smallest successor state, Fiume—it characterized all the postwar successor states" (229). Recent works from Pieter Judson and John Connelly – among others – have argued that Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the other successor states were not necessarily "national" in character, but "miniature Habsburg empires," trying to negotiate the same complex issues as their predecessors.²⁷ With her new book, Reill adds the strongest evidence yet to this claim.

Reill integrates the latest in scholarship into her work and tells us the consequences of these new perspectives.²⁸ She is one of several historians working to refocus our attention on the "transition period from empire" (230).²⁹ There clearly was an extended imperial hangover that has not received just recognition, and, depending on where we stand and observe this phenomenon, empire's shadow is visible well beyond the 1920s. If we recognize empire's legacy, then we can make sense of liberalism's failure, of fascism's rise, and of the disaster of the Second World War. This positions twentieth century war and genocide not as a result of crises in the 1930s, but as the unfinished business of empire.

With this case study, Reill pushes the particular into the universal. Undoubtedly Fiume's situation is pertinent beyond its own boundaries, since so many other countries had to deal with the same post-imperial problems. At the same time, however, the book argues at every turn that "Fiume's urban culture" makes it unique (71). So then what else does it have to contribute to the wider discussion about post-Versailles Europe, the interwar period or the causes of World War II? That all successor states held on to imperial vestiges of greater and lesser importance is a fact beyond doubt. When examining Fiume at this level though, what has resulted from the exploration that can be transferred to other places and times? The book does

²⁷ John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020). He writes, "Yet one could easily change the terms of discussion by redefining the self-styled nation-states simply as little empires. Every nation-state after 1918, for example, was a *Vielvölkerstaat* whose survival demanded the integration of multiethnic populations, the successful—if often authoritarian—attachment of peripheries to centers, and the development of a positive sense of shared identification, even among people who claimed to belong to the same nation. Far from marking the end of the imperial *Vielvölkerstaaten*, 1918 could be said to have witnessed their proliferation," (384); Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 451.

²⁸ See, for example: Judson, *Habsburg Empire*; Paul Miller and Claire Morelon, eds. *Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Natasha Wheatley and Peter Becker, eds. *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Emily Greble, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe* (forthcoming, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

²⁹ To name a few: Wheatley, David Petrucci and Iryna Vushko are all working on projects from this perspective.

not answer this question, nor would I expect it to. But it opens the way for many other case studies to be carried out. Time will tell how this pathbreaking work will be used to inspire studies of other mini-states or even whole successor states.

The contributions of *The Fiume Crisis* are many, and it is both approachable and useful. This book can be fruitfully assigned to undergraduates and graduates alike because it is eminently readable and of high academic value. It is an excellent product of meticulous research and carefully considered presentation, a beacon for monographs to come.

REVIEW BY ÁGNES ORDASI, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF HUNGARY

In recent years, the history of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy has drawn the attention of an increasing number of global researchers, as more and more material of the Southeastern European archives and libraries became available in both physical and virtual form and newer methods and approaches based on interdisciplinarity spread among researchers instead of investigating events and their chronology. Historians of the Habsburg Empire started to pay attention to the lessons that the Habsburg Monarchy might have to offer about the nature of empire, scales and politics and it was a novel framework to work with. They thus emphasized imperial experiences and knowledge transfer.

Consequently, several volumes and studies have been published on the territories of the Habsburg Monarchy, recently.³⁰ Despite this surge of publications, Fiume (currently Rijeka, Croatia), which was the only port-city of the former Hungarian Kingdom, remained unexplored or was interpreted mostly within different nationalist perspectives.³¹ In this regard, Dominique Reill's *The Fiume Crisis: Living in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* provides a real turning point in the historiography.³² By interpreting Fiume as fractal phenomenon, that is, as an unusual but integral part of the Habsburg Monarchy, Reill makes an ambitious contribution to understand the imperial structures and their mechanisms. Reill also shows the transformation that the city went through from 1918 until it joined Italian dictator Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy in 1924. Importantly, Reill demonstrates the violence and the social, economic and physical destruction of this process, so much so that according to Reill her book was "born of anger,"³³ because the stories of the post-war Fiume are not pleasant to recount but must nevertheless be told.

Yet, *The Fiume Crisis* is also about something else. Its focuses on such issues as identity, loyalty, problems of nation- and state-building including the diverse forms of cohabitation and the dilemma of belonging. Reill follows the theoretical conceptions that one would most associate with the work of Pieter M. Judson,³⁴ today. Instead of presenting the Habsburg

³⁰ Johannes Feichtinger–Gary B. Cohen, eds, *Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience* (New York: Berghahn, 2014); John Deak: *Forging a Multinational State Making in Imperial Austria from the Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford: Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe, 2015); Bálint Varga, *The Monumental Nation: Magyar Nationalism and Symbolic Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary* Habsburg and Austrian Studies Series, 20. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016); Markian Prokopovych–Carl Bethke–Tamara Scheer eds, *Language Diversity in the Late Habsburg Empire (Central and Eastern Europe)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Borut Klabjan eds.: *Borderlands of Memory. Adriatic and Central European Perspectives* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019); Maarten Van Genderachter–Jon Fox eds, *National indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2019), Martyn Rady: *The Habsburgs: To Rule the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

³¹ A. Depoli, *Il diritto storico ed etnico di Fiume di fronte alla Croazia* (Fiume, Stabilimento Tipo-litografico di E. Mohovich, 1919); Edoardo Susmel, *La città di passione. Fiume negli anni 1914–1920* (Milano: Treves, 1921), Silvino Gigante, *Storia del comune di Fiume* (Firenze: Bemporad e figlio editori, 1928); Michael A. Ledeen, *D'Annunzio a Fiume* (Roma, Bari: Laterza, 1975); Renzo De Felice, *D'Annunzio politico: 1918–1938* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 1978); Riccardo Gigante, *Folklore fiumano*. eds, Salvatore Samani (Padova: Libero comune di Fiume in esilio, 1980); Fran Barbalić, "Pitanje narodnosti u Rijeci," *Rijeka zbornik* (1953): 15–34.; Jovan Marjanović, *Nastanak i razvitak radničkog pokreta u jugoslavenskim zemljama do Prvog svetskog rata* (Beograd: Rad, 1958), Stojan Kesić, *Radnički pokret u jugoslavenskim zemljama do 1914. godine* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1976); Mirjana Gross, "Dvadeset godina bjesa i očaja ili borba za Rijeku od 1861. do 1881," *Dometi* 4 (1987): 183–225.

³² In this regard one must mention the works of Vanni D'Alessio, Francesca Rolandi, Ivan Jeličić, Gianluca Volpi, and William Klinger as well.

³³ Steven Seegel, "The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire." New Books in Eastern European Studies, Podcast, 59:00, posted 2 December 2020. <https://newbooksnetwork.com/the-fiume-crisis>

³⁴ Pieter M. Judson: *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

Empire as a doomed state conglomerate, or the “prison of nations,” Judson and his circle re-define it. They principally concentrate on the everyday interactions of common people, as well as the continuities that still existed after the collapse of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Although they are often charged with being too theory-oriented and criticized for trivializing certain issues that researchers of the traditional master-narrative focus on,³⁵ this is not the case in *The Fiume Crisis*. Reill successfully avoids this danger thanks to her wide-ranging knowledge of the literature and her empirical research that was conducted in different countries and languages³⁶ over many years. In this regard, the book owes a clear debt to the work of Larry Wolff,³⁷ which the book’s methodological creativity, especially its analysis of issues at multiple scales. One of the greatest strengths of the book is Reill’s clear and comprehensive writing style. She achieves this by including numerous representative examples based on primary sources. Thus, Reill’s monograph is not merely informative and thought provoking, but it is also very readable, comprehensive, and entertaining.

As Reill declares in the introduction, the book has three main aims: to critical recount the astonishing developments in Fiume between the collapse of the Habsburg Empire until the annexation to Italy; to push aside the image of the diplomatic quarrels, the occupying forces or Comandante Gabriele D’Annunzio and, instead, to foreground the experiences of those individuals who considered Fiume as their home; and to re-situate Fiume in “a Europe without continental empires” (21). This is the organizing principle on which she thematizes her book into main five thematic sections with a highly impressive introduction and an exciting conclusion.

In chapter one, Reill provides a general picture about the international and the local situation, without which the complexity of Fiume’s crisis cannot be understood. Her main focus is on the puzzlements and the ignorance of the Great Powers at the Paris Peace Conference related to the Adriatic-question and Fiume’s situation, including President Woodrow Wilson’s opposition to imperialism, the “old-style-secret-diplomacy” (41) and the backwardness of Italy’s political institutions together with his worries about the application of his self-determinism concept over Fiume. Reill also reveals why the city existed as an independent city-state from the end of 1918 until 1924. She makes it clear that local elites, who were seeking to replace the former Habsburg Monarchy’s imperial structures, had completely different ideas about the city’s future. Instead of independence, they were struggling to push Fiume into the Italian Kingdom, given that its cultural heritage, survival, and future prosperity depended on the strong hinterland that Italy seemed to be.

To comprehend the Fiumians’ stubborn commitment to Italy, one needs to know the factors that affected their everyday lives. Therefore, Reill devotes chapter two to those commercial and financial problems that the inhabitants had to overcome after the cessation of the monetary units of Austro-Hungary. For instance, at least four different currencies (the “old” Austro-Hungarian crowns, the Serb-Croat-Slovene, and the Fiume *crowns*, together with the Italian *lire*, just as the French

³⁵ Bálint Varga, “[Review of] Pieter M. Judson: The Habsburg Empire. A New History,” *Korall* 67 (2017): 149-153; Gerald Stourzh, “The Ethnicizing of Politics and “National Indifference” in Late Imperial Austria,” *Der Umfang der österreichischen Geschichte: Ausgewählte Studien 1990–2010* (Wien: Böhlau, 2011): 283–323; Ágoston Berecz, “Recepciótörténeti széljegyzet Tara Zahra tanulmányához,” *Regio* 25:2 (2017): 43-50.

³⁶ Reill conducted research in the Hrvatski Državni Arhiv u Rijeci (Croatian National Archives in Rijeka), Vittoriale degli italiani – Archivio fiumano (Vittoriale of the Italians Fiume Archive), University Library in Rijeka and the University of Miami, Bodleian Library in Oxford, the State Library in Berlin, Johns Hopkins Special Collections, the American Academy in Rome, the Rome Library of Modern and Contemporary History, the National and University Library in Zagreb, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Fiume Museum in Rome and the Maritime and History Museum in Rijeka.

³⁷ Among his many works: Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Wolff, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Wolff, Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

francs and the Serb *dinars*) circulated simultaneously. Additionally, cash smuggling and counterfeiting exacerbated the newly formed multi-currency situation too. These practices led to a prolonged economic crisis, for which the local elites expected a solution from the Italian government since monetary-policy was as one of the responsibilities and characteristics of sovereign states.

However, as is clear in chapter three, the Fiumians' desire to join Italy did not mean that they intended unconditional integration. On the contrary, they were interested in preserving the autonomous position of the city even among its new circumstances. This is not surprising given that during the period of dualism, according to the author Fiume was not merely a part of the Habsburg Monarchy: as *corpus separatum* it belonged to the Hungarian administration and enjoyed an exceptional semi-autonomous status. Following Reill's argument the complicated administrative position of Fiume in the Habsburg Empire and its multi (or layered)-sovereignty had two crucial outcomes: on the one hand, that the lives of the inhabitants were affected by the multi-legal structure from the beginning with all of these difficulties and opportunities. Even so, the privileged status of the city more or less made it possible to the Fiumian elites to protect their local interests against 'others' and 'strangers,' or even against the centralizing efforts of the (Hungarian) state.

In chapter four, which draws upon the above-mentioned multi (or layered)-sovereignty system of Fiume, Reill meticulously examines the dilemmas of social and political belonging. She investigates who could and who could not be admitted to Fiume's body politic and take advantage of this membership. She also details the circumstances in which the non-Italian Fiumians acquired or lost rights. At this point, one more question arises: who could be considered or categorized Fiumian and what did it mean for individuals and the local community? In order to avoid using too artificial or simplified categories, Reill precisely defines the notions of "citizenship," "pertinency," "residency" "localism," and "nationality" and distinguishes between the residents and the citizens of Fiume based on the municipal statute, which was still in force in 1919 (add page citations for this discussion). Concluding her investigations, Reill emphasizes that the fact because the decision over the pertinency was in the hands of the Fiumian elites it became an essential and effective selection tool to redistribute the limited resources and to preserve their power. It also allowed them retain and guarantee the existential security of the local citizens.

Chapter 5 offers the most unique and colourful section of the book. Here, by looking at the symbolic, cultural and educational field, Reill demonstrates the ways in which the Fiumian elites tended to conserve their authority over the society against all challenges. She also describes how they brought local interests and values to the fore in spite of their apparent nationalization and Italianisation measures. Reill recognizes these patterns as both symbolic and pragmatic: in the selection of professors and in the name-changing practices, in the flags and the school maps, or the differentiated use of languages. Thus, she proves that despite the fact that Italian became the *lingua franca* of Fiume, the multilingual character of the city did not cease immediately: it remained an elementary part of the everyday life for years.

To conclude, Reill successfully overcomes nationalist axioms and creates a new Fiume-centred narrative. This monograph will be highly instructive for all those scholars who are interested in the problems of overlapping identities, the complexity of belonging, the challenges of everyday life, and mainly for those who want to understand the post-war local circumstances through the example of Fiume. All in all, the reviewer is convinced that *The Fiume Crisis* will be the most defining and meaningful book of the coming years about the port-city, and that it should be translated into as many languages as possible.

REVIEW BY DR. NEVILA PAHUMI, INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Dominique Kirchner Reill examines the ways in which the citizens of post-Habsburg Fiume dealt with their city's contested future after the end of World War I.³⁸ Fiume might seem inconsequential to anyone passing through this beautiful small town in Croatia today. In the early twentieth century, however, it was the ninth largest port in continental Europe (26). As such, its post-war settlement became a matter of truly international proportions.

The post-war future of Fiume, as the book's title suggests, presented a conundrum for negotiators at the Paris Peace Conference. Here, however, Reill's main contribution is on bringing to life the city's multiculturalism and the very complex day-to-day calculations that Fiumians were making in the wake of the Habsburg Empire, instead of focusing solely on rehashing the diplomatic conversations in Paris.³⁹ Indeed, one of the book's broadest claims is that during these so-called "twilight years" Fiumians continued to operate in much the same ways as before (21).⁴⁰ Unlike so many of the sweeping accounts of the Fiume crisis and the rise of fascism, Reill's interpretations hinge on recovering a history from below.⁴¹

As she explains, Fiume's post-war fate was complicated by its geography, history, and demographics. All three factors combined were additionally configured into the competing visions of Italian imperialism and South Slav nationalism. Both of these conflicting political movements intensified during the war as the Habsburg Empire's survival came into question. As a prosperous Adriatic port, close to Trieste, and surrounded by would-be Yugoslavia on all other sides, postwar Fiume, a city with a long tradition of semi-autonomous administration, left behind an imperial Habsburg past, and embraced Italianization on its own terms. What would this mean for its multi-ethnic population? In 1918, *only* half of the city's fifty-thousand inhabitants considered themselves to be Italians, and much of the other half was mostly concerned with getting by. This, in brief, is what the book is really about.

Reill explores the decision-making processes and choices of the Fiumians over five thematic chapters organized around the city's hidden histories, the constantly changing currency, local sovereignty, and the city's regulations on pertinence, citizenship, and the very local city-centered education between 1918 and 1924. While Fiume experienced an ugly episode of Italian proto-fascist nationalism spearheaded by the flamboyant Italian poet-soldier Gabriele D'Annunzio, in her depiction of the city's transition to a post-imperial *Italianizing* city-state, Reill is careful to point out that Fiume's leaders and its citizens navigated the process with the kind of caution suggestive of imperial continuities.⁴² In other words, what Reill's

³⁸ This review does not represent the views of the Library of Congress in any way.

³⁹ Fiume's standing at the Paris Peace Conference has received ample scholarly attention. Notable examples mentioned here include both classics focusing specifically on the American diplomatic efforts like Lawrence Gelfand's 1976 *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919* as well as broader and more recent commentaries like Erez Manela's *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Larry Wolff's *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, as well as Italian language commentaries on the Italian diplomatic aspects of the Fiume question like Paolo Alatri's 1976 *Nitti, D'Annunzio, e La Questione Adriatica*.

⁴⁰ For a robust discussion focusing on the constructions of the Fiume question, as well as its local and international dimensions look at Chapter 1, "Concealing Histories: The Different Fiume Stories."

⁴¹ As the author makes it explicit in the introduction, this book specifically aims to present a more careful depiction of the ways in which empire endured after the war than has otherwise been presented in the sweeping work of Mark Mazower's *Dark Century*, Pankaj Mishra's *Age of Anger*, and Adam Tooze's *The Deluge: the Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931*.

⁴² One would be justified in comparing Reill's broad interpretations about imperial continuities in Fiume to other contemporary contexts within the Adriatic region as well. In the Ottoman European example, Isa Blumi's take on the ways in which local notables renegotiated their relationships to the Great Powers to preserve, if not enhance their own position, is one such fitting parallel. See

research demonstrates forcefully here is that, just because Italian nationalists in Rome claimed that Fiume was theirs, Fiumians were, in fact, the ones setting those terms. In the war's immediate aftermath, the city's future was *theirs* and theirs alone to determine. That is, until the Kingdom of Italy finally decided to annex the city in 1924.

The *Fiume Crisis* opens with the "Bloody Christmas" incident of Christmas 1920. In the course of the mostly symbolic bloodshed, D'Annunzio and his several hundred-strong "raucous band" of Fiume-based Italian irregulars who had been in control of the city since September 1919, were forced to surrender their control of Fiume when *actual* Italian government forces bombarded Fiume between December 23 and 30, 1920. The Fiume that is represented in this work is "the semi-autonomous city-state and the suburbs it controlled," in 1919 and the immediate postwar years, whereas the Croatian city known today as Rijeka (also meaning river) includes this same urban space and others that in the "early twentieth century were administered by different states using different official languages and different laws" (x). This overlapping distinction between the current city today and the early twentieth century aspects of Fiume-Rijeka is precisely what made the political and social transition from empire to city-state complicated and thus worth exploring in this book.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Fiume was a semi-autonomous city state "administered by a mixture of self-made statutes and laws issued by the Hungarian Kingdom of which it was part," Reill explains in the introduction (26). The Hungarian Kingdom which oversaw the city's administration and which invested heavily into modernizing its port, had been a part of the multi-ethnic and variously interchangeably named Austrian/Habsburg empire since the Middle Ages, and in different types of control over Fiume since the eighteenth century. Fiume's population was, thus, quite diverse and it included a variety of Austrian/Habsburg Hungarians, Italians, Jews, Croats, Czechs, Romanians, Slovenes, and even a small British community (1). During World War One, and particularly right after the empire's sudden dissolution in November 1918, their loyalties shifted and Fiume's future became hotly debated.

At the Paris Peace Conference, the Allied Powers, led by American President Woodrow Wilson, first determined that Fiume would become an independent city-state. In doing so, Wilson defied both the Italian imperialist designs to include the city within the borders of the Italian Kingdom, as well as Fiumians' own requests to be annexed by it. Why this stubborn course of action? Reill argues that of all the imperialist designs projected by the Allied Powers at the end of the war, the Italian one was the easiest to oppose for the naive Wilson, because Italy depended so heavily on American grain and money and also because Italy itself was the weakest of the so-called "Great Powers" (41). Thus, caught between the rising nationalism of the interwar period, between 1918 and 1920, Fiume's city government underwent periods of alternating Italian and South-Slav control. These disputes were finally laid to rest by a joint agreement between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in the Treaty of Rapallo in 1920. Between 1919 and 1924, Fiume constituted a (very) small but free city-state (28 sq. km in size). With Italy's prime minister, Benito Mussolini, firmly entrenched in power in 1923, Fiume was swiftly annexed the next year.

The book's key strength lies in the painstakingly reconstructed details with which Reill documents the fact that life after the war did not represent a linear history from empire to nationalism. The intense political discussions around the city's future, and D'Annunzio's sensationalist representation of his fifteen-months of rule there in particular, have made for simplistic interpretations about what the people of postwar Fiume really wanted. Therefore, Reill makes sure to zero in, as much as possible, and capture all the various relevant ways in which changes to daily life were informed by Fiume's Habsburg past and to locate all the ways in which this transformation represented continuity not rupture.

She does this by bringing into view a diverse set of social actors of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Reill connects their stories to the transition process by analyzing the myriad ways in which people got around the constantly changing currencies, how they navigated new and confusing legal matters, the ways in which people drummed up South Slav and Italian nationalism for personal benefit, and finally also the ways in which local sovereignty was calculated against these

Blumi, "Ottoman Albanians in an Era of Transition: An Engagement with a Fluid Modern World." *Narrated Empires: Perceptions of Late Habsburg and Ottoman Multinationalism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 191-212.

interests. Thus, as Kirchner Reill depicts them, the frameworks and practices that had defined Habsburg Fiume continued on into the early interwar period. While the city's institutions and the general public displayed a facade of *Italianizing*, particularly as the city council needed Italian support, the realities of life and work behind this public demonstration were far more complex. Given the political instability of the immediate postwar period, it stands to reason that most ordinary people would happily cling to the lives they knew beforehand while also striving to attract the economic stability that only a relationship with the wealthiest neighbor – Italy in this case – could bring.

The book is quite accessible for both professional and lay readers alike. It is informed by ten years of exhaustive research at the following institutions: the Croatian National Archives in Rijeka, the *Vittoriale degli Italiani*, the University Library in Rijeka, Oxford's Bodleian Library, the State Library in Berlin, Johns Hopkins Special Collections, the American Academy in Rome, the Rome Library of Modern and Contemporary History, the National and University Library in Zagreb, and the Library of Congress. Reill's range of sources is also broad with source materials that include: municipal records, police reports and statements, newspapers, photographs, maps, legal records, testimonies, diplomatic statements, speeches, decrees, diaries, memoirs, lesson plans, etc. Even more, Reill's deliberate upfront staging of scenes of daily life infused with wonderful aspects of Fiume's multiculturalism and the book's focus on the six years that preceded Fiume's annexation into the Kingdom of Italy successfully drown out the media hype created by D'Annunzio's failed attempt to install Italian rule there.

Reill also carefully sets Fiume's transformation into comparison with other multicultural and contested cities facing a similar dilemma after the war, noting that half of Europe's citizens were suddenly left without the empires that had stood around them centuries before. As such, is it really all that surprising that after surviving the so-called "war to end all wars" people were in no rush, generally speaking, to consolidate their lives around new political identities? Or, minimally, that any kind of change in that direction would only happen step-by-step?

The resilient myth that D'Annunzio's capture of Fiume presaged an inevitable passage into postwar proto-fascism and nationalism, a myth that Reill argues has been enabled by Italian and European historiography on the war and interwar nationalism, is perhaps the most powerful motivator for the author's endeavor in writing this book. Interestingly enough, the first time I encountered D'Annunzio's name was by realizing that some of my own Italian-raised cousins had attended public schools named after him. How many public institutions throughout Italy still bear his name? How many young Italians educated in them naturally link D'Annunzio to an innocent or naive concept of Italian pride? Furthermore, how many people are apt to see his deed as a Fiumian gesture of support for Italian nationalism? To dispel that enduring perception, Reill makes it clear that his jaw-dropping escapades today are mostly remembered and commented upon in Italy, not Fiume.

The *Fiume Crisis* is Kirchner Reill's second monograph and it clearly follows from her first, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice*, which hits on the same combination of themes and chronology, and in point of fact it takes them further.⁴³ In so doing, Reill's latest contribution here continues on the path of late Habsburg borderland studies evident in Pieter Judson's work and is also reminiscent of Jeremy King's earlier *From Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics from 1848-1948*.⁴⁴ Altogether, they point

⁴³ See Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ A number of Pieter Judson's works on the Habsburg linguistic frontiers have prompted historians to rethink the experience of the late empire in Central Europe. These include: Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2018). See also Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

out the ways in which the empire was relevant in the ways of ordinary citizens, and that its transformation into distinct nation-states was quite protracted.

Coming on the heels of the overlapping centennials of the end of World War One, the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Versailles Treaty, and the Fiume Crisis itself, the timing of this book's publication is apt and makes the story it tells all the more compelling and fresh. The equally overlapping commemorations of these events alone have driven historians to re-examine long-standing narratives about the war, nationalism and the end of empire, as well as America's role in the new international order. In the sense of timing, it is similarly motivated by the 100 year anniversary of the end of World War I, to Larry Wolff's just released *Woodrow Wilson and the Remaking of Eastern Europe*.⁴⁵ All these factors combined make the *Fiume Crisis* a relevant addition to the fields of Central and East European studies, which also plainly serves as a bellwether for our own times.

⁴⁵ Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Remaking of Eastern Europe* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2020).

 RESPONSE BY DOMINIQUE KIRCHNER REILL, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

Book roundtables are rarely round; they are usually made up of a jolty condominium of jarring views where the author's response usually works to clarify away the jolts, to synthesize the book again in dialogue with all the diverging paths of interpretation presented. This roundtable on *The Fiume Crisis* has proven to be quite a different beast. It actually is round! Here we have scholars whose geographic specialties circumnavigate the history my book tried to tell. Experts on interwar Italy (Giulia Albanese), the Ottoman Empire and Middle East (Aimee Genell), post-imperial east central Europe (Zachary Mazur), Habsburg Hungary (Ágnes Ordasi), and the post-World War I Balkans (Nevila Pahumi) all provide their reading of where they believe the book sits, what it does, and (delightfully enough) they arrive at a similar assessment: *The Fiume Crisis* does the job it set out to do. I must thank Georgios Giannakopoulos for gathering such a geographically and historiographically varied group and Pieter Judson for providing such a thought-provoking introduction to this final product. I must admit that it is hard to know what to write in such a positive space: I was trained at Columbia University, where praise is rarely bestowed and where one is encouraged to duke it out more than anything else. So, since I have nothing to fight against, I will focus on some of the points that I most care about in all these generous, stimulating assessments.

As Albanese quite rightly emphasizes in her contribution, the title of the book declares its dual ambitions: to challenge the histories we have around the Fiume debacle and to replace them with thinking about what people on the ground experienced when the Habsburg Empire dissolved. In essence its goal was to decenter our understanding of Fiume's importance solely in terms of how it related to Italian history and the rise of fascism. This decentering, however, was never meant to show that the conflicts around post-World War I Fiume did not significantly affect the history of the Italian state and its inhabitants. Instead, the book means to showcase that there was nothing particularly natural or necessary that made this so. Fiume was not an Italian city before World War I, though a large number of its inhabitants were Italian-speakers; from 1915-1918 most of the city's soldiers fought for the Habsburg Monarchy against the Kingdom of Italy; Italian planes bombed the town in aerial campaign; secret pacts never promised the city to Italy after the war; and Fiume's economy and status as a Mediterranean port grew often in direct competition with its Italian counterparts, not in cooperation with them.

Albanese is correct that the book pays little attention to the interrelationship between the legionnaires' political project and those of local Fiumians. In part, this absence is the result of the lack of clarity on how much legionnaires' political visions mattered to Fiumians. Until 1921 most Fiumians seem to have treated the presence of legionnaires in their city as dangerously volatile. To neutralize potential conflict, most citizens lived around the poet-soldier Gabriele D'Annunzio's followers instead of engaging with them directly. Throughout, one sees signs that the newly arrived *regnicoli* (Italians from Italy) were considered outsiders who could be allowed to go about their business, but whose business was not understood as being within the purview of the city itself. This impression that the legionnaires weren't really part of Fiume probably was not just based upon the fact that the legionnaires spoke Italian differently, ate different foods, sat down at their tables at different times, drank different wines, made different jokes, dressed differently, and did not know their way around the city and its environs. It was also most likely because there was no stable corps of legionnaires to begin with. Only very few of those who joined D'Annunzio in Fiume (men and women) stayed longer than a month or two. Identifying the legionnaires' political interaction with Fiumians is also very difficult: supporters of D'Annunzio quickly overran most of the media outlets in the city, so the press is a tricky marker for understanding what was really going on.

Difficulties around gaging the political importance of D'Annunzio and his followers on Fiume culture are compounded by the fact that there was no "one" political legionnaire party or movement. Monarchists, republicans, conservatives, devoted Catholics, libertarians, anarcho-syndicalists, liberals, apoliticals, and everything in between were represented within D'Annunzio's ranks, rising and falling within his spheres of influence as best suited the international moment. Using the Fiumian writer Viktor Car Emin's fascinating 1946 memoir-novel as his working motif, Vanni D'Alessio has shown that even Croatian and Yugoslav activists regarded D'Annunzio's campaign as ambiguous, at once both terrifying and

fascinating.⁴⁶ On one hand, D'Annunzio's arrival epitomized precisely the Italian imperialist chauvinism that emboldened Yugoslav activists to risk much so that they could defend those whom they considered "their own." On the other hand, D'Annunzio's ideological inconstancy, theatrics, irreverence to diplomatic norms, and mythical tones kept people (Italians and non-Italians alike) constantly gathering to see what would come next. In a rare interview about his Fiume childhood, Leo Valiani – a WWII resistance fighter, future Italian senator, journalist, historian, and author of one of the most important histories of the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy – wrote of how he and most of his fellow Fiumians enjoyed what they could comprehend in D'Annunzio's speeches, but that the political specifics of a D'Annunzian Regency were "not understood by the population," garnered little enthusiasm, and were mostly ignored.⁴⁷ As a historian, I find it difficult to give pride of place to the legionnaires' political influence in telling the history of *The Fiume Crisis* from 1918-1921. After 1921, however, I think the political influence of activists from Italy on Fiumian political culture is incredibly important, especially that of the fascists who were headquartered in Trieste.⁴⁸ But, again, that is not the history this book sought to untangle. I begin in 1918 (a year before D'Annunzio arrived) and end in 1921 (when D'Annunzio left) because this was the twilight period, where everything was still up for grabs and Fiume's situation was most similar to that of the rest of the post-imperial world. After 1921, Fiume's history as a beleaguered microstate becomes so particular that the comparisons with the rest of Europe prove less helpful.

At the end of her review Pahumi references how D'Annunzio's name is plastered all over Italy. Schools and even a public university bear his name; his writings are still required reading for every school child; new statues continue to be erected in his honor. This phenomenon is particularly strange when compared to how other European countries have chosen to treat their own "proto-fascist" men of letters. It is hard to imagine a public high school in France being named after Charles Maurras. Even more unthinkable would be a German state-subsidized "Stefan George University." And I am willing to bet that no new statue will be erected in a central British square to honor Houston Stewart Chamberlain anytime soon. And, yet, proof of D'Annunzio's extreme Italian nationalism and the links scholars consistently make to explain how D'Annunzio's influence aided the rise of Mussolini's fascism have not kicked D'Annunzio off the charts of "politically correct" forefathers for Italiandom.

The reasons for this are complicated, of course, and part of a much longer discussion of how Italy has and has not dealt with its fascist past. But some short cuts to understanding why schools, universities, street signs, and squares still bear his name hinge on misconceptions of how D'Annunzio's nationalist movement played out in Fiume and how linking it with fascism has actually softened impressions of what the followers of Mussolini represented. Even today, for many Italians D'Annunzio embodies an emblem for Italian nationalism that was not fascist and perhaps even was progressive. After all, there was no one 'party' in formation trying to define how legionnaires in D'Annunzio's Fiume should or would behave. As mentioned above, the city was a smorgasbord of political and apolitical ideas, with no leader worrying too much about what his followers promoted. An unashamed use of violence to block out the chords of democratic parliamentarianism also did not predominate. In fact, D'Annunzio's Fiume is much more known for its hedonist antics than anything else. Anti-socialism

⁴⁶ Viktor Car Emin, *Danuncijada: Romansirana kronisterija riječke tragikomedije 1919-1921* (Zagreb: Zora Matica Hrvatska, 1977, originally published in 1946). Vanni D'Alessio, "L'altra Fiume. La «dannunziade» vista e vissuta da croati e jugoslavi," in *Memoria e Ricerca* 2020/3: 491-508.

⁴⁷ Leo Valiani, *The End of Austria-Hungary* (New York: Knopf, 1973). For a fascinating analysis of Valiani's history of Habsburg dissolution, see: Laurence Cole, "Leo Valiani's La Dissoluzione dell'Austria-Ungheria in Historiographical Context," *Časopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske*, X./10., 2015: 145-154. Leo Valiani, "Io ragazzo nella Fiume di D'Annunzio." *Nuova antologia*, no. gennaio-marzo (1993): 71-82.

⁴⁸ For a fascinating discussion of how Trieste's incredibly active early fascist party based itself in part as a combined anti-socialist, anti-Slavic, and anti-Habsburg legacy force in the upper Adriatic, see Marco Bresciani, "The Battle for Post-Habsburg Trieste/Trst: State Transition, Social Unrest, and Political Radicalism (1918-23)," *Austrian History Yearbook* (2021): 182-200, at 52.

also did not unify a whole.⁴⁹ Women and non-Italians were not disenfranchised automatically (though most were in practice). In this way, compared to state fascism, D'Annunzian nationalism feels modern, cosmopolitan, progressive, and inclusive. For others, the overlaps between the followers of D'Annunzio and Mussolini serve as a means to explain away why young men first donned their black shirts. Fascist apologist pundits often repeat that activists were in a "common cause" of patriotic fervor that led legionnaires and fascists alike to defend Italy's "mutilated victory" and demand respect on the world stage.⁵⁰

This is terrifying stuff in terms of how D'Annunzian nationalism and early fascism are portrayed. The Italian nationalism that prompted so many people to support D'Annunzio's time in Fiume was not inclusionary patriotism; it was exclusionary nationalism. It was about making the city Italian (and thereby ousting its Central European and Balkan elements); it was about making sure "Italy got its due" through imperial aggrandizement; it was about making sure that the Adriatic would be part of Italy's *mare nostrum* and not become a Yugoslav *naše more*.⁵¹ Conversely, as Victoria de Grazia's stunning latest book reminds us, early Italian fascism was not a fluffy, nudist pirate adventure à la D'Annunzio.⁵² It was thugs; it was pain; it intentionally did not pull punches or aestheticize violence. Fascism was violence.

But as Ordasi says, this book isn't really about Italian history or fascism. Instead, its primary goal is "to foreground the experiences of those individuals who considered Fiume as their home; and to re-situate Fiume in 'a Europe without continental empires'." Ordasi's point about the connections between my work and that of Pieter Judson and Larry Wolff is completely on target.⁵³ Both historians have inspired me throughout my career. Their example of writing histories below, beyond, and around the East-West divide and the nation-state have served as models for how this book was conceived. However, I think it is important to note that neither scholarly giant writes books like this. Their work dives deep into ideas and motivations of people. This book is instead much more sociological than intellectual, cultural, or political. Though the pages are filled with people's "little stories," the big story in *The Fiume Crisis* is about state structures and how people were required to shift them, meld into them, and work around them. Nowhere do we know what people really thought, what they really believed, what dreams they really cherished. We just see a myriad of souls rubbing against the forces of the world-that-was and the forces of the world-that-would-be. In a recent conference panel dedicated to the book, the brilliant historian of

⁴⁹ For more on the status of socialism and socialist activists in immediate postwar Fiume, see: Ivan Jeličić, "Uz stogodišnjicu riječkog Radničkog vijeća. Klasna alternativa nacionalnim državama na sutonu Monarhije," *Časopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske*, vol. 12, 2017: 63-84; "Repubblica con chi? Il movimento socialista fumano e il giallo Sisa nel contesto post-asburgico fumano," *Qualestoria* n.2, Dec. 2020: 73-93.

⁵⁰ Pundits eager to disassociate Dannunzian nationalism from fascism rely heavily on the recent works published by the Italian historian and director of the D'Annunzio museum Vittoriale, Giordano Bruno Guerri, who emphasizes the nationalist/patriotic motivations behind D'Annunzio's enterprise and pays little attention to the xenophobia or exclusionary nationalism inherent in the movement. See: Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Disobbedisco. Cinquecento giorni di rivoluzione. Fiume 1919-1920* (Milan: Mondadori, 2018).

⁵¹ Natka Badurin has published excellent work recently underscoring how unprogressive D'Annunzio's regime in Fiume was, especially the oft-celebrated (though never really enacted) anarcho-syndicalist inspired Charter of the Italian Regency of Canaro. See Natka Badurina, "D'Annunzio a Fiume: la violenza politica, l'etica e la storia" in *Fiume 1919-2019: Un centenario europeo tra identità, memorie e prospettive di ricerca* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2020): 197-211.

⁵² Victoria de Grazia, *The Perfect Fascist: A Story of Love, Power, and Morality in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020).

⁵³ Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); ---, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press- Harvard University Press, 2018); Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); ---, *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); ---, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

post-Habsburg Europe Gábor Egry mentioned how the drama that makes *The Fiume Crisis* so readable is much more driven by historiographical expectations than personal or community ones.⁵⁴ For example, we are only interested in the story of how a Hungarian-speaking clerk risks getting fired because we have been trained to think that in a time of extreme nationalism obviously he should have gotten fired. We don't really know if we are rooting for the clerk per se. We know nothing about what kind of man he was: we don't know if he was an extractive supervisor, a bad landlord, an abusive husband, a man who took in stray animals, or someone who helped children in need. We also don't know if he defined himself as a traditionalist Catholic, an assimilated Jew, a fervent nationalist, a determined socialist, a conservative monarchist, or a liberal capitalist. Judson and Wolff have written books that have unmade and remade worlds, states, and structures, but their books usually have a little more 'there there' of what people wanted, dreamed, fought for, and fought against. I love those kinds of books. I've written that kind of book.⁵⁵ I plan to write more like them. But my goals here were not to do that. The drama is in the trials of living amid state structure in a time of rupture; the suspense in the reading is that we really can't guess *a priori* how things really worked out, even though we thought that we could. And in order to make the 'living' feel both real but abstract, I filled the book with as many different kinds of people and their stories that I could, but without much attention to the personal or the ideological.

Mazur and Genell both emphasize in their discussions this image of the "ghost state of empire" that I reference in the book's introduction (page 22). That in fact was the other working title I had had for the manuscript. And in many ways, it perhaps does get closer to explaining why studying how Fiumians lived their 1918-1921 matters more than how Italian nationalists from Italy did. The dissolution of the Habsburg, Ottoman, Hohenzollern, and Romanov empires left locals — elite and not, rich and not, loyal and not — holding the bag of figuring out how to keep going when the *raison d'être* of the structures that ordered their worlds suddenly disappeared. This was a situation postwar revolutionaries dreamed would happen; but most of the tens of millions of post-imperial Eurasians and north Africans affected were not revolutionaries. They were tired battlefield and homefront veterans of wars that in some places were still going strong.

Mazur's intervention clarifies the pay-off of my having gone for the "peopled abstract" instead of the personal or ideological in writing *The Fiume Crisis*. Thanks to his prodigious knowledge of what regime change meant in east central Europe, Mazur paints the broader picture: many other places experienced what we see going on in Fiume. Immediately after 1918, declarations by newly forming freestates, renegade republics, and resistant duchies show us how, as he puts it, communities could and did make "novel claims of power in the name of a nation or society," even if "imperial laws remained in force, the old civil servants stayed in their posts, and the imperial currency was traded for goods and services, often for years beyond 1918." His larger question about how putting "the imperial hangover" in a central position would affect larger histories of twentieth-century Europe is an intriguing one. For me the answer echoes much of what Kathryn Ciancia's recent book has shown us: to "outlive empire" the efforts involved were more arduous and the time required much longer than anyone had imagined, something I believe encouraged people with every year that passed to accept more radical, authoritarian, and violent solutions.⁵⁶ I remember in the early days of researching this book reading Zara Steiner's *The Lights that Failed*, where Steiner characterizes the central motivating factors in postwar western European history as being about "the primacy of economics" while in eastern Europe it was about "the primacy of nationalism."⁵⁷ Such an assessment utterly shocked me; to my eyes the economic problems of east central Europe's successor states far outweighed those in France or Britain and those

⁵⁴ Gábor Egry, "Book Discussion: *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*," ASEES in-person convention, November 20, 2021.

⁵⁵ Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁵⁶ Kathryn Ciancia, *On Civilization's Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁵⁷ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

money pains had much to do with how post-Habsburgers lived out their political lives. Perhaps greater attention to the importance of the structural effects of the “ghost state of empire” will allow more work to be done like that of István Deák, Tara Zahra, and Máté Rigó that links postwar western and eastern European histories and shows that they were not necessarily so essentially different, even if their contexts obviously were.⁵⁸

The most heart-quickenings questions of this roundtable are posed by Genell. Would our histories of post-Ottoman mandates and nation-states look different if we moved away from investigations of identity and high politics and focused instead on the pragmatics of living in the “ghost state of Ottoman Empire?” This is something that I have been wondering for a while. Should similar methodologies be used to study drastically different worlds? Does it help to compare the empires? And if so, how much? I would love to learn more about what an immediate post-Ottoman marketplace, office meeting, or courthouse felt like in Izmir, Beirut, Istanbul, or the villages outside places like Erzurum, Edirne, or Jerusalem. Did people mix-and-match their worlds the way the Fiumians did? When and how did Ottoman practices, monies, laws, rights, and feelings of self shift, dissipate, or transform? Did it all just remain the same even though the empire was running on empty? Did it all immediately change? On a different though related note, did the peoples of the former empires learn from each other? In her latest book, Sarah Abrevaya Stein described how one of her protagonists wrote about the desire to make of his post-Ottoman Jewish Salonika something like what he believed Paris Peace diplomats did with free-ports like Danzig and Fiume, where multi-ethnic cities could be autonomous of the nation-states surrounding them.⁵⁹ In her forthcoming book, Kristina Poznan describes how post-Habsburg citizens used Fiume passports to circumvent American postwar quota systems in ways that were remarkably similar to the trickster travel documents used by the post-Ottoman Syrian and Lebanese migrants described by Stacey Fahrenthold and the post-Ottoman Sephardic migrants studied by Devi Mays.⁶⁰ Perhaps studying “ghost states of empire” cannot just unlock more about how post-Ottoman peoples lived and thought? Maybe post-imperial peoples mirrored each other? And maybe they also even emulated each other? If that is true, then writing this book plays a part in a larger historical goal of mine to show how the broader Mediterranean was interlinked not just because of common circumstance, but also because the peoples of the Mediterranean sometimes participated in comparative practices.

It took me a decade to produce this book. By the time it was published, I was pretty well finished with the topic. As perhaps my tone here conveys, reading this roundtable made me excited about these issues again. I would like to thank everyone involved in this enterprise for that. I think that the book’s stakes are high, but only as long as we keep reading each other’s work and discussing them in concert.

⁵⁸ István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II* (London: Routledge, 2013); Tara Zahra, *Against the World: Deglobalization in Interwar Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton, forthcoming); Máté Rigó, *Capitalism in Crisis, How Business Elites Survived the First World War in Central Europe* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2022).

⁵⁹ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Family Papers: A Sephardic Journey through the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

⁶⁰ Kristina Poznan, *Migrant Nation Builders: The Politics of Mobility from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the United States, 1880s-1920s*, forthcoming; Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).