

Bordertopia: Pacifico Valussi and the Challenge of Borderlands in the Mid Nineteenth Century

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On March 29, 1849, the thirty-five-year-old journalist and deputy to the Provisional Government, Pacifico Valussi, informed his readership in revolutionary Venice that upon his urgings the *Riva degli Schiavoni*, the city's principal waterfront, would from "now on be called by a more true and broadly significant appellation, *Riva degli Slavi*" (Valussi 1849d; che la così detta Riva degli Schiavoni quindinnanzi con parola di più vero e più ampio significato, si chiamerà Riva degli Slavi). Valussi explained this decision in part by alluding to the fact that "Schiavoni" was (and is) a derogatory appellation meaning at the same time, "Dalmatian," "Slavic-speaker," as well as "big slave." To twenty-first-century eyes (and perhaps to their mid-nineteenth-century counterparts) this announcement appears almost absurd. For by late March 1849, after the disastrous Battle of Novara and the successful blockade of the island-city, was Venice not facing a future of hopeless revolt against Habsburg forces? What was the government doing by spending precious time renaming the famous quay when within just a few days Daniele Manin would announce that the Provisional Government had voted to fight the "Austrians at any cost," indicating to all that the price would be high and the likelihood of victory slight?¹ With cholera outbreaks abounding, fresh bread ever less available, and inflation rising, Valussi's announcement appears to serve as just one more example of how the 1848-49 revolutions were led by elites whose grasp of the realities of battle were tenuous at best. Faced with the consequences of a losing war, interest in re-baptizing Venice's famous promenade smacks of the impulsive utopianism most scholars of the period have identified as one of the main causes for the revolution's failures.²

But contemporaries would have been surprised to hear the charge "utopian" leveled at Valussi's door. For with a university diploma in engineering, almost ten years experience editing Trieste's major political and financial journals, a stint as Secretary to Venice's Provisional Government, and future Senator of the Kingdom of Italy, Valussi presented himself as, and was recognized to be, a 'serious man,' a man historian Adolfo Bernardello rightly characterized as suffering from "the defect of patent realism" when compared to some of his more quixotic fellow 48ers (Bernardello 2002). And perhaps no clearer indicator can be given of Valussi's "patent realism" than the words he wrote his friend Niccolò Tommaseo in the first months of revolution: Everyone and everything

¹ Daniele Manin [1804 — 1857] was a lawyer and political figure in Venice and the Habsburg Veneto, who became the recognized leader of the Venetian revolution against the Habsburg Empire in 1848-49. After Venice fell in August 1849, Manin was exiled from Habsburg lands and spent the last eight years of his life in Paris, where he worked as a language tutor and wrote his memoirs. The best descriptions of his life and political role can be found in Ginsborg (1979).

² By "utopianism" I am referring to a "body of views, aims, or tenets of Utopians; impossibly ideal schemes for the amelioration or perfection of social conditions," as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary. The combination of "ideal" and "unreal" elements of 1848 political and social action has led many historians (of France, the German lands, the Italian lands, the Hungarian lands et al) to characterize the goals of '48ers as "utopian."

should be concentrated on the war against Austria, Valussi insisted. “The hoorays and cheers are no longer enough, and it is also not enough the courageous fighting and dying of the strong” (Valussi 1848g; Gli evviva non bastano più: e non basta nemmeno il coraggioso combattere ed il morire di forti). Here was no dreamer. So why was Valussi pointing Venetians’ attention to a toponymical effort that we can all admit had no effect in changing the outcome of the “courageous fighting and dying of the strong?”³

The question poses an essential problem: What should we regard as utopian and what pragmatic? Are plans that came to fruition any more realistic than those that failed? How should we regard initiatives that seem “out of place” or “out of time” when compared to those trends that would later prove to determine outcomes? By examining the initiatives that led Pacifico Valussi to make his seemingly absurd March 1849 pronouncement, this article will show that sometimes those measures, which on the surface appear inexpedient, can reveal astute responses to problems disregarded either by contemporaries or by the historians who have studied them. In essence, this approach views *utopian* efforts not as outrageous reveries of the past, but as “histories of the present,” to use a phrase borrowed from Foucault and adopted in a recent collection of essays analyzing utopias/dystopias (Gordin, Tilley et al. 2010).⁴ And in the case of Valussi, this “history of the present” exposes a fascinating sensitivity to the complications of nationalism if promoted along Europe’s “borderlands” (*paesi di confine*) a term Valussi himself employed. To respond to what he saw as the precarious nature of nationalism Valussi argued in favor of creating a so-to-speak *bordertopia*, where Venice’s new *Riva degli Slavi* would signal not Italy’s division from Slavdom and the East by means of the waters lapping along its banks, but instead its intersection with lands and “nations” who comingled along its shores.

But before we can unearth the what, whys, and hows of Valussi’s mid-nineteenth-century *bordertopia*, we must first take a quick look at the man who would come to postulate it.⁵ Born in 1813 in the high plains of Friuli outside of Udine, Valussi’s father baptized him “Pacifico” to celebrate the latest round of European peace treaties, marking young Valussi as a true son of the Napoleonic Wars. According to his memoirs, Pacifico was raised in the countryside along much the same lines as Rousseau would have wished

³ Niccolò (also Nicolò) Tommaseo (1802-1874) was a Dalmatian-born poet, linguist, novelist, religious reformer, and liberal politician active throughout most of the nineteenth century, publishing and residing in the Italian peninsula, Dalmatia, the Ionian islands, and France. He is most famous for writing the preeminent Italian dictionary of the nineteenth century, acting as the co-leader of the 1848 revolution in Venice, and for his many initiatives to formulate a social Christian variant of Italian nationhood.

⁴ By “history of the present” I am referring to the methodology for unpacking utopianism and dystopianism described in the recent volume of Gordin and Tilley (2010). The editors of the volume describe this methodology most clearly in the *Introduction* where they write that understanding utopians and utopianism “requires excavating the ‘conditions of possibility’ — even the ‘conditions of imaginability’ — behind localized historical moments, an excavation that demands direct engagement with *radical change*. After all, utopias and dystopias by definition seek to alter the social order on a fundamental, systemic level. They address root causes and offer revolutionary solutions. This is what makes them recognizable” (5). Though clearly also a response to the work of Michel Foucault, Gordin, Tilley and company’s reference to “History of the present” sides less with Henri Bergson’s “*souvenir du présent*” and more with the work of Karl Mannheim, who argued that “[t]he innermost structure of the mentality of a group can never be as clearly grasped as when we attempt to understand its conception of time in the light of its hopes, yearning, and purposes” (Mannheim and Wirth 1976).

⁵ For information on Pacifico Valussi, the best biography to date is Tafuro (2004).

for him. However, the degree to which these memories conform with the ideals of “natural education” indicate that they should be read with a grain of salt (Valussi 1967). What we do know for sure about his background is that he was the son of a not-very-wealthy landowner, he had a brother who was a parish priest, and his family’s associations and his own acquaintances were limited to the circles of Veneto and Friuli, boasting few contacts with Italian-speakers from regions beyond that. Later in life, to increase his familiarity with the lilts of Italian dialects from other parts of the peninsula Valussi even considered hiring a cook from Tuscany just so that he could hear “the Tuscan accent, which,” he admitted, “I don’t know as I don’t know the people from there” (Valussi n.d., c. 1840b; *il desiderio ch’io vorrei dudire come mi fosse possibile l’accento toscano, che del resto non conosco prato la gente di là*). He completed his *liceo* education in Udine with enough success to be admitted to the Mathematics program at the University of Padua. Further information about his family’s economic status is supplied by the fact that they managed to scrounge up enough money to pay for it. Upon Valussi’s successful graduation from university, he decided that engineering and mathematics were not for him, and he spent a few years in Venice trying to decide what path to follow.

In Venice, Valussi contemplated his future as one devoted to letters. Did he want to be a historian? A journalist? A playwright? Valussi tried his hand at all three. And while pondering his potential professions and filling pages with unsuccessful stabs at local histories and histrionic dramas, he earned his bread by tutoring languages and mathematics (aside from the Italian and Latin required of any university student, he was also fluent in French and German and had a reading knowledge of Spanish). By the time he left Venice at the age of twenty-five, Valussi resembled the scores of other underemployed and over-read university students that would come to serve as emblems of the pre-revolutionary era. What Valussi’s future would hold, few knew and, apparently, few hoped for much. He had all the trappings of being on the path to returning to Friuli, hat in hand, a failed “man-of-letters.”

It was Valussi’s departure from Venice and arrival in Trieste that signaled his rise and his greater sensitivity to the importance of the national movement. His departure was engineered by his new friendship with the charismatic, scandal-ridden, poet-writing young priest, Francesco Dall’Ongaro.⁶ Dall’Ongaro, too, had just graduated from the seminary in Padua and had family in Friuli. Brought together by overlaps in background and experience, the two began seeking each other out in Venice’s cafes and bars, sharing their work and discussing some of the most popular authors at the time—Rousseau, Foscolo, Byron, Pellico, Manzoni, Tommaseo, and Mazzini, among others.⁷ Sitting in cafes commenting on the newspapers or walking Venice’s *calle*, Dall’Ongaro and Valussi cemented a friendship based not solely on entertaining companionship but also on the conviction that they were destined to change the world somehow. According to Valussi’s memoirs, what began to occupy their thoughts more and more was the need to

⁶ For a short biographical sketch of Dall’Ongaro see Reill (2011). The most widely read biography of Dall’Ongaro remains De Gubernatis and Dall’Ongaro (1875). Readers should be advised, however, that many of the letters reproduced in this volume have been altered and scholars should consult the originals rather than trusting the “friendly editing” that de Gubernatis provided.

⁷ For an interesting discussion of student culture in Padua and Venice in the Restoration period and the importance of regional ties in the formation of friendship networks see Laven (1992).

reinvigorate *italianità*, a development not so surprising when considering the “Risorgimento canon” he and Dall’Ongaro were pouring over.⁸ But reading was not the only impulse for their national turn. According to his memoirs, Valussi explained his strengthened Italian national sentiments as a response to the culture of decadence of 1830s Venice, describing with a large helping of *malinconia* that in his last days before leaving the island-city:

Splendid and extremely poetic were the sunsets glimpsed from the *Piazzetta* [in front of the Doge’s Palace] or the *Riva degli Schiavoni*, magnificent the summer nights illuminated by the moon among those marvelous buildings.... But in Trieste I could not forget the silence that reigned over [Venice’s] Saint Mark’s Square in late morning, and how, when seeing me and a friend in the early morning armored-up against the cold..., gondoliers never imagined that these two could be Venetians and thus came up to us with the same old call: *Monsieur, la gondola*. (Valussi 1967)

Erano splendidi e poetici oltremodo i tramonti guardati dalla Piazzetta o dalla Riva degli Schiavoni, magnifiche le notti destinate illuminate dalla luna fra quei tanti meravigliosi edifici.... Però a Trieste non poteva dimenticarmi la solitudine che regnava in Piazza San Marco a mattina già avanzata, e che i gondolieri, vedendo me ed un amico mio inferajuolati avviarci mattinieri verso i Giardini, non pensando essi mai, che quei due potessero essere Veneziani, ci venissero incontro sempre col solito grido; *Monsieur, la gondola*.

To Valussi’s and Dall’Ongaro’s eyes, as was the case for so many others at the time, Venice—sadly beautiful with its no-longer-bustling *Piazzetta* marketplace and its parasitic gondolier-infested tourism—was the embodiment of Italian decay.⁹ And when Dall’Ongaro wrote from Trieste inviting Valussi to join him in editing the port-city’s first literary journal, *La favilla* (*The Spark*), Valussi hoped that Trieste could serve as a cauldron for reviving both his own professional aspirations and a general Italian spirit. Eager, untried, and ambitious, Valussi arrived in Trieste in 1838.

It was Trieste that made a ‘serious man’ out of Valussi. As he described in his memoirs,

⁸ For more on the influence of a “Risorgimento canon” of readings that helped inspire and convert nineteenth-century men and women into imagining a “reborn” Italian nation, see Banti (2002).

⁹ For an excellent discussion of the mythical quality of the *leggenda nera* of Venice’s decay under the Habsburgs, see Laven (2002). Emanuel Rota also recently presented a thought-provoking paper on work-ethic, theories of decay, and the industrial revolution in Restoration-era Venice (2010).

As soon as I had arrived in Trieste...I realized that in this city you had to work, and work a lot, or else abandon it in search of a different sort of environment.

Activity would begin early in the morning in the warehouses, the customs house, and the port, after twelve it [activity] would reconvene among the whisperings of the Stock Exchange where it resumed in full force until evening, at which point it moved on to the theaters and the brigades of friends at the restaurants and beer halls, and in it participated the natives and those who had come from every part of Italy and from other countries, both the Levant and the North. This activity inspired a happy eagerness in whomever was young; and I was young. (Valussi 1967)

Appena giunto a Trieste invece m'accorsi...che in quella città bisognava lavorare, e molto, od abbandonarla per cercare altrove un diverso ambiente.

Quel movimento, che cominciava di bel mattino, nei magazzini, nella dogana e nel porto, che dopo mezzogiorno si raccoglieva nel sussurro della Borsa e poi ripigliava fino a sera e finiva nei teatri e nelle brigate di amici dal trattore, o dal birraio, ed a cui partecipavano i nativi ed i venuti da tutte le parti d'Italia, e d'altri paesi, tanto del Levante che del Nord, doveva ispirare un'allegria alacrità a chi era giovane; e così ero.

Compared to what Valussi considered the melancholy silence of Venice, Trieste tested the crowds of newcomers that arrived yearly to partake in its booming trade. Likened by some to the port-cities of the Americas, Trieste represented a sink-or-swim urban culture where opportunities for “new wealth” abounded, but threats of continued or even aggravated poverty also loomed.¹⁰ Valussi responded to the challenge with verve. Within three years he had taken his position as co-editor of Trieste’s literary journal and transformed it into a launch pad from which he would take over the editorship of the government newspaper, *The Trieste Observer (Osservatore triestino)*, and the editorship of the highly influential Austrian Lloyd steamship company’s newsletter.¹¹ Though he arrived as a disciple of Dall’Ongaro in 1838, by the mid-1840s it was Dall’Ongaro who gained employ under the sponsorship of Valussi.

How to explain Valussi’s ascent? Well, first of all he had found his calling. Editing a journal in the mid-nineteenth century flushed out Valussi’s strengths: Work was fast-paced and confined to short segments, a broad knowledge base outweighed a specialized one, networking skills were a must to gain contributions from writers-of-the-moment or entrées from men-in-the-know, and forthright argumentation trumped philosophizing. All

¹⁰ For examples showing how Trieste was compared with the Americas, see de Incontrera (1960).

¹¹ Though owned and run by the same people, the Austrian Lloyd was divided into two divisions, the steamship company and the newsgathering agency. Valussi was hired to oversee and edit the Italian-language version of the Austrian Lloyd’s newspaper (there was also a German-language edition). Alison Frank is currently finishing up a fascinating monograph on the Habsburg Empire’s pursuits to create a “maritime empire” in the nineteenth century, focusing heavily on Trieste and the role of the Austrian Lloyd. In the meantime, the best English-language work on the company remains Coons (1975) For more information on Valussi’s assignment as editor of the *Osservatore triestino* see Tafuro (2004).

of these capabilities Valussi displayed in spades. In Trieste, he also discovered his inner workaholic, prompting friends and his future wife (Dall'Ongaro's younger sister) to consistently describe him as 'running off' to work or 'living at the office.' No doubt, his energy was sustained by the fact that his efforts paid off. For the first time in his life, men began approaching Valussi to ask for *his* help or sponsorship, instead of the other way around. And by the late 1840s Valussi had cultivated close working relationships with some of the Habsburg Empire's most influential statesmen, such as the liberal-minded Counts Franz von Stadion and Karl von Bruck, as well as correspondences with important writers from the Italian peninsula—such as Niccolò Tommaseo, Cesare Cantù, and Gian Pietro Vieusseux—many of whom he had read and admired while struggling to find his way in Venice just a few years before.¹²

In addition to being important for Valussi as a platform for professional advancement, the effect Trieste had on his understanding of nationalism set the groundwork for the March 1849 announcement with which this article began. From the outset Valussi was struck by the amalgam of multi-lingual and multi-religious communities that inhabited the free-port-city. In his newspapers, in article after article, he made mention of how Italian-, South-Slavic-, German-, Greek-, French-, Turkish-, Spanish- and English- speakers converged within the city, practicing their respective Catholic, Christian Orthodox, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim rites in the various religious houses sprinkled throughout the urban space. The peaceful cohabitation of so many different language and religious groups in one *urbs* was not based on assimilation; newcomers to Trieste did not shed their traditions, gods, and alphabets when entering its port. And it was in this environment that Valussi believed he glimpsed the seed of true cosmopolitanism, where a world of differences could cohabit and mutually benefit precisely because difference was recognized, supervised, and appreciated. In this respect, Trieste seemed to supplant Paris as the cosmopolitan city, for its worldliness was fed from below—by trade and different ethnicities joining in its *porto franco*—rather than limited to an intellectual elite. Valussi preferred Trieste's breed of cosmopolitanism. Echoing arguments made by Johann Gottfried von Herder half a decade earlier, Valussi claimed that Parisian-inspired cosmopolitanism was essentially a-national or anti-national, creating cosmopolites who were "citizens of the world without even a patria,"—"vague," "generalizing," "uncertain" (Valussi 1840a).¹³ The inherent flaw of this "worldly cosmopolitanism" was that it rejected the background of its authors, immersing cosmopolites in foreign lands and foreign verses, and thereby only reproducing "imperfectly, with dull colors, those [verses and lands] of other nations" (*ibid.*; *non rappresentano che imperfettamente e con fiacchi colori quello che le altre nazioni furono già*).

How Trieste transformed Valussi's thinking about nationalism, and Italian nationalism specifically, is that he no longer considered nations as confined, autonomous entities. Instead he now thought of nations in terms of their differences and feared what

¹² Throughout Valussi's stay in Trieste he wrote often of his close working relationship with Trieste's new liberal governor, Count Franz von Stadion, and the head of the Austrian Lloyd and future Commerce and Finance Minister of the Habsburg Empire, Count Karl von Bruck. For example see Valussi (1840b; 1847a). Valussi also discussed his working relationship with both Habsburg dignitaries in his memoir (1967).

¹³ "Pretendono però il titolo di Cosmopoliti anche certi scrittori nebulosi, che invece di essere cittadini del mondo non hanno nemmeno patria... si mantengono sulle generali, perchè fino a tanto che s'aggirano nell'incerto, nel vago, nell'indeterminato."

would be lost if these differences were not harmonized. And as such he argued that a true *national* cosmopolite needed to accept difference—to compare, contrast, and improve his own particular national identity in conjunction with others. The “divisions of time, place, race, class” (ibid.; tutte le divisioni di tempo, di luogo, di razze, di classi) should be recognized, not overlooked. Real cosmopolites needed to admit incongruities in order “to overcome harmful national differences,” leaving on the world stage only those traits “that were useful for the free competition of human intelligence” (ibid.; in cui superate le differenze nazionali dannose, non restino, che le caratteristiche, giovevoli alla libera concorrenza degli umani ingegni). “The true Cosmopolites,” Valussi continued, “cross that immense city [that is the world] to learn from other countries to feel more love and admiration for their own and in turn help it” (ibid.; i veri Cosmopoliti percorrono quell’immensa città per imparare negli altri paesi a più amare e stimare il proprio ed a giovargli). By focusing on his “own nation” as well as foreign cultures, Valussi’s Triestine cosmopolite would have an “active voice in the assembly of peoples” (Valussi 1840a; una voce attiva nella grande assemblea dei popoli) representing his own nation while learning from others.

Trieste held a special place in Valussi’s understanding of a cosmos-of-many nations not just because of its diverse urban inhabitants. He maintained that Trieste’s mixed populations were not an idiosyncrasy related to its *porto franco* status, but actually an embodiment of the essential social makeup of any area where “nations” collided. Trieste was just one such collision point. Others that he mentioned specifically were Tyrol, Corsica, Malta, Alsace-Lorraine, and the Ionian islands. In a manner quite atypical for the time, Valussi claimed that these spaces were not sites of disjuncture, but instead “borderlands” of association between different nations, “providentially placed by nature as rings between nations, as bridges of communication for affection, ideas and works” (Valussi 1842; provvidamente la natura mise dei paesi anello fra le nazioni, e quasi ponte pella comunicazione degli affetti, delle idee e delle opera).

It is here, in Trieste in the early 1840s, that we can first spot the origin of Valussi’s bordertopia. First, he contended that borderlands acted as transmitters between different nations, “points of contact” where the “German,” “French,” “Italian,” “Slavic,” “Greek,” and “British” nations could learn about and from each other.¹⁴ These points—described by Valussi as the “limits” between nations—were not blended realms, but instead “rings”

¹⁴ Throughout this article I have already used “Slavic” as a modifier of nationalism, language, and identity. This is a compromise. Up until at least the mid-nineteenth century in the lands south of Vienna Slavic languages were not yet standardized. Linguists agree that three general groups of Slavic language dialects were spoken along the Adriatic in the nineteenth century (the dialects Valussi was usually referring to when he spoke of the “*lingua slava*”): Slovene, Štokavian and Čajkavian. However, every town, island, or county had its own version of these dialects, often almost incomprehensible to other Slavic-language speakers living just a hundred miles away. As such, up until the twentieth century, speakers of a variant of any of the aforementioned dialects went under the general rubric of “Slavic speakers.” If discussed in connection with Polish-, Russian-, or Czech-speakers, they were called “South Slavs” or “Serbs,” regardless of language, dialect variant, or religious affiliations. In the 1830s, the name “Illyrian” was also commonly used to denote the general language family of Slavic speakers living south of Vienna and north of Athens. This was the case not only in Italian, German, French, English, Polish, and Russian texts, but also among the Adriatic’s own Slovene, Štokavian, and Čajkavian speakers. What is more, the orthography, vocabulary, and grammar of today’s Slovene, Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian is remarkably different from what Slavic-speakers spoke during the time period studied and to call what speakers spoke anything other than “Slavic” or “South Slavic” would confuse rather than clarify.

linking neighboring nations, “interpenetrating” yet “retaining a name and existence of their own” (paraphrase of Valussi 1842; s’attaccino l’uno all’altro senza fondersi, o stirarsi, sconnettersi e stacciarsi, pur serbando un nome ed un’esistenza propria). Notable here is the degree to which Valussi contended that Europe was a patchwork of “nations,” that the nation itself was the nucleus on which society was organized and based. These “nations” were not administrative states, but distinctive communities defined by language and customs. And these “borderlands” were found not along the official borders of different countries, but were situated between different national communities.

Valussi’s bordertopia originated from his conviction that by studying and comparing Europe’s borderlands as a group, “you would have a comparative diagram of almost all of Europe; and this would be a peacemaking act” (Valussi 1842; in poco sarebbe un quadro comparativo di quasi tutta Europa; e ciò sarebbe parte di quell’opera di pace). Here lies Valussi’s second point about borderlands: They were the key to European peace. Valussi was sensitive to the fact that “nations” were easily predisposed to hatred and violence. Borderlands, then, were seen as particularly precarious nexuses. Just as they tended to act as “rings of affection” or “bridges for communication,” Valussi argued that these “limits of the nations” could also serve as sites “where reciprocal aversion and national hatreds were more likely and more dangerous” (ibid.).¹⁵ Even the beneficial aspects of interlocking nations could potentially cause violence, for if communities sought to separate or detach from one of their linked neighbors, only bloodshed would result.

What is particularly interesting in this peace-making bordertopia is that Valussi underscored the inherent danger posed by borderlands. To Valussi, borderlands were places only “fire and iron could break up” (Valussi 1842; non possono...senza ferro e fuoco disunirsi). Thus all Europe needed to pay particular attention to these hotspots. In fact, what was needed was a complete rethinking of the nation-building project. The development of nations should not be undertaken in isolation or in the capitals. Instead, to assure that they progress “without becoming enemies” (ibid.; senza inimicarsi), nations should be developed along the “borderlands.” Thus, Trieste, Dalmatia, Tyrol, Istria, and Corsica should be the real workshops of nation-building, not Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Budapest, Zagreb, Athens, or Belgrade. The heart of a nation was not in the center, but on the border, on the “*confine*,” where

different languages, customs, and climes are in continual contact, [where] one can better see and study through comparison the original characteristics of the different nations and work...to harmonize them. (ibid.)

¹⁵ “Queste parti estreme è utile e necessario che si studino e si conoscano, perchè *i limiti* sono anche punto d’appoggio all’azione, perchè ivi è la porta tanto delle buone cose cui conviene aprire l’adito, come delle cattive cui conviene vietarlo, e *più facili vi sono e più pericolose le reciproche antipatie e gli odii nazionali*, o quelle scimmie degli odii poco meno funeste” (italicized sections are those translated in the text).

ove lingue e costumi e climi diversi sono in continuo contatto si possono col confronto meglio vedere e studiare i tratti originali delle varie nazioni ed adoperare perchè camminino...in buona armonia.

Here is where Valussi explained Trieste's special role. After arguing that Europe's system of interlocking nations was a larger regional, even continental, issue, Valussi indicated that Trieste, with its "permanent inhabitants from at least four different languages—the Italian, German, Slavic and Greek" (Valussi 1842; v'hanno sede fissa genti numerose di almeno quattro lingue diverse, l'italiana, la tedesca, la slava e la greca) needed to become the epicenter for aligning Europe's nations. The *porto franco* residents should not content themselves with promoting tolerance within their own heterogeneous body politic. Triestines also had to use their special situation as the center of European trade and transportation to help define national cultures that could work together. To secure peace for Europe, Trieste could not remain behind its municipal walls. Instead it had to look without and reassert its interconnections with all the peoples surrounding it.

Valussi's bordertopia was not empty talk. His writings on cosmopolitanism and interlocking national communities were not just featured in editorials. From the early 1840s until revolution broke out in 1848, Valussi used his position as editor of the three major Triestine periodicals to encourage others to cooperate in realizing his project. Valussi promoted writers and local politicians of different backgrounds to help make Trieste the true cultural and multi-national center of the Adriatic. Of particular interest to Valussi was the idea of creating a forum where Adriatic writers (especially those living on its eastern shores) could publish works dealing with their respective communities. By mid 1842 he had started a recurring column dedicated to the study of Slavdom—written by two Dubrovnik university students, Ivan August Kaznačić and Medo Pucić—an initiative in which he took particular pride.¹⁶ He also made a point of advertising and promoting books from Venice, Trieste, Istria and Dalmatia that specifically addressed their communities and their history in the Adriatic. The Dalmatian Vincenzo Solitro's collection of primary documents tracing the development of Istria and Dalmatia, for example, received glowing recommendations and leaflets announcing its publication not just in *La favilla*, but also in the *Lloyd austriaco* and the *Osservatore triestino* (Valussi 1844). He spoke to an audience within and outside of Trieste, emphasizing whenever possible that his public extended beyond his *porto franco*, encompassing the entire sea and its many nationalities.

It is significant to note that Valussi did not leave Trieste when Daniele Manin declared Venice's secession from the Habsburg Empire in late March, 1848. Many of Valussi's Italian nationalist friends living in Trieste had already left for the peninsula, including his collaborator and brother-in-law, Francesco Dall'Ongaro. Valussi, instead, initially opted to stay in the free-port-city. In part this is because his wife had just suffered a miscarriage and was in no state to travel.¹⁷ But Valussi also preferred to stay in

¹⁶ Valussi mentioned this byline in his autobiography and throughout his life when summing up what he had accomplished during his years in Trieste. For a fascinating examination of the importance of the column for the Slavic national movement see Stulli (1956).

¹⁷ In Pacifico Valussi's memoirs he described his wife's miscarriage as "painful" and "ill-fated" (*disgraziato*). His wife was still suffering weeks after, not only from the physical scars, but also the

Trieste because he felt he could do more good for the Italian national movement within the Habsburg Empire and along its borderlands than he could in the revolutionary epicenters. Here, again, Valussi was the quintessential pragmatist. He understood that in cities like Rome, Florence, Bologna, Turin, Milan, and Venice there was no shortage of newspaper men, many of whom were much more famous and well-connected than he. Valussi also was convinced that his words could have more effect with an “enemy,” highly-placed Habsburg audience than they could amongst fellow 48ers. Months before the revolution began, Valussi had made these feelings known to his friend Niccolò Tommaseo, arguing that “if in this [geographic] extremity one can be understood by ten people and if one can keep back a couple paces the North that advances, it is better [to do] a little here, than much somewhere else” (Valussi 1847b; *se in quest'estremità si può essere intesi da dieci persone e se si può tenere indietro di qualche passo il nord che s'avanza, è meglio poco qui, che molto altrove*).

Finally, Valussi remained in Trieste because, at least initially, he believed that his bordertopia could organically foster cooperation between a future Italian and South Slavic state. Just three weeks after Venice declared its independence from the Habsburg Empire, Valussi wrote an acquaintance in Dalmatia outlining how Dalmatia and the Adriatic would function in a Europe without Habsburg rule. In essence, Valussi continued to consider the free-port city of Trieste a model for the entire eastern seaboard. Like Trieste, which served as the “marketplace” connecting “trade between the sea that sits in front of it and the continental lands to its back” (Valussi 1848k; *il traffico fra il mare che ci sta davanti ed i paesi continentali che abbiamo alle spalle*), Valussi argued that Dalmatia could function as a “link” between different nations and their commerce. To underscore his point, he maintained that:

If the Illyrians [the Slavic-speakers of the Balkans] separated from Austria, joining together Croatians, Serbs, and other Danube Slavs, Dalmatia could become the intermediary link between two allied Nations. The coast would be entirely a free-trade zone; every city would have roads that cut across the mountains, putting them in communication with Bosnia, Herzegovina, and the Danube lands. These lands would come to unite not only materially but also morally with Dalmatia, which would conduct all that trade.... Her sailors and those of Veneto would rule the Adriatic and the Levant.... Dalmatia, Italian along the coast and Slavic inland, is the land destined by Providence to flourish and civilize her neighbors. (Valussi 1848f)

Se gl'Illirici si separano dall'Austria, unendosi Croati, Serbi, Slavi altri danubiani, la Dalmazia può divenire anello intermedio fra due Nazioni alleate. La costa dovrebbe essere tutto un porto franco; ogni città dovrebbe avere strade che tagliassero trasversalmente la montagna e comunicassero colla Bosnia, l'Erzegovina e i paesi danubiani. Questi paesi verrebbero ad unirsi; non materialmente, ma moralmente alla Dalmazia che farebbe tutto

quel commercio.... I suoi marinai coi Veneti sarebbero primi nell'Adriatico e nel Levante.... La Dalmazia, italiana alla costa e Slava nell'interno è il paese destinato dalla Provvidenza a prosperare e ad incivilire i suoi vicini.

Writing from his desk overlooking the port of Trieste, Valussi thought he was witnessing the beginnings of the break-up of the Habsburg Empire. He speculated about how a Europe of nations instead of one of empires could operate. Free-trade ports like Trieste would not become redundant without Vienna's tutelage, instead their importance would grow. "The head of the Adriatic," i.e. Trieste, would serve as the natural reference point for residents of the eastern Adriatic (Valussi 1848f). Dalmatia in this new "intermediary" position between the future Italian and South Slavic nation-states would not act solely as a provider of primary resources to Trieste's trade. Instead, it, too, would become a "marketplace" and a "link." Valussi reasoned that "since the Italians cannot exclude the Slavs from the Adriatic, nor vice versa, they should be friends and mutually help each other" (Valussi *ibid.*; *Gl'Italiani non potrebbero escludere gli Slavi dall'Adriatico, nè questi quello: dunque sieno amici e si giovino a vicenda*).

Valussi finally left Trieste for Venice in late April 1848, partly because he became disillusioned with whatever influence he wielded over his readership and partly because Tommaseo had secured him the editorship of the official government paper *La Gazzetta di Venezia* as well as the post of Secretary to the provisional government.¹⁸ Upon hearing of his decision to leave Trieste, Valussi's employer, Count Karl von Bruck—head of the Austrian Lloyd, Trieste delegate to the 1848 Frankfurt Parliament, and future Habsburg Commerce and then Finance Minister—accepted Valussi's resignation and paid him three extra months' salary to help Valussi face the transition. Von Bruck knew that Valussi was going to work in revolutionary Venice in its fight against the Habsburg Empire. But he also understood that he and Valussi shared a common outlook as to the need to secure that Europe's national movements did not disrupt broader European-wide political and economic interconnections. Valussi accepted the money von Bruck offered him, using it to pay for his family's passage to Venice as well as a security deposit for a small apartment in the working-class *Castello* district. Although throughout the revolutions both men worked on opposing sides, Valussi would spend the rest of his life paying homage to von Bruck for his sponsorship (Valussi 1849c; Valussi 1967).

Once in Venice, Valussi demonstrated the same tireless activity that had launched him to notoriety in Trieste. Not only did he serve as Government Secretary and editor of the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, Valussi also helped edit the daily newspaper *Fatti e parole* (*Facts and Deeds*) and weekly journals such as *L'Italia nuova* (*The New Italy*), *Il precursore* (*The Precursor*), and *La fratellanza de' popoli* (*The Brotherhood of Peoples*). When elections were held for the new Provisional Government in 1849, Valussi was chosen to represent the *Castello* district, receiving the second most votes after his friend

¹⁸ As Valussi wrote to Tommaseo (1848g), "Here [in Trieste] I can't take it anymore. If I didn't have a sick wife I would have already left for Friuli. I could have gone to Turin until yesterday; but I don't feel like going anymore. But I will leave Trieste for sure, since I don't have the means to do any good here" (*Qui io non posso più durarla. Se non avessi la moglie malata sarei partito per il Friuli. Potevo andare a Torino fin ieri; ma non mi garba l'andarci ora. Ma Trieste la lascerò di certo, non avendo mezzo di fare alcun bene*).

Tommaseo. Though sympathetic to the anti-Piedmontese, Mazzinian-republican faction within Venice's political circles, when push came to shove Valussi supported Daniele Manin and the centrist coalition.¹⁹ At revolution's end, when the victorious Habsburg forces listed the fifty political leaders who would face exile for their leadership in the uprising, Valussi's name was among them. He had expected as much. In the final hour, however, he was relieved to discover that his former Trieste employer, Karl von Bruck, had interceded on his behalf again, this time by having his name removed from the list. Apparently all the work Valussi had done while in Trieste balanced out the fifteen months he had campaigned against the Vienna empire.

Von Bruck's last minute intercession on Valussi's behalf serves as a reminder that a certain continuity in logic and argument was evident in Valussi's initiatives once he arrived in Venice. And it is this continuity that helps explain the seemingly inexplicable March 1849 announcement renaming of the *Riva degli Schiavoni*. As he had done in his Trieste publications, in revolutionary Venice Valussi spoke of his hopes that borderlands would harmonize interactions between the national states he believed would be formed after the revolutions. Echoing his Trieste articles, Valussi argued that the Adriatic needed to serve as a "link" (*anello*) between Italian and Slavic peoples—"a conjunction point" (*anello di congiunzione*), a "portofranco" along the entire eastern Adriatic, "the common market for the West, East, North, and South" (Valussi 1848c; *il comune mercato fra l'Oriente e l'Occidente, il Settentrione ed il Mezzogiorno*) a point where "Providence put the two nationalities in such contact that it would be impossible to completely separate them" (*ibid.*; *la Provvidenza mise le due nazionalità a tale contatto, che impossibile sarebbe il separarle di netto*). Not only did Valussi retain his arguments of the Adriatic being the "ring" to connect the Sea's nationalities, Valussi used almost exactly the same arguments to show that Venice was the perfect place to promote such a bordertopia Adriatic as he had used for Trieste just a few months earlier. For example, in January 1849 he wrote:

Throughout Italy the land most suitable for studying such questions [Italian-Slavic alliance], for putting together the foundations for future relations with those Peoples who neighbor us, is Venice. Venice, for its ancient fame and recent glories, can be respected in those countries without being feared. Venice, peaceful and free while surrounded by general chaos, also has the privilege to focus on issues that are less pressing. She [Venice] has within her breast quite a few people of Slavic origin who look kindly upon her, the Dalmatians, who can serve us as intermediaries.... If one day Italy will be free and united, in Venice the ties will have to be renewed with the Peoples situated to the East of our sea, which Austria has broken. With the civilized Slavs we will have daily commerce. The Romanians...instead of sending their children to study in Leipzig, Munich, or Paris will send them here, where we will invite them

¹⁹ The best English-language treatment of the internal political battles that plagued governance of the 1848-49 Republic of San Marco remains Ginsborg (1979).

to join us. And the intellectual relations will be just the starting point of many material advantages. (Valussi and Klun 1849)²⁰

Di tutta Italia il paese, il più appropriato per studiare una simile quistione, per gettare le prime basi delle future relazioni con quei Popoli a noi vicini si è Venezia. Per l'antico nome e per le glorie recenti, Venezia può essere rispettata in quei paesi, senza che per questo la temano. Venezia, tranquilla e libera come si trova in mezzo al generale sconvolgimento, ha pure il privilegio di potersi occupare anche di cose meno pressanti. Essa ha nel suo seno non poca gente di origine slava ed a noi benevola, i Dalmati, che ci possono servire d'intermediarii.... Se l'Italia sarà libera ed unita un giorno, a Venezia si rannoderanno le fila, rotte dall'Austria, delle vecchie relazioni coi Popoli posti all'Oriente del nostro mare. Cogli Slavi incivili avremo quotidiani commerci. I Rumeni...invece di mandare i loro figli allo studio di Lipsia, di Monaco, o di Parigi, li manderanno qui, ove noi facciamo ad essi l'invito; e le relazioni intellettuali si faranno principio a molti materiali vantaggi.

While once Trieste had served as the “natural” intermediary between the nations that “collided” along the shores of the Adriatic, now it was Venice. Though the cities had changed, the sentiment remained the same: nation-building meant harmonizing along Europe’s borderlands.

All was not the same between Valussi’s pre-revolutionary bordertopia and his 1848-49 vision, however. One distinct difference was how he imagined national “conjunction points” would be structured. Before 1848-49, Valussi had argued that the Adriatic served as the *natural* “link” between Italian and Slavic peoples. Up to this point, he had not explained how these borderlands would be administered or how they would relate politically to surrounding nations. This imprecision was due in part to the fact that the Habsburg Empire already functioned as a common infrastructure for the two sides of the sea. In December 1848, when the Habsburg Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia tried to forcibly annex the territories of the eastern Adriatic, Valussi changed course.²¹

After December 1848 Valussi argued that a precise separation needed to be maintained between ethnic borderlands and their neighboring nations (Valussi 1848h). According to Valussi, “Dalmatians, residents of Rijeka, Istrians, and Triestines” were “people of mixed lands equally opposed to being completely absorbed by either nationality [Italian or Slavic]” (Valussi 1848b; i Dalmati, i Fiumani, gl'Istriani ed i Triestini devono essere questi mediatori; poichè quei paesi misti, che ripugnano del pari a

²⁰ See also Valussi (1849g; 1848j).

²¹ There is little published in English on the politics of the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia vis-à-vis Dalmatia and the Adriatic during 1848, as most work focuses on the Hungarian question. However, some understanding can be gleaned from discussions on the differences between “Croatian,” “Illyrian,” “South Slav,” “Dalmatian,” and “Dubrovnik” identity as described in Despalatović (1975); Goldstein and Jovanović (1999); Monzali (2009). Useful non-English language works that discuss Croatia-Slavonia’s aim to integrate Dalmatia into its Kingdom include Vrandečić (2002); Stančić (1980); Clewing (2001); Pirjevec (1995).

venire assorbiti totalmente si dall'una che dall'altra nazionalità). With the revolutions of 1848, Valussi believed these peoples lived in a particularly precarious position in which they "regarded their future with apprehensions mixed with terror and hope" (Valussi 1848b; guardano con un presentimento misto di terrore e di speranza il loro avvenire). These peoples were confronted with "the principle of nationality, now prevalent even where they [nationalities] were not earlier distinct" (ibid.; il principio delle nazionalità, ora prevalente anche laddove non erano prima distinte). Valussi argued that in "ethnic mosaics situated along geographic borders," (ibid.; intarsiature etnografiche lungo i confini geografici) such as the eastern coast of the Adriatic, "a long and terrible battle between the different populations" (ibid.; produrrà per il litorale una lotta lunga e tremenda fra le popolazioni diverse) would result if some solution, some new "temperament," was not found.

What Valussi proposed was the formation of politically separate border territories founded along multi-national instead of mono-national lines. Unlike his earlier idea that peripheries needed to be identified as the true centers of nation-building, now Valussi argued that peripheries needed to be politically severed from the many nations to which they were attached. These separate and neutral bordertopias would serve as liminal spaces that would act as buffer zones against national conflicts and as hubs for international trade. Maritime commerce and continental trade continued to be the lynchpin of Valussi's borderland project. Again and again he insisted that the Sea, situated "between Slavia and Italy, is a promiscuous, middle, neutral territory, an open field to the commerce of all the Nations of this gulf, which nature pushed inside the land not to divide the Peoples, but to unite them" (Valussi 1849a; fra la Slavia e l'Italia, un territorio promiscuo, mediano e neutrale, un campo aperto ai commerci di tutte le Nazioni in questo golfo, che la natura spinse entro terra, non per dividere i Popoli ma per unirli).

Valussi's new argument in favor of creating separate, buffer-zone, borderland states was in no way an indication that he believed multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, or multi-religious communities were on the verge of disappearing. On the contrary, he continued to consider these heterogeneous zones as natural and widespread throughout Europe.²² What prompted his reassessment was what he considered a fatal flaw in contemporary "politicians'" attitudes towards these areas. By December 1848, Valussi was aware that *both* Croats and Venetians were trying to include the Adriatic in their sphere of influence to bolster their position vis-à-vis the Habsburg state.²³ According to Valussi,

²² Almost every article that Valussi published on the subject begins with his argument that borderlands were "Providentially placed" to link nations. Some examples include Valussi (1848b; 1848i; 1848a; 1849b; 1849a; 1849f).

²³ A particularly telling example of the common arguments made in the Venetian revolutionary press that Venice needed to reassert her position as "Queen of the Adriatic" can be seen in the November 1848 announcement of the ten-person Dalmatian-Istrian Legion in Venice which state: "The Italian *bel paese* does not come to an end on this side of the Adriatic, but it also extends enough to include its other shore To your stations, generous youths...; the Patria calls you and incites you. The day of complete Italian independence will also be the day of emancipation of the Dalmato-Istrians from the cruel claws of the Austrian eagle!" (Toth 2004; Il bel paese italiano non finisce al di là dell'Adriatico, ma sulle opposte sponde pur si distende.... All'armi, giovani generosi...; la Patria vi chiama e vi incita. Il giorno della completa indipendenza italiana sarà giorno dell'emancipazione pur anco dalmato-istrian dalla branche crudeli della esecrata bicipite aquila austriaca!). Valussi made specific reference to Italian propaganda trying to push the Eastern Adriatic to joining Venice's plight. He argued that some Slavic-speakers had been encouraged to join the war effort against Italy with arguments that Italy wanted to incorporate the

these Croatian and Venetian politicians were not just trying to increase their states' territories. They were also lazy, seeking an easy fix for a matter that "posed the greatest difficulty" (Valussi 1848b; Queste addentellature presentano le massime difficoltà ai politici). He likened politicians eager to form extensive nation-states to Alexander the Great. When faced with the Gordian knot, which according to legend could only be undone by the man who would rule Asia, Alexander slashed the knot apart. Faced with the difficulty of borderlands, "politicians, not knowing how to undo the Gordian knot, would like to cut it with a sword" (ibid.; i politici, che non sapendo sciogliere il nodo gordiano, vorrebbero tagliarlo colla spada), separating and homogenizing mixed ethnic communities through warfare.

Using "the sword" or imperialism to determine the position of the "ethnographic mosaics along geographical borders" was a foolhardy and dangerous proposition to Valussi: "The works of the sword," he wrote, "are works lasting a day: and the issues resolved with iron resurge the next day more difficult than before" (ibid.; le opere della spada sono opere d'un giorno: e le quistioni sciolte col ferro risorgono il domani più difficili che prima). What was needed instead was a reevaluation of borderlands' place in the larger picture. "It is necessary to find a solution less violent, which is in line with the natural order of things" (ibid.; bisogna cercare qualche soluzione meno violenta e che sia nell'ordine naturale), Valussi insisted. He reasoned that

[i]f these mosaics of mixed Peoples exist along all the geographical borders of Nations, then it must be said that there is sufficient reason for their existence, and that Man must find a way to turn it to his advantage, by changing obstacles into indicators and measurements of what is good. (ibid.)

Se queste intarsiature di Popoli misti esistono su tutti i confini geografici delle Nazioni, convien dire, che c'è una ragione sufficiente della loro esistenza, e che l'uomo deve saperne trarre un partito, mutando in indizio e strumento di bene quello che sembra essere un ostacolo.

eastern Adriatic into its new government. According to Valussi, this was not just empty Habsburg propaganda but also a result of articles published in the Italian press. He writes: "Some boastful journalists have rendered our poor Nation ridiculous by talking about joining to Italy Trieste, Istria, Dalmatia, and every other place where Italian is spoken. These boasts have convinced many of our neighbors of this opinion [that Italians wanted the Adriatic for themselves].... It is imperative that we convince Croats and sincere Illyrians in general who believe in these projects for invasion...that these are not our aspirations." Valussi (1849a; Alcune spaccate da giornalisti che resero ridicola la povera nostra Nazione nel mondo, parlando di aggregare all'Italia Trieste, Istria, Dalmazia ed ogni luogo dove vi sia chi parla italiano, fecero prevalere questa opinione in molti de' nostri vicini.... Bisogna, che ai Croati ed in generale agl'Illirici sinceri, che credono ai progetti d'invasione dell'altrui supposti nell'Italia, si faccia perdere questo falso concetto delle intenzioni nostre: ed agli Slavi, che si fanno indegno strumento dell'Austria nell'oppressione nostra si deve togliere ogni pretesto.)

Reconceiving borderlands as an opportunity rather than a problem in a Europe of nation-states was the guiding theme of Valussi's political strategy. Upon hearing of Croatia-Slavonia's unsuccessful bid to annex Dalmatia, he urged contacts in the eastern Adriatic to open up communication concerning the fate of the Adriatic. He explained his plan this way:

I think that now the moment has arrived to speak in friendly terms with the South Slavs...that between Italy and a Slavic-Illyrian Kingdom to be formed, there should be an intermediary and neutral land, a free-trade zone along the entire Littoral with its mixed populations, from Duino [at the northern most point of the Adriatic] to Kotor [the southern-most part of Dalmatia]. In this way the two nationalities can remain in contact without oppressing each other. (Valussi 1848h)

Io credo, che adesso sia giunto il momento di parlare amichevolmente agli Slavi meridionali...che fra l'Italia ed un regno Slav-Illirico da costituirsi, dovrebbe esservi un paese intermediario e neutrale, un porto franco in tutto il Litorale di popolazioni miste, da Duino a Cattaro. Così le due nazionalità potrebbero rimanere a contatto senza opprimersi.

To undo the Gordian knot of "mixed populations," Valussi returned to the example of his former hometown Trieste. Free-trade and international commerce were the best means of turning the difficult situation of borderlands into an advantage. But this time he cited neutrality as the necessary ingredient to make it work. Unlike his earlier bordertopia arguments, which saw Italians and Slavs as natural allies, now a buffer zone needed to be formed to ensure that they "can remain in contact without oppressing each other" (ibid.).

Though Valussi was most interested in the fate of the Adriatic, he recognized that the problem of reconciling ethnic diversity with nationalism was not limited to territories containing Italian- and Slavic- speaking peoples. In fact, his ideas of creating a neutral Adriatic were founded on what he witnessed in other "mixed" areas of Europe. He explained in one article that Triestines, Istrians, and Dalmatians were quite sensible in trying to remain neutral during the 1848-49 wars:

They [Trieste, Istria, and Dalmatia] are like Switzerland, which cannot be entirely German, or French, or Italian. They are like Belgium, French in the city and Flemish in the countryside, by nature destined to a certain neutrality between Germany and France, where commerce serves as its intermediary. (Valussi 1849)

Essi sono come la Svizzera, la quale non potrebbe essere nè interamente tedesca, nè del tutto francese, nè mai italiana; come il Belgio, il quale essendo francese nelle città, e fiammingo nelle campagne è dalla natura medesima destinato ad una certa neutralità fra la Germania e la Francia, a cui commerci si fa intermediario.

Pointing to Switzerland and Belgium, Valussi hoped to convince his readership that his buffer-zone project for the Adriatic was not utopian. It was viable; so much so that it already existed in some of the most “advanced” regions of Europe.

After being elected deputy, it is in this context that Pacifico Valussi approached the Provisional Government to change the name of *Riva degli Schiavoni* to *Riva degli Slavi*. As mentioned earlier, “Schiavoni” was (and is) a derogatory appellation meaning at the same time, “Dalmatian,” “Slavic-speaker,” as well as “big slave.” So, for example, the famous sixteenth-century Dalmatian-born painter Andrea Meldolla was called “*Lo Schiavone*.” So the guild hall and devotional center run by Dalmatian merchants and sailors in Venice’s *Castello* district was called *Scuola degli Schiavoni*. And so the central embankment outside of Venice’s Ducal Palace was named *Riva degli Schiavoni*, in recognition of the many ships docking there from the Dalmatian islands and the many Dalmatian sailors who had served (often unwillingly) in the Venetian navy (Čoralić 2003). Valussi argued that without the British and French alliances that so many of Manin’s government were counting on to help protect Venice against Habsburg forces, and with Piedmont defeated after the Battle of Novara, now was the time for the Republic of San Marco to shed its legacy of imperialism with her eastern neighbors and offer to work together (against the Habsburgs). Openly, publicly, and materially changing the quay’s name from *Schiavoni* to *Slavi* was to serve as proof that Venice was intent to act as defender of a neutral Adriatic. To rename the promenade *Riva degli Slavi*, or “Bank of the Slavs,” was to show, as Valussi emphasized, that “the spirit of invasion is far from both Peoples [Slavs and Italians]; thus, being the neighbors that we are, we should naturally be friends and [be] joined by common interests” (Valussi 1849d; *Lo spirito d’invasione è lontano da entrambi i Popoli; dunque, come vicini che sono, essi dovranno essere naturalmente amici e collegati d’interessi*).²⁴

Valussi’s renaming of the *Riva degli Schiavoni* was symbolic, but not outside of the realms of time and place in which he was acting. What he was trying to do was divorce Italian nationalism from xenophobia, trying to convince “Italians” and “Slavs” alike that national denigration was dangerous and needed to end. For months, Venetians had been made aware that Slavic-speaking soldiers from Istria, Croatia-Slavonia, and the Military Border zone (between Habsburg and Ottoman lands) had been rallied to fight against Italians with arguments such as ‘the Italians have taken the pope prisoner’ or ‘the Italians planned to conquer and enslave all of the Balkans’ (Valussi 1848d).²⁵ Renaming the *Riva* with the more politically-correct term “*Slavi*” was to serve as just one corrector to the “popular prejudices railing against the Croats” (Valussi 1849f; *i pregiudizii popolari*,

²⁴ Making distinctions between the “old” and “new” Venetian Republic was a common political trope during the 1848-49 revolutions. For example see: “Venezia, l’Italia, l’Europa” (1848).

²⁵ These arguments made against the Italian cause to Habsburg recruits are also mentioned in Sked (1979) and Keates (2005).

declamando contro i croati). It was to serve as an example of the commitment to make “manifest by every means available Italy’s desire to work together” (ibid.; manifesta in ogni guisa agl’Illirici il desiderio dell’Italia di camminare d’accordo).

As we all know, Valussi’s bordertopia did not come to fruition. The “Italians” and “Slavs” did not come together against Habsburg forces in 1849. In fact, if they came together at all, it was in the fight *against* the Republic of Venice (as there were exponentially more Italian-speaking and Slavic-speaking soldiers fighting in Habsburg uniform than there were soldiers fighting for the San Marco Republic’s survival).²⁶ A few days before Habsburg forces reentered Venice, Pacifico Valussi’s wife gave birth to their first child, a girl. Originally they had hoped to name her *Vittoria* to commemorate the island-city’s successful battle against her “overlord.” But with defeat, the name *Victory* proved inappropriate. Instead, the Valussi family opted for *Costanza* (Constance) and the little girl’s uncle, Francesco Dall’Ongaro, welcomed her (from exile) to this world with the following poem:

I opened my eyes to the rumble of cannons,
And my father named me Costanza,
Trusting in those who protect the good
And bring seeds to maturation.
The days pass, the seasons pass,
But hope does not pass away from Italy;
Slowly germinates and slowly matures
The oak in the woods and long it will last.
The wind unleaves and whips it,
But the wind passes and it is made new! (Valussi 1967)

Ho aperto gli occhi al rombo de cannoni,
E il babbo mio mi nominò Costanza,
Fidando in quello che protegge i buoni
E conduce li semi a maturanza.
Passano i giorni, passan le stagioni,
Ma non passa d’Italia la speranza;
Lenta germoglia e lenta si matura
La rovere del bosco e a lungo dura.
Il vento la disfronda e la flagella,
Ma il vento passa e lei si rinnovella!

One can argue that Dall’Ongaro’s “Costanza” poem served as a suitable allegory for the Italian national movement. But the same cannot be said of Valussi’s bordertopia. For the first years following the 1848-49 revolutions, Valussi, newly located in Udine,

²⁶ On the many nationalities represented with the Habsburg military forces see: Deak (1990); Sked (1979). On the particularly non-Croatian national identity of the troops stationed in Venice before and during 1848 see Keates (2005); Kahn (1950); Sondhaus (1989).

continued to argue that Trieste, Venice, and the Adriatic were for their “position and traffic destined to develop into a ring between various Nations” (Valussi 1852; per la sua posizione e per i suoi traffici è destinato a formarsi anello fra varie Nazioni!). Along these lines, he concentrated his efforts on improving the economic and cultural status of the provincial capital Udine and its hinterland, working to set up cooperative banks and founding an economic and literary journal along the same lines as those he had edited in Trieste and Venice. Ten years later, Valussi felt less and less comfortable living in Habsburg Friuli and transferred his family to Milan, where he established still more journals. With the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1859, Valussi shifted his interests from looking at borderlands for their own sake to determining where Italy’s borders should be. And for the next six years, Valussi would become one of the peninsula’s most renowned “Irredentists,” pushing with hyperbole and national chauvinism for the incorporation of the Veneto, Friuli, and Istria into Italy.²⁷ In just ten years, Valussi went from being one of the strongest defenders of cosmopolitan communities to one of the most vehement critics of the Habsburg Empire’s principle of multi-nationality. Elected Friuli’s Senator to the Kingdom of Italy in the 1870s, Valussi died a monarchist, chauvinist Italian nationalist, and supporter of Italy’s centralized nation-state kingdom. *Constance* definitely did not describe Valussi’s mindset after the revolution. Instead, he was much changed.

So, the question looms. What significance does Valussi’s bordertopia hold if it was never realized, and he himself abandoned the project? I believe three points emerge from his efforts.

First, the trajectory of national thought exemplified by this son of the Napoleonic Wars reminds us that ideas for the creation of a future Italy were grounded to a large extent in imperial realities.²⁸ Valussi, in Venice, was inspired by what Alberto Banti (2002) has so brilliantly characterized as the “Risorgimento canon” and the daily examples of Venice’s eclipsed grandeur fed his provincial-centric Romantic ideas. But in Trieste, in the bustling Habsburg free-port-city populated by some of the most influential liberal-oriented political and economic elites of the Empire at that time, Valussi’s mindscape altered significantly. And within this change, his vision for a future Italy was seen as inextricably melded with the culture, trade, and concerns of the other “nations” surrounding it. Some might argue that Valussi’s border-centered understanding of

²⁷ Valussi’s most oft-cited Italian chauvinist and Irredentist text is (1871). Valussi’s transformation into an Italian national chauvinist is heavily documented and first became a central point of investigation in Angelo Vivante’s ground breaking monograph on the “Trieste question” (1997). In English, Glenda Sluga gives a quick summary of the historical and symbolic importance of Valussi’s transformation for later generations of Italian national thinkers in the northern Adriatic (2001).

²⁸ Much very exciting work has been published recently recontextualizing Risorgimento thought and action beyond the borders of what would one day become Italy. Lucy Riall, Gilles Pécout, and Maurizio Isabella have most notably headed the charge in this direction by analyzing the media networks and diplomatic, social, and cultural influences that residence, cooperation, communication or “exile” in Europe’s other empires (England and France most notably) has had on Risorgimento action and thought (Riall 2007; Pécout 2004; Isabella 2009). There is also a new “comparative turn” budding in Risorgimento studies between Habsburg and Ottoman national activism along the Mediterranean. I am thinking specifically of the work on the interconnections between Hellenism and Risorgimento projects as analyzed by Konstantina Zanou (2005). I imagine that such work will only continue to grow when the overlaps in the idea of “shared homeland” in the Ottoman context as described by Bulgarian historian Dessislava Lilova are incorporated with the multinational studies of Habsburg Bohemia, Galicia, and Dalmatia. See Lilova (2011).

nationalism could have been an eclectic outcropping of Mazzinian inspiration, for as we all know Mazzini was a proud proponent for thinking of a (Young) Europe of collaborative nation-states. But chalking Valussi up as a Mazzinian is not only factually incorrect (he, himself, was never an active member of *Giovine Italia*, though he was sympathetic to its cause), it also loses sight of what made Valussi's bordertopia so remarkable. For, as we know, Mazzini regarded "nationality" as a subcategory, a unit within a centralized, hierarchical system beginning with the individual and moving upward through the family, the municipality, the Nation, Europe, and finally Humanity. Like a machine, each part was defined by its function, its "mission" for Europe which, in the Mazzinian model, was an inherently "international" body where distinct nations voluntarily collaborated. Or, as he put it in his autobiography years later, "The nationality question...should be for all of us not a tribute made to local rights or pride: It should be the division of European labor" (Tramarollo 1970; La questione della nazionalità era ed è per me e dovrebbe essere per tutti noi ben altra cosa che non un tributo pagato al diritto o all'orgoglio locale: dovrebbe essere la divisione del lavoro europeo). Valussi's bordertopia challenged the entire notion of national "division," for as he stated both in Trieste and in Venice only "fire and iron could break up" communities where nations collided (Valussi 1842). And as far as Valussi could see from his office overlooking Trieste's port and from his apartment in Venice's working-class *Castello* district, "nations" did collide. This was something learned while working within the Habsburg state. And this Habsburg mentality informed initiatives Valussi would take to build an Italian futurity.

Second, the issue of national division and national borders at the heart of Valussi's work speaks to a broader conceptual conundrum. In his seminal book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson maintained that nationalists had an inherently limited vision of the world, for all imagined that their communities had "finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (2006). None, according to Anderson, envisaged the union of all under one massive, all-encompassing "nationalism." To a certain extent, the case of Valussi supports his point. In fact, Valussi's entire world-view was based on the idea that nations have borders. But his story also reveals that nationalism could, and for him and his colleagues did, act as a universalizing ideology. Paradoxical as it may seem, boundaries to Valussi did not delineate where nations end, but instead where they were conjoined. Bounded together by borders, Europe's peoples functioned and needed to continue to function within one, harmonized system of nationalism, which included a myriad of interlocking, interpenetrating, and sometimes precarious "rings." Attention to the work of someone like Valussi shows that options for how to "imagine" national communities in the past were even more complex than we have believed thus far. And by looking at this "history of the present" we are reminded that Risorgimento leaders were not limited to seeking means for separating and consolidating a future *Italia*. Many were also active in finding ways to insure that this separation and consolidation was not absolute.

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, Valussi's efforts to tie a future Italy with the lands surrounding it, as typified by his *Riva degli Slavi* announcement, illustrates that first-stage nationalists—the intellectual and propertied elite fighting against feudalism in Miroslav Hroch's model—were not blind to the potential dangers encapsulated in the national turn (Hroch 2000). They could be, and many alongside Valussi were, afraid of

the costs the national project would have, especially in multi-lingual and multi-religious communities.²⁹ As we can see throughout, Valussi's brand of national activism was often grounded on fear: fear of one national group oppressing another, fear of the economic consequences of bordering up Europe, and fear of the bloodshed that would ensue if "politicians not knowing how to undo the Gordian knot [of multi-ethnic communities] cut it with a sword" (Valussi 1848b). When considering what happened in the hundred years or so after Valussi voiced his fears, it is hard not to wonder who had a more pragmatic vision of the future: the heady nationalists who proclaimed that "liberty" and "unity" were worth fighting for at any cost or the bordertopian who proclaimed that "(t)he works of the sword are works lasting a day: and the issues resolved with iron resurge the next day more difficult than before" (Valussi 1848b). One way or another, keeping these two Risorgimento variants side by side reminds us that what didn't happen had as much to do with where we find ourselves today as what did. It is important to be aware of these possibilities, to understand that no futurity was predetermined, but instead the result of choices and circumstance.

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²⁹ For a broader study of mid-nineteenth-century variants of multi-national initiatives centered around the Adriatic Sea see Reill (2012).

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