

The background of the cover is a painting in a cubist or expressionist style. It depicts a harbor scene with a large dark ship in the foreground. The ship has a white upper section with the word 'BERT' written on it. Behind the ship are buildings with red and blue walls. There are small figures of people on the ship and on the shore. The overall style is expressive and somewhat abstract.

EDITED BY ADAM J. GOLDWYN & RENÉE M. SILVERMAN

MEDITERRANEAN MODERNISM

Intercultural Exchange and Aesthetic Development

**MEDITERRANEAN
PERSPECTIVES**



Mediterranean Perspectives

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Editors

Mediterranean Modernism

Intercultural Exchange and Aesthetic Development

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This volume has its origins in the 2012 American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) conference, held at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, for which Adam Goldwyn organized the seminar “Mediterranean Modernisms.” The ideas from the many seminar presentations, including Renée Silverman’s, gave rise to the present work. As the volume’s title suggests, the aim of the seminar was to explore how Mediterranean Modernism differed from modernism *per se*, which is often conceived either in terms of specific national traditions or as a broad and vaguely defined international phenomenon—one that usually but not always ends up being limited to Northern or Western Europe, or a set of cosmopolitan cities. Although the eight papers dealing with the diverse regions and cultural traditions of the Mediterranean that were presented over the two days of the seminar demonstrated a number of shared political, aesthetic, and cultural concerns, what turned out to be most striking was the great diversity of artistic production in the region that has been identified as, or identified itself, as “modern.” The papers also showed Mediterranean Modernism to have in common a felt need by writers, artists, architects, and other cultural figures to balance an interest in new foreign ideas, and a certain degree of cosmopolitanism, with long-standing local traditions. The “Mediterranean Modernisms” seminar brought this tension between local and foreign, tradition and innovation, the colonial and the postcolonial, to the fore; the present volume addresses these peculiar and productive paradoxes in a deliberate and detailed way.

Our first acknowledgment is to those who participated in the seminar: the speakers whose presentations shaped this project, as well as the other

conference participants who enlivened our sessions with fruitful discussion and questions. We as the Editors of the current volume are also grateful to those contributors who joined our collective project after the ACLA conference, giving the present volume additional meaning and widening its scope within the Mediterranean region. Thanks are due to both groups of contributors for their dedication to the volume as well as for sharing their expertise in its pages.

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AJG and RMS

Fargo and Miami, September 2015

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Introduction: Fernand Braudel and the Invention of a Modernist's Mediterranean

Adam J. Goldwyn and Renée M. Silverman

THE COSMOPOLITAN VOICE OF MEDITERRANEAN MODERNISM

In 1923, the young French historian Fernand Braudel began working on a book about the Mediterranean policy of the sixteenth-century Spanish King Philip II. By the time it was published as *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II* in 1949,¹ however, Braudel's views about the twentieth-century Mediterranean had changed so dramatically that Philip's sixteenth-century Mediterranean had come to look decidedly different as well. So, too, had historiography, which, in Braudel's view, could no longer be focused on narrow nationalisms, but instead had to be global in its scope. Thus, instead of a work on sixteenth-century Spain, Braudel's new book encompassed the entirety of the Mediterranean and beyond, from pre-history to the author's own day, with only a small section

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still devoted to the original premise. Like many other intellectuals and artists who came of age during the first half of the twentieth century, Braudel's views of the past were forever changed by events on the global stage—the two world wars, the decline of colonial power, the increased movement of people across the borders of increasingly integrated nations, and the rise of competing political and aesthetic ideologies. These ideas are reflected in the new Mediterranean that he invented. This invented Mediterranean was deeply influenced by Braudel's academic training and, perhaps more importantly, by his lived experience of the increasingly cosmopolitan region and his keen awareness of the interplay of cultures, the subtleties of the power dynamics among them, and the culture-specific strategies of appropriation and resistance to the hybridizing of the traditional with the imported. If culture and cultural geography are social constructs,² then Braudel can be fairly said to have invented the modern Mediterranean.

In many ways, Braudel's life can be considered a microcosm of the larger political, cultural, and aesthetic changes which would come to define modernism in Europe and the Mediterranean; indeed, the years between Braudel's birth (1902) and the publication of *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II* (1949) coincide with the peak period of modernism. Born in Luméville-en-Ornois, a small village in northeastern France, Braudel as a young man received his formal education in Paris. This early period of his life contains the seeds for his future development, particularly with regard to his conception of the Mediterranean. Braudel's village roots on the margins of French and Mediterranean culture had a lasting impact on his development. A "historian of peasant-stock,"³ as he would later describe himself, Braudel had experiential knowledge of life on the margins, far from the urban center of Paris where modernism first took hold.⁴ In fact, he was himself a product of the urbanization sweeping France and the larger European and Mediterranean environs. In his autobiographical article entitled "Personal Testimony," Braudel notes that his village had "roots go[ing] back for centuries: I imagine that its central square, where three roads and an ancient track come together, may correspond to the courtyard of an old Gallo-Roman villa" and that his house there, "built in 1806, lasted almost unchanged until 1970—a pretty good record for a village house."⁵ The same could not be said of the Paris to which he had arrived, which during the preceding half-century had been rebuilt almost from the ground up as part of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's controversial modernizing project. Braudel's personal attachment and sensitivity to the deep temporal and cultural roots of the village in opposition to the city parallel the concerns

of urbanism and its discontents⁶ around the Mediterranean: for instance, the conflict between elite urban planners and the common citizens of cities such as Algiers with regard to Le Corbusier's Plan Obus, or Thessaloniki during Ernest Hébrard's reconstruction of the city after the Great Fire of 1917.⁷ Like Haussmann's Paris, Hébrard's Thessaloniki dispensed with the winding streets and narrow alleyways of the medieval city and replaced them with broad boulevards, regular blocks, and square plazas.

The second important influence in Braudel's formative education (and thus in his later construction of the Mediterranean) was his introduction to the academic historiography of the professors at the Sorbonne. These were divided into two camps: the more traditional *Sorbonnistes* and their critics, principally the *Annalistes* led by the historians Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch (the latter a Jewish intellectual murdered in 1940 by the Gestapo for his activities in the Resistance). In the same issue of *The Journal of Modern History* in which Braudel published his memoirs, J.H. Hexter's "Fernand Braudel and the Monde Braudellien" outlines the academic battles between the *Sorbonnistes* and *Annalistes*:

The goal of the *Annales* [the journal edited by Febvre and Bloch and, later, Braudel] from the outset, therefore, was to undo the work of the *Sorbonnistes*, to turn French historians away from the narrowly political and the narrowly diplomatic, to turn them toward the new vistas in history.⁸

Braudel's early initiation into and subsequent leadership of the *Annales* school proved decisive for the new Mediterranean that he would invent: Braudel's later experiences would convince him that the *Sorbonnistes* and their view of history—the view represented by Braudel's early proposal to write on Philip's Mediterranean policy—was “a mode outmoded, no longer adequate for coping with the issues which History must address itself, insufficient to *capter l'histoire du monde*. For the new History, a new sort of equipment is necessary, and a new organization of research.”⁹ Peter Gay writes that “modernists considered Ezra Pound's famous injunction, ‘Make it new!,’ a professional, almost sacred obligation.”¹⁰ Though a historian, rather than an artist, Braudel's emphasis on newness for its own sake shows his engagement with the broader aesthetic and theoretical trends of modernism: Braudel as avant-garde academic. In his commentary, Hexter rightly emphasizes the new aspects of Braudelian historiography without identifying those features which make it new; he rightly understands that the ideology of newness is more important than the specific form that such newness takes in Braudel's work.

History and historiography shape the idea of modernism embraced in this volume—as Braudel with his particular disciplinary background would have instinctively recognized. For as Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane have pointed out in their seminal study, one of the predominant conceptions of “modernism” revolves around the significance of the “modern” as “the historicist feeling that we live in totally novel times... that we are derivatives not of the past but of the surrounding and enfold-ing environment or scenario, that modernity is a new consciousness, a fresh condition of the human mind.”¹¹ This line of thinking draws on previous philosophical and historiographical notions about periodiza-tion, which privilege the idea of breaking with the past rather than finding continuity within it. Indeed, Matei Calinescu has argued that the idea of “modernity” and “modernism” have their roots in Renaissance philoso-phy and historiography: like the leading intellectuals of the Renaissance, Modernists saw themselves as the avatars of a fundamental change, a “rev-olutionary way of thinking” that rejects the immediate past while actually, perhaps, affirming a more distant past that is imagined as an utopia.¹²

Keeping Bradbury and McFarlane’s observations about the modern and modernism in mind, the newness that is central to our vision of what we term “Mediterranean Modernism,” in a way similar to Braudel’s inno-vative approach to the Mediterranean, means a break from narratives that would circumscribe the Mediterranean within specific geographic spaces and determine its center and periphery, thereby prescribing and proscrib-ing its identity/ies. Modernism in the Mediterranean arose from the same confluence of large-scale political, historical, and cultural factors in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as modernism—the decline of colonial regimes and the increase in national fervor, the mass migrations of peoples caused by such political realignments, as well as by new technologies and industrialization—but these factors were condi-tioned by the Mediterranean’s unique history and geography, in particular its colonial, postcolonial, and colonizing circumstances which, as Braudel knew, coexisted unevenly, uneasily, and simultaneously.

Likewise, this volume, paralleling Braudel’s methodology and in keep-ing with what Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz have called “the new Modernist Studies,”¹³ extends the geographic and linguistic bounds of modernism far beyond Anglo-American literary discourse and the usual European metropolises. Indeed, Mediterranean Modernism as a theo-retical and historiographical construct includes formerly marginalized and circumscribed spaces, languages, and cultures. This methodological approach, with its blurring of margin and center, reveals the hybrid cultural

and artistic forms which are the defining feature of the works examined in this volume. Mediterranean geography, as well as the peculiar socio-cultural and linguistic politics of this geography, thus constitutes the axis on which our study turns. At once spatial and temporal, Mediterranean Modernism excavates the archeology not only of the region but also of the very concept of modernism. Significantly, it reveals modernism's complex layering of place and time, bringing to light the inherently historical and historiographical complexities of the colonial and postcolonial with respect to both modernism and the Mediterranean area.¹⁴

Given the impossibility of separating the colonial and postcolonial strata of this archeology directs us, like Braudel in his day, and in keeping with a recent study by David James and Urmila Seshagiri that emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between modernism and Postmodernism, to go beyond the customary limitation of modernism to the period 1890–1930, the dates attributed to it in Bradbury and McFarlane's study. In fact, those characteristics that define our vision of modernism in the Mediterranean began to emerge earlier than 1890. Articles by Defne Çizakça and Adam J. Goldwyn, for instance, find Modernist influences in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1860s and 1870s, while Rob Baum and Federica Frediani focus on late twentieth-century works that reimagine the Mediterranean during the Modernist period from a postmodern perspective. Broadening the time period conventionally attributed to modernism goes hand in hand with widening its geographical, cultural, and linguistic bounds; doing so permits the inclusion of various modernist iterations, ranging from Hispanic *modernismo* (1880s–1920s) to post-World War II explorations of modernity's meaning and consequences from postmodern and postcolonial perspectives.

Returning now to Braudel, his particular shift from the old history to the new, from the old Mediterranean to the modern one, similarly relates to the interrelationship between the colonial and the postcolonial, modern, and postmodern. Braudel was galvanized by his move in 1923 to Algeria, then a French colony, where he taught history, first in Constantine and then in Algiers; he would stay for the next nine years. Braudel, like so many of the leading intellectuals of the period, became a product of the mingling of Mediterranean cultures which he himself would later study—a Frenchman living in Algeria, studying Spain and its imperial holdings in the Mediterranean and abroad. It was during his time in Algeria that Braudel first wrestled with many of the issues of cultural hybridity which *The Mediterranean* did so much to bring to the center of historiography. In “Personal Testimony,” a brief memoir published in 1972, Braudel describes the effect of his stay in Algeria on his thinking:

I believe that this spectacle, the Mediterranean as seen from the opposite shore, upside down, had considerable impact on my vision of history. But the change in my viewpoint was slow. At any rate, at that point in my life I did not understand the social, political, and colonial drama which was, nevertheless, right before my eyes.¹⁵

It was this first youthful encounter with the other Mediterranean, the opposite shore, upside-down Mediterranean, which revolutionized Braudel's historical and cultural perspective. Though Braudel's memoirs are colored by a rosy nostalgia and position his young self as a naïf, the old scholar captures the euphoria he felt as a young man witnessing the emergence of the modern world.

In the same memoir, Braudel describes his Algerian stay as a turning point in his rejection of traditional *Sorbonniste* historiography: "I therefore set out belatedly on the way to that which became my passion—a new history, breaking with traditional teachings."¹⁶ This newness—this break from the past—was not only an intellectual aspiration; it was something Braudel saw around him every day. He provides a vivid example of the ways in which technological advances helped him with his studies when he describes how an early movie camera given to him by an American allowed him to photograph archival material. The presence of increasing technological advancement outside of his academic environment also influenced his work: "The low-flying hydro-planes of those days,"¹⁷ he writes, represented new possibilities for uniting previously far-flung parts of the sea which, in the pre-modern period Braudel studied, was "such a vast expanse in relation to man."¹⁸ Futurists and other members of the modernist avant-garde were equally influenced by such experiences and incorporated them into their own works.¹⁹

Perhaps because of his marginal position within French culture and geography as a villager from the northeast, Braudel did not reject outright the (from the French perspective) similarly marginal Algerian claim to Mediterraneanness. Rather, he reconceived Mediterraneanness as equally inclusive of the margin as well as the center, rightly recognizing that such an orientation was itself a social construct rooted in French (and other nations') colonial ideology (the Algerians themselves would later validate this new perspective, claiming their independence from France during the 1954–1962 Revolution and thus making fact out of theory). Braudel's experiences imbued him with a cosmopolitan sensibility that transcended the divisions within the Mediterranean and pointed toward the holistic

approach found in his book on the subject. Howard Caygill suggests that the importance of the Algerian sojourn was

the insight it offered into the colonial inverse of metropolitan history as well as for its views on the Mediterranean “from the other shore.” His experience living in a colonized Islamic Mediterranean culture put in question the romantic image of the Christian Greco-Latin sea adopted by northern Europeans....[Braudel] sense[d] that the Northern Christian orientation toward the history of the Mediterranean needed to be supplemented by a Southern Islamic perspective.²⁰

Braudel thus unraveled the hegemonic premise of northern Mediterranean ownership of the south, offering to his French and European audience a new and inclusive identity which united north and south, east and west, as well as different religious and ethnic groups under a new Mediterranean identity without privileging one area or culture over another. Writing in the preface to the English edition of *The Mediterranean* the same year as he wrote his memoirs and nearly 40 years after he set out for Algeria, the imprint of this experience on his thinking and his conception of the Mediterranean is still evident. Braudel reiterated that the true nature of the Mediterranean which he asserted several years before “remains unchallenged,” namely

the unity and coherence of the Mediterranean region. I retain the firm conviction that the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, that the whole sea shared a common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences.²¹

A product of his time, Braudel’s innovative thinking stemmed from his willingness not to hold onto inherited and outdated notions—be they aesthetic, political, ideological, or, as in his case, historiographical—when faced with a new situation for which such notions were woefully inadequate in light of his own lived experience, a trait which he shared with many other modernists. Braudel was born to a changing Mediterranean at the turn of the century, educated and formed in France and abroad during World War I and imbued with the spirit of change, of breaking with the past, of entering into something new and modern.

Although these experiences formed the intellectual and biographical background for Braudel’s invention of the Mediterranean, the work itself

was produced in decidedly different conditions than those of either his days as a student at prestigious institutions in Paris or as an itinerant teacher in Algeria. As with so many of his contemporaries, the defining event in Braudel's life, thinking and creative output was the outbreak of World War II. Drafted into the French army at the start of the war, Braudel was soon captured by the Nazis and, as he would later recall:

From 1940 to 1945, I was a prisoner in Germany, first in Mainz, then from 1942 to 1945 in the special camp at Lübeck, where my Lorrainer's rebelliousness sent me. As I returned safe and sound from this long time of testing, complaining would be futile and even unjust; only good memories come back to me now. For prison can be a good school. It teaches patience, tolerance. To see arriving in Lübeck all the French officers of Jewish origin — what a sociological study! And later, sixty-seven clergymen of every hue, who had been judged dangerous in their various former camps — what a strange experience that was! The French church appeared before me in all its variety, from the country cure to the Lazarist, from the Jesuit to the Dominican. Other experiences: living with Poles, brave to excess; and receiving the defenders of Warsaw, among them Alexander Gieysztor and Witold Kula. Or to be submerged one fine day by the massive arrival of Royal Air Force pilots; and living with all the French escape artists, who were sent to us as a punishment; these are — and I omit much — among the picturesque memories.

But what really kept me company during those long years — that which distracted me in the true etymological meaning of the word — was the Mediterranean. It was in captivity that I wrote that enormous work, sending school copybook after school copybook to Lucien Febvre. Only my memory permitted this tour de force. Had it not been for my imprisonment, I would surely have written quite a different book.²²

The quite different book to which Braudel refers would perhaps have followed the contours of the original proposal, a narrow analysis of Philip II's maritime empire. The work he ended up writing seems a more accurate reflection of the cosmopolitan environment of the prison camp in which he wrote it. Braudel was a soldier in the army of a Mediterranean country, yet he was held in the prison of a northern European country during a global conflagration which, as Braudel describes, brought in prisoners from across the Mediterranean, Europe, and around the world.

Braudel was, therefore, at the forefront of a new way of being in the world, a modern cosmopolitanism, which Rebecca Walkowitz defines as “a

philosophical tradition that promotes allegiance to a translational or global community emphasizing *detachment* from local cultures and the interests of the nation”²³ and, in existential terms, as “belonging beyond the polis or the nation.”²⁴ Braudel’s Mediterranean, too, bears the markings of this cosmopolitan space: his Mediterranean, as an ecological, economic, and cultural space, throws into question arbitrary political boundaries—man-made political constructs in the service of narrow nationalisms that gained no real (as opposed to abstract or ideological) traction on the tangible, cultural, or material aspects of the sea and its basin.

The cosmopolitan nature of the political circumstances of the modern period are reflected in the artistic and creative production of the time, and thus we have chosen to interrogate and define Mediterranean Modernism through what Amy Clukey calls the “strikingly peripatetic lives” of “cosmopolitan modernists” like Braudel and other “[e]arly twentieth-century writers [who] were displaced by the disintegration of traditional communities wrought by war, colonialism, or modernization.”²⁵ Braudel, then, can be seen as writing in what Walkowitz terms a “cosmopolitan style,” which she describes in her book of the same name as “imagined collective affinities in retreat from the nation, or [which] have conceived of the center from the perspective of the margins, to name just a few of the cultural practices that the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ has come to designate.”²⁶ This cosmopolitanism, shared by many of the lions of literary modernism (she writes, for instance, about Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf), however, is tempered by what she calls abiding attachments to “local affiliations or collective endeavors: they are attached to nations and cultural groups through acts of citizenship and custom.”²⁷

For Braudel, then, isolating the Mediterranean from the broader currents of global history, geography, and culture must have seemed impossible in the new world forged by the early twentieth century’s two defining wars. Thus Braudel conceived of this modern cosmopolitan Mediterranean geographically as “stopp[ing] at one end with the pillars of Hercules and at the other with the straits at whose entrance ancient Ilium once stood,”²⁸ and his history began (as his mythological allusions suggest) in the Mediterranean’s earliest period and stretched all the way to his own time. Within these boundaries of space and time, Braudel attempts a total history of the Mediterranean Sea’s ecology, its people, and the myriad networks binding them to one another. What could be termed the book’s history proper, that is, its engagement with traditional aspects of narrative

history, and particularly that of the period of Philip II's rule, make up but a small portion of this monumental work.

Nor, however, did Braudel stop there. Given the global reach of the conflict, it seems only natural that he include a chapter entitled "Boundaries: the Greater Mediterranean," in which he "invit[es the reader] to undertake journeys that will lead him far away from the shores of the Mediterranean. He may be willing to make them....[T]here is a global Mediterranean which in the sixteenth century, reaches as far as the Azores and the New World, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the Baltic and the loop of the Niger."²⁹ The Mediterranean, in Braudel's reading, is global in its scope, a multicultural zone of contact stretching around the world, "a radiant center whose light grows less as one moves away from it, without one's being able to define the exact boundary between light and shade."³⁰ For Braudel, the Mediterranean is what Delphi was to the ancient Greeks or Rome under the Roman Empire: the center of the world itself. And just as Delphi and the Eternal City were meeting places for people from around the Greek and Roman (and, thus, Mediterranean) world, so in the modernist period, the Mediterranean became such a place for the whole world: a zone of contact and exchange, a place where not only goods and people moved freely but also ideas, aesthetics, ideologies, and cultures intermingled. If Braudel's years in Algeria resulted in his questioning and slow drift away from inherited ideas about history and historiography, his wartime experience led to a final and complete break with the intellectual school of his former academic mentors, the *Sorbonnistes*: surveying the world while cloistered in elite institutions in more isolationist times, this older generation of academic historians may justifiably have seen history from a narrower perspective than Braudel, who saw the changed face of the postwar world as the result of the deep network of cultural ties which bound the peoples of the Mediterranean to each other and to the rest of the globe.

To be sure, Philip's Mediterranean becomes a reflection of Braudel's own. In Braudel's hands, the Mediterranean in the age of Philip II is depicted as undergoing rapid cultural changes in light of new technological development. Advances in shipbuilding led to the discovery of the New World and opened up new markets and trade routes for the riches that they brought. These increases in wealth and speed were coupled with new geo-political tensions, most notably Philip's ill-fated invasion of England with the Spanish Armada in 1588. Though different in their specifics, the two world wars and the technological advancements that they spurred, the decline of the Great Empires, the growth in maritime

and other forms of trade, and the increased contact between previously more distant Mediterranean (and global) regions and peoples mark the two periods as mirror images in Braudel's mind: "[w]e historians of the west are in exactly the same position as the contemporaries of Philip II, of Gian Andrea Doria or Don John of Austria."³¹ Although Braudel is speaking in the explicit context of the difficulty of Western historians' finding primary source documents about the East, this statement, read more broadly, reflects Braudel's belief in the historical similarity between his age and that of Philip II. The sixteenth-century Mediterranean he describes, albeit embedded in the distant past, emerges in an eternal present.

THE POSTCOLONIAL TURN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERNISM, THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND MEDITERRANEANISM

Writing in 1946, just after his release from the prison camp, Braudel drafted the preface to the first edition of his book, laying out an almost deconstructionist case for the inability of language and narrative to offer a stable and unitary construction of the Mediterranean:

Its character is complex, awkward, and unique....No simple biography beginning with date of birth can be written of this sea; no simple narrative of how things happened would be appropriate to its history. The Mediterranean is not even a single sea, it is a complex of seas; and these seas are broken up by islands, interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by interior coastlines. Its life is linked to the land, its poetry more than half-rural, its sailors may turn peasant with the seasons; it is the sea of vineyards and olive trees just as much as the sea of the long-oared galleys and the roundships of merchants and its history can no more be separated from that of the lands surrounding it than the clay can be separated from the hands of the potter who shapes it.³²

With this remarkable statement, Braudel anticipates the postcolonial and poststructuralist concerns which would come to dominate thinking in the humanities and social sciences in the wake of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. They would also come to occupy a central place in Mediterranean Studies. It is perhaps significant in this regard that the period between the first edition of *The Mediterranean* in 1949 and the second in 1966 saw the increasing intellectual influence in the academy of deconstruction and post-structuralism; Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, of which Braudel was

an early admirer, was published in 1960, and Derrida's *Of Grammatology* appeared in 1967. Like Braudel, both theorists had connections with France and its North-African colonies: Derrida was born in Algeria, while Foucault spent the late 1960s teaching in Tunis. Deconstruction, post-structural, and postcolonial theory all prioritize counter- and destabilized narratives that center the margins and marginalize the center; Braudel's problematizing of the Mediterranean fits this deconstructionist mode. These insights form the basis for the selection of papers in the current volume. Braudel, as proto-poststructuralist, asserts that the Mediterranean defies easy categorization and that no single narrative, "biography" or "history" of the Mediterranean is sufficient to encapsulate the myriad experiences of its diverse peoples. Yet a single Mediterranean narrative is impossible, not only in view of the deconstructionist skepticism of the master-narratives implied in biography and history but also because, for Braudel, a single or unitary Mediterranean simply does not exist. To borrow from Benedict Anderson, the Mediterranean itself is an imagined community, a unified geography built from fragments of maritime and terrestrial features. And, perhaps most paradoxically, Braudel defines the Mediterranean mostly by what it is not, that is, the land surrounding it rather than the sea itself—"[i]ts life is linked to the land." As a consequence, in the present study, we have attempted what could be called a complex biography or history of the Mediterranean. Rather than presenting the Mediterranean from a singular historical or cultural perspective (i.e. Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian), or even from a single narratorial voice (i.e. that of Braudel in *The Mediterranean*), we have brought in a variety of voices to examine the Mediterranean from multiple perspectives.

Since Braudel's time, both the Mediterranean as a socially and culturally constructed geographic space and Mediterranean Studies as a discipline have come under intense scrutiny. For instance, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, Braudel's most prominent intellectual successors, critique Mediterranean Studies for what they see as the discipline's unexamined use of the term "Mediterranean" as synonymous with a Western and Eurocentric view: "It hardly needs stating," they write, "that the Mediterranean, as an area seldom clearly defined but often subconsciously reduced to Italy and Greece, has been the perceived center of European civilization since the Renaissance, and in many respects since classical antiquity."³³ Ian Morris has even gone so far as to argue that the invention of a formalized discipline of Mediterranean Studies in the wake of Braudel's work is itself the product of the destabilizing of the tradi-

tional Mediterranean (and, indeed, Western and global) centers of ancient Greece and Rome:

Confidence in the eighteenth-century idea that Greece was the origin of Western culture has declined, undermining classicists' claims to valuable knowledge. There have been sharp, politicized exchanges over the field's value. Stopping being classicists and becoming instead ancient Mediterraneanists — multicultural, theoretical, and comparative — strikes some as an escape route.³⁴

Though Horden and Purcell are philosophically welcoming of attempts to revise and rethink notions of Mediterraneanness, they are fundamentally opposed to discharging the term altogether. Responding to critiques of Mediterraneanism by Michael Herzfeld³⁵ and others,³⁶ Horden and Purcell defend their approach, caricaturing Herzfeld as one who “finds it astonishing that people are still talking about the utility of ‘the’ Mediterranean as a construct when almost all comparable categories (he gives no examples) have been deconstructed or reconstructed — or have self-destructed.”³⁷

Herzfeld bases his critique on notions of postcoloniality and subalterity in constructing “‘the’ Mediterranean.”³⁸ The more important critique, certainly from the literary perspective, however, is the dual meaning of the “the” which comprises the Mediterranean construct. Herzfeld and other anti-Mediterraneanists object to the notion of the Mediterranean as a field of inquiry per se; but from the literary perspective, it is not the categorical “the” that is the problem but its singular aspect: better, from a poststructuralist and decentered perspective, to think of “the Mediterranean” as a series of “a” Mediterraneans: narratives and counter-narratives, not a closed hermeneutic system inclusive only of works which privilege Greece and Rome and their (self-proclaimed) cultural inheritors (in the West) but a system open to all Mediterranean voices. Formerly marginalized and subaltern peoples now speak for themselves, if with less freedom or levels of opportunity than their former colonizers.

Fortunately, developments in postcolonial theory have given literary critics and cultural historians a sophisticated language for describing the Mediterranean through this multicultural paradigm.³⁹ Homi Bhabha, in particular in *Nation and Narration*, argues that the concept of the nation is established through narrative, or, as Huddart writes in reference to Bhabha, the nation is “a strategy: a *rhetorical* strategy.”⁴⁰ In other

words, nations are defined in part by the stories they tell themselves; the nation is the result of competing narratives set in opposition to the master-narrative. Moreover, Bhabha argues, these narratives are perceived in different ways by the narrators themselves and their discontents:

the colonial authority, the power of a national narrative seems entirely confident of its consistency and coherence, [it] is all the while undermined by its inability to really fix the identity of the people, which would be to limit their identity to a single overpowering nationality. The narrative of nationality is continually displaced by other identities, like sexuality, class, or race, and there can be no end to this displacement.⁴¹

The discourse of a nation—its master-narrative, from the deconstructionist perspective—cannot help but create counter-narratives from the margin, as formerly silenced groups (such as ethnic and religious minorities, those with non-normative sexual identities and those from the non-elite social and economic classes) attempt to write themselves into the national narrative. All these differences, Bhabha writes, force constant revisions of the national narrative to suit the changing national boundary: “[t]o reveal such a margin is, in the first instance, to contest claims of cultural supremacy, whether these are made from the ‘old’ post-imperialist metropolitan nations, or on behalf of the ‘new’ independent nations of the periphery.”⁴² National counter-narratives, or counter-national narratives, then, undermine the national project by pointing to the fissures in such definitions. The modern period, which Bhabha notes was “one of the most sustained periods of mass migration within the West and colonial expansion in the East,” thus invites the kind of writing and rewriting which is central to the continual reauthorization of national narratives (and thus national identity). Such pressure from the margins inevitably reframes the master-narrative, creating space for a wider swathe of experiences.⁴³

Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* illuminates yet still more precisely the interplay of narrative and counter-narrative, and the hybrid identities which this give-and-take produces:

Postcolonial critique bears witness to those countries and communities — in the North and the South, urban and rural — constituted, if I may coin a phrase, “Otherwise than modernity.” Such cultures of a postcolonial *contra-*

modernity may be contingent to modernity, discontinuous or in contention with it, resistant to its oppressive, assimilationist technologies; but they also deploy the cultural hybridity of their borderline conditions to “translate”, and therefore reinscribe, the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity.⁴⁴

Bhabha here points to a postcolonial model of narrative discourse which foregrounds the tension between assimilation and resistance in the creation of these hybrid spaces. Using this model, he concludes that, “[w]hat emerges as an effect of such ‘incomplete signification’ is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated.... It is this *international* dimension both within the margins of the nation-space and in the boundaries of the *in-between* nations and peoples” that third spaces can best be understood.⁴⁵

At the same time, Bhabha’s ideas have not been uncontroversial in postcolonial thought. The concept of hybridity in particular has been the subject of withering critiques in recent postcolonial scholarship, notably for its tendency to eclipse national liberation movements and for justifying modes of oppression by another name. One of the most salient of such critiques is Shalini Puri’s *Caribbean Postcolonial*, in which Puri argues (in part) that “far from resolving the crisis of multicultural societies, particular hybrid identities have been intimately connected with modes of both domination and resistance. In contemporary corporate discourse, the cultural hybridity symbolized by the ‘global village’ provides an enabling discourse for the aggressive economic expansion of capital.”⁴⁶ While an insightful critique of the prevailing optimistic view of hybrid spaces, the conflict that Puri identifies between assimilation and resistance, and between colonizer and colonized, supports the central theme of the current volume. Much the same can be said for cosmopolitanism as a discursive construct; Bruce Robbins argues that “[f]or better or worse, there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it.” Such a reading again complicates the same types of tensions that Puri identifies.⁴⁷ Bhabha’s original construction and Puri’s and Robbins’s critiques of it point to an inherent tension between the new disruptive aesthetics represented by cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and a nationalist aesthetics prioritizing the continuity of tradition and the rejection of foreign elements, on the other hand.

Conceiving of the Mediterranean as a third space, a place where cultures and their narratives mix, causes a new paradigm of power to emerge in concert with an equally new—modernist—aesthetics. As Braudel knew, the Mediterranean constitutes the in-between space that at once joins and separates the various peoples and nations on the shores, islands, and inland places which define the geographical basin. To understand the Mediterranean, then, we must dispense with binary notions of geographic Mediterranean space by rejecting two traditional views of the Mediterranean that remain wrapped up in imperialist and Eurocentric ideology. From the perspective of geography, this means jettisoning the construction of the Mediterranean as having a geographic center—the colonial core of northern Europe, say, or the Ottoman Empire—and margins—the colonized people of the Balkans, North Africa, or the Levant. From the corollary perspective of discourse, this means also rejecting the master-narratives of these supposed geographic centers—narratives grounded in Classical Greece and Rome—as well as master-narrativity as a force for silencing and excluding speakers in subaltern positions.

To the Romans, the Sea was *Mare Nostrum*, Our Sea, a hegemonic and proprietary name. If the Mediterranean is to live up to its name as the space between land or the center of the earth, then one must search for Mediterranean Modernism across the entire length of its margin—the coastline, where its cultures and narratives meet and mingle, for this is where strategies of resistance and assimilation can most clearly be seen. Indeed, assimilationist and rejectionist strategies can be observed with equal force throughout the Mediterranean, in the cultures and discourses of both colonizer and colonized. They are inherent in two opposing constructs of the Mediterranean: a naturally heterogeneous space where cultures and continents mix, and a place subject to powerful homogenizing forces in the form of pan-Mediterranean imperial aspirations (e.g. Roman and Ottoman). Just as the Mediterranean contains this synchronic aspect, it also holds significance from a diachronic perspective as the birthplace of ancient civilizations and as a fully modern space.⁴⁸ To speak of the Mediterranean as having a center in space or time is misleading, since these two opposing constructs of the Mediterranean must continue to exist simultaneously. The Mediterranean belongs equally to all who live(d) there, and it is this position which informs the selection of papers in this volume.

MEDITERRANEAN MODERNISM

Young men like Braudel born in villages like Luméville-en-Ornois and on their way to Paris have a long history in French literature—Stendhal’s Julien Sorel in *The Red and the Black* and Alexandre Dumas’s D’Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers* come quickly to mind—but only in the technological and political circumstances of the twentieth century might such a figure expect easy travel across the Mediterranean to Algeria, much less across what David Abulafia refers to as the “Mediterranean Atlantic” to Brazil, where Braudel spent several years establishing the University of São Paulo.⁴⁹ Stories like Braudel’s were playing out across the Mediterranean, and the papers collected in the present volume represent some portion of what he calls the “individual histories” which in “sum” would constitute the Mediterranean. The individual histories chosen to represent a “Mediterranean modernism” reflect various reactions to the material, economic, and political conditions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, specifically, the increased international traffic in people(s), material culture, and ideas. This rapid period of change and exchange caused writers, and other kinds of cultural producers to reconsider their relation to the past and the connection to the larger world from which modern ideas were coming. The delicate balance between appropriation and resistance, between tradition and innovation, between the absorption of international culture and the oppositional assertion of local culture—put differently, the conflict among the national, the local, and the cosmopolitan—is the defining feature of Mediterranean Modernism.

Part I of the volume, “Personal Reflections on the Multi-Cultural Mediterranean” presents the response to these factors by a variety of cosmopolitan Mediterranean figures like Braudel, thus illuminating their works’ place within a broader Mediterranean literary context. At the same time, it also builds on recent scholarly appreciation of the importance of the unique and the idiosyncratic nature of individual experience in defining aesthetic values. The first essay in the volume, Nadine Wassef’s “Mafarka Before Being a Futurist: The Intimate Egypt in the Writings of F.T. Marinetti,” emphasizes these aspects of Marinetti’s career. The influential modernist is depicted as a sort of Braudel figure in reverse: just as Braudel’s overlooked Algerian experiences were formative for his ideas about the Mediterranean and the aesthetics of its literary presentation, so too, Wassef argues, were Marinetti’s cosmopolitan Egyptian roots for his later literary and political endeavors in Italy. Marinetti’s ideology

and aesthetics were molded, in part, by the tension between the local traditions of the Egypt of his youth and the international ideas that he absorbed in Italian and French colonial schools, followed by his migration to the northern Mediterranean. Charles Sabatos's "Marginal Modernists: Claude McKay, Panait Istrati, and the 'Minor Mediterranean'" looks at the way figures from the Mediterranean margins conceived of the cosmopolitan spaces that they found: McKay, a Jamaican-born Black American who played a key role in the Harlem Renaissance, and Istrati, a Romanian, depict the struggles of lower-class migrant writers in their autobiographical novels. In contrast to the upper-class Marinetti, these two writers explore class solidarity in the European Mediterranean metropolises, depicting how, as in the case of McKay, the dockyards of Marseille create another kind of cosmopolitan space among the poor laborers who come from all corners of the Mediterranean.

Juan Herrero-Senés's "Mediterranean Crossroads: the Spanish University Cruise, 1933" centers on the divide between nationalism and cosmopolitanism by a different means: rather than focusing on the migrants and dockworkers of Mediterranean ports, Herrero-Senés concentrates on sailors, specifically a cruise taken in the summer of 1933 by several prominent Spanish professors and their students, some of whom would go on to play important roles in the country's intellectual and artistic life. By examining the letters, diaries, and other recorded impressions of their trip around the Mediterranean, to places such as Egypt, Greece, and Palestine, Herrero-Senés presents these travelers' impressions of Mediterranean otherness and Spain's position in this larger geographic and cultural space. David W. Bird's "Catalan Political Modernism: The Case of Gabriel Alomar i Villalonga (1873–1941) and Modernism on the Periphery" examines another case from Spain: Alomar, a Catalan from Mallorca, attempted to domesticate the foreign aesthetic and ethical issues which modernism addressed into the Spanish literary and cultural milieu. In his writing, Alomar encouraged Spanish and Catalan artists to move beyond narrow nationalisms and embrace the new ideas coming from France, Italy, and elsewhere. In so doing, Alomar also made a case for rethinking the assumption of Catalonia's (and, by extension, the Balearic Islands') marginal position within Spain and Spain's marginal position within the Mediterranean, arguing that these spaces had long histories of integration and cultural ties.

Anett Jessop's "Geopoetics and Historical Modernism: Gertrude Stein, Laura Riding and Robert Graves in Mallorca, 1912–1936" explores these three expatriate writers' engagement with Spain and the Mediterranean

through a reappraisal of the Classical Greco-Roman past. Unlike their friend Gertrude Stein, Graves and Riding did not settle in Paris or another European capital; instead, they chose Mallorca, an island in the center of the Mediterranean Sea, yet on the periphery of the Mediterranean cultural space. Because of its strategic position in the Sea, Mallorca had been ruled at one point or another by many of the major Mediterranean powers: the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Muslim Caliphates, and, ultimately, the Spanish. As such, it was a suitable location for re-examining the ancient and classical legacy of the Mediterranean, which they did in such works as *I, Claudius* and *A Trojan Ending*. The section concludes with Federica Frediani's "A Scent of Jasmine from the Sea? Representations of Tunis in *Villa Jasmin* by Férid Boughedir and *Le chant des mariées* by Karin Albou," which examines two twenty-first-century films set in Nazi-occupied Tunis. The two films reflect on the legacy of cosmopolitanism in Tunis and the nationalist ideologies—both from without and from within—which brought about the destruction of the city's multi-ethnic and multi-confessional environment. Both of these works challenge the postwar reimagining of North-African cities as peaceful cosmopolitan spaces, an ideology which says more about the ideals of the contemporary moment than about the historical circumstances of the past.

Whereas the first part of the volume examines individual experiences of the Mediterranean, Part II, "Communal Reflections of the Postcolonial Mediterranean," looks at the way societies as a whole or smaller groups of people understood their place within the larger Mediterranean space. In "Naming Surreally: Lautréamont's *Chants* de Maldoror and Nikos Engonopoulos's *Worship of the 'Greek'*," Vasiliki Dimoula suggests that Engonopoulos constructs his modern Greek cultural and national identity by drawing on the symbolic storehouse of Classical Greek literature—Homer in particular—but presenting it in a modern way by using the aesthetics of French Surrealism. In this way, Engonopoulos sought to break Greece free from a more restricted vision of nationalism and its place in the larger geographic, cultural, and aesthetic milieu; rather, through comparison with, and imitation of, the Uruguayan-born writer Lautréamont, who lived in France, Engonopoulos, in his paintings and in print, points toward a redefinition of Greek-ness more in line with the increasingly integrated Mediterranean world.

The question of how to weave modern European aesthetics and ideas into the local traditions of the Eastern Mediterranean is also the organizing principle in Defne Çizakça's "Sharing the Stage in Istanbul: The Multi-ethnic

Beginnings of Ottoman Theatre.” Çizakça demonstrates how late-Ottoman Istanbul society dealt with the importation of European drama, an art form which had not previously existed in the Ottoman Empire. Çizakça argues that the theater, a joint project of Turkish and Armenian artists, became a third space fusing the traditions and aesthetics of the Eastern Mediterranean with a Western Mediterranean artistic form. The result demonstrates Istanbul’s central position for the negotiation of North-African, Middle-Eastern, and European cultures.

Marijan Dović’s “From Autarky to ‘Barbarian’ Cosmopolitanism: The Early Avant-Garde Movements in Slovenia and Croatia” continues the exploration of the integration of Western aesthetics into the Balkans and its effects on national ideology by tracing the interlocking paths of Futurists, Surrealists, and other adherents of manifesto modernism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Despite their shifting political fortunes and the conflicts and debates which arose from the differing aesthetic ideologies that they adopted, these modernists all embraced the cosmopolitan ideals of the avant-garde while simultaneously adapting them to their own national traditions. Adam J. Goldwyn’s “Modernism, Nationalism, Albanianism: Geographic Poetry and Poetic Geography in the Albanian and Kosovar Independence Movements” also examines the contribution of Western aesthetic ideals for the formation of postcolonial Ottoman states. Inspired not only by the political changes sweeping Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century but also by innovations in literary style, Albanian writers forged a national voice, using Western poetics to assert an independent Albanian national identity which connected them with Western Europe rather than their former Ottoman rulers.

The integration of East and West is likewise the central theme of Rob Baum’s “Gender Dystopia on the Kibbutz: From Plato to Marx.” Baum focuses on Israeli novels of the 1990s which are set in the early twentieth century. Though kibbutzim are often viewed as central to the Israeli nationalist myth, Baum demonstrates the ways in which writers like Batya Gur and Meir Shalev problematize the innocence of these spaces, demonstrating that, although they claimed to be a modern kind of political structure, they inevitably reproduced the same kinds of systemic violence toward women and children as previous structures. Baum suggests that the violence inherent in the kibbutz shaped memories of trauma for subsequent generations.

Gavin Murray-Miller’s “Flâneurs in The Orient: The Colonial Maghrib and the Origins of the French Modernist Tradition” place the origins of

French modernism in a trans-Mediterranean context, arguing that North-African tourism, colonial modernization, and encounters with a changing “Orient” played an instrumental role in the making of the modernist tradition. Murray-Miller suggests that, during the mid-nineteenth century, a new generation of Frenchmen watched as the sublime Orient of the romantics dissolved into a disparaging tableau of newly Gallicized cities and hybridized cultures. European settlement, state-sponsored building projects, and greater contact with the Muslim world all served to undermine conceptions of a monolithic and timeless Orient steeped in religious mysticism and exoticism, prompting leading Orientalists like Théophile Gautier and Eugène Fromentin to call for a new style of artistic representation capable of recognizing the Orient as a site of transition and change. The final chapter in the collection, Dina Ramadan’s “The Alexandria Biennale and Egypt’s Shifting Mediterranean,” similarly addresses the formation of national identity in a postcolonial context: in 1955, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser instituted the Alexandria Biennale, a chance for Egypt to assert a new national identity more closely aligned with the Mediterranean than with its former English colonizer. Along with the development of a new national identity, Egyptian artists developed a fresh aesthetic sensibility, combining traditional Egyptian art forms with modernist ideas drawn from schools of modernism in France, Italy, and elsewhere. Including over 500 works by over 250 artists from eight countries, the Biennale showcased Egypt’s national self-image, reflected in and by the variety of Mediterranean artists, cultures, and artistic movements.

In many ways, the Biennale was a microcosm of the intercultural exchange and aesthetic development in the Mediterranean basin writ large during the modernist period. In Alexandria, the quintessential Mediterranean city in antiquity and in modernity, the new Egyptian nationalist government sought to bring together a variety of Mediterranean voices by which it could stake its claim to a Mediterranean identity. The art on display showed the aesthetic innovation necessary to contain the multitude of unresolved competing identities: the reclaimed ancient (Egyptian, Near-Eastern, and Greco-Roman) roots of modern national identity; the cultural legacy of colonialism; and the effects of increasing contact with contemporary neighboring societies. One way to understand the large-scale factors that shaped the times, however, is to examine how they were depicted by the individuals and societies who lived through them. Each of the chapters in Part I of this volume illuminates the interaction of these forces filtered through the idiosyncratic minds of individual artists, writers, and others.

The artists exhibiting their work at the Biennale, however, were organized by country, thus positioning them not just as Mediterranean but also, somewhat paradoxically in an increasingly cosmopolitan world, as representatives of their individual nations; at the same time, they represented a particular view of Mediterranean modernism which their Egyptian hosts wanted to present. Taken together, then, their work demonstrates the great theme of Part II: art as a social and ideological project that explores the ways in which the synthesis of the traditional and the avant-garde, the local and the foreign, the national and the cosmopolitan, produced a new hybrid modernist aesthetic shared across the Mediterranean. When, on the opening page of the Preface to the English edition of *The Mediterranean*, Braudel writes, “[t]he Mediterranean speaks with many voices; it is a sum of individual histories,” this is what he means.⁵⁰

NOTES

1. Published in English in 1972 as *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), and hereafter referred to as *The Mediterranean*.
2. See, for instance, Herzfeld, “Practical Mediterraneanism,” 50, whose position is followed by Jirat-Wasiutyński, *Modern Art and the Idea of the Mediterranean*, 5: “The new Mediterranean was a construct like the Orient of Orientalism,” that is, it is a constructed category rooted in the ideology of its creators.
3. Fernand Braudel, “Personal Testimony,” *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 4 (1972): 449.
4. For an example drawn from painting, see, for instance, Clark 1999.
5. Braudel, “Personal Testimony,” 448.
6. For an influential study of the issue in English literature, see Williams, *The Country and the City*.
7. For which, see, for example, Mazower, *Salonica*, 308–10.
8. J.H. Hexter, “Fernand Braudel and the Monde Braudellien,” *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 4 (1972): 483.
9. Hexter, “Fernand Braudel,” 500.
10. Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy: From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 106.
11. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890–1930* (London: Penguin, 1991), 22.
12. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1987), 21.

13. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123, no. 3 (May 2008).
14. Cf. Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, "Introduction: The Global Horizons of Modernism," in *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*, ed. Doyle and Winkiel, 1–14 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indianapolis UP, 2005).
15. Braudel, "Personal Testimony," 450.
16. *Ibid.*, 451.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 17.
19. See, for instance, Vasily Kamensky's ferro-concrete poem "Constantinople" in his 1914 *Tango with Cows* collection, which depicts the city from the air as a series of words representing the sights of the city and straight lines representing its urban grid.
20. Howard Caygill, "Braudel's Prison Notebooks," *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004): 154.
21. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 14.
22. Braudel, "Personal Testimony," 453. See Caygill "Braudel's Prison Notebooks," for a detailed reading of *The Mediterranean* in this context. The fact of Braudel's incarceration is another aspect of his view of history. Braudel concludes the second edition of *The Mediterranean* by writing, "When I think of the individual, I am always inclined to see him imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distance both behind him and before" (Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1244). Braudel revisits this theme in his "Personal Testimony," arguing that the *longue durée* which encompassed millennia of Mediterranean history offered him an intellectual refuge from the physical reality of his surroundings, and that they were "a direct existential response to the tragic times I was passing through" (Braudel, "Personal Testimony," 454). For Braudel's wide gaze as a source of meaning in contrast to Sartre's focus on meaning in the moment as the products of their different circumstances during the war, see Hexter 1972: 509.
23. Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia UP), 9.
24. *Ibid.*, 5.
25. Amy Clukey, "'No Country Really Now': Modernist Cosmopolitanisms and Jean Rhys' Quartet," *Twentieth Century Literature* 56, no. 4 (2010): 437.
26. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 8.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 18.

29. Ibid., 168.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 17.
33. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology,'" *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 726.
34. Ian Morris, "Mediterraneanization," in *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity*, ed. Irad Malkin (New York: Routledge, 2005), 40.
35. Jirat-Wasiutyński, following Herzfeld, defines "Mediterraneanism" as "a controlling and reductive Eurocentric viewpoint that, in a 'politics of knowledge,' exoticizes, homogenizes, and restricts any account of the region" (*Modern Art and the Idea of the Mediterranean*, 5).
36. According to Horden and Purcell mock the editors of *The Anthology of Europe* for asserting that "the Mediterranean was invented in the 1960s and passed its sell-by date in the 1980s" ("The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology,'" n. 26).
37. Horden and Purcell, "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology,'" 726, esp. n. 26. Herzfeld perhaps foresaw such a critique of his work and attempted to preempt it when he wrote that his "intention is not to argue—as some believe I have done in the past — for a dismantling of the category....My intention is thus to ask why the category is so persistent — why it survives, whose interests its maintenance serves, and what are the consequences of its continuing importance." ("Practical Mediterraneanism," 47).
38. Herzfeld, "Practical Mediterraneanism," 46. For the assertion that speaking about the Mediterranean in this way necessarily summons the absent European as its opposite, see Jirat-Wasiutyński, who argues that "European modernity with its emphasis on history and progress...remained the Mediterranean's absent comparator" (*Modern Art and the Idea of the Mediterranean*, 4). Herzfeld adds to this an awareness of the operation of a power dynamic inherent in such a classification, writing, "I suspect that we are dealing with political hierarchy again" between the colonial and imperial Northern Europe and the colonized and less powerful Southern Europe (2005:60). It is with this reading in mind that Horden and Purcell summarize certain postcolonial views: "[T]he Mediterranean stands accused of being an essentially oppressive concept, born of imperialism and deployed in the service of politically undesirable master narratives," that it is "unpalatable for anyone who sees in the conception and study of Greco-Roman antiquity simply another manifestation of imperialist ideology" and that the Mediterranean as a cultural construct is often criticized for "the specific ideological undesirability of links with European imperialism"

- (Horden and Purcell, "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology,'" 726).
39. For the relations of these Bakhtinian terms to postcolonial theory and hybridity, see Young, *Colonial Desire*, 17–21.
 40. David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 72.
 41. *Ibid.*, 74.
 42. Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.
 43. Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 200.
 44. *Ibid.*, 9.
 45. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 4.
 46. Shalini Puri, *The Caribbean Postcolonial* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 4.
 47. Cheah and Robbins, *Cosmopolitics*, 2.
 48. For which, see Jirat-Wasiutyński, who suggests that even as "the Mediterranean thus conceived was a product of a Romantic myth that saw the region as remote in time and space...it was paradoxically ever more readily available to Europeans — at first hand, in travel and tourism, and mediated, through scholarship and art" (*Modern Art and the Idea of the Mediterranean*, 4).
 49. David Abulafia, "Mediterraneans," in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. W.V. Harris (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 80.
 50. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 13.

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PART I

Personal Reflections on the
Multi-Cultural Mediterranean

Mafarka Before Being a Futurist: The Intimate Egypt in the Writings of F.T. Marinetti

Nadine Wassef

Scholars such as Barbara Spackman, Jeffrey Schnapp, and Cintia Sartini-Blum have mostly and successfully studied Futurist aesthetics in light of Italy's Fascist regime. Other scholars have pointed to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's work as representative of colonialist literature: in their coedited volume, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo include F.T. Marinetti in a wave of Italian literature that, from the 1880s onward, "saw the flourishing of a series of Orientalist and Africanist texts by highly influential writers."¹ The aforementioned approach has led many scholars to look at the exotic representation of Africa and the racial and cultural "othering" of non-Italians in Futurist art as part of the cultural project of Fascism—supported by Futurists—which aimed at stressing a pure Italian identity and character known as *Italianità*. Nonetheless, scholars such as Robert O. Paxton, Lucia Re, and Valerio Ferme have found a more balanced ground when studying the representation of Africa in Italian texts. Their analyses successfully avoid over-generalizations that limit our views of individuals or

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texts emerging from this time period as mere orientalists, colonialists, or even Fascists.

This essay, which favors a more middle ground carved by Paxton, Re, and Ferme, elaborates the complexity of Italians' identity, especially that of the modernist artist and writer F.T. Marinetti. Despite his outspoken support of Fascism, Marinetti was critical of other orientalists' superfluity in describing Africa and Egypt. By analyzing Marinetti's writings in light of his early life in Egypt, I suggest a new approach to the reading of his work. In my view, the Futurist aesthetic that Marinetti formulated in Egypt reflects a combination of, and interaction among, his Italian and Egyptian identities and cultures. In addition to the Italian and Egyptian components of his identity, Marinetti also came in contact with French culture in Egypt's Alexandria, and indeed, his early writings were composed in French.

Marinetti was not only fluent in Italian and French languages. His familiarity with Italian, Egyptian, and French cultures, to which he was exposed during his student years at the Jesuit school in Alexandria, is yet another reason for us to reexamine his work from a new perspective. My proposed reading of Marinetti's Futurist texts reveals new subjectivities that invite us to be more aware of the complexity of these cultural identities when studying the literature(s) that emerged as a result of their crossing and encounters. My approach affirms the uniqueness of authorial experience and goes beyond established colonial boundaries. As such, I read Marinetti's Futurist work, not in light of the historical "catastrophe" known as Fascism, but instead in view of the meeting and intersection of various cultures as they become manifested in his literary writing.

In addition to the intersection of many identities, a close look at the language employed by Marinetti in his writings reveals the complexity of his Egyptian identity. In addition to the use of Egyptian street language, we note the African and Arabic components of his used language which took shape during his life in Alexandria. These components have until now been overlooked—despite his references to them on many occasions²—in favor of, for example, his Italian colonial identity. Moreover, the Arabic and African elements of his identity have been regarded as exotic accessories artificially used in his work, rather than being integral and organic components of his development that were later expressed in his writings (either before or during Fascism). I specifically focus on Marinetti's first Futurist novel *Mafarka le futuriste* (1909), Marinetti's autobiographical account in *Scatole d'amore in conserva* (1927), and the accounts of his trip to Egypt with his wife in 1930, which later appear under the title *Il fascino dell'Egitto* (1933). Analyzing Marinetti's work from this perspective will

shed light on the distinction Marinetti himself made early on between the Fascist political movement and the Futurist artistic movement. In addition to literary texts by Marinetti, primary sources, such as Marinetti's early correspondence with his Egyptian French school rector and brother, as well as the *Futurist Manifesto* become indispensable in understanding Marinetti's fluid conception of national boundaries (the Italian, the Egyptian, with its various stratifications, and the French). Such a fluidity, manifested in Marinetti's identity, is later expressed in his Futurist work.

A FRENCH NOVEL BY AN EGYPTIAN MARINETTI

The influence of Egypt on Marinetti's early life is emphasized and celebrated by him on several occasions. Born in 1876 in the city of Alexandria and educated by French Jesuits, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti lived in Egypt until he was sent to Paris in 1894 to receive his baccalauréate at the Sorbonne.³ In his "Self Portrait," published in *Scatole d'amore in Conserva*, the young Marinetti refers several times to his "strange, colorful, and uproarious sort of life"⁴

Ebbi una vita tumultuosa, stramba, colorata. Cominciai in rosa e nero; pupo fiorente e sano fra le braccia e le mammelle color carbone coke della mia nutrice sudanese. Ciò spiega forse la mia concezione un po' negra dell'amore e la mia franca antipatia per le politiche e le diplomazie al lattemiele.⁵

I had a strange, colorful, uproarious sort of life. I started off with rose and black, a blossoming, healthy little tot in the arms and between the carbon-coke breasts of my Sudanese nurse. Which maybe explains my somewhat *blackish* concept of love and my open antipathy toward milk-and-honey politics and diplomacy.⁶

Throughout his career, Marinetti remembered the African influence as a main component of his childhood. It is not a coincidence that the mention of the arms of his Sudanese nurse precedes the mention of the influence of his Piedmontese father, "the greatest civil law lawyer in Alexandria," and his Milanese mother, "who was entirely composed of the most delicate, musical poetry of affectionate tears and tenderness."⁷ Egypt and its coastal city of Alexandria were central to the biography of the author. In a later publication, Marinetti dedicates a chapter to "Alessandria d'Egitto" in his *Marinetti e il futurismo* (1929) and, in another context, claims Egypt as the birthplace of his "sensibilità italiana" [Italian sensitivity].⁸ I suggest that the exotic places, spaces, and actions that may be attributed to the

Egyptian “other,” and that have provided evidence of Marinetti’s orientaling of Egypt in his work, account better for the intimate (the “I”) rather than the distant (the “other”) in Marinetti’s world.

In opposition to the classic dualism of “I/us” and “other/them” considered to lie at the base of any colonial discourse, Marinetti’s writings reveal an awareness of different stratifications existing within Egyptian culture. Moreover, the boundaries between “us” and “them” continue to shift to the point where he is critical of art that becomes observant of the “other” from a distance—whether this art is European or African. In an Extract from the Proceedings of the 8th Convention of the Reale Accademia D’Italia,⁹ Marinetti already makes a distinction between what is Black, Egyptian, and European in the production of African poetry, plastic arts, and music:

La poesia la plastica e la musica africane sono state finora o arte egizia o primitivismo negro o miscela europeizzante di verismo statico minuzioso monotono nostalgico e l’architettura Africana è stata un antipatico plagio delle antiche costruzioni egiziane o arabe.¹⁰

African poetry, plastic arts, and music have been up till now either Egyptian art or black primitivism or a Europeanizing mixture of static, detailed, monotonous, and nostalgic verism; and African architecture has been an unappealing plagiarism of the ancient Egyptian or Arabic constructions.¹¹

While criticizing European art for being a “mixture of static, detailed, monotonous, and nostalgic verism,” Marinetti also takes African architecture to task for being “an unappealing plagiarism of the ancient Egyptian or Arabic constructions.”¹² He consequently suggests a new colonial way of understanding the relationship between European, Black, Arabic, and Egyptian arts in the 8th Convention of the Reale Accademia D’Italia, hence suggesting the need for a novel way to portray African art. Marinetti also expresses a unique awareness of all those identities acting as various manifestations of African art, thereby rendering the African the regular instead of being the exotic accessory when applying the colonial model. It is also in this light that we can understand the multicultural dimension of Marinetti’s earlier work *Mafarka le futuriste*.

Marinetti’s first Futurist novel, *Mafarka le futuriste*, was published in 1909 in French. It is followed a year later by an Italian translation by Decio Cinti (1910). The novel is immediately accused of being obscene due to its graphic, violent, and sexual imagery especially ones found in the first chapter of the novel, “Le Viol des négresses” [The rape of the

black women]. The novel, composed by the young Marinetti in 12 chapters, takes place in North Africa. It tells the story of the African hero, Mafarka-El-Bar, king of Tell-el-Kebir, the courageous warrior with a “blue voice” and “birds tattooed on his arms.”¹³ Through a mix of boldness and shrewdness, the courageous Mafarka manages to conquer the armies of Africans led by his uncle, Brafane el-Kibir, who had seized his city. He kills his uncle, takes the scepter of his liberated city, and seizes power. Yet the death of his brother, Magamal, transforms his heroism as a warrior into an artistic and philosophical one. In the chapter “Les Hypogées” [The Hypogea], in a state between the awakening and a dream, Mafarka observes the setting sun rapidly descending on his chest. He is later awakened by a strong pain in his chest that he interprets as his son calling to be born. In an attempt to defy material and mechanical laws, he is transformed into a superhuman capable of procreating his ideal son without the aid of a woman. His son, Gazourmah, a bird with mechanical wings, is—using Mafarka’s own words, “Beau en tous ses membres, qui sont effrayants de force et stupéfiants de perfection” [beautiful, in each of his members, which are terrifying in their force and stunning in their perfection].¹⁴ Having decided to leave his throne he delivers his “Discours Futuriste” [Futurist Speech] where he announces to his soldiers his plan to seek eternal youth by building his son. He finally executes his plan and dies while breathing life into his immortal son. The novel is declared by Marinetti on October 1910 in Milan: “opera che amo più di tutte le altre mie e nella quale sono riuscito ad esprimere il mio gran sogno futurista” [a work that I love more than all my other ones in which I have managed to express my great futurist dream].¹⁵

In addition to the philosophical aspect of the novel, and in an attempt to create a novel of high literature, Marinetti announces in his defense of his favorite work that he uses images as “elementi essenziali dell’espressione” [fundamental elements of expression].¹⁶ This part of the paper seeks to detect those elements of expression that Marinetti declares as “strumenti incoscienti per fissare l’inafferrabile verità e per precisare l’ indefinito e l’ indefinibile” [unconscious instruments to cease the elusive truth and to specify the undefined and indefinable].¹⁷ In addition, detecting those elements in the text reveals the complexity of identity of the writer and his ability to freely move between languages and cultures.

Marinetti depicts Mafarka in the first pages of the novel as the high captain who leads his Arab soldiers in prayer and to victory. Mafarka’s righteousness, el-Bar in Arabic translates into “righteous,” is depicted

since the first chapter “Le Viol des négresses” [The rape of the black women] where he voices his outrage and disgust at the sight of his soldiers raping black women held prisoners after a long won battle with his uncle, Boubassa.

It is important to note that, in his successful defense of his novel, Marinetti specifically speaks about the language and style of his work as essential components of his poetics instead of being ornaments used to seduce women:

Tengo inoltre a dichiarare che io non sono un dilettante di letteratura il quale consideri i suoi versi come dei fiori all'occhiello, nè uno spirito bizzarro che abbia scelto per capriccio snobistico una lingua straniera come la francese, per sedurre le belle dame e distrarre i suoi ozi eleganti.¹⁸

I also want to state that I am not an amateur of literature who considers his verses like jewels, nor an eccentric person who chose on a snobbish whim a foreign language such as French, to seduce beautiful ladies and as a distraction from his elegant laziness.

Moreover, Marinetti states his upbringing in the city of Alexandria as the main explanation of his style and language. According to him, he becomes a French writer due to “circostanze involontarie” [involuntary circumstances] despite being Italian in soul and nationality. Subsequently, a more detailed study of the history and culture of early twentieth-century Egypt supports our understanding of the multidimensional encounter between languages and cultures in his work.

The novel points to many familiar architecture structures, words, and historical events and characters with which the author became familiarized in his native Egypt: the village seized by the enemy is spelled Babel-Fotouk,¹⁹ what would be spelled in Arabic as باب الفتوح in a clear reference to one of the gates to Old Cairo, built in 1087. As the name in Arabic suggests, the gate was mainly used for the army soldiers on their way to *fotouhaat*, meaning invasions or battles in which new lands were seized in order to build the Islamic empire. He uses other Arabic words such as Mashrabeya مشربية (an Arabic style window enclosed with carved wood) and hallahoua—what is now known as halawa حلوة (an Arabic dessert with a base of sesame).

Most importantly, Mafarka-el-Bar is the king of Tell-el-Kibir.²⁰ The opening scene of *Mafarka le Futuriste* takes place at the end of a battle, probably recalling the battle of Tell-el-Kibir, which would have been

still alive in the collective memory of Egyptians and Europeans alike living in Egypt. In the battle of Tell-el-Kebir, Egyptians lost to the British in 1881 because of treachery on the Egyptian side, leading to the British colonization of Egypt. The battle is remembered in Egyptian history not just as a battle between Egyptians and the British but also as the failure of a popular revolution led by Orabi Bey, the famous army general and nationalist, and the restoration to power of Khedive Tawfiq, the original supporter of the British. Once Tel-el-Kebir was in British hands, they led a triumphant march to Cairo on September 14, 1881: "Urabi and his associates were taken prisoner, court-martialed and exiled to Sri Lanka; Khedive Tawfiq [an original supporter of the British] was restored to power. The war was effectively over."²¹ 1881 thus marked the date of the official colonization of Egypt by the British. Given the charged nature of the reference to Tell-el-Kebir, we would do well to ask why Marinetti would choose the name of the city charged with so many historical memories and references to be the starting point of his novel.

Marinetti's references to important Egyptian historical events in the opening scene of *Mafarka le futuriste* can be interpreted as an attempt to change the course of history. In this scene, Marinetti proposes a new narrative where Mafarka emerges triumphant in a battle historically lost by the Egyptians. In this way, rather than being a mere exotic and colonial text, we can read this first Futurist novel as an attempt by Marinetti to give birth to a new form of art. This form would transcend national boundaries and enable art to propose new narratives when dealing with African and Arabic history. With this idea in mind, we can then understand the disappointment of Mafarka in his Futurist address to his captain, Abdulla,²² to express his true intentions, which are to help the Arabs become fighters rather than followers:

Que les Arabes fussent mes soldats, je me l'accordais avec orgueil...Mais qu'ils devinssent mon troupeau!...lamentable sort, dont la seule conception eût à jamais flétri leur sang et le mien!...²³

The Arabs as my soldiers, I was proud to acknowledge...but not as my flock...A pitiful fate the mere conception of which would have fouled their blood and my own for ever after.²⁴

Mafarka assumes a mixed identity between the Arabic and the African. Added to those two components of his identity, the French colonial

redemptive rhetoric is expressed in the words that he speaks in dialogue (not ignoring that French is the language in which the novel is first published). Mafarka delivers, toward the end of the novel, his Futurist speech where he blames Abdulla for not having taken his place: “Abdalla, ... Quel cœur as-tu donc, si tu n'as pas senti le désir de me tuer pour prendre ma place?” [Abdullah, ... What kind of heart have you got, if you haven't felt the urge to kill me and take my place?].²⁵ In this sentence, Marinetti seems to propose through Mafarka's words a new colonial rhetoric. According to Mafarka's words, being a military leader of the Arabs does not deprive the led soldiers of their dignity and self-respect. Taking into consideration Marinetti's initial intention to use his novel as a tool to change the world, we can read it in the context of the colonial situation. The suggested new colonial rhetoric reflects Marinetti's vision of Italy's role as a colonial power in the Mediterranean. The French existing model which deprives colonized soldiers of their dignity is not sustainable and requires a revision.

Returning to Marinetti's consideration of *Mafarka le futuriste* as a tool to change the world, we can then read Mafarka's speech as an allegory of cultural leadership in which he proposes to give Arabic culture its independence. While recognizing a shared glorious past and heritage, Arabs should not merely rely upon such a past to define their present. Mafarka's speech also points to a recognition of his leadership as a temporary condition which would only be considered successful if it results in the Arab soldiers gaining their independence. How do we read such a speech in the context of this essay's attempt to highlight the subtle yet important delineation of a borderline between Futurism and Fascism? The section that follows is an attempt to read the way Futurism and Fascism shared or differed over the consideration of *italianità*.

FROM AN EGYPTIAN MARINETTI TO A PROMOTER OF ITALIANITÀ

Mafarka's Futurist speech was composed and then published in 1909—more than ten years before the appearance of the Fascist Manifesto (1919) and Benito Mussolini's rise to power (1922). As Futurism continued to develop, it continued to attract all sorts of vocabulary related to the future including political vocabulary which furthered the ideological aims of the movement. The artistic movement was soon an integral part of Fascist propaganda. On March 1, 1925, less than three years after Mussolini

took power, Mario Carli and Emilio Stettimelli, directors of the newspaper *L'impero*, threw a huge banquet to celebrate Marinetti, praising him as “primo interventista” “first interventionist” and praising Futurism for being “preparatore del Fascismo” “preparing the ground for Fascism.” The event is recounted by Marinetti in his *Scatole d'amore in conserva*. He follows his narration of the event by citing a telegram he received from Mussolini. In this telegram, the Fascist leader of Italy expresses both his regret for not having attended the banquet and his praise for Marinetti for being an “infaticabile e geniale assertore di Italianità” [unrelenting and ingenious supporter of *Italianità*].²⁶ The use of the term *italianità* would continue to be developed and defined throughout the Fascist regime's years in power. Returning to this section's attempt to read the way Futurism and Fascism shared or differed over the consideration of the term *italianità*, it would be clear to conclude that, at this point, both the regime and the artistic movement merged in their ambiguous definition of this term. Later on, some supporters of Fascism will discover the impossibility of defining such an elastic term.

Right from the start, the totalitarian Fascist regime relied on specific notions that left room for speculation and, consequently, the manipulation of terms related to identity. Words such as speed, violence, and progress were central to the way Fascists sought to depict the Italian nation and its citizens. According to the aforementioned 1925 telegram by Mussolini, Marinetti is considered an innovative poet for having given the Fascist leader a sense of “the ocean and the machine.” Mussolini also considered the Futurist author to be a “dear old friend,” for having taken part in the historical events of [the day of the first Fascist battles]. He praised Marinetti's activist art by calling the author [a fearless soldier who offered the nation an untamed passion consecrated through blood!].²⁷ In Mussolini's own words, the main elements that proved Marinetti's loyalty to and support of the regime can be summed up in his depiction of speed, violence, and progress (whether of nature or machines), in his loyal actions, and his willingness to offer his blood in battle to prove such loyalty.

Political scientists and historians studying Fascism²⁸ have understandably continued to refer to the Futurists as an essential component in Mussolini's Fascism. The link between the Futurist movement and the Fascist regime which would come to power a decade later, in addition to the friendly telegram sent by the leader of Fascism to the leader of Futurism, is also verified by the publication of Marinetti's work *Futurismo e fascismo* the

year before the telegram was sent.²⁹ In 1924, Marinetti published his work *Futurismo e fascismo*, which he dedicated to his “caro e grande amico” [dear and great friend] Mussolini. In this volume, Marinetti declares that “Il Fascismo nato dall’Interventismo e dal Futurismo si nutrì di principi futuristi.” [Fascism born from Interventism and Futurism was nourished by Futurist principles].³⁰ Moreover, in the same year, the anti-Fascist intellectual Benedetto Croce published an article entitled, “Fatti politici e interpretazioni storiche” [Political matters and historical interpretations], in which he criticizes Marinetti’s opposition to a school reform project proposed by Giovanni Gentile.³¹ Besides Croce’s critique of Marinetti’s Futurism, which he believed did not qualify to be called an artistic movement, he points out the relationship between the movement and Fascism: “Veramente, per chi abbia senso delle connessioni storiche, l’origine ideale del ‘fascismo’ si ritrova nel ‘futurismo’” [For all those who have a sense of historic processes, the intellectual roots of Fascism can be found in Futurism].³² The study of the alliance between Fascism and Futurism becomes inevitable considering the interdisciplinary nature of the Futurist movement. The artistic movement which embraced literature, art, history (or rejected it), and politics is very similar to the totalitarian nature of the Fascist regime. Such an all-inclusive nature of both artistic movement and the political party has made the study of the alliance between the two important even when each movement is examined as a separate phenomenon.

WHEN A FUTURIST WRITES AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

While some scholars have viewed Marinetti’s Futurism as an important inspiration for Fascism, the mixed identities and languages in his work complicates such an idea. The impasse that Marinetti tries to overcome in literature, and that he theorizes toward the end of his career, instead of representing the contradiction within Fascism, points to areas where Futurism and Fascism could not reconcile. Such an impasse is also an area where Marinetti’s Futurist aspirations prevailed and sought channels to fulfill themselves despite—rather than because of—the Fascist regime.

The “lost youth” and the need to “consume the picturesque sites” found in Marinetti’s work, to which Sartini-Blum refers as “the paradoxical project of exoticist literature,”³³ are not that paradoxical when considered as part of a modernist project. Such so-called paradoxes in Marinetti’s work, I would argue, are autobiographical rather than evidence of escapism. It is the recall of these sites rather than the staging of

them that ensures a faithful representation of African literature in order to, in Marinetti's words, "express through poetry, plastic arts, and music the diverse sensibilities and the diverse states of mind of the numerous African regions (coastal and inland)."³⁴

According to Marinetti, such an authentic way of representing Africa in artistic production requires visiting the continent and spending time there rather than contemplating images and unrealistic stereotypical representations of it from a distance. The shocking scenes of consumption of the picturesque sites of Northern Africa, as depicted in Marinetti's writings, are after all Futurist expressions of contact through violation and clash not found in other colonial literatures where the colonizer's identity remains distinct from the colonized territory or sites they explore. Marinetti's scenes, in contrast, represent an internalization of the colonized sites and characters rather than an imposition of the colonizer's identity.

Surprisingly, it is plausible to claim that Marinetti's writing of his autobiography presents an application of the Futurist call for the abolition of the past. In the case of writing his own biography, the abolition of such a past means rewriting it. Through the lens of the lived present, Marinetti recreates his past while contemplating a future that he seeks to achieve. As such, we can read Marinetti's challenging stereotypical or incomplete representations about Africa in his 1938 article "L'Africa generatrice e ispiratrice di poesia e arti" as a desire to recreate Africa in the European mind—in order to ensure its representation the same way he has seen and lived it. On the one hand, he seeks to present Africa the way he recalls it, and on the other hand, he attempts to change its representation in other writers' work. As early as 1902, Marinetti seems to be concerned about correcting stereotypical views embedded in the minds of the Italian public. In his autobiography, written in 1902 and appearing later in *Scatole d'amore in conserva* published in 1927, we read:

Ci sono innumerevoli leggende da sfatare, correggere o rettificare, calunnie da cancellare...No! M'infischio di tutto questo. Seguo piuttosto il mio destino di missionario dell'arte e mi servo volentieri di me stesso, della mia vita intima e dei miei ricordi personali, per colpire una volta di più il passatismo che insozza ancora la mia cara Italia.³⁵

There are innumerable legends to dismantle, to correct or to eliminate...No! I couldn't care less. I shall instead follow my destiny of art missionary and I gladly use myself, my intimate life, and my personal memories, in order to strike once more the *passatismo* which still soils my beloved Italy.

While his autobiography stresses that the birthplace of his art resides in “Alessandria d’Egitto,” he later emphasizes the fact that his mission is later shaped to serve his country, Italy. In an attempt to reveal his own hidden identity, Marinetti introduces his personal life and childhood memories as part of his desired Italian art and culture, presenting this culture as an artistic example of his call to Futurism. He further presents his childhood as an inseparable component in his call to be an “Art missionary” whose task is to make his “cara Italia” a better nation, instead of being “soiled” by its *passatismo*. Following the model articulated in his biography, Marinetti finds a need to rewrite the past that Italy rejects for itself. By including other forces and colors, according to him, Italy would launch into a glorious future.

Marinetti’s autobiography would be an integral part of his art throughout his career. The introduction which, in its final expanded form, becomes part of *Scatole d’amore in conserva* and which appears in 1927 actually dates back to 1902 when it was published in the author’s *La conquête des étoiles*.³⁶ It then reappears in Marinetti’s preface to his concise autobiography *Il delizioso pericolo*, a collection of short stories published in the magazine *Racconta Novelle*.³⁷ Marinetti’s retelling of his private life and personal memories falls outside the Proustian scheme of viewing childhood as a time of happiness to which the author longs to return. Marinetti’s quest, *à la recherche du temps perdu*, besides aiming at finding a source to his present, suggests that the focus of his artistic project is related to the future and, most importantly, provides a model to be followed by his nation, Italy. Through his words, Marinetti makes a very interesting shift in the art of writing: he turns his own personal life into a public project. His life with its colorful past becomes Italy’s national story.

From this perspective, we have a new way of looking at the meaning of Marinetti’s mapping of his own life. As I have shown earlier in this essay, Marinetti is already aware of the intermixing of several cultures and influences in his own life. He praises such a confluence when he writes, “Ringrazio le forze che presiedettero alla mia nascita e alla mia adolescenza, perché mi hanno, fin ad oggi, evitata una delle peggiori disgrazie che possono capitare: La Monotonia.” [I thank the forces that controlled my birth and my adolescence, because they have, until today, spared me one of the worst adversities that could happen: Monotony].³⁸ The use of the term “forze” [forces/influences] to describe such influences is a clear contradiction with later Fascist views on Italian cultural supremacy. This supremacy developed later into eugenic concepts of racial purity which

were embedded in laws against miscegenation, and which Marinetti himself supported.³⁹ He specifically mentions two cities and one region linked to three persons who intersect in the development of his own life: Alexandria, Milan, and Piedmont, which are related to his Sudanese wet-nurse, his father, and his mother. Although he later mentions in his autobiography the education he received in the French Jesuit school in Alexandria, this influence does not seem “intimate” enough to be mentioned in his childhood section. The two Italian cities are clearly connected to his father and mother and also to their character. His wet-nurse’s Sudanese origin becomes, however, expressed in the color of her skin. It is finally in Alexandria that Marinetti experiences the influence of all three persons or the intertwining of—in his words—such forces: his Sudanese wet-nurse, his father, and ultimately, his dear mother.

In contrast to the expected rejection of the mixed “colors” (or races) by an ardent supporter of Fascism, Marinetti applauds the intersection of those differences and goes as far as considering them “forces” rather than weaknesses: Marinetti “gladly makes use of his life” with its colorful past to become a universal narrative, but this story is meant to be interpreted as an alternative Italian national identity. In doing so, and in accordance to his Futurist call for the rejection of what is ancient, Marinetti alters his own past.

BETWEEN MARINETTI’S LIFE AND ART

As I have shown in the previous section, Marinetti’s retelling of his past lacks historical accuracy. The Alexandrian-born Italian author, in a way, attempts to revive, yet at the same time recreate, this past in order to reject *passatismo*. Moreover, the intertwining of the French, the African, and the Arabic, in addition to being an artificial technique applied by the author in his art, becomes an autobiographical component of his writing. The mingling of cultures, as demonstrated earlier, is expressed in the use of many languages in his work. Yet the study of the author’s own personal letters reveals a similar hybridity with respect to language. In addition to names, Marinetti alternates between languages and even uses hybrid words in his correspondences. For instance, Marinetti shifts between French and Italian in his correspondence with his brother Leone (or Leon as he consistently calls him “Cher Leon”) in the nine letters that date from 1891 to 1893.⁴⁰

Marinetti consistently writes in French to his brother except at the end of some of the letters, to which he adds a Post Scriptum, or when he is in

a hurry. An interesting combination of French and Italian appears in this case. For example, he uses “Vendredi” instead of the Italian “Venerdì.” He also mixes the Italian feminine plural definite pronoun “le” spelled L E with the French “les,” spelled L E S. In addition, he refers to “mamma” as “mère” and, finally, ends his letter with “un bacio à papà e a tè,” using accents that do not exist in standard Italian. I will not make attempts to arrive at conclusions regarding whether Marinetti’s mix of languages is a genuine confusion made by an adolescent who was raised bilingual or whether he was trying to make a point about language hybridity in his letters. The reason for this linguistic hybridity might be as simple as a young man attempting to render his mother tongue (Italian) as adorned and “ornamented” as the French he uses at school. It might also be an adolescent’s revolutionary attempt to take a break from writing properly, considering those letters that were written during the summer. While relaxing from the Jesuits’ hard work, the adolescent Marinetti obviously enjoyed playing with the language (French) associated with the academic discipline of the school that he attended. In all cases, we witness early signs of the author’s lack of interest in the idea of “pure” language, clearly demarcated from the actual languages used by speakers in their everyday lives.

In addition to language hybridity, Marinetti’s name is spelled in diverse ways in his letters and writings. Marinetti is mostly referred to as Thomas in his early years, especially by his brother and teacher, père Catin. In other instances, his name is spelled Tommaso in different writings and letters, and later correspondences he is addressed as F.T. Marinetti or as just Marinetti. Later in his 1930 travel account to Egypt, we almost hear the voice of his mother coming from the past and telling him: “Torniamo a casa Tom” [Let’s go home Tom].⁴¹ Marinetti’s name, like his life and the languages he grew up speaking, holds within it the potential for change and transformation. We can detect in the different spellings a reference to the person pronouncing the name and their background.

The diversity of the languages Marinetti grew up speaking would become “dinamici e creative” [dynamic and creative] years,⁴² as he would call them in his *Il fascino d’Egitto*, published in 1933 and based on his accounts of his trip to Egypt with his wife in 1930. The “dynamic and creative” years to which Marinetti refers in 1933, and which he spent away from his native Egypt, are the explosive and electric 21 years which have earned him the title of “Europe caffèine”: in 1909, Marinetti publishes the Manifesto of Futurist Literature in which he supports the writing of poetry that inspires the sense of movement and creativity. The Manifesto

puts more stress on beauty and the creation of poetry as the ultimate focus rather than the overturning of rules in general. This beauty, together with the conquest of the human spirit, could only be achieved using the medium of art by liberating it from the rules already established by the classics. Such rules—according to Futurists—have imprisoned syntax, punctuation, and words. The *parole in libertà* or words-in-freedom are created or rather become liberated and allowed to occupy the blank space of the page without the restrictions of editing, grammar, or syntax.

In the *Futurist Manifesto*, Marinetti summarizes his view of art as the tool that will be used to change the world. Analyzing the Manifesto reveals the recurrence of certain words, and their prevalence over others. For instance, we notice the repetition of words such as “bellezza” [beauty] which has priority over “azione” [action]. This pattern explains the Futurists’ call for change through art. More importantly, the artist’s desire for transformation is visually central in the manifesto and finds expression in the reiteration of the word “vogliamo” [we want]. Related to “bellezza” are the verbs which point to Marinetti’s preferred method of effecting change, such as “canteremo” [we will sing], “la poesia” [poetry], and “l’automobile” [the car]. Of even greater significance is the recipient of such actions—“il mondo” [the world]. The *Futurist Manifesto* also introduces the ideas that Marinetti would soon repeat in the introduction to his *Mafarka le futuriste*: “il mondo” [the world] becomes more important than “l’uomo” [man] who creates art. In accordance with his belief in his role as “Art Missionary,” Marinetti takes the initiative of writing his first Futurist novel to put his theories into action. He writes in the introduction to the first version of the *Mafarka le futuriste*:

Je suis le seul qui ait osé écrire ce chef-d’œuvre, et c’est de mes mains qu’il mourra un jour, quand la splendeur grandissante du monde aura égalé la sienne et l’aura rendu inutile.⁴³

I am the only one who has dared to write this masterpiece, and it is by my hands that it will some day die, when the world’s growing splendor has equaled and superseded it.⁴⁴

The Futurist author turns his manifesto into action; *Mafarka le futuriste* is the novel that, according to him, would reshape not just Italy, but the whole world—“le monde,” “il mondo.” The African novel, written in French and taking place in the Egyptian desert, becomes, according to Marinetti, a universal novel the same way Futurism was intended to be

a universal art movement. It is a novel that serves as a tool for change, a tool which the author would discard one day: “et c’est de mes mains qu’il mourra un jour,” when “la splendeur grandissante du monde aura égalé la sienne et l’aura rendue inutile”⁴⁵ [and it is with my own hand that it will die one day when the growing splendor of the world will mirror it and will make it useless].⁴⁶ Marinetti’s aspirations for a universal artistic movement would give us, then, an explanation for his fascination with Mussolini’s totalitarian regime, especially in its early stages. Fascisms in general, and Mussolini’s regime in particular, sought in each national culture, as Paxton describes it in his book *The Anatomy of Fascism*, “those themes that are best capable of mobilizing a mass movement of regeneration, unification, and purity.”⁴⁷ As Paxton states further on in the book, “fascists pioneered in the 1920s by creating the first European ‘catch-all’ parties of ‘engagement.’”⁴⁸ Marinetti’s call for continual change in Futurist cultural production can then be explained in comparison with the Fascists’ desire for constant transformation and their plan to become the catch-all political party that would later establish Mussolini’s totalitarian regime.

Marinetti’s consideration of his art as a tool reflects a general attitude among intellectuals during early twentieth-century Italy. While discussions over the role of the intellectual to create change in their society have mostly been attributed to Antonio Gramsci’s reflections in his *Prison Notebooks* as representative of the leftist opposition in general, Marinetti’s discussion of his art as a tool to generate social transformation was, surprisingly, based on the same notions. I would even go as far as to argue that Marinetti becomes representative of Italian artists where he assumes the role of “organizer of culture.” His Futurist movement can be read, then, as an attempt to render the whole of European culture tolerant of the newly united Italy and Italians with all their diverse realities as a sign of the future.

Marinetti’s attempts to organize European culture were successful because the main elements of his movement were organically—when we use the Gramscian term—inherited from his hybrid biography. Founded in 1909, the Futurist Movement enjoyed instant success in all of Europe, reserving for Marinetti the title of champion of the avant-garde. Yet despite his success, in the preface to his novel *Mafarka il futurista* (1909), and in his self-portrait or autobiography as it appears in *Scatole d’amore in conserva* (1927), Marinetti is consistently conscious of his critics. In the introduction to *Il fascino dell’Egitto*, Luciano de Maria notes that Marinetti’s “vorace passione” [voracious passion] leads him to read everything written about

him. Marinetti, according to De Maria, due to his competitive nature, would go as far as challenging his opponents in their territory, which might explain, in part, the character of his prose writing. But what matters to us is that Marinetti, in his attempt to turn his art into a catch-all aesthetic movement, sought also to incorporate even classicism and “style”—the complete opposite of what the avant-garde promulgated.⁴⁹ Marinetti’s art can be read, then, as an all-inclusive art in which there exists an incorporation of Futurism’s opposites and a consistent awareness of current events and critics’ opinions.

CONCLUSION

Looking at all the verbal expressions and the various colors, either racial or various stratifications within the same race, that emerge from Marinetti’s first futurist novel, we can understand the young Futurist’s words when he describes *Mafarka le futuriste* as “polyphonique,” a “masterpiece,” in the preface to the novel dedicated to seven of his “futurist brothers.”⁵⁰ Marinetti’s background, where the Italian, the French, the Egyptian, and the African melt in one pot, is indeed the only one who would have “dared”—using his exact words—to write such a masterpiece. The Futurist author presents *Mafarka le futuriste* as a novel that aims at redefining and reshaping not only Italy, but the whole world. The African novel written in French and taking place in the Egyptian desert becomes, according to Marinetti, a universal novel the same way in which Futurism was intended to be a universal art movement. It is a novel that serves as a tool for change that he may get rid of one day, as he writes, “it is with [his] own hand that it will die one day when the growing splendor of the world will match it and will make it useless.”⁵¹

One can then understand why after all the colors and events related to the author’s native Egypt, which he retells in the self-portrait section in *Scatole d’amore in conserva*, Marinetti’s tone changes when he moves to another chapter of his life, a time of solitude when he turned seventeen in 1893: “Solo, a Parigi. Diciassette anni” [alone, in Paris. Seventeen].⁵² Out of all these colors, experiences, and movements, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Marinetti’s style is born: “stile moderno, ultra-veloce, balzante, simultaneo, elettrico, espressione diretta della nuova vita” [modern style, ultra-fast, resilient, simultaneous, electric, and a direct expression of the new life].⁵³ This style would garner Marinetti the title given to him by Parisian newspapers as “La Caffèina d’Europa.” Taking up the

perspective of Marinetti's colorful early biography, we become familiar with a new perspective from which to analyze Marinetti's work: a case where the embrace of the foreign is not a mere wish for the future but an attempt to recreate his home and childhood. By using his own past, Marinetti gives his readers a living example where the contrasting identities achieve reconciliation through art. Such an approach is capable of liberating Marinetti's work and other literary works from the established paradigms early nineteenth-century intellectuals had to identify with: to be either colonizer or colonized in order to find a place on the map. Marinetti's Futurism sought to challenge those boundaries. A consideration of Futurism with Fascism in the background restricts us to interpreting Futurism as an artistic movement where the leap into the future could only mean a leap into catastrophe, a reality regulated by racial laws, censorship, and colonial aspirations. By advocating new angles of study which focuses on the work of art as a product of life and intersections rather than as a product of politics, a new framework becomes visible beyond rigid dichotomies.

NOTES

1. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romo, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10.
2. As mentioned in his "Self Portrait," published in *Scatole d'amore in Conserva* (1927) and to which I refer later in this essay.
3. Probably inspired by his Egyptian origins, he chose *Le Papyrus* to be the name of the first magazine which he founded (and which appeared between 1894 and 1895).
4. F.T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 5. All English text is taken from this edition. The Italian text is taken from the original text originally published in 1927 and which later appears in the copyrighted edition in: F.T. Marinetti and Ivo Pannaggi, *Scatole d'amore in conserva*, (Firenze: Vallecchi, 2002).
5. Marinetti and Pannaggi, *Scatole d'amore in conserva*, 8.
6. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 5.
7. Ibid.
8. Luciano Maria, comp., *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista. Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto*, (1969).

9. F.T. Marinetti, *L'Africa generatrice e ispiratrice di poesia e arti. Estratto dagli Atti dell'VIII Convegno. Tema: L'Africa. Roma, 4–11 Ottobre 1938–XVI* (Roma: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1940). The convention was held in Rome between October 4 and 11, 1938. It had Africa as its theme and was conducted under the title “L'Africa generatrice e ispiratrice di poesia e arti.”
10. Marinetti and Pannaggi, *Scatole d'amore*, 5.
11. This and all other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
12. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 5.
13. F.T. Marinetti, *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel*, trans. Steve Cox and Carol Diethe (London: Middlesex UP, 1998), 6.
14. F.T. Marinetti, *Mafarka Le Futuriste* (Paris: C. Bourgeois, 1984), 231.
15. Salvatore Barzilai, Cesare Sarfatti, F.T. Marinetti, Luigi Capuana, and Innocenzo Cappa, *Il processo e l'assoluzione di “Mafarka il Futurista”* (Project Gutenberg, 2008), <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/25211>.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Marinetti, “L'arringa di Innocenzo Cappa,” in *Il processo*.
19. E.g. *ibid.*, 52, 57, 63, 64.
20. Spelled the Egyptian way with a double “l” in “Tell” and an “i” in Kibir instead of an “e,” as mentioned in writings of the British “Kebir.”
21. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/egypt/>.
22. He addresses Abdalla in chapter nine of *Mafarka le futuriste*, appearing under “Le Discours futuriste” [The Futurist Address] (163–74; Diethe and Cox 140–50).
23. Marinetti, *Le Futuriste*, 165.
24. Marinetti, *The Futurist*, 141–42.
25. Marinetti, *Le Futuriste*, 164; Marinetti, *The Futurist*, 141.
26. Marinetti and Pannaggi, *Scatole d'amore*, 21.
27. Marinetti, *scatole d'amore*, 21–22. The exact text of the telegram reads the following: “Sono dolente di non poter intervenire al banchetto offerto a F.T. Marinetti. Ma desidero che vi giunga la mia fervida adesione che non è espressione formale ma vivo segno di grandissima simpatia per l'infaticabile e geniale assertore di Italianità, per il poeta innovatore che mi ha dato la sensazione dell'oceano e della macchina, per il mio caro vecchio amico delle prime battaglie fasciste, per il soldato intrepido che ha offerto alla Patria una passione indomita consacrata dal sangue.’ Mussolini.”
28. Robert O. Paxton explains the “term” Futurists as a “loose association of artists and writers who espoused Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s ‘Futurist Manifestos,’” and who “dismissed the cultural legacy of the past collected in museums and libraries and praised the liberating and vitalizing qualities of speed and violence” (Paxton 6). According to Paxton, they were

- “young antiburgeois intellectuals and aesthetes” who were “the third component of Mussolini’s first Fascists” (6).
29. Fascism, born in Milan on Sunday, March 23, 1919 in the room of Milan Industrial and Commercial Alliance was supported that day by more than a hundred persons including Futurist intellectuals (Paxton 5).
 30. F.T. Marinetti, *Futurismo e fascismo* (F. Campitelli, 1924), 18.
 31. Marinetti had previously judged the project as old-fashioned and anti-Fascist.
 32. Benedetto Croce, “Fatti politici e interpretazioni storiche,” *La Critica: Rivista di Letteratura, Storia e Filosofia diretta da B. Croce* 22 (1994), 191.
 33. Sartini-Blum, Cinzia, “Incorporating the Exotic: From Futurist Excess to Postmodern Impasse” in *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture From Post-Unification to the Present*, ed. Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley: U of California P, 2003) 138–62. The project of exoticist literature is explained by Sartini Blum as “the doomed attempt to salvage the romantic figure of the individual by displacing it to a land beyond the reach of modernity.”
 34. F.T. Marinetti, article 2, *L’Africa generatrice e ispiratrice di poesia e arti. Estratto dagli atti dell’VIII convegno Tema: L’Africa. Roma, 4–11 ottobre 1938–XVI* (Roma: Reale Accademia d’Italia, 1940).
 35. Marinetti, *Scatole d’amour*, 8.
 36. Marinetti, F.T. *La conquête des étoiles* (Paris, Editions de la Plume, 1902).
 37. Anno II n. 29, 15 dicembre 1920.
 38. This section from the original text is omitted in the Thompson translation cited in this essay under *Critical Writings*; I have thus translated it myself.
 39. One of the recommendations in his *L’Africa generatrice e ispiratrice di poesia e arti*, pronounced during a conference in Rome between October 4 and 11, 1938, was: “offrire ai poeti ai pittori agli scultori ai musicisti e agli architetti novatori lavati d’ogni abitudine tradizionale la possibilità di vivere qualche tempo in Africa a condizione che non ne traggono delle copie” [to allow innovator poets, painters, sculptures, free of any traditional habits, the possibility to live for some time in Africa on the condition that they do not find partners there] (8).
 40. The correspondences are held at the Getty Research Institute Special Collection Library.
 41. F.T. Marinetti and Luciano De Maria, *Il fascino dell’Egitto* (Milano: Mondadori, 1981), 98.
 42. Marinetti and De Maria, *dell’Egitto*, 13.
 43. Marinetti, *Le Futuriste*, 15.
 44. Marinetti, *The Futurist*, 1.
 45. Marinetti, *Le Futuriste*, 15.

46. Marinetti, *The Futurist*, 1.
47. Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 40.
48. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 58. Paxton refers to German political scientist Otto Kirchheimer's coining of the term "catch-all parties." According to Paxton, "[f]ascist parties were the first to be simultaneously parties of integration and catch-all parties" (267).
49. Marinetti and De Maria, *d'ell Egitto*, 10.
50. Marinetti, *Le Futuriste*, 15.
51. Ibid.
52. Marinetti, *Scatole d'amour*, 13.
53. Ibid., 15.

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Marginal Modernists: Claude McKay, Panait Istrati, and the “Minor Mediterranean”

Charles Sabatos

In his essay “The New Mediterranean Culture,” first presented as a lecture in Algiers in 1937, Albert Camus placed a transnational Mediterranean identity as a challenge to right-wing French nationalism and the soullessness of northern European modernity. Describing the Mediterranean as “a living region, full of games and smiles,” he adds: “The men who yell out in the cabarets of Spain, those who wander around the port of Genoa, along the Marseille waterfront, the strong and curious race that lives on our coasts, come from the same family.”¹ Postcolonial theorists have criticized Camus for his Eurocentrism, and there have been objections in particular to his claim that in North Africa, “there is no difference between the way of life of a Spaniard or Italian on the Algiers waterfront and the Arabs who surround them.”² Nonetheless, Camus evokes left-wing ideology in declaring that “the essential role that cities such as Algiers and Barcelona can play is to serve, in their modest way, that aspect of Mediterranean culture that encourages man instead of crushing him.”³ While acknowledging Camus’ Western perspective, Neil Foxlee places the essay in a historical context of “Mediterranean humanism,” and proposes that “the postcolonialist approach disregards the fact that the political problem that [the

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essay] addresses is fascism, and that this was just as much a problem in Algeria as it was in Europe.”⁴ Rather than overlooking the role of Arabs and Muslims (whose rights he consistently supported) in the formation of this multicultural Mediterranean, Camus alludes to the region’s potential for working-class liberation across ethnic boundaries.

Many of the men along the waterfronts of the Mediterranean were not from the “family” of West European nations, nor from the Turkish and Arabic groups that had conquered much of the region centuries before European colonization. There were also many temporary immigrants from further abroad, drawn to the Mediterranean partly by economic opportunity and partly by its legendary role in world civilization. These included writers who lived among the workers of the port cities and described their struggles with the “natives” of the region, producing a “minor Mediterranean” literature on the fringes of interwar modernism. This term alludes to the Central European context of Franz Kafka’s German-Jewish Prague portrayed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The French theorists assert that Kafka’s attempt to escape the “irreducible feeling of distance” from his native Czech territory results in his creating a “minor literature” within the “major language” of German, which is characterized by “language” with “a high coefficient of deterritorialization,” a “cramped space” that forces everything “to connect immediately to politics,” and “a collective enunciation.”⁵ While the validity of this theory for Kafka’s work has been the subject of scholarly debate, the concept of “minor” can serve as a framework for the “deterritorialized” Mediterranean of two of Kafka’s contemporaries, the Jamaican Claude McKay and the Romanian Panait Istrati.⁶ Both writers came from the margins of Western society (McKay from the colonial Caribbean of the British Empire; Istrati from the Balkans), and both achieved popular success and critical acclaim in the early 1920s: McKay as part of what would come to be known as the Harlem Renaissance, and Istrati as an “Oriental storyteller” discovered by the French literary establishment.

McKay’s *Banjo* (1929), featuring a group of African-American, Caribbean, and African dockworkers in Marseille, and Istrati’s two-volume *Mediterranean: Sunrise/Sunset* (1934–1935), set among Romanians of diverse ethnic backgrounds in Alexandria and the Levant, are both “cramped” and cosmopolitan in their portrayal of migrant minorities struggling to survive at the bottom of society. Their autobiographical protagonists (whether African immigrants in Europe or East Europeans in Africa) encounter cruelty and suffering, but they form bonds of solidarity with

fellow expatriates that transcend ethnic divisions by resisting class exploitation. The two authors even had the same French publisher, Éditions Rieder, which printed most Istrati's work, and also released McKay's novels in French translation. For McKay and Istrati, as for Camus, the Mediterranean represents a region that "encourages man instead of crushing him," but they also show the empty promise of capitalism as a threat to the individual. Both writers were initially captivated by the revolutionary potential of the Soviet Union, but after visiting in person, they expressed their disillusionment with Communist ideology and were swiftly rejected by the intellectual elite. What makes McKay and Istrati "minor" modernists is that they are not only deterritorialized as expatriates in France and the Mediterranean but also alienated from their small "national" territories of Jamaica and Romania. As Sean Cotter has proposed, "The minor troubles the major, because it is inapt for images of purity and control. Its fracturing and multiplicity challenge even those hegemony/resistance models of cultural interaction designed to ascribe significance to less powerful groups, because the minor reveals the extent to which those models imagine the world through the major's eyes."⁷ McKay and Istrati's minor Mediterranean is not free of racial and national tensions, but its "fracturing and multiplicity" offers an escape from the capitalistic conformity of modern life and the suffocating control of socialism.

McKay's novel begins with the African-American musician Banjo strolling along and admiring the seafront of Marseille: "Banjo had no plan, no set purpose, no single object in coming to Marseilles. It was the port that seamen talked about — the marvelous, dangerous, attractive, big, wide-open port. And he wanted only to get there."⁸ Much of the novel is a collection of episodes with Banjo and his friends in the rough seafront neighborhood known as the "Ditch" (*La Fosse*). Despite the violence and poverty of Marseille, they feel a sense of belonging in its "colorful atmosphere":

The quarter of the old port exuded a nauseating odor of mass life congested, confused, moving round and round in a miserable suffocating circle. Yet everything there seemed to belong and fit naturally in place...all seemed to contribute so essentially and colorfully to that vague thing called atmosphere. No other setting could be more appropriate for the men on the beach.⁹

The primary objection that critics had to *Banjo* was its lack of narrative structure, as proudly noted in its subtitle: *A Story without a Plot*. Yet as Bridget Chalk has stated, "McKay's explicit negation of narrative form in *Banjo* reflects a modernist interest in destabilizing traditional literary

representation, contemporary critics viewed the subtitle as a mere alibi for sloppy authorship in a ‘negro’ novel.” The novel’s lack of a “set purpose” is a deliberate choice reflecting its Mediterranean location with a racially mixed and transient population:

With goods and bodies forever streaming in and out, being checked, labeled, admitted, and refused, the port setting produces a view of life determined not by progressive linearity and individuality but by contingency and seriality...McKay delineates the challenges to Marseille’s policing of national definition through the sheer multitude of otherness that seeps into the port.¹⁰

Thus, *Banjo*’s seemingly careless structure reflects not only the challenge that modernism poses to the traditional concept of literary narrative but also the challenge that Marseille presents to the traditional concept of French identity.

McKay’s work is linguistically deterritorialized in several ways: his first collection of poetry, *Songs of Jamaica* (1912), was written in local dialect, while his subsequent poetry was in Standard English, and his novels such as *Home to Harlem* (1928) reproduce the African-American vernacular speech of their characters. He also wrote two books during his 1922–1923 visit to the Soviet Union that were published only in Russian translation, of which the English originals were subsequently lost. Kate Baldwin has suggested that “the occlusion of these Russian texts from McKay’s oeuvre has corroborated with the demand that an ‘authentic’ history of African Americans be singularly contained in English.”¹¹ The 1931 French translation of *Banjo* had a strong influence on the Francophone *negritude* movement, including Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor.¹² As Brent Edwards explains in his analysis of the novel’s transnational impact, “*Banjo* would appear to mark a shift in McKay’s political focus away from the proletariat...and toward such cosmopolitan, fleeting communities of men. The book’s fascination with Marseille’s transient denizens points less to an interest in the expansion and unionizing of the port city’s industrial maritime base than to the margins of that development.”¹³ This focus on the “cosmopolitan” and “marginal” is reflected in the varying speech registers, from the exuberant Black English of the easygoing title character to the politically engaged interior monologue of the Haitian expatriate writer Ray, McKay’s alter ego in both *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*.

As Michael Walonen has emphasized, “there has been a definite lack of critical attention accorded McKay’s Mediterranean writings.” Nonetheless,

the Mediterranean is for McKay “a place of refuge and fellowship, one that, tainted as it was at times by the specter of imperialism, offers glimpses of the closest he was to come in his life and work to finding an ideal spatio-racial order.”¹⁴ This “fellowship” is primarily represented by Banjo and Ray’s friendship, which forms the core of the central section of the novel. Like Banjo, Ray arrives in Marseille by chance, after finding it more difficult to find employment in Harlem, but he encounters a “haven in its frowsy, thickly peopled heart” where he can concentrate on his writing:

He too was touched by the magic of the Mediterranean, sprayed by its foamy fascination. Of all the seas he had crossed there was none like it. He was ever reminiscent of his own Caribbean...but its dreamy, trade-wind, cooling charm could not be compared with this gorgeous bowl of blue water unrestingly agitated by the great commerce of all the continents. He loved the docks. If the aspect of the town itself was harsh and forbidding, the docks were of inexhaustible interest. There any day he might meet with picturesque proletarians from far waters whose names were warm with romance.¹⁵

The “colorful human interest” of the docks is epitomized for Ray by the “picturesque variety of Negroes,” which gives Marseille the vibrant bustle of modern life, lacking elsewhere in Europe but closer to the “clamor and clash of races” that he has experienced in the USA:

There was a barbarous international romance in the ways of Marseilles that was vividly significant of the great modern movement of life. Small, with a population apparently too great for it, Europe’s best back door, discharging and receiving its traffic to the Orient and Africa, favorite port of seamen on French leave, infested with the ratty beings of the Mediterranean countries...the town seemed to proclaim to the world that the grandest thing about modern life was that it was bawdy.¹⁶

The concentration of socially, racially, and economically marginalized “beings” in Marseille makes it a “romantic” yet modern nexus of the minor Mediterranean. Ray’s celebration of its “foamy fascination” resonates with Camus’ evocation of the region as a crossroads of cultures.

McKay was not the only writer to perceive the exceptionally modern nature of Marseille. On a visit there in 1928, Walter Benjamin experimented with hashish in a working-class bar, where the “coarseness and ugliness” of the faces and the “din of voices” in French dialect around him gave him the feeling of the “squandering of our existence that we know

in love.”¹⁷ Tom Cohen has claimed that for Benjamin, who “is obsessed, like Proust, with place-names,” the echoes of “mar” (sea) and “oreille” (ear) make the city “topographically and typographically marked... *Marseilles* appears not only to name a magically notorious and ancient Mediterranean port...but, by a chain which the proper name puts into play, a mock-maternal pre-origin of the senses themselves in an archaeology of marking (Mar/see,—sea,—say,—[o]r[s]eille)—a nodal crossing of historical place with an other to place.”¹⁸ This “otherness” is historicized differently by Yael Simpson Fletcher, in her comparison of Benjamin’s and McKay’s perceptions: although they “seemed to use similar images, such as an open-mouthed devouring beast, to represent the port their dissimilar attitudes toward Marseilles...suggested the differences...between white and black perceptions of modernity.” For Benjamin, the racial and ethnic diversity of the Mediterranean port was “something of a nightmare vision,” but for McKay, it was a “welcome sight” after years of travel in Europe.¹⁹ Benjamin experiences the open prostitution and pervasiveness of jazz on the waterfront as an assault on the senses, while for McKay, the city’s self-assured “bawdiness” gives it a modernist romance that attracts and repels simultaneously.

In his influential formulation of the “black Atlantic,” Paul Gilroy sees the experience of exile among African-American intellectuals as “a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even ‘race’ itself.”²⁰ Gilroy suggests that “diaspora blacks,” such as jazz musicians, compose “a distinct, often priestly caste of organic intellectuals whose experiences enable us to focus upon the crisis of modernity and modern values with special clarity.”²¹ Gary Holcomb describes Marseille as “one of the outermost zones of the [African] diaspora,” making *Banjo* a puzzling work for critics of African-American literature.²² Yet this cosmopolitan port is key to McKay’s radical international vision: “Arguing that McKay poses diaspora as *exclusively* a black nationalist alternative to leftist internationalism...overlooks the author’s own lyrical assembling of...workers from a range of diasporas, primed, as colonized subjects, for radical action.”²³ Thus, McKay’s west-to-east crossing of the “black Atlantic” (from New York to London in 1919) has its counterpoint in his north-to-south crossing of the minor Mediterranean, from Marseille (1926–1928) to the international port of Tangier (1929–1934). Alexandra Peat has seen McKay’s choice of Marseille as an “alternative” to the predominantly white expatriate circles in Paris: “The Mediterranean’s spiritual significance as an in-between space is vital...in contributing to the characters’

transformed understanding of their place in the world and, in particular, their desire to locate a sense of self in something other than a national community.”²⁴ Marseille’s proximity to the Mediterranean transformed McKay’s “sense of self,” by bringing him into contact with a transnational African diaspora community.

Another “organic intellectual” with the desire to transcend ethnic and national identity was Panait Istrati, whose hometown of Brăila on the Danube had a cosmopolitan mix of Greeks, Turks, Jews, and Russians.²⁵ For both Istrati and his fictional “double” Adrien, according to Elena-Brandusa Steiciuc, “Brăila represents on a reduced scale the Balkan-Mediterranean universe where he will wander during his adult life.”²⁶ Istrati left Romania in 1906, traveling to Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and Greece, then left for southern France in 1913. He spent World War I in Switzerland, where he taught himself French by reading classic literary works, beginning with François Fénelon’s *Telemachus*.²⁷ In 1919, Istrati wrote a long plea for support to Nobel laureate Romain Rolland, in which he outlines most of the themes that would dominate his later work, including his upbringing in Brăila and his travels to the Mediterranean: “I feel fatigued by 20 years of crazy vagabondage, by work, misery, nights passed without shelter, sad nights, the nightmare of my memories, when in the streets of Alexandria, Naples, Beirut or Damascus, I ran in every direction, soaked by the rain and starving, avoiding the night guards who signaled to each other and hunted me as if I were a wild beast.”²⁸ When his letter was returned, Istrati attempted suicide in Nice, but when he was found and rescued, it was sent again. This time Rolland received it, responded with admiration, and helped Istrati to publish his first novel, *Kyra Kyralina* (1923). In his enthusiastic foreword to the work, Rolland praises his Romanian friend as “a storyteller of the Orient,” emphasizing his “amazing adventures” in the Mediterranean: “He wandered penniless through Egypt, Syria—Jaffa, Beyrout, Damascus, and Lebanon—Greece and Italy, often hiding himself on boats and being forcibly landed at the first port of call.”²⁹

Kyra Kyralina was the first in a series written in French, with the frequent use of Romanian phrases (sometimes left unexplained to the French reader), loosely connected by the semi-autobiographical narrator Adrian Zograffi. Joseph Kessel describes the freshness of Istrati’s language: since words have been weakened through overuse, “the care of modern writers is applied to giving them a new vigor...by an effect of surprise. But Istrati...doesn’t perceive this fatigue of words. He discovers them as he

has discovered the world.”³⁰ As the only Romance language in Eastern Europe, Romanian has unique linguistic ties to French, yet reflects an entirely different historical and cultural experience. Monique Jutrin-Klener notes that Istrati’s language is a process of translation: “It cites, translates, or transposes into French expressions from the popular Romanian language.... [At first] Istrait could not help ‘thinking’ in Romanian.... Finally, a sort of linguistic osmosis took place and his thought became bilingual.”³¹ The use of French helped Istrati to gain a wider readership in translation across Europe, making him the best-known Romanian writer at a time when the Romanian novel was only emerging as a genre. However, during this period, as Alexandra Vrânceanu has pointed out, “Romanian critics tried to promote those writers that could be read/interpreted as ‘Modernist’ [and] ‘European’...at the same time, they tried to dissociate Romanian culture from ‘Balkanism,’ ‘Exoticism,’ ‘Orientalism,’ which they perceived as values associated to the periphery, marginality, and a non-European cultural universe.”³² Istrati’s exotic portrayal of his small homeland in a major language resembles Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of minor literature, particularly since it could have been perceived by his modernist compatriots as a betrayal of the nation.

After traveling to the Soviet Union with his then-close friend Nikos Kazantzakis, Istrati wrote the book *Russia Unveiled* (*Vers l’autre flamme*, 1929), which denounced Communism and alienated him from his leftist supporters, including Rolland. The works he wrote after this second “betrayal” were never published in English translation, prefiguring his disappearance from critical histories of modernism. His final works, *Mediterranean: Sunrise* (*Méditerranée: Lever du soleil*, 1934) and *Mediterranean: Sunset* (*Méditerranée: Coucher du soleil*, 1935), were later collected with two other volumes under the title *The Life of Adrien Zograffi* (*Vie d’Adrien Zograffi*). A contemporary review concluded that “Istrati’s style has hardened somewhat since his return from the shadows of death, as one fails to feel the poetry of his earlier work.”³³ However, Charles E. Koëlla has seen his travels among “the poorly fed and poorly housed little people, with no hope or ideal, who were exploited by a small privileged minority,” as the source of his literary style: “the scenes that he paints for us of the past or present civilizations of Romania or the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean are so striking that his work could be summarized with the word ‘epic’ (*‘épopée’*).”³⁴

Mediterranean represents both an end and a beginning: although it was Istrati’s last work, it opens with the first of Adrien’s travels abroad:

Lord, what could be more awful than getting stuck in a wretched hole, bathed by the Danube though it may be, where the horizon is always the same, where nothing magnificent ever happens to you, where an entire life crumbles away almost as it would in prison? While the world is full of variety and our soul is eager for splendor! Mediterranean... I think I will faint when, in the morning, my eyes, of a sudden, take in its blinding endlessness.³⁵

At the beginning of his voyage, he meets the Romanian Jew Moritz Feldman, who goes by the Turkish name “Moussa” (Moses). As Istrati later recalled, “Among the men whom I’ve known and loved in my life, Moussa was one of the rare comrades who knew how to hold his head high in misfortune...and remain a faithful friend in adversity.”³⁶ Both are bound for Egypt: Adrien in hopes of finding his friend Mikhail, Moussa in search of his wayward daughter Sarah.

Their ship first docks in Istanbul, where Adrien notices widespread poverty and is reminded of Ottoman repression of the Balkans: “People are dressed in rags; they eat what they can. But what made me think of the Stamboul of the sultans who killed so many of our boyars are the thousands of bright red fezzes and the many mosques with their proud minarets.”³⁷ Yet as he perceives on the following stop in Greece, poverty there is less cruel, since in the Mediterranean climate, even the underprivileged can live more easily: “The sea nourishes them. The generous sky warms them.”³⁸ The narrator’s first observations are of the south as a place of relative refuge, and the voyage itself (which he makes without a passport) is a time of happiness:

Now we are steaming over the open Mediterranean. We have just passed Crete. The sea is as smooth as a small lake. You can feel underfoot the slightest of the vibrations transmitted by the machines to the body of the ship.... I would like it for not a word to break the silence of these unique hours of my life. I am full of kindness, of gratitude, of hope, and I would be delighted to remain lying on the deck like this, in the darkness, without uttering a word, to gaze at the moon, and to lend an ear to the rippling of the Mediterranean.³⁹

While both Adrien and Moussa are reunited with the people they seek, the reunions are unfulfilling, and the Mediterranean is the only consistent source of beauty for Adrien among his poverty and disillusionment.

The “romance” of the Mediterranean also brings the vigorously heterosexual Banjo and the more sexually ambiguous Ray together in an

affectionate if Platonic relationship. Despite McKay's celebration of Marseille's "bawdiness," *Banjo* has a somewhat ambiguous portrayal of its approach to sexuality (reflecting McKay's own complex sexual identity). Comparing the French port to the lusty but largely positive image of Harlem in his previous novel, A.B. Christa Schwarz concludes that for McKay, Marseille is "a crime-ridden place where sex has degenerated into a commodity... [it] would appear devoid of humanity were it not for the Pan-African community of black sailors and beach boys." In contrast to the "natural" Black sexuality in both of McKay's novels, white (including gay) sexuality is "unnatural and uncomfortable," and white women are portrayed mostly in negative terms.⁴⁰ They go for a walk together on the Corniche, the long seafront boulevard east of the "Ditch," which *Banjo* calls a "mahvelous sight [sic]":

Two ships were going down the Mediterranean out to the East, and another by the side of l'Estaque out to the Atlantic. A big Peninsular and Orient liner with three yellow-and-black funnels was coming in. The fishing-boats were little colored dots sailing into the long veil of the marge.... In the basin of Joliette the ships' funnels were vivid little splashes of many colors bunched together, and, close to them in perspective, an aggregate of gray factory chimneys spouted from their black mouths great columns of red-brown smoke into the indigo skies.

"It's an eyeful all right," said *Banjo*. Ray said nothing. He was so happily moved. A delicious symphony was playing on the tendrils that linked his inner being to the world without, and he was afraid to break the spell.⁴¹

This "delicious symphony" is not only a response to the beauty of the Mediterranean but Ray's feeling, after years in exile, of belonging to a place and of connection to another person, even if this "spell" is fleeting.

It is notable that the pastoral backdrop of the harbor is counterbalanced by the steamships and factories, symbols of modern technological progress. The ocean liners arriving from abroad bring with them the most blatant forms of American capitalism and racism, as Ray later observes:

Over above them all, poised high up on the funnel of the great liner, was the brazen white sign of the dollar. It was some dockers pausing, pointing and spitting at it, that drew Ray's attention as he stood at one side with his companions. And immediately, too, a reaction of disgust was registered in him. He could understand the men's gesture and apprehend why that mighty \$ stood out like a red challenge in the face of the obstreperous French bull.⁴²

While the “Dollar Line” might seem like a crudely satirical invention, it was an actual company, even mentioned in a letter written from France by D.H. Lawrence two months before his death in 1930: “We could sail Dollar line from Marseille, and land either in New York or San Francisco: I wouldn’t mind a long sea trip.”⁴³ The same American ships that for Lawrence represented an ultimately futile hope for escape are as a symbol of oppression in McKay’s minor *Mediterranean*. An American woman passenger beckons to the “black boys” waiting at the pier to bring her some English newspapers, as if summoning her domestic servants in Richmond. With a crafty performance of subservience, Banjo fights off competition from a white dockworker and earns a large tip from the woman that he shares with his friends, but their celebration degenerates into a drunken argument in which Ray is accidentally injured. He condemns modern civilization for the dehumanizing effect it has on black men: “But of one thing he was resolved: civilization would not take the love of color, joy, beauty, vitality, and nobility out of *his* life and make him like one of the poor mass of its pale creatures.”⁴⁴ McKay’s manifesto-like rejection of the inequalities of modern life, expressed for pages at a time in the later part of the novel, resembles Istrati’s often-strident pleas for a more humane society.

At the end of the novel, with economic and social conditions becoming more difficult for the African-American and Caribbean expatriates, the group starts to drift apart. Banjo and Ray walk together in the harbor, watching the endless flow of trade that again represents the “grand bawdiness” of the modern world:

The eternal harvest of the world on the docks. African hard wood, African rubber, African ivory, African skins. Asia’s gifts of crisp fragrant leaves and the fabled old spices with grain and oil and iron. All floated through the oceans into this warm Western harbor where, waiting to be floated back again, were the Occident’s gifts.... Composite essence of the soil of all lands.

Commerce! Of all words the most magical. The timbre, color, form, the strength and grandeur of it. Triumphant over all human and natural obstacles, sublime yet forever going hand in hand with the bitch, Bawdy. In all relationships, between nations, between individuals, between little peoples and big peoples, progressive and primitive, the two lovers spread and flourish together as if one were the inevitable complement of the other.⁴⁵

Banjo signs up for the crew of a ship sailing for the West Indies, but only to take his advance before jumping ship and moving on, asking Ray to come with him. Realizing that he has no place in the modern world, Ray

decides that he too has to take advantage of any opportunities he can find: “He had been dreaming of what joy it would be to go vagabonding with Banjo. Stopping here and there, staying as long as the feeling held in the ports where black men assembled for the great transport lines, loafing after their labors long enough to laugh and love and jazz and fight.”⁴⁶ His experience with the other “diaspora blacks” in Marseille has alienated him from the African-American elite of Harlem and their wish to assimilate into the white mainstream. Instead, with the new sense of “racial roots” that he has gained through his contact with the Mediterranean migrants, he accepts Banjo’s offer to “beat it a long ways from here” (foreshadowing the title of McKay’s autobiography, *A Long Way from Home*).

For Istrati, as for McKay, the Mediterranean port represents something quintessentially modern, yet sublime and timeless. Claudio Magris (the native of another multicultural port, Trieste) has described Istrati as “the poet of the promiscuity and ambivalence of the East, of that disorder from which we seem to expect redemption and violence at the same time.”⁴⁷ In *Mediterranean: Sunrise*, Adrien’s first sight of the African coast is the “palm trees, minarets, flat-roofed houses” of Alexandria, which at first seems less “disorderly” than Adrien had expected: “European and Oriental at the same time. Beautiful buildings, modern cafes and stores. A high-class crowd. I’d pictured Egypt as a dirty and half-savage country. It isn’t. My country is much more backward.”⁴⁸ He and Moussa are forced to support Sarah and her shiftless lover Titel, but one evening they go for a walk on the district of Ramleh east of the old city, whose sublimity is reminiscent of Ray’s stroll with Banjo on the Corniche of Marseille:

Moussa and I were literally hypnotized, especially when, as we left the city, a fantastic promenade opened up along the seafront. Palm groves the length of the road and an uninterrupted succession of sumptuous villas, such as you see only in the illustrated tales of the Thousand and One Nights. “It’s Ramleh,” Titel dared mutter. We were grateful to him for it. We were transfixed by it. The nightmare of ugly reality vanished from our souls.⁴⁹

They sit at a café overlooking the sea, and the beauty of the setting sun makes Adrien melancholy with the idea that “man deliberately ruins his life and makes himself unworthy of such beauty.” They meet a wealthy “benefactor” who offers to help Moussa establish a business in Cairo, but after they move there, they eventually learn that their patron’s true purpose is to send Sarah to a brothel in Argentina. In despair at the Orient’s

“promiscuity and ambivalence,” Adrien tells Moussa: “I think I’ll go to Marseille to learn French and to be near the Mediterranean.”⁵⁰

Soon afterwards, Moussa is offered work in Lebanon by a Romanian businessman named Solomon Klein, and Adrien urges him to accept, mostly because it will allow them to remain along the Mediterranean coast: “That way, we’ll get to know Syria, Lebanon, the cedars, another Mediterranean country, and then we’ll go our separate ways, better than we are now.”⁵¹ Moussa is reluctant because of Klein’s reputation (he grew rich in Brazil selling his sister and wife to wealthy clients), but the two have no choice. On their way, Adrien and Moussa stop in Port Said, a crossing point between continents (like Istanbul and Tangier, two other important hubs of Istrati’s and McKay’s minor Mediterranean), whose location at the mouth of the Suez Canal also reflects the mark left by European imperialism in the Middle East. After Adrien and Moussa miss their departure, they are helped by a Greek stoker who raises money for them in a show of working-class solidarity, and Adrien reflects:

Port Said will always be for me the great junction of shipping lanes where my heart sensed and recorded the throbbing of the arteries of the universal life of the planet. Here, I had a clear view, a precise sense, of the variety of human fates, which tear the husband from his wife, the child from his mother, the lover from his beloved, casts them violently into space, where they are brought together by affinities more harmonious than those they attempt to create for themselves through family ties.⁵²

After their arrival in Lebanon, where Klein personally helps them through customs and takes them to his luxurious home, Adrien reflects again that “suffering” is easier in the Levant: “I will tell myself every morning, in front of the rising sun: ‘Keep in mind that you are in beautiful Lebanon, looking through your window at the Mediterranean, instead of toiling in a dark factory and getting bored to death. So suffer sometimes for your radiant freedom!’”⁵³

While Klein is morally despicable, he treats his penniless compatriots fairly and is forthright about his business. This short idyll is broken when his payment is less than Moussa expects and the two companions leave Klein, but can only find odd jobs from the local Lebanese:

That earned us just enough to eat frugally once a day and to get ourselves a little tobacco or to pay for the one-cent water pipes we smoked, ferociously

happy and desperate, gazing sometimes at the Mediterranean sunrises and others at the sunsets, the splendor of which settled in the depths of our beings like a token of celestial friendship.⁵⁴

Things become even more difficult with the arrival of Sarah and Titel, the latter of whom is arrested for theft by the Turkish authorities. Klein recruits Sarah into his service, while Moussa and Adrien return to Romania. Five years later, Adrien returns to Alexandria and sees Sarah running a bar, but having lost her beauty, she pretends not to recognize him.

As Monique Jutrin-Klener has observed, Istrati's Orient is "a vast mirage. It is the world of lost illusions. Even beauty is bitter here.... However, in his evocations of the Orient, a nostalgia seeps out of this mirage. Nostalgia for an inaccessible beauty whose image is tarnished in his memory."⁵⁵ The second volume of *Mediterranean*, published posthumously, is a collection of episodes recounting Adrien's further adventures (including a fruitless attempt to find anyone in Damascus who knows the author of *Hamlet*). In the last chapter, "The Call of the Occident," Adrien sets off for France, gesturing to the fateful decision that began Istrati's literary career. Thus, the last page of his work shows a nostalgia for his youthful travels, at a time when he faced restrictions of movement. As McKay mentions in a 1932 letter, he was aware that Istrati had been "barred from Egypt," among other left-wing artists repressed by British imperialist policy.⁵⁶

By this time, McKay had left Marseille and settled across the Mediterranean in Tangier, famed for its bohemian expatriates. According to Michel Fabre, by "celebrating the physical love of life that folks along the Mediterranean displayed with as much relish and flourish as black folks [do]," McKay "cast Marseille in the role of an international city...[and] relegated Paris to a symbol of the artificial, dissolute, hectic existence in big Western cities, a place of vanity and spiritual desolation."⁵⁷ As Wayne Cooper has shown, McKay "had always been curious about life in Africa, and his encounters in Marseilles with black and brown people from all parts of Africa had stirred his interest even more."⁵⁸ In Morocco, which reminded him in many ways of his native Jamaica, McKay reviewed the proofs of *Banjo* and quarreled with his editor's attempts to standardize the language: "I prefer to be crude and ungrammatical and achieve a clean and clear expression thereby, rather than spill the sap of my thoughts into dead husks of words."⁵⁹ After *Banjo*, he completed the novel *Romance in Marseilles*, which, according to Fabre, "sheds light on McKay's almost compulsive use of the Mediterranean harbor as a locale, which he describes

in lyrical prose,” but it was never published.⁶⁰ While his modernist prose defied editorial control, his ambiguous national identity disturbed the colonial authorities in Morocco, who placed him under increasing surveillance. The following year, McKay returned to the USA and never returned to Europe, but his experience in the Mediterranean remains a crucial, if sometimes overlooked, period of his literary career.⁶¹

In the view of Predrag Matvejević, one of the best-known Balkan authors to write on Mediterranean cultural history, “Mediterraneanity is acquired, not inherited; it is a decision, not a privilege. Some even say there are fewer and fewer true Mediterreaneans on the Mediterranean. Being Mediterranean entails more than history or geography, tradition or memory, birthright or belief. The Mediterranean is destiny.”⁶² This “decision” is often tied, as in Istrati’s case, to the embrace of another language in exile. According to Catherine Rossi, both the French language and the Mediterranean setting helped Istrati to transcend:

the provincial realm of “Romanianness,” reflecting a much larger Eastern world that knew no borders.... [The Mediterranean] represented the attempt to reconcile...the East and the West.... Istrati saw the Mediterranean as a metaphor for his personal journey: the East corresponded to his period of latency, the waiting room before the approaching furnace. But the West corresponded with his period of revelation and acted as a doorway to his own volcanic eruption (a burst of work written in French).⁶³

Istrati’s multilingualism is not limited to French and Romanian, but includes Mediterranean languages such as Greek and Turkish. In *My Departures* (*Mes departs*, 1928), Istrati transcribes a song he hears from an Armenian family in Naples: “*Tam-bour, tam-bour Ya-vasch ya-vasch Si-ga si-ga/yé câ-ché hai ky-ra vé-ndi ka-ra-ghés-lé-ri.*” In Ina Pfitzner’s analysis, “The incomprehensibility of this song grows from the hotchpotch of voices and languages...It mirrors the multilingual tenor of the entire text and the cultural and linguistic mishmash typical of all exiles.”⁶⁴ Through his encounter in another Mediterranean port with one of the largest twentieth-century diaspora groups, Istrati shows the ability of music to convey the pain of exile beyond the limits of language.

Due to their linguistic and geographical deterritorialization from their native lands, Claude McKay and Panait Istrati faced parallel struggles in their literary careers and a period of obscurity after their deaths. In the 1960s, McKay was rediscovered due to renewed interest in the Harlem

Renaissance, but the full complexity of his work and biography, as a bisexual Communist Jamaican exile, has come to light only recently.⁶⁵ Istrati has never been entirely forgotten in France, since the majority of scholarship on his work is in French, but for contemporary Romanian critics, he has an ambiguous status between a local and “foreign” author.⁶⁶ At the beginning of *Zorba the Greek* (1952), whose Cretan title character has become a symbol of Greek culture, Nikos Kazantzakis compares Zorba’s face to that of Istrati: “furrowed, weather beaten, like worm-eaten wood”; the English translation adds the footnote: “Rumanian writer who suffered from tuberculosis. He wrote in French.”⁶⁷ This brief reference (in which even his nationality and language are presumably unfamiliar) reveals Istrati’s fall into oblivion less than two decades after his death; the translator of a recent edition of *Kyra Kyralina* (the first new version in English in almost 80 years) suggests that his criticism of the West “did not endear him to conservative Americans any more than did his broad-mindedness and honesty in sexual matters.”⁶⁸ Through their refusal to be limited by national and cultural borders, both McKay and Istrati offer insightful perspectives on the crisis of modernity, through their focus on the marginalized diaspora of the minor Mediterranean.

NOTES

1. Albert Camus, “The New Mediterranean Culture,” in *The New Mediterranean Culture: A Text and its Contexts*, ed. Neil Foxlee, *Modern French Identities* 38 (2010): 39–40.
2. *Ibid.*, 44.
3. *Ibid.*, 46.
4. Neil Foxlee, “Mediterranean Humanism or Colonialism with a Human Face? Contextualizing Albert Camus’ ‘The New Mediterranean Culture,’” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 21, no. 1 (2006): 91.
5. Deleuze and Guattari, 17–18.
6. See my previous article “Multilingualism and the Czechoslovak Context of ‘Minor Literature,’” *1616: Anuario de la Sociedad Española de Literatura General y Comparada* 2 (2012): 281–94 for further information on the debate over minor literature, including the views of such scholars as Stanley Corngold and Scott Spector.
7. Sean Cotter, *Literary Translation and the Idea of a Minor Romania* (Rochester: U of Rochester P, 2014), 6.
8. Claude McKay, *Banjo: A Story without a Plot* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1929), 12. In both *Banjo* and his unpublished manuscript

Romance in Marseilles, McKay uses the variant English spelling “Marseilles,” although the spelling without the “s” is now more common.

9. Ibid., p. 16.
10. Bridget T. Chalk, “‘Sensible of Being *Étrangers*’: Plots and Identity Papers in *Banjo*,” *Twentieth Century Literature*, 55, no. 3 (2009): 364.
11. Kate A. Baldwin, *Between the Color Line and the Red Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), 38.
12. McKay’s novels *Home to Harlem* and *Banana Bottom* were released in French by Rieder in 1932 and 1934, respectively; the latter in the same year as the company published the first volume of Istrati’s *Mediterranean*.
13. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003), 199.
14. Michael K. Walonen, “Land of Racial Confluence and Spatial Accessibility: Claude McKay’s Sense of Mediterranean Place,” in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Robert T. Talley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 76, 86.
15. McKay, *Banjo*, 66–67.
16. Ibid., p. 69.
17. Walter Benjamin, *On Hashish* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006), 120–26.
18. Tom Cohen, *Ideology and Inscription: “Cultural Studies” After Benjamin, De Man, and Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 226–27.
19. Yael Simpson Fletcher, “Unsettling Settlers: Colonial Migrants and Racialised Sexuality in Interwar Marseilles,” in *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* ed. Antoinette Burton (London: Routledge, 1999), 80.
20. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 19.
21. Ibid., 76.
22. Gary Holcomb, *Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha: Queer Black Marxism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2007), 143.
23. Ibid., 165. As Holcomb mentions in his preface (p. xiv), his book on McKay was partly inspired by lectures he delivered as a Fulbright scholar in Romania.
24. Alexandra Peat, *Travel and Modernist Literature: Sacred and Ethical Journeys* (London: Routledge, 2011), 113–16.
25. Istrati’s own father (whom he never met) was a Greek smuggler.
26. Elena-Brandusa Steiciuc, “Cultures et identités balkano-méditerranéennes dans l’œuvre de Panait Istrati,” *Loxias*, no. 40, (2013), URL: <http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=7385>.

27. Fenelon's didactic prose work, based on the Homeric epics, is the story of a young man's voyage across the Mediterranean; it was an important influence on the rise of the novel in Central and Eastern Europe.
28. Panait Istrati and Romain Rolland, *Correspondance intégrale* (Saint-Imier: Canavas, 1990), 27–28.
29. Panait Istrati, *Kyra Kyralina*, trans. James Whitall (New York: Knopf, 1926), v–vi.
30. Joseph Kessel, "Oncle Anghel," in *Nouvelle revue française* (March 1, 1925), in Jutrin-Klener, *Panait Istrati*, 261.
31. Monique Jutrin-Klener, *Panait Istrati, un chardon déraciné: écrivain français, conteur roumain* (Paris: François Maspero, 1970), 228–29. While Istrati translated a few of his earliest novels (including *Kyra Kyralina*) into Romanian himself, the Romanian versions of his later works were done by other translators.
32. Alexandra Vrânceanu, "National versus World Literature Seen as a Confrontation between Modernism and Balkanism," in *The Canonical Debate Today: Crossing Disciplinary and Cultural Boundaries*, ed. Liviu Papadima, David Damrosch, and Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 268.
33. Pieter H. Kollelijn, "Mediterranean," *Books Abroad* 9, no. 3 (1935): 287.
34. Charles E. Koëlla, "Panait Istrati, le Vagabond Humanitaire," *The French Review* 20, no. 4 (1947): 295–97.
35. Panait Istrati, *Vie d'Adrien Zograffi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 351–52. The following quotes are taken from the first English translation of *Mediterranean* by John Penuel (2010), released in an e-book format without pagination. The corresponding page numbers are provided from the French print edition.
36. Panait Istrati, "Comment je suis devenu écrivain," quoted in David Seidmann, *L'existence juive dans l'oeuvre de Panait Istrati* (Paris: Nizet, 1984), 16. The first section of the novel, "Moussa," is a translation/rewriting of a story Istrati had originally published in Romanian a decade earlier: see Jutrin-Klener, *Panait Istrati*, 147.
37. Istrati, *Vie d'Adrien Zograffi*, 358.
38. *Ibid.*, 360.
39. *Ibid.*, 364.
40. A.B. Christa Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2003), 98, 105.
41. McKay, *Banjo*, 70.
42. *Ibid.*, 153.
43. D.H. Lawrence, *The Selected Letters of D.H. Lawrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 628.
44. McKay, *Banjo*, 164.
45. *Ibid.*, 307.

46. Ibid., 319.
47. Claudio Magris, *Danube* (London: Collins Harvill, 1989), 388.
48. Istrati, *Vie d'Adrien Zograffi*, 370.
49. Ibid., 378.
50. Ibid., 406.
51. Ibid., 407.
52. Ibid., 411.
53. Ibid., 425.
54. Ibid., 441–42.
55. Jutrin-Klener, *Panait Istrati*, 132–33.
56. Anthony Mangeon, ed., “Lettres de Claude McKay à Nancy Cunard,” *Gradhiva*, no. 19 (2014): 192–201. This is the only indication I have seen that McKay knew Istrati, whether personally or by reputation is not clear. (Although as noted above, they shared the same publisher, Rieder.) My thanks to Dr. Mangeon for clarifying this reference.
57. Michel Fabre, *Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840–1980* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993), 111.
58. Wayne Cooper, *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987), 248.
59. Ibid., 253.
60. Fabre, *Harlem to Paris*, 106. The quote Fabre includes from the manuscript of *Romance in Marseilles* echoes McKay’s description of the city in *Banjo*: “Port of the fascinating, forbidding and tumultuous quayside against which the thick scum of life foams and bubbles and breaks in a syrup of passion and desire.”
61. While McKay’s second Mediterranean novel, *Romance in Marseilles*, was projected for publication in recent years, it was never released and remains inaccessible to all but archival researchers; the most detailed analysis can be found in Holcomb, *Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha*, 722–24.
62. Predrag Matvejević, *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999), 93.
63. Catherine Rossi, “French as the Language of *Libre Échange* in the Works of Panait Istrati,” in *Paris-Bucharest, Bucharest-Paris: Francophone Writers from Romania*, ed. Anne Quinney (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 166.
64. Ina Pfitzner, “*Musique exacte et paroles incompréhensibles*: Music as Language in Panait Istrati’s *Mes départs*,” *Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies revue d’études français* 6, no. 2 (2002), 388–89. As Pfitzner explains, these words are not actually lyrics but multilingual comments on the performance (“yavaş” and “siga” mean “slowly” in Turkish and Greek, respectively).

65. The manuscript of McKay's unpublished and unknown 1941 novel *Amiable With Big Teeth* was discovered in an archive at Columbia University in 2009 and awaits publication; see Felicia R. Lee, "New Novel of Harlem Renaissance is Found," *New York Times*, September 14, 2012.
66. For example, there are a dozen mentions of Istrati in Nicolae Manolescu's *Istoria critica a literaturii romane: 5 secole de literatura* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2008), but he does not receive an individual entry (my acknowledgments to Adriana Raducanu for this reference). Nonetheless, a new Romanian film version of Istrati's *Kyra Kyralina* was released in 2014.
67. Nikos Kazantzakis, *Zorba the Greek*, trans. Carl Wildman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953), 11.
68. Panait Istrati, *Kyra Kyralina*, trans. Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno (Greenfield: Talisman House, 2010), 138.

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Mediterranean Crossroads: The Spanish University Cruise, 1933

Juan Herrero-Senés

As contemporary scholarship has shown (see Harris for an overview), the Mediterranean is, more than a physical reality, an idea, vast and complex, where opposing views coexist, a cultural construct that maps an imagined space. In fact, the use of the word ‘Mediterranean’ does not crystallize in European languages until the eighteenth century and its standardized use goes hand in hand with the recognition of the area by the European powers as a strategic location for cultural and economic reasons. That is why Michael Herzfeld, in the wake of Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism, has proposed that terms like “Mediterranism” or “Mediterranean-ness” actually imply a dominant, reductive, and Eurocentric point of view that exoticizes and homogenizes our knowledge of the region. In any case, the majority of descriptions of this imagined space agree on a number of features, some of which I believe display strong resemblances to Modernism. Among others are the reference to classical mythology, especially as a repository of stories and archetypes; sensuality and the importance of the body and sensitivity against the frigidity of pure reasoning; and exchange, negotiation, and hybridity as sources of creativity and wisdom. We could add the value of objects, the material and the concrete, which points to both a

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rejection of idealism and a reassurance of the ideas of limit (not as limitation, but as shape and continent) and balance (in contrast with excess). A last example would be the tensions between classicism and Orientalism, and between democracy and imperialism, tensions that affected Greece and Rome in the ancient past and a good number of countries in the first decades of the twentieth century. In short, when we compare the interpretations of the Mediterranean and of Modernism, we find a similarity in the stress given to certain factors—those just mentioned—mainly in the fields of ethics and aesthetics.

As a cultural imaginary, the Mediterranean provides an extensive repertoire of symbols and topoi: the well, the ship with sails and oars, temples, ruins, white cities, islands, caves, gardens, the stars, the light and of course the sea itself, among others. This invented geography is rooted on the legacy of ancient cultures, and at the same time is governed by natural cycles. It fits the measure of man, offering a landscape without colossality that invites tranquility, community, and hedonism, and reclaims simplicity, freedom, sensuality, and a natural life. That is why it could appear to modernists as a reminder of the most repulsive aspects of the modern world and simultaneously be conceptualized as a retreat from or a cure for industrialized civilization. The Mediterranean fostered synthetic capacity, eclecticism, recognizing the hedonic disorder of existence and the primacy of imaginative improvisation over the rational order. This modernist utopian horizon coexists with the presence of the Mediterranean Sea as a military and commercial geopolitical space that reflects the interests of groups and nations to shape an international order, and that has been for centuries the place of confluence of the North–South frictions.

During the modernist period, the Mediterranean became a rich source of ideas and images, inspiration, and discussion. But I would argue that the involvement with a highly charged cultural construct like the Mediterranean also implied something more for certain intellectuals. Writers and artists were pushed to reevaluate the meaning, validity, and value of the Mediterranean and its equation with Western civilization, and to rethink their own origins as European. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate this through the analysis of one specific case: a non-conventional cruise.

In the summer of 1933, around 200 students and faculty from several Spanish universities (mainly in Madrid and Barcelona) participated in a 45-day cruise around the Mediterranean.¹ The trip had been conceived by Fernando de los Ríos (1879–1949), the Minister of Education and Arts of the young Spanish Republic. Its director was Manuel García

Morente (1886–1942), Dean of the College of Humanities at Madrid's Universidad Central and a close collaborator of philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955). Since its proclamation in 1931, the Republic had started an ambitious agenda of modernization in education that included the construction and extension of thousands of schools, and the reorganization of colleges and curricula. The illusion of renewal in high education was at its highest in 1933 as reforms were being implemented. It was decided that nothing would make more of a difference in student careers than a visit to “los hogares históricos de la civilización” [“the historical cradles of civilization”].² The trip was also a crystallization of the pedagogical theories of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*,³ where some of those in charge at the Ministry of Education had studied. These theories emphasized the importance of studying abroad, learning outside of the classroom, excursions, and a strong sense of community among students as central to education.⁴ Ortega's teachings were another strong inspiration for the trip, especially in relation to three ideas: First, he gave enormous importance to the study of history; learning from the past was the best guide in order to understand the present. Second, he warned that the lack of a set of solid unifying beliefs was the decisive factor for the current decline of the West. And finally, he claimed for the perpetual validity of classic (i.e., Greco-Roman) values, especially regarding a balance between rationality and spontaneity, the value of clarity and tolerance, and the role of the body and the senses as an antidote to excessive idealism.

The government threw itself into the project, providing generous funding and grants, meticulously transmitting political instructions to embassies and consulates, scheduling receptions and meetings with diplomatic and educational authorities in the countries visited, and producing a strong press campaign to promote the virtues of the cruise. Among other actions, Ortega himself, then at the peak of his popularity, delivered two lectures in June 1933 on the theme, “What's happening in the world? Some comments on our time,” as benefits intended to help financially with travel expenses.

As stated earlier, what interests us about this Mediterranean experience is its status as a crossroads. “Crossroads” here has at least three meanings. In the first and most basic sense, the word names an intersection. It also means a difficult situation where you do not know which road to take and you must choose. And finally, in a third sense, a crossroads is a dangerous moment, a critical juncture. Seen from this perspective, the development of the cruise at its various stages was a real assessment of the ability of passengers to accept and understand the other. Passengers had to confront their prejudices,

stereotypes, and ideas about neighboring cultures, and were compelled to reflect on their own standing as Europeans. The trip produced, in its progress, a constant implicit redefinition of “Mediterranean-ness,” fueled by the large number of factors involved, not only those more obviously spiritual or historical, but also those economic, colonial, religious, touristic or strategic. Passengers faced manifold and conflicting inputs, and were forced to take a stand: either accept pluralism and confluence or subsume those inputs under a higher unifying categorization or principle (e.g., a sharp distinction between what was European and what was not).

The crossroads that I explore here is drawn from four basic aspects of the travelers’ experiences and the reactions that resulted from them: the experience of the colonial, as a large number of the destinations of the cruise had a long history of occupation; the experience of the political, as visitors encountered a broad array of political regimes, and the trip itself was sponsored by the Spanish government; the experience of the transcendent, as the cruise included visits to the assumed birthplaces of Western spirituality, Jerusalem and Athens; and lastly, the experience of otherness, that is, the encounter with several cultures different from the Spanish one. These were four intimately related aspects of the same experience of being abroad; it is only for the sake of analysis and clarity that I treat them individually. Numerous landscapes, languages, habits, social, and religious practices defied prejudices, preconceptions, and chauvinism. I do not intend to say that the students were fully aware of the significance of the trip or how it questioned (or not) their beliefs, nor that all dealt with it in the same way. My main goal is to propose an overall interpretation of the cruise as a source of diverse understandings of the Mediterranean. In order to do this, I will mostly rely on primary sources, mainly the testimonies in diary form that the young explorers left behind.⁵

At the outset, the cruise was not lacking in heterogeneity: the selection process, based on academic excellence, gathered students from various Spanish regions (chiefly Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and Granada) who majored in disciplines such as the humanities, philosophy, architecture, art, history, and archeology. The students derived from diverse social backgrounds, from families of high position—children of politicians, diplomats, or tenured faculty—to students from humbler social origins. It brought together people who had barely turned 18, with other students who were over 25, and faculty with long and established careers. In addition, it gathered youths attracted to a broad spectrum of ideological trends, from Fascism to Communism, and with differing views on

topics such as national identity and the development of Spanish history. In time, a good number of the passengers would play a significant role in Spain and in exile as academics, politicians, and intellectuals. Among them were Isabel García Lorca (1909–2002), sister of the poet Federico García Lorca (1898–1936); Soledad Ortega Spottorno (1914–2007), daughter of Ortega y Gasset; the historian Jaume Vicens Vives (1910–1960); the jurist Luis Díez del Corral (1911–1998); the Catalan poets Salvador Espriu (1913–1985) and Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel (1913–1938); the philosophers Julián Marías, Manuel Granell, and Antonio Rodríguez Huéscar (1912–1990); the philologist Antonio Tovar (1911–1985); the Arabist Esmeralda Gijón Zapata (1913–1968); and the archeologist Francesc Esteve i Gálvez (1907–2001).

The trip's route comprised, in this order, visits to Tunis, Malta, Egypt, Palestine, Crete, Rhodes, Turkey, Greece, Italy, and Majorca. During the journey, some changes had to be made, the most prominent being the cancelation of visits to Beirut and Damascus due to logistical problems. In a certain way, it can be argued that the itinerary, as it was conceived, put forward a sort of 'spiritual' journey from the most distant to the Western mind to the closest: the first stop was Africa, understood as the continent spiritually most apart to Europe; then to the Middle East, the origin of Christianity; from there to Greece, considered the ultimate source of rationality and thought; and finally to Italy, where both the Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions blended. Other broad cultural principles, of which I will highlight three, shaped the expedition: first, an implicit Eurocentrism that conceived the idea of Mediterraneanness as the core of what essentially was understood as "civilization." The second principle was the assumption of classicism (in its Ancient Greek and Roman ideals of order, clarity, simplicity, balance, and a synthesis of idealism and realism) as the origin and culmination of thought, against which other cultural forms originating in Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey are in some way inferior, 'mysterious,' and alien. These 'other' cultural forms stand as the penetration and presence of the Eastern, and therefore a Spanish traveler cannot 'recognize' himself or herself in them. The third principle has to do with the notion of 'culture': culture was understood as what informs and shapes both the individual and the civilizations' knowledge and character, and it did not relate primarily to the present but rather to the past. That is why the main goals of the cruise were defined as "cultural," and not sociological or ethnographic. The descriptions of the trip, whether contemporary or written decades later, are devoted for the most part to

relating the impressions provoked by the remains and traces of ancient cultures. They mix and recall historical, mythological, and literary narratives; they take pleasure in evoking glorious bygone eras; and they tend to idealize the past and thus were nostalgic, an attitude Ortega y Gasset had already criticized by naming it a “geography of the imagination.”⁶ Manuel Granell acknowledged the unintended bias: “A pesar de la limpia ignorancia—que cualquier *baedeker* puede hollar—aflorescen los recuerdos de antiguas lecturas, dando un material propenso a la previa deformación imaginativa.” [“Despite our clear ignorance—one any Baedeker can fix—memories of old readings emerge, providing a material prone to prior imaginative deformations.”]⁷ When cruisers dare to offer interpretations of the current situation of visited locations, they almost always refer to ancient history; they hardly include observations about economic, social, and political conditions. The past therefore works as an idealizing filter that prevents the cruisers from fully realizing and understanding the current state of affairs of the place they are visiting: their principal aim is to un/cover and re/cover the old; the sites work mainly as repositories of ancient times. While it is undeniable that history helped to explain the destinations’ current circumstances, it also constituted a prejudice, as it produced a mental image that reduced what was encountered as a support for what no longer existed. As Julián Marías noted: “Vamos haciendo un melancólico viaje hacia atrás, y vamos encontrando cadáveres de las cosas pasadas, de todo lo que ha sido y no es ya.” [“We are taking a melancholy journey back, and keep finding the corpses of things past, of all that has been and is no longer.”]⁸ For example, the Westernization—modernization according to Western models—that the passengers saw at many of the voyage’s ports of call was seen as an affront, as something forced or imposed from outside; some cruisers were sad not to find what they were looking for or what they assumed would still be there; others were frustrated by the erasure of the imprint of a glorious past, and they demanded that the sites remained just as they were centuries ago; some passengers even complained about the lack of picturesqueness.⁹ All these reactions embodied a reluctance to accept that, simply put, history moves in a constant dialectic between modernization and tradition, between permanence and destruction. Historical change is an entanglement involving culture and barbarism, and the very definitions of these concepts are relative to the agents included. The cruisers reinterpreted historical and current events according to their own prejudices and education, thus judging them as either failures or achievements of civilization.

THE COLONIAL

The passengers aboard the *Ciudad de Cádiz* went through a substantive unexpected presence of the colonial, on several levels. By colonial, I refer primarily to the traces of the current or past presence of a foreign ruling power. In political terms, voyagers felt the full force of the colonial system in many of the countries. Tunisia and Syria were under French administration; Britain controlled Malta, Egypt, and Palestine; and the island of Rhodes was ruled by Italy.¹⁰ It is not without difficulties that these powers dealt with severe social, political, and religious conflicts. In the case of Palestine, for instance, the British authorities and Christian groups formed an alliance in the face of the struggle between Jewish and Arab communities. During the visit to Tunisia (June 17), the local students informed the Spaniards of the restrictions imposed by the French authorities on the study of the Spanish language. Traveling to Spain was prohibited and nationalist newspapers were banned. Students had been on strike for almost two months, making clear something they shared with the lower classes: a hatred for everything French as a colonial imposition. While in Sousse (Tunisia) on June 18, cruise passengers visited a small museum set up to glorify the French colonial presence, with rooms dedicated to its military triumphs in the region. The island of Malta, which many remembered as being under the rule of the Spanish Knights of the Order of St. John until 1798, was in 1933 first and foremost the British naval base protecting the shipping lanes between Gibraltar, Alexandria, and the Suez Canal, offering a display of English military power. The young Carlos del Real stated: “aviones de guerra en el cielo y gris acero amenazador de buques militares en el mar (recuerdan) que no es posible más que el saludo cortés a la Unión Jack y el desembarco en la isla como turistas inofensivos.” [“Warplanes in the sky and the menacing gray steel of military vessels at sea (remind us) that our only option is a polite salute to the Union Jack and disembarking on the island as harmless tourists.”]¹¹

Aside from politics, during the trip it became apparent that there was a “new colonization,” one produced by tourism and by the progressive Westernization of those places seeking to adapt to the current conditions of capitalism.¹² Take the city of Rhodes, its luxurious hotels crowded with American millionaires, or Cairo, whose stunning colonial lodgings, the product of British rule, dazzled the Spanish students from modest social backgrounds. Through the exploitation of its natural and historical resources, the Mediterranean developed as a major tourist region.

One need only imagine the days that the travelers spent in highly populated tourist centers such as the Pyramid of Khufu, the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, or the Acropolis. Several students complained in their diaries about tourists who frivolously took places marked by suffering as mere objects of contemplative leisure, or had a habit of despising the modern—but the cruise voyagers suffered sometimes from the same defect. For instance, García Morente refused to visit the modern part of Alexandria, and the student Carlos del Real admitted in his diary that in the excursions, he needed to refuse the impact of the present in order to be inspired.

Significant examples of the consequences of colonialism were noted in the condition of archeological sites. The remains of a millennial history were subjected to extensive discovery, unearthing, classification, conversion into museum material, and on many occasions spoliation. Visitors repeatedly expressed their disillusionment with the quality of the collections in local museums, remembering that the most impressive pieces were in major European venues. The gap between the bookish, academic study, and knowledge in situ, first hand, became apparent once more. The so-called Mediterranean civilizations were in no small part simplified cultural and ideological constructions produced by British, French, and German scholarship. Those students aware of that understood, while in Greece, the significance of the work carried out by the Spanish-Hellenic League, co-chaired by writers Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936) and Kostis Palamas (1859–1943). Officially dedicated to reinforcing relations between the Spanish-speaking world and Greece, the League's main concern was precisely the recovery of the concept of "Hellenism," lost for decades and thus far focused on Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and Francophone cultural and archeological missions in Athens.

The cities visited on the cruise had the imprint of successive conquerors inscribed on their streets and buildings, and told stories of centuries of battles, sieges, servitude, destruction, and reconstruction. For instance, the city of Rhodes, praised by many passengers for being preserved intact since the time of the Crusades. Rhodes was primarily a medieval settlement taken by the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in 1308 and held until its conquest by the Turks in 1522; in 1933, it was under the dominion of Italian Fascists and the image of Mussolini reigned everywhere.

As the colonial powers included Spain, several locations were easily taken by some cruisers as excuses for patriotic wistfulness, remembering with pride "nuestra acción civilizadora" ["our civilizing action"].¹³ With

calm sincerity, the young Carlos del Real acknowledged upon his visit to Malta that “vuelan sobre nosotros ideas absurdas de fantásticas reconquistas” [“absurd ideas of fantastic reconquests come across our minds”].¹⁴ The trip often included visits to Spanish relics (such as the Albergó of Spain or the Temple of the Masters of St. John in Malta, Berleybey Palace in Istanbul, where the Empress Eugenia de Montijo stayed, or the palaces of Alfonso V of Aragon and Carlos III in Naples). Imperial Spain, and especially the Mediterranean expansion of Carlos V and his conflicts with the Ottoman Empire, is often invoked in the diaries. For instance, the Arabist González Palencia compared the cruise landing in Tunisia with the galleys of Carlos V who “saved” Europe from the Turkish hordes.¹⁵ The power of memory, joined with nostalgia for a glorious history of victories and occupations, was channeled into what some voyagers experienced as the oddest moment of the entire cruise. It happened on July 19. That night, around 11 PM, the *Ciudad de Cádiz* sailed the Gulf of Lepanto, and the director García Morente convened the students on deck to see the site of the famous Battle of Lepanto, where the major Catholic maritime states in the Mediterranean (known as the Holy League) decisively defeated the main fleet of the Ottoman Empire on 7 October 1571.¹⁶ The boat slowed to a crawl, and the siren rang three times in honor of the fallen. Morente yelled “España, España, España!” and there were cheers and singing of the *Himno de Riego*, the official anthem of the Republic. The Catalanian travelers, who mostly remained in the saloon during the ceremony, described the initiative as stale comedy; in contrast, for others it was completely up-to-date: “La victoria sobre los turcos cobraba sentido después de haber recorrido aquellas tierras, en las que eran más notorias las huellas de su barbarie que las de su cultura.” [“The victory over the Turks made sense after traveling those lands, in which the traces of their barbarism were more noticeable than those of their culture.”]¹⁷

The Orientalist and exoticized imagery, that for decades had been translating the encounter with Asian and Middle East peoples into a pleasant experience, affected expectations and muddled understanding, preventing the travelers from taking responsibility for the actual evolution of the places visited. A significant anecdote will make this apparent: Most passengers were provided with pith helmets, but they were seen by some students as “too colonial,” so their use declined rapidly among the most politically aware. Unsurprisingly, many were disappointed with their first glimpse of Africa, upon which they had projected an image created by colonial novels (such as *Beau Geste*) and movies. In Tunisia, where they

expected to see camels, Arab dresses, desert, and beautiful *houris*, they found a fully European city in which only the heterogeneity of its people reminded them of where they were:

Pero ¿África es esto? Un grupo de casas iguales que las de cualquier pueblo de España. Unas palmeras, como se encuentran en los paseos de la más vulgar ciudad de Europa. Un muelle sin carácter y unos barcos. ¿Esto es África? África no puede ser esto. África ha de ser calor y sed. Camellos bajo un cielo encendido, sobre la tierra cansada y seca. Alcazabas y morabos. Viento cálido del desierto. Dolor de razas vencidas y orgullo de oficiales de ejércitos dominadores. La tricolor de la República imperial de Francia y las banderas, hoy vencidas, del Profeta. Pero esto, no.¹⁸

But, this is Africa? A group of houses identical to those in any village in Spain. Palm trees, like those found on the streets of the most vulgar city in Europe. A characterless dock and some boats. This is Africa? This can't be Africa. Africa must be heat and thirst. Camels under a glowing sky, on the tired and dry earth. Fortresses and hermitages. Warm desert wind. The pain of conquered races and the pride of dominating army officers. The tricolor of the imperial French Republic and the flags, now defeated, of the Prophet. But not this.

Alexandria was a further blow, since it was a far cry from the city, designed by Ptolemy and described by Caesar and Strabo, which would become the center of Hellenism. García Morente, the cruise director, made some unfortunate comments to the local newspaper *Mokattam*, frustrated by the custom of many Egyptians wearing Western apparel instead of keeping their traditional clothes and preserving Alexandria's Oriental color.¹⁹ For some visitors, however, Alexandria still retained its traits of babelism and cosmopolitanism, as citizens from all over the word and signs "in all the languages" (*Sueño* 147) could be seen.

The visit to Turkey was a touchstone in this process of how expectations shaped experiences. The perception of its capital, Istanbul, was largely negative, and the travelers were left with the letdown of not encountering reminiscences of the era of the sultans. The city once called Constantinople appeared in the imagination of the young Spaniards as a gateway to the East yet still in Europe—the center of the Ottoman Empire, described a thousand times in the stories of romantic travelers of the nineteenth century. In 1933, Istanbul was no longer a flourishing metropolis, but rather a poor city, mired in economic crisis following defeat in World War I, and most of its streets were dark and lacked liveliness. Following the new

rules by President Mustafa Kemal, the population was mostly dressed in European fashion and the signs in Arabic had been removed after the adoption of the Latin alphabet for the Turkish language.²⁰ In general terms, our travelers considered the Turks to be barbarians. Many expressed their suspicion toward the East, the free Muslim world and its future expansion, and joined this reticence with the above-mentioned remembrance of the Spanish imperial past, all of which created a dangerous mix of ideas and aspirations.

The recurrence of an unresolved chapter in Spanish history added poignancy to this colonial experience and tested nationalist convictions. I refer to what is probably the most complex—and repeated—cultural encounter that the travelers had with their own past: the strong presence of Sephardim. The Sephardim were, as it is known, the descendants of Jewish settlers who lived in the Iberian Peninsula until their expulsion from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497). Their existence represented not only a living vestige of that expulsion but also conjured up the specter of the anti-Semitism that was hovering over Europe. For instance, in the Jewish Quarter of the city of Rhodes, a Sephardic community of more than five thousand people had its movements limited by the Italian government. Overall, the Sephardim showed great interest in the young Spanish Republic and the improvement of Spain's relationship with Jews. Yet the response of the cruise passengers was not as enthusiastic. They were taken by surprise by the large number of descendants of those expelled by the Catholic Monarchs. These descendants showed a strong sense of connection to the longed-for Sepharad, something the voyagers were for the most part unaware of, as Sephardism was not discussed in Spain. Isabel García Lorca wrote to her family that “es espantoso pensar la enorme cantidad de judíos que había en España, porque se llaman Mallorca, Zamora, en fin, apellidos muchos de ellos idénticos a los nuestros.”²¹ [“It is terrible to think about the enormous amount of Jews that used to live in Spain, because their names are Mallorca, Zamora, that is, last names mostly identical to ours.”] To take another example, in Turkey, the Sephardim opened the doors of their houses to voyagers in the city of Izmir, and again in Istanbul they received the cruisers cordially. In fact, the Turks referred to the travelers as “Spanish from Spain” to differentiate them from the large number of Sephardim who lived in the city.

The situation of the Sephardic communities in Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean was a matter of particular concern to the Minister Fernando de los Ríos. For years he had expressed opinions in favor of relaunching

and reinforcing the relationship between Spain and the Sephardim, and in February 1933, he promoted a decree to facilitate the return to Spain for the descendants of the expelled Jews, referring to Article 23 of the Constitution of the Republic, which concerned the acquisition of Spanish nationality for foreigners with Spanish origins. The conservative press in Spain reacted with anger to this idea. In the summer of 1933, as the trip developed and the cruisers had several encounters with the Jewish community and especially the Sephardim, Spanish right-wing newspapers resumed their criticism, labeling the trip philo-Semitic.

Certainly some of the decisions concerning the trip can only be understood as part of the Minister's express desire to boost the connections with the Sephardim. Of the three academic sessions offered during the entire cruise, one was in Jerusalem at the largest center of Jewish studies, and there were no lectures on Muslim institutions in Cairo or Istanbul. The last two days of the stopover in Thessaloniki (July 11 and 12) were devoted mainly to relations with the Jewish community. The Sephardic Jews of Thessaloniki were estimated at more than 40,000. Excited by the visit, they welcomed travelers lavishly, as they wanted to show how they had kept the memory and use of the Spanish language and traditions. The Sephardim still could sing old folk songs from the fifteenth century, surnames such as Medina, Calderón, or Pérez were common, and geographical origins remained alive in the divisions of the synagogues: Cuenca, Toledo, Seville, and Catalonia. During the visit, the Jewish community also showed its concerns about the nationalist policies of President Venizelos, who in June 1933 had begun a press campaign against the Jews, accusing them of being strangers in Greece and of having opposed Greek national efforts. The sailing of the *Ciudad de Cádiz* on July 12 mobilized the Sephardim of the entire region who came to bid farewell to the cruise: according to Morente, over three thousand people crowded the pier waving flags and handkerchiefs, throwing flowers, and shouting goodbye to the travelers, cheering Spain and the Republic.

THE POLITICAL

As we have already seen, politics were overtly present throughout the entire trip. The cruise itself, among other things, was a propaganda strategy by the Republican government to promote its vision of the new Spanish youth—a youth that the Republic's educational models were meant to forge. The cruise could therefore be compared to a cultural

embassy of the thriving Spanish Republic, and a letter of introduction to the Mediterranean world from the new society that emerged after the fall of the Monarchy. It was also a clear attempt to delve into social, cultural, and political relations with various states, a good many of which were ruled by right-wing governments with policies that contrasted those of the Spanish Republic.

Among the countries visited, only Turkey could be compared to the Spanish Republic, with its wide-ranging social, cultural, and economic reforms. These reforms included the separation of Islamic doctrine from secular law and the granting of equal rights to women in marriage. The State Art Museum opened its doors, modern teaching methods were promoted, the university system was reorganized and, as I pointed out earlier, a new alphabet was implemented. The Turkish press gave wide coverage to the cruisers' stay, and the government used it for propaganda purposes. The visit served as a good excuse to show off the modernization of Turkish society, in particular, the way in which the country implemented critical changes after the demise of imperial rule. In a speech given at the University of Istanbul, Morente endorsed the new regime, praised the efforts made by the government to bring the country into the ranks of major nations, and concluded by affirming Turkey's right to join the League of Nations.

Several incidents along the journey remind us that the political situation in the Mediterranean was anything but stable. On June 28, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Manuel García Morente gave a lecture on the history of Spain from prehistoric times to the end of the *Reconquista*, attended by a large number of professors and intellectuals.²² At the end, A. Elmaleh, leader of Israel's Sephardic community, asked Morente about his opinion on the expulsion of the Jews, surprised to have found no allusion to it in Morente's presentation. Morente, aware of the gravity of the question, responded with a measured declaration that the Republic made no distinction between religion and race. He pointed out that Spain was open to all Jews and showed his sympathy for Jewish efforts to convert Palestine into a nation.

Earlier that morning, another incident occurred. One of the voyagers, the poet Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel, asked his guide, a Jewish student, about his origins. He replied that despite being born in Italy, he was not Italian, as he considered that his true "homeland" was the place of his mother tongue (Hebrew). At this point, the Franciscan priest who accompanied the visitors cut him off: "Absolutely not, you Jews have no homeland," prompting disapproving looks from the travelers. The visit

to the Wailing Wall brought new and diverse reactions. Esteve Gálvez provides a summary: “La majoria pensàvem que la nació jueva té dret a rescatar la pàtria perduda, disposar d’un Estat i una bandera que la protegesca, però encara hi hagué qui ho estimava just, com un càstig de Déu; i també es manifestà algú del nou estil ‘racista’, que tingué paraules de menyspreu per als jueus.” [“Most of us thought the Jewish nation had the right to regain its lost homeland, to have a State and a flag that protected them, but there were some who still considered their stateless situation just, as a punishment from God; and one from the new ‘racist’ style had his words of contempt for the Jews.”]²³

At the farewell dinner in Jerusalem, the head of the Franciscans, who had given shelter to the travelers, surprised everyone with a strongly political speech that lauded the policies of Mussolini and the Fascist Party. He stated that youth must find the future in their ideals of service to religion and country. A few days later, on July 8, while visiting Turkey, a group of students snuck off the boat at night and had the opportunity to meet with Leon Trotsky, who was confined to one of the Prince’s Islands in the Sea of Marmara by order of the Turkish government. Only two years earlier, in 1931, Trotsky had published several well-informed articles on the fall of the Monarchy, the new political regime, and the role of Communists in Spain. Given the content of these articles, the cruisers were frustrated when Trotsky revealed his ignorance about current Spanish politics. At the same time, the Russian leader demonstrated his unshakeable faith in the spread of Communism and the role that university youth should play in its establishment.

The visit to Italy (the last ten days of July) was to be the definitive test for the feelings of the travelers regarding Fascism. It mainly provoked rejection. When they arrived in Syracuse on July 21, the voyagers were surprised to find an atmosphere similar to that of the southern cities of Spain, but were shocked by the large number of uniformed members of the Fascist Party and the air of militarization. As Isabel García Lorca wrote to her family:

Es de miedo ver la fuerza de Mussolini. [...] Comprendo que la obra que ha hecho es inmensa, pero los italianos son odiosos con este servilismo, tan teatrales como su saludo y sus odiosas camisas negras. Ayer hubo un desfile de un ejército de niños de 5 años vestidos con el uniforme con su escopetita al brazo y la gente aún tenía el valor de aplaudir.

It’s scary to see Mussolini’s strength. [...] I understand that the work he has done is immense, but the Italians are hateful with this servility, as theatrical

as their salute and their hideous black shirts. Yesterday there was a parade of an army of 5-year-old children dressed in uniform carrying their little rifles, and people still dared to applaud.²⁴

Along the entire visit to Italy, the visitors found cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, strict control (e.g., in Palermo, some girls were fined for wearing skirts that were too short), and the continuous display of formal events and theatrical paraphernalia: persistent Roman salutes ostentatiously performed, and plenty of patriotic songs. The young Spaniards, following the advice of García Morente to be prudent, responded with silence to the Fascist anthems at official events, until the farewell at the port of Naples (July 28). There the tension increased and eventually the Spaniards replied to the singing of *Giovinetta* with the *Himno de Riego* and hails to the Republic and the Spanish Federation of University Students, a leftist student organization known for its strong opposition to the Miguel Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Such demonstrations were met with the cries of the Fascist University Group. After the incident, Julián Marías noted in his diary that Fascism involved more than a political doctrine or polity. It was a total ideology, in the sense that it was ever-present and subsequently it affected the development of all human activities.²⁵

We must not forget that in the 1930s ideological confrontation was already splitting Spanish public sphere into opposing groups. In the lecture cited above, Ortega y Gasset noted that the current times were marked precisely by the co-occurrence of Fascism and Communism. He argued that both ideologies had striking similarities because they shared an origin—the decay of liberalism—and a common style: denial of democratic principles and calls for revolutionary action. Indeed, the written testimonies of the voyagers show opposing ideological positions and how these different ideologies permeate their perceptions of the trip.

THE TRANSCENDENT

According to most testimonies, the two moments of greatest spiritual depth, which also produced intense emotions in the travelers, were the visits to the Holy Land and Greece. These two places meant a face-to-face meeting with the roots of Western thought and with the origins of the religions that marked the historical development of Spain. Compared to them, the other stops on the cruise were dwarfed and on many occasions

completely overshadowed. In his diary, for example, the philosopher Julián Marías jumped directly from Palestine to Greece.

In the Holy Land, a representative of the Spanish Franciscan keepers of the Holy Places greeted cruisers. While the vision of dirty old shacks in the city of Jaffa once again ate away at the dream of the Orient for many, the fields with small-domed whitewashed houses, the herds, cypresses, and olive trees did powerfully recall the iconography of the New Testament, and produced in many a deeply emotional response to being in the cradle of Christianity. The young Arabist Esmeralda Gijón Zapata wrote in her diary entry of the visit to Jerusalem and its surroundings: “en cada objeto del camino está la cara de Dios.” [“In every object along the road there is the face of God.”]²⁶ In several testimonies, reflections on the spiritual imprint of the last days of the life of Jesus replaced curiosity, as well as artistic and archeological interests. The most fervent believers saw their faith fully reaffirmed, some were moved by Catholic devotion and others recalled the Spanish presence in those places, emotionally reaffirming the link between Catholicism and Spain sanctioned by traditional historiography.²⁷

But for the vast majority, Athens (visited between July 13 and 17) was the highlight of the expedition. Many based their emotions on a double association of origin and lineage with Greece, taken as the wellspring of culture and the basis (and almost everything else) of the Western mind. This produced a sense of fellowship and belonging, expressed, for example, by Julián Marías when he says in his diary that he feels “una honda comunidad vital” [“a deep vital connection”] with the values that the Acropolis embodies.²⁸

By 1911, Ortega y Gasset had already criticized that “caprichosa genealogía” [“whimsical genealogy”]. Many Spaniards—including himself, in the past—wanted to smooth over the fact that Spain was located outside the cultural mainstream by postulating “una mística afinidad con ilustres razas superiores” [“a mystical affinity with illustrious superior races”], particularly with Greek culture, with which the Spanish had no relation.²⁹ Ortega made these statements around the same time he was elaborating his theory of cultural “types,” based on a personal interpretation of the history of art. He postulated the existence of “the Mediterranean man” as a distinct category opposed to four other types: the “primitive man,” the “classic man,” the “oriental man,” and the “gothic man.” The specificity of the Mediterranean man, whose purest representative was the Spaniard, was the search and affirmation of the small, trivial, and inconsequential. This explained other traits: materialism, individualism and the love of sensible

things. It implied an attitude of antipathy toward any transcendence. The opposite of the Mediterranean man was the Gothic man, attracted to abstraction, and both types merged in the classic man, who found the realm of ideas actualized in the earthly world.³⁰

It is precisely this ideal of the “classic man” that seems to be in the cruisers’ minds when they recount the Greek stopover. They tend to emphasize and claim Westernness over the previously experienced East, which they interpret as radically different and in fact as negated or combated by classical values. Thus, the Parthenon stands up against the Oriental baroque in its essential perfection, and Athens, compared to the confusing, and in some cases threatening Eastern cities, is seen as orderly, clean, and inviting.³¹ These values, which stereotypically defined classicism, were also reaffirmed as central to Mediterraneanness: clarity, harmony, simplicity, beauty, and balance. But, as we have seen, the equation of Mediterraneanness with classicism—or at least locating classicism as the epicenter of Mediterraneanness—was an idealization. The cruisers had experienced the Mediterranean as a heterogeneous, messy, and complex entity, a territory of negotiation, exchange, and impurity where divergent and even contradictory worldviews clashed, coexisted, and intertwined. The Mediterranean had no core, and the homogeneity that labeling something as “Mediterranean” implied, simply did not exist.

This vindication of classical values as the core of Western civilization³² worked for many as a “certificado de seguridad intelectual” [“intellectual reassurance certificate”].³³ In order to realize its timely fashion, we should take into account some characteristics of the spiritual context of the early 1930s, in addition to the sense of cultural inferiority to which Ortega alluded: first, the prevalence of a relativistic interpretation of knowledge sponsored by a strong current of nihilism called into question the objectivity of values, and therefore invalidated the Eurocentric claim to possess the “true” civilizing principles.³⁴ Another characteristic was the popularity of discourses following the success of Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* that defended the decay of the Western spiritual model: exhausted after several centuries, and that currently survived in an atmosphere of Byzantine materialism (note the metaphor). In this context, many intellectuals felt the “sugestión tentadora” [“tantalizing appeal”]³⁵ exerted by remote cultures such as African, pre-Columbian or Hindu cultures, which were subject to important discoveries in the interwar years. All this provoked a fascination with primitivism and alternative forms of thought that questioned the centrality and superiority of the Western worldview.

In a more political fashion, we have the challenge posited by rising powers such as Russia or China. The first offered both an alternative socio-economic model to the capitalist system and the embodiment of the “Slavic” mentality; the second presented both a dangerous spiritual seduction and a threat to European predominance. On this trip, the most prominent “enemy” was Islam—an enemy that was palpable in many of the visited areas. Several testimonies offer a fairly negative image of Islam, which is seen primarily as a “violenta y fogosa” [“violent and fiery”]³⁶ faith that feeds an increasing rage toward Europe. Muslims are portrayed as gathering strength, vindictively preparing for a new global fight—a crusade—where they will seek not only to recover territories that they once owned—such as the Holy Land—but also to conquer the West.³⁷

FACING DIFFERENCE

The *Ciudad de Cádiz* arrived at the harbor of Valencia on the first day of August. The end of the trip gave rise to two opposing interpretations. One is reflected in the report that the director García Morente forwarded to the Minister of Culture shortly afterward. He identified three fundamental gains of the journey: first, being able to visit the “cuna de la civilización” [“cradle of civilization”]; second, the “estudio de los monumentos y restos del pasado que narran en sus ruinas la epopeya grandiosa de la cultura humana” [“the study of the monuments and remains of the past that narrate the great epic of human culture”]; and third, “el contacto con vidas y civilizaciones ajenas a la nuestra, el espectáculo de otros pueblos y otras costumbres, harto distinto de los nuestros” [“contact with lifestyles and civilizations other than our own, the spectacle of other peoples and customs, utterly different from ours”]. While keeping a Eurocentric perspective, Morente alludes directly to the enriching experience of contact with otherness. The awareness of cultural difference expanded knowledge of reality, helped break down preconceptions or purely bookish concepts, and in doing so, the voyage relativized—or at least questioned—one’s own position. Manuel Granell said, facing the Egyptian pyramids: “No habríamos de encontrar en todo el crucero algo que extrañe y disienta tanto de nuestro fundamental modo de ser.” [“We would encounter nothing on the entire trip that simultaneously surprised us and disagreed more with our fundamental way of being.”]³⁸ And Isabel García Lorca, after a visit to Cairo, commented to her family that it was “distinto de todo lo

que yo había visto y ya está muy lejos de lo nuestro” [“different from anything I had seen before, something very far from what we are”].³⁹

The explanation that the conservative writer José María Pemán had offered even before the journey began was very different. In an article published in April 1933 and significantly entitled “The Mediterranean,” he summarized what the students would learn from the trip: “Por encima de todos los relativismos y todos los evolucionismos y toda la democracia, la Cultura es una jerarquía de valores fijos e inmutables. Se está con el Mediterráneo o contra el Mediterráneo. No hay otra opción.” [“Beyond evolutionism, relativism and democracy, Culture is a hierarchy of fixed and immutable values. One stands with the Mediterranean or against it. There is no third option.”] Christ, the Vatican, and the Acropolis, in opposition to the pyramids, the mosques, and the synagogues, symbolized those Mediterranean values.

Pemán’s reactionary comments voiced the angry reaction against the fragile conditions of the present, and the appeal of distant cultures and curiosity about the Other. He appropriated and reduced the Mediterranean, and essentialized it as the epitome of cultural unity. The perspective advocated by Pemán was also present on the cruise. For some, an extensive tour of the heterogeneous only served precisely to strengthen their longing for identity and unity, or to ‘correct’ non-European drives, going against Gregorio Marañón’s prediction at the beginning of the journey of a fusion of “national consciousness” and “longing for universality” in the minds of the young travelers. For some, the experience produced a reaffirmation of indigenous ideals of the past and a hostile attitude toward the foreign. Thus, a sea peppered with traces of the Spanish presence inspired imperial and missionary zeal. The Mediterranean should somehow be reconquered and brought back to order. The way to curb anti-Western progress was that Europe—redefined as stemming from a unique “great tradition” (Díaz-Plaja) of Christian faith, light skin and Greco-Roman thought—should take back the scepter of command in a world threatened by other cultures. This clash of views would be translated only three years later to the much cruder language of guns, starting in Spain and spreading all over the Mediterranean and the world.

NOTES

1. The trip extended from June 15, when the passengers boarded the ship *Ciudad de Cádiz* in Barcelona, to August 1, when they docked in Valencia.
2. Manuel García Morente, “Crucero universitario,” 41.

3. Founded in 1876, the Institute was a private institution free of church and state that offered primary and secondary education following non-traditional pedagogical principles. It emphasized free inquiry, observation, and spontaneous criticism and discouraged the use of textbooks and examinations.
4. According to the government's plans, the cruise was to be the first of several to include students from engineering, pharmacy, and medicine who would travel to England and Germany. While the aforementioned cruises never happened, others did: the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, under the supervision of Jaume Vicens Vives and Guillem Díaz Plaja, passengers on the 1933 cruise organized a transatlantic cruise the following year that included the Canary Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, the Netherlands Antilles, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the USA. There were two subsequent cruises in the academic years 1934–1935 (to the Philippines) and 1935–1936 (to Japan). The University of Valladolid organized a trip to Greece in 1934 to donate a plate honoring the birthplace of the painter El Greco and his strong ties with Spain.
5. Cruisers were required to keep a journal of the trip and the College of Humanities awarded a prize for the best piece. The winner was Carlos Alonso del Real, and Julián Marías and Manuel Granell received honorable mentions. Their work was published in the volume *Juventud en el mundo antiguo* [*Youth in the Ancient World*] (1934), accompanied by photographs taken by fellow cruisers. Del Real (1914–1993) would in time become a professor of ancient history at the University of Santiago de Compostela. Julián Marías (1914–2005) and Manuel Granell (1906–1993) were two prominent philosophers who emerged from Ortega y Gasset's tutelage.
6. See Ortega y Gasset, "Tierras del porvenir," 86.
7. Manuel Granell, "Fragmento del diario," 257.
8. Julián Marías, "Notas de un viaje a Oriente," 212.
9. Examples include the general frustration caused by the "too-European" look of Tunis, discouragement at the sight of the Dead Sea, and the negative reaction to restorations Arthur Evans had made in the Palace of King Minos at Knossos.
10. Tunisia had been a French protectorate since 1881, after the Treaty of Bardo, and achieved independence in 1956. Syria had been under French mandate since 1920, when the French troops occupied the country, until independence in 1943. Malta had been officially a British territory since 1814, as part of the Treaty of Paris, and gained independence in 1964. The British government issued a unilateral declaration of Egypt's independence in 1922, after a nationalist revolt, but its influence and military

presence remained until 1954. Palestine came under British mandate in 1922. The non-Jewish Palestinians revolted in 1929 and 1936, and in 1947, the British government announced its intention to terminate the mandate. Italy gained Rhodes in 1912 during the Italo-Turkish War, and in 1947, together with the other islands of the Dodecanese, it was united with Greece.

11. Carlos del Real, "Diario de un estudiante viajero," 25.
12. The Spanish Republic was fully aware of these business possibilities. The cruise included two workers from the Spanish Tourist Board, an institution that sought to promote tourism to Spain. Among other things, they organized several lectures by García Morente in Greece to describe Spain and its natural and artistic beauties.
13. A. González Palencia, "Bajo la bandera de Cisneros."
14. Del Real, "Diario," 25.
15. Carlos V conquered the city of Tunis, then under the control of the Ottoman Empire, in 1535. The Ottomans recaptured the city in 1574.
16. The victory prevented the Ottomans from expanding further along the European side of the Mediterranean, thus maintaining Western dominance, and was assigned great symbolic importance by the Catholic nations. It had an added value for Spaniards as Miguel de Cervantes lost his arm in the battle.
17. Manuel Gómez-Moreno Martínez, see F. Gracia and J.M. Fullola, *El sueño de una generación* [from here on *Sueño*], 283.
18. Del Real, "Diario," 16.
19. *Sueño*, 166.
20. Carlos del Real spoke of the "insulting vulgarity of the Kemalian Istanbul," "Diario," 98.
21. *Sueño*, 257.
22. "Reconquista" is a historiographic term used to refer to the period of history in Spain from the Islamic conquests in 711–18 to the fall of Granada, the last Islamic state in the Peninsula, in 1492. Decrees expelling the Muslim and Jewish populations from Spain followed.
23. Quoted in *Sueño*, 188.
24. Letter of 25 July, 1933, quoted in *Sueño*, 293.
25. Marías, "Notas," 242.
26. Gijón Zapata, quoted in *Sueño*, 176.
27. A link, by the way, repeated insistently by the extremist right-wing press, which dared to label the trip as a religious expedition to the Holy Land.
28. Marías, "Notas," 222.
29. Ortega, "Pathos," 82.
30. See Ortega, "Arte de este mundo y del otro," *passim*.

31. It helped that on the last day the city of Athens greeted the travelers with something worthy of the cultural character of the expedition: the night lighting of the Acropolis, an honor they were told had not been granted for years, due to the Greek government's austerity. The illumination created an ethereal effect which transported the young travelers' minds to ancient Greece.
32. This claim is twofold, because in addition to the Greek classic set of values being understood as the root of civilization, it implies its eternity and ongoing presence. While the survival of other sets of values depends on the existence of the civilization that embodies them, in the case of classical values, their validity is beyond time and does not depend on the factual existence of a certain civilization. In fact, Ortega himself in 1911 defined the classic as the perpetual source of spiritual energies (see "Sobre la enseñanza clásica.V") and 20 years later the young Marías, at the sight of the Acropolis, explains the emergence of the Greek as a "hunger for intemporality" (*Juventud*, 226).
33. Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, "Hace cincuenta años."
34. In 1925, the philosopher Eugenio d'Ors (1881–1954), one of the most prominent intellectuals of Spain and a strong defender of the unity and superiority of European values, had labeled precisely as "Orientalism" some intellectual movements born in the nineteenth century such as intuitionism, neo-mysticism, pragmatism, and relativism that departed from the European classical scientific explanation of the world. See *Paliques*, 297.
35. Díaz-Plaja, "Hace cincuenta años."
36. Del Real, "Diario," 68.
37. Back in 1924, again Eugenio d'Ors had presented his view that Islam was already at war with Europe, and that Europe should defend itself (see *Paliques*, 149). The front was all the territories from Morocco to Pakistan, the headquarters were in Egypt, and the first episode was the Rif War. (The Rif War was being fought since 1920 between the Spanish colonial power and the Moroccan Berbers of the Rif mountainous region. It would end in 1926 when France assisted Spain in a final attack against the Rifians). Some years later, in 1943, Ortega y Gasset, recounting the life of Alonso de Contreras, made a comment about the recurring threat that Islam posed to Europe. He stated that every 500 years Islam made a double movement forward (through the Ural Mountains and through the northern coast of Africa) to conquer Europe (see "Prólogo a Aventuras del capitán Alonso de Contreras," 340).
38. *Sueño*, 157.
39. Letter from June 25, 1933, quoted in *Sueño*, 161.

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Catalan Political Modernism: The Case of Gabriel Alomar i Villalonga (1873–1941) and Modernism on the Periphery

David W. Bird

INTRODUCTION: GABRIEL ALOMAR, CATALAN MODERNIST

The Mallorcan poet and essayist Gabriel Alomar i Villalonga (1873–1941) serves as a valuable case study for the ways in which the aesthetic values of modernism are translated into ethical and political ones on the periphery of Europe. As we will see, for Alomar it is modernity’s openness to freedom and contingency that represent modernism’s lesson for Spain, and his project is the “nationalization” of those values so that they will not be rejected by the body politic as foreign. Alomar points out to the wider Spanish public¹ that openness to the influence of the Mediterranean, and Europe generally, is actually a value that many Spaniards have shared over the long development of the nation, even if that value had not achieved hegemony at the national level by the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, for Alomar, “modern Mediterranean” tendencies that could be seen as in problematic tension—for example, the vindication of the local alongside a growing desire for cosmopolitan connectedness—are in the case of Catalan culture not to be perceived as revolutionary or foreign,

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but rather a desirable return to a traditional form of life. In this study, I will discuss some of the unique features of how the term “modernism” has been adopted and understood in the Spanish context, explain some of the Iberian historical background that has conditioned the Spanish and Catalan encounters with modernity, and on that basis investigate how Alomar’s modernist values are deployed to reconceive Spaniards’ and Catalans’ basic understanding of nationhood and the individual’s relationship to nation.²

Anglo-American and Spanish critics’ understandings of what the term “modernism” refers to are often at odds; adding to the possibilities for confusion is the fact that the English term “modernism” is often translated into Spanish as *modernismo*. On the one hand, usage of *modernismo* can refer to a specific literary movement, almost a school, originating in Latin America (especially Nicaragua in the person of Rubén Darío), strongly influenced by French Symbolism, and exported in the first decade of the twentieth century to Spain. On the other hand, in *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987), Matei Calinescu observes that it was also used in Spanish “approvingly to designate a larger contemporary movement of aesthetic renovation.” Thus, Calinescu does not differentiate as strongly between the English and Spanish definitions of the term as some critics do.³ In fact, European writers of Spanish literature like Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866–1936) use “modernism” to refer to a wide-ranging love of the new and personal. Valle-Inclán wrote that, “I became a professed modernist: Looking for me in myself and not in others...If in literature there exists something which could be called modernism, it is certainly a strong desire for personal originality [*personalidad*].”⁴ Gabriel Alomar’s famous essay “El futurisme” amply demonstrates that he shares this modern value of the personally original: “Fiat! Sies TU! Sies únic! Contradiu! Deixa d’esser els altres! Crida i esvalota! Dissent de la multitud! Viu!” [Act! Be YOURSELF! Be unique! Contradict! Stop being another! Shout and make noise! Dissent from the multitude! Live!].⁵

Thus, Spanish criticism can generally be said to refer either to a “broad” or a “narrow” definition of *modernismo*. On the one hand, there are critics like Federico de Onís (1885–1966), whose understanding of the economic factors inherent in modernist writing lead him to categorize as *modernista* all literature that participates in the “search for modernity”;⁶ on the other hand, critics like Dámaso Alonso (1898–1990) conceptualize *modernismo* as an artistic technique rather than a ubiquitous consciousness.⁷ I will use the untranslated term *modernismo* for the narrower usage, and *modernism* for the broader concept to be understood as referring to a writer’s explicit consciousness of, adoption of, and/or negotiation with,

values and phenomena associated with modernity.⁸ As we will see, Alomar may be described employing both of these terms: as a poet, Alomar is often called “Parnassian,”⁹ a label closely associated with the aestheticism of Symbolism and *modernismo*;¹⁰ as an essayist, he is a fierce advocate of integration into European modernity—an integration that he hopes to facilitate by reminding the nation of Catalonia’s once and future engagement with the Mediterranean.

Jesús Torrecilla’s studies of turn-of-the-century Spain afford an excellent appreciation of the cultural context in which Alomar operated. *La imitación colectiva* (*Collective Imitation*) elaborates two fundamental ideas: that reaction against modernity on the grounds that newness is inherently undesirable is different from reaction against modernity as a foreign irruption, and that *neophobia* must be distinguished from *xenophobia*, even when both are present. Torrecilla traces the discourse of Spanish intellectuals as they fulminate against a culture in which the “best” literature slavishly follows foreign—mostly French—models. Torrecilla points out the irony of Clarín’s¹¹ equation of France with the modern and Castile with the archaic, observing that many of the authors who most strongly protested the French “invasion” showed signs of succumbing to it themselves: the brothers Antonio and Manuel Machado (1875–1939, 1874–1947), Symbolism (and Darío-style *modernismo*); Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920) and Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1921) with realism and naturalism; Rafael Alberti (1909–1999) with surrealism; and so on:¹² Torrecilla identifies in this seeming contradiction what he calls a “double internal necessity,” an idea circulating at the time that suggested Spanish literature could be revitalized and made more authentic by the imitation of foreign models.¹³

This double need is answered by a double originality. Torrecilla identifies the visible distinction in the critical and intellectual discourse of the era between “originalidad” as authenticity, and genuineness and “originalidad” as whatever is newest and most strange. The identification of the modern with the foreign threatens to conflate the two concepts, and so “convierte un proceso de renovación y cambio en una pugna de identidades irreductibles” [turns a process of renovation and change into a struggle between irreducible identities].¹⁴ This interpretation of modernism among some Spanish intellectuals as *foreign* acquires support, however, from writers whose approach to European modernism is to “nationalize” it—that is, to marvel at “French” or “German” modernism and to set out to create a “Spanish” modernism.¹⁵ It is therefore unsurprising that Spanish authors “discover” the roots of modern styles upon looking into their Iberian

literary heritage. Torrecilla sees modernity as conditioning the manner in which “modern” writers see their literary history—the Generation of 27’s widely acknowledged debt to Góngora is probably the best-known example.¹⁶ Conversely, modernist preoccupations imported from outside Spain fundamentally change the way Spaniards read their own authors of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

Torrecilla’s 1996 *El tiempo y los márgenes* (*Time and the Margins*) revisits the idea that in Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century the notion of modernity was inextricably tied up with foreignness. The author reiterates his sentiment that the contemporary critic must beware of oversimplifying the difficulties of Spain’s process of negotiation as it encounters modernity. For Torrecilla, the critical tendency to compare Spain to the great hegemon of European modernism, France, is far from perfect, and may be counterproductive. He further argues that France is not the most appropriate country for comparison with Spain. Torrecilla suggests instead that the modernities of peripheral states like Poland or Russia would be more useful for comparative study with Spain, because the complexity of these countries’ negotiations with technological and social development at the beginning of the twentieth century has more in common with the Spanish experience.¹⁷ As Calinescu’s account of the development of modernity into the nineteenth century shows, it is impossible to speak of aesthetic modernism without the greater social and cultural framework of the “modern” self-understanding. Alomar is a modernist precisely because he lives in and reacts to a world in which the eternal verities of religion are gone, the traditional means and forces of production have been transformed by the steam engine and other technologies, and mankind’s understanding of time and the purpose of its existence are fundamentally questioned. The Spanish case is particularly complicated by Spain’s historical particulars, which contributed to unevenness among Spain’s regions in the arrival of, negotiation with, and acceptance of the “modern” in all its forms. Characteristically, Castile and Catalonia were still, even after four centuries of union in the “Kingdom of Spain,” different in their willingness to adopt or adapt what was new and different. In her study of later Catalan Futurism, Renée Silverman has described a Catalan cultural scene equally applicable to Alomar’s earlier modernist values: “Catalonia was an especially hospitable environment for Futurism. The simultaneous imperatives for national self-definition and cosmopolitan modernity...resonated with the paradoxes of Catalanism during the first three decades of the twentieth century.”¹⁸ For Alomar in

that century's first decade, seafaring, Mediterranean Catalonia is already characterized by modern values more than any other region of Spain, and for that reason, Catalonia and Catalans are uniquely well placed to lead the whole country into community with the rest of the world.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: CATALONIA IN SPAIN, SPAIN IN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Alomar, a native of the Mediterranean island of Mallorca, was born into as peripheral a situation as can be imagined and still be in Europe at all: the Balearics were in the late nineteenth century a backwater's backwater, considered marginal even by other speakers of Catalan, especially the metropolitans of Barcelona, and negligible in influence in the wider Spanish context. By the end of the nineteenth century, in turn, Spain itself was considered barely European by more economically developed neighbors; there is some dispute as to which Frenchman first sneered that "L'Afrique commence aux Pyrénées," but the phrase was certainly being used as early as the Napoleonic period.¹⁹ It is essential to note that the Mediterranean coast and islands of Spain were thought of as a hinterland even by other Spaniards, an attitude that should surprise, given Iberian geography. Looking at a map of southern Europe, one would, if one knew no history, assume that the modern nation-state we name "Spain" would have been intensely connected with the Mediterranean basin throughout its history, and that therefore its late-nineteenth-century encounter with modernity would have been deeply conditioned by that connection. In the event, the dominant point of view in "modern" Spain vis-à-vis external relations has not in fact been oriented to the Mediterranean, and it is reasonable to ask why this should be the case. In the case of Spain, the issue is the extremely marked regional variation in relationships with extra-Iberian peoples and influences, and the fact that the particular regional point of view that would become hegemonic—the Castilian²⁰—was not that particular regional point of view whose historical development was deeply influenced by the Mediterranean—the Catalan-Aragonese. Beginning in the Middle Ages, Castile's central, landlocked, Iberian position and Catalonia's peripheral, maritime, Pyrenees-straddling position—their political boundaries, the result of conflicts among the small Muslim and Christian states—would have tremendous impact on the two nations' subsequent development.

The seafaring Catalans of the Middle Ages moved outward into the Mediterranean. They made good use of the knowledge that their lifestyle

brought them in order to safeguard their nascent maritime commerce, gain markets,²¹ and win recognition for “Christianizing” the Mediterranean. Land-based, landlocked Castile, in contrast, pushed outward into the other proto-states of the Iberian Peninsula,²² building an empire that, although not as large as the Catalan sea-spanning one, lasted longer.²³ Because the far-flung Catalan empire required more defense and administrative oversight than the metropolis was able to give it, gradually its more distant parts simply slipped away. As its maritime empire waned, Catalonia turned to find that while its attention remained concentrated on Mediterranean islands and trade, almost all of Iberia had gravitated toward the Castilian and Portuguese monarchies.²⁴ Castilian land hegemony in non-Lusophone Iberia was thus for the most part presented to Catalonia as a *fait accompli*.²⁵ As Catalan fortunes fell, Castile’s military successes propelled it to a position from which it could contemplate hegemony over the Iberian Peninsula. The 1469 dynastic union of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragón ended the possibility that Castile’s peninsular mastery would be contested by any other Iberian Christian state.²⁶ In this way, the Catalans’ Mediterranean-centered perspective and the cultural values—so valued by Gabriel Alomar—of connectedness and cosmopolitanism were marginalized in the context of the founding of “Spain,” pushed aside by a set of values forged in a fundamentally different historical development and strengthened in the explosive growth of the Spanish “New World” empire after the momentous events of 1492.

In spite of these geographically marginal beginnings, Alomar would become an important figure in early twentieth-century Spain, and the values of modernism that he absorbed from his education in Barcelona and from his broadly European reading would be appropriated to serve a cultural and political critique that would seek a thoroughgoing renovation of Spanish life. Openness to Europe and the Mediterranean world would, Alomar firmly believed, transform Spain from a confessional, overly centralized and problematically essentializing²⁷ society into a place that could proudly claim membership in the world community.

IBERIAN POLITICAL HISTORY AND THE DIVISION INTO REGIONS

The nineteenth century could aptly be called “the Age of Centralization.” Politically, in the sphere of the “state,” one witnesses the first unification of previously patchwork states like Italy and Germany, as well as violent

questioning of, resistance to, and reaffirmations of national unity like the American Civil War. Culturally, these unifications are accompanied throughout the world by a renegotiation of the meaning of “nation.”²⁸ What makes the turn of the twentieth century unique is the way in which they intersect with the modernity ushered in by the Industrial Revolution, and the general restructuring of Western politics and economy according to the needs of capitalism. In the Catalan case, peripheral, regional resistance to an essentialized, centralized Castilian discourse understands national identity as properly based on external, performative aspects of life;²⁹ that is to say, one’s national identity is a consequence of participating in a group’s values and practices, rather than as incarnating some sort of “national spirit.”³⁰ Gabriel Alomar, the Mallorcan-Catalan essayist, poet, and educator, prefers a Catalan regionalism in which the modern values of progressive education and civic equality can help develop a new, historically contingent but socially useful definition of “Spanishness.” As Alomar puts it neatly in his 1904 essay “El futurisme,” “En una paraula: hi ha el regionalisme just, lliberal, i regionalisme injust, tirànic” (In a word: there is a just, liberal regionalism, and an unjust, tyrannical regionalism).³¹

For our study of Spain, then, we must ask ourselves if Manuel Fraga Iribarne’s assertion that “Spain is different” can be usefully applied to the Iberian situation at the turn of the twentieth century.³² Spain saw massive disruptions caused by the Napoleonic Wars (especially 1807–1814), as the displacement of the ruling Bourbon family by Napoleon’s older brother Joseph, and subsequent Bourbon restoration, created doubt and dissension over fundamental political principles, such as constitutionalism; these disruptions would occasion no fewer than three civil conflicts (the “Carlist Wars”) over the course of the nineteenth century. Such conflicts conditioned the aesthetic and cultural shift toward Romanticism, with its increasing emphasis on the individual as a moral, spiritual, and political being. As well, there were developing imperial projects, most especially in Africa and Asia, and the social conflicts called into being by the economic shifts of industrial capitalism. It is self-evident that all the states involved in these processes had their particular complications—how is Spain unique? After all, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Spanish intellectuals would be trying to elaborate and solve the *problema de España*,³³ seeking to comprehend the uniquely Spanish experience of modernity.

A fundamental difference between negotiations with rising modernity in Spain and in the rest of Europe is the unevenness in the understanding

of individualism. Because Spain at the turn of the twentieth century was so fiercely polarized along economic lines, as well as having almost no experience with democracy of any sort, an awareness of oneself-as-individual as a morally acting political agent came at very different rates in different parts of the country. It seems that different rates of economic development conditioned the rates of political development: the workers of Barcelona, for example, were a recognizable urban proletariat, politically aware and active, as exemplified by the 1879 founding of the socialist *Partido Socialista de Obreros Españoles* (PSOE).³⁴

Alomar's early life (born 1873) coincided with this period of fierce cultural and political discussion in Spain on topics ranging from constitutional questions on the legitimacy of the monarchy to the nature of property in Spanish society, and the problem of the education of the young. It was what Álvarez Junco calls "una época convulsa, plagada de revoluciones y trastornos políticos" [an age of convulsion, plagued by revolutions and political upheavals];³⁵ political and aesthetic manifestos enjoyed brief vogues and then vanished, magazines were founded and closed in great numbers and at dizzying rates, and the government in Madrid was often so transient that some ministers never visited their offices.³⁶ Political struggle frequently became violent in this period, with agricultural workers' riots in southern Spain and unrest among the growing industrial proletariat in the Basque Country and Catalonia. Bakunin-style anarchism competed with the most reactionary forms of Carlist Catholicism,³⁷ with every imaginable sort of thought between them also represented: Catholic syndicalism attempted to keep workers from organizing in socialist groups; anarcho-syndicalists wished to abolish the state and put power instead into the hands of collective labor communes; and non-Carlist monarchists fought for the status quo, undesirable as it seemed. Mass meetings became riots, and political animosity more than once turned to murder, as in the assassinations of the Prime Ministers Cánovas del Castillo in 1897 and José Canalejas in 1912. Also, regionalist tensions were beginning to assert themselves fully, with an autonomist movement becoming more and more powerful in Catalonia (led by, among others, the politician Francesc Cambó) as well as the growth of a racially based nationalism in the Basque-speaking regions, led by the Basque Sabino Arana, and a relatively weaker but growing consciousness of difference in Galicia.

These geographical concerns determine a complex center-periphery construction that is at the heart of Gabriel Alomar's conception of Catalonia in Spain. Alomar deploys a rhetoric that aspires to participate

in the oldest classical discourses of civic virtue, a rhetoric that uses tropes of proximity and distance to an idealized spiritual City to distinguish the proper behavior of a State from the improper institutionalization of illegitimate actions or ideas. He constantly employs the term *City*, capitalized to indicate an ideal rather than a physical space, “transmetent-se la veu i reforçant-se, enllà de les terres i del temps” [transforming its voice and reinforcing itself, beyond lands or time].³⁸ His use of the city as a metaphor demonstrates the degree to which the Catalan attributes national character to the ongoing negotiation between humanity and its surroundings, rather than to a purely geographical determinism.

As well as avoiding geographical determinism, Alomar generally eschews racial explanations for national constitution, insisting on a clear distinction between sets of political boundaries, subjectively constituted groups, and ethnic or racial units³⁹—and not using the terms for such distinguishable notions interchangeably. However, because he sees the various national spirits of Europe as differently constituted, in Alomar’s estimation, they are apt for “futurization” to varying degrees. The degree to which a national spirit is apt for this process governs the rate at which it develops. For Alomar, the root of Catalonia’s ability to accept and assimilate European modernity is precisely the fact that its participation in traditionalist obstinacy differs in both degree and kind from the rest of Spain.

Catalonia’s peculiarity is its uniquely short experience of Muslim domination, which permitted it to avoid that transformation into a confessional Crusader state like Castile, which a centuries-long *Reconquista* might have brought about. On the one hand, Alomar believes that Catalonia’s experience of the past one-and-a-half millennia left its original, Carolingian-Germanic character intact, and that Catalans are, in the historical context of the *fin de siècle*, more inclined toward Europe and the Mediterranean than the isolated, hybridized remainder of the Iberian Peninsula so marked by centuries of Muslim occupation.⁴⁰ On the other hand, in the essay “El lliberalisme català” Alomar would call regionalism itself “el nostre gran enemic” [our great enemy], because it stands between individuals and the feeling of a kind of universal citizenship that is spiritually preferable to any national belonging.⁴¹ For Alomar, then, a specifically Catalan national pride is a step in the right direction, because these feelings allow Catalans to move from a negative cultural policy of simply denying their Spanishness to a preferable, positive affirmation of Catalanness. Yet Catalan nationalism is not a final destination.

It is insufficient for a twentieth-century modernity that will, as Alomar sees it, demand a high degree of international understanding and involvement. As he explains his distaste for arbitrary political borders, “Som antinacionalistes, adversaris d’aquell frenesí nacional que es retreu i fossilitza entre les fronteres. Obrim el braços a la invasió moral de defora... Obrim els braços a la iniciativa de totes les tendències i escoles renovadores, al temps i a l’espai” [We are anti-nationalists, adversaries of that national frenzy that withdraws and fossilizes within its borders. Let us open our arms to the moral invasion from without... Let us open our arms to the initiative of all the tendencies and schools of renovation, to time and to space].⁴²

In this way, Alomar constructs a spatial metaphor that contrasts the civilized space within the City against the chaotic barbarity of the violent, uncivilized space without. In “El lliberalisme català,” he deploys the symbol of the city as the center of a civilization, asserting that all great cultures have their roots in some metropolis, and that successful progress or modification to those cultures may often depend on change occurring in those centers. The fundamental flaw of centralism, then, is that in an excessively traditionalist culture a worn-out, superannuated center is allowed to continue in its central ideological position, thereby extending its rottenness to the margins.⁴³ The solution Alomar offers is nothing less than the creation in the minds of individuals of a transcendent World City to which emancipated minds may give their primary loyalty.⁴⁴

Alomar regards Spain generally, and Catalonia specifically, as stuck in a cultural slowdown, and he blames this sluggishness on the lack of national spiritual amity. He believes that Catalonia’s lethargy can be blamed on an illegitimate isolationist tendency that began to take root in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Catalan isolationism was born, Alomar writes, of the excusable desire to escape or avoid the political rule of Madrid.⁴⁵ This desire, however, made even the great deeds of Catalan history in that period fundamentally conservative ones, such as the Catalan revolts of 1640 and 1714. These revolutions were doomed to failure, Alomar argues, because they were attempts to avoid going through the evolutions of their time. Since Alomar does not believe that such avoidance is possible, these revolutions seem to him futile, if gallant. The centralizations of that period were in keeping with the spirit of the time, though not necessarily good or legitimate, and shaped modern Spaniards’ understanding of their own country.⁴⁶ The Habsburg who succeeded the Catholic Monarchs in the early sixteenth century inherited a patchwork of separate

kingdoms and crowns, some of which enjoyed various degrees of legal autonomy. Though the Habsburg did not maintain the itinerant court of Ferdinand and Isabella, they did allow the various constituent regions of this new polity called Spain to keep some degree of the legal regionalism that had gone before.

As the seventeenth century progressed, however, and most especially with the accession of the French-derived Bourbon monarchy after the War of the Spanish Succession ended in 1714, it became clear that Spain's immediate political future would include centralizing policies intended to reshape Spain in the image of a post-Louis XIV France. For Alomar in "El lliberalisme català," for instance, the centralizing monarchs of the eighteenth century were too close to the questions of power to hold the kind of disinterested legitimacy that Catholicism and the old ideas of Empire had provided. In the Spanish case, the revolutionary ideals of the nineteenth century would eventually demand that this legitimacy be reacquired through an increasing amount of Church intervention in the affairs of the State. Unfortunately, Alomar insists, the result was not a more ethical monarchy, but a more corrupt Church.⁴⁷

In the nineteenth century, the country divided itself into two camps for which Alomar imports the Mediterranean metaphor of the medieval Italian Guelphs and Ghibellines—liberals and conservatives. In the Spanish context, "liberals" are generally considered to be anyone in favor of a constitution, while "conservatives" are those opposed. Both parties, however, fall prey to the extremism that Alomar identifies as the permanent ill of Spanish politics. The "Guelph" conservatives become guilty of hyperclericalism, allowing Spain to be ruled from Rome by a tradition-bound and dogmatic Church. Alomar derides early conservative Catalanism for what he perceives to have been its thralldom to the Catholic clergy and the "exhumed and rotting" values of Fatherland and Faith.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the liberals also accept militarism and the culture of the *pronunciamiento*, which the pacifist Alomar cannot accept: "La sèrie infinita dels *pronunciamientos* feia creure que a Espanya la llibertat venia sobre la punta de les baionetes" [The infinite series of *pronunciamientos* made one believe that in Spain, freedom would come at the point of a bayonet].⁴⁹ For Alomar, then, it is illegitimate to pursue liberal goals by illiberal means.

In addition to the tendency to extremism, Alomar's diagnosis of the ills of Spanish democracy in the nineteenth century includes the poor state of the country's political institutions. As an evolutionary thinker, Alomar wholly disallows the idea of the final perfection of any social

institution. The positivist political theorists of the period decided that they had reached an ideal political solution, and therefore created an inflexible political machine around their theories that did not allow for any kind of evolution. Alomar points out that if a system shows weaknesses but there is no way to repair them, then the entire system can only be thrown out in a *pronunciamiento* or other upheaval.⁵⁰ He asserts that this failure belongs peculiarly to Madrid, and explains therefore the necessity of modern, European Barcelona's increasing primacy.

Alomar reconciles the fact of Barcelona's undoubted leadership in Catalan-speaking society with his distaste for centralized power by differentiating between cultural influence and political force. Every goal in Alomar's transformative plan is invariably subject to the demands of individual emancipation; although the periphery of Catalonia should have the freedom to do as it likes, it is salubrious for it to absorb the "healthy emanations" of the Catalan metropolis.⁵¹ In Alomar's view, this is not cultural imperialism, but rather a consistent engagement with his modernist ideal of individuals being open to new experiences. All of Catalonia must be open to influences not only from the rest of Spain, but from the larger cultural context of Europe. To describe the process of making Catalonia a cosmopolitan locus, Alomar coins one of his many rolling polysyllables, "trans-Pyreneization" or *transpireneització*. Alomar sees Catalonia as having always been a willing receiver of European influences—French, as his neologism would suggest, as well as Germanic and Anglo-Saxon ones. He would further insist on recognizing the equality and rights of the North African populations that France and Spain intended to colonize in Algeria, Morocco. In his view, the isolation forced upon Catalonia since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 is actually an aberration in Catalan history rather than the norm.⁵² Although the term *afrancesado* is used more commonly in an earlier period, Alomar is very pro-Bonaparte, writing approvingly of the immediate sequelae of the French Revolution as "un imperialisme espiritual qui imposés la llibertat" (a spiritual imperialism that imposed freedom).⁵³

While Alomar judges the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the most part as time spent in political limbo,⁵⁴ he does appreciate the liberal legacy of unrealized but valuable initiatives that they managed to transmit, especially the Constitution of Cádiz, which was written during the Napoleonic Wars. According to Alomar in "El liberalisme català," Catalan liberalism began as part of a wider Spanish liberalism in Cádiz in 1812.⁵⁵ Alomar similarly insists that modernization be carried out realistically,

always remembering that while democratic, deliberative societies like Great Britain were excellent and admirable models, it may be that liberalism and politics generally in countries like Spain have different requirements.⁵⁶

For instance, in the essay “L’obra civil o laïca,” Alomar proposes to look forward into Spain’s political and cultural future by comparatively examining the politics and culture of Russia and France. The narrative voice adopts a strongly Spanish rhetorical point of view, and looks outward to the other countries of Europe and the Mediterranean in an attempt to assuage that voice’s evident despair over the state of affairs on the Iberian Peninsula. In this essay, Alomar considers that there are various historical paths down which a state may go, and that not all states occupy the same place on their respective paths. In Alomar’s view, Spain is following the same path of evolution as Russia and France, although they are all at different points along it.⁵⁷ The goal to which Alomar sees these three countries aspiring is what he calls a “novell règim,” in contradistinction to the French *Ancien Régime*, the pre-Revolutionary absolute monarchy. The signs of the developing *nouveau régime* in France and Russia are the break with the Church as part of government and the establishment of firm civilian control over the military, objectives which he does not see Spain as anywhere near achieving. Alomar attributes Spain’s failure to manage these reforms to the underlying political motivation of such actions. Such legal reforms are useful, but they are signs of a philosophical change in the way governments understand themselves and the way citizens conceive of their relationship to their governments: “El fi polític per excel·lència, el fi qui ha d’estendre sobre tota la matèria nacional o social la irradiació de la gran entitat selecta que es congria en la ciutat” [The political goal *par excellence*, the goal of extending over the entire national or social fabric that irradiation of the great, select entity that coalesces in the city].⁵⁸

It has been established that Alomar wanted Spain to participate more fully in the European experience of modernity, but he also recognized that in this context “Europe” as a cultural term was insufficiently specific. In the essay “Catalunya i el occidentalisme” [Catalonia and Occidentalism], Alomar addresses precisely this point. Taking a broader look at his contemporary European political scene, he hypothesizes a union of what he calls “the three empires”—which I understand to be Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary—in opposition to the Western powers of Britain, France, and Italy—specifically named in the essay. Where, he asks, would the Iberian powers’ natural affinities lie? It seems evident to him that Portugal would side with the West due to its centuries-old alliance with

Great Britain. Spain, on the other hand, would waver indecisively because it is a country “*sotmesa a una dinastia que no té res d’occidental, anacrònica com la nació mateixa, on ha persistit i retanyat la vella soca, està fora de l’acció de tota corrent moderna*” [subject to a dynasty that has nothing Occidental about it, anachronistic as the country itself, where the old ways have persisted and endured, and which is totally outside of any modern current].⁵⁹ Yet because Alomar is an individualist, he does not attribute the flaws of Spain’s response to international stimuli exclusively to the Bourbon regime. For him, there is a fundamental difference in the mindset of the individual citizens of truly “Western” countries. In Alomar’s opinion, “*política i socialment els pobles occidentals representen per essència la modernitat dels règims*” [politically and socially the Western peoples essentially represent the modernity of their regimes].⁶⁰

In light of the other essays discussed here, I take this notion of representation to mean that the individual members of certain national groups have somehow transcended nationalism, replacing it with a fully realized internationalist vision that allows them to think in terms of genuinely universal action. The internationalist policies of their governments thus do not clash with citizens’ mindsets and, therefore, the terrible political tension of the beginning of Spain’s twentieth century is not duplicated in these more fortunate countries. Alomar sees the necessity of policymaking in harmony with the times as an argument against conservatism: conservative policy makers will be unable to keep up with the mental and cultural evolution of the individual citizen.

The inevitable end that Alomar identifies in this increasing internationalism in Europe is the eventual collapse of the balance of power in force at the time of writing (1905). What he predicts—incorrectly in the short term, more presciently as it has turned out—is the gradual transition of Western Europe into an international “community of action” based primarily on the feeling of cultural solidarity. Alomar uses a cultural notion of what he calls “occidentalisme,” including, for example, the USA as a possible member of this community:⁶¹ as I mentioned above, the term is more a synonym for “modern and open” than a geographical expression. And as always in Alomar, this *Western* internationalism is only the first step toward a larger field of action. The next move toward cultural inclusion, which he calls “universalism,” is nothing less than a world culture that flows over the globe in a process of benign assimilation.⁶²

However, this seemingly radical notion of a globalized culture is described as having a historical precedent, namely Great Britain.⁶³ Alomar

points out that Britain's island geography has allowed it to avoid European entanglements when desired, as well as equipping it with a formidable naval potential that, to a student of medieval Catalonia's maritime empire, must have sounded quite familiar. This naval potential combined with isolation means that, in disputes over European hegemony, Britain invariably had an option not available to the Continental powers—that of not participating in the land wars that lasted through the Renaissance and beyond. All of these factors come together (as Alomar explains it) to permit Britain the opportunity to build colonies that have a genuine cultural existence of their own, that become nations themselves (Alomar specifies the USA, Australia, and New Zealand).⁶⁴ In this way, Britain as an imperial power operated at a truly global level, and it is this future that Alomar predicts for all of Europe. Because (he thinks) the forces of history operate similarly in like circumstances, the globalized model *exemplified* by the British need not be *imposed* by the British in all cases. Rather, situations like theirs will inspire national groups with similar advantages, such as the Japanese, to whom Alomar applies the term “occidental” at the same time he derides Russia for being too “oriental.”⁶⁵ Indeed, Alomar calls the coast of East Asia one of the future centers of the world, powerful because of its dense population and its willingness to modernize in order to stay current, a willingness that had won the Russo-Japanese war for the Asian nation (the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the war, was signed on September 5, 1905, nine days after the essay was published).

Especially visible in the essay on “occidentalisme” is Alomar's concern that Catalonia not be prevented from participating in the great internationalist project merely because of its association with Spain. I emphasized earlier that Alomar rejects the notion of nationalism as an *end*. At the same time, in “Catalunya i el occidentalisme” he makes clear that it can be a most useful *means* for the integration of Catalonia into the larger future: “El nostre esperit, l'esperit català, ¿no devem intentar fer-l'en digne, procurar que esdevingui definitivament occidental i que, com els pobles moderns de veritat, col·labori en l'empresa futura?” [Our spirit, the Catalan spirit, should we not make it worthy, ensure that it develops definitively into a Western spirit, and that, like those peoples who are truly modern, it collaborates in the future enterprise?].⁶⁶ Internationalist collaboration, like solidarity, must be reached from a firm basis in national feeling and belonging, although these nationalist sensations can kill these larger phenomena just as easily as they facilitate them. Alomar cites the French essayist Raul Chélaré, who maintains that nationalism is one phase of many through

which civilizations pass; nationalism has its place, but to insist on the permanence of a nationalist sentiment is a kind of cultural failure to grow up.

With the foregoing discussion in mind, one might reasonably ask how Alomar reconciles the idea that the rest of Spain is dead weight, preventing Catalonia from fuller integration into a wider European cultural context, with the seemingly opposite notion that Catalanism should not be a secessionist movement. The answer that Alomar offers (along with many other Catalan thinkers then and now) is some form of federalism that would serve to bring the rest of Spain up to Catalonia's level, in particular that open cosmopolitanism forged in Catalonia's deep attachment to the Mediterranean world through the centuries before the Catholic Monarchs' dynastic union. Unitary theorists of Spain like some of the Castilian-speaking Generation of '98 writers accuse the federalists, most notably the Catalan future Prime Minister Francesc Pi i Margall, of desiring a return to the Middle Ages—to the days before the Catholic Monarchs when "Spain" was a geographical expression and its kings were princes of many small states. In the essay "El fur i la federació" [The *Fuero* and the Federation] Alomar specifically answers such criticism. Naturally, for Alomar, the accusation of willful atavism is among the worst, for he regards it as conservative and traditionalist. In this essay, Alomar seeks successfully to differentiate the kind of pluralist political future he envisions, for Spain and for Catalonia in Spain, from the vision of the conservative, bourgeois Catalanists who preceded him. The Catalan term *fur*, in Castilian *fuero*, refers to the medieval privileges accorded to the various regions of Spain during the long process of unification. The reconquest of Iberian Muslim territories by Christian princes and the unification of those territories into one Spanish state were interconnected but not identical processes. The unification proceeded along both military and political lines, with carefully negotiated dynastic marriages and economic concessions as important in the creation of "Spain" as military success. *Fueros* were legal exemptions of many kinds, offered to smaller states and regions by the growing Castilian-speaking Spanish polity as incentives to become or remain part of that polity. Most Spanish regions participated in the *fuero* to some degree, but because such exemptions—from taxes, military conscriptions, or trade restrictions—were negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the regions in question, there was quite a variety of political relationships involved. The conservative Catalanism of the nineteenth century took as its lodestone the return of Catalonia to its previously privileged position under foral law, a position open to the criticism of atavism.

At the same time, Alomar explicitly rejected a return to the foral system. In his view, such a system of privilege actually adds no real autonomy to Catalonia's status within the Spanish state, since these privileges are the whim of a monarch rather than rights recognized to inhere in Catalonia by virtue of its spiritual sufficiency. Indeed, in "El fur i la federació," he highlights the system's implicit acceptance of Castilian hegemony by referring to it by the Castilian term *fueros* rather than the Catalan word *fur*. As usual, Alomar argues fiercely against regionalisms that he sees as being backward-looking, especially the Celtic nationalisms of Ireland, Wales and Brittany, but also the situation of the Basques in Spain, whom he accuses of cultural inbreeding,⁶⁷ and whose object is the maintenance of an ethnic purity that constitutes the enemy of social dynamism. In his treatment of the Basque question in "El fur i la federació," it is also notable that Alomar chooses to use a geographical rather than a cultural vocabulary to describe the Basques. For example, while Alomar uses the term "països" [country] as a cognate of the common Castilian toponym "País Vasco" [the Basque Country], he pointedly does not refer to Basques as a "nació" [nation], reserving this term for cultures with a well-developed spirit like Catalonia.⁶⁸ Alomar's description of *fueros* as monarchist and rural responds to his notion of the city as the highest sum of humanity's potential for creativity and freedom.⁶⁹

As one ends up expecting with Alomar, the primary work of regionalism and nationalism should be that of emancipation. Accordingly, the main difference between foral law and federalism is its ontological underpinnings. *Fueros* takes as its foundation the presupposition of sovereignty imposed from outside, with the regions in a subordinate role: "La terra novament inscrita dins el radi de la sobirania," while federalism is founded upon the voluntary association of free peoples, an "integració voluntària i gradual de les nacionalitats en grans ensamblements" [voluntary and gradual integration of nationalities in great gatherings].⁷⁰ The autonomy that Alomar claims for Catalonia in this as in all his essays is that of self-determination, that is, an acceptance of the philosophical principle that it should be Catalans who decide what shape their relationship to the wider world will take.⁷¹

This notion of particularity within universality represents the most important broadening of a modernist aesthetic value to a cultural and political question. Just as modernist artists—Woolf, Joyce, Dalí, Picasso, Svevo, to take just a few examples—seek a universal understanding of the human condition by delving most deeply into the particular intimacies

of individual consciousness, for Alomar it is the felt richness of a particular cultural identity that serves as the starting point for humans to reach out for the world. Alomar's regionalism—his vindication of the Catalan point of view as an important constituent of what “Spanishness” means—is no nostalgic throwback. It is an insistence that the long centuries of Mediterranean influence, the openness to the new and the foreign that had come to represent a key part of what Catalans valued about themselves, could and should come out from the suffocation of an essentialized, falsely homogeneous “Spanishness.” Rather than separating Catalonia from “Spain,” Alomar envisioned a Spain in which the particularities of the several regions could come together to make the country's encounter with modernity a cause for celebration rather than alarm. The derailment of Spain's nascent democracy in the Civil War (1936–1939) and subsequent stasis of Francisco Franco's long dictatorship (1939–1975) put a 40-year hold on the germination of anything like Alomar's vision; it is yet to be seen if his hope that Catalonia could flourish within the Spanish state will prosper in the twenty-first century, or whether the region will choose to make its own way into the future.

NOTES

1. Alomar began his career as a political essayist writing in Catalan for a regional audience, and then around the beginning of World War I switched mostly to writing in Castilian Spanish in order to broaden his readership. It is very much worth noting that a good deal of Alomar's writing was published in newspapers rather than first in book form, because of the significant difference in access to audience that this entails. Books were expensive, and literacy rates in Spain even at the turn of the twentieth century were quite low, somewhere around 30%, with readers much concentrated in the cities, so that effective literacy rates in rural areas were considerably lower; thus, the “reading public” for books was more middle class and conservative, and perhaps predictably less likely to be swayed by Alomar's arguments. Newspapers, on the other hand, were cheap and easily available to urban workers (if not always to their rural counterparts), and in many workplaces the custom evolved of deputizing a literate co-worker to read to the rest of the shop from the papers during the workday (see Houston, n.p.). In this way, concentrating on newspapers as publishing venues put writers like Alomar in contact with the urban working class as well as with more elite political actors.

2. Alomar was not writing, especially in the early essays on which I concentrate here, from a position of perfect amity with other Catalanists of his day. Nineteenth-century Catalan regionalism was both antagonistic toward the rest of Spain in a way that Alomar found unproductive and socially conservative in a way that Alomar found obstinately unsuited to the negotiation with modernity that he knew the twentieth century would bring. Many Castilian-speaking Spanish unificationists, on the other hand, thought that the erasure of all regional identities in favor of a single identification with “Spain” would serve to ameliorate both cultural and material problems. It is for this reason that I speak here of “Spaniards and Catalans.” It is of course the case that not all non-Catalan Spaniards were Castilophile Spanish speakers, but other regional movements (e.g. the Basque, the Galician) did negotiate similar internal and external political realities; the Catalan case is just that—one case among several.
3. For example, Anthony L. Geist and José B. Monleón cite Astradur Eysteinnsson’s 1990 book *The Concept of Modernism* as an example of the tendency of European critics to insist that Spanish and Latin American *modernismo* have absolutely nothing to do with European modernism. This complete divorce seems illegitimate to them: “For Hispanists, one of the most blatant offenses reproduced by the great majority of studies is that they base their paradigms on a reduced number of artistic examples. The result is an extremely distorted canon that stubbornly excludes the Hispanic production” (Geist and Monleón xix).
4. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1987), 73.
5. Gabriel Alomar, *El futurisme: seguit del articles d’El poble català (1904–1906)* (Palma de Mallorca: Moll, 2000) 46.
6. Calinescu, *Five Faces*, 78.
7. Ferreres, *Límites*, 12.
8. For reasons of space, I will not go into the details of the lengthy, detailed, and at times highly acrimonious critical debate over these terms generally and their usage and usefulness in Spain particularly, though footnote no. 3 above may serve as an example of how that debate can play out. For a thorough appreciation of the Modernism Wars in Hispanic context, Gayle Rogers’ panoptic introduction to his *Modernism and the New Spain* (2012) is highly recommended; for further development regarding the debate, as well as a compelling portrait of how one Spanish “Modernist” understood the term and applied it to himself, see Rogers’ “Jiménez, Modernism/o, and the Languages of Comparative Modernist Studies” (2014). Full bibliographical information is given in my Works Cited list.

9. See DeBoer, *Mallorcan Moods* (1938), for an instance of this description from Alomar's own lifetime, as well as Doll, "The Traditional and the Visionary" (1995).
10. Cf. Calinescu, *Five Faces*, 70.
11. *Clarín* is the *nom de plume* of the Asturian novelist Leopoldo Alas (1852–1901), who along with Benito Pérez Galdós and Emilia Pardo Bazán was one of Spain's most important novelists and critics of the latter part of the nineteenth century. His work and critical values reflect the influence of Naturalism. His early masterpiece *La Regenta* (published in two volumes, 1884 and 1885) is often compared stylistically and thematically to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (published episodically, 1856–1857).
12. Jesús Torrecilla, *La imitación colectiva* (Madrid: Gredos, 1996), 43. Torrecilla's list is meant to be representative, not exhaustive; we could add more names from a greater diversity of genres, for instance, poets Luis Cernuda (1902–1963) and 1977 Nobel Prize winner Vicente Aleixandre (1898–1984), as well as painters like Joan Miró (1893–1983) and Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), all of whose work, it can be argued, show European (and particularly French) influences.
13. *Ibid.*, 19.
14. *Ibid.*, 38.
15. *Ibid.*, 43.
16. The "Generation of 27" is a critical concept that groups together certain chronologically close Spanish writers who were simultaneously interested in avant-garde forms of expression and in finding historical predecessors for those forms. The generational label is taken from a 1927 symposium dedicated to the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora (1561–1627) celebrated in Seville and attended by many of Spain's most prominent young writers, in particular the poets Pedro Salinas (1891–1951), Jorge Guillén (1893–1984), Dámaso Alonso (1898–1990), Gerardo Diego (1896–1987), Federico García Lorca (1898–1936), and Rafael Alberti (1902–1999). Despite his early death in the first days of the Spanish Civil War at the hands of Nationalist thugs, Lorca would become the most famous member of the group. Others would go on to longer careers as artists and critics.
17. Jesús Torrecilla, *El tiempo y los márgenes* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1996), 9. One useful example of the comparability of Spain with other "underdeveloped," peripheral European states is the development of the national railway system, which (as in Russia) was to a very great degree conditioned by the nineteenth-century political considerations rather than the economic utility and efficiency of the country as a whole. As Fusi and Palafox (1998) point out, the 1855 *Ley de Ferrocarriles* (Railway Law) explicitly privileged the centrality of Madrid, linking it to ports and frontiers

- despite its remarkable commercial unimportance. Rather than tying together Spain as a civic and economic community, the railway's design was intended to centralize power in the capital, disproportionately improve *official* communications and so the effectiveness of that centralized power, and to facilitate the economic development of Madrid at the expense of the regions (117–118).
18. Renée Silverman, "Rafael Barradas, Catalan Futurism and Marinetti's Visit to Barcelona (1928)," in *2013 International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 215.
 19. The jibe is usually ascribed to Alexandre Dumas *père*, but a very similar idea can be found as early as 1816 in the memoirs of the splendidly named French clergyman-diplomat l'Abbé Dominique-Georges-Frédéric de Rion de Prolhiac Dufour, baron de Pradt, an attendee of the Congress of Vienna (*Mémoires historiques sur la révolution d'Espagne*, Perronneau, 1816).
 20. Every part of the Iberian Peninsula was deeply and indelibly marked by the Muslim invasions that began in 711. Arab generals, leading Arab and Berber troops, took advantage of a period of domestic strife within the then-dominant Visigothic ruling class and invaded from Morocco. The Muslim army reached well into central France before being turned back at Poitiers in 732 by a European army under Charles Martel. Asturias, a small mountainous region on the Bay of Biscay, was the only part of the Iberian Peninsula never to be ruled by Muslims, and from it would come the beginnings of the Castilian monarchy that would forcibly unify most of the peninsula. The Castilian claim to legitimacy by descent from the Visigothic monarchy was key to the politicking that surrounded the formal unification of Spain into a single monarchy (cf. Álvarez Junco, *Mater dolorosa*, 42).
 21. The wane of the Genoese Republic's commercial hegemony due to internal economic woes left a power vacuum in the region, and the Catalan-Aragonese empire eventually extended eastwards, growing to include Sicily, Sardinia, and Greek islands in the Aegean (Fletcher, "Early Middle Ages," 84).
 22. José Manuel Cuenca Toribio, *Andalucía. Historia de un pueblo* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1982), 357.
 23. Juan Reglà, *Historia de Cataluña* (Madrid: Alianza, 1974), 58.
 24. Angus Mackay, "The Late Middle Ages," in *Spain: A History*, ed. Raymond Carr (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 110.
 25. H.J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (New York: AMS Press, 1969 [1933]), 203.
 26. E. Allison Peers, *Catalonia infelix* (London: Methuen, 1937), 66.
 27. By "essentializing" I mean the attempt to reduce national character to an ideal, reductive set of values and practices, and the limitation of civic

participation to the enactment of those values and practices. An essentializing discourse of “Spanishness” was fundamental to the Francoist discourse that would violently supersede more participatory, open forms of democratic life as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War. In the context of a discussion of Alomar, such discourses could be seen as opposed to the modernist’s happy acceptance of the messiness of social life as constituted by individual and sub-group priorities coexisting in a non-normative public sphere.

28. Spain specifically experienced an obsession with a historically transcendent, essentializing “Spanishness” “derive[d] from historical, ethnographic, and linguistic discourses that have been common currency in Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century” (Loureiro, “Spanish Nationalism” 65–66).
29. Andrès de Blas Guerrero, *Nacionalismos y naciones en Europa* (Madrid: Espasa, 1994), 38ff.
30. I discuss this performative view of nationality and nationhood somewhat more in Bird, “Literary Tropes and Futurist Social Critique.” Briefly, Alomar should be read here in the context of earlier, sometimes Romantic European ideas of nationhood, starting with the eighteenth-century thinkers such as Johann Gottfried von Herder’s (1744–1803) philosophy of nation, and the influential formulation of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) sometimes called “cultural nationalism.” In his “Fourth Address to the German Nation,” Fichte described a doctrine in which the individual is set at naught, writing that in speech “[n]icht eigentlich redet der Mensch, sondern in ihm redet die menschliche Natur, und verkündigt sich ändern seines Gleichen” [(i)t is not actually the human being who speaks, but rather it is human nature that speaks in him and announces itself to other humans]. For Fichte, the purpose of education is to produce a society in which this “human nature” is allowed to flow more and more unencumbered—in other words, a totalitarian orthodoxy in which the destruction of the individual will (“die Freiheit des Willens gänzlich vernichtete”) is necessary for the good of the state. For Fichte, this is the central purpose of education. Fichte’s understanding of national feeling requires an Ideal, which people then express in their life practices to a greater or lesser degree of perfection. For Fichte, finally, there was no question that the German nation was a chosen people, nearer to the Ideal and more able to act out its imperatives by their very nature—a notion with terrible consequences. Alomar, who cites Fichte, borrows this framework and emphasis on education for a libertarian project completely different from Fichte’s statism. Warm thanks are due to Fichte scholar Daniel Breazeale of the University of Kentucky for help with this idea.
31. Alomar, “El futurisme,” 76.

32. Manuel Fraga Iribarne held several important posts under the Franco regime, and was Minister of Information and Tourism between 1962 and 1969. A savvy political operator throughout his lifetime, he successfully navigated the transition to democracy after Franco's death in 1975, helping to write the 1978 constitution, founding the conservative political party *Alianza Popular* ("People's Alliance") (the direct ancestor of today's center-right *Partido Popular*), and then, when pushed out of the center of affairs in Madrid, spending 15 years as President of his native region of Galicia in northeastern Spain. As Minister of Tourism, Fraga popularized the slogan "España es diferente!" as a way to attract visitors from northern Europe to Spain's beaches and countryside. The campaign to attract visitors used an extremely reduced conception of the Spanish character—flamenco dancers, gypsies, bullfighters, and the like—to present a facile, pleasant face to the world.
33. "The Spanish Problem" was a phrase much used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Generally, it denotes a phenomenon that many Europeanized Spanish intellectuals were attempting to identify and define, a characteristic syndrome or set of attributes that would explain Spain's failure to modernize along with the rest of Europe. There were as many theories as theorists, including principals of the Generation of 98 like Miguel de Unamuno and Pío Baroja, as well as both older and younger thinkers such as Emilia Pardo Bazán, Benito Pérez Galdós, José Ortega y Gasset, and Ernesto Giménez Caballero.
34. Juan Pablo Fusi and Jordi Palafox, *El desafío de la modernidad* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997), 162.
35. Junco, *Mater dolorosa*, 2001.
36. Raymond Carr, "Liberalism and Reaction, 1833–1931," in *Spain: A History*, ed. Raymond Carr (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 233–234.
37. "Carlism" is a term that refers to a series of dynastic disputes that begin in the first third of the nineteenth century, when a pragmatic sanction was issued to replace the previously prevalent Salic law. This change meant that the presumptive heir to the throne, Don Carlos María Isidro de Borbón, was disinherited in favor of his niece, eventually crowned Isabel II. The disinheritance touched off a series of civil wars, in which the more conservative, Catholic, absolutist factions tended to gravitate toward Carlos and the relatively "moderate" or constitutionalist factions toward the underage Isabel and her Regent, María Cristina.
38. Alomar, "L'obra civil i laica" [The Civilian and Layman's Work], in *El futurisme*, 255.
39. Alomar, "El lliberalisme català" [Catalan Liberalism], in *El futurisme*, 91.
40. This judgmental distinction was ubiquitous in the early parts of the twentieth century, and was believed by some to reflect a timeless division of

humanity: “In particular, the vision of antiquity as dominated by two great peoples, proposed by Leonard Ranke in his *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker* (*History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations*), meshes with ethnographic discourses about the division of humanity in various races, and with discourses of historical linguistics about languages and their families” (Loureiro, “Spanish Nationalism,” 66). Alomar deploys it to the disadvantage of Spain, but some slightly later writers like Giménez Caballero reverse it to serve as a compliment to the “Latins.”

41. Alomar, *El futurisme*, 107.
42. Alomar, “El lliberalisme català,” in *El futurisme*, 108.
43. *Ibid.*, 90.
44. *Ibid.*, 107.
45. *Ibid.*, 98.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, 102
49. *Ibid.*, 98.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, 103.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Alomar, “L’obra civil i laïca,” in *El futurisme*, 254. “Afrancesado” is a term with origins in the eighteenth century, originally denoting a Francophile Spaniard, usually one with Enlightenment sympathies and values. The term acquired a pejorative meaning in the Napoleonic period, since Francophiles were widely suspected of collaborating with the French occupiers, and indeed much of the Bourbon bureaucracy stayed in place under Joseph Bonaparte.
54. In fact, Alomar describes Spain as having been a “Sleeping Beauty,” awakening at the end of the nineteenth century to find her clothing out of fashion and her understanding of social niceties gone (“El lliberalisme català” 99).
55. Alomar, “El lliberalisme català,” in *El futurisme*, 100.
56. *Ibid.*, 103.
57. Alomar, “L’obra civil i laïca,” in *El futurisme*, 253.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Alomar, “Catalunya i el occidentalisme” [Catalonia and Occidentalism], in *El futurisme*, 187.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, 188.
62. Alomar does not say whether or not he had read Hegel, whose notion of *Geist* and its ongoing self-realization resonate with this idea of the flowing world-culture.

63. Alomar, "Catalunya i el occidentalisme," in *El futurisme*, 188.
64. *Ibid.*, 189.
65. *Ibid.*, 190. It should be emphasized that Alomar's notion that similar nations placed in similar contexts tend to act in similar ways is not the same as more strongly essentializing discourses that would maintain that nations are necessarily formed at a mental level by their geography, that is, that a force sometimes called "geoteleology" marks out the inevitable destinies of idealized "Peoples." Alomar is simply noting the fact that island nations tend to have lots of people in them who are good at maritime activities because they spend much time in boats, instead of saying that their "national character" makes them transcendently superior.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Alomar, "El fur i la federació" [The *Fuero* and the Federation], 246.
68. *Ibid.*, 245.
69. *Ibid.*, 247.
70. *Ibid.*, 246.
71. *Ibid.*, 247.

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Geopoetics and Historical Modernism: Gertrude Stein, Laura Riding, and Robert Graves in Mallorca, 1912–1936

Anett Jessop

The Balearic Islands off Spain’s eastern coast—Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, and Formentera—are arguably the most “Mediterranean” of places. The archipelago’s strategic position for trade made it an important holding for the major civilizations and empires of the Mediterranean Basin: the early Phoenicians, Greeks, and Carthaginians from the sixth century BCE; the Roman Empire, from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE; Germanic Vandals; the Byzantine Empire during the fifth and sixth centuries; and from the seventh century onward, the Moors, most notably, the Emirate of Córdoba and the Umayyad Caliphate. In 1229, Christian Catalonians, under Jaime I, seized the islands for the Crown of Aragon, a claim that held until the eighteenth century, when, with the dissolution of Aragon, the islands were variously occupied by the French, British, and Spanish until the early nineteenth century, when the Balearics were claimed once again as a province of Spain.¹ As such, culturally, religiously, and linguistically, the Balearic Islands are imprinted with the heterogeneity representative of historical *Mediterranea*: Greco-Roman, Christian and Muslim, Latin and Arabic.

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While the Balearics were not an antiquities stop on the European Grand Tour, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travelers still found their way to the islands. Word of Mallorca's salubrious climate attracted an ailing Frédéric Chopin and George Sand, for example, who spent the winter of 1838–1839 in the Valldemossa Charterhouse, a fourteenth-century Carthusian monastery; Sand captured their stay in her travelogue *Un Hiver à Majorque* [Winter in Mallorca] (1855).² Late nineteenth-century European readers discovered the islands through the Austrian Archduke Ludwig Salvator's seven-volume cultural and natural history, *Die Balearen, Geschildert in Wort und Bild* (The Balearic Islands Portrayed in Word and Image), released between 1869 and 1891.³ And early twentieth-century tourists enjoyed the many travelogues and translations of British adventurer-scholar J.E. Crawford Fritch, including his *Mediterranean Moods: Footnotes of Travel in the Islands of Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, and Sardinia* (1911).⁴

Through the first decades of the twentieth century, several influential modernist writers arrived in the Balearic Islands, notably Gertrude Stein, Laura Riding, and Robert Graves.⁵ Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas vacationed on Mallorca twice: during the spring of 1912 and later, for the span of a year, from May 1915 until June 1916. In 1929, when the collaborators Riding and Graves wished to escape London after Riding's failed suicide attempt (illegal in Britain), Stein advised, "If you like paradise, Mallorca is paradise." Unlike Stein, who never sought to relocate from Paris to any part of Spain, Riding and Graves moved their belongings and literary Seizin Press to the northeastern village of Deià, where they bought land, built a home and press shop, and set to work writing books and attracting shorter- and longer-term collaborators for their projects.

Scholars of literary modernism have examined the impact of Europe's great capitals (Paris, London, Berlin) on the modernist vanguard.⁶ Spain (including its urban centers), however, remained a peripheral location, and many of its artists and writers relocated to European cities, including Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, and Luis Buñuel.⁷ Nevertheless, after the first decades of the twentieth century, Spain, which had remained neutral during World War I and thus still had a countryside that was not war-ravaged, became attractive to European tourists. The Balearic Islands were inexpensive, secluded, and now accessible thanks to the fledgling cruise-ship industry servicing such Mediterranean ports as Palma, Mallorca, and Vila d'Eivissa, Ibiza.⁸ At the time of their sojourns, Stein, Riding, and Graves were at the height of their creative powers and productivity; still, their

stays on the Balearic Islands resulted in marked aesthetic and conceptual redirections—most notably in their emphases on genre, subject, and language. Unlike the “third-space” locales described by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, the inter-cultural exchange between these writers and their Catalan neighbors was limited and superficial. If anything, the experience of cultural isolation and privacy allowed them to focus more directly on their own national, linguistic, and aesthetic identities. For Stein, the redirection was a new perceptual framework, as revealed in *Tender Buttons* (1914) and *Geography and Plays* (1922); Spain, she claimed, freed her to develop her experimental writing style, especially as it highlighted language and description. Riding and Graves, although they were better known as poets, embarked on historical novels portraying Persian, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine royals, generals, and courtiers (*A Trojan Ending* and *Lives of Wives; I, Claudius*, and *Count Belisarius*, respectively).⁹

This pattern of inventive shifts, calibrated to location and historical moment, in the works of these modernist writers can be analyzed by means of Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope, as defined in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward A Historical Poetics” (1937–1938).¹⁰ Bakhtin’s formulation of the literary chronotope proceeds from his earlier theorizing of the self and identity. Bakhtin’s self is an “architectonic” structure produced through the composite of perceptions of the subject and reflecting “others,” with identity being the subsequent consciousness of this internal–external exchange, or dialogue. Similarly, Bakhtin’s literary chronotope is the interplay of authorial imagination and the external dimensions of time and place. Bakhtin claims that each literary work is intrinsically stamped by its chronotopic (time-space) reality, that is, its “historical poetics.” Time “thickens” and space is “charged”¹¹ such that both formalize in the artwork. The chronotope, as a “formally constitutive category of literature,”¹² operates as an “organizing center” for representation,¹³ which can be further analyzed for broader cultural and ideological significances.¹⁴ The literary chronotope may epitomize a particular setting or situation that incorporates a social space which then shapes narrative interactions and plot outcomes. As time is its signal feature, the chronotope will also direct narrative description and pace in a literary work. Bakhtin asserts that the chronotope “defines genre and generic distinctions”; as such, narrative prose fiction is the chronotope’s natural literary domain, as opposed to poetry with its concentrated arrangements and multivalent language.¹⁵ Bakhtin, like many modernists, resurrects the Mediterranean past in order

to ground his theory of the chronotope through a review of classical Greek narrative. Alongside his extended discussion of ancient novelistic prototypes and their appropriation in the developing European novel form, he identifies typological chronotopes which construct emblematic sites for narrative action, conflict, and transformation: the road; parlors and salons; and provincial towns, to name a few. Bakhtin's motivic "chronotope of the road," for example, aligns with the familiar modernist trope of the traveler:

On the road ("the high road"), the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect at one spatial and temporal point....On the road the spatial and temporal series defining human fates and lives combine with one another in distinctive ways, even as they become more complex and more concrete by the collapse of *social distances*. The chronotope of the road is both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement.¹⁶

While "the road" may present a *Canterbury-Tales*-style parade of different types, the characters often remain essentially unchanged by association or locality, while at the same time becoming more themselves against the relief of human diversity—a phenomenon that Bakhtin addresses: "the road is always one that passes through *familiar territory*, and not through some exotic *alien world* (...since the foreignness of this foreign country is illusory, [and] there is not a trace of the exotic); it is the *sociohistorical heterogeneity* of one's own country that is revealed and depicted."¹⁷ The modernist writers here under consideration did not assimilate with the local population; if anything, the experience of traveling, being "on the road," produced a more enhanced interiority—a further identification with language, class, and nation. While the curiosities of local habits and beliefs are remarked upon by all three writers, such observations do not induce the kind of hybridity that Bhabha finds in "third-space" localities. Instead, these writers focus almost exclusively on their own cultural projects, and with innovations suggested by Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope: that is, to genre-choice, subject matter, and attention to their native tongue. This chapter examines these modernist writers' redirections in terms of the representation of historical time and its coincident effect on the aesthetic direction of their works.

GERTRUDE STEIN IN PALMA

Stein's travels with Toklas are depicted in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), where their decision to vacation in Mallorca for the first time, during the spring of 1912, is described as an arbitrary one: "That summer having found the Balearic Islands on the map, we went to the island of Mallorca."¹⁸ Spain had already produced an effect on Stein's work. According to "Alice," an earlier visit had freed Stein to further develop her experimental writing style:

We enjoyed Granada...and it was there and at that time that Gertrude Stein's style gradually changed. She says hitherto she had been interested only in the insides of people, their character and what went on inside them, it was during that summer that she first felt a desire to express the rhythm of the visible world.¹⁹

That an aesthetic shift, marked by moving from the depiction of a psychological interiority to a descriptive exteriority, occurred "there and at that time" registers the presence of the chronotope. The time-place axis is repeated in "the rhythm" (tempo) and the subjectively envisioned province of "the visible world." Thereafter Stein worked to fuse the endogenous/exogenous binary in order to, as she explains, "describe the inside as seen from the outside" in her "studies" published in *Tender Buttons*.²⁰

While the 1912 visit to Mallorca was relatively brief, it did offer Stein and Toklas a sense of the island, in the company of the American painter William Cook. Following the Battle of the Marne in September 1914, Stein's second visit to Mallorca was prompted by an increasingly tense and mobilizing European theater: "We decided we would go to Palma too and forget the war a little."²¹ Once back in Spain, Stein and Toklas were struck by the presence of men on the streets, after having experienced their absence due to military conscription: "I did not imagine there could be so many men left in the world. One's eyes had become so habituated to menless streets, the few men one saw being in uniform and therefore not being men but soldiers, that to see quantities of men walking up and down the Ramblas was bewildering."²² Palma was a refuge from the zeppelin alarms in Paris, and soon Stein sent for their Breton maid in order to set up household at 45 Calle del Dos de Mayo, Terreno, on the outskirts of the island capital.²³ The year in Mallorca proved highly productive for Stein and a good portion

of the work that she accomplished there was later published in *Geography and Plays* (1922). As pleasant as life was in Palma, war reports eventually compelled them to return to Paris in June 1916: “Day by day the news was worse...[However] Verdun was not going to be taken. Verdun was safe. The Germans [sic] had given up hoping to take it. When it was all over we none of us wanted to stay in Mallorca any longer, we all wanted to go home.”²⁴

It is not surprising that travel, with its exposure to diverse languages, geographies, and cultures, would effect change in a writer’s work. In the same way, linguistic diversity would heighten the traveler’s alertness to her own language. Certainly while sightseeing in Spain, Stein heard the country’s many languages (Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Basque) and dialects, including the Mallorquí vernacular spoken on the island. According to her *Autobiography*, Stein’s stylistic shift included experimentation with language, but with the end result that she committed to her native tongue: “She tried a bit inventing words but she soon gave that up. The english language was her medium and with the english language the task was to be achieved, the problem solved.”²⁵ According to “Alice,” Stein avoided reading in French and during their visits to Mallorca, the two women generally socialized with the few English-speaking expatriates on the island: “A great many americans seem to like it [Mallorca] now but in those days [William] Cook and ourselves were the only americans to inhabit the island. There were a few english, about three families there. There was a descendant of one of Nelson’s captains, a Mrs. Penfold, a sharp-tongued elderly lady and her husband.”²⁶ Attention to geography becomes increasingly evident in Stein’s work during this period, in particular the motif of the “island” and island culture. That Stein associated England with Mallorca is evident in her rendering of an earlier occurrence into an entry in *Geography and Plays*. During the Battle of the Marne, Stein and Toklas had been stranded in England, staying in the London home of philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, with whom Stein “walked endlessly around the country... [and] talked of philosophy and history.”²⁷ One evening when Bertrand Russell, Whitehead’s co-author of the foundational *Principia Mathematica* (1910, 1912, and 1913), came to visit, Stein engaged him in discussions of education and the comparative values of island cultures upon Western civilization, including those of the classical Mediterranean world:

[Russell] explained all the weaknesses of the american system of education, particularly their neglect of the study of greek. Gertrude Stein replied that of course England which was an island needed Greece which was or might

have been an island. At any rate greek was essentially an island culture, while America needed essentially the culture of a continent which was of necessity latin....Stein then became very earnest and gave a long discourse on the value of greek to the english, aside from its being an island, and the lack of value of greek culture for the americans based upon the psychology of americans as different from the psychology of the english. She grew very eloquent on the disembodied abstract quality of the american character and cited examples, mingling automobiles with Emerson, and all proving that they did not need greek, in a way that fussed Russell more and more and kept everybody occupied until everybody went to bed.²⁸

This explication on islands is concentrated in her composition “England” (*Geography and Plays*) where Stein’s experience of Mallorca combines the idea of island culture and intrinsic values:

Nothing is perplexing if there is an island. The special sign of this is in dusting. It then extends itself and as there is no destruction it remains a principle. This which makes that reveals that and revelation is not fortuitous. It is combined and ordered and a bargain. All this shows the condition to be erect. Suppose that there is no question, if there is no question then certainly the absence of no particular is not designed. And then when it is astonishing it is no liberty. Liberty is that which gathered together is not disturbed by distribution and not given without remark and not disturbed by frugality and an outline. All this makes the impression that is so disturbed that there is no question.²⁹

Here, Stein employs the language of economics, both home (domesticity) and commercial (“bargain,” “distribution”). The word “island” is emblematic, a standard, pregnant with meaning and revelatory, even while ambiguous, ephemeral, and so surprising as to evade “question.” Comparison of these two passages—the distillation of the experiential into an aestheticized prose argumentation—highlights Stein’s principles of composition at this time, which focused on an “exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality” to create a “simplification” through “concentration” in order to extinguish any “associational emotion” in the creative text.³⁰

Geopoetics

Stein’s approach to time–place depictions is often referential, with embedded historical and autobiographical allusions. In the piece “Mallorcan

Stories,” from *Geography and Plays*, Stein compiles references to island sites and history to generate her composition:

Romanonos no.
 Maurer see.
 Sun never sets.
 Napoleon the third, cathedral.
 McKinley’s eagle.
 Pope’s prayers for peace.
 Pins and needles ship.
 Mallorcan stories

For example, the opening line, “Romanonos no,” recalls Mallorca’s Roman settlements and the remaining ruins that could be found in towns like Pollença and Alcúdia at the northern tip of Mallorca.³¹ The Latinate name is run together and followed by an echoing “no” which then links semantically to the end word “see” in the following line. Alfred “Maurer,” the American modernist painter, is mentioned in the *Autobiography* as an acquaintance of Stein’s who offered her a firsthand account of the invasion at Marne.³² “See” responds to the Spanish homophone “sí” (yes) to answer the English “no,” thereby also effectively externalizing sound and sight. (An additional homophone for “see” is possible by the reference to the Pope, and thus the Holy See, in line six.) The allusion to British nineteenth-century empire-building, “Sun never sets,” holds equally true for the global ambitions of the Spanish Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as those of Napoleon III, Emperor of the Second French Empire. In the same vein, in the last years of the nineteenth century, American expansionist campaigns under President William McKinley acquired the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico (as well as a holding interest in Cuba) from Spain following the Spanish–American War (which signaled the decline of the Spanish Empire). The composition’s stacked descriptors run chronologically, from the Roman Empire to the Great War, Stein’s biographical moment, when the newly appointed Pope Benedict XV “Pray[s] for peace” and a German ship, “which sold pins and needles to all the Mediterranean ports before the war” was abandoned in the Palma harbor.³³ Later, after the start of the battle for Verdun, German sailors began preparing the ship for war, which alarmed Stein and the other tourists (setting them, as it were, on “pins and needles”). In these Mallorcan “stories,” Stein interrogates time and place through

historical–contemporary conflation, as she also does in other works in *Geography and Plays*. In “I Like It To Be A Play: A Play” (Scene IV), for example, she asks, what defines place?

Will you be sorry to leave Mallorca.
 You mean the island.
 The sun.
 Or the people.
 A great many people dislike the people.³⁴

Is “Mallorca” the land mass, the environment, the population, her neighbors? Or, is “Mallorca” Stein’s literary topos, her rhetorical theme? “Spain is a tame name,” she rhymes in “In the Grass (On Spain),” and where she also claims that “culture is power, Culture is power. Culture.”³⁵ National and linguistic identities are further questioned in other works that Stein wrote during this period: “England”; “France”; “Mexico”; “Italians”; “Americans”; “Land of Nations. (Sub Title: And Ask Asia)”; “Accents in Alsace”; and “The Psychology of Nations OR What Are You Looking At.”

As Bakhtin proposes in his theory of the chronotope, the Mallorcan geography (space/place) pressures a generic shift in Stein’s work, such that she is inspired to move from prose narrative to dramatic form, as confirmed by “Alice” in the *Autobiography*: “It was during this stay at Palma de Mallorca that most of the plays afterwards published in *Geography and Plays* were written. She always says that a certain kind of landscape induces plays and the country around Terreno certainly did.”³⁶ Moreover, the collection title, *Geography and Plays*, proclaims the correspondence of place and genre. Many of the works in the collection experiment with dramatic conventions, that is, the subdivisions of whole works into Acts, Scenes, Parts, and also Chapters and Pages, as well as illocutionary acts sometimes introduced as “Monologues” and “Dialogues.” Stein is most observant of social networks, family interactions, and individual idiosyncrasies. “Alice” comments that Stein’s literary world is composed of people: “She always however made her chief study people and therefore the never ending series of portraits.”³⁷ Stein’s experimental dramatic formats exploit the word “play” for its definition as both noun (literary genre) and verb (to play); this was a conscious stylistic shift for Stein, away from the “seriousness” of earlier work.³⁸ In the following excerpt, from “Do Let Us Go Away: A Play,” Stein offers a symposia of characterizations (The War, The Cuban Boat, Minorca) and characters (royalty, Spaniards, a Greek goddess, as

well as unidentifiable persons) engaged in reportage, opinion, and conventional pleasantries:

The End of May

The weather in June is like the weather in September.

The end of May is cooler.

The bathman is disgusted that the Mallorcans don't bathe in September. The water is warm in September.

It is warmer in July and August.

(The War.) Are there German submarines in Spanish waters.

(Signor Dato.) There are no German submarines in Spanish waters.

(Marquis of Ibyza.) I hate the English.

(The King.) Have you any daughters.

(Marquis of Ibyza.) I have.

(The King.) Then leave them all alone.

(The Cuban Boat.) It has sunk.

...

(Iphegenia.) To work hard is commendable if one earns money. I do not wish to be married. I wish to be sure of marriage. I have selected my sisters. They do embroidery. I will not copy them. I am not so old. I have a younger brother and sister. I do not pay attention. We do not pay attention to one another. I am in a way disappointed. I do believe in fish. Everybody does in Mallorca.

(Minorca answering in French.) I know the name of Mary Rose.

What is a saint.

Stamp on a flag.

Believe in your country.

Singing at night.

(Paul.) I am going to see John.

(John.) Come when you like. How is your wife.

(Paul.) My wife is tired. We walked too far yesterday. It was beautiful moonlight.

(John.) Remember me to her.³⁹

This dramatization grounds Stein's historical moment (World War I) and location (the Balearic Islands) through conversations, both fanciful and parochial. Stein's dramatic exchanges often conform to the kinds of discourse present in Bakhtin's motivic chronotope of parlors and salons, "where encounters occur...the webs of intrigue are spun, denouements occur and finally—this is where *dialogues* happen,...revealing the character, 'ideas' and 'passions' of the heroes."⁴⁰ (Stein was famous for

her own weekly literary salons in Paris, which attracted influential modernist writers and artists.) In addition to these types of social interactions, Bakhtin accounts for the opportunity for intimate exchanges: “the weaving of historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life, with the secrets of the boudoir.”⁴¹ Life in Mallorca offered Stein and Toklas privacy and a certain isolation; during this period, Stein writes “Pink Melon Joy,” which appeared in *Geography and Plays*, as well as much of the erotic sequence *Lifting Belly*.⁴² In these works, Mallorca, the island/the experience, multiplies and amplifies its significations:

Lifting belly is recognized to be the only spectacle present.
 Do you mean that.
 Lifting belly is a language. It says island. Island a strata.
 Lifting belly is a repetition.
 Lifting belly means me.⁴³

“Island a strata” suggests semantic layers, both rock and tissue; there is a transfiguration of the geography of Mallorca into the intimate topography of the body, the language of intimacy, and individual identity.⁴⁴

In his preface to *Geography and Plays*, American novelist Sherwood Anderson observes that the modern writer is always in a “hurry” to achieve “grand things,” to write the “Great American Novel,” in the process forfeiting the importance of the “little words” that must carry textual meaning. Stein’s work is different, he claims, for it operates “in a rebuilding, an entire new recasting of life, in the city of words... .the little housekeeping words, the swaggering bullying street-corner words, the honest working, money saving words, and all the other forgotten and neglected citizens of the sacred and half forgotten city.”⁴⁵ Simple words, provincial settings, and contemporaneity: what Laura Riding, in a review in the journal *transition*, called her “barbarism,” are the fundamentals of Stein’s Mallorca compositions.⁴⁶ Bakhtin’s chronotope of the “provincial town” as a “locus for action” is characterized by stagnation, a tempo of “sleepy streets, the dust and flies” of quotidian time:

Time here has no advancing historical movement; it moves rather in narrow circles. ... Day in, day out the same round of activities are repeated, the same topics of conversation, the same words and so forth. In this type of time people eat, drink, sleep, have wives, mistresses (casual affairs), involve

themselves in petty intrigues, sit in their shops or offices, play cards, gossip. This is commonplace, philistine cyclical everyday time.⁴⁷

Bakhtin establishes how “cyclical everyday time” organizes narrative, in other words, directs composition, in such a way as to free the writer to begin a work at any temporal narrative point: “The author-creator moves freely in his own time: he can begin this story at the end, in the middle, or at any moment of the events represented without violating the objective course of time in the event he describes.”⁴⁸

In a way similar to Bakhtin, Stein, as set forth in her 1926 treatise “Composition as Explanation,” subscribes to representing the “time-sense in the composition,” or narrative duration, which she calls the “prolonged present” and “the continuous present” as realized through the “creation of expression” offered by the writer.⁴⁹ For Stein, composition is the organic time-based generation of the language of the text and time as registered in the text, both process and object: “the time-sense in the composition is the composition that is making what there is in composition.”⁵⁰ Her depictions of life’s mundane reenactments, the repeated activities, and conversation topics as itemized in Bakhtin’s account, are reproduced in the process of composing: “Beginning again and again and again explaining composition and time is a natural thing.”⁵¹ Stein’s aesthetic shift during the Mallorcan period, when she began to record the inside as seen from the outside and the outside from within, corresponds to the topological loop characteristic of the chronotope, where there is “mutual interaction between the world represented in the work and the world outside the work.”⁵² Bakhtin’s broader query, “from what temporal and spatial point of view does the author look upon the events that he describes?,” is likewise Stein’s preoccupation. She defines a text’s modernity as perforce its “authentic” generation in the present moment—what Bakhtin calls the writer’s “own unresolved and still evolving contemporaneity.”⁵³ The point of view is necessarily always of the present moment, as Stein rather archly confirms in “Composition”: “No one is ahead of his time.”⁵⁴ In fact, by the time a writer’s innovation is recognized and “classified” in critical explanation, it belongs to the past and is no longer modern—it has become, Stein states, “classical.”⁵⁵ This tension between contemporary time and the classical past will be further vetted by Riding and Graves.

LAURA RIDING AND ROBERT GRAVES IN DEIÁ

In October 1929, Riding and Graves stopped to visit Stein and Toklas at their summer house in Belley in southeastern France. Riding and Graves had fled London to avoid Riding's deportation after her dramatic suicide attempt earlier that spring following a failed love affair. Riding was an early champion of Stein, having written one of the first literary-critical analyses of her work, "The New Barbarism and Gertrude Stein" (1927), for the journal *transition*. Additionally, Graves and Riding profiled her writing in their influential *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), and their Seizin Press was preparing to release Stein's *An Acquaintance with Description* (1929). On Stein's recommendation, they continued on to Mallorca which, she claimed, was "paradise—if you can stand it."⁵⁶ While Stein had remained in the island capital of Palma, Riding and Graves settled in the more remote mountain village of Deiá, beyond Valldemossa where Frédéric Chopin and George Sand had stayed. Against a setting rich in olive, fig, and citrus trees, they built a main residence, Canellún ("the house belonging to far away"), with its press room, attendant orchards, and surrounding huts. Soon poets, literary critics, journalists, artists, and filmmakers converged to create an intellectual community to assist with Riding's and Graves's many projects exploring language and culture.⁵⁷

While their move to Mallorca was forced, the effect of the Mediterranean upon Riding's and Graves's imaginations and work was expansive. As it happened, their literary partnership had begun against a Mediterranean backdrop when, in 1926, Riding had sailed from New York City to join Graves and his then-wife, Nancy Nicholson, on a journey to Egypt where Graves had accepted the position of English professor at the University of Cairo.⁵⁸ Fierce champions of poetry up to this point, once in Mallorca both Graves and Riding began to work on novelistic projects that resurrected the classical world in decidedly modern works of historical fiction. Graves personalized the powerful figures of the past through "autobiographic" narratives depicting Roman and Byzantine emperors in *I, Claudius* (1934), *Claudius the God* (1935), and *Count Belisarius* (1938); Riding penned feminist revisions of the patriarchal record by recovering the forgotten lives of Greek, Trojan and Roman women in *A Trojan Ending* (1937) and *Lives of Wives* (1939). Additionally, Riding and Graves co-edited and published the journal *Epilogue: A Critical Summary* (1935–1937)—containing essay contributions by their many visiting

collaborators—that interrogated literature, culture, language, and politics. Many of the *Epilogue* articles reflect a preoccupation with reading the modern against the classical: for example, Rimbaud against Catullus (“The Cult of Failure”); Tacitus on the German character (“Germany”); the ancient Greek philosophers and tragedians on civil infractions and social transgression (“Crime”).⁵⁹ Paradoxically—or predictably, as illustrated by Stein—while surrounded by Mallorcan Catalan (Mallorquí), Riding and Graves became ever more interested in the English language, as evidenced in their many lexicographical and sociolinguistic projects.⁶⁰ In early August 1936—after seven years in Mallorca—Riding and Graves were forced by Francisco Franco’s invading Nationalist forces to abandon their property, possessions, and work, and to evacuate the island. From 1936–1939, they drifted through England, Switzerland, France, and finally to the USA, working to finalize the many projects begun in Mallorca. In 1940, they officially ended their 13-year partnership, with Riding remaining in the USA and Graves returning to England.⁶¹

Historical Modernism

Walter Benjamin has observed that, “Among all relationships into which modernity entered, its relationship to classical antiquity stands out.”⁶² Indeed, the images and achievements of the classical Mediterranean world resonated for modernist writers, philosophers, artists and, notoriously, in Germany’s conscious staging of the Third Reich in the guise of Imperial Rome.⁶³ This preoccupation with the classical world registered in the works produced by Riding and Graves once they settled in Mallorca. They, too, worked to define and historicize their contemporary literary period in critical and creative projects, and they are usually credited with coining the term “modernism.” What is striking is the shift that occurred in their conceptualization of history following their relocation from London to Deiá. Riding and Graves were first publically partnered in their seminal *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), which introduced British audiences to American modernists, and famously modeled textual close-reading—thereby influencing William Empson’s treatise on lexical ambiguity and instigating the emergent New Criticism. A driving question in this study transposed the relationship of writer to epoch: “may a poet write as a poet or must he write as a period?”⁶⁴ In *Survey*, they deconstruct examples of modernist poetry to expose false claims of originality, belief in literary progress, and over-dependence on literary theory.⁶⁵ They contend that

twentieth-century vanguards did not successfully “make it new” (as Ezra Pound championed); in place of “honest invention,” these movements substituted a “rewriting” of the poetry of past vanguards.⁶⁶ Modernist poets did succeed, however, in befuddling the “plain reader” with the appearance of difficulty through stylistic mannerisms, eccentric analogies with other art forms (such as painting and music), and aberrant punctuation, typography, and lineation. Riding and Graves criticize these modernists for being consumed with representing “time-spirit,” that is, making an “historical effort,” which they define as a “forced” requirement of the poem to represent its “accidental” time-place of generation.⁶⁷ As such, time became the “foundation of composition” and also its critical measure: “any poem which could not be related to its period could not be said to have any immediate critical value, and critical value was the only value by which poetry could become current.”⁶⁸ Riding and Graves claim that this “false modernism,” with its “faith in history,” mistakenly interfused two distinct realms: Civilization, with its Darwinian theories of progress, and Poetry, writ large. Accordingly, modernism meant “progressiveness,” “intellectual advancement,” and a belief that society was “continuously developing in the direction of an absolute and perfect end—which it obviously is not.”⁶⁹ Literary “historical modernism,” their term, forced poetry into a race with civilization. In place of this “false modernism” Riding and Graves propose an “authentic ‘advanced’ poetry” and a “genuine modernism” that is independent in thought and embodies a paradigm shift—“faith in the immediate, the new doings of poems...as not necessarily derived from history”—which casts the poet as “maker” rather than “methodist.” This “ideal” poem, the authors claim, “is its own clearest, fullest and most accurate meaning....[I]t presents the literal substance of poetry, a newly created thought-activity: the poem has the character of a creature by itself.”⁷⁰ Self-sufficient, independent of both maker and critic to interpret and justify its meanings, the genuinely modern poem interprets itself.⁷¹ Instead of representing modernity, the independent poet represents Poetry as a seemingly Platonic form, an ideal beyond the confines of time and place. Poetry is thus separate from civilization,

developing organically by itself—not a minor branch of human endeavor but a complete and separate form of energy which is neither more nor less in the twentieth century AD than in the tenth century BC, nor a different kind of energy now from what it was in Homeric times, but merely lodged in different, or *other*, persons.⁷²

Poems are historical and contemporary at the same time, they claim, “at once old-fashioned and modernist.”⁷³ In *Survey*, Riding and Graves present a theory of poetry that is transhistorical and, ultimately, this rarified vision could not easily be sustained as praxis. In particular, Riding’s high praise for poetry and poetic language began to erode once she was in Mallorca, as expressed across volumes like *Poems: A Joking Word* (1930) and *Poet: A Lying Word* (1933), leading to her final renunciation of poetry-writing following the release of her *Collected Poems* in 1938.⁷⁴

Inhabiting History

Once removed from the fog, and the parlors and salons of T.S. Eliot’s “Unreal City,” and having arrived to the Mediterranean and the island of Mallorca, Graves’s and Riding’s understanding of historicity changed, as did their genre for literary production. They came to demonstrate in their work Bakhtin’s formulation of the temporal-spatial perspective of the writer which necessarily encompasses “the literature of the past that continues to live and renew itself in the present.”⁷⁵ Living on an island still dotted with the ruins of the pre-Christian Era Roman occupation was a continuing reminder to them of the reality of history to contemporaneity. From history both writers learned to devise “story” through an imaginative inhabiting of the figures of historical men and women of Mediterranean antiquity: for Graves, the Roman emperor Claudius, and Byzantine general Belisarius; for Riding, Cressida, Helen, Cleopatra, and the wives of classical rulers.⁷⁶ To start, both held strong reservations about the novel genre. In a letter to the military historian Liddell Hart, Graves wrote: “*Claudius* wasn’t written as a work of art...but as a money-maker...it is (faintly) critical, in parts, of the failure of historians to make the most of their stuff, and is very pointedly, in style, *underwritten*, as a criticism of the failure of novelists to hold their readers’ attention with rhetorical *overwriting*. But it claims no more than readability. My only real work is now, and has always been, poems.”⁷⁷ In her preface to *A Trojan Ending*, Riding contends that the historical novel is “a ghoulish” and “parasitic” literary form;⁷⁸ had she been “surer” about the “fact and truth” of the Trojan War, she would have certainly written a poem.⁷⁹ Still, the epic range of Mediterranean history called for a more prolix genre than poetry and both Graves and Riding concur that narrative fiction could supplement what they found lacking in history books. According to Riding, the historian’s purpose “was to tell how

it all happened, not why”;⁸⁰ the “why” that motivated both writers to their material were the enigmas and inconsistencies in historical record for which the novel might posit explanations. As early as 1929, Graves had written in his journal about his interest in the Emperor Claudius: “I had been reading Suetonius and Tacitus. It was about Claudius, the emperor who came between Caligula and Nero...Claudius has always been a puzzle to the historians, as indeed he was to his contemporaries.”⁸¹ Five years later, after finishing his novel, Graves articulated the position of his dramatization in his “Historical Reconstructions in *I, Claudius*”:

I have nowhere, so far as I know, *gone against* history; but wherever authors have disagreed, or there has been a gap or confusion or mystery or they were obviously lying I have felt free to invent, in the spirit of the story.... Needless to say I'm not a Classical scholar or anything of that sort but there is a story somewhere hidden in that confused and rather dreary history and I have tried to dig it out.⁸²

Riding identifies with the Trojan woman Cressida, about whom she felt “[a]n irresistible instinct of sympathy...a sense of long-distance understanding,” whose legend had been repeatedly revised since the medieval period.⁸³ Cressida engages Riding’s attention because her story is incomplete: “There is no story so unfinished as hers, and what is unfinished must be finished. It is this that makes legends: when stories are left unfinished because the life in them was not finished.”⁸⁴

Both Graves and Riding discover they are motivated to imaginatively resolve gaps in the historical record in order to highlight the “story” in history. In fact, the modern writer has the advantage of time—in this case, retrospect—and can render through dialogue the untold and voiceless dimensions of the past. As Bakhtin theorized, the chronotope is the means by which “[t]he process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature”⁸⁵ occurs and the authorial locus⁸⁶ is the writer’s “own unresolved and still evolving contemporaneity, in all its complexity and fullness...[which is] first and foremost, the realm of literature—and not only contemporary literature...but also the literature of the past that continues to live and renew itself in the present.”⁸⁷ Eventually Riding discovers that the novel form, “whatever its faults,” features the “enduring virtue of homeliness,” which permits her to dwell in affinities with the past.⁸⁸

Writing historical fiction allowed Graves and Riding to discover the intersections of the past in the present, both in terms of individual identity and world affairs: for example, the great classical battles offered Graves, a World War I veteran, parallels to the Great European War while the imaginative recovery of the histories of classical women offered Riding forceful female antecedents for her ambitions. While it is perhaps a cliché to state that the lessons of history must insure that we not make similar mistakes—the point is underscored in their works. According to Riding, “The mysterious difference between us and them is only that we cannot, must not suffer what they suffered. We may repeat the pleasures of the past, but to relive its miseries would make our lives wasteful and ghastly.”⁸⁹ A paradox of the historical modernism that Graves and Riding now propose is that, in our advanced age, we can yet be young: “Looking back, we despise...most of what we see in history’s death-tinged quantity. It is all so repulsively old. And we are young. We are at the late end of history, yet we are young.”⁹⁰

In their “Majorcan Letter 1935,” Graves and Riding offer the “trick of history-making” as a method by which “The intact inheritance of / The unborn generation” lives. The effect of the Mediterranean on Gertrude Stein’s modernist imagination enabled her to plot subjectivity into her historical moment. Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope cements the veracity of an identity that is the product of the immediate and the contextual, a narrative of the historical present.⁹¹

NOTES

1. The Crown of Aragon was a federation of kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Mallorca, which commanded significant power throughout the Mediterranean region from the twelfth through seventeenth centuries. With the War of Spanish Succession at the start of the eighteenth century, the Crown of Aragon was abolished.
2. In 1956, Robert Graves published his translation of George Sand’s *Winter in Majorca* with the Mallorca-based Valldemosa Edition press.
3. For a collection of accounts of Mallorca by nineteenth-century tourists, see *British Travellers in Mallorca in the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology of Texts*, eds. Brian J. Dendle and Shelby Thacker (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 2006).
4. J. E. Crawford Fritch. *Mediterranean Moods: Footnotes of Travel in the Islands of Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Sardinia* (London: Grant Richards LTD, 1911), 310. Travel writers’ accolades to Mallorca continued to be

published across the next decades, including Henry C. Shelley's *Majorca* (1926), Frederick Chamberlin's *The Balearics and their Peoples* (1927), Ada Harrison's *A Majorca Holiday* (1927), Gordon West's *Jogging Round Majorca* (1929). For more information related to the above and on early twentieth-century tourism in Mallorca, see John K. Walton's "Paradise Lost and Found: Tourists and Expatriates in El Terreno, Palma de Mallorca, from the 1920s to the 1950s" (*Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, 2005).

5. This article limits its analysis to the three writers here listed; however, other artists and writers representing international modernism also visited and often resided on the islands during the early part of the twentieth century, including D.H. Lawrence (see "The Man Who Loved Islands" in *Collected Short Stories*), Rose Macaulay (see *Crewe Train*, 1926), the Berlin Dadaist Raoul Hausmann, and the American artist William Cook. Literary theorist Walter Benjamin also spent a productive period on Ibiza and the influence of the island on his work will be analyzed by this author in a separate article.
6. Each of the writers in this essay was resident in an important metropolitan center: Stein in Paris; Graves in London; and Riding in New York City (the North American modernist hub) and then London.
7. In *Modernism and the New Spain: Britain, Cosmopolitan Europe, and Literary History* (2012), Gayle Rogers makes the case for a reconsideration of Spain's contributions to European modernism. He examines the project for a New Spain as imagined by Spanish intellectuals and writers and advanced through their network of correspondences with the British vanguard, including T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Lytton Strachey, and Virginia Woolf.
8. For an accessible history, see R.J. Buswell's *Mallorca and Tourism: History, Economy, and Environment* (2011).
9. In the past decades, modernist studies has expanded to include global modernisms with emphases on gender, race, and location: more recent considerations include Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel's *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005); Bonnie Kime Scott's *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2007); Andrew Thacker's *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009).
10. Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895–1975) reputation grew posthumously, with English translations of his works appearing in the 1980s and scholarly engagement following in the 1990s. Early treatments include Michael Holquist's *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 1990); Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson's *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation*

- of a Prosaics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1990). For its relevance to this paper, see the recent anthology *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives* (Ghent: Academia, 2010).
11. M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981), 84.
 12. *Ibid.*, 84.
 13. *Ibid.*, 250.
 14. *Ibid.* "All the [narrative's] abstract elements—philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect—gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work" (250).
 15. *Ibid.*, 85. In "It was not Death': The Poetic Career of the Chronotope," Jo Ladin argues for the possibility of a chronotopic approach to non-narrative poetry: chronotopes "emerge from language's role in mediating the relationship between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, in the reciprocal transformation of individual, idiosyncratic perception into communicable accounts of the world, and of shared but abstract terms into templates that give intelligible form to private perception" (*Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives* 137).
 16. *Ibid.*, 243–244.
 17. *Ibid.*, 245.
 18. Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), 152.
 19. *Ibid.*, 145.
 20. Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 192. I use the terms *endogenous* and *exogenous*, in this case taken from the biological sciences, in order to suggest the organic nature of the transposition of inside and outside in Stein's aesthetic shift. The book title *Tender Buttons* is, itself, an example of the conflated affective-object (i.e. the meaning attached to a thing).
 21. Stein, *Autobiography*, 198.
 22. *Ibid.*, 199.
 23. In "Paradise Lost and Found: Tourists and Expatriates in El Terreno, Palma de Mallorca, from the 1920s to the 1950s" (2005), British social historian John K. Walton chronicles the popularity of El Terreno, an ocean-front suburb of Palma. In this article, he points to the concerted strategies of Mallorca's Fomento del Turismo, established in 1905, to attract resort visitors from the first decades of the twentieth century onward.
 24. Stein, *Autobiography*, 205. Stein's eccentric punctuation practices, as when she uses the lower case "g" in the proper noun "Germans," occur throughout *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as well as many other works.

25. Ibid., 146.
26. Ibid., 200.
27. Ibid., 182.
28. Ibid., 186–187.
29. Stein, *Geography*, 91.
30. Stein, *Autobiography*, 259.
31. According to nineteenth-century traveler, E.G. Bartholomew, “The poor deserted town of Alcudia affords evident proofs of what it once was. It was built by the Romans, and Roman remains in great quantities lie scattered around, far beyond the massive walls and deep moat which encircle the town, although these means of defence [sic] are of much more modern date” (“Seven Months in the Balearic Islands,” 57). Bartholomew also records that “Palma was built by Metellus the Bloody, 120 B.C.” (59); Quintus Caecilius Metellus Balearicus was the Roman consul who founded large colonies at Palma and Pollenca (Alcúdia) during the first century B.C.E.
32. Stein, *Autobiography*, 191.
33. Ibid., 205.
34. Stein, *Geography*, 287.
35. Ibid., 75.
36. Stein, *Autobiography*, 202.
37. Ibid., 146. Prose portraits of identifiable people in *Geography and Plays* include “Mrs. Whitehead,” “Braque,” “One: Carl Van Vechten,” “A Portrait of One: Harry Phelan Gibb,” “I Must Try to Write the History of Belmonte” (a popular Spanish bullfighter), and “Portrait of Constance Fletcher.”
38. “Hitherto she had been concerned with seriousness and the inside of things, in these studies she began to describe the inside as seen from the outside” (*Autobiography* 192).
39. Stein, *Geography*, 223–224
40. Bakhtin, “Chrontope,” 246.
41. Ibid., 247.
42. *Lifting Belly* was published posthumously in *Bee Time Vine*, 1953.
43. Gertrude Stein, *Lifting Belly*, ed. Rebecca Mark (Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1989), 422.
44. An early consideration of the Mallorcan experience on Stein’s writing and language can be found in Richard Bridgman’s *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 143–154.
45. Sherwood Anderson, “The Work of Gertrude Stein,” introduction to *Geography and Plays*, by Gertrude Stein (Boston: The Four Seas Company Publishers, 1922), 7–8.

46. Laura Riding, "The New Barbarism and Gertrude Stein." *Transition* 3 (1927): 153–168.
47. Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 247–248.
48. *Ibid.*, 255.
49. Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation," a lecture given at Oxford and Cambridge universities in 1926 and later published by the Woolfs' Hogarth Press. Stein states that she moved from a "prolonged present" in earlier works, like *Melanctha*, toward a "continuous present" in the later work. She defines the writer's subjective expression as "always a fear a doubt and a judgement and a conviction" (*Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* 451–461).
50. Gertrude Stein, "Composition," 461.
51. *Ibid.*, 455.
52. Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 255.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Stein, "Composition," 454.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Richard Perceval Graves, *Robert Graves: The Years with Laura, 1926–1940* (New York: Viking), 125.
57. Between 1929 and 1936, the regulars who would live for extended periods in Deiá (along with partners and spouses) and work on Riding and Graves' projects included poets James Reeves, Norman Cameron, and Alan Hodge; novelist Honor Wyatt; *Time* magazine editor Thomas Matthews; painter John Aldridge; New Zealand artist and filmmaker Len Lye; polymath Jacob Bronowski; research and activist Eirlys Roberts; and graphic artist and Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany, Karl Goldschmidt.
58. The influence of the Mediterranean is clearly present in Graves' 1927 novel *Lawrence and the Arabs*, which unfolds against settings in the Middle East and Asia Minor.
59. "The Cult of Failure" and "Germany" appear in *Epilogue* I (Autumn 1935); "Crime" in *Epilogue* II (Summer 1936).
60. In their co-authored *Epilogue* essay, "The Exercise of English," Riding and Graves elevate English above all languages for its genius for expressing ideas, reality, truth, and poetry: "The English language is the history of truth...Immediate truth is poetry" (111–112). Their many lexicographical investigations included work on a children's dictionary, conceived to offer explanations of words that might be perplexing to children. This project expanded into plans for a "child's university series," to be entitled *Subjects of Knowledge*, consisting of multiple volumes devoted to the history of various topics of human achievement. Riding's *The Critical Vulgate* (carrying the inscription, "An instrument of knowledge in the understanding of words") was an ambitious venture, enlisting the labors of

many (including noted mathematician and later author of the BBC *Ascent of Man* series Jacob Bronowski, and Eirlys Roberts, one of the founders of Britain's consumer education movement), to reflect on the history and contemporary values of a range of keyword subjects, canvassing philosophy, religion, culture, and economics. Collaborators also contributed to *The Dictionary of Exact Meanings* and *The Dictionary of Related Meanings*, projects aspiring to eliminate ambiguity in word definitions and usage. Riding's own manuscript, "The Word Woman," constructs an etymological genealogy and lexicographical history that highlights female oppression.

61. Assisted by her new husband, Schuyler Jackson, Riding would continue in her language investigations, which were posthumously published in the substantial study *Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words* (1997). After World War II, in 1946, Graves returned with his new wife and son to Canellún, where he remained until his death in 1985. Since 2006, the house and grounds at Can Alluny, Casa Museu de Robert Graves, have been open to the public.
62. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB), 81. During the spring of 1932, Benjamin first spent several months on Ibiza, from April to July, immediately following Hitler's appointment as Weimar Republic chancellor, and he returned for another six months (April to September) in 1933. During his first visit to the island, he wrote a collection of short stories, *Ibizenkische Folge* (Ibiza Suite), and during the second, an essay on the experience of exile, *Experience and Poverty*.
63. Modernist participants engaging classical themes and subjects include the writers James Joyce, Rainer Maria Rilke, H.D., Jean Cocteau, T.S. Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis; and the philosophers Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, T.E. Hulme, and Martin Heidegger; and the artists Pablo Picasso, Isadora Duncan, and Igor Stravinsky.
64. Riding and Graves, *Survey*, 155.
65. In particular, Riding and Graves charge an over-dependence on the works of T.E. Hume, whom they label the "Aristotle of modernism" (135).
66. According to Riding and Graves, the modernists are not alone in this: "The nearest thing to invention in Shakespeare is his original use of other people's inventions" (21).
67. "The real task is, in fact, not to explain modernism in poetry but to separate false modernism, or faith in history, from genuine modernism, or faith in the immediate, the *new* doings of poems (or poets or poetry) as not necessarily derived from history. Modernist poetry as such should mean no more than fresh poetry, more poetry, poetry based on honest invention rather than on conscientious imitation of the time-spirit."

68. Riding and Graves, *Survey*, 266.
69. *Ibid.*, 162.
70. *Ibid.*, 118.
71. *Ibid.*, 61. "Authorship is not a matter of the right use of the will but of an enlightened withdrawal of the will to make room for a new will."
72. *Ibid.*, 163.
73. *Ibid.*, 187.
74. Unlike Riding, who committed herself to language study after 1940, Graves would continue to write poetry in homage to love, muses, and myths. In a more recent article, "Reading Renunciation: Laura Riding's Modernism and the End of Poetry," Tom Fisher argues that Riding's move away from poetry was anticipated in her interpretation of the modernist project (*Journal of Modern Literature* 33, no. 3 [2010]: 1–19).
75. Bakhtin, "Chronotope" 255–256.
76. This article specifically analyzes genre and historical–geographical collocations in Graves's and Riding's work during this period; other scholars have examined their work in the context of the 1930s historical novel including, more recently, Ian Firla's "The Historical Novels: Motives for an End" in *Robert Graves's Historical Novels* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2000) 29–55; Chris Hopkins' *English Fiction in the 1930s: Language, Genre, History* (London, England: Continuum, 2006); John Woodrow Presley's "Narrative Structure in Graves's Novels of the 1930s" in *Robert Graves's Historical Novels* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2000) 83–100; Peter Christensen's "Historical Truth in Laura Riding's *A Trojan Ending*" in *Focus On Robert Graves and his Contemporaries* 1.12 (1991) 1–17.
77. Paul O'Prey, *In Broken Images: Selected Letters of Robert Graves 1914–1946* (London: Hutchinson and Co. 1982), June 18, 1935, 254–255.
78. Riding, *Trojan*, xvii.
79. *Ibid.*, xiii.
80. *Ibid.*, xxii.
81. Graves, *But It Still Goes On*, 134.
82. O'Prey, *In Broken Images*, 349.
83. Riding, *Trojan*, xii. Literary works featuring Cressida were popular with Medieval and Early Modern authors, including Giovanni Boccaccio ("Il Filostrato)," Geoffrey Chaucer ("Troilus and Criseyde"), and William Shakespeare (*Troilus and Cressida*). Cressida comes to represent inconsistency in love.
84. Riding, *Trojan*, xix.
85. Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84.
86. That is, referring back to Bakhtin's question, "from what temporal and spatial point of view does the author look upon the events that he describes?" ("Chronotope" 255).

87. Ibid., 255.
88. Riding, *Trojan*, xii.
89. Ibid., xiv.
90. Ibid., xv.
91. The author is grateful to Dr. Arturo Giraldez for his encouragement and recommendations in the development of this article.

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A Scent of Jasmine from the Sea:
Representations of Tunis in *Villa Jasmin*
by Férid Boughedir and *Le chant des mariées*
by Karin Albou

Federica Frediani

The focus of this essay is the representations of Tunis in the telefilm *Villa Jasmin* (*Villa Jasmine*) by Férid Boughedir and the film *Le chant de mariées* (*The Wedding Song*) by Karin Albou, each produced in 2008. In different ways, the two films depict Tunis during the Nazi occupation, from November 1942 to May 1943. This historical period and this geographical area are rather neglected in the European and Mediterranean archives.¹ Only a few recent books and articles and two French novels, *La statue de sel* (*The Pillar of Salt*) by Albert Memmi and *Villa Jasmin* (*Villa Jasmine*) by Serge Moati, document such a time and place. Albou's work invites comparisons with Boughedir's film because both show the spreading of geopolitical conflicts into North Africa, destabilizing the dynamic coexistence of religious communities and resulting in Jewish flight from the region. In 1911, there were about 35,000 and 50,000 Jews (Tunisian and foreign)

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in Tunisia—4% of the total population. In Tunis, there were between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews. Despite Ahmed Bey's and Moncef Bey's efforts to protect the Jewish population, the Nazis succeeded in imposing anti-Semitic rules. They obliged the Tunisian Jews to wear the Star of David to mark them as Jews in public; they confiscated Jewish property, established fines, and sent around 5000 to forced labour camps near the front lines.² The terrible consequences of these laws are narrated in *The Wedding Song*. Myriam, the Jewish character, is expelled from school and her mother loses her job. They have neither the money to pay the fine to the Nazi authorities for everyday living expenses. Her husband is sent to a labour camp.

Villa Jasmine is a compelling double love story about a French-Tunisian Jewish family. Henri-Serge Boccara returns with his wife to Tunisia in search of his family's roots.³ He has come back as a sort of pilgrimage to the place where he was born. Although his life changed dramatically at a tender age, the death of his father, Serge, seems to have been anti-climatic. His mother passed away shortly after her husband's death. Henri-Serge goes back to some familiar places trying to remember parts of his life. Through flashbacks we get an idea of what his parents had to endure in a land that became polarized by the control of France, as a protectorate, and then by the German invasion. As Jews, they did not have a chance for survival, but Henri and his mother and sister were spared the fate Serge had in store when he was taken prisoner and sent to a concentration camp. Boughedir's adaptation of Moati's novel casts it as a memory piece, a son's reminiscence as he goes back to rediscover his past, and it is characterized by no clear differentiation between the present and the past. In some scenes, for instance, Henri-Serge dialogues with the character of his father as if he were still alive.

The Wedding Song follows the evolution of the friendship between two teenage girls, Nour, a Muslim, and Myriam, a Jew, in German-occupied Tunis during World War II, and the painful process of their growing into womanhood. Nour and Myriam grew up in the same neighbourhood in Tunis. The Axis forces made life difficult for both women; the German authorities prevented Khaled, Nour's fiancé, from getting a job, forcing them to postpone their wedding, while Myriam's family must pay exorbitant fines for being Jewish, which may lead her into a marriage of convenience to a wealthy physician many years her senior. While Myriam sees no way out of her desperate situation, Nour finds that the Nazi propaganda circulating throughout the community piques her worst suspicions about Jewish stereotypes. But as Nour and Myriam sink deeper into their personal crises, they begin to understand how badly they need one another's

support. *Villa Jasmine* is constructed through flashbacks and shows Tunis in the past and present, whereas *The Wedding Song* focuses only on the past, which is depicted through the innovative use of music. Katryn Lachman examines how Albou uses music in *The Wedding Song*:

The film's score consists of the strategic interplay between two contrasting pieces of music, both featuring women's voices. The first, a "traditional" North African brides' song, opens the film and returns at decisive junctures to convey the pressures working to undermine the solidarity between the Jewish and Muslim protagonists. The second, Nina Hagen's operatic punk rock song, "Naturträne" ('Nature's Tears' 1978) enters in the second half of the film to underscore the political, emotional and social turmoil of the German occupation of Tunis [...]. The director deploys music at different volumes in order to demonstrate unequal power relations. Finally, Albou uses what Powrie has called "incongruous" music to complicate the film's historical narrative and to undermine simplistic binary oppositions.⁴

Analysing these works means taking into account the traits of the ideal Mediterranean city, and the dominant and persistent image of Tunis as a place of peaceful coexistence between different cultures and religious communities. In particular, both films concentrate on Jewish people living in Tunis, their relationships with Muslim communities, and the complex interactions between colonizers and colonized. As is well known, Muslims and Jews coexisted satisfactorily in Tunisia for a long time.⁵ It is important to bear in mind that, as Moati makes clear in the first pages of *Villa Jasmine*, in Tunisia there were two distinct forms of Judaism:

In Tunisia, for a long time two forms of Judaism co-existed. One was "chic"; the other not. The fashionable sort thought that there were definitely too many mosquitoes in Tunis, the summers were sweltering, and the streets insalubrious. This sort came from "Elsewhere", especially from Italy; more precisely from Leghorn, a hospitable city where they settled after escaping the autos-da-fé and the Spanish Inquisition. And here they are: Tuscans and proud to be so. They are survivors. Theirs is the strength and energy of survivors. The other Judaism, the non-chic, is autochthonous, and has been here from time immemorial. Some of its members landed on these welcoming shores even before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, others right after. Survivors. They, too, have courage and vitality.⁶

Moati underlines, convincingly, that the differences are not only on the religious level but also on the social and economic levels. These disparities

are evident in *Villa Jasmine* when Serge's grandmother—who comes from Leghorn—does not want Serge to marry Odette, a “Chemama” Jew from the Ghetto.⁷ The different origins among Jews became crucial during the German-Italian occupation: for instance, the measures adopted by the German military powers against Tunisian Jews and French Jews were not applied to Italian Jews.⁸ Nevertheless, Tunis is inhabited not only by different Jewish tribes but also by a multitude of people, as Albert Memmi quite effectively describes in *The Pillar of Salt* (1966):

My native city is after my own image [...] I am my city's illegitimate son, the child of a whore of a city whose heart has been divided among all those to whom she has been a slave. And the list of her masters, when I came to know some history, made me giddy: Phœnicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantine Greeks, Berbers, Arabs, Spaniards, Turks, Italians, French — but I must be forgetting some and confusing others. Walk five hundred steps in my city, and you change civilizations: here is an Arab town, its houses like expressionless faces; its long, silent, shadowed passages leading suddenly to packed crowds. Then the busy Jewish alleys, so sordid and familiar [...] Further on, little Sicily, where abject poverty waits on the doorsteps, and then the fondouks, the collective tenements of the Maltese, those strange Europeans with an Arab tongue and a British nationality [...] One can make a mess of one's childhood or of one's whole life. Slowly, painfully, I understood that I had made a mess of my own birth by choosing the wrong city.⁹

The coexistence of different civilizations that has profoundly marked Tunis was not always as peaceful as described in the dominant narratives about the city. *The Wedding Song* and *Villa Jasmine* not only highlight a forgotten historical period but they also provide more complex and even contradictory representations of Tunis. Tunis is a Mediterranean city, a definition that calls up a multitude of images, representations, even preconceptions, and stereotypes. Clearly, any reflection on the Mediterranean city implies an analysis of the use of the term “Mediterranean.” We can take it for granted that a Mediterranean city exists in discourse representations, yet we remain aware that defining “Mediterranean” becomes harder and more complicated when it qualifies the noun “city.” Cities are at the very heart of the Mediterranean debate, as proven by a long historiographical tradition that identifies precisely in cities, as well as in their structures and mutual interactions, the fundamental and constitutive element of Mediterranean identity. This identity is not unalterable, of course, but to a certain degree stable and recognizable for its models. During the course of the twentieth

century, scholars such as Henri Pirenne, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, and David Abulafia found the essence of Mediterranean in its cities and in the links between them.¹⁰ As Braudel writes in *La Méditerranée. L'espace et l'histoire*:

The Mediterranean owes its unity more to a network of cities and small towns constituted early and incredibly resistant than to climate, geology, relief: the Mediterranean space is built around this network that maintains it alive. The cities are not born from the countryside, but the countryside from the cities that is barely sufficient to sustain them. Through the cities a model of social organization is projected on the ground. All migrants, forced or volunteer, try to reproduce the schema everywhere. Nomads will establish their camps following immutable rules. Settled, they will found a city, always the same.¹¹

This vision profoundly permeates narratives of the Mediterranean. Departing from this “city always the same,” over time, scholars have codified some ideal types of cities—classical, Islamic, mediaeval, for example—and these were often set up in opposition to each other, but continuously under the macro-category of the Mediterranean city. As a result of these categories gaining ground, however, we are left with a limited range of social, economic, and cultural characteristics captured by the ideal types of Weberian cities, which fail to do justice to all of the variables of urban areas.¹² The Weberian notion of the city is rooted in an ideal European type, and the academic debate on Mediterranean cities has to consider that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)-region cities are unlike European ones, as well as looking at the cultural factors that create such differences. It is also true that many of the MENA cities have been built by colonizers on European models and styles and, for these reasons, it is difficult to isolate and identify the traces of traditional, local, and Islamic architecture. Moreover, the accelerated process of changes occurring in recent years in the Mediterranean has inevitably undermined the pattern of the “city always the same.” Even if these concepts seem to be obvious, the cultural constructions behind them remain extremely resilient to changes. Michael Dumper, for instance, underlines that it has been “the construction of an Orient and an ‘ideal’ of the cities of the MENA region along essentialist lines that overlook, on the one hand, commonalities between the Arab-Islamic world and the West and, on the other, internal differentiation.”¹³

For a better understanding of the interplay between the divergences and correspondences in Mediterranean cities, it is crucial to take into account that the city is a living organism and assume different perspectives,

as suggested in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. By showing "one face to the traveller arriving overland and a different one to him who arrives by sea," Despina conjures up the outline of Mediterranean cities: "Each city receives its form from the desert it opposes; and so the camel driver and the sailor see Despina, a border city between two deserts."¹⁴ This description recalls quite vividly some Mediterranean port cities that straddle the border between sea and inland, such as Naples, Barcelona, Marseille, Beirut, and Algiers. It also highlights one of the key issues that remains unresolved in this specific area: the Mediterranean question in a broader sense, namely the intrinsic relation between sea and land, between the open sea and the mainland, or, in modern terms, off-shore and on-shore.¹⁵ Are we to classify as Mediterranean only those cities that front onto the sea, or do we also label as such those cities that are located in Mediterranean countries—inland, so to speak, and without a sea view? A whole variety of possible answers may be given, but what is certain is that borders and boundaries in the Mediterranean are adjusted as the need arises, change into centres of mediation or conflict, and are never determined once and for all. Some cities build their identity precisely on the dividing line between sea and land, between port and city proper; others feed on it from a distance. The epistemological problem, which naturally takes in the political, social, and cultural dimensions, addresses the question, mentioned above, of whether the model of ideal European city is applicable to North African and Middle Eastern cities. Perhaps it goes without saying that the infrastructure of cities within these geographical areas has coalesced around political, cultural, and social contexts quite different from those of the northern shores of the Mediterranean. Tunis is at the same time a MENA and Mediterranean city, and is kaleidoscopic.

As well described by Kenneth Brown, it contains within itself three different cities that are the result of stratifications, waves of Mediterranean immigrants, modernization of the urban infrastructure, administration, commerce, transport, and industry promoted previously by French and then by the president Habib Bourguiba.¹⁶ Tunis comes from the encounter of the so-called *ville nouvelle* (the European city), characterized by colonial urbanization and the neglected Medina, and the new residential neighbourhoods such as, for instance, the Berge du Lac.

Before analysing the representations of Tunis in the two selected films, it will be useful to briefly introduce Tunisian cinema. Tunisian cinema is an important, even prestigious industry in North Africa, which experienced its golden age from 1986 to 1996. Boughedir—according to Robert Lang,

“one of the founding directors of the New Tunisian Cinema and perhaps its most visible and peripatetic member on the global stage”¹⁷—regards the success of Tunisian cinema as due to “a Tunisian tradition of cinephilia; the successful resistance by filmmakers to any suggestion that they should have a state-run film industry, the boldness of Tunis’s directors in being willing to tackle subject matter that would be deemed taboo in other Arab countries; and the resourcefulness of an energetic group of producers.”¹⁸ The Tunisian cinema is prominently Tunisian, but it is simultaneously local, national, regional, and diasporic (due to the amount of Maghrebi directors living in France) as suggested by Will Higbee who affirms that “Maghrebi cinema” is to some extent a constructed category and it is also a cinema with a complex interplay among these real and imaginary spaces.¹⁹

Financial concerns and the need to assure greater visibility for its films together explain why the Tunisian film industry,²⁰ despite its fame and importance, has been involved in several co-productions with France. Culturally speaking, Tunis still sees French cinema as a point of reference, even though it is often critical of it. The co-productions and the international productions raise many political, identity, and even aesthetic issues, not least the awkward relationship between decolonized countries and former colonizers. It is well known that many scholars,²¹ for example, Edward Said, underline the crucial role played by literature, cinema, and culture in the re-establishment of a national cultural heritage, in the reinstatement of native idioms, in the reimagining and refiguring of local histories, geographies, and communities. As such, then, literature not only mobilized active resistance to incursion from the outside but also contributed massively as the shaper, creator, and agent of illumination within the realm of the colonized.²²

Even if it is crucial for former colonized countries to produce their own literature and cinematography in order to re-establish a national cultural heritage, likewise it is desirable that they have international visibility so as to at once entertain local audiences and move beyond national borders. Sometimes, directors who have left their home or are second-generation immigrants living in-between two different cultures realize the connections among their own and European countries. Yet international productions could sometimes be risky since producers might compel directors to adapt their scenarios to the expectations of European audiences.

On the one hand, the geographical displacement of the Arab filmmaker reflects an existing dislocation within the society. On the other hand, the cinema itself becomes uprooted. Attention, if not allegiance, becomes suddenly divided. International production implies international distribution,

international audiences—and international thinking as well. As Jocelyne Saab remarks,

I don't have any more complexes about the openness of Lebanon to East and West, as filmmakers we are the synthesis of these two poles, and if that translates itself into the image, it is fantastic. But it is dangerous: when I get financing of five million francs from France, I run the risk of having to change my scenario!". Not always, but frequently enough, changes are made. The western viewers become the major factors in the film equation. In the worst instances, the director — as guide — is suddenly conducting an audience of tourist through his or her culture. "This problem," Merzak Allouache told one interviewer, "has to do with the demand for the picturesque. In the relation to us, Third world filmmakers, the demand for the picturesque emanates from Europe."²³

It is difficult to make a clear distinction between a colonized heritage and colonizers because the cultures and the culture creations are more fluid than what might be imagined at the theoretical level. If we consider the city as a "text," a "poem," a "discourse," as suggested by Roland Barthes, it is a text with unstable and variable meanings.²⁴ From this perspective, we can argue that Tunis and Mediterranean cities are the result of stratifications and intersected readings. Moreover, the narratives of ex-colonizers and the ex-colonized converge to create the urban text, in which distinctions between colonial heritage and local heritage are more and more ineffective. It is clear that there are influences between Occidental and Oriental imagery, as the two selected films show. *The Wedding Song* is a Franco-Tunisian co-production, while the telefilm is a French production. These two co-productions embody and illustrate the convergence of two viewpoints—the outside and the inside. Albou is a Jewish woman who grew up in France, but of Algerian origin, and who lived for a brief time in Tunisia. In contrast, Boughedir is a Tunisian film director and historian of cinema. The two directors represent, respectively, the internal and male viewpoint, and the external (albeit not entirely so) and female viewpoint. Despite the differences of gender, time, and social milieu—Nour and Myriam and Henri-Serge perform a *quête d'identité*, and somehow they undertake a similar itinerary, at least symbolically. All of them have to confront their traditions and roots to achieve their own identity. Henri-Serge, suspended between his seemingly irreconcilable identities as a French subject and a native of Tunis, shares the nostalgic and ultimately doomed illusions of the émigré seeking to retain both identities

in equal measure. The notion of homeland and national belonging: “chez moi” or “chez nous” resonates in *Villa Jasmine*.²⁵

Tunis acts as a backdrop for the events narrated in the two films, which stage a quest for identity: the characters symbolically find their identity by crossing the threshold, or boundary, between private space and public space. The city streets become the *locus* of a “passage”—a journey which changes the characters. All the characters are obliged—more or less traumatically—to cross the boundaries between youth and maturity, and to deal with their roots and origins. Henri-Serge has to leave France and to go back to Tunisia in order to reappropriate his own identity. Boughedir makes Henri-Serge literally roam around Tunis, a Tunis of the past and of the present, constantly resorting to the use of flashbacks. Albou describes Myriam’s and Nour’s attempts to escape the closed, patriarchal space of their homes, in order to come out into the world and find their legitimate place in the world. Nour and Myriam are submitted to the restrictions of a patriarchal society that overtakes religious differences. Nour could attend school but she is almost illiterate, and Myriam is compelled to marry an old man. To some extent the marriage seems, in the traditional and patriarchal frame described, the only horizon in these women’s lives. To demonstrate this aspect, Albou focuses on rituals related to weddings, shared by Jewish and Muslim women in North Africa at that time: the engagement party, the oriental waxing, the hammam, the wedding night, the proof of the bride’s virginity. By contrast, Henri-Serge is a free young man of our times who lives in France and who makes a sort of journey in the past over the traces of his parents. If Henri-Serge, in his capacity as a male and contemporary hero, is totally free to move around (and also, fictionally, in time), Myriam and Nour, for their part, have to go through a painful, agonizing process: their struggle for mobility and freedom of movement. They are frequently shown watching the world through the iron grid on their windows, a symbol of both their captivity and the forms of segregation to which, literally and metaphorically, they are subject.

The representation of space, and in particular of “seclusion,” is a recurrent topic in the new Tunisian cinema (between 1980 and 1995). As Sonia Chamkhi writes:

les films tunisiens de cette période traitent inmanquablement de l'enfermement. Qu'il s'agisse de l'ignorance qui limite les esprits, de la persistance de traditions figées, des us et coutumes qui coupent les sujets de toute ouverture, ou encore du statu inférieur de la femme, franchement cloîtrée

et exclue, les films disent, et quelque soit l'histoire racontée, la douloureuse disjonction que vivent les sujets, entre un ici dysphorique et fermé et un ailleurs désiré et inaccessible.²⁶

This poetic of seclusion is present also in *The Wedding Song* and in *Villa Jasmine*. In the second sequence (1.04–1.39) of the *The Wedding Song*, Myriam and Nour are portrayed watching men walking in the streets from an inner space, through an iron grid. From the very beginning, Albu intends to highlight the physical separation between women and men who do not share the same spaces. This separation reminds us that for a very long time in Mediterranean societies, public space has been the prerogative and the exclusive preserve of men, while private space remained that of women.

The distinctive use of public space in Mediterranean cities has been staged for all its potential. The dominant and recurrent image of Tunis is nostalgically that of a past city of peaceful coexistence of different cultural and religious communities. This image began to falter at the time of the Nazi occupation first, and subsequently, when Tunis became independent (1956), a process that is narrated in *Un été à la Goulette* (*A Summer at la Goulette*, 1996), another film directed by Boughedir. Tunis, in both these films, inspires a feeling of nostalgia, sort of nostalgia for that lost city, for that Paradise lost that seems to affect and drive both directors. Each film shows, and lingers on, the picture of large houses, which are identified as proper characters. (Houses with a courtyard are typical examples of a traditional type of accommodation in Tunis.) The courtyard constitutes a space “suspended” between private and public, surrounded by the houses of several families (with windows looking out onto it), and these families are often dissimilar from each other. This is where different ethnic and religious cultures become close by contact, and through the exchange of food, favours, and secrets. It remains, in any case, a fragile balance, threatened by the precarious living conditions of those who inhabit such spaces. When resources begin to run out, as we can see in *The Wedding Song*, solidarity also begins to break down. In *The Wedding Song*, the house is a kind of cocoon and every time there is an opening—the window, the terrace, and the radio—the war penetrates. In *Villa Jasmine*, the big house to which the title refers was the family home where the protagonist's family used to live. When he revisits it, he finds it much changed. Villa Jasmine, under a new guise, is emblematic of the uneasy, controversial, and complex relation between tradition and innovation; these are issues affecting

not merely each individual citizen of Tunis but also the city itself. The challenge becomes: how to preserve Tunis's architectural, historical, and cultural heritage—indeed its past, with the colonial heritage included—and in what way to reconcile this past with the transformations and needs of today's city—the little alleyways of the Medina and the broad avenues of the Berge du Lac.

Boughedir makes certain to point out particular details of the city's architecture: the ornamental details of colonial palaces; the famous blue doors; and the crowded streets. He also dwells on specific monuments, such as the Porte de France and the al-Zaytuna Mosque, which are macro-signs of the urban identity, and true landmarks for the city residents and their narratives, as well as for architects and tourists.²⁷ In some scenes, for instance, the frame of a huge blue door has a picture-postcard quality. The cemetery becomes the emblem of a—perhaps dead—multicultural society.²⁸ The sea frequently appears as a backdrop, and it is always blue and calm, even in the sequence where the Nazis seize the villa of Henri-Serge's family and occupy it. The image of the Mediterranean Sea is affected by a series of stereotypes generated profoundly by touristic and advertising discourses where it is represented as a warm, peaceful, and safe place.²⁹ In *The Wedding Song*, the sea, almost absent, appears in very few scenes. Boughedir renders Tunis awash with intensely bright and summer sunlight in contrast with the greys, blues, and winter hues preferred by Albou. Despite his attempt to describe a little known and tragic period of Tunisian history, Boughedir seems to prefer glossy and stereotyped images—perhaps to avoid disappointing the French spectator for whom the telefilm was primarily intended. The European audience is familiar with a certain “orientalist” vision of Tunisia—and the Mediterranean—generated by literature and painting that is difficult to deconstruct.

It remains unsurprising that a telefilm was produced taking audience expectations into account. The opening scene begins with a picture of the Mediterranean Sea and a ship approaching the Gulf of Tunis. Henri-Serge and his wife are “intoxicated by the scent of jasmine wafting from the shore which remind Serge of the exquisite gardens and lemon groves of his youth.”³⁰ At their arrival at the Goulette harbour, a smiling old man offers them some jasmine, the national flower of Tunisia. Boughedir evinces what Anna Maria Lorusso and Patrizia Violi call “the Med effect.” Literary narratives, figurative representations, and discourses contribute to constructing stereotypical images on different planes: the predominance of the colours blue and white; the recurrence of the Mediterranean as

seaside, an area of sociality, humanity, cheerfulness; the eidetic prevalence of round shapes in which the archway dominates; a mythical region where the sun always shines in a clear blue sky.³¹ All these features, as illustrated above, are abundantly present in Boughedir's cinematic narrative.

Albou is able to avoid the dominant stereotypes of the Mediterranean. Indeed, she does not present any recognizable image of Tunis. Rather, she puts forward a sort of Mediterranean counter-narrative, as she describes Tunis at war, a city that has lost all of its usual sunny quality. Fittingly, in *Albou*, the image of Tunis as the chosen "home" of peaceful coexistence disintegrates: Nazi planes fly overhead in the skies, and the city is transfigured by an overpowering fear, its streets occupied by Nazi soldiers. In her counter-narrative, the market, a traditional and typical Mediterranean space like the *hammam*, becomes transfigured by the war. The market square is represented, in one of the initial sequences, as invaded by German soldiers and then, following the market's bombing, as a ruined space full of anti-Jewish treaties. Tunis is rendered nearly unrecognizable; it could be just any other Mediterranean city afflicted by war. In an interview with John Esther, Albou states that she wanted to put an end to the mythology of Tunisia as a non-violent country, and reveal instead that it was not spared from political, historical, and domestic violence.³² With this strong claim, Albou aligns herself with other women—writers and artists—who want to include violent and confrontational aspects in narrating the Mediterranean. This is the thrust, for instance, of Mona Hatoum's artistic work, in which she emphasizes the precarious and ambiguous boundaries between beauty and ugliness, the bright and the dark side of life.

In keeping with her dark counter-narrative, Albou chooses a colour palette of grey and cold blues totally opposite to the bright blue usually chosen for depicting the Mediterranean. The sky is always grey, the sun remains almost invisible, and there are many night scenes. The only places that seem to resist the ugliness of armed conflict are the home, especially the sumptuous interiors of Myriam's husband's house, and the *hammam*. Albou's representations of the *hammam* in particular are quite similar in both films: it becomes a shelter for the women persecuted by the Nazi soldiers who occupy the narrow alleyways of Tunis. In fact, both Albou and Boughedir represent the *hammam* in an unusual way, distancing themselves from Orientalist painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, Jean-Étienne Liotard, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Eugène Delacroix, who have influenced the Western perception of the *hammam*.³³ However, in *Albou*, this intent is more programmatic than in Boughedir. In fact, in

a special section of the DVD version of *Villa Jasmine*, she declares that she wanted to represent the hammam as a place of everyday life, as well as of generational, political, and religious conflict. In the first scene of the film, for instance, the two girls and their mothers chat about soldiers, school, and money, while taking their bath. The hammam manager argues with Tita, Myriam's mother, because she still hasn't paid the entrance fee. Muslims and Jews share the same space. In the second scene, Germans and collaborators break violently into the hammam to round up Jewish women. At this point, Nour decides to save Myriam by saying that she is her sister, taking advantage of the soldiers' ignorance since they don't know that Maghrebi Jews and Muslims speak the same language.

Albou intentionally avoids lingering on naked female bodies or aestheticizing the frames too much. In doing so, she makes a crucial shift from the male to the female gaze, deliberately portraying her female characters through the eyes of—and in relation to—other women. Albou further subverts the visual objectification of women, in art and film, from male-oriented angles, directions, and narratives. At the aesthetic level, she deconstructs the eroticized and exotic hammam through an unusual choice of colours. Instead of selecting golden and other warm colours for the set and costume design, Albou uses cold blue and grey hues in order to break with the Orientalist vision of Tunis as a warm and nice place. The dominant colour is a cold and pale blue-grey, and the naked bodies are far from perfect or sensual.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we can affirm that the Mediterranean city is not “always the same” because it acquires a sense only in relation to those meanings projected onto it by society, and such significations are continually relocated and transformed (Foucault, Lefebvre, Barthes, Westphal). The city is actually a creative frontier constructed by plural representations that run through contemporary spaces, both real and imagined (Augé, Barthes, Benjamin); the narrative dynamics are in direct relation to social dynamics and citizenship practices (Barthes, Augé, Benjamin, Marrone, Pezzini); all theory of the city is, at the same time, a theory of vision. Between memory and everyday life, the city that we perceive is in reality always “mediated” by individual gazes, by the pervasive gaze of the media and by a stratified imaginary production (Urry). The representation of the city inevitably leads to its political dimension, as illustrated by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in

the immortal cycle of frescoes *L'allegoria del Buono e del Cattivo governo* (*Allegory of Good and Bad Government*). As is well known, the etymology of the term “politics” designate the city as a place of foundation and deployment of political discourse.

For all these reasons, the analysis of media and cultural productions are essential to approaching a critical discourse on the cities, and in particular on Mediterranean cities where the overlapping of different cultures and imaginaries is revealed in all its potential. Albou and Boughedir deal with the same dominant narratives, even if they represent European and Tunisian points of view, respectively.

Concerning the representations of Tunis in the *Wedding Song* and *Villa Jasmine*, it is worth noting that there are similarities and differences in the ways in which the city is represented. Tunis perpetuates, through a variety of forms, the myth of a “city of peaceful coexistence”; the image of a city hovering between tradition and innovation; a “piece of land” that preserves the roots as well as the graves of those different communities scattered across the Mediterranean region. Both directors have the merit of focusing on a neglected historical period and region, introducing the uncomfortable warp of the war into Mediterranean narratives, which are still too often pervaded by the rhetoric of peace, sun, and pleasure. Albou is more resolute in creating a counter-narrative, while Boughedir (although he is Tunisian) has difficulty distancing himself from what we might call “codified” representations of the Mediterranean. The debate on Mediterranean cities has to deal with several questions: the relation of Otherness in its different dimensions; the nature and legitimacy of discourses on the Mediterranean; and the need to give space to counter-narratives in order to integrate a plurality of views and avoid homogeneity.

NOTES

1. Albou did some research and she inserts some archival pictures and video (in particular the images of the encounter between Hitler and the Mufti of Jerusalem), and radio extracts. The radio played an important role in the propaganda against the Jews who were considered responsible for the war.
2. See, for instance, Filippo Petrucci, *Gli ebrei in Algeria e Tunisia 1940–1943* (Firenze: La Giuntina, 2011).
3. I choose to maintain the two names of the main character. In fact, his real name is Henri, but after the death of his father, he takes his name.

4. See Kathryn Lachman, "Music and Gendering of Colonial space in Karim Albou's *Le Chant des mariées*," *Music, Sound and Moving Image* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 7–8.
5. On this topic, see Paul Sebag, *Histoire des Juifs de Tunisie: des origines à nos jours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991).
6. Serge Moati, *Villa Jasmin* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 31–32. English translation my own.
7. Chemama was a common surname among Tunisian Jews that lived in the Ghetto. The *Hara*, or Jewish quarter, was reserved for poor Jews, but the poorest Muslims and Christians could also live there. Having been born in the *Hara* became a social blemish that was difficult to erase. At the opposite, as Petrucci writes, "for the Tunisian Jews it was a social improvement to marry a Jew From Leghorn" (Filippo Petrucci, *Gli ebrei in Algeria e Tunisia 1940–1943*, 26, English translation my own).
8. Fayçal Cherif, "Jews-Muslims Relations in Tunisia during World War II: Propaganda, Stereotypes, and Attitudes, 1939–1943," in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, ed. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011), 305–20.
9. Albert Memmi, *La Statue de Sel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 110–11. English translation by Edouard Roditi: *The Pillar of Salt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 96–97.
10. P. Horden, "Meshwork: Towards a Historical Ecology of Mediterranean Cities," in *Mediterranean Cities between Myth and Reality*, ed. Federica Frediani (Lugano: Nardini International, 2014), 37–54. See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Lucien Febvre, *Geographical Introduction to History* (New York: Routledge, Trench Trubner, 1924); Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1925); David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).
11. Fernand Braudel, Filippo Coarelli and Maurice Aymard, *La Méditerranée. L'espace et l'histoire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 194. English translation my own.
12. Max Weber, *The City* (first published 1921), (New York and London: Glencoe Free Press, 1958).
13. Michael R.T. Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley, eds., *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa. A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007), XX.
14. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 17–18.
15. A term that Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell are thinking of replacing because of the one-sidedness, the a priori passivity or subordination

- implied by hinterland. See Peregrine Horden, “Meshwork: Towards a Historical Ecology of Mediterranean Cities.”
16. Kenneth Brown, “Tunis” in Michael R. T. Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley, eds., *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa. A Historical Encyclopedia*, 371–73.
 17. Robert Lang, *New Tunisia Cinema: Allegories of Resistance* (New York: Columbia UP, 2014), 22.
 18. Ibid.
 19. Will Higbee, “Le cinéma Magrébin vu de l’autre côté de la Méditerranée” in *Africultures* no. 89–90 (2012–2014): 102–15.
 20. Unfortunately, in the last few years there has been a decline.
 21. Since the 1980s, postcolonial scholars have rethought, from different approaches and perspectives, the narrative and cultural production in the former colonies and, in particular, the works written in the colonizers’ languages. See on this topic: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1978); Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow-Sacrifice,” *Wedge* (Winter/Spring 1985): 120–30; Gayatri Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic* (London: Routledge, 1990); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
 22. Edward Said, “Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations,” *Race & Class* 32, no. 1 (1990): 1–2.
 23. Myriam Rosen, “The Uprooted Cinema: Arab Filmmakers Abroad,” *Middle East Report* no. 159 (July/August 1989): 36.
 24. Roland Barthes, *The City and the Sign: an Introduction to Urban Semiotics* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986).
 25. English translation my own: “at my place” or “at our place.”
 26. Chamkhi, *Cinéma tunisien nouveau* (Tunis: Sud Éditions, 2002), 11. English translation my own: “The Tunisian films of this period invariably tackle the issue of seclusion. Whether it be narrow-minded ignorance, or the persistence of frozen traditions, or the stifling effects of customs and tradition on the individual mind, or even the inferior status of women, indisputably cloistered and secluded — the films narrate, regardless of the particular plot, the painful division experienced by the subjects between a dysphoric and closed ‘present moment’ and a desired and an unattainable ‘elsewhere.’”
 27. Blue doors, the Port de France, and the al-Zaytuna represent for Tunis, even if on a smaller scale, what the Tour Eiffel represents for Paris. They are everywhere where Tunis is to be stated as an image. See Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower, and other Mythologies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1997).
 28. The image of Tunis as a multicultural city is doubtless an old one and is no longer alive.

29. It is worthwhile to remember that this image of the sea is relatively recent. For a long time, the sea was seen as a dangerous and unsafe place. See Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994).
30. Robert A. Rosenston and Constantin Parvulescu, eds., *A Companion to Historical Film* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).
31. Patrizia Violi and Anna Maria Lorusso, eds., *Effetto Med. Immagini, discorsi, luoghi* (Bologna: Logo Fausto Lupetti Editore, 2011).
32. The November 6, 2009 interview is available here: <http://jestherent.blogspot.it/2009/11/exclusive-interview-karin-albou.html>.
33. Lynne Thornton, *Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting* (Paris: ACR PocheCoeur, 1994).

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PART II

Communal Reflections of the
Postcolonial Mediterranean

Naming Surreally: Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror* and Nikos Engonopoulos's Worship of the "Greek"

Vasiliki Dimoula

The work of the poet and painter Nikos Engonopoulos (1907–1985) is among the most prominent instances of Greek surrealism. Engonopoulos's corpus is marked both by the influence of Western European surrealist poetics and an intense preoccupation with ancient, Byzantine and modern Greek literary traditions. This, together with a distinctive interest in Eastern Mediterranean traditions, such as those in Turkey and the Balkans, has placed his work at the center of the debate on the national character of Greek modernism in general.¹ In this paper, and by means of a comparative reading with Lautréamont, I will consider "Greekness" in Engonopoulos in light of the usage of the proper name in his poetry. Through an approach to the name as both the site of an enigma and a sign of great intensity, it will be suggested that the "Greek" inscribes itself in Engonopoulos's texts as something which returns insistently, but remains irreducible to, any specific cultural vision.

The wide cultural spectrum of Engonopoulos's work, whose surrealist geography includes—apart from Turkey and the Balkans—Latin America,

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Egypt and Africa and participates in modernism's turn to "primitive" civilizations,² excludes any narrow-minded argument about this work's supposed ethnocentrism at the outset. For this reason, scholarship almost unanimously tackles the vexed issue of the poet's "Greekness" with recourse to the logic of cultural synthesis. Michalis Chrysanthopoulos's application of the compound adjective "αλβανοφραγκοτούρκικος" ("Albanofrankoturkish": Albanian, French and Turkish)—a neologism by Emmanouil Roidis (1893)—to Engonopoulos's "Greekness" is characteristic of scholarship's more general assumptions regarding the accommodation of the Other of the Greek, or the Greek as Other, in the poet's work.³ In what follows, I wish to remove emphasis from the logic of Otherness and cultural variety and consider instead a reading of poetry in light of Engonopoulos's persistent insistence on his *ελληνολατρία*, that is, "worship" of the "Greek," while keeping this notion clear of any ethnocentric connotations. My reading is not suggested over and against the "cultural synthesis" approach, but as a different possibility of discussing what is distinctive in the problematic of "nationhood" when it appears in poetry.

The most emblematic formulation of "worship" of the "Greek" is included in the Notes Engonopoulos himself adduced to his famous poem "Bolivar, a Greek poem" (1942–1943) ["Μπολιβάρ, ένα ελληνικό ποίημα"], to which we will return. Because of the apparent clash, in the poem's title, between the reference to the figure of Latin American independence Simón Bolívar (with the accent, in Engonopoulos, on the last syllable, as his name would be pronounced in French) and the indication "Greek poem," "Bolivar" figures in every debate on Engonopoulos's original conception of "Greekness." The poem abounds in references of South and Central American states ("But also up to Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Haiti, San Domingo, Bolivia, Columbia, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, And even Mexico"). In his Notes Engonopoulos explains that, apart from the beauty and eurhythmia of their names, these states serve as a screen for the raving manifestation of the worship of "Greekness" in the poem ("σαν προπέτασμα για την έξαλλη εκδήλωση Ελληνολατρίας του ποιήματος").⁴ To this should be added a number of relevant comments in the poet's interviews: "I am too much of a Greek without being a racist"; "I am proud for being a Greek. And I am a great admirer of Hellenism"; "Thought was born once, and it was Greek thought"; "Greece is a small state, but a big nation."⁵ The unresolved tension between the poet's insistence on his *ελληνολατρία* on the one hand, and the aforementioned range

of references to the foreign in his work on the other, raises a number of issues which are key to an analysis of Engonopoulos's usage of the proper name.

The present discussion builds on Fragiski Abatzopoulou's work dedicated to the variety and frequency of the proper name in Engonopoulos, where she argues against the referential function of the name and suggests that names are evoked by the poet to construct a new reading of history.⁶ Linking the question of the proper name in Engonopoulos with the issue of his "ethnocentric modernism," she concludes that the great ethnic variety of the names used by the poet points to his "open cultural consciousness" and his effort to "compound the Greek and the international in an original synthesis."⁷ Her essay is informed by the semiotic approach to the proper name in the generation of the 1960s, which focused on the function of the proper name as a linguistic sign within the text, as well as on the name's etymology and cultural connotations.⁸

The theoretical prism of my own account of the proper name in Engonopoulos differs, to the extent that I suggest approaching the name not as a bearer of cultural connotations but as a vehicle of "worship." Instead of the name's lack of referentiality, I therefore insist on its liminal position in relation to language, and thus its untranslatability, and I draw on the theoretical insights on the proper name developed by Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze and Pierre Klossowski among others.⁹ The name's resistance being translated along with its cultural connotations becomes all the more interesting in Engonopoulos because, in contrast to the onomatographic practice of Western European poetry, in most cases proper names in his work are names which *do* bear a cultural load.¹⁰ This, however—to put it in terms loosely invoking Lacanian theory—ends up working more at the level of the Real than that of the symbolic or the imaginary. What is at once an affinity and a difference between the Mediterranean poet and the Western avant-garde in this respect will be illustrated through a discussion of naming in the works of Come de Lautréamont (1846–1870), the French poet of Uruguayan origin, who was claimed by most surrealists as a poetic predecessor, and is among Engonopoulos's most cherished literary references.¹¹ I will then move on to discuss some instances of the proper name in Engonopoulos, where the paradoxical conflict between the cultural load of the names and their non-translatability into cultural terms is most manifest. This, I suggest, may point a way toward the understanding of his "Greekness" beyond both ethnocentrism *and* openness to the cultural Other.

In the six-cantos prose poem *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), naming as a literary practice is certainly “significant for not being the means of that text’s grounding in the real.”¹² But this observation hardly exhausts the function of proper names in Lautréamont. Let us start with the name Maldoror itself, the work’s antihero, a figure of evil modeled on the Satan of the Romantics. A number of possible semic components are indicated through which “Maldoror” can be analyzed—each suggesting corresponding interpretations of the work in its entirety—“mal d’ horreur,” “horreur du mal,” “mal d’ aurore,” “aurore du mal,” “or” and so on.¹³ We should insist, rather, that the name Maldoror remains untranslatable in its semic components, although it condenses the connotations of *jouissance* that they all share (“mal,” “aurore,” “or”). The name thus functions as a sign at the limit of the signifying economy of language, determined by the logic of difference and similarity among signs. In this sense, Maldoror exemplifies the distinctive characteristic of the proper name, which is its “undecidable” character: The proper name resists signification within language and aspires to assimilation in language at one and the same time.¹⁴

The proper name’s resistance to a reading in terms of difference and similarity with other signs in the economy of the *Chants* becomes important for an understanding of the relation between Maldoror and the figure of George Dazet, a comrade of Ducasse in the Lycée de Tarbes. Dazet’s youthful charm made on Ducasse an indelible impression upon his arrival in France for secondary education in 1859. In the anonymous edition of the first Chant in August 1868, Georges Dazet is apostrophized by his name. Between this first version and the final edition of the first Chant, together with the rest of the work, in October 1869 under the signature of the Comte de Lautréamont, the most striking difference is the replacement of the name of Dazet with a series of other signs, which allude to the most bizarre animals: “poulpe, au regard de soie” [“octopus of the silky glance”] (Chant 1. 9); “rhinolophe” [“Rhinolophus”] (1.11); “pou venerable” [“venerable louse”] (1.12); “crapaud” [“toad”] (1.13); “les quatre pattes nageoires de l’ours marin de l’océan Boréal” (1.13) [“the four webbed feet of the sea-bear of the northern ocean”]; and “l’acarus sarcopte” [“mite that produces the mange”] (1.14).¹⁵

As has been insightfully suggested, these animal names all bear the grapheme “o” or the phoneme /ç/ or /o/ and the grapheme/phoneme r/R/ and thus represent a disseminated, paragrammatic inscription of the name Maldoror, the textual name of the writer (*scripteur*).¹⁶ Consistent with my argument that the proper name is not equivalent with

its implied semantics but is rather of the order of the signifier as object, I suggest that the inscription of the name Maldoror within the animals that substitute Dazet binds Maldoror and Dazet together in the material singularity of the *letter*, the distinctive characteristic of the name—what remains of the name despite its transformations.¹⁷ The letter anchors the relation between Maldoror and Dazet outside the signifying economy of language, in a deep identity that transcends the differential or identificatory relationships between signifiers. It thus supports from a different viewpoint the deeper meaning of animal thematics and transformational poetics of the work: love.¹⁸

The significance of the letter at the level of the proper name may be interpreted in light of the priority of inscription over speech in the *Chants*:

On raconte que je naquis entre les bras de la surdité! Aux premières époques de mon enfance, je n'entendais pas ce qu'on me disait. Quand, avec les plus grandes difficultés, on parvint à m'apprendre à parler, c'était seulement, après avoir lu sur une feuille ce que quelqu'un écrivait, que je pouvais communiquer, à mon tour, le fil de mes raisonnements.

They say I was born deaf! In my early childhood I could not hear what was said to me. When with the greatest difficulty they succeeded in teaching me to speak, it was only by reading what they wrote down on a piece of paper that I could communicate my thoughts to them.¹⁹

Referring to the priority of writing over speech in this passage, Jean Michel Olivier suggests that Lautréamont's "écriture vampirique" is conditioned by "la fêlure originelle de son nom, son manque à être, comme son errance incessante."²⁰ The stigma "vampire"²¹ is thus in place of Maldoror's name ("en tient lieu")—because Maldoror has no proper name: "car de nom propre Maldoror n'en a pas."²² And yet, it is the priority of inscription and the letter which safeguards something of the name Maldoror, something on the basis of which his identity with the (erased) Dazet is, as we saw, established beyond notions of identification and difference, which would "translate" the one into the other.

Rather than taking a signifier (e.g. the vampire) as being in place of the proper name, I suggest that the proper name is itself "in place of" an enigma. A number of passages in the *Chants* are telling from this point of view. In the first Chant we read: "Ô toi, dont je ne veux pas écrire le nom sur cette page qui consacre la sainteté du crime, je sais que ton pardon fut immense comme l'univers. Mais, moi, j'existe encore!"²³ The passage plays on the *topos* of the unutterability of the name of God, but

the *Chants* are a real parody of this taboo, since they refer to the divine in all sorts of ways.²⁴ The unutterable name here is instead none other than that of Dazet, which figures in the 1968 version of the first Chant, but not in stanza 6. The fact that the name would emerge in the place of something that remains unknown is even more clear in Chant 6, where Mervyn receives a letter from Maldoror, but the signatory remains hidden (“Qui donc lui écrit une lettre?”), while at the end the young man exclaims:—“Trois étoiles au lieu d’une signature, s’écrie Mervyn; et une tache de sang au bas de la page!”²⁵ We are reminded of the three stars composing Ducasse’s signature on the cover of the first edition of Chant 1 (August 1968). As Lack observes, what Mervyn discovers at the end of the letter is that the “site of the name is a dangerous place, a place where threats are veiled and enigmas proposed,” in a work which “threatens finally to mark the site of the name with an indelible indeterminacy.”²⁶

The paradox of the proper name which insists as a material instance and remains “unknown” at one and the same time is at the core of Engonopoulos’s poetics of the proper name too.²⁷ Incidentally, one of the poet’s references to Lautréamont’s name—Isidore (Ducasse)—is emblematic of this paradox, as we see in the poem “Osiris” from the poet’s 1938 collection *Do Not Disturb the Driver*: “The dog-headed lover—let us call him thus, for his name Isidore remains undisclosed [‘unknown’: *μας είναι άγνωστο*]
—exited the tragic bedroom much later. He wore a brown raincoat and a pair of spectacles.”

It matters little whether *Ισίδωρος* is an allusion to Isidore Ducasse or Isis, Osiris’s sister and wife, or both. What counts from the point of view adopted here is the coexistence of the name and the statement on its unknowability. If the name that names the poetic subject either directly or, as in “Osiris,” indirectly, captures the *ιδιον* of the poetic subject, this is not because the *ιδιον* is confounded with the proper name but because through the proper name it is made present as absent.²⁸ Proper names in Engonopoulos, or at least the ones examined here, are not analyzable in terms of cultural equivalents (in which case the meaning of “Osiris” would depend on whether Isidoros refers, e.g. to Isidore Ducasse or Isis), but maintain the distinctive attribute of the proper name as a “rigid denominator,”²⁹ with the difference that, contrary to everyday practice, in his poetry this function coexists with a haunting impression that the real name remains unknown. We encounter this same combination of unicity and unknowability, I argue, also in some of the cases where proper names do seem analyzable, at a first approach, into a series of cultural connotations related

to Greek tradition. Our examples are drawn on Engonopoulos's two first poetic collections, where the surrealist influence is more pronounced. Let us start with the poem "Perhaps," again from Engonopoulos's collection *Do Not Disturb the Driver* (1938). The heart of the poem consists of a dialogue between two characters:

Εκεί καθόταν μιὰ κοπέλλα δίχως μάτια, που αντ'ίς για φωνή είχε ένα λουλούδι.
Με ρώτησε:

- Μα τι είχατε και καρφώνατε, έτσι, σήμερις από το πρωί;
- Α, τίποτες ... τίποτες. Μιλούσα με τον Όμηρο.
- Με τον Όμηρο τον ποιητή;
- Ναι, με τον Όμηρο τον ποιητή, και μ' έναν άλλο Όμηρο, απ' τη Μοσχόπολη αυτός, που έζησε όλη του τη ζωή πάνου στα δέντρα σαν πουλί, κι όμως ήτανε γνωστός σαν «άνθρωπος του γιοφυριού» στις γειτονιές κοντά στη λίμνη.

A girl was sitting there, eyeless, with a flower in place of her voice. She asked:

- Shay, what were you hammering today, all day?
- Oh, nothing ... nothing. I was conversing with Homer.
- What, with Homer, the poet?
- Yes, with Homer the poet, and with another Homer, the one from Voskopoje, who spent all his life on trees, like a bird, and yet was known as "the man of the bridge" in the neighborhoods near the lake.

The name Homer in this poem alludes to the relationship between ancient Greek tradition and the modern Greek poet. Yet, the redoubling of the name at the end of the poem opens up a series of questions. It has been suggested that the other Homer, who was from Voskopoje (Moschopolis), spent all his life on trees, like a bird, and was known as "the man of the bridge" in the neighborhoods near the lake, alludes to the Turko-Albanian poet Chatzi Sechretis, the author of the narrative poem *Alipasiada*, which evokes the *Iliad* (*Iliada*). Also, with Moschopolis, we get a perspective on the Balkans, Greek Enlightenment and the eighteenth century, when this town was an important commercial and cultural center.³⁰ This suggests a shift of emphasis from a "translation" of "Homer" in its cultural connotations to the desire that results in the redoubling of the name as an "undecidable" sign that both invites and resists translation.

Issues of orality and writing are, in a similar way to Lautréamont, relevant here. Karavidas argues that, for Engonopoulos, Moschopolis “is the ideal place to reiterate his thesis that poetry is essentially an oral creation,” since it alludes to the Western Balkans’s tradition of oral epic poetry, as studied by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord.³¹ The poet’s reference to “conversation” between Homer and himself would seem to encourage the view on poetry’s oral quality. “Conversation” is however rendered problematic by the very mode in which it is conducted: hammering.³² In its non-signifying repetitive sounding, hammering suggests the obsession which results in Homer’s return as a name. Unlike hammering, however, the name cannot be reduced to a non-signifying sound. On the contrary, it is interesting to consider “Homer” here in light of theoretical developments where the name is seen as both at the limit of the system of linguistic signs and, for this precisely, one of those signs that “name moments of the greater attentive intensity.”³³

Linguistic—and, as this entails, cultural “conversation”—is problematized also by the fact that the girl in “Perhaps” is deprived of sight and voice (“A girl was sitting there, eyeless, with a flower in place of her voice”). Here, we may again allude to Lautréamont and his own challenge of sight and speaking as channels of communication which would inscribe the relation between Maldoror and Dazet in the symbolic. Let us take as an example the toad/Dazet episode in the first Chant.³⁴ The toad’s eyes—with “pupils that move with the breeze and seem to be alive”—are not connected with sight but the gaze, as Maldoror’s impression of their lethal effect suggests: “as I meet these monstrous eyes my whole being shudders.”³⁵ Moreover, the opening of the stanza renders the voice alien to itself: “The leech’s brother” who is none other than Maldoror, “often ... would stop and open his mouth as if to speak. But each time his throat would contract and the abortive utterance would be chocked back.” Taking place beyond the senses, the nonhuman encounter between the toad/Dazet and Maldoror assumes the form, rather, of mutual murder: Maldoror feels threatened by the toad’s eyes, while the toad, in the same way as Dazet in the 1968 version of the Chant, thinks of Maldoror as the cause of his death: “Adieu donc; n’espère plus retrouver le crapaud sur ton passage. Tu as été la cause de ma mort. Moi, je pars pour l’éternité, afin d’implorer ton pardon!”³⁶

I read the connection between Homer and the poet, as well as between the ancient Homer and Homer from the Balkans in “Perhaps” in terms of the non-dialectical relation established in the *Chants*. In the same way that Maldoror *inscribes* his way into Dazet, “Homer” is redoubled as a material signifier which discourages the “conversational” connotations on the basis

of which a metaphor—a synthesis between ancient and modern, Greece and the Balkans—could be conceived. Rather than opening the way to a dialectic of cultural otherness, the redoubling of Homer's name brings to the fore a sign charged with particularly intense desire, the communicable trace for something that, being other than itself in the first place, cannot be captured, defined and communicated, and yet blossoms flower-like in the absence of both mouth and voice. The desire named Homer is not that of an opening to cultural otherness but that of a deeper identity—beyond identification and difference—between things that are themselves not self-identical.

What evades communication is something one “loves madly,” to borrow the closing of a later poem by Engonopoulos.³⁷ The connection of love with the sign charged with desire emerges clearly in a poem where we encounter yet another redoubling of a name: “Polyxena.” This is a poem about lost love, love unjustly lost and injustice linked with human fate. Lautréamont is here named explicitly (Isidore Ducasse) as part of the surrealist company whose “message” is brought to the poet by vampires³⁸:

Βρυκόλακες αλαλάζοντες και σιδηροπαγείς αύραι μου έφεραν χτες, περι το μεσονύκτιον, μεσουρανούντος του ηλίου της δικαιοσύνης, το μήνυμα του Ντάντε Γκαμπριέλ Ροσσέτι, του Isidore Ducasse και του Παναγή του Κουταλιανού.

Clamoring vampires and ironbound breezes brought to me yesterday, around midnight, upon the zenith of the sun of justice, the message of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Isidore Ducasse and Panagis Koutalianos.

The poem then moves on to a discussion of the poet's beloved, whom he ultimately loses:

Και όμως την έχασα, μπορώ να πω μέσ' απ' τα χέρια μου, ωσάν να μην ήταν ποτέ παρά ένα απατηλόν όραμα, παρά ένα κοινότατο σφυρί. Στη θέση της βρέθηκε μονάχα ένας καθρέπτης. Κι' όταν έσκυψα να δω μέσα σ' αυτόν τον καθρέφτη, δεν είδ' άλλο τίποτες παρά μόνο δύο μικρά λιθάρια: το ένα ελέγετο Πολυξένη, και το άλλο, Πολυξένη επίσης.

Yet I lost her, out of my very arms I might say, as if she only ever were but a deceptive vision, but the commonest of hammers. In her place only a mirror was found. And when I leaned to look inside that mirror I saw nothing but two small pebbles. One was named Polyxena, the other, Polyxena also.

Polyxena has often preoccupied scholars and has been read, like other mythical names in Engonopoulos (Eurydice, Orpheus, Oedipus), as an

archetypal structure through which the poet's aesthetic, ideological and ethical ideals find expression. More specifically, Polyxena is considered as the heroine of the "other side," the "unjust victim" of the victors' arrogance, which makes the poet's "psychological identification" with her all the more interesting.³⁹ This reading assumes, again, the translation of the name in its cultural connotations, where Polyxena is seen as a vehicle of the dialectics between Greekness and its other. As for the psychoanalytically colored notion of "identification," it is rendered problematic by the complication of the mirror's function: Looking into the mirror, the poetic subject sees two small pebbles, "one was named Polyxena, the other, Polyxena also."⁴⁰ Redoubled, the name prevails over the mirror and captures the essence of a non-specular identity which remains without issue in language.⁴¹

As in Lautréamont's *Chants*, where love is related to identity beyond both specular identification and the differential relations of language, in "Polyxena" Engonopoulos takes the metonymy of narcissistic love par excellence, the mirror, and turns it on its own head. The last lines drastically disturb our expectations of dual love by adding a third term (we have the poet, Polyxena and Polyxena) and by introducing within the imaginary logic of identification the Real of the Same.⁴² The repetition of the name "Polyxena" as a privileged sign at the limits of language discourages a reading whose prerequisites would be sameness and difference, the Greek and its other. By contrast, the Same is *produced* here through repetition itself, the Same, as Gilles Deleuze would put it, of that which differs in itself.⁴³

The poem's lost love object is this Same—which returns disguised or in fragments; Polyxena haunts Engonopoulos's early poetry and paintings. If in "Polyxena" the message of her loss is brought to the poet by vampires, in "Οδοστρωτήρες" ["Steamrollers"], the poet offers up his heart for whom was lost to feed upon⁴⁴: «Η καρδιά μου είναι ένα αντικείμενο από λάστιχο συμπαγές. Έχει μέσα δύο οδονηρά ανάξια γυάλινα καρφιά.» ["My heart is an object made of solid rubber. It contains two painful worthless glass nails"]. In a way that may be compared to the Maldoror–Dazet relation in the *Chants de Maldoror*, identity beyond identification is achieved here through an act of mutual violence: «Παίρνω αυτό τ' αντικείμενο, κι ενώ μ' αντιστέκεται με χέρια και πόδια, κατορθώνω, μόλις και με βία, ναν το κρύψω μέσα στο σερτάρι όπου φυλάω.» ["I pick up this object and, as it resists me with both hands and feet, I just about manage to hide it inside the drawer"]. This idea is immediately connected to writing: The word "funnel" in Engonopoulos is a metonymy for poetic composition and the

poem is dedicated to writing, expressed in the ensuing clause: «λόγια κι ιστορίες απ' το χωριό των ποδηλάτων.» [“words and stories from the village of the bicycles”].

Furthermore, writing is embedded in a space defined by the positioning of the words “my heart” and “stranger” at the beginning and end of the poem, respectively. We can't miss the echo here between the Greek word for “stranger,” *ξένη*, and *Πολυξένη*, Polyxena, whose name names again the unnamable identity (achieved in writing) between the poet's “heart” and the other, as in the poem's closing lines:

Γνωρίζω από παιδί τον καθρέφτη των λουλουδιών. Τραγουδώ τις δόξες των οδοστρωτήρων, λέω τους αγνούς ψαλμούς των μπουκαλιών, ενώ η χάρτινη κουκουβάγια μου λέει ίσια μέσα στ' αυτί—με το χουνί της—τη λέξη «ξένη».

Ever since my childhood I have known the mirror of flowers. I sing the glories of steamrollers, I say the chaste psalms of bottles, while the paper owl recites straight into my ear—with her funnel—the word “s t r a n g e r.”

In the line “Ever since my childhood I have known the mirror of flowers,” the other is established as the object of lost love, to which the flower often alludes in Engonopoulos.⁴⁵ As for the mirror, its familiar blindness discourages any figuration of the relation with this lost object at the level of the imaginary.⁴⁶

Poetry's “funnel” brings the “I” and “Polyxena” together again in one of Engonopoulos's most famous poems “Νυχτερινή Μαρία” [“Night Maria”], which opens with the posthumous voice of the murdered poet, in a time which is that of the eternal present of the “event”⁴⁷: “On the very next day after my death, or rather my being put to death, I got all the newspapers to read, that I might learn every possible detail concerning my execution. [...] / And the one thing of note that I happened to read during those days was a most lengthy letter from the Italian, Guillaume Tsitzes, my one close friend, whom actually I never met and whose existence I even doubt. In short, the entire content of that letter of his was as follows: ‘You,’ he said, meaning Polyxena of course, ‘are an old gramophone with a bronze horn [“funnel”: χουνί] beneath a black cloth.’” The poem problematizes communication and exchange in dialogue in the figure of the black cloth which covers the gramophone up.⁴⁸ The latter's oral connotations are further mitigated by the fact that it alludes to the *inscription* of the voice,⁴⁹ as well as by the insistence on the vocabulary on writing rather than speech: “note,” “read,” “letter.” More than that, it is not only

spoken language but language in general that dries up in the immediacy of this “of course,” which names the poet/gramophone Polyxena, leaving no place for any symbolically negotiable relation between the two. Resisting translation in language, Polyxena emerges, rather, as an intensely charged, material signifier for what was lost under the “black cloth,” which is as irrecoverable as it is dear.

Now, this brings us back to our observations on the name as an enigma in Lautréamont, and on the connection between the name and the unknown in “Osiris.” “Polyxena” names what is proper to the poetic subject (“‘You’, he said, meaning Polyxena of course”) and calls attention to its inner difference, without explaining it away in language but preserving it veiled under the “black cloth.” This characteristic of the proper name emerges more clearly in the poem “Hydra” (*The Clavichords of Silence*, 1939), which also describes the crime suffered by the poet, who is deemed dangerous for “law-abiding citizens.” In the poem’s last stanzas, in first-person narrative, the poet refers explicitly to the process of naming:

κι ωνόμαζα θλιμμένα
την καρδιά μου
κατά διαστήματα κανονικά—ή μάλλον ακανόνιστα—
Έκτωρ
αλογά Έκτωρ

and sorrowfully I named
my heart
at regular intervals—or rather irregular ones—
Hector
horse-owning Hector⁵⁰

Horse-owning Hector alludes to Homer and Hector’s attribute in the *Iliad* as a tamer of horses.⁵¹ But again in the *Iliad*, we may think of Andromache “sorrowfully” evoking her “heart” when she hears Hecuba’s lamentation and knows Hector is dead: “έν δ’ έμοι αύτη/στήθεσι πάλλεται ήτορ άνά στόμα, νέρθε δε γούνα/πήγνυται” [“and in mine own breast my heart leapeth to my mouth, and beneath me my knees are numbed”].⁵² The poetic “I” is both Hector *and* Andromache, and by twice naming its heart Hector (“Hector/ horse-owning Hector”), it finds a name for this difference and unicity, a name for the

Same which thus inscribes its trace within the text. In the next and final stanza of the poem, the onomatographic practice again testifies to this function of the proper name as a commemorating sign for the Same that has been lost for language. “Hecuba” is now the name of the “great shadow” of the poet’s “brain”:

ενώ Εκάβη
 -σ' αυτήνα την περίπτωση-
 ήτανε η μεγάλη
 η φοβερή σκιά
 του
 εγκεφάλου μου
 while Hecuba
 - in that case -
 was the great
 the terrible shadow
 of
 my brain.

Engonopoulos is here drawing from Euripides' *Hecuba*, in which the queen awakens at dawn from a terrible dream:

Such ceaseless thrills of terror never wrung my heart before.... For I saw a dappled hind mangled by a wolf's bloody fangs, torn from my knees by force in piteous wise. And this too filled me with affright; o'er the summit of his tomb appeared Achilles' phantom, and for his guerdon he would have one of the luckless maids of Troy. Wherefore, I implore you, powers divine, avert this horror from my daughter, from my child.⁵³

“My daughter, my child” is, of course, none other than Polyxena. Nor is this the first time that her shadow is cast on the poem, as may be inferred by the description, earlier in “Hydra,” of the crime suffered by the poet: “[they] frogmarched him/like a relic/like a virgin slender/and white/by the name of Maria/who was weaving dentelle/of rare beauty/- dentelle like my painting—/in the shade of/the forest/of the mountain/and of the verdant/garden.” The sacrificial victim—Hector, the poet—is now compared with a slender virgin, whose relation to Hecuba is connoted semantically (“shade,” “shadow” is the same word in Greek: *σκιά*). Her name is Maria, which brings to mind “Night Maria,” where, as we saw,

Polyxena plays a central role. The deeper identity between the poetic “I” and the “slender virgin” is established if we read “Hydra” together with a number of other poems in *Do Not Disturb the Driver*, where not the poet but rather a virgin appears as the victim of a crime.⁵⁴

For instance, we read in the poem “There,” about the “the blood of a/virgin/who never told her name” (αίματα μιας παρθένου που δεν είπε ποτέ τ’ όνομά της). The line makes explicit the proper name’s lack of designatory function, of its being “in place of” an enigma, which is its “untouchable” mystery, its hesitation at the borders of language.⁵⁵ A heart may be named “Polyxena” (“Steamrollers”) or “Hector” (“Hydra”)—still, after the effort to put its pieces together, it turns out it “never told its name.”⁵⁶ Simultaneously male and female, mourner and victim, the poetic “I” in Engonopoulos remains singular, however. Andromache, Hector, Hecuba, Polyxena: Engonopoulos uses many names in order to inscribe in the “dentelle” of the text its impossible androgynous sign.⁵⁷

As a way to make explicit the relevance of the above discussion with the problematic of “nationhood” foregrounded at the beginning of this paper, let us return briefly to the poem “Bolivar,” which Engonopoulos composed in 1942–1943, during the German occupation of Athens. “Bolivar” is inspired by the poet’s “emotion” “for the figures, austere and magnificent, of Odysseus Androutsos and Simon Bolivar,” although, as he states, Androutsos is saved for a future song: “Yet for now I shall only sing of Simón, leaving the other one for a more appropriate time.” It is clear, however, that this future song is none other than the present one and that the names “Androutsos” and “Bolivar” are interchangeable in the following lines: “Bolivar! Name of metal and wood”; “Your name is now a lit torch, that illuminates America, North and South, and the entire universe.” At the same time, a famous simile in the poem brings together not Bolivar and Androutsos but Bolivar and the “Greek”: “Bolivar, you are beautiful as a Greek!” [“Μπολιβάρ, είσαι ωραίος σαν Έλληνας!”]. The phrasing obviously alludes to the “beau comme ...” similes in Lautréamont.⁵⁸ Yet, in the *Chants*, this rhetorical pattern gradually breaks apart, to give way to the main movement at work in Lautréamont’s text: metamorphosis. As we saw in the case of the identity between Maldoror and the animals replacing Dazet, the letter of the name plays an essential role in metamorphosis. I suggest reading in light of this notion, metamorphosis, rather than in terms of cultural “synthesis,” the line “Bolivar, you are beautiful as a Greek!”⁵⁹ The originality of my reading consists in taking “Greek” here

not as an adjective but, rather, as itself a proper name. As such, “Greek” both invites and resists “translation” in *any* cultural terms, either hellenocentric or ethnically mixed. It names something “without identity,” which still remains singular and unchangeable, and is what one worships, “loves madly,” as the poet’s statements on *ελληνολατρία* suggest.⁶⁰ This explains why, in Engonopoulos’s texts, proper names can bring culture into poems about love and loss and thus turn culture into an erotics obsessed not with otherness but with the Same.

NOTES

1. The ideologeme of “Greekness” has often been considered as the distinctive characteristic of Greek modernism. For a sharp criticism of this assumption and the ethnocentric character of Greek modernism, see Vayenas, “Hellenocentrism,” 43–48.
2. On the engagement with the primitive in modernism in general and Engonopoulos in particular, as a means of critique of Western rational thought, see Tachopoulou’s illuminating study (2009).
3. Michalis Chrysanthopoulos, “και ο υποκειμενισμός της ελληνικότητας,” in *Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος: Ωραίος σαν Έλληνας* [Εννέα Μελέτες], ed. G. Giatromanolakis (Athens: Ίδρυμα Γουλανδρή Χορν, 1996): 28.
4. Nikos Engonopoulos, *Νίκου Εγγονόπουλου Ποιήματα* (Athens: Ίκαρος, 1999): 345. All references to Engonopoulos in Greek are from this edition; all English translations are from Stabakis, Nikos, ed. and trans. *Surrealism in Greece: An Anthology* (Texas: University of Texas Press 2008).
5. «είμαι πολύ Έλλην χωρίς να είμαι ρατσιστής ... »; «Είμαι υπερήφανος που είμαι Έλληνας. Και είμαι μέγας θαυμαστής του ελληνισμού!»; «Η σκέψη γεννήθηκε μία φορά και ήταν ελληνική σκέψη»; «Η Ελλάς είναι ένα μικρό κράτος, αλλά ένα μεγάλο έθνος», and so on. All quoted in Kechagioglou, “Εξωελληνικά πρόσωπα,” 257. Albeit from a different viewpoint, the present essay complies with Kechagioglou’s argument, which resists an explanation of Engonopoulos’s *ελληνολατρία* as “irony” or as easily relativized in the name of cultural pluralism.
6. See her “Συμβολή στη μελέτη της ποιητικής του Νίκου Εγγονόπουλου: Η τέχνη των ονομάτων” (2010). Abatzopoulou offers a catalogue of proper names including (1) names of Greek mythology, (2) names of invented people, (3) names of the Greek War of Independence, (4) names of literary characters, (5) names drawn on ancient history, (6) names of the Old and New Testament, (7) Hebrew names, (8) names of foreign authors and artists, (9) names of Greek authors and painters, (10) names of Byzantine

- provenance, (11) invented names, (12) names of recent history legendary figures and (13) names of international history (“μελέτη της ποιητικής,” 121–2).
7. Abatzopoulou “μελέτη της ποιητικής,” 131–32.
 8. *Ibid.*, 117.
 9. See especially the two lectures Jacques Lacan dedicated to the proper name in his Seminar IX, *L’Identification* (20 December 1961 and 10 January 1962): the distinctive characteristic of the proper name as opposed to common names is precisely that it is untranslatable and as such is outside language: “que d’un langue à l’ autre il ne se traduit pas, puisqu’ il se transpose simplement, il se transfère ... je m’ appelle Lacan dans toutes les langues, et vous aussi de même, chacun par votre nom.” (Seminar IX, 93). Cf. Derrida’s comments in “Des Tours de Babel”: “Or un nom propre en tant que tel reste toujours intraduisible, fait à partir duquel on peut considérer qu’ il n’appartient pas rigoureusement, au même titre que les autres mots, à la langue, au système de la langue, qu’elle soit traduite ou traduisante” (Derrida, *Psyché*, 208).
 10. Abatzopoulou draws attention to the parallel between names in Engonopoulos and the “weird” (παράξενα) names in French poetry (Gaspard, Maldoror, Ubu, Rose Sélavy). She goes on to discuss the name in the Greek and the French poets in similar terms, as characterized by an antirealist, unconventional usage and producing a defamiliarizing effect on the reader (“μελέτη της ποιητικής,” 119–120).
 11. Four extracts from the *Chants* were translated by Engonopoulos in 1944, and published in 1978 (Vourtsis, “Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος,” 9).
 12. Roland-Francois Lack, *Poetics of the Pretext: Reading Lautréamont* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 3–4.
 13. For a discussion, see Lack, *Poetics*, 3–4; and see also his account of the same “glossographical attention” paid to “Comte de Lautréamont” (1998: 8–9).
 14. Cf. Derrida’s comments on the name “Babel” as an archetype of this “undecidable character: the name is haunted by the ‘duty’ to be translated, a duty, though, that can never be discharged. It is thus translatable and untranslatable at one and the same time” (“à la fois se traduit et ne se traduit pas, appartient sans appartenir à une langue, et s’endette auprès de lui-même d’une dette insolvable, auprès de lui-même comme autre”) (Derrida, *Psyché*, 211).
 15. All citations in French are from Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror et autres textes* (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 2001); all translations from *Les Chants de Maldoror*, translated by G. Wernha (New York: New Directions Publishing).
Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont et Sade* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), 93. See also Peytard, “de Dazet.”

16. Lois Nathan, *et ses signifiants en six chants, ou, Le miroir brisé de Maldoror: sémiotique pour Lautréamont* (Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2002), 37–8.
17. On the materiality of the proper name, cf. Deleuze: “Les noms propres aussi sont des indicateurs ou des désignants, mais d’une importance spéciale parce qu’ils sont les seuls à former des singularités proprement matérielles” (1969: 22–3).
18. On transformational poetics, see Blanchot, *Lautréamont*, 117–25. As for the new meaning love assumes through mutual metamorphosis, the most striking instance in the *Chants* arguably occurs in Chant 2, in the episode with the female shark, in which at last Maldoror has found a lover and they lose each other in a “un accouplement long, chaste et hideux!” (“in a long, chaste and hideous coupling”), during which they change features between them: “Deux cuisses nerveuses se collèrent étroitement à la peau visqueuse du monstre, comme deux sangsues; et, les bras et les nageoires entrelacés autour du corps de l’objet aimé qu’ils entouraient avec amour, tandis que leurs gorges et leurs poitrines ne faisaient bientôt plus qu’une masse glauque aux exhalaisons de goémon.” This metamorphosis had been prepared earlier, in the first Chant: “Nul n’a encore vu les rides vertes de mon front; ni les os en saillie de ma figure maigre, pareils aux arêtes de quelque grand poisson” (Chant 1.8) [“No one yet has seen the green furrows in my forehead, nor the protruding bones of my emaciated face, resembling the bones of some great fish”].
19. Lautréamont, *Chants*, 2.8. On the link between the proper name and writing, cf. Lacan, Seminar IX: “La caractéristique du nom propre est toujours plus ou moins liée à ce trait de sa liaison, non pas au son, mais à l’écriture” (85); “Ce qui distingue un nom propre malgré de petites apparences d’amodiations ..., c’est que d’une langue à l’autre ça se conserve dans sa structure. Sa structure sonore sans doute, mais cette structure sonore se distingue par le faite que justement celle-là, parmi toutes les autres, nous devons la respecter, et ce en raison de l’affinité, justement, du nom propre à la marque, à la désignation directe du signifiant comme objet” (86).
20. Jean-Michel Olivier; *le texte du vampire* (Lausanne: L’Age d’ Homme, 1981), 127.
21. Lautréamont, *Chants*, 1.11.
22. Olivier; *le texte du vampire*, 126.
23. Lautréamont, *Chants*, 1.6.
24. On the “divine names” in the *Chants*, see Lack, *Poetics*, 37–56.
25. Lautréamont, *Chants*, 6.3.
26. Lack, *Poetics*, 10. The enigmatic status of the proper name in the *Chants* emerges more clearly if compared and contrasted with the different function of the proper name in Lautréamont’s *Poésies*, of which the most

famous instance is the “Grandes-Têtes-Molles” passage in *Poésies* I: “Depuis Racine, la poésie n’a pas progressé d’un millimètre. Elle a reculé. Grâce à qui? aux Grandes-Têtes-Molles de notre époque. Grâce aux femmelettes, Chateaubriand, le Mohican-Mélancolique; Sénancourt, l’Homme-en-Jupon; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, le Socialiste-Grincheur; Anne Radcliffe, le Spectre-Toqué; Edgar Poe, le Mameluck-des-Rêves-d’Alcool; Mathurin, le Compère-des-Ténèbres; George Sand, l’Hermaphrodite-Circoncis; Théophile Gautier, l’Incomparable-Épicier; Leconte, le Captif-du-Diable; Goethe, le Suicidé-pour-Pleurer; Sainte-Beuve, le Suicidé-pour-Rire; Lamartine, la Cigogne-Larmoyante; Lermontov, le Tigre-qui-Rugit; Victor Hugo, le Funèbre-Échalas-Vert; Mickiewicz, l’Imitateur-de-Satan; Musset, le Gandin-Sans-Chemise-Intellectuelle; et Byron, l’Hippopotame-des-Jungles-Infernales.” In this case, names have no enigmatic status, but function as “markers of discourses” and are “made to enact the theme of Ducasse’s discourse on Romanticism: the disarray of Romantic literature” (Lack, *Poetics of the Pretext*, 31; 35).

27. On the unknowability of the name, cf. Lisa Block de Behar’s comments on the “mystery of the Name” in Borges’s poetics of “negative epistemology”: “a name can hide another name and that recondite and — like semi-osis — unlimited denomination displaces its secret in a deeper secret, so much so that from name to name, the true one becomes unknown” (Block de Behar, *Endless Quotation*, 138).
28. Cf Lacan: “Il y un sujet qui ne se confond pas avec le signifiant comme tel, mais qui se déploie dans cette référence au signifiant, avec des traits, des caractères parfaitement articulables et formalisables, et qui doivent nous permettre de saisir, de discerner comme tel le caractère idiotique — si je prends la référence grecque, c’est parce que je suis loin de la confondre avec l’emploi du mot *particular* dans la définition russellienne — le caractère idiotique comme tel du nom propre” (Seminar IX, 81).
29. For the proper name as “rigid designator,” see Kripke’s seminal study on the problematic of proper names. Kripke formulates his argument through a sustained critique to Frege and Russell’s theory on the proper name as synonymous to the abbreviated or disguised description that could replace the proper name and of which the proper name derives its sense (Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 66). For a critique of Russell’s theory of the equivalence between the proper name and its descriptions, see also Lacan, Seminar IX, 75–77.
30. For a detailed review of the accounts of the “other Homer in scholarship,” see Vlachodimos, *Διαβάζοντας το παρελθόν*, 58–72.
31. Yiannis Karavidas, “for Albania in my heart’: The Anxieties of a Greek Surrealist in the Late 1930s,” in *Greece and the Balkans: Identities*,

- Perceptions; and Cultural Encounters Since the Enlightenment*, ed: D. Tziouvas (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 245.
32. On hammering as a figure for Engonopoulos's awareness that a communication with Homer is not an easy thing in contemporary Greece, see Valaoritis "Για τον θερμαστή," 83.
 33. The notion of the name as a sign of "intensity" is developed in the work of Pierre Klossowski and proves relevant to the present discussion. In the "Postface" following *Les Lois de L' Hospitalité*, Klossowski refers to the name—in his case, famously, Roberte—as a unique sign, as "an already specific designation of the first intensity" ("une désignation déjà spécifique de l'intensité première"), which has no "representational content," and yet fascinates with the value and the meaning of all that matters: Klossowski, *Les Lois*, 334. See also Canning, *Klossowski's Alternative*, 115 and Mackendrick, *Divine Enticement*, 207.
 34. Incidentally, "Perhaps" alludes to the toad episode in the first Chant through striking verbal echoes: the introductory phrase to the poem, "Yet it saddens me to tell ...," strongly recalls the words which announce the appearance of the toad/Dazet: "Puisqu'il te plaît de venir à moi, comme attiré par un aimant, je ne m'y opposerai pas. Qu'il est beau! **Ça me fait de la peine de le dire**" (Chant 1.13) ["Since it pleases you to come to me as if drawn by a magnet, I shall not hinder you. How beautiful he is! **It pains me to say this**"]. Here and in what follows, the lines in the Greek text I highlight in bold characters draw attention to the possible allusions to Lautréamont.
 35. Lautréamont, *Chants*, 1.13. For a concise account of the distinction in Lacan, see Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, 72.
 36. Lautréamont, *Chants*, 1.13. "Farewell then! Hope not again to discover the toad on your journey. You have been the cause of my death. As for me, I am leaving for eternity that I may implore your forgiveness." Mutual violence is an omnipresent theme in the *Chants* and closely binds together victim and executioners as they change roles and turn into each other: for example, "Alors, tu me déchireras, sans jamais t'arrêter, avec les dents et les ongles à la fois. Je parerai mon corps de guirlandes embaumées, pour cet holocaust expiatoire; et nous souffrirons tous les deux, moi, d'être déchiré, toi, de me déchirer ... ma bouche collée à ta bouche." (Chant I. 6) ["You shall rend my flesh increasingly with teeth and nails. I shall deck my body with scented garlands for this expiatory holocaust, and we shall suffer together, you from rending me and I from being torn ... my mouth pressed forever upon your mouth"]. See also Blanchot, *Lautréamont*, 71.
 37. Engonopoulos, "Περί Ύψους," in *Ἐν Ἀνθηρῶ Ἑλληνι Λόγω*, 1957.
 38. Dante Gabriele Rossetti, Isidore Ducasse and Panagis Koutalianos are connected because of their physical or mental strength and because they

are all ethnically mixed (English–Italian, French–Latin American, Greek from the East) (Ricks, “Ο Εγγονόπουλος,” 238). It is true that not all names in Engonopoulos resist “translation” into their connotations and in many cases, a reading of names as a bunch of allusions remains possible. My focus on proper names which are, rather, “signs of intensity” is based on the deliberate decision on my part to read poetry as a site for the obsessive repetition of the Same rather than as a site of cultural synthesis.

39. See Anthis, “Διακειμενική πρακτική”, 216.
40. It has been suggested that Engonopoulos borrows Polyxena from another Greek author of the generation of the 1930s, Kosmas Politis, who had already transferred the figure from the Iliadic cycle to a contemporary context in his famous novel *Eroica* (Valaoritis 2008: 293). In Politis’s novel, Polyxena is a blond teenager of Bavarian origin and Engonopoulos himself had Bavarian roots.
41. Lautréamont’s *Chants* offer parallels of the two pebbles “duality” in Engonopoulos: “Je jette un long regard de satisfaction sur la dualité qui me compose ... et je me trouve beau!” (Lautréamont, *Chants*, 6.IV); “Je n’ai pas à remercier le Tout-Puissant de son adresse remarquable; il a envoyé la foudre de manière à couper précisément mon visage en deux, à partir du front, endroit où la blessure a été la plus dangereuse: qu’un autre le félicite!” (Ibid., 2.2.) Cf. further other “mirror passages” in the *Chants*, which draw attention to the precariousness of the mirror image and thus challenge identification. For example: “Ce qui me reste à faire, c’est de briser cette glace, en éclats, à l’aide d’une pierre ... Ce n’est pas la première fois que le cauchemar de la perte momentanée de la mémoire établit sa demeure dans mon imagination, quand, par les inflexibles lois de l’optique, il m’arrive d’être placé devant la méconnaissance de ma propre image!” (Chant 4.5).
42. In her study on the proper name in Engonopoulos, Abatzopoulou attributes the effect of the title name “Polyxena” to the clash between the reader’s expectations for a “prosopographical” lyric prose on the one hand and the undoing of the connection between the name Polyxena and a specific feminine person on the other (Abatzopoulou 2010: 123). Although any referential anchoring of the poem in reality is indeed out of question here, I attribute the efficiency of the closing lines of the poem to the repetition of “Polyxena” and its insistence on some specificity, the unnamable singularity of the Same which the proper name—all its cultural connotations aside—is evoked to capture, as the sign outside language par excellence.
43. Gilles Deleuze, *Logique de Sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), 306: “le seul Même de ce qui diffère.”

44. Vampirism is of course central throughout the *Chants de Maldoror*, where it appears connected to the healing of the impasses of writing. In the second Chant the poet complains that his pen is motionless (“ma plume reste inerte,” 2.2), after which a dog, which recalls the rhinophe/Dazet in previous scenes, appears to drain his blood: “Allons, Sultan, avec ta langue, débarrasse-moi de ce sang qui salit le parquet. ... On ne croirait pas, au premier abord, que Maldoror contînt tant de sang dans ses artères; car, sur sa figure, ne brillent que les reflets du cadavre” (Chant 2.2). [“Come, now Sultan!, lap up this blood that befouls my floor! ... One would not at first have thought that Maldoror contained so much blood in his arteries, for his countenance gives forth only a corpse-like radiance.”]. After the incident, the poetic subject is healed: “Oh! que je suis faible! N’importe; j’aurai cependant la force de soulever le porte-plume, et le courage de creuser ma pensée” (2.2) [“Ah! How weak I am! But it matters little; I still have the strength to lift my pen and the courage to set down my thoughts”]. Similarly, in “Polyxena” the vampires appear at once as the disabling condition of life and the enabling condition of writing, the name Polyxena surviving as the commemorating sign which is the remainder of poetry’s doomed effort at recovery of an object lost for language.
45. See, for instance, “Καυχησιολογίαι υπό βροχήν” II, where a flower is connected with the dead beloved: ‘η ωραία κόρη/ Κύριε/ π’ αγαπούσαμε/ ήτανε ωσάν/ κυκλάμινο/ μέσα/ στο νεκρικό της/ το κρεβάτι” (“the beautiful virgin/Lord/that we loved/was like/a cyclamen/in her funereal/bed.” Translation mine).
46. On the problematization of the mirror function through reference to “the man with fur eyes,” see Filokyprou, *Λόγια και Ιστορίες*, 88. Filokyprou links this reference to the mirror in the poem “Lotus,” where we read: “or is it possible that a green mirror/ - the simplest green velvet mirror-/ is enough / to contain/ the sobs/ -the rhythmical and hollow sobs -/ of the infernal/ lamellas?” Like the fur, velvet is a material that does not allow the mirror to reflect the light.
47. Cf. Deleuze, *Logique de Sens*, 80: “L’événement, c’est que jamais personne ne meurt, mais vient toujours de mourir et va toujours mourir, dans le présent vide de l’Aïôn, éternité.”
48. The image of the “black cloth” covering up the gramophone with its bronze horn is usually connected to Engonopoulos’s bitterness about the hostile reception of his poetry in Greece (Filokyprou 2008: 255). I suggest that Lautréamont must have offered Engonopoulos a model for this exilic situation of the poet, raised to an existential rather than circumstantial level. The verbal echoes between “Nocturnal Maria” and the 11th stanza of the first Chant, where Maldoror attends as an outcast/vampire a peaceful family scene, are signposts to the thematic connection (compare

the underlined phrases in the two poems): The father of the family gives an account of the terrible spectre of Maldoror that has ruined their family peace, conjuring his son never to resemble this man: “Il va de contrée en contrée, abhorré partout. Les uns disent qu’il est accablé d’une espèce de folie originelle, depuis son enfance. D’autres croient savoir qu’il est d’une cruauté extrême et instinctive. ... Il y en a qui prétendent qu’on l’a flétri d’un surnom dans sa jeunesse; ... Ce surnom était le vampire! ... Quelques-uns mêmes ont affirmé que l’amour l’a réduit dans cet état; ... Mais le plus grand nombre pense qu’un incommensurable orgueil le torture, comme jadis Satan, et qu’il voudrait égaler Dieu” (Chant 1.11) [“He wanders from land to land, hated by all. Some say that he has been a victim of some special kind of madness since childhood. Others believe that he is of an extreme and instinctive cruelty. ... There are those we maintain that in his youth he was branded with an epithet ... continually. This epithet was The Vampire! ... Some say that love brought him to this state. ... But most think that he is tortured by incommensurable pride, as Satan was, and that he would like to be God’s equal”].

49. See Chrysanthopoulos, “και ο υποκειμενισμός της ελληνικότητας,” 37 and Karavidas, “Deep craving,” 242.
50. Lautréamont, “Hydra,” *The Clavichords of Silence*, 1939. The phrases “at regular intervals or rather irregular ones” are again phrasal resonances which allude to the 11th stanza of the first Chant, where Maldoror is considered a threat to the conventional family and is rejected outside the limits of the human community. His shrieks of “poignant agony” disrupt the peace of the family scene, resounding at a distance “a divers intervalles” (Chant 1.11, 1968 version).
51. The Homeric intertext also accounts for the choice of the word heart, as the Homeric word for heart (ἤτορ) recurs repeatedly in the epics, in the sense of both “the seat of life” and “the seat of feeling, passion, desire” (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddell and Scott). Incidentally, one of the most famous episodes in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “Hades,” is constructed around the figure of the heart as the “organ of life and emotions.” The heart appears there in all its literal and metaphorical permutations, from actual organ (“a pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day”) to metaphorical location of emotion (“touches a man’s inmost heart,” “How many broken hearts are buried here”) (see Joyce, *Ulysses*, 803).
52. Homer, *The Iliad*, 22.452.
53. For the reference to Hecuba’s dream in Euripides’ *Hecuba* from a different viewpoint, see Anthis “Η ψυχαναλυτική διάσταση,” 276.
54. For aggressive acts in four out of ten of the narrative poems in *Do Not Disturb the Driver*, see Filokyprou, *Λόγια και Ιστορίες*, 32.

55. On the “untouchable,” cf. Jacques Derrida’s allusion to Walter Benjamin’s “unberühbar” to designate “un point infiniment petit du sens,” the “a-traduire,” that which cannot be translated in language, and still must be translated (Derrida, *Psyché* 222–24).
56. Engonopoulos’s surrealist poetics may indeed be seen as the rehearsal, at once humorous and dark, of a naming process, which alludes to the subject’s sliding on the chain of enunciation, whereby the subject, in Lacan’s words, “élide quelque chose qui est a proprement parler ce qu’ il ne peut savoir, a savoir le nom de ce qu’ il est en tant que sujet de l’ énonciation” (Seminar IX, 93).
57. The mixed gender of the poetic “I” may be paralleled again with the Hermaphrodite as a figure for the poet in Lautréamont. In the second Chant, the Hermaphrodite receives an attack strongly reminiscent of “Hydra”: “On le prend généralement pour un fou. Un jour, quatre hommes masqués, qui avaient reçu des ordres, se jetèrent sur lui et le garrotèrent solidement, de manière qu’il ne pût remuer que les jambes. Le fouet abattit ses rudes lanières sur son dos, et ils lui dirent qu’il se dirigeât sans délai vers la route qui mène à Bicêtre” (Chant 2.7) [“People generally takes him for a madman. One day, four masked men, acting under orders, threw themselves upon him and bound him firmly so that he could not move a limb ... with whips they raised great welts on his back and told him to set out at once along the road to Bicêtre”].
58. Sofia Skopetea, Κάλλος και καταγωγή Μπολιβάρ, *Χάρτης* 25/26 (1988): 204.
59. It is moreover in light of metamorphosis that we should read the self-referential gesture that brings Bolivar, the poet and none other than Lautréamont together: “I know not what kinship linked you, if he was your descendant, to the other/great American, the one from Montevideo,/ One thing alone is known, that I am your son.”
60. Contrast here different renderings of the poet’s surrealist logic, like that focusing on “humor” dictated by the political circumstances of the German occupation (Dialismas 1996: 89) or the one suggesting that the “signified of adjectives (*Greek*) can change even more freely than the signifier of proper names (Bolivár instead of Bolívar, Eggopoulos instead of Engonopoulos, as the poet sometimes signed his paintings)” (Chrysanthopoulos, “και ο υποκειμενισμός της ελληνικότητας,” 41).

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Sharing the Stage in Istanbul: The Multi-ethnic Beginnings of Ottoman Theatre

Defne Çizakça

Istanbul has been a sociopolitical, religious, and artistic centre of the Mediterranean since the fourth century CE. From the Byzantine to the Ottoman Empires, the city has been home to various peoples: amongst them Greeks, Armenians, Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Romaniote, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, and Levantines, to name a few. These groups have lived alongside one another without giving up their local traditions or religious beliefs. Consequently, multireligious sharing of spaces, celebrations, rituals, and professional collaborations among different ethnic groups, as well as the formation of eclectic artistic genres, has been common practice.¹ The following essay will focus on one such joint project between nineteenth-century Turks and Armenians: the establishment of modern European theatre in Istanbul. This cooperation deserves scrutiny because of both its complex historical layers and its convergence with the emergence of nationalism in the imperial city.

My aim in this paper is fourfold: first, to offer a historical analysis of theatre in Istanbul and within the Armenian diaspora; second, to chart

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the political and cultural circumstances that enabled an Armenian director, Agop Vartovyan (1840–1902) to stage the first Turkish patriotic play Istanbul had seen; and third, to highlight Vartovyan’s Gedikpaşa Theatre, and prior to it the Mechitarist island of San Lazzaro, as exemplars of Homi Bhabha’s third space. The fourth goal of this essay is to suggest playwright Namık Kemal’s (1840–1888) *Vatan Yahut Silistra* (1873) as the production that ended this status through its nationalist undertones.

Third-space theory results from Bhabha’s work on identity and community. According to Bhabha, the essence or origin of a culture is never accessible and consequently all cultures, within and without themselves, exist in a process of translation, hybridity, and change. It is this hybridity that Bhabha designates as the third space in which new structures of authority and political initiatives emerge and displace the histories that constitute it.² The third space develops when two or more cultures/individuals interact, and it challenges our view of historical and cultural identity “as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People.”³ Edward Soja, applying Bhabha’s concept to geography, suggests that third spaces are locations where issues of class, race, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other.⁴ Accordingly, while the collaboration between Armenians and Turks to establish modern theatre constitutes an example of the third space, Namık Kemal’s *Vatan Yahut Silistre* terminates this status by partaking in an incipient nationalism that privileged Turkish identity above the Armenian.

THE BEGINNINGS OF EUROPEAN THEATRE IN ISTANBUL

The Ottoman Empire was introduced to European theatre as early as the seventeenth century through theatrical performances in embassies, but this new form of entertainment did not reach the general public until the nineteenth century.⁵ The interest in European theatre was part of a larger curiosity about Western arts, culture, and political thought which found its highest expression in the Tanzimat period (1838–1876). Until the nineteenth century, modernity had been understood as a set of tools within the Ottoman context. Ottomans began to adapt European technology in such fields as mining, cartography, and firearms in the fifteenth century. They learned about Renaissance astronomy and medicine through Jewish scholars who escaped the Spanish Inquisition and found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Despite these borrowings, the Ottomans considered themselves

superior to Europe culturally, spiritually, and militarily, and limited their adaptations from the West.⁶ It is only in the late seventeenth century that European advancements in technology began to signal signs of decline to the Ottomans, the first appearance of which occurred in the field of warfare. After the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, and as a result of unprecedented territorial losses, Ottomans began to believe in the eminence of European military techniques. The Industrial Revolution followed suit and led Muslim travellers to marvel at the use of gas lamps in European streets. Soon, economic prosperity was judged as a token of Western modernism as well. Cumulative European advancements led to the scientific revolution. In time, Islamic intellectuals extended their admiration from military techniques to political systems and began to deem European constitutional reforms guarantors of safety and prosperity.⁷ By the nineteenth century, modernity had morphed from a set of tools into a value system in the Ottoman worldview. While the Ottoman Empire had experienced modernizing movements such as the Tulip Era (1718–1730) and the reforms of Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) before, the Tanzimat marked a period of transformations that would not subsequently be reversed.

The Tanzimat Era saw modernist reforms adapted in both the political and artistic spheres. The civil and criminal codes, the financial and educational systems, and the army were all reorganized, and the edict of Hatt-ı Hümayun (1856) granted full legal equality to Ottoman citizens of all religions. Aesthetically, the period marked changes in dress codes such as the Europeanization of official uniforms. Furthermore, Neoclassical, Baroque, and Rococo architectural elements entered Istanbulite buildings and were praised as “*hüsn-ü diğer*”—a different kind of beauty.⁸ New literary forms like the short story, drama, and the persuasive essay were introduced to the empire through translations from European languages.⁹ Innovations took hold in the performance arts as well, and theatre was considered one such locus of Westernization.

Westernizing sultans were keen to include European forms of entertainment alongside Ottoman ones.¹⁰ Sultan Selim III (1761–1808) invited European dancers to entertain in the Ottoman Palace in 1793 and an opera troupe to perform for him in 1797. Sultan Mahmud II (1789–1839) had 500 French plays in his private library and wanted the Ottoman army orchestra to train in Western classical music. To this end, he hired an Italian musician, Giuseppe Donizetti (1788–1856), in 1821 (later known as Donizetti Paşa).¹¹ Sultan Abdülmecit I (1823–1861) is said to have visited the theatres of Pera himself. He also built a private stage next to

his palace in Dolmabahçe. In 1847, a Turkish intellectual, Şevket Bey, staged his own translations of Molière's plays at the Ottoman Palace. The Imperial Military Music School, Müzika-yı Hümayun, was established in 1859 and performed plays in Ottoman Turkish.

While embassy theatres appealed to educated higher classes who spoke foreign languages and had a familiarity with high culture, imperial theatres and Müzika-yı Hümayun were geared towards the palace population, foreign guests, and soldiers.¹² Theatres catering to the general public were run by Greek and Armenian companies and performed plays in their respective languages. Istanbul was identified as the hub of Greek theatre from 1858 to 1922, but it was the Armenian community that would popularize the form for Turkish-speaking Istanbulites.¹³

Armenian Istanbulite theatre had two features that distinguished it from embassy and palace theatres, on the one hand, and from local and travelling Greek companies, on the other hand. The first such distinguishing factor was the Armenian theatres' involvement in a broader Armenian Enlightenment project which shall be discussed in detail. The second aspect that made Armenian Istanbulite theatre unique was that they were the first and only companies to perform bilingually, in both Armenian and Ottoman Turkish. Their use of Ottoman Turkish enabled them to attract the general Turkish public to join their Armenian audience. Agop Vartovyan's Gedikpaşa Theatre was one such location where Armenian and Turkish theatre mixed to create a unique third space that incorporated elements of both cultures.

GEDİKPAŞA THEATRE: AN ISTANBULITE THIRD SPACE

The beginnings of Gedikpaşa Theatre go back to a French horse acrobat named Louis Souillier (1813–1888) who was the director of an itinerant circus. Sultan Mahmud II (1789–1839) watched Souillier's performances in Silistre in 1837 and invited the troupe to Istanbul shortly afterwards. A theatre was built in Gedikpaşa in order to accommodate Souillier's rehearsals. After Souillier's departure from Istanbul, the venue was used first by Hovannes Kasparyan's Aramyan Theatre Company, second by a dance company called Razi, and third by the Suhr Circus.¹⁴ On the 14 November 1867, an article announcing changes to Gedikpaşa Theatre appeared in the newspaper *Istanbul*. Many professional actors and dancers had been brought over from Europe, and the theatre would entertain in European-style plays, or their adaptations, from then on.¹⁵

From 1868 to 1880, Gedikpaşa Theatre came under the direction of Agop Vartovyan who, in 1869, received a ten-year concession from the Ottoman Porte,¹⁶ giving him sole rights to stage plays in the Ottoman Turkish language, as well as in Armenian.¹⁷ Vartovyan's company was not the first to stage plays in the two languages; his fellow Armenians Sirapyan Hekimyan's company "Arevalyan" and Istepan Eksiyán's "Vasपुरagan" had performed bilingually before, from 1859 to 1867. Vartovyan followed their lead but was more prolific, staging 50 comedies, 10 tragedies, 44 dramas, 10 operettas and vaudevilles in just the year 1874–1875.¹⁸

Before the special mandate granted to Vartovyan and his popularization of bilingual performances, Ottoman theatre had been divided into several ethnic theatres. It was only after Vartovyan's direction of Gedikpaşa that one could talk about a multicultural Ottoman stage. Gedikpaşa Theatre was able to take a European art form, adapt it to Istanbul, and create a repertoire that appealed to both Armenians and Turks and as such initiate a hybrid third space. Bhabha describes hybridity through a psychoanalytic analogy in which identification of oneself is through and with another.¹⁹ In this sense, and within the context of Vartovyan's Gedikpaşa, the Armenians had to identify with and through the Turks whom they depicted and who constituted their audience, and the Turks had to identify with and through the Armenians who acted out scenes from their daily lives and entertained them in the process, in order to "give birth to something different, new and unrecognizable."²⁰

ARMENIAN ISTANBULITE THEATRE

An important question comes to mind from the brief history outlined above. Why did the Ottoman Porte want to popularize European theatre among a Turkish-speaking audience? And for what reason would it choose to do so through an Armenian theatre company instead of a Greek one? The choice suggests that Armenian theatres were more willing—or able—to perform plays in the Ottoman Turkish language.²¹ While Armenian companies were known for their bilingual performances, there are no records indicating that Greek companies performed in Turkish at all. The reasons therefore fall beyond the scope of this essay. However, there may be a more suggestive answer to the above question—one that does not depend on language use. The Armenian community of Istanbul successfully used theatre to convey their ideology to the masses, while

Greek theatre in Istanbul remained largely non-partisan. It may be that the Ottoman Porte and Turkish intellectuals had a political agenda in popularizing European theatre for a Turkish audience, and that they considered the Armenian community more apt in actualizing this vision. To understand the modus operandi of the Armenian troupes, their political use of theatre and idealism, we must go further back in history.

SAN LAZZARRO: A THIRD SPACE OF ARMENIAN ENLIGHTENMENT AND OTTOMAN ROYALTIES

The history of Armenian theatre is intimately linked to that of the Armenian Enlightenment, which finds its beginnings in the religious conflict within the Armenian community of Istanbul. The Ottoman Empire was ruled through the *millet* system, a form of imperial indirect rule vis-à-vis confessional communities. Ottoman constituents, the Armenians amongst them, were organized into autonomous, self-regulatory units, or millets, through their religious affiliations. Each millet was entitled to independent religious courts and schooling systems, and granted freedom of worship in return for loyalty to Ottoman rule and the payment of taxes. The millet system enabled the Ottomans to rule over heterogeneous communities within the empire without religious persecution, which led to the relatively peaceful coexistence of various ethnic communities from the twelfth to the eighteenth century.²²

The Armenians held a special place among the peoples of the Ottoman Empire since their community was divided into three different denominations that were subsumed under three different millets. Armenians were recognized as Apostolic Gregorians in 1461 and were administered by the Armenian Patriarchate as a singular unit until 1832. In 1832, Sultan Mahmud II (1789–1839) recognized Armenian Catholics as a separate millet, while Sultan Abdülmecid I (1823–1861) recognized Armenian Protestants in 1850. Sectarian conflicts raged among the Armenians until these official recognitions were issued. From the seventeenth century onwards, Roman Catholicism had begun to gain prominence amongst the Armenian community due to missionary activities in Ottoman lands. These proselytizing attempts were overseen by the Papacy. By the nineteenth century, another schism had occurred amongst the Catholic Armenians themselves. One faction opposed the Armenian Patriarchate and wanted to unite under the leadership of the Pope in Rome and another faction wished to elect independent bishops and patriarchs in

Istanbul. The Ottoman Porte was concerned with the growing tension amongst its Catholic Armenians since directorship of the Papacy in Rome would mean extension of its jurisdiction into Ottoman lands.²³ Alongside these disagreements, first-hand testimonials also record aggression from the Armenian Patriarchate towards Protestant converts.²⁴

Mechitar of Sebaste (1676–1749), who would play a pivotal role in the Armenian Enlightenment, was born into this time of unrest. He was born Manouk Petrosian to an Apostolic Gregorian family in Sivas on 7 February 1676 and converted to Catholicism when he was 15. After being ordained a priest at the age of 19, Mechitar studied at several monasteries in Anatolia, translated religious works from Greek into Armenian, and gained a loyal following. He moved to Istanbul in 1700 with 16 of his followers and established an Armenian school there in 1701.²⁵ Mechitar and his congregation eventually left Istanbul due to the growing sectarian conflicts, settling in Morea, which was then under Venetian rule, and consecutively moved further north to Venice when Morea came under Ottoman jurisdiction.

Mechitarists were granted asylum in Italy and were gifted the Island of San Lazzaro by the Serene Republic in 1715.²⁶ Mechitar and his followers took refuge on the island and established a monastery that formed a focal point of the Armenian Enlightenment.²⁷ The Armenian Enlightenment was a part of the European Enlightenment (1687–1789), while also differentiating from it in some important aspects. The purpose of the European intellectual movement was to progress society through reason rather than tradition or faith; it marked the triumph of rationalism and of empiricism, the scientific spirit, and progress.²⁸ It also laid the foundations for the separation of state and religion, and thus for the modern secular state. National states played a central role in shaping the various institutions—academies, publishing houses, universities—that disseminated these Enlightenment ideas. Consequently, diaspora or minority peoples, such as the Armenians, who did not have states of their own, experienced this intellectual movement differently.

In the case of the Armenians, elite families, the bourgeoisie, and minority institutions took on the role of the state, and worked together to develop and spread Enlightenment ideas. The Armenian Enlightenment was a diverse movement that embraced both critics of religion and the clergy as the guarantors of Armenian culture; faith and tradition remained a central tenet of this project. There was also no clear division between lay and clerical enlightenment thinkers.²⁹ The Mechitarists of San Lazzaro must

be seen in this light, as both a part of the European Enlightenment with its notions of scientific method, reason, and advancement of knowledge, and as distinct from it with its religious and traditional tone, and unique setting.

The Mechitarists contribution to the Armenian Enlightenment was in their attempts to create religious, linguistic, and cultural revival. Regarding the first, Mechitar began his theological work in Anatolia and resumed it in Istanbul and Venice, writing 14 personal works and 27 translations, as well as editions of religious works, hymns, and spiritual praises. Mechitar's first writings to be published in Venice were the *Compendium of Theology of Blessed Albert the Great* in 1715, followed by *The Spiritual Garden* in 1719, and the *Mekhitar Book of Vices and Book of Virtues* in 1721. Mechitar wrote catechisms, which he published first in classical and then in contemporary Armenian in 1725. In 1733, an illustrated version of the catechisms was published for children. He also prepared a new Armenian edition of the Bible which was published in 1735.³⁰

Mechitar's religious work went hand in hand with his linguistic work. He had witnessed the low literacy levels of his fellow Armenians during his travels in Anatolia and was keen to raise their education levels. To this end, he and his fellow monks worked on rendering the Armenian language more accessible to the uneducated masses. Mechitar's efforts centred on both vernacular and classical Armenian; he understood the importance of the vernacular for the vast majority of Armenians who did not have the means to learn the ancient, ornate language that dated back to the fifth century CE. Hence, Mechitar published the first manual of vernacular Armenian based on the dialects used in Asia Minor. The subsequent publication of books in this new dialect laid the foundation of nineteenth-century Armenian.³¹

Yet, as a theologian, Mechitar was also convinced of the importance of classical Armenian. Many ancient Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Persian, and Latin manuscripts had survived only in their ancient Armenian translations and most of these books were religious in nature. Mechitarists published the first grammar book of classical Armenian in 1730 to make these texts more comprehensible to a lay audience. In addition to these publications, the Mechitarists compiled an Armenian dictionary, and wrote a number of books on the practical arts and sciences.³² They published a history of the Armenian people in three volumes in 1769 and began publishing *Bazmavep*, a literary, historical, and scientific journal in 1843.³³ The monks also translated from Greek, Roman, and European authors ranging

from Homer to Shakespeare. It must be noted these translation projects would become more political in nature as Mechitar's cultural revival was inherited by a new generation of Armenian intellectuals from the 1850s to the 1880s. Members of this "Renaissance generation" were mostly educated in the West, and influenced by French and Russian revolutionary politics. They believed that religion had monopolized the arts and letters for too long and that this interference was to the detriment of progress; they hence aligned themselves more closely to the European Enlightenment project. The Armenian Church's emphasis on classical Armenian had averted a national Enlightenment, they believed, just as the Ottoman Empire's support of the Armenian Patriarchy had merely reaffirmed traditionalism. The Renaissance generation, as opposed to the Mechitarists, promoted secularization of Armenian culture and their translations of European works into Armenian was a way of disseminating these ideas amongst the Armenian populace.³⁴

With a view to circulating their work and ideals to the Armenians scattered around the world, the Mechitarists established schools in Venice, Paris, Elisabethpol, Varadin (Transylvania), Istanbul, Trabzon, Izmir, Mus, Harput, Mardin, and Karasu Pazar (Crimea).³⁵ From the work of the monks on San Lazzaro, one can conclude they aimed at nothing less than an Armenian revival with the following tenets:

- (a) unification of the Armenian diaspora through awareness of their shared culture
- (b) in-depth study and reformation of the Armenian language to serve this end
- (c) scholarly investigation into, and reinterpretation of, Armenian heritage and history
- (d) translation of world literature into Armenian
- (e) raising literacy levels by establishing Armenian schools around the world.

In terms of cultural regeneration, Mechitarists had a theatre in most of the schools that they established throughout the world, as well as in the monastery on San Lazzaro. The first play on the island was performed in 1730, and the community staged plays at the Venetian carnival regularly.³⁶ Both the Monastery in San Lazzaro and the school of Rafael, which was established in Venice by the Mechitarists in 1836, played an important role in disseminating Enlightenment ideals. Many monks on the island

and students at Rafael were from Istanbul and took their knowledge of theatre back to the capital.³⁷ The plays staged in San Lazzaro were sent to Armenian centres in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and India, and then read, discussed, and staged in Mechitarists schools.³⁸ The first such performance took place in an Istanbulite school in 1810 where *Arsavir Takavori Ganki*, The Life of King Arsavir, was staged.³⁹ The plays in question varied in their topics. Some were religious in nature, others were about important characters or events from Armenian history, yet others were comedies set in Istanbul. Since many Mechitarists were from Ottoman centres, they knew Turkish and their archives held 25 plays written in the language.⁴⁰

It is significant that while Mechitarists attempted an Armenian Enlightenment, they did not oppose Ottoman rule. Rather, just as they had joined Enlightenment ideals with religion, they united an Armenian national awakening with Ottoman loyalties and thus created a unique third space in the Mediterranean. This can be seen in the Mechitarists' use of the Ottoman Turkish language, their cultural, personal, and financial contacts with Ottoman lands, and in their use of the Ottoman flag in San Lazzaro. Both the Mechitarists and the Ottoman Porte considered the island part of the Ottoman Empire. Even though San Lazzaro was not within its borders, it was occupied by Ottoman subjects and upon the recognition of the Armenian Catholic millet in 1830, the Ottoman Porte marked its imperial presence on the island. This was a relationship with mutual benefits: the Mechitarists gained legitimacy in the eyes of the world through Ottoman protectorate, and were furthermore able to distinguish themselves from Roman Catholics, while the Ottomans in their turn continued relations with an important branch of the Armenian millet, and proved their power in the Mediterranean through governance of San Lazzaro, which, according to millet principles, was left free to practice its culture and religion as it pleased.⁴¹ The earliest documents relating to the formal exchange between the monks and the Porte date back to 1846. In a letter to Reşid Paşa, Abbot-General Kirkor Hurmuz expresses his gratitude to Sultan Abdülmejid I for granting the Mechitarists his *Imperial Portrait* and *Order of Glory*. Abbot Hurmuz assures Reşid Paşa that the portrait of the Ottoman patriarch will be hung in the Grand Hall of the monastery so that "the sacred image of the Sultan would always be visible to the pupils of the Monastery and that they always feel devoted to the Empire full of sentiments of fidelity and patriotism."⁴² In 1870, Jean Sorguggil, Father Superior of the Mechitarists in San Lazzaro, writes a petition to Grand Vizier Ali Pasa in which he requests a *berat*, an official seal, which would

declare the Mechitarist Congregation in Venice under the protection of the Ottoman Empire:

La Congrégation des Religieux Arméniens Catholiques des Méchitaristes de Venise, ainsi que leur couvents, maisons, collèges, et écoles, établis dans l'Empire ou à l'étranger sont sous la protection spéciale du Gouvernement Impérial; et qu'aucune intervention ne pourra agir contre le libre exercice de leur droit civil.⁴³

The Congregation of the Religious Armenian Catholics of the Mechitarists of Venice, as well as their convents, houses, colleges, and schools, founded in the Empire or abroad are under the special protection of the Imperial (Ottoman) Government; and that there can be no intervention against the free exercise of their civil rights.⁴⁴

Ottoman Sultans also gifted flags, coats of arms, the *Mecidi Order*, and official letters of gratitude to Mechitarists for their services to Ottoman citizens, all of which can still be seen in the Monastery today. Manok's research into the Mechitarist archives reiterates these findings; he finds no anti-Turkish or anti-Ottoman propaganda in Venice despite the halting of Ottoman–Armenian relations after the Armenian Genocide of 1915.⁴⁵ Perhaps the most telling symbol of the third-space status of San Lazzaro can be seen in its language use. As was noted before, the language of the plays staged by the Mechitarists was Ottoman Turkish, but their medium was not the Arabic alphabet used by Ottomans. Rather, Mechitarists wrote their theatrical pieces in Armeno-Turkish.

ARMENO-TURKISH AS A MULTICULTURAL LANGUAGE OF THE THIRD SPACE

Armeno-Turkish is defined as Ottoman Turkish written in the Armenian script. It dates back as far as the Seljuk period with manuscripts appearing in the fourteenth century and was mostly written by and for Armenians whose mother tongue was Turkish.⁴⁶ It has been argued that Armeno-Turkish, in print form, might have functioned as a lingua franca among the intellectuals of Istanbul.⁴⁷ The reason for its wide usage was the difficulty of both classical Armenian and Ottoman Turkish. Literacy in Ottoman Turkish required knowledge of Arabic script, as well as of Persian and Arabic grammar. Armeno-Turkish bypassed these difficulties since it only demanded command of the Armenian alphabet, which was less complicated than the Arabic alphabet, and fluency in spoken Turkish.⁴⁸

Manuscripts in Armeno-Turkish date back to the fourteenth, the printed works to the eighteenth, and the press to the nineteenth century. Armeno-Turkish was printed for more than two and a half centuries in 200 printing houses scattered around 50 cities. Over 2000 books and 100 periodicals were printed between 1727 and 1968, and nearly 200 plays in Armeno-Turkish were staged by Armenian troupes.

While the Mechitarists were not the first group to utilize Armeno-Turkish, they were the first to write plays in the language. They subsequently staged these productions in San Lazzaro from 1798 onwards.⁴⁹ The use and popularity of Armeno-Turkish testifies to an Ottoman, polyglot, multicultural *lebenswelt* which stands in sharp contrast to the monolingualism of both contemporary Turkey and Armenia. This polyglot and multicultural reality had repeated itself at different times in the history of the Mediterranean; the region had witnessed centuries of commercial relations and intellectual exchange between its different cultures. For instance, in 1140, an Italian, Gerard of Cremona (1114–1187), and an Arabic scholar, Ghalib “the Mozarab,” met in Toledo’s Arabic library which had been reconquered from its Andalusian rulers by Alfonso VI (1140–1109). Some of the books in the library were translations from Greek classics, while others were scientific works produced by Arabs. Ghalib rendered the classical Arabic of the texts into Castilian Spanish, which Gerard then translated into Latin and in this way the collaborators translated 88 Arabic works of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and logic, which would then play an important role in laying the foundation of the European Renaissance and consequently, the European Enlightenment and modernism.⁵⁰ A close neighbour to Toledo, the Venetians had been travelling to the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond since at least the ninth century and Alexandria, Damascus, and Aleppo were so familiar to them that few felt the need to describe these centres in their travelogues.⁵¹ The Armenians, in their turn, had become an internal part of the Mediterranean through their presence in Italy from the sixth century onwards, and through their extensive trade networks. The New Julfan Armenians were the only Eurasian community that was able to operate in all the major empires in the early modern world, both land-based Empires and emerging seaborne Empires including the Dutch, British, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. They traversed Europe and Asia as merchants and through courier networks, and created vibrant Armenian communities in several Mediterranean port cities.⁵²

The Ottomans inherited this flow of scholarship and commerce between East and West. They considered themselves a continuation of the Roman Empire. Ottoman rulers were referred to by the Greek title “Basileus,” as well as the Muslim honorific “Sultan,” and accordingly their governance, culture, and scholarship mixed the heritage of the Islamic world with the Byzantine.⁵³ Language use in the Empire reflected this variety with official declarations being penned in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Ladino, Serbian, Syriac (in two different scripts, Nestorian and Sertan), while other languages of the Empire included Albanian, Kurdish, Rumanian, and numerous Caucasian tongues, to name a few of the most significant.⁵⁴ Similarly, multiculturalism was reflected in the formation of Ottoman Turkish which began as an Altaic language, but then borrowed from the syntax and vocabulary of both Semitic and Indo-European languages: it was influenced by Persian and Arabic, as well as Italian (especially the Venetian dialect). As Hanioglu points out, the process of linguistic mixing within the empire was multidirectional. Albanian, Bulgarian, and Greek acquired Turkish loanwords, while Ottoman Turkish picked up many words from Greek, particularly nautical terms.⁵⁵ Hence, the Armenian, Italian, and Turkish-Ottoman symbiosis in theatre can be viewed as a natural result of Mediterranean cultural exchange of which there is a long tradition.

Vartovyan’s Gedikpaşa Theatre was heir to a tradition of bilingual performances in both the Ottoman Empire and beyond. As noted previously, we have no documents stating why an Armenian theatre was given the task of popularizing the art form for a Turkish audience in Istanbul. What is certain is that the Ottoman authorities were aware of Mechtarist activities in San Lazzaro, and their use of theatre to both educate and disseminate ideology. It is likely the Porte chose the Armenian community for their experience in bilingual performances, and for their use of theatre as an educational tool.

THE LITERARY COMMITTEE AT GEDIKPAŞA

After a particularly moving performance at Vartovyan’s Gedikpaşa Theatre, a Turkish intellectual named Menapirzade Nuri Bey approached Vartovyan to comment on the quality of the play. He said that the script had indeed been so good that it had enabled him to ignore the terrible accents of its performers. Another Turkish intellectual in the audience, Halet Beyefendi, joined the conversation to suggest the establishment of a literary committee geared towards perfecting the Turkish pronunciation

of the Armenian troupe.⁵⁶ This crucial conversation led to the commencement of the Gedikpaşa Literary Committee which had the following aims:

- (a) teaching Turkish pronunciation to Armenian actors
- (b) correcting and improving previous translations of European literature through the simplification of the Turkish language
- (c) enriching the Turkish theatrical corpus with new translations from European works
- (d) producing more plays in Turkish so as to create a national repertoire.

The agenda of the literary committee bears similarities to the Enlightenment goals of the Mechitarists. This is not a coincidence; most members of Vartovyan's literary committee also belonged to a revolutionary group called the Young Ottomans (1865–1876). The goal of this dissident, political organization was to establish the first parliament and constitution of the Ottoman Empire and an Enlightenment of their own.

THE YOUNG OTTOMANS

The Young Ottomans were formed during a picnic in Istanbul in the summer of 1865. Most men present at the picnic had worked at the Translation Bureau of the Porte.⁵⁷ They were united in their opposition to the policies of the viziers Ali and Fuad Paşa, and angered by the waning of imperial power coupled with territorial loss. They thought the disintegration of the Empire could be remedied by constitutional representation. Their primary aim was to establish the first parliament of the Ottoman state and carry out reforms for its further modernization.

The group was not opposed to monarchical principles and believed in the necessity of a sovereign Sultan. They did not, however, think that the current ruler Sultan Abdülaziz was fit for the task. They also regarded Ali and Fuad Paşa as insufficient reformers.⁵⁸ The Young Ottomans were in contact with Sultan Abdülaziz's nephew, Crown Prince Murat, and hoped that he would be the next heir to the throne. While the group aimed to follow the political lead of Europe in establishing a constitutional parliament, their intense patriotism made them think of reforms for Ottomans, by Ottomans, and along Islamic lines.⁵⁹

Like the Mechitarists, the Young Ottomans stayed true to their religious principles. In their case, the religion in question was not Catholic

Christianity but Sunni Islam. The group drew their theories from the political exegetes of the Koran, the political philosophy of Islamic philosophers, the practical counsels of which the Islamic “mirrors of Princes”⁶⁰ were made, and the Turko-Iranian-Mongolian theory of secular legislation. Among these four groups, Islamic political theology and the illustrations of an idealized Islamic government proved most influential. The Young Ottomans believed that the political theory of the Koran and its interpreters provided the strongest guarantee of individual freedom, just as the Mechitarists did not see a clash between Enlightenment ideas and religious belief.⁶¹

Young Ottoman and playwright Namik Kemal (1840–1888) formed a detailed theory of how Islam and democracy were in fact combined. For Kemal, good governance depended on Islamic law, and Islamic law was applicable only upon the formation of a government. He held the view, as per other Islamic political theorists, that humans were naturally inclined to hurt one another, and hence established associations of men for safety and protection. These assemblies then elected specialists among themselves to guarantee order. Once a government was formed in this manner, the best method for its application was Islamic law. Hence, Kemal forwarded a secular explanation of the origins of society that asserted the supremacy of Islamic rule.⁶²

Following the formation of a government, there would be another contract through which allegiance to the ruler was legalized. Kemal posited that this allegiance was functionalized through the *biat* system, which determined the legitimacy of the caliph, the chief Muslim ruler. This social contract was binding only insofar as the caliph enforced divine law. Upon failure of fulfilling this duty, the people could break the contract. Hence, while opting for religious rule based on Islamic institutions, Kemal left the door open for a democratic people’s uprising, and in doing so again combined modern and Islamic principles.⁶³

According to Kemal, *meşveret* was another Islamic principle conducive to modernity. *Meşveret*, or *shura* in Arabic, was one of the four core organizational principles in Islam, the other three being justice, equality, and human dignity. For Kemal, *meşveret* was a parallel concept to Western democracy and was based on three prior precepts: first, that all persons in any given society are equal in human and civil rights. Second, that public issues are best decided by majority consensus, and third, that justice, equality, and human dignity are best administered through a *shura*, or consultative, government. The Koran itself offers two related

yet different explanations of consultation.⁶⁴ The first of these refers to Prophet Mohammed consulting his companions before making his own decisions, and the other refers to a community of the faithful administering its own affairs through mutual consultation.⁶⁵ It is this second model Kemal put forward instead of Western democracy; he believed the most successful periods of the Ottoman Empire came about due to the actualization of the *meşveret* principle. Kemal also stated that the Ottoman state had long utilized the principle of the separation of powers through the distinct roles the Sultan, the *ulema*, or the scholars of religion, and the janissaries had within the operational structure of the Empire.⁶⁶ Just as the Mechitarists, the Young Ottomans defended progress in their own terms rather than equating it with Westernization.

Both the Mechitarists and the Young Ottomans were modernization movements. Abbot Mechitar's dominant motive was "to bring the Armenian nation into contact with Europe, but without extinguishing the national spirit; to love his nation and for that very reason to borrow from European science and enlightenment that which might not prove antithetical and injurious to the spirit of the nation."⁶⁷ Similarly, the Young Ottomans wanted to preserve their traditions and religion even as they advocated for political reforms. To this end, they took up the study of the Ottoman past and analysed historical precursors to conceive remedies to combat the Empire's current decline.⁶⁸ They criticized "superficial" borrowings from European culture such as the changes in dress codes and entertainment styles.⁶⁹ Mechitarists and the Young Ottomans were against adopting European norms wholesale, and advocated language reform, the advancement of literature, and the scrutiny of history to impede a loss of identity.

It is significant that while Mechitarists and Young Ottomans embraced patriotic ideals, neither was hostile to the other's ethnic or cultural identity. Similar to how the Mechitarists had been able to unite Armenian and Ottoman fidelities within their ideology, the Young Ottomans's understanding of patriotism was one which included different ethnicities and religions within it. Namık Kemal defined the concept of fatherland as "a most precious gift from God because one's first breath was taken in it." Kemal's definitions of fatherland focus on land and belonging, and are not exclusive to one identity:

The fatherland is not composed of the vague lines traced by the sword of a conqueror or the pen of a scribe. It is a sacred idea resulting from the conglomeration of various noble feelings such as the people, liberty,

brotherhood, interest, sovereignty, respect for one's ancestors, love of the family, and childhood memories.⁷⁰

The goal of establishing a constitutional parliament representing all the millets of the Empire, which was the *raison d'être* of the Young Ottomans, also bears testimony to the multicultural aims of the group. Both the Mechitarists and the Young Ottomans present a transitional nineteenth-century nationalism that bridges imperial ideology with the politics of nationhood. The groups predate the militant nationalist formations of their future compatriots; Mechitarists precede the Hnchak and Armenakan parties that aimed at an independent Armenia, while the Young Ottomans precede the Young Turks, or the Committee for Union and Progress as they were officially known.⁷¹

And last but not least, just as the Mechitarists had used theatre in spreading Enlightenment ideas, so the Young Ottomans wanted to use the stage for their own ideological purposes. A member of Vartovyan's committee, playwright Ebuzziya Tevfik (1849–1913), speaks for both groups when he says:

Meşrutiyet yönetimini amaçlayan bir kuruluşla nihayet bir eğlence aracı (lubiyat) olan tiyatro arasında ilişki kurmak—ihtimal ki—bir çok kimseler tarafından garip karşılanacaktır. Ancak şurasını unutmamak gerekir: Eski *Jön Türkler* (Yeni Osmanlılar) ana hedef olan özgürlük ve meşrutiyete ulaşmak için, gelişme ve ilerlemenin elde mevcut her türlü araçından yararlanmayı öngörüyorlardı...Tiyatro belki de bir eğlenceydi ama eğlendirerek öğretmesini ve eğitmesini biliyordu. O halde ondan da—imkanlar oranında—elbette yararlanacaklardı. Hele ki basınla elde etmek istedikleri sonuç iki de bir engelleniyordu. Öyle zaman oluyordu ki iş sadece tiyatroya bel bağlamaya kalıyordu. Sonra tiyatronun basına göre bazı üstün tarafları vardı: ...gazete ve dergileri sadece okuma yazma bilenler izleyebilirken, tiyatroyu hiç okuması olmayan bir kimse de rahatlıkla izleyebilir ve ondan etkilenebilirdi. Toplum bilinci tiyatrodaki daha yaygın ve daha birinden birine geçici bir hal kazanıyordu.⁷²

It may seem strange to connect theatre with a group that aimed at constitutional representation. But one must not forget, the Young Ottomans were ready to use any tool for the sake of reforms and progress, in order to reach freedom and constitutional representation ... Theatre was entertainment but as it entertained it also taught. It would be a useful means, especially in an environment where the printing press was continuously censored and even suspended by the authorities. There were times the only vehicle at hand was theatre. Plus some aspects of theatre were stronger than

those of the press: ...While only the literate public could follow newspapers and magazines, everyone could follow, and be affected by, a play. Societal awareness gained prevalence in the theatre, and was easily communicated from one person to the next.

Young Ottoman publications were closed down frequently and at times required sponsorship from third parties who infringed on their freedom of opinion.⁷³ Theatre enabled the Young Ottomans to branch out from their usual circles, and to educate and politicize the general public on their own terms.

VATAN YAHUT SILISTRE OR THE BEGINNINGS OF NATIONALISM

Playwright Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahut Silistra* (Homeland or Silistira), which was staged at Vartovyan's Gedikpaşa Theatre on 1 April 1873, deserves special scrutiny in this context since it conveys the Young Ottoman's apt use of theatre as a political tool. *Vatan Yahut Silistre* caused great turmoil upon its performance in Istanbul. Kemal was already a well-known journalist, poet, novelist, and playwright at the time he penned the play. Today, he is considered the father of Turkish nationalism, and the most philosophical member of the Young Ottomans. In particular, Kemal is known for his coinage of new terminology for the rising Turkish nationalism: "vatan" (fatherland, discussed above) and the popularization of the term "hürriyet" (freedom). In addition to a large number of articles, Kemal wrote six plays, a series of short biographies, three novels, the first volume of a projected twelve-volume Ottoman History, two extensive essays, the first of which was on the Ottoman past and the second on Kemal's ideals for the Ottoman society, two long critical essays in verse, and several translations from European works.⁷⁴

Vatan Yahut Silistre was an unusual play on several accounts. First, it was a Turkish patriotic play and the earliest of its kind in Ottoman history. Consequently, its performance in Vartovyan's Gedikpaşa Theatre upset the venue's third-space status. Second, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* was one of the first plays to exchange the complex sentence structures of Ottoman Turkish with a straightforward and easy use of Turkish which could be understood by the general public. Third, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* utilized Kemal's patriotic vocabulary. Fourth, it was the outcome of a close collaboration between Vartovyan and Gedikpaşa Theatre's newly

established literary committee. And last but not least, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* was unique because of the surprising protests it caused on the night of its performance.

PLOT OUTLINE

The first act of *Vatan Yahut Silistre* starts with a monologue. Zekiye's speech, directed at her deceased mother, is about her feelings for Islam Bey—Islam is used here as a personal name. As Zekiye talks, Islam Bey comes in through the window and declares his undying love to her. He also tells Zekiye that he must nevertheless leave. The country is at war and Islam Bey's romantic love is secondary when compared to his love for the fatherland. He bids Zekiye farewell and makes a passionate patriotic address to the followers awaiting him outside her house. He invites those who love him to follow him to war. Upon hearing this, Zekiye disguises herself in man's clothes and joins the soldiers on their way to Silistre.

Islam Bey's call to arms is reminiscent, in its mix of humility and fervency, of Kemal's own dedication at the beginning of *Vatan Yahut Silistre*. The playwright dedicates his work to the soldiers who have lost their lives defending the fatherland, even as he considers his writing unworthy of them. Kemal writes that for those who know the true meaning of fatherland, the only options are "to die for it, God forbid in case of calamity; or to fight for it in case of victory."⁷⁵ [Vatanın ne demek olduğunu bilen kalem sahiplerinin, onu korumak için yapabileceği şey, askerde, Allah göstermesin, (bir) felaket görürse (onlarla) birlikte ölmek, zafer görürse milletin teşekkürünü dile getirmektir.] Islam Bey declares his mission to his comrades in a similar manner. He says he is ready to die and sacrifice his feeble body for the fatherland. "We are going to protect the land, and God (Allah) is going to protect us. ...The only thing greater than a human being is God (Allah) and God (Allah) orders us to love the fatherland."⁷⁶ [Biz vatani koruyacağız. Allah da bizi koruyacak...İnsandan büyük bir Allah var! Allah vatana sevgiyi emrediyor.] Both the beginning of the play and its dedication aim to ignite patriotic feelings, and do so by disparaging the self, and by coalescing Islamic and nationalistic vocabulary. The same method is repeated throughout the play.

The second act takes place in the castle of Silistre which the Ottomans are defending against the Russians. Islam Bey gets wounded and Zekiye volunteers to take care of him. Islam Bey recognizes her immediately upon waking. Meanwhile, the enemy has been on the attack and the only way to

save the castle is to destroy the opponent's ammunition supplies. To this end three volunteers, amongst them Zekiye and Islam Bey, undertake the mission and are successful.

The war depicted in *Vatan Yahut Silistre* is the Crimean War (1853–1856) in which the castle of Silistre was of paramount importance. The Crimean War began as a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Russia but quickly turned into a Mediterranean affair. Its immediate cause was Russia's wish to protect the Orthodox minorities in the Holy Land, which was under Ottoman control. The wish to help this community was also strategic; Russia's long-term ambition was to gain land in the region and consequently become a Mediterranean Empire. This goal conflicted not only with Ottoman but also with French, Italian, and British interests in the Middle East. These nations joined the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire and were stationed in Istanbul. Before the French and the British could move to fight at the front however, the town of Silistre was occupied by Russian forces. On 15 May 1854, the castle of Silistre was surrounded by 80,000 Russian soldiers, and defended by 10,000 Ottomans. The Ottomans eventually won the battle, which lasted 43 days.⁷⁷ Islam Bey, and through him Kemal, express the importance of this front by equating the river of Danube (Tuna), which passes by Silistre, to the river of life for the Ottomans (*ab-ı hayat*): “If Tuna is lost, there is no fatherland. If there is no fatherland, nobody in it lives... A person who sees his fatherland trampled upon cannot live.”⁷⁸ [Tuna elden gidince vatan kalmıyor; vatan yaşamazsa, vatanda hiç bir insan yaşamaz... İnsan vatanının ayaklar altında çiğnendiğini görürse yaşamaz.] In Act III of *Vatan Yahut Silistre*, the soldiers celebrate their victory and Islam Bey announces Zekiye's true identity upon which the commander Sıtkı Bey recognizes her as the daughter he had abandoned many years ago. Islam Bey and Zekiye's marriage is arranged, and the families reunite.⁷⁹

LITERARY ASPECTS AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

While the content of *Vatan Yahut Silistre* incited patriotic enthusiasm amongst its audiences, its dramaturgic success was not as clear. The play was criticized for its overly sentimental language use, and non-Islamic and hence unrealistic conventions—such as entering the house of an unmarried woman through the window. The play's similarities to Victorien Sardou's *Patrie!* were noted by a Russian critic.⁸⁰ Kemal himself said he wrote the play rather quickly and with aims of inciting nationalist fervour,

suggesting his focus was on the impact of the work rather than its literary success.⁸¹ Alongside its undisguised patriotism, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* had a veiled message of political import in its ending.

The play concluded with the words, “Muradımızı İsteriz!” Translated literally the phrase means, “We want our wish.” However, “Murat” (wish) is also a personal name—that of the Crown Prince whom the Young Ottomans favoured and hoped would replace the current Sultan Abdülaziz. Indeed, after the play was staged, an enthusiastic crowd asked to see its playwright on stage. When Kemal did not appear, the audience marched to the newspaper *İbret*, where Kemal was a columnist, and placed a thank-you letter by its door. They shouted, “Long live Kemal! Long live the fatherland! This is our wish! God Grant us our wish!” The wish in question referred to the rule of Crown Prince Murat.⁸²

The letter of gratitude was printed in *İbret* two days after the event. Three days later, an article analysing the success of the play and the failure of the government was published. Five days after *Vatan Yahut Silistre*'s premiere, Gedikpaşa Theatre was temporarily closed down and the publication of *İbret* suspended. Kemal and other writers connected to Vartovyan's theatre were exiled: Ebuzziya Tevfik and Ahmet Mithat were sent to Rhodes, Nuri and Hakkı to Acre, and Kemal himself to Cyprus. Vartovyan and the managing editor of *İbret* were arrested, only to be released shortly thereafter.⁸³

THE CONTESTED IDENTITY OF VARTOVYAN

The political significance of *Vatan Yahut Silistre* and its patriotic message raise questions as to Vartovyan's own political leanings. How did Vartovyan conceive of his identity? Was he an Armenian first and an Ottoman second or an Ottoman first and an Armenian second? Or was he more associated with his religious identity, or perhaps with his social status as an Istanbulite intellectual and entertainer? And what were his true thoughts on *Vatan Yahut Silistre*? After all, the characters of the play were all Turkish, its coalescing of Islamic sentiments and patriotism was evident (the main hero and warrior was called Islam), and the battle staged in the play was fought against the Russians with whom Armenians had cultural and religious ties.

While it is true that the Crimean War in general, and Silistre in particular, occupied an important position in the Turkish psyche, the Ottoman Empire was fighting battles on many fronts at the time. One cannot but

wonder whether Kemal's choices regarding his characters and the enemy were made in spite of Vartovyan's suggestions. In either case, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* marks a shift in Gedikpaşa Theatre's third-space status. The shift in question is due to the patriotic themes of the play that mark it as an artefact of Turkish culture, rather than of two cultures in collaboration. The employment of Turkish characters as heroes (with no Armenian counterparts), the emphasis on Islam as religion, and the depiction of Russians as the enemy of choice all lean towards a termination of dialogue and exchange between the Armenian and Turkish elements in Ottoman theatre. The literary committee's emphasis on fixing Armenian pronunciation in Turkish, even if it was meant simply to aid understanding, further dislocates the equilibrium of the two cultures' partnership. While Gedikpaşa Theatre before the staging of *Vatan Yahut Silistre* can be viewed as a third space, Gedikpaşa Theatre after the play is no longer fit for non-hierarchical discourse.

Gedikpaşa Theatre reopened after the short interruption caused by *Vatan Yahut Silistre* and Vartovyan continued producing plays penned by his exiled playwrights. Kemal sent in two plays from Cyprus, *Zavallı Çocuk* and *Akif Bey*, both of which were staged without mention of their author. Nevertheless, success for Vartovyan's Gedikpaşa Theatre would no longer be easy. A new art form, known as *tuluat*, that mixed Turkish improvisation techniques with European-style plays developed. Tuluat actors used characters, events, and stories from daily life. They improvised and were not tied to a written script. Their goal was to match the interests and moods of their audiences.⁸⁴ And since *tuluat*s were not judged to be European theatre, Vartovyan's ten-year concession did not protect him from the rival companies that sprang up in Istanbul.⁸⁵

Furthermore, from 1878 onwards, Armenian independence movements gained strength and caught the attention of the world. Many actors from Vartovyan's theatre moved to Russia or Armenia—further away from Istanbul to escape possible conflicts. As a result, Gedikpaşa Theatre suffered a loss of talent. With the unstable political atmosphere, Vartovyan's ten-year concession was not renewed and he passed Gedikpaşa Theatre on to a new director, Minakyan. In 1881, the Ottoman Porte forbade non-Turkish plays in the districts of Kadıköy and Üsküdar. And in 1884, Gedikpaşa Theatre was shut down.⁸⁶

Vartovyan's life continued to evolve in unexpected directions after his directorship of Gedikpaşa. In 1880, Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842–1918)

invited him to work in the Ottoman Palace Orchestra. Vartovyan contracted his third marriage, this time to a Turkish woman, and converted to Islam. Upon his death in 1902, he was buried in the Muslim cemetery of Yahya Efendi in Beşiktaş, under his adopted Turkish name Güllü Yakup, Agop the Rosy.

VARTOVYAN'S LEGACY

Reactions to Vartovyan's legacy are complex and reflect ideological bias. Fırat Güllü uses commentaries on Vartovyan's life to chart variants of Turkish and Armenian nationalism.⁸⁷ He subsumes these interpretations under two categories: racial nationalism and cultural nationalism. Fırat Güllü posits Vasfi Rıza Zobu as an exponent of the first group. Zobu published a series of six articles on Vartovyan in the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in 1958. In these articles, he suggests Vartovyan was a Christian Turk descended from Turcoman tribes who mixed with Greeks and Armenians, converting to Christianity in the process. According to Zobu, these Turkish Christians were forgotten by Ottoman rulers due to their organization of society according to religion rather than ethnicity (the millet system). Fırat Güllü considers Zobu's proof for Vartovyan's Turkishness weak. Zobu quotes a conversation, which Vartovyan's son remembers from when he was two years of age. In this conversation, Vartovyan tells his son that their family came from Kayseri, a city in central Anatolia, a long time ago. Since Vartovyan died when his son was two, the memory is difficult to verify. Plus state records show Vartovyan was born in Istanbul in 1840. Despite the unlikelihood of the theory, Zobu uses Vartovyan's newly discovered Turkish identity to encourage a celebration of his life. Zobu's argument is as follows: since Agop Vartovyan is actually a Turk, there is no obstacle against putting his photograph on the walls of Turkish state theatres.⁸⁸

This reappropriation of Vartovyan's identity includes and inflates it within a wider Turkish one, even if it be Christian. But Christianity would constitute an impurity in the idealized Turkish Islamic synthesis as well, so Zobu further eliminates the problem of Vartovyan's Christianity through his well-documented conversion to Islam. This line of argument, or racial nationalism as Fırat Güllü puts it, bypasses the dilemma of acknowledging an Armenian predecessor for the contemporary Turkish stage.

The cultural nationalists are milder but not weaker in their assimilation tactics. Their arguments imply that it is of no importance whether

or not one is racially or ethnically Turkish, as long as one is culturally Turkish. This view was adopted by Metin And in his response to Vasfi Rıza Zobu's above-mentioned articles. Since Vartovyan was a cultural Turk, as can be interpreted from his role of bringing theatre to the wider Turkish public, there is no shame in tying the beginnings of theatre to an ethnic Armenian, And believes.⁸⁹ This argument comes despite And's various works on Ottoman theatre in which he openly cites its Armenian beginnings. And's attitude exemplifies what Bhabha refers to as the creation of cultural diversity with the simultaneous containment of cultural difference. Bhabha points out that a host society or the dominant culture may allow for cultural diversity but only insofar as it can specify the interpretation of it.⁹⁰ He believes systems of cultural diversity acknowledge the historical and social contexts of different cultures only to eventually transcend them: "These other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid." Twentieth-century interpretations of Vartovyan's work and life designate what Bhabha terms an attempt to appreciate cultures in a "musée imaginaire," or through a comfortable distance.⁹¹

Armenian studies on Vartovyan bear unfortunate similarities to the Turkish ones. Thus, Sarasan focuses on Vartovyan's demeaning, greedy personality and regards his sole motive in staging Turkish plays to be financial gain. Stephanyan takes this argument one step further and suggests Agop has betrayed Armenian enlightenment goals and the Armenian people by staging plays in the Turkish language.⁹²

It is not surprising that the political animosities between Turks and Armenians have led to emotional interpretations of Vartovyan's life and work. Nineteenth-century Istanbulite theatre proves difficult to interpret in the light of twentieth-century violence. What is clear is that while Vartovyan received at best an ambivalent reception from the modern Turkish Republic, Kemal was heralded as the father of Turkish nationalism and became part of the literary canon. Contrary to what their posthumous receptions might intimate, the two men had more similarities than differences. They both took part in Enlightenment projects and used theatre to convey their ideologies. They collaborated on a joint artistic endeavour—that of establishing a theatre welcoming to all communities living in Istanbul. What separated them was not language or religion but the import their different ethnicities would eventually gain. No doubt Vartovyan would have been incorporated into mainstream historiography together with Kemal had the Ottoman Empire not evolved into a one-nation state that defined itself as exclusively Turkish.

CONCLUSION

The third space that Gedikpaşa Theatre offered was the product of nineteenth-century Istanbul, with its transitioning sense of self- and cultural identity. This conscious awareness of ambivalence enabled Istanbulites to initiate a time-sensitive, non-hegemonic, artistic interaction. For both Turks and Armenians, the nineteenth century offered a myriad of political possibilities: the continuation of the Ottoman Empire; a parliament with equal representation; the union of the Armenian diaspora; and reformation in science and education. Modernism, traditionalism, religious rule, and secularism were all equally viable. It would not be too far-fetched to assume Vartovyan thought it possible to unite the Armenian and Turkish Enlightenments in the same location—his theatre. Gedikpaşa Theatre became a third space due to this vacillation, and abruptly lost this status when Turkish nationalism found its voice.

But where does all this leave us with regard to Vartovyan's identity? Is he a betrayer of the Armenian nation, a pseudo-Turk, a convert overridden with guilt, or a man who sincerely participated in more than one cultural category? Bhabha notes he began thinking about the third space as a theoretical construct during his readings of nineteenth-century missionary accounts of India. In one such account, a missionary mis-translates the concept of Holy Ghost as spook, or "bhoot," and he is surprised as to why the Hindus are not affected by his proselytizing. Bhabha remarks his interest in this anecdote was not so much in translation and mis-translation, but rather:

in the emergence of a dialogical site—a moment of enunciation, identification, negotiation—that was suddenly divested of its mastery or sovereignty in the midst of a markedly asymmetrical and unequal engagement of forces...at the intersection of different languages jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation opens up through the process of dialogue.⁹³

The concept of the Holy Ghost has no equivalent in either Hindi or Hinduism, and the openness of the signifier suddenly drains the charge of power from the dominant party in the exchange. This drainage of power enables and births the third space, Bhabha argues, whereas a counterargument would have only sparked the hierarchical dialogue back to life.⁹⁴

Vartovyan, as an individual, is as effective as his Gedikpaşa Theatre in defying authority and creating this dialogical site; his biography thwarts any certain interpretation. He halts both Turkish and Armenian hegemonic

discourses in different points of his life, and appears to have collected a multitude of identities in his person without prioritizing one above the others. He contradicts assumptions on what it means to be an Armenian, a Turk, and an Ottoman, while at the same time participating in all three categories. For these reasons and for his contributions to Istanbulite theatre, Vartovyan and his work must be remembered and scrutinized. He remains an open signifier to Armenian–Turkish collaborations, and to a multicultural Ottoman Istanbul that no longer exists.

NOTES

1. For further information on these collaborations among Armenians, Greeks, and Turks in the field of architecture and construction, see Ömer L. Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami ve İmaret İnaaatı (1550–1557)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basım Evi, 1972); in the field of business partnerships between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, see Murat Çizakça, *A Comparative Evolution of Business Partnerships: The Islamic World and Europe, with Specific Reference to the Ottoman Archives* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996); in the field of scholarship, alchemy, and language, see Tuna Artun, *Hearts of Gold and Silver: Production of Alchemical Knowledge in the Early Ottoman World* (Ph.D. Diss., Princeton University, 2013). In the field of shared musical tradition, listen to Mehmet ali Sanlıkol, *A Story of the City: Constantinople, Istanbul*, (Istanbul: Dünya Inc, 2011), as well as the concert series in collaboration with Dr Edwin Seroussi, *Jews and Sufis: A Shared Musical Tradition*. For a reinterpretation of the Ottoman Empire as a Greek-Turkish Empire and Alevism as the symbiosis of Christianity and Islam, see Dimitri Kitsikis, *Türk-Yunan İmparatorluğu: Ara-Bölge Gerçeği Işığında Osmanlı Taribine Bakış* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996). For more information on shared religious figures, spaces, and rituals amongst Jews, Christians, and Muslims, see Jerry Brotton, “St George Between East and West,” in *Re-Orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the East*, edited by Gerald Maclean (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50–66.
2. Jonathan Rutherford, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha,” in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 210–11.
3. Homi K Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 2003), 208.
4. Edward Soja, *Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real and Imaginary Places* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 50,

- quoted in Felipe Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 97.
5. The first theatre in Istanbul was built by Marquis de Nointel, the French Ambassador to Istanbul, and was located next to the French embassy quarters in Pera. Records state Molière's latest plays were staged in this theatre between 1672 and 1673. Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839–1923," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 10, no. 1 (1983): 49.
 6. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, "Science in the Ottoman Empire," in *Science, Technology and Learning in the Ottoman Empire: Western Influence, Local Institutions and the Transfer of Knowledge* (VT: Variorum, 2004), 214.
 7. *Ibid.*, 6.
 8. Shirine Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevitable' Question of Westernization," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 1 (2004): 33.
 9. Handan Inci, "Late Ottoman Literature," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 340.
 10. For earlier forms of Turkish theatre, see Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1992), 11–62.
 11. Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839–1923," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 10, no. 1 (1983): 48–58.
 12. Firat Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar* (Istanbul: Bgşt Yayınları, 2008), 22, 31.
 13. Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou, "Greek Theatre in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean from 1810 to 1961," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 25, no. 2 (2007): 268–70.
 14. Kerem Karaboğa, *Geleceğe Perde Açan Gelenek: Geçmişten Günümüze İstanbul Tiyatroları I* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 18–19.
 15. *Ibid.*, 20.
 16. The term comes from the French *la sublime porte*, the exalted gate, and was commonly used to refer to the Ottoman court in Istanbul.
 17. Karaboğa, *Istanbul Tiyatroları I*, 22.
 18. *Ibid.*, 23.
 19. Rutherford, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," 211.
 20. *Ibid.*
 21. The language used in the Ottoman Empire was loosely termed the Ottoman language (*Lisân-ı Osmâni*). It was written in the Arabic alphabet, its content was largely Turkish with a strong influence from the grammar and vocabulary of Persian and Arabic primarily, and the local languages of the empire, such as Greek and Armenian, secondarily. Ottoman went through many transformations within the 600 years of the Empire. These

periods can broadly be marked as the Old Ottoman Turkish (from the thirteenth until the sixteenth century), the Middle Ottoman Turkish (from the sixteenth until the nineteenth century), and lastly, the New Ottoman Turkish (from the nineteenth century until 1928). With the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923 and the language reforms initiated by Mustafa Kemal in 1928, the language went through a radical transformation: it would no longer be written in the Arabic alphabet but in the Latin, and it would be purified of its Arabic and Persian vocabulary. Concurrently, it would no longer be called Ottoman Turkish but simply Turkish. A language committee was established to adapt the Latin script to the phonetic demands of Turkish, resulting in a new alphabet of 29 letters. The script was founded by an Armenian, Hagop Martayan (1895–1979). Martayan was offered a new surname—Dilaçar—by Mustafa Kemal: a coined word meaning language opener. While spoken Ottoman Turkish and modern Turkish share many similarities, Turks have lost the ability to read Ottoman Turkish unless specifically trained.

22. Despite these strengths, the *millet* system was not without its complications. From the eighteenth century onwards, political developments within and outside of the empire began to reflect negatively on the arrangement. Stamatopoulos suggests that the gradual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire corresponded to a progressive collapse of the *millet* system and its replacement by the principle of the nation state, which gained strength after the French Revolution. According to Stamatopoulos, the organization of Ottoman *millets* went through some substantial changes following the Greek War of Independence. One by one, different Balkan groups separated from the leadership of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy in Istanbul, under which they had previously been subsumed as Orthodox subjects, and went on to establish their own national churches. Soon afterwards, these groups became nationalist movements seeking independence from Ottoman rule. The *millet* system, which was based upon religious affiliation, became dysfunctional in the face of ethnicity-centred identity formations. For more information on this topic, consult: Dimitris Stamatopoulos, “From Millets to Minorities in the 19th-Century Ottoman Empire: An Ambiguous Modernization,” in *Citizenships in Historical Perspective*, ed. Steven G. Ellis, Gudmundur Halfdonarsan and Katherine Isaacs (Pisa: Pisa UP, 2006), 253–56.
23. Ahmet Turkan, “İstanbul’daki Katolik Ermeni Gruplarının Problemleri ve Papalığın Müdahaleleri” *History Studies: International Journal of History* 4, no. 2 (2012): 317–41.
24. Armenian Istanbulite author Zabel Yessayan notes in her autobiography that the Armenian Patriarchate did not grant “heretical Protestants” burial rights in Armenian churchyards. Zabel Yessayan, *The Gardens of Silihdar*:

- A Memoir* (New York: Armenian International Women's Association, 2014), 6, 33–34.
25. Gürsoy Şahin, "Sivaslı Mihitar (1676–1749), Mihitaristler ve Ermeni Milliyetçiliğine Katkıları," in *Hoşgörüden Yol Ayrımına Ermeniler Cilt2*, ed. Metin Hülagu et al. (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayını, 2009), 244–46.
 26. Venice was not a strange city to Armenians, who had a strong historical and political presence in Italy dating back to the sixth century. The Armenian presence in Italy increased during the Kingdom of Cilicia when Armenians settled in all the major cities of the peninsula and founded flourishing colonies. In 1235, the Venetian nobleman Marco Ziani left a house to the Armenian community at San Zulian near Piazza San Marco, which came to be called the Casa Armena and provided a focal point for Venice's ever more numerous Armenian residents and visitors. And in the sixteenth century Hagop Meghapart, a Venetian Armenian, established a printing house in the city which published the first-ever book in Armenian, the "Urbatagir," the Book of Friday. In light of these past connections, it is not surprising that the Mechitarists were welcomed in Italy and granted asylum. For further information on Armenian presence in Italy, see The Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation Online, "From 6th to 11th Century," *Armenians in Italy*, <http://mechitar.com/arminitaly/index.php?iM=83>, The Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation Online, "From 12th to 18th Century," *Armenians in Italy*, <http://mechitar.com/arminitaly/index.php?iM=84>, and Roderick Convey Morris, "The Key to Armenia's Survival," The New York Times Online, February 23, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/24/arts/24iht-conway24.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.
 27. Harry Jewel Sarkis, "The Armenian Renaissance, 1500–1863," *The Journal of Modern History* 9, no. 4 (1937): 443–46.
 28. Vahe Oshagan, "From Enlightenment to Renaissance: The Armenian Experience," in *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, ed. Richard G. Hovhannisian and David N. Myers (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1999), 145.
 29. *Ibid.*, 143.
 30. The Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation Online, "Mekhitar's Publishing Activities in Venice," *History of the Congregation*, <http://mechitar.com/aboutus/index.php?iM=74>.
 31. Sarkis, "The Armenian Renaissance," 443.
 32. *Ibid.*, 442.
 33. Roderick Convey Morris, "The Key to Armenia's Survival."
 34. Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 118.

35. Yervant Baret Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi: Ermeni Mikhitarist Manastırı ve İlk Türkçe Tiyatro Oyunları* (Istanbul: Bgst Yayınları, 2013), 50.
36. Ibid., 39–40.
37. Such as Migirdiç Beşiktaşlıyan, Sirabiyon Hekimyan, Sirabiyon Tigliyan, and Sabuh Laz-Manasyan.
38. Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi*, 49.
39. Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 33–34.
40. Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi*, 41, 53.
41. Defne Kut, *Presents for Presence: Ottoman Imperial Depictions as Power Symbols: The Case of Mechitarist Monastery in Venice* (History Project, Bogazici University, 2014), 8.
42. BOA, HR.TO 407/17, quoted in Defne Kut, *Presents for Presence*, 7.
43. BOA, HR.TO 543/4, quoted in Defne Kut, *Presents for Presence*, 9.
44. All translations my own.
45. Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi*, 13–14.
46. Mehmet Kutalmış, “On Turkish in Armenian Script,” *Journal of Economic and Social Research* 5, no. 2 (2003): 51.
47. Murat Çankara, “The Language of One, The Script of the Other: Early Armeno-Turkish Novels and Ottoman/Turkish Literary Historiography,” *The University of Michigan’s Armenian Studies Programme*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P51ElrlFiKk>.
48. Kutalmış, “On Turkish in Armenian Script,” 52.
49. This date is from a surviving copy of the play; however, previous plays may have been lost in the fire of San Lazarro in 1883.
50. William Dalrymple, “The Porous Frontiers of Islam and Christendom: A Clash or Fusion of Civilisations?” in *Re-orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the East*, ed. Gerald Maclean (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), ix.
51. Deborah Howard, “The Status of the Oriental Traveller in Renaissance Venice,” in *Re-orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the East*, ed. Gerald MacLean (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 20, 30–31.
52. Sebouh Aslanian, “The Salt in a Merchants’ Letter: The Culture of Julfan Correspondence in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean,” *Journal of World History* 19, no. 2 (2008): 129.
53. Dimitri Kitsikis, *Türk-Yunan İmparatorluğu: Ara-Bölge Gerçeği Işığında Osmanlı Tarihine Bakış* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 35, 36, 61. For Kitsikis’s theories on the intermediate region and the Turkish-Greek Empire, see: Dimitri Kitsikis, *L’empire Ottoman* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991).

54. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008), 33.
55. *Ibid.*, 33–35.
56. Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 93–95.
57. Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), 11.
58. The Young Ottomans accused Ali and Fuad Paşa of being too mild in their reform policies. The viziers were opposed to any form of constitutional representation at a national level. They believed the people were not ready, and also that the multinational composition of the Empire would cause turmoil in a parliament, and lead to its eventual demise. Instead, Ali and Fuad Paşa worked on implementing elected provincial councils at a local level. They passed “The Law of the Organization of Provinces” which allowed for elections in each of the provinces of the Empire, and believed self-governance would have to be reached gradually. The Young Ottomans wanted a national parliament to be initiated immediately. Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), 12, 20.
59. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 10–21.
60. The Mirrors of Princes were instructional textbooks that advised rulers on correct rule, behaviour, and morality. The most famous European example would be Machievelli’s *Prince*. The genre flourished in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. The mirrors facilitated political and historical discussion, and enabled intellectuals to openly criticize Sultans, institutions, and policies. In the Ottoman Mirrors the supremacy of the Ottoman Empire was not questioned, rather they voiced direct criticism of current institutional failures, social injustice, disruptions, and corruption. For an in-depth study of Ottoman Mirrors, see: Ahmet Tunç Şen, “A Mirror for Princes, A Fiction for Readers: The Habname of Veysi and Dream Narratives in Ottoman Turkish Literature,” *JTL Journal of Turkish Literature* no. 8 (2011): 41–65.
61. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 8–12.
62. *Ibid.*, 290–91.
63. *Ibid.*, 293–95.
64. For further information on consultation in Islam, see: Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).
65. Sadek Jawad Suleiman, “The Shura Principle in Islam,” <http://www.alhewar.com/SadekShura.htm>.
66. Cemil Koçak, “Namık Kemal’in Cumhuriyet’e Devreden Düşünce Mirası,” in *Cumhuriyet’e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve*

- Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 249.
67. Sarkis, "The Armenian Renaissance," 442.
 68. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 133.
 69. *Ibid.*, 115.
 70. Namık Kemal, "Vatan," in *İbret*, March 12, 1873, quoted in Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 327.
 71. What began as an Armenian cultural awakening in the island of San Lazzaro turned into an armed revolutionary movement in late nineteenth century. Several Armenian groups took up arms, Black Cross Society at Van (1878), Protectors of the Fatherland in Erzerum (1881), the Armenakan Party in Van (1885), the Hnchakian Revolutionary Party in Geneva (1887), and the Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) in Tiflis (1890). Some of these groups collaborated with their Turkish nationalist equivalents, the Young Turk Party in Istanbul, against Sultan Abdulhamid II. As Payaslian notes in *The History of Armenia*, Armenian nationalism was a part of the wider phenomenon of nationalisms—including Turkish, Arab, and Greek—that had emerged throughout the Ottoman Empire. Despite ideological differences Armenian and Turkish groups worked together against common enemies, in this case the Ottoman Porte headed by Sultan Abdulhamid II, which opposed nationalisms of all kinds. Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 118, 119, 120. The Young Turks on the other hand began as a multicultural organization aiming to replace absolute monarchy with a constitutional one, similar in their ideology to the Young Ottomans. They led a successful rebellion against Sultan Abdulhamid II (who succeeded Sultan Murat V) in 1908, and established the second constitutional era of the Empire. The group saw Islam as a step towards positivism and materialism. Throughout the years, their ideology became more nationalist and eventually led to the Armenian Genocide of 1915. For a thorough history of the Young Turks, please see Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995).
 72. Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 84.
 73. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 47–55.
 74. *Ibid.*, 286.
 75. Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* (Istanbul: Bordo Siyah Klasik Yayınları, 2004), 21.
 76. *Ibid.*, 39, 40.
 77. İrfan Morina and Lindita Latifi, "Bosna'da Osmanlı Dönemine Ait Edebiyat Araştırmaları ve Namık Kemal'in Boşnakça'ya Tercüme Edilen Eserleri," *Dede Korkut Dergisi* 2, no. 3 (2013): 96.
 78. Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahut Silistre*, 40.

79. Ibid., 1–88.
80. Güllü, *Vartoryan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 104–5. While similarities between *Patrie!* and *Vatan Yahut Silistre* have been studied in detail and refuted by Cevdet Perin in his *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Fransız Tesiri* (Istanbul: Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1946), comparisons of Kemal’s play with a French work are not without basis. The Tanzimat Era marked a growing fascination with Western intellectual culture, especially French, amongst the Ottoman elite. Translations from European literature introduced Ottomans to new literary models such as the novel and drama. One such example was Yusuf Kamil Paşa’s translation of Fenelon’s *Les Aventures de Télémaque* in 1862, which led to the production of similar works in the empire. Other examples of French writers in translation were La Fontaine, Montesquieu, Hugo, Racine, and Molière. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman dignitaries communicated with their foreign equals in French and fluency in the language was deemed necessary for moving up the bureaucratic ladder. Similarly, the term “*Alla Franga*” began to denote all things good, new, and modern. As Hanioglu points out, foreign visitors were often surprised by the extent to which works of nineteenth-century French materialism, such as d’Holbach’s *Système de la Nature*, held sway over the Ottomans. It must be noted that this French influence mostly pertained to the elite classes, and that several criticisms of it preoccupied Ottoman writers and satirists who did not equate progress with Westernization. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008), 95–101.
81. Ibid., 97.
82. Menemencioğlu, “The Ottoman Theatre 1839–1923,” 53.
83. Ibid.
84. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume 2, Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977), 129.
85. Ibid., 54.
86. Güllü, *Vartoryan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 59–60.
87. Ibid., 38–43.
88. Ibid., 412.
89. Ibid., 42–43.
90. Rutherford, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha,” 208.
91. Ibid., 208–10.
92. Güllü, *Vartoryan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 47–52.
93. Homi Bhabha, “In the Cave of Making: Thoughts on Third Space,” in *Communicating in the Third Place*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (New York: Routledge, 2009), x–xi.
94. Ibid.

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From Autarky to “Barbarian” Cosmopolitanism: The Early Avant-Garde Movements in Slovenia and Croatia

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The stormy period of modernization of artistic fields in Slovenia and Croatia during the period 1910–1930 witnessed several waves of movements with typical avant-garde features. Among them, particularly radical were the following: early Futurist experiments in the Dalmatian city of Zadar (*Zvrk*); the “swans” formation in Slovenia (*Three Swans*), Zagreb/Belgrade-based Zenithism (*Zenit*); and finally, the “tankers” formation (*Tank*). In the discussion of these movements and their position within the larger Mediterranean context, I place special focus on their cosmopolitanism in relation to their (allegedly) peripheral character. The selected focal point is far from being marginal when one realizes that it was precisely the notion of cosmopolitanism that represented something new and decisive for the first wave of European avant-gardes, usually identified with the advent of Italian Futurism. That this is indeed the case can be inferred from a number of studies of historical avant-gardes, from Peter Bürger’s seminal *Theorie der Avantgarde* onwards.¹ They reveal that, apart from innovations

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in the artistic material and expressive language (i.e., innovations that relate to the artworks), the early avant-gardes also revolutionized the contextualization of these works and their authors in the cultural field. In addition to the hitherto unimaginably fast pace of subsequent breaks in terms of content and form, the avant-gardes in the early twentieth century introduced new ways of communication (new genres, such as the manifesto), implemented a new type of operation of artists and groups, radically challenged the modes of artists' social positioning, invented new types of media, and introduced a completely new set of standards for international networking, communication, and mutual legitimation. Despite the rivalry of large avant-garde centers (Milan, Rome, Paris, Berlin, Zürich, Leningrad, and Moscow), the pan-European historical avant-garde established a cosmopolitan self-consciousness that remained one of its fundamental characteristics. From such a perspective, the question of cosmopolitanism is far from trivial for the early Slovenian and Croatian avant-garde.

The question consists of several sub-questions: What was the cosmopolitan habitus of the avant-garde protagonists in Slovenia and Croatia? How (through which channels) did they experience new artistic movements in the neighboring countries and across Europe? How were these lessons reflected in their artistic work and public activity? How did they travel (if they were able to travel at all) and interact with foreign artists? Were they personally (or at least through correspondence) in touch with the avant-garde centers? And what about reciprocity: how and to what extent (if at all) did the avant-garde authors appear in journals abroad and perhaps influence the work of other avant-garde authors? What was the relation of the Slovenian and Croatian movements to their counterparts in the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and Europe in general: were they recognized as a vital part of the concurrent internationalist avant-garde network? To what degree were they identified as part of such a network in synthetic scholarly reviews? And finally, how (if at all) did they contribute to the specific features of the avant-garde in the region? In a brief account of their history, I also offer some answers to these questions.

FROM FUTURIST *ZVRK* IN ZADAR TO THE “NOVO MESTO SPRING”

Due to the pluralization and internal differentiation of the media system toward the end of the nineteenth century, a stable intermediary mechanism was formed in both the Slovenian and Croatian cultural scenes that

regularly provided information on international artistic issues. From 1909 onwards, cultural magazines immediately and comprehensively—although sometimes ironically—reported about the new subversive phenomena in the arts, beginning of course with the upcoming Italian Futurism and its manifestos, provocations, and publications. In both Slovenia and Croatia (at that time in the Mediterranean part of the Habsburg monarchy), Marinetti’s Futurist manifesto was already translated and published in 1909, and Futurist ideas reverberated in literary works well before the First World War.² Although Futurism did not grow into a larger collective movement in Slovenia, an ambitious subversive group was formed on the Croatian coast; only the outbreak of war prevented it from unleashing a radical Futurist project at the beginning of 1914. Under Italian influence, the Futurists in the Dalmatian city of Zadar led by Josip Matošić (1890–1966) and Ulderiko Donadini (1894–1923) prepared to print the first issue of the magazine *Zvrk*³:

Among the selected articles there were several contributions by the editor Joso Matošić, texts by Croatian writers Ulderiko Donadini, Antun Aralica, and Antun Gustav Matoš, and writings by the leading Italian futurists Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Aldo Palazzeschi, and Giovanni Papini. *Zvrk* was prepared for printing (forty pages in 34 × 30 cm format), and its publication was only prevented by the start of the First World War and the arrest of Matošić, Pilić, and Aralica in July 1914 on suspicion of their involvement in organizing the Sarajevo assassination.⁴

It is evident that the *Zvrk* group had direct contact with the Italian Futurists (Marinetti submitted an original text), who always considered coastal Istria and Dalmatia to be areas within the Italian cultural sphere.⁵ In his manifesto “To Futurism,” Matošić, who was well acquainted with both Italian and Russian Futurism, expressed a set of Futurist ideas in quite an original way. However, as Šimičić rightfully states: “The public only discovered the magazine *Zvrk* decades later, and this early attempt to affirm the avant-garde understanding of art, unfortunately, passed without any significant echoes on the cultural scene.”⁶ Later on, Futurism continued to influence Croatian arts, leaving its mark especially on Expressionism.⁷ However, unlike the early Futurist experiments, the Expressionist movement did not display radical avant-garde features in either Croatia or Slovenia.

Very much like the *Zvrk* episode, the early Futurist act usually denoted as the “manifesto of the Slovenian historical avant-garde” was described in retrospect.⁸ In March 1915, the 16-year-old provincial poet Anton

Podbevšek (1898–1981) sent his *Žolta pisma* (Yellow Letters) to the editor of the established literary magazine *Dom in svet* (Home and World). An interesting poetic cycle testifies to Podbevšek's early fascination with Futurism as well as his ability to creatively manipulate the Futurist techno-poetics. Unlike the Zadar Futurists, who personally associated with the Italians, Podbevšek drew the information about Futurism exclusively from Slovenian literary magazines (especially from the report on Marinetti's 1912 "technical" manifesto). However, the bottom line is that *Yellow Letters* did not leave any public traces prior to 1972, when this so-called avant-garde manifesto was first published.⁹

Bearing this in mind, the actual public appearance of both the Slovenian and Croatian avant-gardes should be dated after the end of the First World War. In addition to the dramatic political and territorial changes (disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, formation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and acquisition of a large area with a Slovenian ethnic majority by the Kingdom of Italy), this turbulent period was also imbued with a widespread subversive atmosphere. The public debut of the Slovenian avant-garde is usually associated with the "Novo Mesto Spring," an outburst by a young artistic group led by Podbevšek and the painter Božidar Jakac (1899–1989). The moderately provocative events in Novo Mesto, a southeastern provincial town, in late September 1920, would likely have remained a local curiosity, but their Ljubljana reiteration in November signaled that the movement had gained a more revolutionary momentum: Podbevšek was at that time closely linked to the composer Marij Kogoj (1892–1956) and critic Josip Vidmar (1895–1992), and the painters gained the patronage of Rihard Jakopič. However, the "spring" formation hardly meets the criteria of the cosmopolitan avant-garde. Truly avant-garde features were only present in the work of Podbevšek and Kogoj, and virtually all the protagonists lacked a cosmopolitan background: none of them were actively linked to prominent avant-garde centers or nurtured personal contacts abroad or working with other magazines.

LJUBLJANA—ZAGREB—BELGRADE—TRIESTE: SVETOKRET—
ZENIT—TRIJE LABODJE—TANK

Nevertheless, exactly at the moment when the young Slovenian subversives were attempting to settle in Ljubljana at the end of 1920, they briefly came across an offshoot of what was soon to develop into the distinctively cosmopolitan "Zenithist" movement. At the end of January 1921, Ljubljana

saw the publication of the first avant-garde magazine in Yugoslavia: *Svetokret*, “the journal for the expedition to the North Pole of human spirit.”¹⁰ *Svetokret* can be seen as a kind of Ljubljana branch of *Zenit*—or, more precisely, its predecessor. Its only author was Branimir Micić (1898–1947), who wrote under the pseudonym Virgil Poljanski. Only a month later in Zagreb, his brother Ljubomir Micić (1895–1971) started publishing the most pervasive Yugoslav avant-garde newspaper, but Poljanski did not do so well in Ljubljana. His *Svetokret* was released in a single Serbo-Croatian issue (in Latin script) and, in addition to Poljanski’s own poetry (“song-projections,” as he labeled them), included a series of pamphlets in which he vehemently denounced various forms of “passatismo.”

The poorly documented contacts between the Slovenian and Croatian avant-garde figures in 1921 testify to more of a rift than cooperation.¹¹ It is quite likely that Micić shared his brother’s serious disregard for Podbevšek, or perhaps the self-proclaimed “Balkanic barbarian-genius” simply did not want to cooperate with the energetic “titan” in the neighboring capital that shared many of his character’s features: both were stubborn, authoritarian, and hastily ambitious. Podbevšek was certainly confident enough to establish an independent Slovenian movement with Kogoj and Vidmar: these efforts are reflected in the first issue of *Three Swans* (published at the beginning of 1922); the ambition to start a publishing house; the formation of Podbevšek’s literary “school” (his prophetic style influenced Zdenko Skalicky, Vladimir Premru, France Onič, Stane Melihar, and many others); and the emerging *Klub mladih* (Youth Club). However, the bottom line is the fact that the avant-garde as represented by *Three Swans* is hopelessly autarkic. The lively contemporary happenings abroad simply leave no echo, the flow of information is indirect, and the only reference to the contemporary avant-garde outside Slovenia points to *Zenit*. The first issue of *Three Swans* simply lacks any internationalist consciousness and employs no foreign contributors. Compared to *Zenit* and other avant-garde journals that were published in the same year in Serbian or Croatian (*Dada Jok* by Virgil Poljanski, *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz* by Dragan Aleksić, and the Cyrillic *Putevi*, which marks the beginnings of “Belgrade Surrealism”), *Three Swans* is noticeably less radical in both content and layout.¹²

The most striking difference between the “Swans” and the “Zenith” avant-garde model then seems to be precisely the internationalism that was encouraged by Micić and Poljanski in the desire to promote Zenithism as an international movement. Poljanski’s career reveals a typical (low-budget)

cosmopolitan of the era: in the beginning of 1920s, he can be found in Ljubljana, Vienna, Berlin, and Prague, often involved in various quarrels and incidents.¹³ His brother Ljubomir Micić—Serbian by origin, but at the time settled in Zagreb, where he already enjoyed a certain reputation as a young Expressionist poet—had managed to knit together a significant international network. Unlike most of the remaining Yugoslav avant-garde magazines that were only published once or twice, *Zenit* was issued continuously from 1921 to 1926 (for a total of 43 issues). The international network that was woven around the magazine is simply fascinating—starting from Micić’s decision to coauthor the 1921 *Manifest zenitizma* with Serbian writer and cineaste Boško Tokin (1894–1953, then working in Belgrade) and the French-German poet Yvan Goll (born Isaac Lang, 1891–1950, then settled in Paris). Already in the early 1920s, Micić established contacts with Ilya Ehrenburg, El Lissitzky, and the Berlin circle of Herwarth Walden. The international links of *Zenit* soon ranged from Paris, Antwerp, Brussels, and Berlin to Krakow, Prague, Budapest, Sofia, and Rome, as well as to the USA, Russia, and Spain (cf. Subotić 1995: 93–126). Along with the contributions of Yugoslav authors that included innovative works by visual artists such as Jo Klek (born Josip Seissel, 1904–1987) and other members of the Zagreb *Traveleri* (Travelers) group, the numerous international contributions—regularly published in original languages, not in translation—gave *Zenit* a truly cosmopolitan flavor that was only intensified with increasingly bold Constructivist layout. The effectiveness of *Zenit*’s international network is not only attested in the magazine itself but also materialized in the impressive collection of avant-garde artifacts that was created over several years and was already on display in 1922 at the Zagreb “Zenit” gallery. In 1923, the collection along with the editor moved to Belgrade, where a large Zenithist exhibition in April 1924 presented over 100 works by authors from 11 countries—including today’s celebrities such as Wassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, László Moholy-Nagy, Robert Delaunay, and El Lissitzky.¹⁴

Obviously, *Zenit* was profoundly sensitive to impulses from all directions. It not only actively recorded and commented on virtually all contemporary movements that are recognized today as the core of the transnational avant-garde network but also established and maintained a lively two-way exchange with the major nodes of this network. In fact, Micić’s ambitions were even greater: he was seeking to establish Zagreb (and later Belgrade) as the avant-garde center of Zenithism—a movement at least on an equivalent basis with other European *-isms*. In so doing, he actively employed colleagues in foreign centers, “christening” them

sometimes as Zenithists, the cult of internationalism, and the original concept of “Balkanization.”¹⁵ To a considerable extent, Mičić’s strategy was successful. His repeated reference to the “Balkanization of Europe” turned out to be a “happily invented and explosive slogan that made it possible for *Zenit* to become recognized and introduced into the circle of extreme avant-garde magazines” (Subotić 1995: 127). How Micić imagined his niche for the international breakthrough is clearly visible in his Zenithist manifesto, which resolutely states: “In the Šar Mountains—in the Ural Mountains—there is a NAKED MAN BARBARIAN-GENIUS standing.” The Balkanic = Slavic = Barbarian genius is set forth as that new, creative force from the periphery that must invade dying, rotten Europe to make possible its radical renovation and purification: “do close the gate...Europe, *but we are going to enter anyway.*”¹⁶

Because Micić’s authoritarian character and his disregard for anything but Zenithism caused constant disputes within the movement, the number of those permanently collaborating with *Zenit* was small and fluctuating. At the end of 1921, when Goll officially assumed coeditorship, Tokin was no longer on board, and in 1922, the break with Dragan Aleksić (1901–1958) followed. Aleksić, inspired by the 1921 experience of the Prague scene (the Devětsil group, especially Karel Teige and Jaroslav Seifert), was one of the most inventive adherents of the group, but was strongly turning toward Dada ideas. With his emergent Dadaist “troop,” about which he reported to Tristan Tzara in May 1922, Aleksić could only work hand in hand with Micić until mid-1922, when the dispute between the two caused the publication of the anti-Dada pamphlet *Dada Jok* by Poljanski (in May) and two Dadaist issues by Aleksić: *Dada Tank* (at the end of June, soon reprinted after a censor’s ban) and *Dada Jazz* (in September).

In comparison with the concurrent emergence of the avant-garde in Zagreb, the Slovenian 1922 episode of *Three Swans* hardly makes an impression—especially when measured by cosmopolitan criteria. The “spring” group proved volatile: after the dispute with the remaining two editors, Podbevšek left. Without him, *Three Swans* was bereft of any avant-garde charge: the second issue of the magazine from the end of 1922 (which also happened to be the last one) looks and reads like a traditional literary magazine. Shifting his focus toward politics, Podbevšek had limited success with his new radical leftist group (e.g., in holding lectures for workers), but he failed again both as an editor and as a promoter of proletkult and anarchist ideology. His attempt with *Red Pilot*—also lacking any international collaboration—collapsed after only two issues in 1922.

Gradually, the ambitious “titan” lost all his former allies and, when he finally released his poetry collection *The Man with the Bombs* (1925), he was no longer considered the leader of the avant-garde.¹⁷

In the same period, the young Slovenian poet Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926) was writing his highly innovative *integrali* (integrals), *konsi* (conses), and collages. The material that has been preserved along with other records undoubtedly places Kosovel in a deep internal relation with modernism and the avant-garde, especially Constructivism. In fact, Kosovel can rightfully be considered one of the great Mediterranean modernists, and his works—in contrast to Podbevšek’s—enjoy unanimous repute in Slovenia and partly even abroad. However, the “poet of the Karst” died very young and even during his public life showed little affinity with Podbevšek’s or Micić’s type of *modus operandi*. In addition, Kosovel as an active avant-garde artist was not “invented” until much later, during the neo-avant-gardes of the late 1960s, along with the publication of his *Integrals* (1967) and controversies attached to it.¹⁸ In reality, Kosovel’s links with the vibrant world were—as in the case of Podbevšek—limited: the Slovenian magazines and especially *Zenit* played a crucial role in his formation. Quite obviously then, he cannot be considered a serious player in the international avant-garde network.

From this perspective, the Slovenian interwar avant-garde did not enter the international scene before the *Tank* episode. Even a superficial glance at the two printed issues from 1927 reveals that the magazine was completely in line with the contemporary avant-garde magazines elsewhere, very distant from the setting of *Three Swans*. Like *Zenit*, *Tank* featured emphasized internationalism that among other things was reflected in simultaneous multilingualism: set next to each were texts in Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, Italian, French, German, English, and Esperanto. The two issues are distinguished by a typical combative manifesto style, bold design, and typographic inventions that resemble the Constructivist spirit of *Zenit*. A list of participants—even if not all the contributions were written specifically for *Tank*—is impressive: among the authors of poetry were Lajos Kassák, Tristan Tzara, Kurt Schwitters, Micić, Poljanski, and Sofronio Pocarini (one of the founders of the Friuli Futurist league). In addition to the manifestos written by Černigoj, Delak, and Micić, *Tank* also published texts by Herwarth Walden and Anatoly Lunacharsky. The impression is that the magazine’s ambitious “directeur” Ferdo Delak must have been cultivating a wide international network: the “tankist” tentacles seem to have reached the most vivid avant-garde centers of the time.¹⁹

As can be seen from Delak's and Černigoj's introductory manifestos, the ambitions of *Tank* were considerable: the “young pioneers” (Delak) of the “new artistic generation” (Černigoj) wanted to promote Ljubljana as a center of the new art, as a bridge between East and West—like Micić used to promote his *Zenit* as a bridge between “Orient” and “Occident.” Ljubljana was to become the “garage” of fast-paced world beauty, “a center from which “pilots prepare to fly around the world by means of mental machines.”²⁰ Within the new “tanker” creativity, the most thriving group became the visual artists. The core members were young Slovenian painters from the Littoral, involved in lively artistic settings of the Italian cities of Trieste and Gorizia: Avgust Černigoj (1898–1985) and his Triestine group (Edvard Stepančič, Josip Vlah, and Giorgio Carmelich), Veno Pilon, Ivan Čargo, Lojze (Luigi) Spazzapan, and others. Their *spiritus movens* was Černigoj, probably the most all-round figure of the Slovenian interwar avant-garde. In his formation, an essential role was played by Weimar studies at the famous Bauhaus school (then led by Walter Gropius), where Černigoj spent the first half of 1924, intensely absorbing Constructivist ideas and procedures in a class taught by Wassily Kandinsky and his assistant László Moholy-Nagy. Even though Černigoj was very familiar with a number of avant-garde ideas, especially Futurist ones, he managed to develop a unique version of Constructivist poetics; with at least partial success, he also attempted to “convert” the most penetrating Gorizia painters, Pilon and Spazzapan, to Constructivism.²¹ Other visual collaborators of *Tank* also had an international background, especially in comparison to the first generation of Slovenian avant-garde artists. In fact, it was the editor of *Tank* Ferdo Delak (1905–1968) who lacked significant international experience prior to the end of 1920s. Not unlike Kosovel, he was brought up chiefly by *Zenit* and later by his experienced colleague Černigoj; the activities of the couple in the Littoral gradually connected Delak more closely with the Futurists (especially Pocarini) and Micić.²² However, at that time, there was no sign that Delak alone would be capable of launching the demanding project of establishing a new node of avant-garde network.

How did this new wave of avant-garde attempt to enter the international scene? This question can be clarified by the 1927 correspondence between Černigoj, Delak, and Micić. At first, the Slovenians intended to lean directly upon Micić, who fled from Yugoslavia at the end of 1926 after the court-imposed ban on his *Zenit* and announced that he would attempt to revive Zenithism in Paris.²³ However, while the French project

of the Balkan barbarian-genius was failing to thrive, the self-confidence of Slovenian avant-gardists was growing. The activities of Zenithists represented an “almost unsurpassed model”²⁴ for them at the outset, but the relationship was now changing rapidly: “Micić lost the leading role as the carrier of the specific avant-garde model and turned from the potential editor of the renewed magazine in the spirit of Zenithism into one of the editors and collaborators of Delak’s and Černigoj’s *Tank*.”²⁵ On 2 September 1927, in Paris, Micić received a lapidary note from Delak informing him that Delak and Černigoj would launch an “activist magazine” for which they had already provided “sub-editorial posts in Germany (Hannes Meyer in Dassau), Italy (Sofronio Pocarini in Gorizia), Switzerland (Jean Bard in Geneva), and so on,” while Micić as the “founder of Zenithism and the first poet of Balkans” was asked to take over the editorial role for France and Serbia.

Cherishing the hope that the “Slovenian avant-garde artists, especially Ferdo Delak and Avgust Černigoj, would continue with Zenithism,”²⁶ Micić obviously had no other option but to support the new project, which could immediately take advantage of the personal network as well as the ideological legacy of Zenithism. Therefore, Irina Subotić rightly argues that the “Slovenian Constructivists gathered around the magazine *Tank* and the Trieste group were in a way the spiritual successors of Zenithist ideas and procedures.”²⁷ As Černigoj’s letter to Micić testifies, the Slovenian avant-garde adopted the Zenithist disregard for the “rotten West” and the idea of a South Slavic barbarian as the renovator of European art: “We Barbarians,” writes Černigoj on 3 March 1927, are “more proficient and artistically talented than all the French-Italian and German commercial prostitution.”²⁸ In a certain way, obviously, *Tank* tried to penetrate through the same niche as *Zenit*. The common point of both avant-gardes is an acrobatic attempt to reevaluate the center-periphery relationship; the axis of the break is not simply Mediterranean versus Continent (Černigoj speaks of “French-Italian prostitution”), but rather (barbarian Slavic-Balkan) East versus (rotten, commercialized) West. As one could expect, the projected breakthrough did not happen: after two promising issues, *Tank* was stranded on the cliffs of bureaucratic obstacles in the background of which it is possible to see the Yugoslav ideological censorship that had already buried *Zenit*.²⁹

However, the “tankers” were successfully promoted outside the domestic boundaries on at least one occasion. Following the decline of the magazine, as a representative of the Slovenian avant-garde Delak traveled

to Berlin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Herwarth Walden. On 26 September 1928, he lectured on the new Slovenian arts in the house of *Der Sturm*. In January 1929, a special issue of *Der Sturm* (vol. 19, no. 10) entitled “Junge slowenische Kunst” (new Slovenian art) provided perhaps the most successful presentation of the Slovenian avant-garde in the international context at the time: the eclectic Berlin-based magazine was one of the referential media of modern European art, “an open platform for a multitude of new ideas in the field of art” or, in the words of Georg Brühl, “the most important trumpet of modernity.”³⁰

Delak and Černigoj obviously attempted to introduce *Tank* among the most vital projects of the international avant-garde. In doing so, they were able to—or, more precisely, they had to—refer to the continuity of the Balkan movements as embodied by Ljubomir Micić. However, the sum total of the “tanker” efforts was scant in spite of the breakthrough in *Der Sturm*. As Peter Krečič observed, a number of circumstances prevented the “Slovenian participants from being able to expect the desired effects of great success acquired with difficulty.”³¹ Even though Slovenian contemporary art was presented in Walden’s magazine as an “active co-creator of modern Europe,”³² the visibility of *Tank* and the associated artists remains weak in the international context.

After the decline of *Zenit* and *Tank*, the radical and excessive avant-garde was all but withdrawn from both the Slovenian and Croatian culture scenes. Certainly, individual traces of Futurism, Constructivism, and so on were still present within the prevalent modernist currents, traditionally (loosely) described as Expressionism. However, the bulk of the avant-garde activities in Yugoslavia after 1927 definitely moved to Belgrade, where the group of “Belgrade Surrealists” had started its development in the early 1920s, reached its peak around 1930 (almanac *Nemoguće/Le Impossible* with the Surrealist manifesto), and remained active during the 1930s as a vital part of the international Surrealist scene.³³

CONCLUSION

To sum up, some remarks are needed regarding the national and international visibility of the movements presented. The earliest avant-garde experiments in Slovenia and Croatia—they were directly stimulated by the Italian Futurism and can thus be considered (peripheral) extensions of this movement—were unnoticed outside the boundaries of their native cultural scenes. Needless to say, their influence could not reach beyond the local

context, especially given the fact that even in their home environment, they were sometimes “discovered” with a lag of several decades (compare the cases of *Zvrk*, Podbevšek’s *Yellow Letters*, and later Kosovel’s *Integrals*). Italian Futurism was becoming less attractive after 1920 (because of increasingly nationalist, anti-Slavic, and fascist overtones), and so the avant-gardes in Slovenia and Croatia sought other potential points of reference. Although the first Slovenian avant-garde wave in the early 1920s might fit the general criteria of the avant-garde, it was certainly not sufficiently integrated internationally: it remained completely local, autarkic, and therefore provincial. In contrast, the next wave that was generated in Zagreb with *Zenit* and later reached Belgrade, Ljubljana, and Trieste featured a mature, creative, and explicitly cosmopolitan avant-garde that was—through a specific self-positioning strategy—seeking European acclaim on (at least) equivalent grounds. Its protagonists were utterly up-to-date and their artistic achievements worth noticing. The question is, however, whether they really managed to intervene in the European avant-garde space as a force that helped shape it.

To answer this question, it should first be noted that the radical avant-garde movements in Slovenia and Croatia discussed here never managed to occupy a central position within their respective cultural fields. “The activities of the Zenithists and Dadaists in Croatia were short-lived and had no major influence on the local, traditional art scene,” states Šimičić,³⁴ and similar is true for the situation in Slovenia: the avant-garde was mostly facing indignation, ignorance, censorship (cf. the cases of *Zenit*, *Dada Tank*, and *Tank*), and lack of money. It is therefore no surprise that even in the local surveys, these movements were not seriously regarded for decades. Zenithism, for instance, was seldom considered an important chapter of Croatian (or Serbian) art history until the last decades of the twentieth century. Among the possible reasons for this might be the fact that Zenithism—whose internationalist spirit does not really fit into the vision of separate national literary and art histories anyway—could never be completely adopted, neither by Croats nor by Serbs. However, *Zenit* seems to be acknowledged today as “an important segment of the global avant-garde network.”³⁵ The statement by one of the leading Croatian experts agrees with the findings of Serbian scholars such as Irina Subotić and Vida Golubović: Zenithism is the only movement in the region that is seriously taken into account in major international surveys.³⁶

Nonetheless, this fact should draw some attention. Does this “recognition” of Zenithism rest on any serious evaluation of its achievements? And

what about ignoring the other movements? Beyond doubt, the continuity of publication and the vigorous networking by Micić, the magazine’s editor, should be listed among the fundamental reasons for such a presence of *Zenit*. However, might these also be the *only* reasons? Certainly, this hypothesis would require more careful consideration. Yet, considering the unwillingness to overcome the language and alphabet barriers, it is hard to avoid the impression that treatments of Zenithism are usually not based on a competent judgment of its substance. (Instead, only the criterion of “international connectedness” is applied.) In this case, the scholarly “recognition” of *Zenit* could also be seen as reproducing in a peculiar way the domination of the avant-garde centers with their “vertical” optics over peripheries.³⁷ As I have shown, the *Zenit-Tank* avant-garde with its notion of the rebirth arriving from the barbarian (south)east can be understood in many ways as an attempt to revolt against the “asymmetry” of international artistic lines of force, an attempt to revolutionize the periphery-center relationship. From this perspective, we may be facing a new lesson from this same asymmetry. “[D]o close the gate [...] Europe, *but we are going to enter anyway*,” threatens Micić in his 1921 manifesto. Perhaps *Zenit* has managed to enter the closed gates—just to open up another creative possibility for critical reflection of such asymmetries.

NOTES

1. C.f. Jean Weisgerber, ed., *Les avant-gardes littéraires au XX^e siècle* 1–2, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986); Astradur Eysteinnsson and Vivian Liska, eds., *Modernism* 12 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), and recent publications by the EAM (European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies) association.
2. For early Futurism and its influences in Slovenia, see Troha (1993) and Dović (2009). In Slovenia, the most exhaustive reports were written by Ivan Gruden. In Croatia, the translated and annotated Futurist manifesto was first published in *Savremenik* by Arsen Wenzelides.
3. The noun *Zvrk* is rare in Croatian; it designates a body that rotates (rapidly) around its symmetrical axis (used in gyroscopes).
4. Darko Šimičić, “Strategija u borbi za novu umjetnost, Zenitzam i dada u srednjoeuropskom kontekstu,” in *Moderna umjetnost u Hrvatskoj 1898–1975*, eds. Ljiljana Kolesnik and Petar Prelog (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti 2012), 44–45. All translations from Slovenian or Croatian to English are by the author.
5. Here, it is worth noting the activities of the Italian Futurists in Rijeka (Ital. *Fiume*) in 1919 and 1920, during the Futurist “occupation” of this coastal

- city: “The Futurist company (Marinetti, Berchet, Keller, Scambelluri, Cerati, Vecchi, Guglielmino, etc.) gathered in Rijeka during D’Annunzio’s short government were recruited from the military sphere of action, but many of them were already known in the Futurist scene” (Glavočić, “D’Annunzio,” 74).
6. Šimičić, “Strategija u borbi,” 45.
 7. Expressionism in Croatian literature has usually been associated with the works of Antun Branko Šimić, Gustav Krklec, Ulderiko Donadini, and Miroslav Krleža; its magazines were *Kokot* (1916–1918), *Vijavica* (1917–1918), *Jurš* (1919), and *Plamen* (1919). In the visual arts, Expressionism marked the works of Ljubo Babić, Vilko Gecan, Milivoj Uzelac, and Marijan Trepše (cf. Šimičić, “Strategija u borbi,” 44, and Flaker, “Croatian”).
 8. The term “historical avant-garde” is traditionally used to describe the interwar avant-garde movements in Slovenian literary history.
 9. For more information about Podbevšek’s poetics, rise, decline, and rediscovery, see the chapter in *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* (Dović, “Anton Podbevšek”).
 10. In original, the title neologism plays with the meaning of “turning the world.” The subtitle reads: “list za ekspediciju na severni pol čovekovog duha.”
 11. See Poljanski’s fierce attack on Podbevšek in *Svetokret* (Poljanski, “Novembarski,” 9).
 12. Another avant-garde magazine was launched in 1922 in Yugoslavia: the activist magazine *Űt*. It was edited by Csuka Zoltán and published in Hungarian from 1922 to 1925 in Novi Sad (in Vojvodina). Naturally, it was oriented towards the Hungarian avant-garde scene (among the contributors were Lajos Kassák, Sándor Barta, and Árpád Láng), but as an “an organ of Yugoslav activists in Hungarian” it also cooperated with Dragan Aleksić, Milan Dedinac, Rade Drainac, Stanislav Vinaver, Ljubomir Micić, Boško Tokin, and other Yugoslav authors.
 13. After 1927, when he publicly proclaimed the end of his literary career, Poljanski settled in Paris, where he devoted himself to painting, but with little success; after 1940, traces of him practically disappear.
 14. See the exhibition catalogue in *Zenit* no. 25.
 15. At the same time, Micić attempted to use the international network as a means of legitimizing the movement at home, where the controversial *Zenit* was constantly facing opposition, disdain, confiscation, and censorship. A similar strategy was later adopted by Delak in *Tank*.
 16. Goll, Iwan, Ljubomir Micić, and Boško Tokin. *Manifest Zenitizma* (Zagreb: Biblioteka Zenit, 1921), 3. The manifesto consists of three separate texts by Micić, Tokin, and Goll, and was released as the first issue of

- the Zenit Library in 1921. Later on, ten publications followed in this collection. In original, the quoted passages by Micić read: “Na Šar planini—na Uralu—stoji GOLI ČOVEK BARBAROGENIJ/.../zatvori vrata...Evropo, *ali mi čemo ipak učiti.*”
17. Dović, Marijan. “The Canonisation of an ‘Absent’ Author.” Translated by Katarina Jerin. *Primerjalna književnost* 28, special issue (2005), 205–214, 55–60.
 18. Marijan Dović, “The Canonisation of an ‘Absent’ Author,” trans. Katarina Jerin, *Primerjalna književnost* 28, special issue (2005).
 19. The question is, of course, how far *Tank* could have reached without Černigoj, Poljanski, and especially Micić (in *Tank* 1^{1/2}: 11, the father of Zenithism was proclaimed “le plus grande [sic] poete des Balkans”).
 20. Delak, *Tank* 1^{1/2}, 5. In the original, the quoted passage reads: “središče ljubljane bo oznanjalo proti vzhodu in zahodu, da se pripravljajo piloti za polet okoli sveta potom duševnih strojev. ljubljana mora postati ‘garage’ svetovne drveče lepote.”
 21. Peter Krečič, *August Černigoj* (Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 1999); Poniž, “Revija Tank in slovenska likovna avantgarda,” in *Tank*, Reprint izdaje iz leta 1927 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1987), 57–74.
 22. Cf. Štoka, “Ferdo Delak.”
 23. The *Zenit* adventure ultimately came to an end in December 1926, when the magazine was banned because of alleged Communist subversion. On 15 December 1926, Micić left Belgrade. In Rijeka he was imprisoned, and after personal intervention by Marinetti he was released and reached Paris via Trieste. In Paris he remained active and was associated with many prominent avant-garde protagonists, but did not experience much success as a poet or editor.
 24. Peter Krečič, “Der Sturm in zadnji poskus vstopa slovenske zgodovinske avantgarde na mednarodno umetniško prizorišče,” in *Der Sturm in slovenska historična avantgarda*, ed. Alenka Gregorič and Dragan Živadinov, (Ljubljana: Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane in Zavod Delak, 2011): 10.
 25. Vida Golubović, “Dopisovanje v zvezi z revijo tank. Černigoj—Delak—Micić,” in *Tank*, Reprint izdaje iz leta 1927 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1987): 100.
 26. Irina Subotić, *Likovni krog revije “Zenit” (1921–1926)* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 1995): 81.
 27. Ibid.
 28. Golubović, “Dopisovanje,” 102. In original: “Mi Barbari/.../smo bolj podkovani in umetniško nadarjeni kakor vsa francosko italijanska in germanska komercialna prostitucija.”
 29. Apart from this, *Tank* never had a sufficient material base to make the long-term media project possible (cf. Dović, *Slovenska*, 312–313).

30. Polona Balantič, “Der Sturm—med estetiko in politiko,” in *Der Sturm in slovenska historična avantgarda*, ed. Alenka Gregorič and Dragan Živadinov (Ljubljana: Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane in Zavod Delak, 2011), 55., The genuine interest of Herwarth Walden, the editor of *Der Sturm*, in (south)eastern Europe surpasses the prevailing patronizing view of the center towards the (exotic) periphery. Walden’s fancy for Europe’s east is not only demonstrated in the special issues (also on Hungarian, Czech, Bulgarian, and Polish art) but is also present throughout the years that his magazine was published (1910–1932).
31. Peter Krečič, “Der Sturm,” 10.
32. Balantič, “Der Sturm,” 64.
33. The discussion of “Belgrade Surrealism” would round out this overview of the most interesting phenomena in the Yugoslav interwar avant-garde. A recommended source for more information—especially on Serbian artists and magazines—is the online *Virtual Museum of Avant-Garde Art* with texts also available in English.
34. Šimičić, Darko. “Strategies in the Battle for the New Art.” In *Zenit. Svetokret. Dada Jok. Dada Tank. Dada Jazz. 1921–1926*, Reprint, n.pag. Zagreb: Horetzky, 2008.
35. Darko Šimičić, “Strategies in the Battle for the New Art,” in *Zenit. Svetokret. Dada Jok. Dada Tank. Dada Jazz. 1921–1926*, Reprint (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2008): n.pag.
36. Serbian surrealism is a problem of its own and is not addressed here.
37. This problem was addressed by Janez Vrečko on several occasions; recent criticism is even harsher (cf. Piotrowski, “Horizontal History”; Juvan, “Svetovni”; Dovič, *Mož z bombami*). Fairly symptomatic in this context is the fact that the accounts originating from central or eastern Europe are much more accurate than the Western ones (cf. Folejewski, *Futurism*; Drews, *Die slawische*; Konstantinović, “Expressionism”; Lauer, “Die literarische”).

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Modernism, Nationalism, Albanianism:
Geographic Poetry and Poetic Geography
in the Albanian and Kosovar Independence
Movements

Adam J. Goldwyn

I.

In 1847, Vaso Pasha, a 22-year-old Ottoman subject from Shkodra, in northern Albania, went west to Italy to participate in the revolutions which would sweep Europe the following year. As a secretary in the British consulate of Shkodra in the years preceding his trip to Italy, he had learned English, Italian and French, and thus became not only one of the more educated Albanians of his time but also one for whom the revolutionary ideals of the Spring of Nations—the series of liberal and nationalist uprisings that inspired many late nineteenth-century reformers—were readily available.¹ Though the revolutions were crushed within a year and Pasha was forced to leave Italy for Constantinople, the revolutionary fire never left him. Indeed, some 30 years after his expulsion from Italy, after a long and distinguished career in the Ottoman foreign service, Pasha wrote *Albania, Poor Albania* (c.1878–80), the poem which the preminent

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scholar and translator of Albanian poetry Robert Elsie calls “the most influential and perhaps the most popular ever written in Albanian.”²

O Albania, Poor Albania, the only poem that Pasha ever wrote, begins with a simple question:

O moj Shqypni, e mjera Shqypni,
Kush te ka qitë me krye n’hi?³

O Albania, poor Albania,
Who has shoved your head in ashes? ⁴

But Pasha does not provide an answer to the questions, instead digressing to tell a romantic history of the nation personified:

Ti ke pas kenë një zojë e randë,
Burrat e dheut të thirrshin nanë.
Ke pasë shumë t’mira e begati,
Me varza t’bukura e me djelm t’ri,
Gja e vend shumë, ara e bashtina,
Me armë të bardha, me pushkë ltina,
Me burra trima, me gra të dlira;
Ti ndër gjith shoqet ke kenë ma e mira.⁵

Once you were a fine, great lady.
All the world’s men called you mother.
One you had such wealth and goodness,
With fair maidens, strapping lads,
Herds and land, rich fields and produce,
Flashing guns, Italian weapons,
Heroic fellows and pure women,
You reigned as their best companions.⁶

Pasha personifies the nation as a “great lady,” a “mother” to “all the world’s men.” This land, he continues, was rich and beautiful: he praises quality, its fertility, its people, its goods. Even as Pasha develops a romantic and tragic narrative of Albanian history, he still avoids answering the question originally posed. It is only toward the middle of the poem that he comes to an answer:

Shqypnar?, me vllazën jeni tuj u vra,
Ndër nji qind ceta jeni shpërnda;

Ca thone kam fë ca thonë kam din;
 Njeni: “jam turk,” tjetri: “latin”
 Do thonë: “Jam grek,” “shkje”-disa tjerë,
 Por jemi vllazën t’gjith more t’mjerë!
 Priftnit e hoxhët ju kanë hutue,
 Për me ju damun me ju vorfnue!⁷

Albanians, you are killing your kinfolk,
 You’re split in a hundred factions,
 Some believe in God or Allah,
 Say “I’m Turk,” or “I am Latin,”
 Say “I’m Greek,” or “I am Slavic,”
 But you’re brothers, hapless people!
 You’ve been duped by priests and hodjas
 To divide you.⁸

The cause of Albania’s woes, he suggests, is the problem of the Albanian diaspora under Ottoman colonial rule, a surprising answer from a man who rose to the position of Governor of Lebanon under the Ottoman Empire. Pasha focuses his particular ire on those who use religion rather than nationality as the measure of identity, thus pitting Albanians who should be unified against each other in terms of Christians and Muslims. Having answered his original question, Pasha then offers a solution:

Coniu, shqyptarë, prej gjumit çoniu,
 Të gjithë si vllazën n’nji besë shtërngoniu,
 E mos shikoni kisha e xhamia:
 Feja e shqyptarit asht shqyptaria!
 Qysh prej Tivarit deri n’Prevezë,
 Gjithkund lshon dielli vap’edhe rrezë,
 Asht tok’ e jona, prind na e kanë lanë
 Kush mos na e preki, se desim t’tanë
 Të desim si burrat që vdiqnë motit
 Edhe mos marrohna përpara zotit.⁹

Wake, Albanian, from your slumber,
 Let us, brothers, swear in common
 And not look to church or mosque,
 The Albanian’s faith is Albanianism!

From Bar down to far Preveza
 Shall the sun spread forth its warm rays,

Our forefathers left us this land,
 Let none touch it, for we'll all die!
 Let us fall as did our forebears
 And not shame ourselves before God!¹⁰

On its face, Pasha's exhortation was a failure: Bar remains part of Montenegro while Preveza is now situated in Greece. But on a deeper level, the poem played an important role in the cultivation of two elements which were vital to Albania's moving from a colonial to a post-colonial state: first, the establishment of a primary national identity to replace the variety of identities which the Ottomans used to divide the Albanians; and second, the attempt to establish defined and recognizable geographic borders of an Albania distinct from the Ottomans for those who adhered to the new national identity. Thus, Pasha's claim for national identity above other ethnic or religious markers—"The Albanian's faith is Albanianism"—is a necessary corollary to his geographic claim that the new nation should extend "[f]rom Bar to far Preveza." Pasha, importing the revolutionary ideals of the Spring of Nations which had so deeply affected him as a young man, ties geography to nationalism and, in so doing, becomes one of the first revolutionary voices to push Albania into the modern world—politically, as an independent postcolonial nation-state, and culturally, as one with greater integration with international intellectual and literary traditions. Pasha's poem, therefore, represents a model synthesis of revolutionary politics and revolutionary poetics which would be followed by subsequent generations of Albanian poets, politicians and patriots.

Pasha's poem, however, was not a *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, it was rooted in his own youthful experiences in Western Europe and in the specific context of Albanian–Ottoman relations in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In June of 1878, the period during which he wrote his poem, Pasha had been among the leaders of a group of Albanian intellectuals, politicians and revolutionaries who gathered in the city of Prizren (in modern day Kosovo) to form the Albanian League for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nation, better known as the League of Prizren (Lidhhja e Prizrendit).¹¹ The League was formed in response to the Treaty of San Stefano, signed three months earlier, which altered the borders of the Balkan countries after Russia's victory in the Russo-Turkish War. Under the Ottoman Empire, the region of the Balkans where most Albanians lived was divided among various administrative units, called

vilayets, and those who gathered together to form the League feared—rightly and presciently—that if the empire collapsed, the independent countries which would spring up in its wake would divide the Albanian people among several different countries, thus fracturing their political power as well as their cultural and historical trajectories. The platform consisted of four essential points:

1. a refusal to give up any territory to Serbia, Montenegro or Greece; 2. a demand for the return of all Albanian-speaking land annexed by Serbia and Montenegro; 3. Albanian autonomy within the Empire; and 4. no more conscription for and taxation by the central government in Constantinople.¹²

The first two points reflected Albanian opposition to geographic division, while the latter two expressed resistance to the dismantling of Albania's political institutions.¹³ The northern branch of the League of Prizren fought the decision to allocate portions of this imagined Greater Albania to the Serbians and Montenegrins, while the southern branch fought the annexation of its lands to Greece. The League's initial demands did not suggest the broader nationalist aims which it would come to advocate; indeed, the historian George Gawrych suggests that the demands "represented a minimalist position framed within an Islamic-Ottoman medium without any stated national aspiration."¹⁴ The demands were limited by region (mostly the northern regions affected by the Treaty of San Stefano) and mostly limited to Muslims (though the rights of Christians were explicitly to be protected). Subsequent meetings of the League, however, expanded the scope of the demands.

Nevertheless, the Treaty of San Stefano was short lived, a victim both of resistance by the local peoples it affected and the tumultuous back and forth which characterized the debates among the Great Powers. In July of that year, the Great Powers reconvened and a new agreement, the Treaty of Berlin, was reached. The new agreement was even worse for the Albanians, and in essence forced them to expand their nationalist program. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the Berlin Congress, the League sent a petition to the Sublime Porte demanding geographic and cultural integrity. Indeed its principal demands were "first, the creation of one province for the region of Albania with a provincial capital centrally located; second, the appointment of civil officials competent in the local language; third, the teaching of the Albanian language in schools," as well as two more demands relating to an autonomous general assembly and

public financing.¹⁵ The second and third goals point to a growing recognition of Albanian nationhood and the unity of Albanians as a distinct people; the first goal seeks to ratify the abstraction of nationalist sentiment with the establishment of a geographical space for its development.

Although initially the League enjoyed international support and modest success at stanching Albania's territorial loss, it was crushed by the Ottomans in 1881, its leaders imprisoned, executed or exiled. On the cultural front, the League's destruction foreshadowed further Ottoman (and later European) attempts at the suppression of Albanian national identity, most notably the outlawing of the Albanian language in schools, print, private correspondence and official documents.¹⁶ As importantly, the League was unable to reverse the slow erosion of its territorial aspirations: in the north, the cities of Ulcinj and Podgorica, as well as the surrounding territory, were ceded to Montenegro; in the south, the districts of Epirus and Thessaly, including the city of Janina, were ceded to Greece.¹⁷

In spite of its ultimate defeat, the League did have one important and enduring legacy. Several centuries of Ottoman occupation resulted, for better or worse, in the loss of a larger Albanian identity. In response to an Albanian plea for independence at one of the meetings of the Great Powers, Otto von Bismarck replied: "There is no Albanian nationality."¹⁸ Modern scholars, too, have questioned the extent to which, in the period before the League of Prizren, there was even a concept of an Albanian nation or national identity before the "Rilindja Kombëtare," or national awakening, which occurred during the period that begins with the establishment of the League in 1870s and ends with the declaration of Albanian independence in 1912.¹⁹

The Albanians were not alone among colonial peoples in their attempt to throw off their empires and emerge into modern statehood. The 34-year journey from the formation of the League of Prizren to the Declaration of Independence mirrors similar moves toward unity, independence and nationalism among other peoples during the period. The Greeks, for instance, had fought their own national revolution some 50 years before and were actively engaged in the building of their own national identity, while the Italians declared Rome as the national capital in 1871, the same year as the Germans declared their unification. Just to the north, Serbia's decades-long move toward independence was ratified at the same 1878 Berlin Congress which caused the Albanians such consternation, while, further east, the Zionist movement which would formally begin with the

publication of Theodore Herzl's *The Jewish Question* in 1897, was also beginning to take shape. India, Ireland and many other colonial (and postcolonial) states saw the stirrings of their own nationalist movements, although these would come to fruition later than in Albania. When Pasha laments the fallen state of Albania and the division of its people by race, religion and language, he is lamenting the Albanian version of a process playing out in other countries around the world.

The founding of the League of Prizren, as the seminal event of the Rilindja Kombëtare, fostered the sense of national identity which Pasha says the Albanians lacked.²⁰ "O Albania, My Albania" was but a first instance of the important role poetry played in the creation of that national identity. At the most basic level, poetry provided an opportunity for the dissemination of a standard alphabet for written Albanian, a requisite for nationhood and identity. In 1879, Pasha, the brothers Naim and Sami Frashëri and other prominent Albanian intellectuals standardized written Albanian by publishing *The Primer of the Albanian Language*, the result of two years of language debates among them in Istanbul. Previously, Orthodox Albanians wrote in Greek script, Catholics in Latin script and Muslims in Arabic or Farsi.²¹ The language question would continue to be altered slightly by ensuing generations, but the first principles of the modern Albanian Latin script were left unchanged,²² and the poetry that would be written in this script helped to spread the new written language. Thus, writing poetry in Albanian became part of the nation's modernist project—to make new the world, the nation and the language. The adoption of the Latin script allowed for a national re-definition away from the Ottoman Empire and toward the nation-state model of Western Europe. As Elsie notes, "writing in Albanian, by its every existence, constituted an act of defiance against the foreign powers ruling the country or dominating it culturally."²³ It was also a means of unifying a nationalist movement hampered by the different scripts in which diaspora Albanians wrote. The early Albanian nationalists came from all across the Mediterranean: Pasha died in Beirut holding the position of governor general of Lebanon; the Frashëris were based in Istanbul; Andon Zako Çajupi (1866–1930) wrote in Egypt; Ndre Medja (1866–1937) taught in Italy; and Asdreni (pen name of Alkes Stavre Drenova, 1872–1947) studied in Bucharest and Constanza, Romania. Before the language reforms, their work would have been illegible to many of their fellow revolutionaries. After the language reform, Albanian was comprehensible to Albanians from all parts of the diaspora.

II.

At a deeper level, poetry aided the nationalist cause by evoking two complementary attitudes toward Albania as a physical and political space in lyric poetry, from the Rilindja to the end of World War II. These themes may be termed the poetry of geography and geographic poetry. The poetry of geography evokes a nationalism based on neo-romantic descriptions of the Albanian landscape—mountains, rivers and soil. These poems create an idealized Albania whose non-specific features imbue a sort of idealized patriotism. Geographic poetry, on the other hand, is rooted in specific named places within the Albanian polity. Rather than focusing on mountains and cities in the abstract, it focuses on specific mountains and cities within the hoped for borders of the new Albanian nation.

Poems focusing on geography contributed to the independence movement by providing Albanians with both a romantic image of their land and the specific place names which would determine the boundaries of the nation-state in which that land would be encompassed. Indeed, the divergent strands of the poetic approach to the land were alluded to as early as 1942, when in “Modern Albanian Literature,” Anthony Klančar tried to define the change between the modern (generally western-educated) Albanian writers, beginning with the neo-romantic poet Jeronim de Rada, and their predecessors. Klančar described the two paradigmatic poets of this type of poetry: Naim Frashëri (1846–1900), the national poet of Albania, and his younger contemporary Gjergj Fishta (1871–1940), author of the national epic *Lahuta e Malcís/The Highlight Lute* (composed between 1902 and 1909)²⁴: “There is an essential difference between them: Fishta’s themes are imbued with a regionalist...spirit, while Frasherri has given himself the task of translating the spirit of the Albanian people, without distinction as to province or tribe.”²⁵ Thus, Fishta is a poet of places and place names, while Frashëri is the poet of the romantic and symbolic landscape.

Frashëri’s most famous poem, “O malet’ e Shqipërisë”/“O Mountains of Albania” (1886), still one of the most famous poems in the Albanian literary canon, begins with the “lines which every Albanian schoolchild knows, or is supposed to know, by heart”²⁶:

O malet’ e Shqipërisë e ju o lisat’ e gjatë!
 Fushat e gjëra me lule, q’u kam ndër mënt dit’ e natë!
 Ju bregore bukuroshe e ju lumenjt’ e kulluar!

Çuka, kodra, brinja, gërxhe dhe pylle të gjelbëruar!
 Do të këndonj bagëtinë që mbani ju e ushqeni,
 O vendëthit e bekuar, ju mëndjen ma dëfreni.
 Ti Shqipëri, më ep nderë, më ep emrin shqipëtar,
 Zëmren ti ma gatove plot me dëshirë dhe me zjarr.
 Shqipëri, o mëma ime, ndonëse jam i mërguar,
 Dashurinë tënde kurrë zemëra s'e ka harruar.²⁷

Oh mountains of Albania and you, oh trees so lofty,
 Broad plains with all your flowers, day and night I contemplate you,
 You highlands so exquisite, and you streams and rivers sparkling,
 Oh peaks and promontories, and you slopes, cliffs, verdant forests,
 Of the herds and flocks I'll sing out which you hold and which you nourish.
 Oh you blessed, sacred places, you inspire and delight me!
 You, Albania, give me honour, and you name me as Albanian,
 And my heart you have replenished both with ardour and desire.
 Albania! Oh my mother! Though in exile I am longing,
 My heart has ne'er forgotten all the love you've given to me.²⁸

The name of the volume which this poem opens, *Bagëti e bujqësija/ Bucolics and Georgics/Cattle and Farming*,²⁹ suggests the romantic and idealized description of the natural world which is found in the poem. But Frashëri's description of mountains, plains, cliffs and forests is more than a simple romantic revelry; rather, it is tied up with the Albanian national awakening: these idealized landscapes are the Albanian lands around which he wants to rally Albanian national pride. The poem is written in the second person, addressed to the mountains of Albania at the beginning and then to Albania as a country and as an identity: "më ep emërin shqipëtar/ you name me as Albanian," he writes and, later "Shqipëri! o mëma ime!/ Albania! Oh my mother!" Frashëri uses an idealized Albania to inculcate a patriotic zeal for the motherland.

Andon Zako Çajupi's "Servitude"/"Robëria" (1902), is another example of this kind of poetry of geography, depicting the land as his mother and representing his love for it through its natural and topographical features:

E dashura memedhe,
 te dua dhe kshtu si je!
 Po kur te te shoh te lire
 do te te dua me mire.
 Qani pyje, fusha, gure,

qani male me debore!
 Shqiperia mbet e gjore
 dhe nuke sheh drite kurre;
 nje mjegull e keq' e shkrete
 e ka mbuluar perjete!³⁰

Dear motherland of mine,
 I love you as you are,
 But if I saw you free,
 I'd love you even more.
 Weep, oh forests, plains and stones,
 Weep, oh mountains under snows,
 Poor Albania is abandoned,
 Never will she see the light,
 Veiled forever is the country
 In a thick and sombre blight.³¹

In a similar way to Frashëri's "Mountains of Albania," Çajupi's poem here evokes an Albanian landscape that is both generalized and idealized: he celebrates the "forests, plains and stones" and the "mountains under snows" even as he laments their occupation and their lack of freedom. Çajupi, like Frashëri, grounds his nationalist sentiment in an idealized vision of the land and its natural features. Like Pasha, Çajupi concludes with a call to arms for the sake of national liberty:

Shqiptare beni bene
 te leftoni per atdhene.

E dashura memedhe,
 te dua dhe keshtu si je!
 Po kur te te shoh te lire,
 do te te dua me mire!³²

O Albanians, swear an oath that
 You will now fight for your homeland.

Dear motherland of mine,
 I love you as you are,
 But if I saw you free,
 I'd love you even more.³³

More than simply a lament for the traumas inflicted on the landscape, Çajupi calls for action; he importunes his readers to “swear an oath” and “fight for your homeland.” The romantic idealization of nature oppressed by colonial powers depicted previously in the poem finds its fulfillment in this concluding rallying cry.

Fishta approaches this same nationalistic goal through a different evocation of geography. In *The Highland Lute*, his historical epic, Fishta focuses not on an airy idealization of the past, but an idealization rooted in the specifics of history and place. At over 15,000 lines, *The Highland Lute* defies a full analysis here, yet a reading of the passages describing the immediate aftermath of the League of Prizren depicts a vision of postcolonial history which differs significantly from Frashëri's.³⁴ After receiving the news that the Great Powers have determined to give parts of the Albanian homeland to Montenegro, Fishta describes how the leaders of the League meet in Prizren:

Per me folë, me bisedue,
 Shqyptarin se si m' e pshtue
 Prej çapojve t' Malit t' Zí,
 Qi ka dýndun top e ushtrí,
 Me hí n' Plavë, me hí n' Gucí,
 Me marrë Shkodren me Malcí,
 Dér kú dán vendi me Drí.³⁵

to deliberate, consider
 How to rescue their poor homeland
 Now from Montenegro's clutches,
 Which had sent out cannons, soldiers
 To pluck Plava and Gucia,
 To snatch Shkodra and the Highlands,
 Down to where the River Drin flows.

Unlike Frashëri, Fishta evokes the specific place names that will be lost. It is no longer “peaks and promontories, and you slopes, cliffs, verdant forests”; instead, it is identifiable cities: Plava, Gucia, Shkodra. The overall patriotic effect remains the same, as the characters involved express similar nationalistic sentiments of idealized patriotic lives. In the poem, after hearing that the Montengerans aim to take the northern cities the Albanians claim as their own, a group of Albanian nationalists gather in the city of Gjakova in Kosovo to discuss the implementation of the treaties of San

Stefano and Berlin and the transfer of their territory to Montenegro with the local Ottoman representative, Mehmet ali Pasha (a Muslim convert who was born in Germany as Karl Detroit).³⁶ Decrying the transfer of the land, one of the Albanians, Ali Pasha of Gusinje exclaims:

E sot dashtka baba Mbret
 Me Shqypní me bâm aj nderë,
 Thue i shportë fqsh kjo ká qillue,
 Aní kujë? Malit te Zí!...
 A din shka, ti Pasha i Mbretit?
 Ngarko rraquet per Stambollë
 Se ky, po, ásht nji vend i eger
 E po t'njitet kund ndo i ferrë...
 Sa per caqe të Shqypnís,
 Kto ka herë kánë vendue:
 I ká ngulë shpata e Shqyptarit.³⁷

Now it seems our father sultan
 Wants to give away our country
 Like a fig within a basket,
 And to whom? To Montenegro!
 Listen, pasha of the sultan,
 Take your knapsack back to Stamboul,
 This our land's a vicious country,
 Thorns will wound you on the byways,
 And, as to our nation's borders,
 They were years ago established
 Marked by an Albanian saber.

The Albanians, in Fishta's retelling, have a national identity as Albanians, with a clearly delineated border "marked by an Albanian saber." But Mehmet ali Pasha replies:

S' ká Shqyptarë as s' ká Shqypní:
 Veç ká Alláh, Mbret e Turkí!³⁸

There is no Albanian people,
 Only Allah, sultan, Turkey.

The push and pull of nationalism and identity in this exchange is telling: the Albanians are seeking to claim an independent national and ethnic

identity as Albanians. The Ottoman representative, on the other hand, denies its very existence and instead reasserts their Ottoman identity as Muslims and subjects of the Sultan. When the Albanians refute Mehmet ali Pasha, they do so not in the romantic language of Frashëri, but rather through the depiction of facts on the ground. They rebut him and, in doing so, describe the geographical borders of northern Albania:

E n'Gjakovë rrebtë do t' kersasë,
 Pse halís i u dha kushtrimi
 M' kaçanin e del m' Qafë t' Diellit,
 Ç' merr prej Sharit m' Buletin,
 Me rrâ turr m' pazâr t' Gjakovës
 Tym per shpí ka I' burrë me armë.
 E t' ká rrâ Pejë e Kosovë,
 E t' ká lshue Rekë e Rogovë,
 Ká lshue Gásh, ká lshue Krasniq,
 Asht dyndë Plava me Gucí
 E t' kan dalë m' at fushë t' Gjakovës
 Porsi miza per kercunë.³⁹

There'll be shooting in Gjakova.
 For a war cry has been sounded
 from Kačanik to Qafa e Diellit,
 Calling Sharri, Boletini,
 Every hearth must send a man off
 With his weapons to Gjakova.
 Thither pushed Peja, Kosova,
 hither pushed Reka, Rogova,
 Up in arms Gashi, Krasniqi,
 Joined by Plava and Gucia,
 To Gjakova's plain they swarmed up
 like an anthill by a tree trunk.

His list of cities comprises the major centers of Kosovo and northern Albania. In the ensuing verse, Fishta broadens his narration to a national call to arms:

Anì shán s' largut anmiku,
 Se kurr bashkë s' bâhen Shqyptarët!
 Preki 'í herë ti m' tokë të t' Parve,
 Preki 'i herë ti m' erz të fisit,

Edhè tÿ kan me t' diftue,
 Se si dijn kta me u bashkue,
 Se si bijn kta m' shpinë t' anmikut.⁴⁰

Lo, our enemies deride us, saying,
 "ne'er together work Albanians!"
 Touch, though, their forefather's country,
 Dare infringe upon their honor,
 They will congregate, will show you
 That they're able to join forces,
 Set upon their foe, united.

Through the use of place names, he establishes these cities as inside the Albanian national territory and, coming together as they do, he shows the national unity of that territory. As such, this section exemplifies the work as both a backward-looking poem which valorizes the League of Prizren and its ambitions, but also a forward-looking poem which, on the eve of revolution, issues a call to arms and national unity based on specific geographical references.

Though these two threads of geographic description can be found in isolation, more often than not, the two are intertwined. In *O Albania, Poor Albania*, for example, the generalized reflections on the sad state of Albania can be seen as part of the former tradition, while the specific references to identity ("Turk," "Greek") and to place ("from Bar to far Preveza") suggest the latter tradition.

III.

Perhaps no poet better expresses the turn toward specific place names than Sejfullah Malëshova (1901–1971), Albania's most fervent voice against the Italian Occupation of WWII. By 1912, the national movement had coalesced and, after failed revolts in 1908 and 1910, finally succeeded in throwing out the Ottomans. During the violent turmoil of the First Balkan War, the Albanians declared their independence, which was ratified on an international level at the London Peace Conference which ended the First Balkan War in 1913. The terms of the treaty, however, did not encompass all the ethnic Albanians in the region, with large populations falling to Greece, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro.⁴¹ Albania itself fell under the dictatorship of King Zog, who ruled until Italian occupation in

1939. It was during this period of renewed occupation that the Albanian revolutionary Sejfullah Malëshova composed his book of poetry, *Vjersha / Verses*, which was published after WWII in 1945.

Malëshova, like many Albanian elites, studied abroad, receiving a medical degree in Italy in 1924. Malëshova was thus the leading intellectual light of a new generation of Albanian revolutionaries: at 23, he was personal secretary to Fan Noli, who briefly held power in 1924 at the head of a leftist revolution. Malëshova never abandoned his political radicalism, and shortly after the overthrow of Noli's government, he fled first to Paris before settling in Moscow, where he taught Marxist theory. After returning to Albania during WWII, Malëshova rose to become Albania's Minister of Culture and Propaganda before being purged as too moderate (significantly, he advocated continued reading of Gjergj Fishta, whose influence can be seen in his own poetry), living the next decades in a cruel form of internal exile.⁴²

Verses follows in the tradition of earlier revolutionary poets such as Vasko Pasha, combining pan-Albanian nationalist calls to arms with specific reference to place names in order to rally Albanians toward a renewed independence. In *Si e dua Shqipërinë/How I Love Albania* (1939), for example, Malëshova writes that despite his being an exile who owns no land, he loves Albania:

S'kam çiflik e s'kam pallate,
 S'kam dyqan me kater kate,
 Po e dua Shqipërine
 Per nje stan ne trebeshine,
 Per nje shkarp e per nje gur,
 Per nje gardh e per nje mur,
 Per kasollen mbi Selishte,
 Per dy ara ne Zallishte.⁴³

I've no farm or estates or manors,
 I've no shops or lofty buildings,
 Yet I love my land, Albania—
 For a barn in Trebeshina,
 For its boulders and brushwood,
 For a hut above Selishta,
 For two fields plowed in Zallishta.⁴⁴

Malëshova “love[s] his land, Albania” in an abstract sense, that is, for its idealized and generalized features such “boulders and brushwood,” but also as a country with defined borders and specifically identified cities: Trebeshina, Selishta, Zallistha. He repeats this line, “Yes, I love Albania”/“Une e dua Shqiperine” six more times, alternating between love of abstract characteristics of the Albanian nation and reference to specific geographic locations. In the next stanza, for instance, Malëshova writes:

Une e dua Shqiperine,
 Per terfilin mi lendine,
 Per nje vase gjeraqine,
 Dhe per ujet qe buron
 Nga nje shkem e gurgullon
 Neper lista gjetheshume,
 Edhe zbret perposh ne lume.
 Une e dua Shqiperine.⁴⁵

Yes, I love my land, Albania
 For the clover in its meadows,
 For a quick and agile maiden,
 For its spring of water gurgling
 From the cliffs and flowing swiftly
 Through the leafy oak tree forests,
 Tumbling down to form a river,
 Yes, I love my land, Albania.⁴⁶

The stanza continues with similar praise of the natural environment, reflecting the poet’s love of the beautiful land. In the previous lines, the poet has loved the rural and the bucolic. The last stanza, however, represents a significant alteration in the poet’s attitude:

Ku del bujku qe me nate
 Me parmende dhe me shate,
 Mbjell e korr me djell, me hene
 Dhe s’ka buke per te ngrene,
 Ku nallbani dhe samarxhiu
 Mjeshtri, kallfa e kallajxhiu,
 Krrusen dite e krrusen nate,
 qe te hane buke thate,
 Ku hamalli neper skela

Ngarkon hekur dhe varela,
 Kembe zbathur, grisur, çjerre
 Punon vetem per te tjere.⁴⁷

Where the farmer sets off early
 With his hoe and plough a-toiling,
 Sows and reaps by sun and moonlight,
 Yet, he has no food to live on,
 Where the farrier and saddler
 Day and night stoop o'er their duties
 Just to get a few stale breadcrumbs,
 Where the porter at the dockyards,
 Laden down with iron and barrels,
 Bears his load, barefoot and ragged,
 Always serving other people.⁴⁸

These concluding stanzas invert the conventions of socialist-realist art. While still focusing on workers—farmers, farriers and saddlers—laboring at traditional crafts, Malëshova's workers are deeply oppressed. Instead of a typical poem praising the worker, he presents a dystopian vision of Albanians suffering under oppression, and the poem's cartography proves vital for understanding this shift. Trebeshina, Korça and the other cities mentioned in the first two sections all lie inside Albania proper. There, Albanians can live happy and fulfilling lives. But those in the cities mentioned in the last stanza, Skopje and Janina, both of which had significant Albanian populations but which were outside Albanian administrative control (in Greece and Macedonian Yugoslavia), “suffer” and, rather than farm as free men, “live in serfdom.” This leads Malëshova to conclude with a call to arms which echoes those of his revolutionary models, Pasha and Cajupi:

Une e dua Shqiperine
 Qe nga Shkupi e Janine,
 Ku nje popull derezi
 Heq e vuan roberi
 Po ka shpirtin luftetar.
 Une e dua Shqiperine
 Si shqiptar e bir shqiptar.⁴⁹

Yes, I love my land, Albania
 Right from Skopje to Janina,

Where its people in misfortune
 Suffer, live their lives in serfdom,
 Yet they have a fighting spirit -
 This is how I love my country,
 Like a revolutionary.⁵⁰

Malëshova's "Poeti rebel/Rebel Poet" (1935) is even more explicit in both its call to revolution and its use of Pasha and Fishta as poetic models. After describing how he has been made an outlaw and fugitive for his nationalist work, he concludes by issuing a summons to battle reminiscent of the gathering of soldiers in Fishta's *Highland Lute*:

Anëmbanë Shqipëria
 ...Le të mblidhet
 Nër pallate tirania
 ...Le të dridhet⁵¹

Let our country's people gather
 everywhere,
 Let the tyrant tremble, quiver
 in his hall.⁵²

He writes in the final section of the poem, then lists, from south to north, the cities, regions, rivers and mountains of Albania who will join him in his struggle: Korça; Devoll; Kolonja; Opar; Vlora river; Gjoleka; Kurvelesh; Chameria; Mount Tomorr; Shkumbin river; Berat; Tirana; Elbasan; Mat; Luma and Dibra; Shkodra; Kosova; Krasniqi; Bajram Curri; and Tetovë. The list of names leads to the final few lines, which begins with the same call to arms which preceded it:

Anëmbanë Shqipëria
 ...Le të mblidhet
 Nër pallate tirania
 ...Le të dridhet.
 Vjershë o vjershë, shko si bombë
 ...Me tërbim
 Shko përhapu si flamur,
 ...Si kushtrim.⁵³

Let our country's people gather
 ...everywhere,

Let the tyrant tremble, quiver
 ...in his hall.
 Verse, my verse, fly off in fury
 ...like a bomb,
 Go and furl out like a war cry,
 ...like a flag.⁵⁴

Like Fishta, Malëshova lists the place names of the cities gathering for revolution. And like Fishta's call, the place names Malëshova uses cover the entire length of Albania and Kosovo from Korça in the south to Kosovo in the north. These place names encompass almost the entirety of Greater Albania. Malëshova also builds upon both Fishta and Pasha, moreover, by including the physical features of the land: its rivers and mountains, creating an autochthonous synergy between the natural environment and the people living there.

IV.

While Albania regained its independence after the defeat of the Italians in WWII, the dream of a Greater Albania which had motivated the founders of the Rilindja movement were all but dashed by the consolidation of territory in Yugoslavia and Greece.⁵⁵ Over the next 50 years of Yugoslavian rule over the majority Albanian province of Kosovo, Kosovar Albanians were virtually isolated from their southern Albanian neighbors due to Albania's policy of sealed borders. Yet the idea of an independent Kosovo never died, and these ideas found their expression in Albanian and Kosovar poetry such that the geographic focus which had guided earlier Albanian Rilindja and WWII poets again became a favored means of expressing a longing for an independent Kosovo. An analysis of such poetry for the Kosovar independence struggle shows the contemporary legacy of Albanian modernism and its revolutionary aesthetics and politics.

One such poet is Xhevahir Spahiu, an Albanian poet whose work often focuses on the violence in Albanian history and the necessity for independence as a solution to it.⁵⁶ Born in 1945, Spahiu grew up in the period following Kosovo's separation from Albania. Spahiu addresses this division in his poem "Kosova":

Më pyetën fshatarët e mi për Kosovën.

Drini si Osumi.
 Sharri si Tomorri,
 Atje, si këtu, fjala.

Ka vetëm një ndryshim të vogël:
 Prangat.

The peasants in my part of the country asked about Kosova.

River Drin, River Osum,
 Mount Sharr, Mount Tomorr,
 Here and there the same words spoken.
 One difference is certain:
 The shackles.⁵⁷

In this poem, Spahiu unites Albania and Kosovo based on geographical features. The River Osum is in Albania, while the Drin flows through Kosovo as well as Albania. Mount Sharr is a mountain range in Kosovo, while Mount Tomorr is the tallest peak in Albania. Spahiu makes a geographic connection between Albanian and Kosovo as well as a linguistic and cultural one: “The same words are spoken.” But Spahiu also points out the great difference: in 1994 when Spahiu composed “Kosova,” the Albanians in Albania were living in a free and nascent democracy under their own rule; Albanians in Kosovo, however, remained under Serbian occupation.⁵⁸

Agim Vinca, an ethnic Albanian who was born in Macedonia but studied and taught in Prishtina (until he was fired and replaced by the Serbian government in 1991), is another poet who uses place names to establish the Albanian identity of Serbian-controlled Kosovo. In his poem “Albanian Rhapsodies,” he asserts the unity of Greater Albania by discussing the flow of two branches of the region’s main river, the Drin. In the first couplet of each of the first four quatrains, the poet questions an unidentified interlocutor’s knowledge about their course:

Keni qenë te burimi i Drinit të Zi,
 në Shën Naum, në Jug?
 ...
 Keni qenë te burimi i Drinit të Bardhë,
 në Bjeshkët e Nemuna, mes shkëmbinjsh?

...

Keni qenë te burimi i Drinit të Zi,
në Ohër, në Strugë?

...

Keni qenë te burimi i Drinit të Bardhë,
në Radavc të Pejës?⁵⁹

Have you been to the source of the Black Drin,
To Saint Naum, in the south?

...

Have you been to the source of the White Drin,
To the Northern Albanian Alps, among the cliffs?

...

Have you been to the source of the Black Drin
To Ohrid, to Struga?

...

Have you been to the source of the White Drin
Radavac, near Pejë?⁶⁰

Both of these rivers have their sources inside Greater Albania—in Kosovo and Western Macedonia—territories controlled at the time by Yugoslavia (the poem was written in 1987). Yet, Vinca's last stanza asserts the Albanian claim to these waters in romantic terms:

E keni parë si rrjedhin lumenjtë tanë
nëpër gryka e male.
I keni dëgjuar meloditë e tyre:
Rapsodi shqiptare.⁶¹

Have you seen how our rivers flow
Through the gorges and the mountains,
Have you heard their melodies:
Albanian rhapsody.⁶²

He describes them, in this stanza, as “our,” that is, Albanian rivers, a point made more strongly by the closing line (from which the poem derives its title): it is not a Yugoslav, Serbian or Macedonian rhapsody, but an Albanian one.

Vinca's 1987 poem “Emrat / The Names” also connects Albanians with the land:

Për fëmijët tanë
 zgjodhëm emra të bukur,
 emra të mire:
 Drilon,
 Shkumbin,
 Gramoz,
 Korab,
 Vjosa,
 Valbona

For our children
 We have chosen beautiful names,
 Good names:
 Drilon,
 Shkumbin,
 Gramoz,
 Korab,
 Vjosa,
 Valbona.⁶³

These are very common first names among Albanians. They are, moreover, the names of Albanian rivers, lakes and mountains: Korab, for example, is the tallest mountain in Albania⁶⁴; Valbona is the name of a river along the Albanian and Montenegrin borders and Vjosa is a river which flows through southern Albania and northern Greece. The poem concludes with a wish which explicitly connects the people to the topography:

Le të rrjedhin pas nesh
 si lumentjë tane.
 Le të ngrihen mbi ne
 si malet tona.

May they flow behind us
 Like our rivers,
 May they rise above us
 Like our mountains.⁶⁵

The poet identifies the Albanian children with the land itself, hoping that they will last as long as the rivers and rise as high as the mountains. In doing so, he asserts the Albanianess of the land.

Thus, in the independence struggles of both Albania at the turn of the twentieth century and Kosovo nearly a century later, poets used the language of place names to forge a unified national identity based on the geography of an imagined Greater Albania. Though Albanians and Kosovars would eventually achieve independence and, to a degree, improved material conditions, recent authors have attempted to capture a more ambivalent attitude about the nationalist project. Flutura Aça's "Në 'Trojet Tona'" / "On Our 'Ancestral Lands,'" for example, is replete with ambiguities, and moments of temporal and geographic indeterminacy:

Nga ai çast
lashë zbrazëtinë e hapave të mi,
si trajtat e një jete të paqenë.

From that moment on,
I left behind me the void of my steps,
The traces of my unlived life.⁶⁶

Aça never clarifies what moment she is talking about, whether it be a moment in her own personal life or a moment of greater national significance. Unlike, for example, Pasha, Fishta and Malëshova, who urge the Albanians to rise up and create a future, Aça's is a nostalgic poem, and, looking backwards, she finds only a 'void' and 'traces' of a past she doesn't know. The second stanza begins on an ambiguous temporal note:

Pas
shkretëtira të bardha pendimi,
relievit të brengës
dhe ti,
dhe unë
s'e kuptojmë
nga fryn stuhia.

Thereafter,
White wastelands of repentance,
Topographies of torment,
Neither you
Nor I
Know
Whence the storm has come.⁶⁷

The certainty of the previous authors turns into ignorance: “Neither you/ Nor I/ Know,” she writes. And, where all the previous authors celebrated the land and their link to it, seeing it as the source of their identity, of even their very names, Aça sees it as a “topography of torment.” The poem’s final stanza complicates her attitude to the land further:

Nga ai cast,
 një shall harrimi m’u bë
 se pështillej të ngrohte netët e vona, por
 sa ftohtë bën në “trojet” tona.

From that moment on,
 They became my scarf of oblivion
 To wrap and warm the late nights, and yet,
 How cold it is on our “ancestral lands.”⁶⁸

The Rilindja poets and the poets of the early twentieth century were products of an optimistic period of nation building. The context of “On Our ‘Ancestral Lands,’” by contrast, was markedly different; the nation-building project had already been realized. In 1997, when Aça wrote the poem, circumstances for Albanians were decidedly more pessimistic. Of the four founding goals of the League of Prizren, the first two, which had hoped for geographic unity of ethnic Albanians in a single nation, had decisively failed, with Albanians scattered throughout all the Balkan countries. Kosovar Albanians, in particular, were suffering in a lopsided war with the Serbs which only ended with military intervention by NATO in 1999. To Aça, it may have also seemed that the last two goals regarding Albanian political institutions and self-rule were failures too as Albania fell into a low-level civil war and the economy collapsed after the implosion of massive pyramid schemes initiated by the political elite. Thus, by 1997 Pasha’s utopian vision of Albania has given way to a different view of Albania as a geographic and symbolic space. The love of the land which had inspired Pasha and his fellow revolutionaries at the turn of the twentieth century had, a century later, turned into Aça’s “topographies of torment.” Yet, in the twenty-first century, more Albanians live under their own self-rule in democratic states integrated into the larger world and with greater personal liberty, and physical and material security, than they ever have. The initial goals of the League of Prizren seem now fulfilled at least in part,

and their poetic vision of the land as both something highly idealized by the poetry of geography and something very specific in geographic poetry. In so doing, these poets created a unified Albanian national identity out of the far-flung polyglot and multifaith Albanian diaspora community. As importantly, they created a new and modern Albanian literature which became the foundation for a new and modern Albanian poetic and literary tradition. As in all nations, Albanian national identity is constantly evolving to meet new circumstances, and it now falls to a new generation of poets to revise the vision again, to define new goals, if not for expanded terrestrial borders, than for expanded social, cultural and political ones.

NOTES

1. An early version of this essay appeared as “From Bar to Far Preveza: Political Geography and Geographical Poetry in the Albanian and Kosovar Independence Movements” in Gloria Everson, ed., *Perspectives on Space and Place* (Oxford, Interdisciplinary Press, 2013), 3–12.
2. Robert Elsie and Janice Mathie-Heck, *Lightning from the Depths: An Anthology of Albanian Poetry* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2008), 77.
3. Elsie, *Albanian Literature* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 84.
4. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 77.
5. Elsie, *Albanian Literature*, 84.
6. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 77.
7. Elsie, *Albanian Literature*, 85.
8. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 77. Pasha is not just speaking metaphorically. Indeed, Skendi notes that part of the problem with the formation of a Greater Albania was the way the Ottomans classified the region’s inhabitants: “The Ottoman censuses...were based on religion, and all Muslims, whether Albanians, Bosnians, or Turks, fell in one category” (Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, 31).
9. Elsie, *Albanian Literature*, 86.
10. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 77.
11. For the deep background to these events and the historical, cultural and political forces which shaped the emergence of nationalist movements in the Ottoman Balkans, see the opening chapters of Schwandner-Sievers and Fischer, *Albanian Identities* and Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*. For one view on the formation, aims and structure of the league in particular, see Blumi 103ff., who argues that the League, “long seen as the quintessential nationalist moment” was in fact “far from being the collaborative effort of a well-formed ‘nationalist’ movement, factions emerged that resulted in violence directed at each other, the Ottoman state, and only in

- specific cases, the forces of ‘occupying’ armies” (Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 103).
12. Robert Elsie, *History of Albanian Literature* (New York: Eastern European Monographs, 1995), 228. See also George Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874–1913* (New York: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2006), 46ff.
 13. Though the Albanian nationalists did conceive of an independent Greater Albania, theirs was not the only voice in Albanian politics. Noel Malcolm describes three groups: those who wanted to preserve traditional Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, those who wanted to divide Albania along religious lines (which meant, primarily, Catholics agitating for an independent Catholic Albania) and pan-Albanian nationalists. Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 238.
 14. Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 47.
 15. *Ibid.*, 51.
 16. Selçuk Akşin Somel, “Ottoman Islamic Education in the Balkans in the Nineteenth Century,” *Islamic Studies* 36, no. 2/3 (1997): 453.
 17. For a fuller discussion of the League of Prizren, its goals and its aftermath, see Stavro Skendi, “Beginnings of Albanian Nationalist and Autonomous Trends: The Albanian League.” *American Slavic and East European Review* 12, no. 2 (1953): 219–32. For a more recent perspective on the activities of the league in Kosovo, see Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 217–38.
 18. Skendi, “Beginnings,” 220. For the context of the comment, see Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 40.
 19. Jane Sugarman, for example, in her analysis of folk songs from the early nineteenth century, writes: “The ethnic designations evoked in these song texts suggest that most Albanian speakers identified themselves and each other through terms with quite delimited meanings, rather than through any single national designation. Individuals are generally identified as being from a specific town or region, as Gegs and Tosks, or as Muslims...and Christians....Fewer than one-sixth of the historical texts in the collection contain national designations such as ‘Albanians’ (*shqypëtarë*) or ‘Albanian’ (*Shqipëri*)” (424). Blumi agrees, suggesting that while he does not want “to argue that there was no Shqypni conceptually in place,” ethnic terminology was “not meant to constitute an ethnographic assertion about who lived in these areas. The terminology was general, not precise, and certainly did not mean that people living in these areas saw themselves exclusively as Albanians” (Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 92). In this, they follow Hobsbawm: “In what sense, or even how far, ordinary Albanians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw themselves as such, or recognized an affinity with one another, is far from clear” (Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 53,

reprinted in Sugarman, "Imagining the Homeland," 419). See also Neofotistos, "Postsocialism," 884–85 for the roots and current usage of the ethnonym. It is in this context that Vaso Pasha's discourse on the use of this word for the Albanians at the Berlin Congress should be read, for which, see Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 84.

20. Gawrych writes that "the League of Prizren became the symbol of a national awakening for its political dimensions. Its memory would serve as a rallying point for Albanian nationalists in the subsequent three decades" (Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 69). Isa Blumi offers a different perspective, suggesting, in fact, that the significance of these events have been overstated by modern historians:

Historians eager to identify the origins of the requisite "national rebirth" in the Balkans have overinterpreted the events following the imposition of new frontiers in 1878 by constantly associating the ambitions of the actors in strictly ethnonational terms....If we actually put into context each event during the entire 1878–1881 period, it becomes clear that the "resistance" of men and women against the many new borders cannot be interpreted as being driven by collective "nationalist" sentiments (Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 98).

Here and elsewhere in his work, Blumi objects to the nationalist myths which imagine an Albania and an Albanian nationalism sprung fully formed in the late nineteenth century without any larger historical contextualization which accounts for the depths of the Ottoman influence in the early period. In this, Blumi is certainly right, insofar as national myths are, from the political historian's vantage, almost always overblown, and the historical reality is almost always more complicated and multi-faceted than historical narrative, and particularly nationalist historical narrative, can account for. The literary historian, however, looking from a different vantage point and asking different sorts of questions, will naturally see something different. Thus, while it is true that the Albanian elite who participated in the talks and the writers working at the time wanted to preserve Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, their aims and objectives did evolve toward an independent and sovereign nationalism. That is to say, like all revolutionaries, they were loyal subjects up until the moment they weren't. Although we cannot know for sure exactly when the shift from autonomy within the Ottoman Empire to independent national self-determination took shape, such a shift did indeed take place, not only at the macro-level of the national consciousness, but also at the micro-level of the individual Albanian. The League of Prizren was certainly a unifying symbol in that process.

21. Edwin Jacques, *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 1995), 289.

22. For developments in the Albanian alphabet, see Jacques, *The Albanians*, 308ff.
23. Robert Elsie, "Evolution and Revolution in Modern Albanian Literature," *World Literature Today* 65, no. 2 (1991): 257.
24. Gjergj Fishta, *Labuta e Malcis* (Shtypshkronja Françeskane: Shkodra, 1937), vii.
25. Anthony Klançar, "Modern Albanian Literature," *Books Abroad* 16, no. 1 (1942): 22.
26. Elsie, *Albanian Literature*, 72.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. The first translation is Elsie's (*Albanian Literature*, 72), which correctly suggests Frashëri's familiarity with the Western literary tradition dating back to Virgil. Indeed, Frashëri was the first to translate *The Iliad* into Albanian, and Fishta would later produce a translation of his own; the second translation is the literal rendering of the Albanian.
30. Andon Zako Çajupi, *Baba-Tomorri* (Cairo: 1902).
31. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 88.
32. Çajupi, *Baba-Tomorri*.
33. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 89.
34. The opening lines of the poem, with its evocation of a once-glorious Albania brought low by brutal Ottoman subjugation also echoes Pasha's poem, thus markedly putting *The Highland Lute* as a successor in this nationalist-independence genre.
35. Fishta, *Labuta e Malcis*, 9.6. All translations from Elsie, *The Highland Lute*, which uses an interlinear method and thus has the same line references as the original.
36. See Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 49ff., and Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 102–5, for an account of the following events. Gawrych suggests that Mehmed Ali Pasha was an ill-advised choice, and that "from the Albanian perspective, Mehmed Ali already had two strikes against him. He had represented the Ottoman Empire at the Berlin conference, and he had commanded a military force that had suppressed an Albanian revolt seven years earlier" (Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 49). Blumi, however, paints a more favorable depiction of him, suggesting that he was "the one Ottoman official who had knowledge of local conditions and hence some sympathy for the inhabitants of the Malësi. Tragically for him, he was asked to support policies that he had wholly opposed while a delegate at the Berlin Congress" (Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 104).
37. Fishta, *Labuta e Malcis*, 10.79.
38. Fishta, *Labuta e Malcis*, 10.106. The Albanians would rise up in Gjakova and kill not only Mehmet ali Pasha and his Turkish Guards, but also

- Abdullah Pasha Dreni, a prominent local Albanian who had hosted him (Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, 57). For another account, cf. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 223.
39. Fishta, *Lahuta e Malcis*, 10.159.
 40. *Ibid.*, 10.171.
 41. The larger Balkan context of these events is thoroughly examined in Yavuz and Blumi, *War and Nationalism*.
 42. Malëshova was banned from contact with anyone for the last 25 years of his life, with the sole exception of soccer games with local children. For the cruel circumstances of his internal exile, see Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 126.
 43. Sejfulla Malëshova, *Vjersha* (Tirana: 1945), 18.
 44. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning* 127.
 45. Malëshova, *Vjersha*, 18.
 46. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 127.
 47. Malëshova, *Vjersha*, 19.
 48. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 127.
 49. Malëshova, *Vjersha*, 19.
 50. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 127.
 51. Malëshova, *Vjersha*, 13–16.
 52. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 129.
 53. Malëshova, *Vjersha*, 16.
 54. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 129.
 55. The fading of the idea of Greater Albania is eloquently rendered in verse by the Albanian poet Visar Zhiti in “My Father’s Poem.” Zhiti describes his father’s poem as “Fletë të verdha/nga të luftës më të fundit botërore”/“Yellowing pages/From the last World War,” which the Communists wanted to burn after WWII. On it he finds the lines “Kujto Çamërinë, Kosovën e shkretë,/Ëndërruan larine, u bënë ëndërr vetë.”/“Forget not Çameria and hapless Kosova,/They dreamt of freedom, became a dream themselves.” Visar Zhiti, *The Condemned Apple: Selected Poetry*, trans. Robert Elsie (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2005), 267–9. Çameria is the Albanian term for that portion of Greater Albania lost to Greece, while Kosova is the northern portion of Greater Albania lost to Yugoslavia. Thus, they dreamt of freedom, that is, their own independence, but now they have become a dream, that is, their independence and unification with Albania is a dream, something unreachable.
 56. See, for example his poems “History” (Elsie, *Elusive Eagle*, 128) and “Our History” (Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 214).
 57. Robert Elsie, ed., *An Elusive Eagle Soars: Anthology of Modern Albanian Poetry* (Boston: Forest Books, 1993), 214.

58. It is for poems like these that, in his review of Spahiu's 1991 "Kohë e Krisur" ("Mad Age"), Robert Elsie writes that one of Spahiu's poetic subjects is "passionate verse on the martyrdom of Kosova, a tragedy in the making which gnaws at the spirit of Albanians on both sides of the Yugoslav border" (Elsie 1992, 385). Elsie wrote this almost a decade before the Kosovo War, which saw even more violence perpetrated against the Albanians in the former Yugoslavia.
59. *Ajim Vinca, Arna dhe ëndrra* (Rilindja: Prishtina, 1987), 12.
60. Elsie, *Elusive Eagle*, 138.
61. *Vinca, Arna dhe ëndrra*, 12.
62. Elsie, *Elusive Eagle*, 138.
63. *Ibid*, 141.
64. And the tallest mountain in Macedonia as well: it forms the border between the two countries.
65. *Ibid*, 141.
66. Elsie and Mathie-Heck, *Lightning*, 252.
67. *Ibid*.
68. *Ibid*. The word Elsie translates as "ancestral lands," "trojet" (a word marked by quotes in the original), is used in Albanian to refer to those lands in which Albanians live and Albanian is spoken. The quotation marks around "trojet" call into question the very notion of ancestry, a reading enhanced by the unspecified time to which the poem repeatedly looks back: its "traces of un-lived life," its questioning of "where did we vanish/who are no longer" and its invocation of "repentance," a looking back on past sins. The Albanian "trojet," however, contains not only this notion of "ancestry" but also those places where Albanians still live in the present.

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Gender Dystopia on the Kibbutz: From Plato to Marx

Rob Baum

Batya Gur's police detective novel *Murder on a Kibbutz: A Communal Case* (1994) reflects a lost world—founded, like Plato's *Republic*, on a myth of innocence—in which the murder of a kibbutz member by another member becomes conceivable.¹ Danger from outside the kibbutz is a founding rationale for the Mediterranean kibbutz *utopia*, but murder from within is not anticipated. Written in 1991, Gur's postmodern vision of one of the first *kibbutzim* (in the plural)² reveals how much Israeli society has changed since the days of the modernist pioneers.

Murder on a Kibbutz targets the kibbutzim and the ideological changes initiated by economic sufficiency. Gur's novel, and particularly her position that the kibbutz operates like one big family, inspires this exploration of the kibbutz as an early twentieth-century attempt to create a new society. Kibbutz idealism is a combination of Socialist social roles and a Communist work ethic. Like other utopic models, the kibbutz is superlative in some respects—such as the ability

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to provide water, food and protection to a large, unrelated group of people—and deficient in others—notably, in regards to gender hierarchy.³ Kibbutzim claimed an *ethos* of gender equality, yet invariably relegated women to the kitchen, laundry, infirmary, and children’s house, while sending men to tend fields, livestock, buildings, and arsenal. As a modernist social experiment in equality, it was therefore flawed in very basic ways.

The present investigation of gender dystopia in the traditional kibbutz draws from the available socio-political and philosophical scholarship, journalistic accounts of kibbutz events, and these novels. This is an attempt to fairly illustrate the intellectual ambitions and achievements of the Israeli kibbutz without ignoring its ultimate failure to bring about gender equity. In support of this take on gender hierarchy, Meir Shalev’s *The Blue Mountain* (2001) exposes a seedier view of the kibbutz family. The kibbutz doctrine leading unrelated individuals into lifelong political pacts is equated with the love of a single woman. Perhaps this is noble in the context of the romance novel, but in the grim and brutal environment of early kibbutz realities, such relationships had no *political* place: in Shalev’s novel the female founder of the kibbutz is politically rather than romantically allocated to one of the founding males. As in Gur’s novel, the rigour of kibbutz labour is venerated as a higher ideal, but the actors unconsciously bow to the cult of masculinity.⁴ These novels accord with one of the greatest themes of Modernist literature: the “sense of nihilistic disorder behind the ordered surface of life and reality;”⁵ in their focus on the alienation of *kibbutz* life, they attest to a particularly Mediterranean ideal, borne of Plato’s pedagogical “novel” *The Republic*. The founders of Gur’s fictional kibbutz are destroyed by the burden of radical principles in a tamer landscape; the founders of Shalev’s fictional kibbutz, along with their founding principles, are literally buried in a new capitalist venture. The ironies of both novels provide a more substantial (and harsher) view of the kibbutz experiment, from the perspective of the postmodern period.

THE FOUNDING OF THE KIBBUTZ

The kibbutz reflects a nationalist ideal. Prior to the formation of the kibbutz, the prototypical *kvutzah* emerged. Even after the kibbutz became the social norm, the *kvutzah* continued to exist as a smaller collective. (The Hebrew nouns *kvutzah* and *kibbutz* share a root signifying “group”; the *kvutzah* precedes the *kibbutz* as an ideological formation.) *Kvutzot*

(in the plural) adopted a Socialist and *anti-familial* structure detrimental to the needs of couples and antagonistic towards women. *Kibbutzim* developed and supported these double standards through their implementation and support of ideological achievements such as communal sleeping for children. While intending to bond small children to their age mates, this policy (as demonstrated by Gur, Shalev, Tal, *et al.*) was also responsible for traumatizing entire generations of kibbutz children,⁶ who cried nightly for their birth parents and were often psychologically unsuited to the barracks-like “children’s house” with its rotating nursemaids, house mothers, or monitors. This trauma—alongside the influence of the Holocaust on three generations of survivors, and daily terrorism mounted against Palestinian (now Israeli) Jews by their neighbours—defines modern Israel; it is part of the language of daily Jewish (as well as non-Jewish) life. It also indicates the slow erosion of the Zionist ideal shown in these novels as the “new society” of communal resources shares the psychology of theft, extortion, and murder found outside the sheltered kibbutz existence.

A long debate continues about the value of the kibbutz and its comparative accomplishments.⁷ Faced with the alternative of traditional nuclear family life in the desert, a solitary existence, readers can understand the motivations of kibbutz elders who founded these living collectives. There is much to commend the *kibbutzim*, particularly the opportunities available in communal living for eco-politics, shared agriculture, collective parenting, and group defence. Yet the early kibbutz structure appears to have been largely dystopic for women and children. The kibbutz essentially replicated the patriarchal and masculine hierarchies (Baum 2006a, b; Connell 1995) common throughout Israel and much of the world, while additionally placing demands on women for hard physical labour; it thus simultaneously circumvented and obstructed the traditional mother–infant dyad, or primary bonding experience of mother and child (Winnicott 1964; Klein 1984). While succeeding in its mission to shelter, nourish, defend, and educate its members, the kibbutz became a gender dystopia for women, children, and some men.

The *vekhovtsy*, a group of Russian Modernists named for a symposium entitled *Vekhi* (*Landmarks*), are indicative of a particular ideological trend of the intelligentsia in this period:

Ashamed of the intelligentsia’s part in the abortive revolution of 1905 and in the struggle that led up to it, [the *vekhovtsy*] sought to efface their guilt and repent of what they considered their own and their predecessors’ youthful

follies....Ideologically they were concerned to indict the belief that man can control and transform his environment, the belief which offers radical solutions to intractable problems and defies or oversteps the limits of caution... the belief in...the heroic deed, the decisive action for the deep, slow, patient, interminable endeavour....They appealed to their readers to jettison the great utopia of the radical intelligentsia, the starry-eyed unsound posture, the revolutionary dream as if Russia could have been cured of revolution.⁸

The kibbutz movement assumed a far more radical stand, defined by heroism and transformation—the shame of the *vekhovtsy*. The romance of the agricultural arose in the early 1900s (not only in Palestine): in this fervour the malarial swamps of Jezreel were drained in order to create more arable land. Following the extraordinary industry of the pioneers, the successive generation showed an even greater need to *reclaim* “wasted” land that had actually been wasted by its previous claimants.⁹ In keeping with Socialist philosophy, religious beginnings were relegated to the background or swept away entirely in the social imperative of survival. Since that time the kibbutzim, indeed the kibbutz movement, has seemed a sociological experiment in conformity, anti-religiosity, and anti-intellectualism, as well as an example of an ideological prison.

The underlying idea of the kibbutz was a global and revolutionary phenomenon flourishing across the world.¹⁰ Although modern communes are notionally about “free love” or the loosening of sexual mores in favour of more liberal, individualistic, and personal enjoyment, many communes fundamentally reject certain forms of sexual congress, such as those between couples (especially when bound by romantic love). Citing Freud, Michael Tratner notes: “(T)wo people declaring they are in love ‘are making a demonstration against the herd instinct, the group feeling.’”¹¹ In the USA as late as the 1990s the communal—and communally sexual—system often proved to be bound in patriarchy, with an elder male in charge of and with greater access to all (young) women, and an onus as well as a capacity for women to have sex with more male partners and with greater frequency than they might desire.¹² Each commune, every kibbutz, has a structure of its own (like any family) and while it adheres to some aspects of other families’ rules and social norms it follows its own, particular customs.

This investigation moves back and forth between the non-fictional kibbutz experiment found in archival and experiential sources, and the fictional yet tightly researched kibbutzim of Gur’s and Shalev’s novels. The kibbutz founders in these novels are, as both authors make clear, equally

founders of the social ills they describe. Batya Gur's work will be explored first, as it exhibits the more traditional values of the *kvutza*, and thus guides discussion of the original politics and how they governed gender as well as sexuality. Meir Shalev's work will be examined later in the context of *utopiae* stemming from Plato, or the fundamental *mythos* of the kibbutzim.

Gur's kibbutz is exemplary as a traditional rather than a progressive kibbutz. Developed from the *kvutza*, the architecture demonstrates seminal ideas of equality and work as destiny. Adult rooms are small and intended for sleep. There is a single large dining room for all meals and a regular central forum, or *sicha* (literally, conversation). Here kibbutz decision-making occurs. Within the single children's house all kibbutz children sleep, regardless of their parents or the significance of their parents' roles on the kibbutz: all members are meant to be equal. In part because this fictional kibbutz has not expended funds on updating its physical or social structure, it has survived an economic downturn that affected nearly every other kibbutz in the country. Its elders naturally point to this survival as a mark of its ideological success.¹³

BATYA GUR AND THE ISRAELI DETECTIVE NOVEL

All Gur's books are set in Jerusalem, where Gur lived and worked for 20 years. Before her death in 2005 (we met in Italy in 2004), Gur taught at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She tackles big institutions and major ethical considerations: for example, in *Literary Murder: A Critical Case*, she takes on the academy of higher education; in *Murder Duet*, she exposes the world of professional musicianship; in *Saturday Morning Murder: A Psychoanalytic Case*, Gur investigates psychoanalysis. In *Murder on a Kibbutz: A Communal Case*, her target is the failure of the kibbutz to maintain its utopic ideals intact.¹⁴ Gur's own political life illustrates the backdrop of the novel.¹⁵

Gur is extraordinarily popular—her books have been translated into ten or more languages and at least one has been televised—which is an anomaly, especially given the late rise of the detective novel in Israel. Why she is so popular, especially in Germany, is an interesting question. Is it because her writing possesses a crisp energy in its detail, her plots are precisely ordered, and many of her characters are of German origin, transplanted to Israel between the 1920s and 1960s? Or could it be that Germans enjoy the exoticism of such literature, as Germany has no local understanding of modern Jewish life, having systematically pursued its own utopia of a

Judenrein state under Nazi rule? The unfortunate reality of socio-political *utopiae* is that “utopia” is a relative term, with any given utopia favouring those in whose image it was created. The beginnings of the detective novel in Israel, the politics of assassination, and the reasons for the popularity of Gur’s novels are not, however, within the scope of this chapter.¹⁶

Her strongest female kibbutz characters, Osnat and Dvorka, are staunchly political and ideological, and their opposing motives end in murder. Gur capably represents both viewpoints, and although it is eventually clear to which perspective Gur subscribes, the alternate view resonates strongly, embodied by characters endemic and essential to Israeli society. Gur’s characters are not metaphors but credible, complex individuals, people we know and perhaps despise, but must tolerate (or risk becoming murderers ourselves). Her worlds are strenuously researched and meticulously crafted; characters deep, diverse, and idiosyncratic; relationships complex, individual, familial, and perplexing.

Gur creates complete environments in which her chief protagonist, a Jerusalem police detective, is forced to adapt. Detective Inspector Michael Ohayon shows passionate restraint,—a curious mixture in a character, and particularly a Sephardic policeman—a gentle care that draws the reader closer. In Ohayon, Gur evokes the image of an ordinary Israeli in the crucible of work, family, and principles. Of Moroccan parentage, Ohayon has lived in Israel since the age of three, and has risen rapidly in the police to the rank of *balash* (Detective), exciting envy, suspicion, and grudging admiration. He is plagued with the doubts often inherent to *Sephardi* (Jews from Spanish and North African countries), historically marginalized in Israeli society: Ohayon seems eager to deny his origins in the Arabic world, even to himself. Like so many of his generation and occupation, he is divorced; his son Yuval currently serves in a *Nahal* unit in Ramallah (a difficult zone in the country’s centre), which adds to the stress Ohayon already experiences from late hours, bad coffee, and police bureaucracy. In addition, there is the antagonism of the Jerusalem team collected to solve the kibbutz murder. While detectives who have difficulty with operatives from other districts are the stock of police dramas, even the worst among them do not usually resort to the kind of personal, crass insults leveled at Ohayon by Detective Nahari. A more alienated detective would be hard to find, an alienation common to modernist fiction.

Love interests are a staple of hard-boiled detective fiction, in which women are notoriously consumed by male detectives as if rightful payment for their dedication to their work.¹⁷ This tradition is so well embedded

in the genre that the benefit is now also accorded to hard-boiled *female* detectives. The jealousy Ohayon arouses in men who cannot be his superior indicates the degree of his intelligence; the remarks of an old woman who follows him in a mental hospital calling him “handsome” indicates his appeal. Ohayon is apparently handsome enough to awaken the fantasies of female colleagues, students, and old women. Yet the two attractions in *Murder on the Kibbutz* are disparate and awkward: one causes Ohayon to blush, and one emerges with adolescent tenderness as the novel closes. Previously married, Ohayon is in love with a married woman who not only shows no signs of leaving her husband, but also in this novel has withdrawn from their affair. Most compellingly, Ohayon views his own seduction of a young female colleague critically, recognizing in himself the habit of conquest alongside a compulsion to protect: the *vulnerability* of the woman attracts him. This sensitivity marks him as a most unusual man in any country.

Gur’s work exceeds the literary level or sophistication of much detective fiction. The technique of timing, commonly used to generate interest and suspense, is crucial to detective novels, whereas the meting out of clues is perhaps foremost among techniques. Gur employs a strategy of delayed information but without deception, locating delay in the inherent logic or logistics of the textual environment, where it appears natural and eventually desirable. This delay does not generate suspense so much as gratification, briefly delayed to magnify the effect for the reader. A call is placed through the switchboard and the detective begins to speak before it is apparent to whom the call was placed. An interrogation about a third party nearly finishes before a witness (and the reader) realize who is being discussed. Characters speak in a style devoid of literary conceits, and the confusions and slippages of details common to dialogue naturalistically occur, like people turning their backs during a conversation. Exposition comes from within rather than without: the reader is not subjected to weighty set-ups (compare John Grisham and Richard North Patterson) but plunged into the world of the novel’s characters through their own language. Thus in *Kibbutz Murder*, Avigail’s long sleeves, Yankele’s protectiveness, and Dvorka’s familiar face induce curiosity long before they are explained; none of these characteristics is significant to the plot. A great deal more could be said about Gur’s techniques, character development, and careful plotting, but this avid crime novel reader prefers to leave this pleasure to her readers. These novels afford great insights into Israeli culture, themselves deep investigations into a hard-boiled society.

CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL

Gur's novels could not be set in another country, and language is considered one of Israel's strongest unifying factors—more so than age, gender, occupation, or even military group—identifying a person as belonging to a family and culture (micro-society) from outside Israel, and absorbing an immigrant into collective culture (macro-society) within Israel. It is crucial, for example, that Detective Inspector Ohayon speaks Arabic as well as Hebrew, marking him as a marginal minority voice in Israel, a Sephardic and moreover Moroccan Jew, and therefore held inferior to Ashkenazi Jews. Among the multitude of languages and cultures in contemporary Israel, Hebrew constitutes a world in itself, re-marking the speaker as having been “absorbed” into Israeli culture, of having successfully transitioned from an old world to the new. But this new language is also repository for myriad representations, at once sacred relic, proletariat instrument, and ideological affect. This aspect of modernism—the structural separation of what in postmodernism will become conflated, such as culture, language, and style—demarcate the boundaries between the kibbutz as idealized and the eventual reality.

How do we speak to each other about our beliefs? How do we answer each other, except in the language of those beliefs? Faith and ideology drive communication, alliances, and conflicts. The language of culture, continually modified, displaces meaning, destabilizes intention. The language of war governs every conversation about peace. As Allan Pred writes in the essay “Lost Words as Reflections of Lost Worlds,”

As practices and power relations emerge out of one another,
and into one another,
as new practices appear and former practices are discarded or modified,
as power relations are transformed through consensus or struggle,
as new powers of technology are developed
and new powers of technology are implemented,
as migrants arrive with their cultural and biographical baggage,
as the language of particular groups, institutions, occupations and
generations inevitably undergoes shifts and transformations.¹⁸

Pred's poetic commentary on lost worlds is reminiscent of the building of Israel by successive waves of immigrants: each one contributing its own languages, practices, and cultural baggage; each yoked in turn to the

power relations and technologies of the existent society; each transforming into a modern and diverse nation.

In October of 2003, with writer/architect Suad Amiry of Birzeit University,¹⁹ Gur created a two-week political diary. Published in the left-wing Paris weekly *Nouvel Observateur*, the diary includes this distinctive passage:

In the afternoon, a journalist from *Die Tageszeitung*, the German newspaper, comes to see me. She asks whether I could live elsewhere. I shudder at the idea and answer: “No way.” Surprised, she pursues the line of questioning, asking why I don’t retreat to the countryside, far from Jerusalem. I retort that no place in the world is any safer than here. I am unable to explain why I can’t live anywhere else. It’s not so much the idea of homeland, but rather of attachment to people, language, and odors... That’s how it is.”²⁰ (28 October 2003)

This response is frequently heard among Israelis. The sense of belonging *to* this country outweighs the potential of longing *for* this country: it is better to live at home, where every danger is familiar, than in safety anywhere else.

The choice of where and how to live and speak is political, and in Israel there is nothing that is *not* political. Even a walk to the supermarket requires fateful decisions involving what neighbourhoods to pass through and which to avoid—particularly on Shabbat (when by religious decree it is unlawful to drive) but also after a government or terrorist action. There are choices about which people to acknowledge and which to spurn in the market (according to one’s beliefs or provenance), which bottle of wine to buy for Shabbat and which to curse (depending upon one’s feelings about occupied territory), and what language to speak or pretend *not* to speak (depending upon who is present). In the novel, the barest mention is made of the backdrop of the *Intifada*. Although such a stressful period would seem to magnify the tension, this is a good move as the constant conflict and recognizable “types” assure the novel continued relevance. Israel is a nation surrounded by enemies on all sides, as well as within its own borders—a point this novel drives home: the ubiquitous demand for national security generates a civil paranoia (if not schizophrenia) as terrifying as it is inevitable.²¹

And there is the language of the Shoah, an event of such ethical and cultural magnitude that it changed humanity’s notion of genocide,

modernism, and war, while traumatizing four generations (at this writing). The Shoah as a kind of literary character is omnipresent in Israel and its literature, whether eulogized, excused, or examined. Among survivors and their descendants the Holocaust amounts to a religion; Woocher calls it the “Holocaust cult,” citing Elie Wiesel as Head Priest.²² After Germany offered war reparations, or “Restitution” to the fraction of (previously German) Jews who had survived, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion is said to have quipped, “There’s no business like *Shoah* business.” The influence of the Shoah on contemporary Jewish life is visible, especially in the large urban areas to which Jews fled, such as major cities in Israel, New York, and Melbourne. The Shoah remains alive in the language of the founding generation of Gur’s unnamed kibbutz, directing its work habits and policies, especially attitudes towards family, food, and survival.

THE KIBBUTZ COLLECTIVE

Survival is the basis of the kibbutz phenomenon. The kibbutz was formed to provide Palestinian Jews with a communal structure from which to combat the natural environment. Once the land was fertile (attested to in *Torah* and other ancient texts), but the Romans cut down the forests in order to build their fleet. In a desperate necessity to create agriculture where only desert and swamp met the eye, the early settlers found and drained swamplands—an ecological mistake still being righted—and irrigated deserts—a display of arrogance that granted the region its economic viability, making it increasingly desirable to other nations. The pioneers also imposed an ideology of the Far East upon the social architecture, and a politics of containment. Sociologist Marilyn Safir explains that:

The kibbutz was a dream of Eastern European ghetto youth. They believed that a socialist communal society would free and empower the ghetto Jew. Banding together in Zionist groups that prepared young people to return to their homeland to create communal utopias, they aspired to establish a new society in the Land of Israel in which there would be social equality devoid of exploitation...production was collectivised, and members received goods and services according to their needs rather than according to individual productivity. The welfare of the group took precedent over the welfare of any individual. Marriage and family were rejected as reactionary, as the cornerstone of traditional economic structure and also as a threat to group solidarity; family ties were also rejected.²³

Establishment of the *kibbutz* followed the prototype of the *kvutza*,²⁴ a communal social experiment in the early 1900s in which marriage and intimate relationships were so patently discouraged that a *primus*, or third party²⁵ (Palgi 261), was installed in the houses of coupled members. Kibbutzim introduced a relative comfort: the possibility to band resources and bond families, increase the population through procreation (impossible in the early days of the settlement),²⁶ and recreate the lost sense of tribes in the desert. It was not a simple construct: provisions had to be made for sleeping, eating, child-rearing and schooling, care for the ill, maintenance of equipment, absorption of new members and their worldly possessions, and security from outside threats—all communally handled. Above all stood the notion of labour: productive communal labour was the core of kibbutz pursuits, an economy from which all members could prosper—one could say, be *redeemed*. As Marx wrote in 1844, “The transcendence of private property is therefore the complete *emancipation* of all human senses and attributes...”²⁷ Thus was born the myth of one big happy family, the “kibbutz family”—a structure shattered, in Gur’s novel, by a member’s murder.

How did the changing focus and economy of Israel make such a murder (in this case fictive) possible and symbolically expedient? In the concept of a “body politic,” debated for so many years as homologous to the “natural body” (and therefore the study of physicians as well as philosophers), it has been posited that the body (in both senses) is ruled by the heart (Harvey), the mind (Descartes), the foetal heart (Harrington), or the (mechanistic) circulation of the blood (Hobbes). Even Werner Stark, an opponent of “organicism,” or organistic social theory, opines:

One is constantly tempted to express them [aspects of society] in organismic similes: phrases like “one sector limps behind” or “one sector is out of joint with the rest” tend to form themselves, as of their own volition, in one’s mind, and try to push themselves into, and to flow out of, one’s pen. This alone shows that organicism has a deep root, and that its basic metaphor is not absurd, even if its votaries make it so.²⁸

Alan Watts suggests an origin for the analogy:

Our whole knowledge of the world is, in one sense, self-knowledge. For knowing is a translation of external events into bodily processes, and especially states of the nervous system and the brain: we know the world *in terms* of the body, and in accordance with its structure.²⁹

While the substantive analogy of society to the human body may have surrendered its currency, the formal analogy³⁰ of the kibbutz to human anatomy may be useful, particularly as the kibbutz is likened to family, not community. The executive or steering committee (commonly including a secretariat, treasurer, president, or “head”) attempts to handle the economic wellbeing of the collective, anticipating and meeting social dangers and requirements—analogue to the human head. Members are meant to provide physical labour, consume its realized product, bear children, and enjoy what the kibbutz provides—but sometimes demonstrate a materialistic appetite inconsistent with the “body’s” own achievements or output.

The traditional kibbutz transparently follows socialist governance, in which families were originally irrelevant, but that is only true in examination of the kibbutz as a collective economic structure. This collective entity is also a communal body or organism comprised of individuals whose needs and desires have historically been subjugated for the greater good of the kibbutz. As Marx put it:

The higher development of society is thus only achieved by a historical process during which individuals are sacrificed, for the interests of the species in the human kingdom, as in the animal and plant kingdoms.³¹

This Darwinist language demonstrates the scientism prevailing in philosophy at the *fin de siècle*, and throughout the Modernist period. The struggle for supremacy of science over belief marks the kibbutz experiment.³²

What was possible in the days of the founding generations, pioneering individuals who transformed desert into arable and productive land, is not even conceivable now. Many kibbutzim today prosper largely from the work (often in high-tech, or computers technology) of a few individuals on the kibbutz, and not a result of the collective labour of members working in internal kibbutz industry. This situation obviously introduces an imbalance in which not all members are equally productive (though productive according to their means). Simultaneously, the notion of physical labour is denigrated; thus mundane activities typical of *all* living arrangements, communal or individual (cooking, cleaning, childcare, sick care) are avoided. In Marx’s words,

This *material*, immediately *sensuous* private property is the material sensuous expression of estranged human life. Its movement—production and consumption—is the *sensuous* revelation of the movement of all production

hitherto, i.e., the realization or the reality of man. Religion, family, state, law, morality, science, art, etc., are only *particular* modes of production, and fall under its general law. The positive *transcendence* of private property as the appropriation of *human life* is, therefore, the positive transcendence of all estrangement...the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his *human*, i.e., *social mode* of existence...(E)conomic estrangement is that of *real life*.³³

The understanding is that within capitalistic society internal structures eventually collapse as a result of materialistic considerations. This has been visible in *kibbutzim* that have introduced post/modern benefits and permitted autonomy not initially available. The attempt to further modernize the *kibbutzim* appears to have led to their disintegration.

Kibbutzim were an invention of new settlers (generally from Europe and particularly the Eastern bloc)³⁴ yet formally based on nineteenth-century Jewish political philosophy. They responded in particular to such influential tracts as Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892) and Theodor Herzl's *Das Neue Ghetto* (1894), which decried the urbanization, isolation, and alienation of modern man through that same urbanization. Ironically, the allure of urbanization is another central theme of Modernism,³⁵ and the trope of the emasculation of Jews is indelibly linked to the allure of the city, in which the Jew has lost his way to an idealized nature. Herzl's later *The Jewish State* (1895), which is generally believed to underpin construction of the modern state of Israel, develops from these renunciations of Jewish intellectualism and religious culture.

The new region of *Palestina* or Palestine, which predated the 1948 establishment of a Jewish nation, was perceived as a fresh slate on which the lives of a new people might be written. Even the British occupation or "Mandate" that succeeded Ottoman rule did not dissuade Jewish immigration from all parts of the world, though much of it was clandestine and extremely dangerous. In the new country, many European traditions were abolished, particularly those pertaining to class, status, and education, and codes implemented regulating behaviour, affect, and difference in order to fit the collective melting pot. To this day one can see these effects in the everyday dress and behaviour of professionals, including academics, who wear the "work uniform" of short pants and biblical-style sandals favoured by kibbutz members. One hears it in the language spoken by Israelis, which must not be ostentatious; ceremonies developed around children's pageantry rather than adult achievements; museums of

the pioneer, settler, and resistance member (which precede construction of other archives); lines in public buildings (where no special consideration is given to elders—or, for that matter, to who came first); hospitals (where even those paying for private rooms are placed with others for “company”); security at airports, in new homes or neighbourhood shelters, upon entrance at public buildings; and Zionism in general. Even the custom adopted by some secular Israelis of eschewing religious rituals held in the synagogue (because of the political hegemony of the religious minority) but collecting *outside* synagogue stems from a need for *havereh* (comradeship).

MEIR SHALEV AND THE KIBBUTZ AS MAGICAL REALISM

The narrator of Meir Shalev’s novel *The Blue Mountain* is a boy, 15 years old at the beginning of the novel, constructed as “the child” of his Grandfather. The details of his own birth, name, childhood, dreams, and desires, come late in the novel, just as the personal wants of kibbutz members are meant to do, subservient to the collective, politically based “family.” He is raised on one of the original kibbutzim by one of its four founders, Baruch, whose name means “blessing” in English; he is thus the blessing of the entire community. But he is an oddity on the kibbutz and, as such, an unreliable narrator: a boy who likes to be alone, sneaks about the kibbutz, sees and hears what is not meant for him, and ends up alone—the worst punishment anyone can imagine in the Israeli and especially the collective context. He is, moreover, the ultimate *bourgeois* of the kibbutz, both caretaker and undertaker, disillusioned with the past. In short, he is the postmodern reality of Israel, transplanted (back) into his Grandfather’s grove.

Baruch is more a metaphor than a man, more a character in a novel than an actor in the world, as he discovers late in adulthood after the death of his beloved Grandfather: as the old man dies, Baruch realizes with startling clarity that his every action, perhaps every impulse, has been choreographed by his Grandfather, written into being by the supreme will of a man who in his own time was already a legend. Baruch belatedly understands that Grandfather was not only a godlike being in his lifetime but also after death, and he himself is only a servant who continues to “carry” the old man wherever he wants to go, including under the ground and “back” to the movement of the Second Aliyah. The descent under Israel darkly contrasts with the notion of a risen people.

One of the four original Founders of the kibbutz, Grandfather's counsel is sought on every matter related to agriculture, cultivation, and husbandry—the growth of a new world. The kibbutz developed from the love of three men—Grandfather Mirkin, Mandolin Tsirkin, and Eliezer Liberson—for Feyge Levin, a love so intense and seminal that they named their band of four the Feyge Levin Workingman's Circle. These are all people of the Second Aliyah, a beginning and a destination that is fundamental to their politics and the book's core. In keeping with a Communist doctrine, everything is communally held; everyone works for each other. They even hold a lottery to determine how to share their central possession:

That year the first Jewish settlers pitched their tents in the Valley of Jezreel. The Feyge Levin Workingman's Circle decided that "Comrade Mirkin and Comrade Levin should enter the state of matrimony". Together with the bee-keeper Hayyim Margulis and his sweetheart Tonya from Minsk, who was later to fall in love with Rilov, the future pedagogue of Ya'akov Pinness, and his pregnant wife Leah, who would die that same year, they formed the first group to scour the Valley for purchasable farmland, "to search out the country" as Pinness put it biblically. Thus they became the founding fathers of the village.³⁶

Thus, even in love, Grandfather has won out. But as Feyge's grandson will later attest, "Mirkin...only loved her in partnership with Eliezer Liberson and Mandolin Tsirkin and never forgot his Crimean love even on the day he brought Feyge to his tent"³⁷

Grandfather's groves are unrivalled; his methods are studied and copied. His and Feyge's child is the firstborn of the kibbutz, the kibbutz's child: "Feyge carried the child of the whole village in her womb."³⁸ The child's name is Avraham, the original Jew and first Father. But this too is debatable in the *kvutzah's* politics:

The pioneers sat up singing all night, and in the morning Rilov [the Watchman] and Tsirkin reappeared, having run all the way back. [They had commandeered a train to take Feyge to the hospital, but in the excitement left her behind: she gave birth in the fields.] Rilov did not even apologise. After sipping some water, he demanded a general meeting to decide what the child should be called. "He's already been given a name by his mother," he was told. "It's Avraham, after her father." Eliezer Liberson muttered something about "comrades taking impermissible liberties" and even wrote

in the village newsletter that “the child” is as much ours as hers’, but there was nothing he could do about it.³⁹

Avraham is depicted as a strangely biblical entity, a child who says nothing until faced with a Jezebel (in this context, a beautiful capitalist woman from overseas), whereupon he spews forth Davidic poetry that no one understands, like the speech of the Oracle. His son, Baruch, becomes the “blessing” of his Grandfather’s old age, and another odd child. But because this kibbutz is, after all, in Palestine, not on an experimental farm in Europe or Australia, the boy is orphaned early in a terrorist Palestinian (Arab) attack on his parents’ room. His parents are described as united in love: his father Avraham awoke, saved the baby, and threw himself across his wife to shield her from the blast; his mother, still asleep, wrapped her legs around her husband. The baby is scooped out of the ashes like a survivor of the Shoah, and brought up by his Grandfather.

The great Founder of a large and prosperous kibbutz that seems to sit in principled isolation in a vast desert of (in Baruch’s time) modernity, commercialization, and greed, Grandfather is powerful, loving, rational, and stubborn. He is devoted to “the child” with gestures that are at once generous and tyrannical: whenever Baruch opens his mouth (to speak? to question? to refute?) something is put into it—a fresh slice of bread, a tomato with rock salt, a finger full of honey. The benign Grandfather is thus a metaphor for the G-d of Israel, the one who gives and gives to the “chosen” but also takes and takes. Perhaps as a result of this determinism, Baruch (as we eventually discover) listens at doors and at windows; we see him in fields, watching lovers caress, and in the shadows of a house, as husband and wife fight indoors. He is always watching as families eat, make love, hide their secrets, or commit adultery. This makes him an interesting narrator, but not one the reader can trust or even like. There is something sly, almost craven, about Baruch. To make things worse, people know this (nothing can be hidden on a kibbutz): everybody knows that the child, and later the man, spies on the lives of other people. He does not appear to have a life apart from this interminable stealing of others’ moments.

In the end the Grandfather’s proxy or carrier, this great big boy raised on food, history, and the future of the kibbutz, will plow under the fruitful lands to make a testament to the Second Aliyah. The bones of the pioneers will feed the ground they once tilled. It is an ecclesiastical and ironic ending to the romance of agrarian Jews.

But this is fitting as, despite the principles, love, and great joy of the Founders, the land of milk and honey is depicted as a foul place, built on the drained malaria swamps in which German children died. Honey comes from bees, those hierarchical workers who slave (like these Founders) for a common queen. Milk is the produce of cows raped by a single bull; in Hobbesian terms, their calf children live horribly short lives and in their final moments are cruelly abused by the “lorry drivers” who lead them to slaughter. Work is defined as the only true good; thus, the cult of masculinity grows as quickly as the fruits of the field, and those who cannot manage hard labour in those fields are despised. The Watchman cares more for his arsenal than his community, and comrades hunger for their neighbours’ spouses.

PLATONIC IDEAS

Kibbutzim are patently modelled on the *Principia*, or Plato’s *Republic*. Ironically, of the many philosophers who contributed to the ideal of the kibbutz, Plato alone is of Mediterranean origin; the great philosophers customarily cited belong to the contaminated, decadent Europe the Jewish settlers sought to escape. Kibbutzim were perceived as ideal societies and proposed to replace the living systems available in the old country where individuals fought separately for their material needs. Kibbutzim received or settled land as communal property on which “rooms” (member houses) were built and dispensed according to the size of one’s family rather than one’s origins; people coming to live permanently on the kibbutz were expected to tip personal belongings, property, money, and abilities into a common vat, not to profit individually from private gifts but make them available to all (such as the gift of a television from one’s parents); share motor vehicles and all work duties (including kitchen duty and crop picking). The principal belief was that an egalitarian society would only emerge from the abolition of privately held goods. As Freud defines the Communist project in *Civilization and its Discontents*,

The communists believe that they have found the path to deliverance from our evils. According to them, man is wholly good and is well-disposed to his neighbour; but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature. The ownership of private wealth gives the individual power, and with it the temptation to ill-treat his neighbour; while the man who is excluded from possession is bound to rebel in hostility against his oppressor. If private

property were abolished, all wealth held in common, and everyone allowed to share in the enjoyment of it, ill-will and hostility would disappear among men. Since everyone's needs would be satisfied, no one would have any reason to regard another as his enemy; all would willingly undertake the work that was necessary.⁴⁰

Freud goes on:

I have no concern with any economic criticisms of the communist system; I cannot enquire into whether the abolition of private property is expedient or advantageous. But I am able to recognise that the psychological premises on which the system is based are an untenable illusion. In abolishing private property we deprive the human love of aggression of one of its instruments...but we have in no way altered the differences in power and influence which are misused by aggressiveness, nor have we altered anything in its nature. Aggressiveness was not created by property.⁴¹

Principia and *Republic* were ideal in large part because they were conceived as literary and philosophical responses to social and political constructions. The utopian ideal on which the kibbutz is based is a combination of social communism, neo-Classical Jewish philosophy, and Zionism. (Zionism is a form of agricultural pioneerism—one might compare Quakers, Pilgrims, or German Calvinists—as opposed to a form of military evangelism—compare Christians and Muslims.) Apart from the challenge of creating an oasis in the desert, the kibbutz had to survive, economically and bodily, against enemy assault (the British, the Arabs). Thus, continual war defined the structure, management of resources, and decision-making of the kibbutz. As in Plato's *Republic*, this new society was built upon carefully constructed binaries, mythologizing propaganda, and educational metaphor. The kibbutz founders represented the spirit, zeal, and strength of the utopia. Officiating as kibbutz "elders," they were entrusted with teaching, training, moulding, and guiding the younger members. Kibbutz members were in effect their "children," raised to understand, grow, defend, and eventually lead their communities. The *Republic* is notoriously problematic in its proposition of the Myth of Ur, the founding myth on which the new society is based, and the need to dispose of the writers of the myth themselves. That is, as René Girard has pointed out, parricide is a "founding murder."⁴²

Kibbutzim were not written upon a fresh slate, however, but analogous instead to the "magic slate." Freud was fascinated with invention of the

“mystic slate,” a resinous surface on which one could write with a stylus and then erase, leaving the “memory” or “trace” of what had been written.⁴³ Kibbutz members may have few possessions left, but cannot escape memories, never erasable from mind or body, of horrors experienced in Nazi Europe, hardships on the journey to Palestine, and the harshness of new settlement in a dry, unyielding desert. Each choice developed as a resistance to and subversion of what had been endured. The flattening of resources, abilities, and intelligence eradicated the representation of difference for which Jews had been murdered or exiled. The renunciation of private ownership reduced responsibility for any decision, while sharing out the possibility of success and failure. Even surnames, felt to be reminders of the past, were changed to reflect Israeli provenance; in kibbutz writings such as the one Gur cites, *Kehilatenu* (Our Community), names are also abbreviated to defy any individual’s claim to immortality. Even the language of the old country gave way—after a bitter fight over the choice of German or English—to Hebrew, exhumed from its liturgical grave for this secular purpose.⁴⁴

The more provocative and revolutionary ideals of the kibbutzim are precisely those tenets debated on Gur’s fictitious kibbutz in the communal *sicha*, or “conversation”—the term yet another indication of the informality the pioneers adopted, as the *sicha* is the most important decision-making body on every kibbutz. The kibbutz secretary, Osnat, has asked that the kibbutz adopt some of the more “progressive values” of other kibbutzim, and the membership is deliberating two motions: to install a single communal dwelling for its elders, making the elders’ rooms available to kibbutz families; and to send children back to their family rooms at night, dismantling the children’s house where kibbutz children sleep communally under the scrutiny of house mothers. While family sleeping has already been implemented in most other kibbutzim, the issues challenge the traditional economic concerns of this kibbutz, requiring enlarged if not increased family housing, a change in parental work hours, development of communal living strategies for unrelated adults, education and training of *metepelot* (caregivers) for elders (instead of children), possible integration of non-member elders for financial reasons (selling places in the *beit avot*), and so on. The first issue is obviously of severe import for elders (the generation of founders), who foresee themselves discarded in the manner of elders outside the kibbutz. Both issues are significant for Gur’s novel, but the issue of communal childcare affects a larger population.

The idea of communal childcare is visible in many social structures around the world, including in the institution of day care, *kinder*, or the crèche system: it is the perception that one (trained) person can babysit a handful of children as easily as one, and possibly better than a parent. Inherent in the kibbutz formulation of communal childcare are a variety of concepts which are progressive or even radical for their times: that relief from parental demands will ensure longer, more productive work hours among members; this relief permits women sexual and social equality; a trained childcare giver can assume all the roles of a parent; communal sleeping generates a closer bond between children than that of individual children sleeping (alone) among family; therefore, a stronger kibbutz membership develops, with robust social contract and diligent kibbutz defence. The relegation of children to a single children's house also keeps the size and cost of member housing to a minimum: one room per couple. Scholars Nina Richter and Rachel Shazar document, respectively, epidemics effectively contained, and a lower rate of infant mortality in cases of communal sleeping.⁴⁵

Speaking about his award-winning film of kibbutz life, *Children of the Sun*, edited by Ron Goldman, Tal Ran says that

what interested us most was the decision made on the kibbutz to get rid of the nuclear family and create a collective family in its stead, thereby creating a better person, a new person. We decided that the conflict our film would shed light on would be the tension created on the kibbutz between children and their parents, and the tension created years later between the by now grown-up kibbutz children and their own offspring.⁴⁶

Ran, himself a product of the children's house, remarks that while it was not the worst arrangement in the 1940s, he is glad now to see his own daughter sleeping in her own room (in Tel Aviv).

Shalev tackles the question of women's work obliquely, through letters written by Feyege Levin and her brother.

"The girls here," he wrote to his sister, who was then digging irrigation holes in orange groves near Hadera, "are callous and crass and pay no mind to a young man like me who cannot serenade them [like Tsirkin] or sweeten their lives with honey [like Margulis]. They want strong fellows who sing while they work, and I, weak and afflicted as I am, am not well liked by them. How I long for a soft, pure hand, for the fragrance of a muslin dress, for a cup of coffee with little cakes on a white table by a green riverbank... Will my powers

hold out? Have I the mental and physical fortitude to pass the test? I would be happiest going back to Russia or away to America,” he wrote to Feyege, who was then singing away as she crushed stones into gravel near Tiberias.⁴⁷

The young man is reviled for his softness and physical weakness, qualities that are equated with victimization and decadence, the twin epithets of Jews throughout history. Perversely, his sister concurs with the judgement. Although she does not mean to denounce her brother, she too equates hard labour with the important work of the kibbutz:

Levin showed me Grandmother’s answer. “There are other women working here, and they indeed launder and cook for the men as you feared would be my lot. But how happy your little sister is! *She* is a real worker. Tsirkin, Mirkin, and Liberson—I call them by their last names, and they in turn call me Levin and salute me like an officer—all lend a hand in keeping up our tent. Tsirkin, when the spirit moves him, is a most wonderful cook.... Yesterday was Mirkin’s turn to do the laundry. Would you believe that a grown man washed your sister’s underthings?”⁴⁸

It is easy to see the dichotomy in which Feyege lives, and the little attention she pays to the inequity experienced by other women in the village. While *they* work for the men, *she* works for village. Manual labour is romanticized as something attended by song—an art, or a pleasant pastime. Domestic chores are seen as subservient, efforts of the weak and inferior: good for women. While the Feyege Levin’s Workingman’s Circle divides work in seeming equality, this is an extraordinary action not repeated elsewhere in the Jezreel. The rest of the village maintains the strict masculine hierarchies of the old and therefore corrupt world in which women serve men and only the work of men has merit.

Women initially supported communal sleeping in kibbutzim, believing that they would be elevated to the status of men in the kibbutz, but the opposite proved true: *only* women were expected to serve as communal caregivers, provide milk for non-nursing mothers (even to the detriment of their own), and become nurses and teachers; women were permitted to see their children daily for a set, brief period, while men were accorded a half hour (deplored by the character Moishe in Gur’s novel). Women on the kibbutz, moreover, were rated as to their ability to breastfeed (prove themselves “good mothers”) while performing manual labour. When labour laws were successfully introduced, thus granting women a shorter

workday, women were all the more impressed into “natural maternal roles” while fathers and their relationships to their own children were ignored. Caregivers were almost exclusively females,⁴⁹ reifying what has been apparent elsewhere: “Women...[unlike men] are perceived as acquiring their social identity *and* personal individuality solely in the sphere of the private.”⁵⁰ Gur masterfully verbalizes the betrayal experienced in a close community when one of its members is violated. She locates a moment of psychological trauma—the cracking point, when the collective psyche is most vulnerable and the community is under threat of dissolution.

In his “theory of ideology,” Ernest Gellner demonstrates the (Kierkegaardian) “offensiveness” which simultaneously draws one nearer:

Ideologies attract and repel; they do both at once; and, I suspect, they can generally function only if indeed they do both. This seems to me of the essence of the predicament of man-in-face-of-an-ideology: he has cause to be attracted and to be afraid, and has no way of telling *which*.⁵¹

In the early *kibbutzim* murder, if conceivable, might have been kept secret among the membership. The first (known or publicized) social crimes on a kibbutz—that is, Benny Sela’s serial rapes⁵² and youth gang rape—shocked the small country: surely the context of the kibbutz made such crimes impossible! The kibbutz is an extended family, with all the brutal criticism and fierce protectiveness that word implies. A kibbutz member is an *individual in community* in which the social contract of the whole is primary, coming before self or blood relations. Thus the Kibbutz Shomrat rape, in which six teenage boys participated in raping and torturing a 14-year old girl,⁵³ was an attack against the community and a violation of the kibbutz ideal. The actual Kibbutz Shomrat rape destroyed community standards and the kibbutz sense of *itself*.⁵⁴

Examples of communal wounding on a much greater scale include the Shoah, Bosnian rapes, and the Darfurian genocide, horrific events of such magnitude that in their wake, cultural and ethnic identities are deconstructed—another form of murder. The shattering of self, reflected by close community as a communal and social rupture, also generates turbulence in the macro-society.⁵⁵ The violations that occurred on the kibbutzim therefore affected all Israel, casting into doubt the safety of *all* Israelis—possibly even prefiguring the horror of Prime Minister Rabin’s assassination by an Israeli Jew.⁵⁶ Gur’s fictional murder of a kibbutz member concretizes the felt absence of ideology, unification, and communality.

A DYSTOPIA OF WOMEN

Is dystopia too strong a term for what occurred in the kibbutz? Women were the equals of men: working as hard in the fields, making the same “wage” or share in kibbutz membership, and defending the kibbutz from assault. But they were also *women*—the child bearers, nurses, child carers, and teachers. On the traditional kibbutz women were everything female, perhaps, but mothers—women with soothing words and warm arms in the middle of the night—as the communal children’s house precluded mother/infant bonding and dependency on the birth mother, by substituting dependencies on *other women* (such as nursery school teachers and communal caregivers). In the kibbutz, romantic partnerships could result in sexual liaisons and even procreation (necessary, after all, for the continuance of any community). But “family” loyalties were actively discouraged through spatial and economic arrangements, including the separation of children from their birth parents and interference with deep romantic commitments. Members were taken care of, but as ownership was communal they could receive no property, equity, or assets if they left the kibbutz (unless the kibbutz had held assets for them in trust).⁵⁷ Children raised on the kibbutz had no romantic interest in their age-mates and thus no adult interaction, forcing them to seek partners from outside the kibbutz who were willing to return with them—or to leave the kibbutz. Kibbutz children were inclined to psychological problems from those same maternal absences; fear of the dark, the sound of artillery, and some caregivers; and the mandate to deny “personal” needs, including crying for their mothers or themselves.

Developing from the *kvutza*, which actively opposed familial ties, the kibbutzim placed the family at its periphery.⁵⁸ Contemporary postmodern Israel, however, less environmentally embattled, steeped in religious overtones, and indelibly marked by the destruction of European Jews, locates children at its *epicentre*, determined to ensure a happy and care-free childhood for the second and third generation. The postmodern kibbutzim, having accepted materialistic concerns, have moved consistently towards individualistic practices: privately held property and goods, family sleeping, even family cooking and dining. Women have called for the return of their children to their own care, men for the recognition of their parental roles. And in the past few years, the kibbutz has been reincarnated as a combination of pioneers’ collectivist ideology and capitalists’ individualized materialism. Truly this is a postmodern ending to a modern story.

The contemporary kibbutz permits and encourages personal ownership, entrepreneurship, and psychological separation while supporting a “balance between collective responsibility and individual freedom”;⁵⁹ in short, the new kibbutz resembles the older *moshav* without its agricultural focus. The romance of the agrarian Jew, the struggle of the Mediterranean modern, is gone. In this “suburbanized version of [pure socialism],” professional managers run kibbutz services and individuals are paid salaries in accord with the income they generate for the kibbutz. What effect this new, postmodern version of kibbutz life will have upon its children has yet to be seen.

For some time sociological research on kibbutzim focused on structures, equality, and kinships, and avoided the thorny nightmares realized by both Gur’s and Shalev’s characters. This silence verifies the trauma unwittingly visited upon successive generations by the founders, in their quest for a communal utopia. One could say that the emergence, at last, of this voice on behalf of the children heralds the end of an old language—and with it the beginning of another new world.

In his exploration of lost words as signatory of the death of cultures, Allan Pred also provides a wistful ending:

Thus,
to uncover lost worlds, no longer durable meanings and expressions,
to retrieve elements from no longer spoken dialects,
jargons and
slangs,
is to lift the lid from a treasure chest of past social realities,
to reveal fragments shimmering with the reflections of lost worlds of
everyday life.⁶⁰

NOTES

1. Murder by individuals and groups external to the kibbutz constituted part of its founding document: the kibbutz was (and sometimes still is) seen as a community developed to counteract and survive political and religious antagonists. Thus the 2002 murder of five kibbutzim on Kibbutz Metzger—including women and sleeping infants—by an Arab extremist is not unusual. Jeff Jacoby, columnist in *The Boston Globe*, writes: “It is one of the abiding myths of the Arab-Israel conflict that a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza is the key to peace. But if that were true, peace would

- have broken out in 2000, when former Prime Minister Ehud Barak proposed a sovereign Palestinian state comprising all of Gaza, virtually all of the West Bank, and half of Jerusalem. Arafat responded to Barak's offer by launching a new war of terrorism and bloodshed." (Jacoby, "Murder").
2. For consistency and style, the Hebrew plural *kibbutzim* will be used throughout this essay, as will other relevant Hebrew words.
 3. Michal Palgi, "Personal Dimension," in *Calling the Equality Bluff: The Women in Israel*, ed. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1993b); Marilyn P. Safir, "The Effects of Nature or of Nurture on Sex Differences in Intellectual Functioning: Israeli Findings," *Sex Roles*, 14, no. 11/12 (1986).
 4. The masculinity cult is another global phenomenon of the time, and can be traced to Rudolf Laban's dance politics, the Young Democrats and later *Hitler Jugend*, fascist parades, and architectural monumentalism.
 5. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: 1890–1930* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 393.
 6. See Ran Tal and Ron Goldman's documentary on kibbutz life from the first half of the twentieth century, *Children of the Sun*, which won the Wolgin Prize for Best Documentary at the Jerusalem Film Festival in 2006.
 7. Silvie Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Motherhood and Revolution: The Case of Women on Kibbutz, 1910–1948," *Sborashim* 6 (1991); 1992; Michal Palgi, "Motherhood in the Kibbutz" and "Personal Dimension," in *Calling the Equality Bluff: The Women in Israel*, eds. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1993a&b), 1997, 2003.
 8. Eugene Lampert, "Modernism in Russia 1893–1917," in *Modernism: 1890–1930*, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 141–42.
 9. This movement eventually ended in rejection of the same mystique—though perhaps not to the same degree in Israel—in favour of the need to urbanize as well as discredit the methods of agricultural cultivation. Shalev (*The Blue Mountain*) expertly taps this theme in his novel about the idealization of the founding fathers of the Second Aliyah and their subsequent decline, marked by the steady poisoning of their lands, bodies, and relationships.
 10. As a demonstration of the synchronicity of the idea of communal living and child rearing, in 1944 a kibbutz was established in Melbourne, within walking distance of what is now Monash University. In 1951 the small town of Shepparton, locally famous for unusual attributes, developed a communal farm (Metcalf, "Haschshara"). The Bahai people's "garden city" in Haifa could be considered an associated idea, as can models of communes throughout the USA and Europe.

11. Michael Tratner, *Crowd Scenes: Movies and Mass Politics* (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), 9.
12. Robert P. Sutton recalls a similar experiment in Black Bear, established in 1968 in the Californian Siskiyou Mountains, in which private property was abolished and sexual coupling with a single partner discouraged. Robert P. Sutton, *Modern American Communes: A Dictionary* (Ohio: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 16–17. This researcher's own (fortunately short-lived) experience with a commune in San Francisco testifies to the reality of the constraints placed on young women as well as romance. On 14 May 2010, Evan Andrews posted an online site entitled "Top 10 Experimental Towns and Communes." Alongside the Israeli kibbutz, his picks are in India, Scotland, Turin, and six locations in the USA.
13. The kibbutz of Shalev's novel (*The Blue Mountain*) displays the schism between economic boom and decline, as the next generation takes over from the pioneers and either develops new technologies to compete with the later era or suffers the consequences of remaining mired in the romantic past.
14. Batya Gur, *The Saturday Morning Murder: A Psychoanalytic Case*, trans. Dalya Bilu (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Batya Gur, *Literary Murder: A Critical Case*, trans. Dalya Bilu (New York: HarperCollins, 1993); Batya Gur, *HaMerhakh HaNachon: Retzak Musicali* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishers, 1996).
15. Itim, "Writer Batya Gur arrested for insulting border police," *Ha'aretz.com*, <http://www.haaretz.com>. The text states, in part: "A member of the Peace Now movement and literary critic for *Ha'aretz*, one of Israel's three leading newspapers, Gur was arrested in September of 2003 for confronting Jerusalem Border Police. The police had been verbally insulting an elderly Palestinian Arab as Gur walked by. She felt impelled to return to the scene, believing that to ignore it would be tantamount to the Germans' failure to notice Jews being violated in Nazi Germany: 'I'm not a freedom fighter and I'm not politically active,' she said."
16. See, for instance: Harvey E. Goldberg, ed., *Judaism Viewed from Within and Without: Anthropological Studies* (Albany, New York: State U of New York P, 1987); Marc Manganaro, ed. *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork To Text* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1990); Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1989).
17. This trope is so standardized in male crime fiction (Phillip Marlowe, Ian Fleming, Jeffrey Deaver, et al.) that the *exception* is notable, such as the "yellow-eyed" Travis McGee, who does *not* bed every woman who throws herself his way.

18. Allan Pred, "Lost Words as Reflections of Lost Worlds," in *A Ground for Common Sense*, eds. Reginald G. Golledge et. al. (Goleta: Santa Barbara Geographical Press, 1988), 144.
19. Birzeit University is a Palestinian Arab university, marginalized in the Israeli university system and continually at risk due to its location and population.
20. Batya Gur and Suad Amiry, [Diary], *Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), October 28, 2003.
21. For an interesting postmodern account of the terrors Israelis face, see David Pryce-Jones, "No Qualms as Israeli Moves on Evil Hamas," *The Australian* 13, 21 April 2004.
22. Goldberg, 45.
23. Marilyn P. Safir, "Was the Kibbutz an Experiment in Social and Sex Equality," in *Calling the Equality Bluff: The Women in Israel*, eds. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1993), 251.
24. Notice the root letters *k.v.t z*, common to both words, showing the relationship between the idea of group and collective.
25. The *primus* is, literally, a "small home burner" that warms up the kibbutz rooms: the role of the *primus* was intended to make intimacy difficult.
26. Marilyn Safir puts it more strenuously: "Early anti-familial policies precluded planning in this area" ("Experiment," 255). Due to the limited resources, in the *kvutza* childbirth was often not allowed, and women were forced to have abortions or to leave the *kvutza*. For a personal account see Michael Palgi's interview of "Malka," conducted in 1988 (Palgi, "Personal Dimension," 268–9). Safir also tells of a child of three born to a family in a *kvutza*, removed by the Welfare authorities in 1938 due to the lack of "formal childcare arrangements" (Safir, "Experiment," 255).
27. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *Marx & Engels on Literature and Art: A Selection of Writings*, ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski, 1973), 69.
28. Werner Stark, *The Fundamental Forms of Social Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 73–74.
29. Alan Watts, *The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (London: Abacus, 1973), 92–93.
30. Compare Ernest Nagel's distinctions between analogies based upon known laws (substantive) and appearance (formal).
31. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1963), 118–19.

32. A friction emerges between the scientific and religious leanings of principal thinkers who (apart from Darwin) are almost all Jewish in origin—pointing to a curious underlying relationship to the Mediterranean as the cradle of Judaism and therefore Modern thought itself.
33. Marx, “Economic,” 69–70.
34. The *appearance* of the human body must be mentioned, however briefly, as it is particularly influential in the physical surrounds and demands of agricultural labour in *kibbutzim*. (I will take up this matter in depth elsewhere.) The new Jewish ideal in-built in Zionism also promotes a physical and aesthetic characteristic to be embodied by the people. For a more intensive discussion of this iconography see Lisa Sachlav Stoler, “Mothers Birth the Nation: The Social Construction of Zionist Motherhood in Wartime in Israeli Parents’ Manuals,” *Nashim* 3, no. 16 (2003): 104–18. The “degenerate” European Jewry (which Palestinian Jews blame, in part, for the *Shoah*, were perceived as people who developed a fierce concentration on intelligence and intellectualism at the expense of the health of the body. In this new environment, the health of body–mind became paramount. The philosophy is more akin to the Hellenic Jewish context, but also disturbingly reflects the German focus of the 1930s and 1940s. Zionist icons for both women and men were thus tall, strong, attractive, athletic, tanned from the sun (not racial descent), and “larger than life”—much like images on Nazi war posters. The contrast from the *stereotype* of the European Jew could not be more powerful or marked.
35. See, for instance, Malcolm Bradbury, “The Cities of Modernism,” in *Modernism: 1890–1930*, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin Books, 1976): 96–104.
36. Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, 51.
37. *Ibid.*, 53.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 54.
40. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961), 59–60.
41. *Ibid.*
42. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977).
43. I. Bernard Cohen, *Interactions: Some Contacts Between the Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 36.
44. This move is also hotly contested to this day. Many ultra-religious Ashkenazim refuse to speak Hebrew, viewing it as a sacred language, not to be spoken on the streets until the days of the *Moschiach*, or Messiah.
45. Safir, “Experiment,” 256.

46. Nirit Anderman, "A Mosaic of Kibbutz Memories," review of *The Children of the Sun*, by Ran Tal, *Haaretz Online*, September 17, 2007, Arts and Leisure, <http://www.haaretz.com/culture/arts-leisure/a-mosaic-of-kibbutz-memories-1.229487>.
47. Shalev, *Blue Mountain*, 46.
48. *Ibid.*, 46–47.
49. See also Marilyn P. Safir, Jessica Nevo and Barbara Swirski, "The Interface of Feminism and Women's Studies in Israel," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 3–4 (1991): 116–31.
50. Juliet Blair, "Private Parts in Public Places: The Case of Actresses," *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps*, ed. Shirley Ardener (London: Croom Helm and Oxford University Women's Studies Committee, 1981), 212.
51. Ernest Gellner, "Notes Towards a Theory of Ideology," in *Spectacles and Predicaments: Essays in Social Theory*, eds. I.C. Jarvis and J. Agassi (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979), 120.
52. For a partial transcript of one victim's comments in 2000, 15 years following the rape, see Ariela Ringel Hoffman, "Sela's silent victim: Twenty years after being attacked, serial rapist's first victim finally speaks out about her ordeal," *YNet News*, December 6, 2006, <http://jewishsurvivors.blogspot.com/2006/12/rape-survivor-of-benny-sela-speaks-out.htm>.
53. In August of 1988, over a period of several days, six boys in their late teens had repeated sexual relations with a 14-year-old girl on Kibbutz Shomrat. The boys claimed that the sex was consensual; the girl claimed it was rape. When the girl did not prove her credibility the judge acquitted all six youths (November 2), sparking women's riots from Acco to Jerusalem (about half the country). See Felice Maranz, "Gang Acquittal," *The Jerusalem Report* (December 3, 1992): 22. On appeal, four of the defendants in the Shomrat case were found guilty and sentenced to 12–15 months. For a later rape verdict in Israel—convicting seven teenagers from Kiryat Tivon (Haifa), see Janine Zacharia, "Too Soft On Rape?" *The Jerusalem Report* 22, February 8, 1996. The Tivon ruling also led to street protests and a re-evaluation of national policy on rape sentencing.
54. Just as rape and torture tear at the fabric of the ego, wounding the individual's sense of self, in a group context the event travels beyond the self. Horrible events such rape or murder can be seen to act upon the *polis* of the kibbutz as a whole. For a study of the changing perceptions of kibbutzim, see Efrat Shoham, "The Attitude of Kibbutz Youth to Rape: Myth Versus Reality," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 40, no. 3 (1996): 212–13. Shoham, a professor of Criminology at Bar-Ilan University, and associated with the Kibbutz Netzer Serreni, has found that kibbutz members no longer consider the

- kibbutz to be a refuge from the rest of the world/Israel, and that middle-class urban youth from outside kibbutz compare with kibbutz youth members. Tellingly, Shoham writes: “Until recently, acts of rape were considered to be contradictory to the basic conception of the kibbutz as a society whose members do not become involved in serious crime. This study attempts to examine the preconceptions of rape of kibbutz youth as compared to those of middle-class urban youth of the same age, in respect to the victim, the assailant, and the circumstances in which the act occurred. The findings indicate that the kibbutz is no longer felt to be the safe haven that the members have believed it to be during the greater part of its existence” (212). The Shomrat rape case in Israel, 1988, which galvanized Israeli women to protest, and divided the country over whether the 14-year-old girl was indeed raped by six teenage boys “like beasts,” or (as they said) “asked for it.” Judge Micha Lindenstrauss did not convict.
55. An Israeli play entitled *Backyard Games* has had over 1000 performances since its first showing at the Haifa Municipal Theatre. Written by Edna Mazya and directed by Oded Kotler, the play is based on the Kibbutz Shomrat rape, and has been assessed as a vital educational tool for instructing young people about rape and its consequences. See Anat Gesser-Edelsburg, “Paradoxical Outcomes in an Educational Drama about Gang Rape: Ethical Responsibilities of Practitioners and Educators,” *Research in Drama Education* 10, no. 2 (June 2005): 139–58.
 56. I do not suggest that Gur was writing about Rabin: Gur’s novel was published in its original Hebrew in 1991, and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin occurred late in 1995. Rather, I draw attention to the way in which shockwaves ripple through communities, and particularly throughout Israel, whose national identity is predicated upon collective memory and shared destiny, for example, The Basel Doctrine.
 57. This was seen as a progressive means of attracting new members in later kibbutzim, permitting them to keep what they had separately owned; this standard led to great jealousy and preferential treatment, as had been feared by kibbutz founders.
 58. Palgi, “Motherhood,” 261.
 59. Isabel Kershner, “Winds of Change Breathe New Life into Kibbutzim,” *The Age* (September 1, 2007), 20.
 60. Pred, “Lost Words,” 145.

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Flâneurs in the Orient: The Colonial Maghrib and the Origins of the French Modernist Tradition

Gavin Murray-Miller

Studies on the origins of modernism comprise an exceedingly rich and expansive body of literature ranging from broad assessments of nineteenth-century politics, culture and social change to biographies and case studies of individual artists, writers and cultural figures. In the majority of these studies, France, and to a greater extent Paris, has typically constituted the epicenter of the “modern tradition,” reflecting a tendency to emphasize the markedly Parisian origins and character of a movement that would, within a short time, become accepted by artists and writers across the continent.¹ The annual salon organized by the state-run Académie des Beaux-Arts, the influential Batignolles Group, the Café Guerbois, Montmartre and the Parisian press have all constituted common focal points in the modernist narrative. The particular cultural and geographic framework traditionally associated with the origins of modernism reflects, in large part, popular perceptions of nineteenth-century Paris itself, a city conceptualized as the veritable “capital of modernity.”² The rebuilding of Paris during the years of the Second Empire (1852–1870) has occupied a central place in

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solidifying this modern identity. Baron Georges Haussmann's state-sponsored urbanization projects have served as the backdrop against which the drama of modernity unfolded, bringing into existence the boulevards, train stations, street culture and forms of urban sociability that would figure prominently in the writing and art of the first modernists.³ Walter Benjamin's influential studies on the genesis of urban modernism identified a familiar nineteenth-century Parisian icon—the *flâneur*—as one of modernism's chief protagonists.⁴ A man of leisure with patently overdeveloped sensibilities and an acute eye for the details of urban life passing before him, the Parisian *flâneur* has enjoyed the status of “an emblematic representative of modernity.”⁵

Yet the view of *haussmannisé* Paris as a crucible of modernity was just as much a creation of the culture of modernism as it was a factor in its development. Parisian writers, artists and critics who engaged in acts of *flânerie* were hardly mere spectators to the modernization process unfolding around them. On the contrary, more often than not they played an instrumental role in narrating and shaping the context in which the experience of modernity was understood. Laments for the loss of the “old Paris” effaced by Haussmann's building projects provided a key element in the recognition of the city as a locus of transition, with critics employing personal memories and recollections as a prompt for the articulation of Parisian modernity. “Paris changes....,” Charles Baudelaire famously claimed. “New places, scaffolding, blocks, old, settled districts...and my dear memories are heavier than boulders.”⁶ It is precisely this relationship between place and memory that Benjamin highlighted in his examination of *flânerie* and urban modernism. Sensitive to the ephemeral and transient nature of modern experience, Baudelaire and other modernists saw the need for a new form of mnemonic representation that was capable of recording and preserving modernity's contingent aspects. Modernism, in this context, signified an awareness of the new demands that modernity placed on memory and visual representation.⁷ Those bearing witness to modernization had significant influence over determining the context and location in which the new modernist project would be carried out and applied. While the *flâneur* dwelled upon the spectacles of modern life passing before him, he was not a passive subject. Rather than “an emblematic representative of modernity,” the *flâneur* actively constituted and shaped it.

A critical examination of French modernism rooted in the particular cultural practices and discourses elaborated during the middle of the nineteenth century implies rethinking the framework of the modernist

aesthetic and its implicit assumption of Parisian modernity. It equally implies identifying alternative spaces and contexts in which the practices of modernism were applied and elaborated, taking note of more peripheral fields of activity beyond metropolitan France. By the 1860s, France's new Algerian colony across the Mediterranean had become a popular destination for artists, offering the image of a Sahara "dotted with as many landscapists' parasols as the forests of Fontainebleau in the days gone by," as the poet and art critic Théophile Gautier claimed.⁸ Gautier was one of the many artists and writers who, whether for purposes of leisure or to perfect their craft, temporarily left Europe for the Maghrib, which by the 1840s was only a two-day steamboat ride from Marseille. The growing *présence française* in the Mediterranean region at mid-century would have an impact on French literature and art just as much as on French politics and culture. As Gautier was keen to inform his readers in 1861, "Algeria has shown its impact on art in developing a new element. A trip to Algeria is becoming almost as indispensable to painters as the pilgrimage to Italy."⁹

In spite of this evident fascination with North Africa, by the 1850s and 1860s, studies examining the place of the colonial Mediterranean in French modern art and letters have customarily focused attention on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is often assumed that the popularity of romantic Orientalism and its penchant for mythological, historicized and picturesque subjects discouraged exceedingly "modern" representations of the East in European art and literature until the closing decades of the century, by which point the modernist aesthetic was already well-established in Europe.¹⁰ This chronology corresponds with broader underlying temporal, cultural and geographic distinctions central to the narrative of modernity that have accented the primacy of a modernizing northern "center" against a passive and predominantly premodern Mediterranean "periphery." Yet as Gautier and his contemporaries revealed in their observations of the French Maghrib, the antique Orient was already undergoing a parallel modernizing process by the middle of the century. Urbanization efforts in Algiers, Constantine and other North African cities occurred in tandem with the rebuilding of Paris, and artists and writers found just as many opportunities to experience and ponder over the onset of modernity in the colony as they did at home. Colonialism was a condition rather than a consequence of European modernity, a point made evident in the sense of crisis French Orientalists expressed when confronting the violent ruptures and discontinuities produced by colonial modernization. As disillusioned observers began to understand "the

Orient” in fundamentally new terms, the colonial Mediterranean came to play a key role in both the development of the modernist aesthetic and the French modern experience.

By shifting attention away from *haussmannisé* Paris to the newly Gallicized cities and hybridized cultures of colonial North Africa, it becomes possible not only to analyze the broader cultural and intellectual milieu that cut across metropole and colony in France, but also to conceptualize modernism in relation to the many “tensions of empire” that reciprocally shaped national and imperial societies in the nineteenth century.¹¹ The practices and discourses associated with modernism arose from a variety of activities linked to the “enterprise of empire” such as colonial tourism, critiques of Orientalism and travel writing. These acts were integral to reimagining the Orient as a place of change and transition and furnished the essential discursive framework and script central to Oriental modernism, a novel style of artistic representation that would reveal the trans-Mediterranean dimensions of the French modernist aesthetic and conceptualize the Mediterranean in exceedingly new terms during the period.

ORIENTALISM AND THE IMPOSITION OF MODERNITY

The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of an Orientalist vogue in Europe that influenced artistic sensibilities, cultural practices and diverse disciplines of scholarship. Following France’s entrance into Egypt during the Napoleonic Wars and the transfer of Egyptian artifacts back to Paris, the East attained a conspicuous mystique among a new generation of Romantic writers, artists and intellectuals coming of age in postrevolutionary France. “We are preoccupied today more than ever before with the Orient,” Victor Hugo claimed in 1829. “Oriental studies have never before been pushed so far....As a result of all this, the Orient, whether as image or whether as thought, has become for the intelligence as much as for the imagination a sort of general preoccupation.”¹² This fascination for all things Eastern aroused desires to study and categorize non-Western societies and populations as well as collect objects, art and cultural artifacts from Africa and Asia. These acts of classifying and collecting produced a discourse and set of cultural practices which scholars have broadly identified with a culture of Orientalism in Europe.¹³

Exhibitions staged in the newly built Algerian and Egyptian wings of the Louvre prominently featured artifacts retrieved from North Africa while paintings depicting imaginative scenes of Turkish harems and fierce Arab

tribesmen became fashionable in Parisian salons. Travel accounts and stories rife with details of Oriental exoticism and decadence were widely purchased and read by a public enthralled with the seemingly bizarre customs and foreign populations found beyond the confines of Europe. Indeed, as Gustave Flaubert remarked, by the mid-nineteenth century the mystique of the East offered European audiences a form of escapism and entertainment: “We covet the Orient on rainy days.”¹⁴ As a revived French colonialism came to focus attention on the Barbary Coast and North Africa after 1830, intellectuals and critics surrendered to the Orientalist craze captivating the French imagination, giving rise to a means of describing, stereotyping and representing foreign places and cultures that became central to the “practice of empire” in nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁵

To evoke the Orient was to conjure up images of beautiful women concealed behind silk veils, palatial splendor fallen into ruin and spectacles of religious mysticism distinct from the enlightenment and modernity found in Europe and the West. Describing Istanbul in 1835, the political writer Émile Barrault referred to the East as “a living Bible” where the old religions of the Book retained a lively resiliency in contrast to the materialism prevalent in modern Occidental societies.¹⁶ During his travels to Egypt in the late 1840s, Flaubert was similarly inclined to depict “the old Orient” as a “land of religions and flowing robes.”¹⁷ Leaving the confines of Europe and “Occidental” society implied not only traveling physical distances but temporal ones as well, encountering a civilization steeped, according to the painter and travel writer Eugène Fromentin, in “the customs and practices both public and private of yesterday.”¹⁸ Inspired by Romantic luminaries such as Byron and Chateaubriand who had published accounts of their travels through the Balkans and Levant earlier in the century, intellectuals and critics were inclined to view the East as archaic and static, a land where time had been suspended and “the magnificence of the Bible,” as Gautier insisted, miraculously came alive.¹⁹

Departing Paris for Algiers, writers and artists reveled in the peculiarity and exoticism of the city’s Oriental panorama.²⁰ “The eye hardly recognizes a city in the agglomeration of buildings without roofs and windows,” the author Charles Nodier recorded upon first setting eyes on Algiers from the coast.²¹ Walking through the old sections of the city, travelers marveled at how normative conceptions of space appeared to become refracted and distorted. Gautier compared the narrow streets and cyclopean walls of the Casbah to an “African maze,” remarking, “the streets tangle, cross, coil, and return on themselves, seeming to have no other purpose than to baffle

pedestrians and travelers. The veins in the human body do not form a more complex network."²² When the French dramatist Ernest Feydeau departed from the "modern streets" built by the French in the colonial capital, he was forced to navigate through a matrix of torturous alleys where "nothing resembled anything familiar."²³ The Goncourt brothers were similarly captivated by the "streets animated by a strange, picturesque and dazzling multiplicity, by a veritable Babel of dress" they found in the city. Even the architecture possessed a bewitching quality. "Arab constructions, rigidly angular during the day, deliquesce during the evenings, their lines like a vaporous tint, their uncertain masses buoyant as a veil."²⁴

Engaging the Oriental city promised enchantment, mystery and spectacles that tantalized and disoriented the senses. For the *flâneur*, the allure of the "old Orient" was its power to evoke the past and excite the imagination. "If you at all have a taste for wondering and dreaming," Fromentin mused while walking the streets of Algiers, "it's possible to recreate a society that's long gone."²⁵ Whereas European societies had to confront the traumas of industrial modernization, violent social change and profane skepticism fueled by scientific progress, the charm of the Orient lay precisely in its perceived simplicity and inertia. It was, as Flaubert remarked, the land where "nothing changed" and life continued much as it had a millennium before.²⁶ Expectations of Eastern exoticism and difference were commonly validated in the experience of travel, indicating that colonial *flânerie* was mediated through the tropes and stereotypes of Orientalism. Travel accounts often conveyed a familiar "spatial narrative" that reinforced established identities and power relations prevalent to colonialism's binary logic.²⁷ Ironically, it was the impositions of colonialism that would significantly destabilize these forms of spatial storytelling and compel the need for new narratives capable of representing and bounding colonial spaces.

It was telling when Gautier expressed aversion at the sight of European buildings and train stations in Egypt. Alexandria, with its cosmopolitan influences and mix of styles, was "not a purely Oriental city," in his opinion, while Cairo had little of the authentic Orient to offer the traveler. "Without the distinguishable minarets and palm trees," he bristled, "you would hardly believe yourself to be in Africa."²⁸ An earlier visit to the Ottoman capital in 1852 had equally revealed the extent of change taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean. Writing to a friend, Gautier complained that "Constantinople looks a lot like London and has nothing of the Orient."²⁹ Describing French Algiers in 1860, Feydeau could not help

but remark upon its hybridized character (*physionomie hybride*), depicting the city as a creature half Moorish and half French.³⁰ Arsène Vacherot, a critic sympathetic to French colonial designs in North Africa, boasted in 1869 that in Algeria a visitor now found “the passions of France at the same time as the beauties of the Orient,”³¹ while the dignitary Albert de Broglie described Algeria as a “singular mélange consisting of diverse parts of two different civilizations.”³² The “old” Orient was, critics and travelers realized, in a state of transition, acquiring the “modern” characteristics familiar to Europeans. “Now is the time to see the Orient,” Flaubert advised his mother while making a trip through Egypt and the Levant in the late 1840s, “because it’s disappearing, it’s getting civilized.”³³

Hybridization was most conspicuous in the colonies and protectorates directly under European control. Much as writers like Vacherot and Gautier observed, Maghribi cities were coming to reflect a discernible French quality and character by the middle of the nineteenth century. The Marine quarter that housed the offices of the colonial government strikingly exemplified the new urban landscape coming into existence. Appraising the district in 1852, Fromentin observed that the French administration had managed to create “a little rue de Rivoli” complete with buildings that he described as “Parisian imitations.”³⁴ Gautier was indignant when staring up at the old Djenina Palace nestled in the heart of the Marine, its noble Moorish architecture surrounded with the “bourgeois banality” of French edifices.³⁵ Thierry-Mieg found that the palace of the Algerian dey had been turned into a garrison with the colorful wall murals covered by whitewash and the grand terrace outfitted with an office for the sale of tobacco.³⁶ By 1860, Algiers was “veritably diminished,” according to Feydeau, “and the sad thing is that the diminishing is still taking place.”³⁷

Commenting on the extent of French building projects in 1839, the military interpreter Ismael Urbain complained, “Soon the traveler will only find here a detestable copy of our French cities where the preoccupation of work and the noise and smoke of industry do not permit any repose or distraction.”³⁸ For many, Urbain’s words were prophetic. Writing in 1869, the Algerian journalist Augustin Marquand alleged that due to the “civilizing” initiatives executed by the French government in the Algerian capital “the Oriental has little by little been transformed into a modern city....The Algiers reminiscent of the legends of Okba ben Nafi and Barbarossa will soon enough be gone.”³⁹ Walking through Algiers and its environs in the late 1860s, the colonial writer Charles Desprez

observed that the Moorish cafés familiar to the city's cultural life were now only "a mere shadow" of what they had once been, while nearly every street in the city center was obstructed by "excavations, piles of rubble and ruins." The Oriental beauty and charm of the city was gone, compelling him to ask, "Where can one now find a secluded quarter to live in that Oriental incognito?"⁴⁰

In a colonial world, could French travelers seeking to lose themselves in the mystique of the Orient expect to fulfill such a desire? For many, the prospect seemed doubtful. "Proceeding by the principle of *tabula rasa*," Fromentin stated, "civilization has begun by tearing down everything not in accordance with its tastes."⁴¹ The street bazaars had disappeared, along with the Arabs who had once attended them; whole sections of the city existed now in name and memory alone; religious customs and cultural traditions were giving way to modern habits brought by the Europeans. "Today Algiers is an entirely European city," Thierry-Mieg concluded in 1860. "The Arabs that one sees there already seem so completely exiled that it is popularly said they now only serve as ornaments for the landscape and to remind people that Algiers was not always a French city."⁴² As Urbain had warned in 1839, it was easy to comprehend that soon enough there would be "nothing in Algiers which recalls a Moorish city, not even Arab inhabitants" if French building projects continued to demonstrate a flagrant disregard for the indigenous architecture and residents of the colonial city.⁴³

"The Orient is disappearing," Feydeau lamented while gazing upon the new landscape of *haussmannisé* boulevards and Turks drinking absinthe at French cafés. "It is disputing the terrain step by step, but it is disappearing with its exquisite forms."⁴⁴ As the old and sublime Orient celebrated by Romantic poets and artist became replaced by a landscape of demolished buildings, gutted streets and European facades reminiscent of Second Empire Paris, those clinging to visions of an idealized Orient found themselves confronted with the discouraging reality of a modernizing East that placed the very object of Orientalism itself—that mythic Orient of romantic design—under threat. While postcolonial theorists have been quick to associate Orientalism with the practices and culture of European imperialism, such assertions overlook that colonialism and Orientalism often assumed a dialectical relationship that revealed the inherent contradictions between the assimilationist objectives of colonialism and Orientalism's need to retain a non-European other.⁴⁵ Acts of *flânerie* in the colonial Mediterranean often entailed directly engaging such tensions of empire,

and this engagement would, within a short time, furnish the necessary context for a new view of the Orient shaped and mediated through the discourse of modernism.

ORIENTAL MODERNISM AND THE REIMAGINING OF THE EAST

Modernism (as an aesthetic and ideology) and modernity (the actual conditions produced by cultural and social change) have often had a contentious relationship. Not surprising, the first modernists were often among the most vocal critics of modernization and its resulting social consequences. Although Baudelaire recognized that his generation enjoyed “miracles unknown to the Romans” that unquestionably exemplified their “superiority over the ancients,” he nonetheless remained pessimistic about the implications these accomplishments portended.⁴⁶ The “new cult of progress” was nothing more than “stupidity paying homage to itself, steam-engines denying God.”⁴⁷ Materialism, democratic leveling and the “cheapening of hearts” was symptomatic of *l’infection moderne* corrupting society with the banality of reason and bourgeois values.⁴⁸ As Marshall Berman has claimed, modernism was a reaction to a modernizing world more than the acceptance of it. It proposed a general reconsideration of established practices and patterns of thought in an effort to come to grips with the traumas and devastation wrought by modernity.⁴⁹ Nowhere was this sense of modernity’s destructive potential more palpable than in the new “built environments” of cities. “Everywhere, recent ruins and edifices being raised are visible,” Alexis de Tocqueville reported in 1841 when describing the impact of colonial modernization on Algiers.⁵⁰ Two decades later, this scene would be familiar to any Parisian: “Everywhere houses in ruin, demolitions commenced, unfinished constructions, wooden gates, fences of dirty and disjointed planks, scaffolding blocking views, masonry and carpentry tools lying about.”⁵¹

The need for a “new art” in the mid-nineteenth century was stimulated by a recognition of modernity’s destructive tendencies and the irresolution this destruction brought. Walking along the newly constructed streets and boulevards of Paris in the late 1850s, the writer and renowned gastronome Charles Monselet professed, “It is no longer the old Paris but it is not yet the new Paris either. We are placed between memory and promise.”⁵² A visit to Algiers elicited the same uncertainty, as Fromentin, a seasoned North African *voyageur*, discovered in 1852. He was “not yet able to

visualize what [Algiers] will be and seeking what it has stopped being,” he wrote, “imagining both with difficulty.”⁵³ Processes of colonization and modernization brought Occident and Orient together in novel ways, often linking disparate experiences through a shared trans-Mediterranean modernity that spanned cultural and spatial boundaries. If designations of East and West once mapped distinct conceptual topographies subject to different temporalities and ideological narratives, by the mid-nineteenth century these differences were becoming increasingly blurred.

The changing topographies of cities and the demolition of familiar streets and landscapes that accompanied urban modernization fostered an awareness of what the critic Victor Fournel described as the “incessant movement” endemic to urban milieux. According to Fournel, Haussmannization testified to modernity’s sheer evanescence and perplexing resistance to capture. “The present passes you, overwhelms you and slips through the hands that try to seize it,” he wrote, reflecting on the matrix of constantly shifting streets and quarters that the new Paris presented to spectators.⁵⁴ Fromentin was equally conscious of the difficulties associated with representing present-day realities in his North African accounts. In the second edition of his travel writings published in 1874, he apprised his readers that although his works documented travels made in the 1840s and early 1850s, they were “already of another time” due to the transformative impact of French colonization on the region in the intervening years.⁵⁵ Such sentiments came to underscore a collective outlook that the present was, as Baudelaire contended, “ephemeral, fugitive, [and] contingent.” In a world where all appeared labile and subject to constant change, the task of art and literature was not to represent the ideal and eternal but rather to preserve a “memory of the present,” he advised.⁵⁶ As a general perception “that anything and everything may disappear” crystallized during the period,⁵⁷ critics and commentators began to consider the relationship between the arts and social memory, asserting that texts and images were capable of bounding and preserving human experience and recalling what modern time diminished. The turn toward outlooks that would soon be classified under the labels of “realism” and “modernism” was guided not only by a belief in the need for a new visual language capable of portraying contemporary subjects, but also a growing apprehension over the violent uprooting and obliteration perpetrated by modernity.

The Orientalist aesthetic popularized in French painting and visual culture during the early nineteenth century hardly fit with this new outlook.

With its penchant for mythological subjects and highly idealized panoramas, Orientalism remained tied to visions of a premodern and timeless East resistant to change. By the 1860s, a small but growing circle of critics began assuming a more aggressive tone in their treatment of Orientalist works displayed in national exhibitions. For Jules-Antoine Castagnary, Orientalism had no place in French national art, arguing that its exoticism and foreignness possessed “a nature that...lacks any relation to our own ideals and temperament.” In his view, the historicized and fantastic subjects dear to Orientalist painters contained nothing relevant to modern society, amounting to a cowardly escapism which should be avoided. “They want to flee Paris, abscond from the world around them and escape the obsession with the real and the present,” Castagnary assailed in 1864. “There is nothing they would not prefer to what is.”⁵⁸ Such remarks anticipated the criticism of journalists like Émile Zola who, a decade later, would reproach the romanticized and decorative style of popular Orientalist painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme as an affront to modern tastes and sensibilities.⁵⁹

Castagnary and Zola were representative of the new generation of critics coming of age in the closing years of the Second Empire. Their remarks were intended to provoke controversy and their barbed commentary was often suffused with explicit political and nationalist connotations, equating academic art and traditionalism to the slavish obedience and tyranny of the current Bonapartist regime.⁶⁰ “We love neatness, sharpness, images which are easy to understand, which bedazzle or make us smile,” Zola impugned in 1868. Taking aim at the Académie’s preference for “imitation” and “charming banality,” Zola charged: “We do not possess an art that is truly French.”⁶¹ That same year, an aging Gautier surprised his readers by publishing a defense of the rising modernist school in his annual *Salon* advising conservative art critics to have an open mind when considering the works of a younger generation which did not share the same ideals and outlooks. The new art, he argued, revealed a talent and beauty that perhaps “escapes those of us with old Romantic heads of hair already mixed with silver threads [but] that is nonetheless appealing to young people in short jackets and modern hats.”⁶²

Gautier’s support for realism may have appeared to break with the romanticism evident throughout the course of his long literary career; yet in many ways, it was a natural outcome of his evolving views on Orientalism during the 1860s. Like many of his contemporaries afflicted by the *infection moderne*, Gautier found it preferable to contemplate the “sublime” and “mysterious” Orient that differed from modern France “just as the

day differs from the night.”⁶³ From the start of his career, Gautier had revealed a preoccupation with the Orient as both a literary theme and concept. It was after reading Victor Hugo’s *Les Orientales* that he decided to abandon his aspirations of becoming an artist and take up a career as a writer. The paintings of salon artists such as Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps and Prosper Marilhat served as references for the Oriental settings of many of his stories, which depicted veiled women and Pharaonic princesses, cluttered streets framed by tapering minarets, caravans and desert landscapes bathed in crepuscular light. Gautier confessed that after viewing Marilhat’s *Vue de la Place de l’Esbekieh* displayed at the annual salon in 1844 he was compelled to return to the gallery 20 times over the course of the next month to gaze upon the painting, committing the Egyptian tableau to memory while entertaining fantasies of traveling to Cairo and losing himself in the picturesque quality of the lifestyle and landscape of the East.⁶⁴ In these Orientalist tableaux, Gautier found his own aesthetic sensibilities and philosophy validated. They represented an art dedicated to exploration and seeking out beauty wherever it may be found; an art existing on its own terms, devoid of moral didacticism yet deeply spiritual and transcendent.⁶⁵

Heavily influenced by the imaginativeness and exoticism of the Romantics, Gautier, like many of his generation, envisioned the Orient as a counter model to the *infection moderne* that had beset European society. In contrast to the philistinism, cupidity and spiritual bankruptcy of modern Europe, the Orient embodied the promise of a simpler, idyllic and more fulfilling life; it constituted the antithesis of the modernity and civility that Gautier found so repulsive in his own society. Yet if Gautier employed the Orient as an idealized mirror in which to critique Western modernity, his various engagements with Eastern societies and cultures rarely proved to sustain this assumption. In Algiers, he succumbed to the same disillusionment felt by other *voyageurs* upon laying eyes on the sites of fresh devastation, lamenting that the “profound and mysterious Orient” was becoming eclipsed by the “civilizing” influences of the French.⁶⁶ A trip to Egypt in 1869 only served to further reinforce this pessimistic appraisal. “Despite the regrets of the poets and artists,” he wrote after a stroll through the streets of Cairo, “civilization imposes its fashions, its forms, its usages and what we might even call its mechanical barbarism on the quaint barbarism [of the Orient].”⁶⁷ European music could be heard emanating from cafés and restaurants while the Place de l’Esbekieh—the scene of Marilhat’s captivating painting repeatedly admired by Gautier in his youth—was

thronged by crowds of European tourists attending the newly constructed Théâtre du Cirque and Comédie-Française. Even the rich and sensuous colors of Marilhat's Egypt were nowhere to be seen. "The travelers who, on the faith of the painters, dreamed of fiery colors...[finds only] a grayish tone," he complained, "nothing that recalls Egypt or at least how one had assumed it to be."⁶⁸

Although not immune to the disenchantment experienced by various tourists who flocked to North Africa at mid-century, Gautier, more than others, showed a willingness to admit that the Orient might not be as he had assumed it to be. In 1845, he candidly acknowledged that prior to setting foot on African soil his impressions regarding the East had derived from "opera costumes and drawings in albums."⁶⁹ Once engaging the Orient directly, he found it incongruous with his initial expectations, prompting the conclusion that representation and reality were not always mutually constitutive elements.⁷⁰ "One forms a fantastic image in their mind of cities they have wished to see since childhood, repeatedly visiting them in dreams," he wrote while in Cairo. "It is difficult to let go of this even when you find yourself faced with the reality. The image of an engraving or a painting is often the point of departure."⁷¹ Unlike those who clung to ideas of an authentic Orient distinct from and opposed to the West, Gautier recognized that the popular images of the East informing European conceptions of Oriental otherness were, by and large, nothing but imaginative renderings culled from paintings and literature.

French Orientalists and tourists may have been fascinated by the allure of the East, but the object of their fascination was never anything more than a "fairyland Orient," as he phrased it, a "charming phantasmagoria" manufactured by poets and artists who fed "the inconceivable fantasies of Parisians." These fantastic representations did, however, signify definitive realities for Europeans who, arriving in a foreign land, immediately became disenchanted with the reality they found, leaving Gautier to speculate whether it was true that "the illusion is valued more than reality? That the Orient of the opera...[is] superior to the real Orient ...?" As a product of an art and literature that persistently "diminished" the real for the sake of fantasy, escapism and amusement, the Orient anticipated by tourists was not a tangible entity. One commonly saw the representation of the object but rarely the object itself, Gautier contended, and these "accepted types reproduced a thousand times," he maintained, "[were] the only things that people perceived."⁷²

Having traveled across North Africa and through the Levant over the course of 20 years as a travel writer, Gautier could appreciate the fact that reality was constantly mediated through fanciful images and cultural representations. Rather than Biblical landscapes and Oriental splendor, he was confronted with the more sobering reality of urban demolition, European influences and modernizing societies, and for Gautier these spectacles of modernity were nothing short of a tragedy. As colonialism violently transfigured the indigenous landscape and cultures of North Africa, the real and authentic Orient which had never been known or experienced by Europeans would, he insisted, “soon exist only in a state of memory” as it vanished into historical obscurity.⁷³ Lest all that remain be the misleading impressions and representations of the imagination, it was imperative, he urged, to capture the reality of this dying world through direct accounts of experience. The fate of the Orient and the consequences of colonialism became, in Gautier’s opinion, the justification for a new Orientalism modeled on the practice of aesthetic realism, thereby preserving, either in word or image, what modern time would condemn to obsolescence.

In nature, explained Fromentin, “the passage of time” constituted the domain of experience. Yet in the realm of art, “a certain character is determined, a moment in time is fixed, the choice made in perfection, a scene is set for eternity and is absolute.”⁷⁴ In a similar way to Gautier, Fromentin’s Maghribine travels during the late 1840s and early 1850s compelled him to reconsider his aesthetic approach and outlooks, a feature most evident in his growing preference for writing and visceral description over painting and the fine arts. Drawn to North Africa by an intense fascination with Orientalist paintings, he professed a desire to capture the “spectacles” of Eastern civilization and experience the “real Africa” with its camels, caravans and palm trees.⁷⁵ While Fromentin is often considered an Orientalist *par excellence* whose work replicated and perpetuated many of the ingrained stereotypes familiar to European perspectives on the East, in actuality his writing, like Gautier’s, suggests that Orientalism was undergoing a crisis of representation in the mid-nineteenth century as writers and artists acknowledged the disparity between the Oriental imaginaries of Parisian salon culture and what they actually found. Fromentin captured the mood in his travelogue *Un été dans le Sahara* when describing a scene in which he comes across a palm—popular symbol of the “old Orient”—in French Algiers, noting that “its base is cemented over, dishonoring it and yet not preventing it from dying.” This vestige of the old Orient “hangs

on,” as he put it, out of place in the modern European-inspired landscape that has grown up around it.⁷⁶

Fromentin’s Orientalism reflected the growing presence of modernity in representations of North Africa as well as drew attention to the deficiencies he found in former Orientalist paragons. “In spite of Marilhat and Descamps,” he wrote from Algeria in 1848, “the Orient still remains to be accurately rendered.”⁷⁷ The Orient of European settlement and colonial modernization was not the Orient of past generations, but rather an Orient *à faire* (“in the making”), according to Fromentin.⁷⁸ Intent on “[trying] things from home in this foreign land,” the painter-cum-writer fashioned himself a *flâneur à l’Orient*, expressing a desire “to see well while observing [and] to travel...but in the way one participates in a spectacle, letting the changing tableaux renew themselves around a fixed viewpoint and a motionless existence.”⁷⁹ Romantic writers from Gautier to Gérard de Nerval had actively sought out the curious, grotesque and exotic to entertain their readers, characteristically stressing the agency and individualism of the author in this process. For Fromentin, the objective was different. In contrast to the adventurous narrative of the Romantic travelogue which commonly encouraged exaggeration and sensationalism, his approach was to capture momentary and unmediated experience through passive observation. “Everything converges in the center that I inhabit,” he explained, “and the unexpected comes there seeking me out.”⁸⁰ Summing up his method with the dictum *voir, c’est dire* (“to see is to say”), Fromentin would transform the practice of *flânerie* into the substance of a reconstituted Orientalist aesthetic.⁸¹

“I have no power of invention,” Fromentin liked to state when discussing his technique, insisting that “memory” rather than “imagination” or “fancy” furnished the essential basis of his subject matter.⁸² It was not simply that representing the “authentic” Orient of the present demanded realism. In Fromentin’s estimation, a modern Orient necessitated the recognition of what was immediately present to the observer as well as the “many things that no longer exist.”⁸³ If modernity implied accelerated and persistent change, accurate and faithful representations alone could hardly convey the essence of the modern subject. By their very nature, image and word assumed a mnemonic quality as they attempted to represent and bound a reality that was labile and inherently unstable, bearing out Fromentin’s assertion that “however large or beautiful reality may be...memory ends by surpassing it.”⁸⁴ If his vivid depictions of rubble-strewn streets, razed palaces and mosques converted into hospitals and

garrisons invoked the violence and destruction of colonial modernization, they equally accentuated the new forms of subjective experience endemic to the modern condition. A Moorish building once tenanted but now slated for demolition or an old fountain surrounded by a recently laid French courtyard became objects suffused with new significance and meaning. Through these relics and traces—"old friends bringing back old memories" of an Africa that was no more—the dispossessed past became momentarily incarnate in the present, transforming the Algerian landscape into a repository of personal and historical memory suggestive of the "old" Orient's eclipse by the implacable movement of modern time.⁸⁵

In a colonial world, the spatial narratives sustaining the Orient of Romantic design became untenable, prompting French Orientalists to elaborate a new language of representation that recognized the Orient as an explicit manifestation of the modern. It was, therefore, unsurprising that the evocative qualities of Fromentin's Algerian tableaux and his brand of Oriental *flânerie* often communicated the same anxieties, disquiet and nostalgia expressed in Baudelaire's portrayals of Parisian modernity. Fromentin's North Africa was characterized by similar acts of urban wandering, reflections on debris and fixation with memory found in the poet's Parisian tableaux. The sight of the recently renovated Place de Carrousel unleashes the deluge of recollections which suddenly "flood" Baudelaire's "fertile memory" with impressions of "old Paris" just as the sight of a familiar fountain in Algiers conjures up memories of "old Africa" for Fromentin.⁸⁶ Whether in the capital of the metropole or the colonial periphery, the landscape of the modern city was haunting, summoning the "tocsin of dark amorous memories from the distant years" that would become central to the representations and discourse of the modernist aesthetic in France.⁸⁷

If modernity entailed coming to grips with the trauma of violent and fast-paced change, the new art prescribed by early modernists furnished a means of recording and preserving what could not, in reality, be preserved. In adopting the practices and outlooks of modernism, Orientalism equally came to embody what Baudelaire described as that "profound and magical spell which captures us when, in the present, the past is restored."⁸⁸ In reconfiguring the Orient as a space in which the drama of modernization could be viscerally experienced and narrated, Gautier, Fromentin and their contemporaries established the context for a new vision of the Mediterranean in art and writing that evoked the Baudelairean "memory of the present" rather than the allure of a mythic past.

FRENCH MODERNISM AND TRANS-MEDITERRANEAN MODERNITY

The emergence of Oriental modernism in the middle of the nineteenth century marked an important moment in the shaping of Mediterranean modernism just as much as in the French modernist tradition itself. Constituting North Africa as a subject of modernist interest first entailed confronting familiar stereotypes of a timeless East and re-situating “the Orient” within the domain of modern time and experience. This reimagining of the Orient that took place at mid-century indicates that European Orientalism was not a static discourse. Such a conclusion not only implies the need for a more historically situated examination of the cultural influences and categories that underpinned European notions of difference and otherness, but also furnishes a broader and more nuanced understanding on the dynamics of colonialism and the colonial experience in general. Much as Nicholas Thomas had argued, the conception of colonies as “passive places” undermines the complex and multivalent relations that often shaped European outlooks and mentalities, prizing a theoretical approach that favors “unitary representation...extended from the metropole...[that are] unmediated by perceptions or encounters.”⁸⁹ Yet as Orientalist travel writer and critics made evident, the notion of a monolithic Oriental other fashioned by Europeans was a “fantasy-construction”—to use a phrase proffered by Slavoj Žižek—that supported the reality itself.⁹⁰ To directly engage and scrutinize this construction ultimately augured a new type of Orient, one defined by change and contingency that willingly recognized colonialism and its object as a manifestation of the modern.

As the sublime Orient of the Romantics dissolved into the disparaging tableau of devastation and ruin encountered by a new generation coming of age in a colonial world, the need to reinvent the discursive practices of Orientalism became strikingly manifest. With its tendencies to Europeanize non-European spaces and blur distinctions between East and West, colonialism posed an implicit threat to the very object of Orientalist discourse, presaging a troubling dilemma in which Orientalists would find themselves deprived of an Orient to scrutinize, categorize and fashion in accordance with their own desires and expectations. Under the circumstances, it was essential to espouse a new discourse and set of cultural practices capable of reaffirming the Orient as a conceptual category. Acknowledging and coming to terms with imperialism’s destructive nature, disillusioned critics elaborated a new style of describing and representing inspired by modern-

ism's concern with time, experience and memory, providing a discursive framework which could at once recognize the Orient as a site of change and transition while equally preserve it as a categorical object of study.

Yet acts of travel and critiques illuminating the various "tensions of empire" that characterized the colonial experience also served to break down the dichotomous boundaries between Occidental self and Oriental other as well. To sketch the contours of a trans-Mediterranean modernity rooted in the collective experiences of modernization and the urban environment is to also question the primacy of Paris in the development of the modernist tradition. Decentering *haussmannisé* Paris and the salon, we may begin to comprehend a more dynamic understanding of the origins of French modernism and modernity in general. Modernism and *modernité* were concepts elaborated within a cultural and intellectual environment that cut across the boundaries of metropole and colony. Reframing this picture entails locating the tensions of empire within the larger tensions engendered by modernity and noting the ways that these twin phenomena shaped both national and imperial cultures in the nineteenth century.

NOTES

1. See for example: Anne Coffin Hanson, *Manet and The Modern Tradition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979); T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in The Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999); Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of The Second Empire: The Universal Exposition of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987); Beth Archer Brombert and *Edouard Manet: Rebel in a Frock Coat* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996); Phillip Dennis Cate and Mary Shaw, eds., *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor and the Avant-Garde, 1875–1905* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1996); Clement Greenberg, "Modern and Postmodern," *Arts* 54, no. 6 (1980).
2. I borrow this phrase from the book by David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
3. David Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: The Free Press, 1995); Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*; Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005); Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988).

4. See: Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed., Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006) and Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Rolf Tiedmann et al. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002).
5. Priscilla Ferguson, "The Flâneur on and off the Streets of Paris," *The Flâneur*, ed., Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 22. Also see: Gregory Shaya, "The Flâneur, the Badaud and the Making of the Mass Public in France, circa 1869–1910," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2004): 41–77.
6. Charles Baudelaire, "Le Cygne," *Selected Poems*, trans. Carol Clark (New York: Penguin, 1995), 87.
7. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1973), 157–191; Cynthia Chase, "The Memory of Modern Life (Baudelaire)," *Angelaki* 5, no. 1 (2000): 201.
8. Quoted in Roger Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism and French North Africa, 1880–1930* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2003), 15.
9. *Moniteur Universel*, July 2, 1861.
10. Some examples include: Jan Birksted, *Modernism and the Mediterranean* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004); Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics*; Luca Somigli and Domenico Pietropalo, eds., *Modernism and Modernity in the Mediterranean World* (Toronto: Legas, 2006); Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
11. I borrow this term from Frederick Cooper and Anne Laura Stoller, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997).
12. Quoted in Ildikó Lőrinszky, *L'Orient de Flaubert des écrits de jeunesse à Salammbô* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 48.
13. See: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Christine Peltre, *Orientalism* (Paris: Terrail, 2005); Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture and Conquest in The East, 1750–1850* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 3–8. For works examining the practice of Orientalism outside of Europe, see: Richard V. Francaviglia, *Go East, Young Man: Imagining The American West as The Orient* (Logan: Utah State UP, 2011); Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–796.
14. Gustave Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet December 11, 1846, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Club de l'Honnêt homme, 1974), 12: 570.
15. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 9–11; Inge E. Boer, *Disorienting Vision: Rereading Stereotypes in French*

- Orientalist Texts and Images* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004); Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts, eds., *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005); Frederick N. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003); Roderick Cavaliero, *Ottomania: The Romantics and The Myth of The Islamic Orient* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2010). An interesting refutation of the Eurocentric tendencies pertinent to Orientalist visual culture is Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002).
16. Émile Barrault, *Occident et Orient: Études politiques, morales, religieuses* (Paris: A. Poigin, 1835), 103.
 17. Gustave Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt*, trans., Francis Steegmuller (New York: Penguin, 1996), 73.
 18. Eugène Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara: An Algerian Journal*, trans., Blake Robinson (Athens: Ohio UP, 1999), 20.
 19. Quoted in Denise Brahimi, *Théophile et Judith vont en Orient* (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1990), 26.
 20. See: John Zarobell, *Empire of Landscape: Space and Ideology in French Colonial Algeria* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State UP, 2010).
 21. Charles Nodier, *Journal de l'expédition des Portes de Fer* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1844), 46.
 22. Théophile Gautier, *Voyage en Algérie* (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1989), 47.
 23. Ernest Feydeau, *Alger: Étude* (Paris: Editions Bouchene, 2003), 32–33.
 24. Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, "Alger: Notes au Crayon," *Pages retrouvées* (Paris: Charpentier, 1886), 267–268, 270–271.
 25. Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara*, 83.
 26. Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt*, 81.
 27. Victoria E. Thompson, "Telling 'Spatial Stories': Urban Space and Bourgeois Identity in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 3 (2003): 555; Boer, *Disorienting Vision*, 3–12.
 28. Théophile Gautier, *Voyage en Égypte* (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1991), 38, 75.
 29. Théophile Gautier, Letter to Louis de Cormenin 5 July 1852, in *Constantinople et autres textes sur la Turquie* (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1990), 24.
 30. Feydeau, *Alger*, 49.

31. Arsène Vacherot, "L'Algérie sous l'Empire: les indigènes et la colonisation," *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1869), 83:174.
32. A. de Broglie, *Une Réforme administrative en Afrique* (Paris: H. Duminy, 1860), 122.
33. Quoted in Frederick Brown, *Flaubert: A Biography* (New York: Little Brown 2006), 265.
34. Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara*, 11.
35. Gautier, *Voyage en Algérie*, 38.
36. Thierry-Mieg, *Six semaines en Afrique*, 406.
37. Feydeau, *Alger*, 39.
38. *Journal des Débats*, July 21, 1839.
39. Augustin Marquand, "Alger et ses environs," *Akhbar*, February 14, 1869.
40. Charles Desprez, "La haute ville," *Courrier de l'Algérie*, March 11, 1868.
41. Fromentin, "Fragments d'un journal de voyage," *Œuvres complètes*, 965.
42. Thierry-Mieg, *Six semaines en Afrique*, 406.
43. *Journal des Débats*, July 21, 1839.
44. Feydeau, *Alger*, 157–158.
45. This tension has been noted by Vera Tolz, "Orientalism, Nationalism and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia," *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005): 127–150.
46. Charles Baudelaire, "Exposition Universelle, 1855," *Art in Paris, 1845–1862*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1965), 126.
47. Baudelaire, "Years in Brussels," *My Heart Laid Bare*, 219.
48. See Eric C. Hansen, *Disaffection and Decadence: A Crisis in French Intellectual Thought, 1848–1898* (Washington, D.C.: UP of America, 1982).
49. Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 16–19.
50. Alexis de Tocqueville, "Notes du voyage," *Sur l'Algérie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), 62.
51. Fournel, *Paris nouveau*, 26.
52. Charles Monselet, *Les Ruines de Paris* (Paris: L. de Potter, 1857), 1:256.
53. Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara*, 82.
54. Fournel, *Paris nouveau*, 29.
55. Eugène Fromentin, "Un été dans le Sahara," *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 3.
56. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *My Heart Laid Bare and Other Prose Writing*, trans., Norman Cameron (New York: Huskell, 1975), 39, 37.
57. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.
58. Quoted in Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics*, 24–25.

59. Rosalind P. Blakesley, "Émile Zola's Art Criticism in Russia," *Critical Exchange: Art Criticism of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in Russia and Western Europe*, eds., Carol Adlam and Juliet Simpson (Bern: Peter land, 2009), 269.
60. Théophile Thoré, *Salons de W. Bürger* (Paris: Renouard, 1870), 2:350; Émile Zola, *Le Bon Combat: De Courbet aux impressionnistes*, ed., Gaëtan Picon (Paris: Harmon, 1974). Broadly, see: Nord, *Impressionists and Politics*.
61. Zola, "Mon Salon (1868)," *Le Bon Combat*, 102.
62. Quoted in, Ross, *Early Impressionism and the French State*, 146.
63. Gautier, *Voyage en Algérie*, 34.
64. Gautier, *Voyage en Égypte*, 61.
65. Elwood Hartman, *Three Nineteenth-Century French Writers/Artist and the Maghreb: The Literary and Artistic Depictions of North Africa by Théophile Gautier, Eugène Fromentin, and Pierre Loti* (Tübingen: Gunter Norrverlag, 1994), 6–7.
66. Gautier, *Voyage en Algérie*, 69.
67. Gautier, *Voyage en Égypte*, 74–75.
68. *Ibid.*, 46.
69. Gautier, *Voyage en Algérie*, 36.
70. See: John Zarobell, "Abstracting Space: Remaking The Landscape of Colonial Algeria in Second-Empire France," in Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiuttynski, ed., *Modern Art and The Idea of The Mediterranean* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007), 61.
71. Gautier, *Voyage en Égypte*, 61.
72. Gautier, *Voyage en Algérie*, 35–36, 147, 140–141.
73. *Ibid.*, 140, 147.
74. Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara*, 95.
75. Peter Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 51.
76. Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara*, 24.
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81. Hartman, *Three Travel Writers/Artists*, 42.
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89. Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 60.
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The Alexandria Biennale and Egypt's Shifting Mediterranean

Dina A. Ramadan

INTRODUCTION

On 26 July 1955, President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) inaugurated the Alexandria Biennale for Mediterranean Countries in celebration of the third anniversary of the July Revolution.¹ The exhibition was held in the Museum of Fine Arts—which had opened a year earlier—and included 561 artworks by 265 artists from eight participating countries: Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Spain, and Syria. At the time of its establishment, the Alexandria Biennale was the world's third art biennale, after La Biennale di Venezia (est. 1895) and the Bienal de São Paulo (est. 1951). It was the only such event in the Middle East and Africa and is Egypt's longest running international exhibition.² It took place just months after the Bandung Conference,³ and a year before Nasser's speech announcing his decision

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to nationalize the Suez Canal Company.⁴ It is a moment of reimagined geographies and shifting political alliances. The Alexandria Biennale is, therefore, a significant and unique artistic event, one that unfolds a crucial and little-understood moment in Egyptian, Arab, and global politics.

For the first edition, the biennale's organizing committee commissioned Alexandrian artist 'Izzat Ibrahim (1919–1993)⁵ to design the poster. (In subsequent years, the committee would establish a competition for the design that they would announce alongside the call for participation.) In the inaugural poster, Ibrahim draws on Hellenic references articulated in a modernist aesthetic.⁶ An almost rectangular white box is superimposed on the dark background of the poster. In its bottom half sits a naked mermaid, her voluptuous body reclining elegantly on the waves. Her figure and the sea below her are created through thick, bold, double outlines, stencil-like, with an art nouveau aesthetic. She leans against and embraces a Greco-Roman column, composed of three paintbrushes. The column towers above her, extending beyond the confines of the white box. As it sweeps below her, passing through her embrace, we realize that the white backdrop she inhabits is in fact an easel, with the column passing through its thumbhole, in its top right-hand corner, three circles of paint. Through his design, Ibrahim seeks to meld images of Alexandria's ancient Mediterranean history with its modern artistic and cultural identity. This striving for a new Mediterreanism was a ubiquitous trope in biennale materials.

At first glance, an international exhibition organized around the Mediterranean basin may appear reminiscent of Egypt's *ancien régime* and its prerevolution intellectual and cultural politics. However, a closer look reveals how the event, shaped by Nasserism and third worldism, imagined and reinscribed the Mediterranean as a much more polyvalent space, a transnational rather than regional one. While the biennale emphasized the Greco-Roman history of Alexandria (and Egypt), it was also a space to construct multiple and shifting subjectivities. It is precisely the fluidity of the Mediterranean that functioned as a malleable category of classification and (national) identity in a time of flux; different editions of the event emphasized different aspects of this identity. Neither definitively European nor Arab, these 1950s and 1960s articulations of the Mediterranean transcended East and West and bridged three continents at once. Exploring these potential subjectivities reveals how artistic and cultural production can help us think and rethink subjectivity and its contestations in the early Nasserist period.

Drawing on materials produced in the first six editions of the biennale—from July 1955 to March 1966—as well as mainstream Egyptian press coverage of the event, I explore the role of the Mediterranean in the

wider cultural politics of postindependence Egypt. I demonstrate how the biennale shaped a fluid geographical space, imbuing it with changing meanings and malleable boundaries. In tracing the links between aesthetics, artistic production, and the political economy that this event forged, I map the shifting meanings of Alexandria and the Mediterranean. In doing so, I contest popular and academic histories that neatly situate the biennale in self-evident dichotomies and binaries. The biennale is a moment that prevailing narratives identify to simultaneously celebrate and mourn the passing of an alluring “cosmopolitanism” into a vulgar “provincialism.” Contesting such narratives and taking the complexity of the work of 1950’s and 1960’s cultural producers seriously destabilizes the seemingly self-evident, binary, and lachrymose understandings of Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism.

MYTHS OF ORIGINS: THE HISTORY OF THE BIENNALE

The history of modern art in Egypt is very much an institutional one, at least in the majority of foundational texts in Arabic, French, and to a lesser degree, English. Even while recognizing the pre-existence of artists and artistic production, the departure point for such narratives is repeatedly Prince Yusuf Kamal’s establishment of the School of Fine Arts (SFA) in Cairo in 1908. The School’s first graduating class is usually referred to as the *Rummad* or pioneer generation⁷ and does not include Alexandrians such as Mahmud Sa’id (1897–1964),⁸ Muhammad Nagi (1888–1956),⁹ and the Wanli brothers¹⁰ (despite their being some of Egypt’s most recognized artists). Unlike their Cairene counterparts, these artists were not formally educated but rather were trained by European artists, often Orientalist painters, in their ateliers.¹¹ Art historians have tended to treat Alexandrian artists collectively—regardless of whether or not their work shares stylistic or thematic concerns—dedicating a separate chapter to them in broader histories of modern art in Egypt.¹² Writings on the biennale adhere to established patterns; the focus continues to be institutional and Cairene and Alexandrian artists are discussed separately as distinct groupings.¹³

To date, the only study that focuses on the biennale is ‘Ismat Dawistashi’s *Binali al-Iskandariyya: Dirasa Tarikhiyya Tawthiqiyya Kamila* [The Alexandria Biennale: A Complete Historical Archival Study]. This work was published on the occasion of the event’s golden jubilee.¹⁴ Dawistashi (1943–) a painter, sculptor, and a native of Alexandria, became the Director of Alexandria Museum of Fine Arts in 1993 and the biennale organizer in 1994. As an aspiring artist, Dawistashi spent his youth attending the biennale and being inspired by the work he saw there. Documenting it later in his career

was a labor of love. Literary critic Hala Halim describes him as “belong[ing] in that category that may best be described as the artist-collector or writer-archivist, particularly prominent in parts of the world where heritage preservation is neglected.”¹⁵ Published at his own expense, Dawistashi’s study is an invaluable archive of the biennale that includes much of the material available for each of the editions, from information on participating countries and artists, to press and publicity material, to organizers’ and participating artists’ correspondence. However, it is most useful as a catalogue of the event’s history rather than a critical engagement with it; Dawistashi’s commentary is for the most part subjective and anecdotal.

The Alexandria Biennale was the brainchild of Husayn Subhi (1906–1987), the director of the Alexandria municipality. During his career in public office, Subhi became something of a patron of the arts; his involvement in the cultural sphere comes through his political appointment. The merging of his two roles is most apparent in the development of the biennale. He was the first to discover a large collection of artworks in the municipality building which had been donated to the city by Edward Friedhein on the condition that they would be housed in a museum. In 1954, Subhi led the initiative to create the Museum of Fine Arts in Alexandria, which would later take his name. The following year he set about establishing the Alexandria Biennale, which he would continue to oversee until his death, to be held in the new museum. Both the museum and the biennale, along with the Alexandria SFA that would open in 1957,¹⁶ were crucial in creating an artistic infrastructure for the city, one it had previously lacked.

In an extended interview with Dawistashi in February 1985, Subhi recalls how the idea of such an exhibition first came into being; when Subhi began considering setting up the event, he approached the Spanish consular, who expressed great enthusiasm.¹⁷ According to Subhi’s recollection of events, both the Spanish consular and his Italian counterpart had had a similar idea, and there had been some contention over which country should host the event. Subhi swept in at the right time, and the Spanish consular was relieved to have him diffuse the situation by taking over. After receiving Madrid’s support, Subhi then approached other consulates and began to plan the event. In Subhi’s narrative about the biennale’s inception—which Dawistashi also repeats in the introduction to his book—the event is presented as one that was desirable to different countries, with several contenders competing to host it. Initially, the Italian consular suggested that each edition of the biennale be hosted in a different city in the Mediterranean basin, modeled on the Mediterranean Games that had opened in Alexandria in 1951.¹⁸ However, Subhi insisted on securing a

permanent home for the biennale in Egypt. Regardless of the accuracy of this story, Subhi and Dawistashi clearly establish the biennale as a momentous event, one that different countries vied to host. Mediterraneanism, and a biennale to institutionalize it, appear as historical inevitabilities in this narrative. Three national representatives simultaneously and independently come up with the idea. It quickly gains momentum among others. The biennale's origin myth, both in its contemporaneous and historical articulations, posits Mediterraneanism as a natural category, one that is geographically grounded, but also spontaneous. Subhi's struggle is primarily with the Italians (after the Spanish quickly step aside) who already host the world's oldest, and arguably most important, art exhibition. That he should triumph over such a worthy opponent makes his victory all the more impressive. The comparison and competition with Venice continued to shape Subhi's vision of his city's biennale. In his introductory note to the catalogue of the third biennale (17 December 1959–17 March 1960), Subhi evidenced the Mediterranean's role in the modern world by identifying two of its cities—Venice and Alexandria—as makers of modern art.¹⁹

ISKANDARIYYA LEIH?: COSMOPOLITANISM'S COLONIAL LEGACY

In their studies of international biennales, Federica and Vittoria Martini suggest that the Alexandria Biennale was established “at a very particular moment in the city's history, when the cultural centrality of Alexandria was declining and the importance of Cairo rising.”^{20,21} This reading adheres to the prevalent narrative which associates Alexandria's heyday with its foreign communities; their departure, beginning in 1956, signals the onset of the city's decline. Edward Said echoes this sentiment in his essay “Cairo and Alexandria,” in which he compares the two cities and concludes that “Alexandria was in fact over: the city celebrated by European travelers with decadent tastes had vanished in the middle 1950s, one of the casualties of the Suez War, which drowned the foreign communities in its wake.”²² Said is not alone in his mourning, for as Will Hanley has argued in his searing critique of the limited effectiveness of the concept of cosmopolitanism within the field of Middle East studies, the deployment of the term cosmopolitan “consistently entails nostalgia for a more tolerant past, along with grief over modern-day Middle Eastern states and societies.”²³ Even while engaging in a critique of the cosmopolitan identity of Alexandria, authors often unwittingly “endorse the cosmopolitan dream reflexively and in spite of themselves.”²⁴ However, they mourn a past that is largely

imagined, for there is little historical evidence that the city was as they wish to remember it.²⁵

Alexandria has had pride of place in local, Arab, and Western imaginings since the late nineteenth century as perhaps the quintessential Mediterranean city. From Constantine P. Cavafy's Hellenistic poems, to Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1957–1960), to Egyptian director Yusif Chahine's autobiographical cinematic quartet (1978–2004), cultural memory has and continues to celebrate Alexandria as “the paradigm case of Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism.”²⁶ However, as Halim has argued, it is no coincidence that Alexandria's cosmopolitan period (1860s–1950s), “overlaps precisely with growing European intervention in the country, the British occupation and hence direct colonial control that ends in the 1950s.”²⁷ Indeed, most of the scholarship on this period fails “to recognize the degree to which Alexandrian cosmopolitanism is complicit with colonialism.”²⁸ This failure has a corollary in scholarly dismissal of Nasserist era artistic and cultural production as necessarily transparent and ideological.

Despite being Egypt's longest running international exhibition, the Alexandria Biennale has received very little critical attention, either within studies of Egyptian or regional art histories or those concerned with the development of international biennales more broadly.²⁹ However, there is much this event can teach us about a Mediterraneanism expansively and fluidly imagined beyond the confines of colonial cosmopolitanism.

THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION

In the event's earliest editions, the number of participating countries varied between seven and ten. The list of participants often reflected the changing regional (and international) political landscape. Some countries participated for the first time shortly after they gained independence; both Morocco and Tunisia began participating in the second biennale (28 December 1957–15 March 1958). During the years of the United Arab Republic,³⁰ the two countries participated as one national pavilion, divided into a northern and a southern section, each with its own curator and curatorial statements.³¹ This bifurcated pavilion reveals the fragility and limitations that characterized the ephemeral experiment in Arab unity.

The nature of a country's participation often demonstrated its relationship with the host country, and sometimes the situation of its community in Egypt. French participation is a case in point. The conversation with

Parisian art movements had been ongoing for half a century. Cairo's SFA was modeled on the *École des Beaux-Arts* and initially staffed by French (and Italian) instructors, artists such as the sculptor Mahmud Mukhtar were sent to study in Paris, and movements like surrealism made an impact on Egyptian artists and thinkers.³² France's pavilion in the first biennale relied on works of French modern art from the private collections of "foreigners" and "Egyptians."³³ The 51 paintings on exhibit included works by Marc Chagall, Andre Derain, Jean Dubuffet, Raoul Dufy, Alfred Sisley, Maurice de Vlaminck, Georges Rouault, and Chaim Soutine.³⁴ From this impressive collection we get some sense of elite taste in mid-century Alexandria. There was a clear appreciation of the School of Paris artists, and particularly for Expressionist, Fauvist, and Cubist painting, on the part of both "local" and "foreign" collectors.³⁵ Dawistashi, in a gesture that both celebrates and laments a certain kind of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism, suggests that the size of this selection gives a sense of the collections of international art in Egypt before Nasser's nationalization policies began in the 1960s, leading to the emigration of foreigners and wealthy Egyptians. However, in contrast to such common misreadings, Robert Mabro has argued the size of this community has always been exaggerated and "the Egyptian population constituted a significant majority, with a ratio of at least three Egyptians to one foreigner."³⁶ Similarly, Dawistashi fails to acknowledge that changes in the frequency and scale of French participation—they did not take part again until the sixth edition in 1965 due to their role in the Tripartite Aggression—speaks to shifts in the political and artistic landscape.

Certainly participation was not a direct or linear expression of high politics; decisions to participate in exhibitions are often more banal, and contingent on individuals' agendas as well as budgetary and organizational concerns. However, what becomes clear in all of these shifts, unexpected continuities, and ruptures is an expansive and expanding idea of the Mediterranean, one that is inflected with a growing third worldism. Indeed, the consistent participation of countries such as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and a broad swath of Arab countries transgressed the boundaries of prior restricted understandings of the Mediterranean. An earlier Mediterraneanism was inextricable from Greco-Roman (read European) heritage as the repository of culture, history, and civilization. But in the 1950s, the locus of cultural, historical, civilization-ary referents shifted to the east, to the west, and to the south.

Beginning with the second edition of the biennale, Sayf Wanli started designing the catalogue covers, and with each edition we see a particular mapping of the Mediterranean that was shaped through a direct encounter with the shifting political arena. However, Wanli's designs were subtle and far from didactic in their engagement with different registers; a Cubist and futurist, he often incorporated more abstract shapes and solid blocks of color in his pieces. His first cover design exemplifies his style and approach and is notable for its simplicity.³⁷ Two sharp bold shapes sit against an emerald green background; a black easel slightly overlaps with a white sculpture, an abstracted human bust. Dawistashi suggests that the sculpture is of a female form.³⁸ However, the figure seems intentionally unidentifiable; there is a quiet dignity in this ambiguity. The simple oval head merges into a long, slender body, widening again at the base for the feet. The only definitive feature is a sharp, almond-shaped eye that gives the statue a Pharaonic air and thus making it look simultaneously modern and ancient. There is a nod to the neo-Pharaonism pioneered by Mukhtar, but a commitment to further abstraction. A solid black line runs down the center of the cover, sliding behind the easel and bust. Similar to Ibrahim's earlier poster, materials from the artist's studio are the focus of the design but here our attention is drawn to them primarily as forms and most intriguing is the relationship between them. The stark contrast between the black and white objects is balanced by the harmonious connection between them, the way in which they cross over the line that boldly divides the cover. The field of green grounds them both. The curve of the easel becomes the arch of the sculpture's back, so that the two objects appear to be connected as one. Given that the second biennale marks the first participation of countries in the African continent (aside from Egypt, of course), Dawistashi reads Wanli's design as the artistic interconnectedness between Europe and Africa.³⁹ But more than representing two specific geographical sites, Wanli seems interested with proximity between artistic traditions once reduced to simple forms. For him the Mediterranean, as a place, but more importantly as an idea and intellectual and political project, exists in the space of overlap.

Wanli draws on many of these elements in his design for the consecutive edition, however, the political dimension is much more explicitly referenced. An easel occupies the length of the right-hand side of the cover. Two streaks of paint, red and black, splash carelessly across the easel, separated by a white strip with the two green stars of the flag for the United Arab Republic. Coming out from behind it, the silhouette of a female

figure, statuesque, seated on the waves. In her hand, she holds up a small boat with two sails, perhaps representing the two countries in the union or simply emphasizing the sea as the expansive, unifying force. The short-lived unity between two Arab countries, one of the few political manifestations of Arab nationalism, is clearly being emphasized here. However, Wanli articulates this through the twin registers of the artistic and the nautical, rather than exclusively Arab nationalist symbols. The celebration of the union thus becomes the celebrations of new artistic tradition.

WITHIN AND BEYOND THE NATION STATE

The Alexandria Biennale, like its predecessors, adopted the structure of national pavilions, usually organized by local consulates. Initially, organizers of the Egyptian representation issued an open call in the national press that invited artists to submit works for consideration, as opposed to the nomination system that would be later adopted and would result in fewer participants.⁴⁰ Consequently, throughout the earliest editions of the biennale, the Egyptian pavilion was quite impressive in terms of scale. The inaugural exhibition, for example, included 92 locally based artists—the majority of whom were painters—who exhibited 1621 artworks.⁴¹

It is worth noting here that participation in the Egyptian wing was not strictly based on national identity. Both “Egyptian” and “foreign” artists residing in Egypt were eligible and encouraged to take part. According to Dawistashi’s count, of the 1100 artists who participated in the Egyptian pavilion during the biennale’s first 50 years, 105 of were identified as “foreign [*ajanib*] artists who lived in Egypt.”⁴² This categorization of participants is echoed in an advertisement in *al-Akhhbar* newspaper calling for submissions for the third edition of the biennale. The announcement calls upon “Arab and foreign [*ajanib*] artists residing in the United Arab Republic” to submit their work.⁴³ In both the 1959 advertisements and Dawistashi’s more recent assessment, the exact definition of “foreigner” is not clear. Thus, despite retroactive readings of the 1950s and 1960s as a time of quickly consolidating and exclusionary identities, we see that “local” and “foreign” were by no means distinct and fixed. There has been a tendency on the part of art historians to both fetishize and lament the existence of a foreign artistic community in Egypt, and especially in Alexandria⁴⁴ and Dawistashi cites the involvement of local foreigners under the category of Egyptian as evidence of the once cosmopolitan make up and inclusive spirit of Egyptian society.⁴⁵ However, what the guidelines of

biennale participation demonstrate is that understandings of identity were not just fluid, but also pragmatic.

As the early structure of the biennale illustrates, there was an emphasis on showcasing as many artists and art works as possible, so as to demonstrate the variety and scale of the Egyptian art scene. As Hana Simika, the director of the museum and *commissaire*⁴⁶ of the first biennale, pointed out in his introduction to the catalogue, “three consecutive generations of Egyptian artists have taken part in enriching the Egyptian school of art.”⁴⁷ The biennale was intended to provide the art world an opportunity to assess its “development.” It was a space that offered a thorough representation of “the different directions and levels” of the Egyptian art scene. It gave audiences a chance to “measure and compare” the Egyptian artistic revival with its regional counterparts.⁴⁸ The event has a dual function for the Egyptian organizers; it is both a chance to display the artistic innovations of the recent decades and to assess them in relation to neighboring art scenes. The lists of exhibiting artists from the earliest editions reflect this vision; participants range from established figures in Egypt’s second and third generation to unfamiliar amateur artists.⁴⁹ The inclusion of local foreigners is very much in line with a broader curatorial policy whereby quantity is used to demonstrate range and diversity.⁵⁰ Rather than being indicative of the last gasps of a cosmopolitanism that tolerated or indeed celebrated “foreign” communities, this was a pragmatic strategy to expand participation in Egyptian pavilion. Since foreigners living in Egypt had always played an active role in the local art scene, excluding them would have meant limiting the potential scale of Egyptian representation.

In returning to Ibrahim’s poster for the first edition mentioned at the beginning of this article, the broadness of the audience imagined is evident. The image on the poster is framed from above and below by informative text, in Arabic and French. However, the texts are not parallel translations; each provides the viewer with slightly different information. The Arabic text, at the top of the poster reads, “In celebration of the anniversary of the blessed revolution the Alexandria municipality holds the first Alexandria Exhibition for Arts from the Mediterranean countries.” Below the image, the French text reads: “Countries Bordering the Mediterranean at the Museum of Fine Arts on Menasche Street 26 July–15 September 1955.” Here we see the need to emphasize for a local (and regional) Arabic-speaking audience the commemorative nature of the event; the “blessed revolution” is the source of celebration, perhaps more significant than the biennale itself. Also noteworthy is that the Arabic text refers to the biennale as “the first Alexandria

exhibition,” making the Egyptian city, as a Mediterranean city the focal point.⁵¹ French visitors received a different message. The focus here is on the Mediterranean both as a unified geographical space and as a concept for the exhibition. The specific location within this larger region is underplayed in favor of the whole. Also emphasized is the Museum of Fine Arts as the venue, the recent establishment of which confirms the city’s serious commitment to the arts. The logistical information is also only provided in French, perhaps to guide an audience less familiar. Clearly, this bilingual poster performed two dual roles for two different audiences. For Arabic speakers, Alexandria’s place in the celebration of the anniversary of the revolution is crucial; it is the city repeatedly chosen for the celebration of both political and cultural achievements (and it would be once again, a year later when Nasser would announce the nationalization of the Suez Canal in the city’s al-Mansheya Square). For the Francophone audience, the regional connections at the heart of the exhibition are highlighted.

However, it is important to remember that there was a third target audience, a bilingual one that would have been equally comfortable with Arabic and French (Egypt’s lingua franca since the late nineteenth century). The conversation surrounding modern art in Egypt had been bilingual from the outset. Since its establishment, the SFA had produced all its publicity material in both languages, as did galleries and exhibition spaces. Writing on the fine arts was prolific in Arabic and French, with some publications including both.⁵² This tradition endured in 1950s and 1960s; the catalog of the inaugural edition of biennale was produced in the both languages.⁵³ The posters and medals would also continue to be bilingual. With this bilingualism, biennale organizers acknowledged (rather than denied or attempted to erase) the history and nature of the fine arts in Egypt as one entangled in a specific colonial and class legacy. However, by using the two languages somewhat differently in the poster discussed above, that is to convey different kinds of information, there is an institutional attempt to embrace a revolutionary and a Mediterranean narrative simultaneously, rendering them complementary rather than contradictory. This process was contingent, hesitant, and emerged, in part intentionally, and in part not, as one that challenged the rigidity of geographical imaginings.

ISKANDARIYYA, KAMAN WI KAMAN

This new, polyvalent geography is reinscribed through Gamal al-Sagini’s (1917–1977)^{54,55} designs for the biennale’s commemorative medals. The

design for the first commemorative medal, the image of which also featured on the inside cover of the catalogue, captures the multiple registers at play in this expanded vision of the Mediterranean. The layered, palimpsestic nature of the design is an attempt to unearth a range of references simultaneously. On one side, the statuesque profile of the Alexandria composer and musician Sayed Darwish (1892–1923)—the father of Egyptian and Arabic popular music—features prominently in the center.⁵⁶ Overlaid on Darwish’s profile are a number of objects: a map of the Mediterranean is nestled in his thick, curly hair, below which sits a radiant sun, its pointed rays stylistically echoing Greek symbolism. On the right-hand side of Darwish’s profile, covering his ear and the back of his head, is a range of art supplies; an easel and paintbrushes, what appears to be a canvas as well sculptures of some sort, one an almost Pharaonic-looking bust. Surrounding this image, along the circumference of the medal, runs the text: “Pays de la Méditerranée Première Biennale d’Alexandrie 1955.” On the reverse side of the medal is the coat of arms of the city of Alexandria: a shield on which a woman dressed in white flowing robes, most likely Cleopatra, floats across the sea toward the radiating light of Pharos (the city’s infamous lighthouse), holding a white sail. In the sky above the lighthouse hangs the crescent moon containing three stars, borrowed from the Egyptian flag.⁵⁷ Above the shield sits a crown, resembling the top of towers of the Qaitbay Citadel, built at the same time as the lighthouse. The French engraving on the crown reads “the city of Alexandria,” below the shield “Alexandria” in Arabic.⁵⁸

While al-Sagini goes on to produce the medals for subsequent editions of the biennale, this initial contribution is significant in that it is the only one that explicitly captures and commemorates an individual.⁵⁹ As a member of the artist collective *Jama'at al-Fann al-Mu'asir* (the Contemporary Art Group),⁶⁰ which included artists such as ‘Abdel Hadi al-Gazzar (1925–1966)⁶¹ and Hamid Nada (1924–1990),⁶² al-Sagini was interested in the exploring Egyptian folkloric traditions in his work, particularly the festival arts. The choice and appeal of Darwish for the commemorative medal is therefore not surprising; the composer and musician himself drew in folkloric themes, seamlessly incorporating a combination of colloquial and formal Arabic in his songs. His vision of a modernism grounded in popular culture spoke directly to the ways in which al-Sagini and his contemporaries were seeking to develop their artistic practices; Darwish personifies a modernity that is inspired by local tradition. (Al-Sagini’s later designs drew more on symbols from the sea itself for inspiration, for example, a statuesque mermaid seated

on the city's coat of arms,⁶³ or a bloated fish which carried a map of the Mediterranean and art supplies on its scales.)⁶⁴ Much like Ibrahim's poster discussed above, al-Sagini's medal captured the hybridity at the heart of biennale's Mediterraneanism. Alongside the figure of Darwish—and all that he represents for the Arabic (music) tradition—al-Sagini incorporated both elements of the Alexandria's Greco-Roman past and symbols of its modern artistic movements. Art supplies featured repeatedly in his designs—as well as in subsequent posters and catalog covers—most often in the form of an easel and brushes as well as some kind of sculpture, usually a bust. These elements represented the art forms most prominently exhibited in the biennale, but also those that were considered to most epitomize the development of modern art. Egyptian intellectuals and cultural critics had been lamenting the absence or “lack” of a painting and sculpture tradition since the early twentieth century. The repeated presence of these signifiers in the material surrounding the biennale speaks to a continued anxiety on the part of these artists and a need to reaffirm the place of these art forms within the Egyptian artistic tradition. Al-Sagini, therefore, attempts to capture an Alexandrian modernism that is based on a range of distinct influences, seamlessly woven together.

CONCLUSION

In examining the earliest editions of the Alexandria Biennale—an event that is largely understudied by scholars interested in cultural production in mid-twentieth century Egypt—a much more complicated understanding of the Mediterranean begins to surface. Through the biennale's various editions, we find a constant reformulation and expansion of this geographic space, one that resist Eurocentric restrictions and instead imagines a fluid, polyvalent space. Influenced by nonalignment and third-worldist movements of the time, the Alexandria biennale challenges assumptions about early Nasserist Egypt and encourages us to reconsider understandings of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism, which is all too often declared dead with the end of colonial presence.

NOTES

1. The first biennale ran until 15 September 1955. After the first edition, the exhibition moved to its more regular timeslot from December to March.

2. Its Cairene counterpart was established in 1984 as part of the Mubarak regime's expanding cultural policies.
3. The Bandung Conference, which took place on 18–24 April 1955, was a meeting of 29 mostly newly independent Asian and African states, in Bandung Indonesia. The conference laid the foundations for the Non-Aligned Movement, which would be established in Belgrade in 1961 and in which Gamal Abdel Nasser would play a key role alongside Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesian president Sukarno, Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah, and Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito. Nasser became president of the movement in 1964.
4. On 26 July 1956, in a two-and-a-half hour speech delivered in Alexandria, Nasser announced his decision to nationalize the then British- and French-owned Suez Canal. This led to the Tripartite Aggression the following October, in which Israel, Britain, and France invaded Egypt.
5. 'Izzat Ibrahim was a prolific painter who documented through his work much of the life and ancient ruins of Alexandria. He began his career in restoration in the Greco-Roman museum in Alexandria before moving to the Museum of Fine Arts where he worked as a curator. He is particularly known for his extensive work, almost 300 pieces, on Sayed Darwish. In 1961, Ibrahim had an exhibition in commemorating the singer/composer.
6. For a reproduction of this poster see 'Ismat Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya: Dirasa Tarikhiyya Tawthiqiyya Kamila*, Catalogue 77 (Cairo: 2005), 89.
7. The pioneering generation includes Mahmud Mukhtar, Raghib 'Ayad, Muhammad Hassan, Yusuf Kamil, to name but a few. For a study of this generation see Badr al-Din Abu Ghazi, *Al-Funun al-Jamila fi Misr: Jil min al-Ruwvad* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kitab, 1975).
8. Mahmud Sa'id, the son of the Prime Minister Muhammad Sa'id, studied law in Paris where he discovered his love of painting. Upon returning to Egypt he worked as an assistant attorney, however, he continued to paint and became one of Egypt's most famous painters. For a summary of his life and work see Badr al-Din Abu Ghazi, *Mahmud Sa'id* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kitab, 1972).
9. The painter Muhammad Nagi was the first Egyptian Dean of the SFA (1937–1939). For a study of his life and work as well as reproductions of some of his writings see 'Iffat Naghi and Christine Roussillon, *Mohamed Naghi (1888–1956): Un impressioniste égyptien* (Cairo: Les Cahiers de Chabramant, 1988).
10. Brothers Sayf (1906–1979) and Adham Wanli (1908–1959) trained in the Italian artist Otorino Becchi's studio in Alexandria before setting up their

- own together in 1942. Sayf taught at the Alexandria College of Fine Arts and was assigned by the state to record the Nubian landscape before its destruction during the creation of Lake Nasser. He went on to win a number of state prizes. For a study of the brothers' lives and works see Kamal Malakh and Subhi Sharuni, *al-Ikhwan Sayf wa-Adham Wanli* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kitab, 1991).
11. For a discussion of the foreign artists living and working in Egypt at the turn of the century see Aime Azar, *La peinture moderne en Egypte* (Cairo: Les edition nouvelles, 1951), 295–309.
 12. The insistence on such a separation is shaped by a simultaneous focus on Cairo's cultural centrality and on Alexandria's cosmopolitan exceptionalism. For an example, see Rushdi Iskandar, Kamal al-Malakh, and Subhi al-Sharuni, *Thamanun Sana min al-Fann* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kitab, 1991), 69–91.
 13. For an example of this see Kamal al-Gawali, "al-Iskandariyya Tasta'id li-l-Binali al-Dawli al-Khamis," *al-Masa'* December 1963, reproduced in Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 89.
 14. The 50-year anniversary marks the 23rd edition of the biennale. An earlier version was published for the 40th anniversary in 1994. For a discussion of the golden jubilee and the publication of the book see Hala Halim, "Mediterranean Hyphens," *al-Abram Weekly*, 1–7 December 2005.
 15. Ibid.
 16. At the Faculty of Fine Arts students could specialize in one of five departments: architecture, painting, design, printmaking, and sculpture. The sculptor Ahmad Osman (1907–1965) was the first dean of the school and was himself an established artist, winning the first prize at the fourth biennale for his sculpture of Ahmed Shawqi (1868–1932), the Egyptian poet and playwright known as "the Prince of Poets," and who is credited with pioneering the modern Arabic literary movement. Given his interest in pan-Arabism, Shawqi seems like a fitting choice.
 17. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 503.
 18. The Mediterranean Games were established by Muhammad Tahir Pasha (1879–1970) who was chairman of the Egyptian Olympic Committee at the time. They take part every four years and are hosted by a different country bordering the Mediterranean.
 19. Quoted in Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 55.
 20. *Iskandariyya Leih?* (Alexandria Why?) is the title of the first film in Yusif Chahine's quartet.
 21. *Just Another Exhibition: Storie e Politiche delle Biennali Histories and Politics of Biennials* (Milan: Postmedia, 2011), 108.
 22. Edward W. Said, "Cairo and Alexandria," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2002), 705.

23. Will Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies," *History Compass*, 6/5 (2008), 1346.
24. *Ibid.*, 1355.
25. *Ibid.*, 1351. Hanley argues that "there are precious few blended accounts of cultural adaption in these cities" meaning Alexandria, Beirut, and Haifa, but instead they were "composites of several discrete communities."
26. Sami Zubaida, "Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East," in *Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East*, ed. Roel Meijer (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 26.
27. Hala Halim, *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism: An Archive* (New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2013), 3.
28. *Ibid.*
29. The 25th edition, which took place from 17 December 2009 to 31 January 2010, attracted some international attention after the Algerian pavilion was cancelled and selected artist Zineb Sedira was disinvited following public protest after mob violence by both Algerian and Egyptian football fans, before and after the Algerian defeat of the Egyptian team in the World Cup qualifying match in November 2009. After a four-year hiatus following the 2011 uprising, the 26th edition was held in June 2014.
30. The United Arab Republic was the three-year political union between Egypt and Syria (1958–1961).
31. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 55. The *commissaire* for the Egyptian section was the *Ruwaad* artist Muhammad Hassan, one of the earliest graduates of the SFA. After graduating he taught in various art institutions and served in governmental positions for 42 years, including the dean of the SFA (1939–1941). His earliest work included caricatures in *al-Kashkul* and *al-Siyasa*. His oil paintings were primarily academic in style. For a summary of his life and examples of his work see Badr al-Din Abu Ghazi, *al-Funun al-Jamila fi Misr*, 225–252.
32. For a growing archive on the Egyptian surrealists, visit <http://www.egyptiansurrealism.com/>.
33. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 12. It is worth noting that the distinction between the categories of "foreign" and "local" were not always distinct or fixed up to this point. Recent scholarship interrogates understandings of these categories, particularly in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Alexandria. For example, for an examination of the role death and burial played in producing such distinctions see Shane Minkin, "Documenting Death: Inquest, Governance and Belonging in 1890s Alexandria," in *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance*, eds. Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), 31–56.
34. *Ibid.*

35. Ibid.
36. Robert Mabro, "Alexandria 1860–1960: The Cosmopolitan Identity," in *Alexandria: Real and Imagined*, ed. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (London: Ashgate, 2004), 247–262; quotation from 247–248.
37. For a reproduction see Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 38.
38. Ibid., 43.
39. Ibid.
40. This changes by the fifth edition in 1963. For a full reproduction of this letter see Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 99.
41. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 29.
42. Ibid., 11.
43. Ibid., 59.
44. For examples of this see Aime Azar, *La peinture moderne en Egypte* (Cairo: Les edition nouvelles, 1951), 295–309.
45. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 29.
46. This is the term that continues to be used in Egypt to refer to a curator.
47. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 29.
48. Ibid.
49. The first generation of modern Egyptian artists tended to be involved on an organizational level. For an overview of the development of the first three generations of Egyptian modern artists see Caroline Williams, "Twentieth-Century Egyptian Art: The Pioneers, 1920–52," in Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni eds., *Re-envisioning Egypt 1919–1952* (Cairo: The American U of Cairo P, 2005), 426–447.
50. It is worth noting that the question of scale continues to be important in discussions of the Biennale; Dawistashi repeatedly evokes the number of participants in any given year as a mark of the event's success and importance.
51. The biennale is interchangeably referred to as "the Alexandria Exhibition," "the Alexandria Biennale," and "the Alexandria Biennale for the Mediterranean Countries" in Arabic press and publication material.
52. For example, the art journal *Sawt el-Fannan* [The Voice of the Artist] (1950–1952) goes from being produced entirely in Arabic to becoming a bilingual publication that included translations of its contents into French. For more on *Sawt el-Fannan* see Dina A. Ramadan, "Cultivating Taste, Creating the Modern Subject: *Sawt el-Fannan* and Art Criticism in 1950s Egypt," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 42, no. 1&2 (2008), 26–31.
53. Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 27. Following the first biennale, participating countries started to produce their own catalogues for their individual pavilion.
54. *Iskandariyya, Kaman wi Kaman* [Alexandria Again and Forever] (1989) is the title of the third film in Chahine's Alexandria quartet.

55. The sculptor Gamal al-Sagini was a graduate of the School of Fine Arts (1934–1938) and had also studied in Paris and Rome. He was greatly influenced by the English sculptor Henry Moore (1898–1986). He designed the medals for the first six editions of the biennale, aside from the fifth. He was also a recipient of first prize for sculpture in the first biennale.
56. Sayed Darwish was a pioneer of the Arabic operetta, influenced by both Verdi and Wagner. The Alexandria Opera House—opened in 1921 and named the Mohamed Ali Opera House—was named after him following his death. Darwish was closely involved with the Egyptian nationalist movement and composed the music for the Egyptian national anthem, *Biladi, Biladi, Biladi* (lyrics by Muhammad Yunis-al Qadi) that was adopted in 1979.
57. The three stars are considered to represent the three religions of Egypt: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In 1953 the Free Officers changed the Egyptian flag to one similar to today’s, however, they kept the crescent moon and stars on a green backdrop on the breast of the Saladin’s eagle. For a more detailed of the transformation of the Egyptian flag see Arthur Goldschmidt, *Historical Dictionary of Egypt* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 165.
58. There are variations of the coat of arms in which the positions of the Arabic and French texts are reversed.
59. Al-Sagini went on to produce the commemorative medals of Egyptian icons, such as Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Umm Kulthum and Taha Husayn.
60. The painter Husayn Yusuf Amin (1904–1984) formed the Contemporary Art Group with a desire to develop an Egyptian art free from Western influence. The group held their first exhibition in 1946, held exhibitions throughout 1940s and 1950s in Cairo.
61. Abdel Hadi al-Gazzar was a painter who began his career representing the popular neighborhoods of Cairo and was particularly interested in the festival culture. After 1952, he became a strong supporter of the revolution and his style and interests changed, becoming more focused on the relationship between man and technology. He is perhaps most famous for his work “The Charter” (1962) and “The Man of the High Dam” (1964). For a detailed analysis of the work of al-Gazzar see Alain and Christine Roussillon, eds., *Abdel Hadi al-Gazzar: An Egyptian Painter* (Cairo: Elias Modern Press, 1990).
62. <http://www.arteeast.org/2012/03/02/article-by-naim-atiyya/>.
63. This was the medal design for the second edition in 1957. For a reproduction see Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 37.
64. This was the design for the third edition in 1959. For a reproduction see Dawistashi, *Binali al-Iskandariyya*, 60.

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