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BOOK REVIEW

Pappalardo, Salvatore. Modernism in Trieste: The Habsburg Mediterranean and the Literary Invention of Europe, 1870–1945

New York: Bloomsbury, 2021. Pp. 261.

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This richly researched, intellectually adventurous, and intriguingly—often brilliantly—argued discussion of the major modernist authors associated with Trieste confirms in exemplary manner the fascination and significance of the "city of nowhere."

The book appears in the "New Directions in German Studies" series, though only one major author discussed, Robert Musil, was a writer in German. The book's inclusion in the series is inspired, however, precisely because it undercuts such *nationally* conceived categories. It is far from normal "German studies" and much more a book about *Austrian* literary modernism, but it is most perceptive about the German (and Austrian) relationship to Europe, then and now. The book presents Triestine modernism as a transcultural, non-national, multilingual phenomenon that makes nationally conceived categories of literature blinkered.

Pappalardo outlines three sources of what made Trieste such a fertile space for a "literary invention of Europe": a municipal version of Habsburg "state patriotism," "Jewish indifference to the nation," and "an open network of local identities characteristic of the Mediterranean region" (32). The main writers he analyzes—Robert Musil, Italo Svevo, and James Joyce—dealt with or were in their own complex way linked to these themes, whether or not they were Austrians, Jews, or "Mediterranean." The primary vehicle by which he does this, eccentric though it might appear, is by showing their common interest in the supposed Phoenician origin of Trieste and the classical myth of Europa and the Bull. Europa, it turns out, was a *Phoenician* princess.

The first chapter introduces us to the Phoenicians of the Ancient World, a group of seafaring Semites, closely related to the Jews but with a heathen religious system, who for many centuries rivalled the Greeks and then Romans in the Mediterranean. When a claim of Trieste's Phoenician origin was made by scholars in the 1870s, this offered Trieste's inhabitants, especially its Jews, the opportunity for an independent identity. Triestinos could differentiate themselves from Italian nationalist claims on the city. A Phoenician (neither Slav nor Italian) origin better suited the city's role as the Habsburg monarchy's gateway to the Mediterranean. For Jews, the Semitic ethnicity of the Phoenicians, and Carthaginians, gave them an independent origin story when it came to their place in the Adriatic world. One (short-term) resident of Trieste in the 1870s, Sigmund Freud, identified with a Phoenician hero, Hannibal of Carthage; similarly, Italo Svevo, when he wrote *The Conscience of Zeno*, identified not with the Greek Zeno of Elea but the Phoenician Zeno of Citium. The myth of "Phoenician Trieste" was likely enough incorrect, but that did not prevent it from helping to shape the idea of Trieste as a model for a cosmopolitan, European future.

Alongside this Phoenician origin story were the multiple adaptations of the Greek myth of Europa and the Bull among Triestine modernist writers. Pappalardo introduces this theme through the work of the relatively minor, bilingual (Italian-)German writer Theodor Däubler, paralleled by the work of the Slovenian writer, Srečko Kosovel, in which a Slav version of the same Greek Europa myth, that of Lepa Vida, played the same role. In both cases, intriguingly, a myth of sexual violence, of rape, could be transformed, following the lead of none other than Friedrich Nietzsche, into one of consensual satisfaction of sexual desire, a love affair, for both the Greek Zeus and the Phoenician Europa.

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The Greek–Phoenician relationship was thus reinterpreted in a more symbiotic, positive light, symbolizing for multiethnic Trieste an inclusive, cooperative social and cultural model that rejected the colonialist, exclusive, and dominating world of nationalism.

Pappalardo details how these themes appear in the works of Musil, Svevo, and Joyce. Musil, for instance, describes Paul Arnheim as having a "hard Phoenician skull," repeating his racial analysis of Walter Rathenau in his diary entry from 1914, and hence makes Arnheim—as a Phoenician—a Jew and Gentile, a humanist, an intellectual, a capitalist, and a Prussian, but also a war profiteer, a (satirical) paragon of the Nietzschean New Man, the *Homo Europaeus* (133). Another example: Svevo writes, through Zeno Cosini, a "confession" that is, in effect, a very long "Phoenician tale"—in classical Roman parlance a sophisticated lie. This then upends the nationalist insistence on the exclusive use of the Tuscan form in Italian literature, for a confession that was thought and spoken in Triestino can only be a lie if forced to be written in standard Italian. It is exemplary of the subversive nature of "minor literature," a most subtle way of saying that all nationalist culture is, by demanding uniformity of form, built on lies (176).

As for Joyce, his extended sojourn in Trieste, along with the errant myth of Trieste's Phoenician origin, inspired him to adopt the claims of "Irish Orientalism"—that the Irish too had a Phoenician origin—as a central *literary* trope of his later works, most significantly *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. This claim was also untrue, as Joyce was aware, but he nonetheless used it. The character of Leopold Bloom was partly inspired by Svevo, and a Triestine context for Bloom explains his apparently simplistic civic definition of the nation, as opposed to an ethnonationalist one, because this civic version was the standard definition of *Habsburg* state patriotism, which was central to polyglot, multiethnic, and transcultural Triestine identity. Moreover, Bloom, as Joyce's Ulysses, is not only an Irish Jew but also, as Joyce understood the ethnicity of the original Homeric Ulysses from reading Victor Bérard, a Hellenized Phoenician (201).

It is in *Finnegans Wake* that Joyce explores much more fully what Pappalardo calls "the ethnolinguistics of Hiberno-Punic mythography." There, Joyce used the Irish Orientalist myth of Phoenician origin to provide Irish identity an independence from *both* English cultural and political domination and *also* narrowly ethnic Irish nationalism. It gave Ireland and the Irish a cosmopolitan, transcultural, *European* identity that mirrored that of his Trieste. How Pappalardo shows this is remarkable, but then *Wake* is a goldmine for his thesis—or a minefield, where interpretations might explode in the author's face at any false step (and I wonder if any such mines are trodden on). Nevertheless, the overall result is impressive. The idea that Joyce, in his remarkable language of portmanteaus and neologisms, was trying in effect to recreate the local patois, Triestino—the "boneless Viennese Italian" as Joyce describes it (188)—as a multilingual language for a new Europe, is an enchanting one (231).

Pappalardo ends with a coda: exploring the versions of Europe outlined by two of the most astute commentators on the subject in the last decades, Claudio Magris and Jacques Derrida. What Pappalardo has effectively shown is that both Magris and Derrida, perceptive and brilliant as they are, are just carrying on a tradition of an inclusive, self-critical, non-national, and cosmopolitan European identity that has its origins in Trieste—and Phoenician Tyre.

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