

EDITED BY YASSER ELHARIRY & EDWIGE TAMALET TALBAYEV

# CRITICALLY MEDITERRANEAN

*Temporalities, Aesthetics, and Deployments  
of a Sea in Crisis*

MEDITERRANEAN  
PERSPECTIVES



# Mediterranean Perspectives

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University of Colorado-Boulder  
Boulder, CO, USA

Sharon Kinoshita

University of California Santa Cruz  
Santa Cruz, CA, USA

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yasser elhariry • Edwige Tamalet Talbayev  
Editors

# Critically Mediterranean

Temporalities, Aesthetics, and Deployments  
of a Sea in Crisis

palgrave  
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*Editors*

yasser elhariry  
Dartmouth College  
Hanover, NH, USA

Edwige Tamalet Talbayev  
Tulane University  
New Orleans, LA, USA

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Our initial efforts in thinking about the modern and contemporary Mediterraneans followed extensive correspondence and long conversations, and culminated in a three-day, five-panel seminar during the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association, held at New York University in March 2014. Entitled “About the Mediterranean: Cities, Capital(s), and the Production of Culture,” our seminar probed the extent to which imperial capitals and peripheral cities around the Mediterranean littoral played a central role as the sites of the emergence, creation, and production of historical, cultural, artistic, and religious modes of expression. It sought to excavate the layered cultural and artistic memories of mythical and historical Mediterranean cities. Through a comparative study of visual and literary representations, the collective vision of the seminar outlined the traces of a transhistorical and interdisciplinary genealogy of Mediterranean capitals that spoke to both their local relevance and their global appeal. Although one of our aims was to question the relevance of the concept of the Mediterranean as a field of inquiry, as a site of knowledge production, and as a cross-disciplinary nexus, our primary concern then was, ultimately, to bridge the gap in Mediterranean studies between pre-modern and early modern scholarship, and research in the modern and contemporary periods. For the spirited debate around Greenwich Village and SoHo, we wish to thank all of our seminar participants: Chen Bar-Itzhak, Ziad Bentahar, Alexander Bevilacqua, Maya Boutaghou, Marlene Eberhart, Hoda El Shakry, Federica Frediani, Maria Hadjipolycarpou, Ruth Jones, Sharon Kinoshita, Elizabeth Marcus, Ethan Pack, Erin Roark, Toby Wikström, and Oumelbanine Zhiri. Adrian W. B.

Randolph provided support for our reception at the Pegu Club on West Houston in his capacity as then Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities at Dartmouth College.

Following our initial meeting, our intentions in critically conceiving of the contemporary Mediterranean squarely put the focus on recent decades, and even recent years. Our initial focus was permanently transformed into a temporal one that questioned how the Mediterranean lends itself to pluralities of temporal divisions. The next move was a panel entitled “Mediterranean Times: Past, Futurity, Afterwardness” with some of the contributors to this volume during the Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association in Austin in January 2016. The invaluable contributions of Norbert Bugeja, Michal Raizen, and Veli Yashin advanced our interrogations of temporality in the Mediterranean and the discipline of Mediterranean studies, with their concurrent and ever-contentious striations, layerings, and overlappings of time and history.

With the generous support of the Leslie Center for the Humanities and the Guthrie Fund of the Department of French and Italian at Dartmouth College, we were able to meet a third time in Hanover, New Hampshire, in November 2016 with all contributors to this volume in order to discuss and workshop our material together. David Alvarez and Claudia Esposito joined us for the weekend-long series of meetings and discussions, as did Michèle Hannoosh, who delivered a closing lecture entitled “Practices of Photography: Circulation & Mobility in the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean.” For having made these events possible, we wish to thank the former director of the Leslie Center, Colleen Boggs, and the Advisory Committee for funding our project, as well as Graziella Parati for welcoming us in her capacity as the center’s new director. At the Department of French and Italian, we wish to thank Andrea Tarnowski, Nancy Canepa, and Robert St. Clair, who served on the Guthrie Committee, for choosing to fund our project.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Hakim Abderrezak** is associate professor in the Department of French and Italian at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (USA). His research focuses on the Mediterranean region. He is the author of *Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and the Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music* (2016). A major part of his work examines representations of clandestine sea crossings in works that have appeared in Arabic, French, and Spanish. He has contributed chapters and published articles in such journals as *SITES: Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* and *The Journal of North African Studies*, and has co-edited a special issue of *Expressions Maghrébines* (2012).

**John Baldacchino** is professor and director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Arts Institute. He was faculty in the universities of Dundee (Scotland), Falmouth (England), Columbia (New York), Robert Gordon (Scotland), and Warwick (England). He is the author of *Post-Marxist Marxism* (1996), *Easels of Utopia* (1998), *Avant-Nostalgia* (2002), *Education Beyond Education* (2009), *Makings of the Sea* (2010), *Art's Way Out* (2012), *John Dewey* (2014), co-author of *Democracy Without Confession* (2013), and coeditor of *Mediterranean Art Education* (2013) and *Kenneth Wain* (2014). Three other books are due in 2018, and a forthcoming monograph on Ivan Illich. He is editor of the forthcoming *Wiley Blackwell's Encyclopedia of Art & Design Education: Histories and Philosophies*.

**Naor Ben-Yehoyada** is assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University (USA). His work examines unauthorized migration, criminal justice, the aftermath of development, and transnational political imaginaries in the central and eastern Mediterranean. His book, *The Mediterranean Incarnate: Transnational Region Formation between Sicily and Tunisia since World War II* (2017), offers a historical anthropology of the recent re-emergence of the Mediterranean as an example for the processes through which transnational regions form and dissipate. His current work follows anti-Mafia investigators and the perpetual debate about what the Mafia is.

**Norbert Bugeja** is senior lecturer in postcolonial studies at the Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta. He has published extensively on questions of postcoloniality and literature, historical memory, and political space in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and North Africa regions. He is vice chair of Fondazzjoni IDEAT, an intellectual think-tank, and a member of the European Network of Political Foundations.

**Antonis Danos** is associate professor of art history and theory in the Department of Fine Arts, Cyprus University of Technology. His research and publications have mostly focused on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Greek art and culture, particularly on the construction of collective (national and cultural) identities; and on modern and contemporary Cypriot art and culture, particularly on the experience of modernity in the framework of colonialism/postcolonialism and within the wider Mediterranean milieu. He has curated exhibitions of modern and contemporary Cypriot art in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and the UK.

**Annika Döring** studied philosophy and art history in Bochum and Hamburg (Germany), and has worked at the Center for Mediterranean Studies in Bochum. She has published on the importance of animals for the formation of man in the image of god, a study of pansophy in the work of the sixteenth-/seventeenth-century Czech philosopher, pedagogue, and theologian John Amos Comenius. She is currently science manager and researcher in the department of scientific communication of the Project NUCLEUS, which is funded by the European Commission. Döring works with an international team whose objectives are to unravel how scientific communication works in different cultural environments. Within this context, she has undertaken fieldtrips to Scotland, Ireland, and China. The aim of the project is to make scientific results more useful for

the non-academic public. She has also done extensive work as a voice-over artist. She is an accomplished painter, and her work has been shown at several exhibits, most recently at the Galerie M Beck in Homburg.

**yasser elhariry** is assistant professor of French at Dartmouth College and writer in residence in the Frederick Lewis Allen Room in the New York Public Library (USA). His essay “Abdelwahab Meddeb, Sufi Poets & the New Francophone Lyric” was awarded the Modern Language Association’s 53rd Annual William Riley Parker Prize. He is the author of *Pacifist Invasions: Arabic, Translation & the Postfrancophone Lyric* (2017), and guest editor of the special issue of *Expressions maghrébines* on *Cultures of Mysticism* (2017).

**Claudio Fogu** is associate professor of Italian studies at University of California, Santa Barbara (USA). He is the author of *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (2003) and co-editor of *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (2006) and *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* (2016). He is the co-founder of two digital journals, *Zapruder World* and *California Italian Studies* (of which he co-edited the inaugural volume in 2009–10 dedicated to “Italy in The Mediterranean.” He is currently working on his second monograph, provisionally entitled *Making Italians, Making Southerners: The View from the Mediterranean*.

**Olivia C. Harrison** is associate professor of French, comparative literature, and Middle East studies at the University of Southern California (USA). Her research focuses on postcolonial North African, Middle Eastern, and French literature and film, with a particular emphasis on transcolonial affiliations between writers and intellectuals from the global South. She is the author of *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (2016) and, with Teresa Villa-Ignacio, coeditor of *Souffles-Anfas: A Critical Anthology from the Moroccan Journal of Culture and Politics* (2016) and *Translating the Maghreb* (2016), a special issue of *Expressions Maghrébines*.

**Peregrine Horden** is professor of medieval history at Royal Holloway, University of London, and an extraordinary research fellow of All Souls College, Oxford (UK). He is co-author, with Nicholas Purcell, of *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), of its successor (forthcoming), and of a collection of supplementary studies to be entitled *The Boundless Sea*. With Sharon Kinoshita he co-edited *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (2014). He also works on the history of medicine and charity in the Middle Ages.

**Isabelle Keller-Privat** is associate professor at the Université Toulouse II–Jean Jaurès (France), where she teaches English literature and translation. She has recently published the first detailed study of Lawrence Durrell’s poetry at the Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest—*Between the Lines. L’écriture du déchirement dans la poésie de Lawrence Durrell*—which she has just finished translating into English for publication.

**Michal Raizen** is an assistant professor of comparative literature at Ohio Wesleyan University (USA). Her research interests include Arab-Jewish studies, Franco-Maghrebi literatures, Hebrew-Arabic translation, contemporary Egyptian literature and culture, and ethnomusicology. Her current book project addresses an emerging literary and cinematic phenomenon characterized by a deliberate engagement with the cultural iconicity associated with the musical all-stars of the Arabic-speaking world. She has taught courses on cinemas of the Middle East, space and place in literature and film, Arabic graphic and experimental novels, love and sexuality in the literary arts of the Mediterranean, and cosmopolitanism.

**Jonathan H. Shannon** is professor and chair in the Department of Anthropology, Hunter College, City University of New York (CUNY), and a member of the doctoral faculties in music and anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center (USA). His research and writing focus on aesthetics and music performance in the Arab world and Mediterranean, with a special focus on Syria, Morocco, Spain, and Turkey. He is the author of numerous articles and three books: *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria* (2006), *A Wintry Day in Damascus: Syrian Stories* (2012), and *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean* (2015).

**Edwige Tamalet Talbayev** is associate professor of French at Tulane University (USA). Her research focuses on the intersection of modernity, postcolonialism, and transnationalism in the Maghreb–Mediterranean contact zone. She is the author of *The Transcontinental Maghreb: Francophone Literature across the Mediterranean* (2017) and co-editor of *The Mediterranean Maghreb: Literature and Plurilingualism* (2012). She is editor of *Expressions maghrébines*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Coordination Internationale des Chercheurs sur les Littératures Maghrébines. Prior to coming to Tulane, she was assistant professor of French at Yale University and an affiliate of the MacMillan Center at Yale (USA).

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

**Hakim Abderrezak** Department of French and Italian, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Minneapolis, MN, USA

**John Baldacchino** University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI, USA

**Naor Ben-Yehoyada** Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

**Norbert Bugeja** Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

**Antonis Danos** Department of Fine Arts, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus

**Annika Döring** Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum, Germany

**yasser elhariry** Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA

**Claudio Fogu** University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA, USA

**Olivia C. Harrison** University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

**Peregrine Horden** Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK  
All Souls College, Oxford University, Oxford, UK

**Isabelle Keller-Privat** Université Toulouse—II Jean Jaurès, Toulouse, France

**Michal Raizen** Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH, USA

**Jonathan H. Shannon** Department of Anthropology, Hunter College,  
City University of New York, New York, NY, USA

**Edwige Tamalet Talbayev** Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, USA



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## CHAPTER 1

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# Critically Mediterranean: An Introduction

*yasser elhariry and Edwige Tamalet Talbayev*

*They wait for the boat then cast the heavy cordage which unfurls in the air, lasso-like, their movements are splendid [...] they make memory emerge, they cut through the continuity of time to make the island's memory surface through their movements, and they do it all in the present of the instant; when I set foot on the concrete pier, I am short of breath, my heart starts beating wildly, and I remember this moment in exacting detail, it stands in my memory like an inaugural scene.*  
*Maylis de Kerangal, à ce stade de la nuit (2015: 50)*

This foundational episode anchoring Maylis de Kerangal's reflection on the Mediterranean's memorial density provides a striking illustration of the fundamental tension underlying most historically bound investigations of the Mediterranean in modernity. On the one hand, the narrative stages the romanticized portrayal of the Stromboli sailors to whom the narrative voice alludes, a revisitation of well-known orientalist tropes that relegate the Mediterranean region outside the

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y. elhariry (✉)  
Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA

E. T. Talbayev  
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, USA

purview of history: there, the Mediterranean figures a site of uninterrupted continuity, both impervious to change and ensnared in a circular temporality at cross purposes with the ever-unfolding telos of North-Western European modernity.<sup>1</sup> On the other, and at the extreme end of de Kerangal's historically bound, linear chronology, stands the instant, the present in its most elusive form, the now, throbbing with a sense of urgency crisscrossed with indeterminacy—the mark of unfathomable, endless contemporaneity. For de Kerangal, who like any North-Western European visitor to the Mediterranean engages the grand narrative of history from the privileged perspective of agency, the instant purveys delightful disorientation, an exhilarating loss of coordinates conducive to an affective rerooting of her distressed, modern subjectivity in the nurturing strata of Mediterranean “memory.” (She even speaks of her excavation of the affective resonance of the Mediterranean as a *stratigraphie* [51].) Yet through the filter of her narrative's temporal dichotomy, the instant of this encounter, though ripe with temporal possibilities, loses its sharpness; it folds back into the dense texture of the Mediterranean's stillness, short-circuiting any attempt to reshuffle the distribution of historical agency and temporal existence between the two groups. At the antipodes of de Kerangal's mode of dwelling in the instant—the foundation of her relation to and relation of Mediterranean reality—the sailors' entrapment in the infernal tyranny of the everlasting present begrudges them the same recognition as historical beings that the narrator is afforded. De Kerangal's binary temporality purveys either precise coincidence with the unfolding of teleological time in the case of the narrative voice, or perfect exclusion from the order of historical existence in the case of the sailors. Her perspective can only conceive of historicity as a zero-sum proposition, which echoes the inured dichotomies that have historically pitched a hegemonic North-Western Europe against its contiguous Mediterranean peripheries.

Counter to de Kerangal's dual temporal mode, French historian François Hartog has forcefully delineated the contours of a new contemporary experience of time dubbed “presentism”: a temporality of crisis featuring novel collocations of past, present, and future, in which “the distance between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation has been

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Glissant (1990: 46, 1996: 14–15, 1997: 729, 2009: 50).

stretched to its limit, to breaking point” (2015: 17).<sup>2</sup> Hartog takes account of the disengagement of historical time from future-oriented politics. In his presentist model, praxis remains irremediably mired in the inconsequentiality of a never-ending present, thus posing the question of a suspended “production of historical time” within our contemporary moment (17). Hartog suggests that

perhaps this is what generates today’s sense of a permanent, elusive, and almost immobile present, which nevertheless attempts to create its own historical time. It is as though there were nothing but the present, like an immense stretch of water restlessly rippling. So should we talk of an end of, or an exit from, modernity, from that particular temporal structure we call the modern regime of historicity? It is too early to tell. But we can certainly talk of a *crisis*. “Presentism” is the name I have given to this moment and to today’s experience of time. (17–18; our emphasis)

By placing the spotlight on the fundamental insufficiency of “the modern regime of historicity” to adequately engage the temporal aporia of our contemporary moment and its ensuing epistemic stagnation, Hartog propounds a pluralized vision of history resting on “the idea of degrees, of more or less, of mixtures and composites, and an always provisional or unstable equilibrium [...] a way of linking together past, present, and future, or of mixing the three categories” (xv). His outlook places emphasis on the intrinsic anachronism of our contemporary critical present, on its interwoven texture as resurgent stories irrupt in its distended fabric, as its possible future instantiations retrospectively color it. For, according to Giorgio Agamben,

those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands. They are thus in this sense irrelevant [*inattuale*]. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time. (Agamben 2009: 40)

<sup>2</sup>Hartog borrows the term “expectation” from Reinhardt Koselleck. As Talbayer’s “Afterward: Critical Mediterranean Times” makes clear, we understand it to designate the conditions of possibility for progressive politics, something akin to Ernst Bloch’s “principle of hope.”

This sedimented, gaping present forms the basis of a jerky, fragmented, unsynchronized temporality, one that exceeds the kind of duality exposed by de Kerangal: historically bound, linear chronology on the one hand and the instant, the now on the other. Such a present is deeply attuned to subjective temporal experiences, to internalized, past moments of crisis—those reverberating traumas that modernity has occasioned and whose ripple effects can be perceived in multiple contemporary presents.<sup>3</sup>

Cutting across rigid taxonomies that deploy time along a linear, teleological axis of transhistorical progress, *Critically Mediterranean* adopts as its main ordering principle the prevalent state of *crisis*—humanitarian, economic, political, aesthetic, literary, as well as temporal—that has engulfed the Mediterranean in the time-space of modernity. Pursuant to this theoretical premise, this volume’s methodology deploys a specifically *critical* engagement with time—that is, one that finds its methodological mooring in the state of crisis identified by Hartog.<sup>4</sup> As such, our critical project counters and complicates the exhausted teleological historical narrative that has undergirded the unfolding of modernity. By echoing Wendy Brown’s denunciation of the exhaustion of history as a narrative of emancipation and social progress in her evocatively titled *Politics Out of History* (2001), we foreground an alternative epistemology of time, one engaged in the subjective experience of temporal frames and dedicated to the reclaiming of historical agency in the quandary of current-day Mediterranean politics. This volume’s contributors thus expose and engage the entanglements between aesthetic production, philosophy, literature, and the arts in the Mediterranean, and collectively proclaim the emergence of a *critical* Mediterranean: a temporal, cultural, literary, and artistic field of inquiry, and a cross-disciplinary site of knowledge production that both builds on and amends the various reflections on the time-space of modernity.

<sup>3</sup> Much has been made of theories of the contemporary in literature, culture, and politics. See Brozgal and Kippur (2016).

<sup>4</sup> It may be helpful here to point out the shared etymology of the two concepts, both derived from the Greek *krinei*: to separate, to decide. A more complete exploration of the critical in relation to multiple Mediterranean times, as well as the political ramifications of these temporal reconfigurations, can be found in Talbayev’s “Afterward,” which constitutes a companion piece to this Introduction and should be read alongside it.

## BEARINGS OF A DISCIPLINE

Emerging in the nineteenth century,<sup>5</sup> the discipline of Mediterranean history has, over the course of the twentieth century, been compounded by the emergence of the dynamic transdisciplinarity of Mediterranean studies.<sup>6</sup> Originally engrained in the *Annales* school of history, and indebted to the towering figure of Fernand Braudel, the most substantial histories and studies of the Mediterranean have remained, by and large, concerned with the premodern and early modern periods.<sup>7</sup> Based on excavating millennia-old histories of ever-shifting

<sup>5</sup> As Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell emphasize in *The Corrupting Sea*, the invention of the Mediterranean as a region does not occur before the nineteenth century; for instance: “Modern thinking about the Mediterranean has its roots in the works of the great geographers of the nineteenth century. See generally Dickinson and Howarth (1933) *The Making of Geography*; R. E. Dickinson (1969) *The Makers of Modern Geography*. The Mediterranean makes some appearance as a discrete subject in the writings of Carl Ritter (1779–1859) [...] More significant in this context is Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), whose interest in the Mediterranean as a region began with an exploration of its zoology [...] Ratzel’s anthropogeography, his vision of environmental determinism, yielded an idea which in his own time was to add intellectual legitimacy to German imperial expansionism and was to have a greater posthumous significance—the idea of *Lebensraum*” (Horden and Purcell 2000: 532–533; see also Horden and Purcell 2006: 728–729). W. V. Harris acknowledges the more polemical assertion made in Victoria A. Goddard, Josep R. Llobera, and Cris Shore (1994) that the “‘the Mediterranean’ was invented in 1959, and had already outrun its usefulness in the 1980s” (Harris 2005: 1). See also Horden and Purcell (2006: 726), Yashin (2014) and Wick (2014).

<sup>6</sup> The state of the field has most recently been surveyed by Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (eds.) in *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (2014).

<sup>7</sup> For instance, a sampling of major titles appearing in 2016 and 2017 includes Felix Arnold, *Islamic Palace Architecture in the Western Mediterranean*; Boris Chrubasik and Daniel King (eds.), *Hellenism and the Local Communities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 400 BCE–250 CE*; Cavan Concannon and Lindsey A. Mazurek (eds.), *Across the Corrupting Sea: Post-Braudelian Approaches to the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*; Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean*; Beshara B. Doumani, *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History*; Hussein Fancy, *The Mercenary Mediterranean: Sovereignty, Religion, and Violence in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*; Allen James Fromherz, *The Near West: Medieval North Africa, Latin Europe, and the Mediterranean in the Second Axial Age*; Gary Leiser, *Prostitution in the Eastern Mediterranean World: The Economics of Sex in the Late Antique and Medieval Middle East*; George Nash and Andrew Townsend (eds.), *Decoding Neolithic Atlantic and Mediterranean Island Ritual*; Monique O’Connell and Eric R. Dursteler, *The Mediterranean World: From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Napoleon*; Christophe Picard, *Sea of the Caliphs: The Mediterranean in the Medieval Islamic World*; Teofilo F. Ruiz, *The Western Mediterranean and the World: 400 CE to the Present*; and Goran Stanivukovic, *Knights in Arms: Prose Romance, Masculinity, and Eastern Mediterranean Trade in Early Modern England, 1565–1655*.

interactions at the micro-level (Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's "connectivity"), this body of scholarship has striven to move the focus away from the myriad local histories unfolding across the Mediterranean's coastlands in order to bring the space of the sea as a principle of integration into relief. These conceptions highlight wide-ranging forms of mobility, interconnectedness, and analytical fluidity in their adjustable Mediterranean model. They emphasize the material flows running across the sea and its shorelands, and the human activities that they have supported. As Horden observes in his and Sharon Kinoshita's *Companion to Mediterranean History*, "There seems to be no limit to the ways in which the Mediterranean region may be reimagined, as a sea, as an area involving physical movements, maritime spaces, territorial arrangements, and political processes that seek to transcend national boundaries and enmities" (Horden 2014: 2).

The field's focus on earlier Mediterranean histories has placed scholars working on the cultural production and critical thought of later periods at a frequent disadvantage, owing to the relative lack of equally vast theoretical interventions, methodologies, and case studies of the modern and contemporary Mediterraneans. Amid this scant corpus, theoretical paradigms resting on the basis of geographically bound cultural analysis have emerged to productively engage the plural legacy of the Mediterranean. One such model has taken the shape of inquiries into the multicultural city spaces dotting the Mediterranean coastline. From the early days of cosmopolitan port-cities and city-states (Ben-Yehoyada 2014: 115–116) to contemporary metropolitan areas, urban spaces have revealed the tensions and contradictions of global migrations and the attendant, revised notions of sovereignty and identity politics. For instance, Michela Ardizzoni and Valerio Ferme's *Mediterranean Encounters in the City* has highlighted the transhistorical "cultural connections" provoked by Mediterranean encounters (2015: 5). Their discussion of "the transitional areas between the liquidity of transport and the stability of rootedness" stresses the relational encounters between the Mediterranean, its cities, and their people (1). Yet, as Ardizzoni and Ferme acknowledge, the exclusive focus on the city–sea relationship runs the risk of obscuring "the bigger picture" (2) that lies beyond the comparative analysis of models of coastal urbanity.<sup>8</sup> Theirs is an

<sup>8</sup>This tendency is even more discernible in Federica Frediani's conceptual map in her otherwise innovative *The Mediterranean Cities Between Myth and Reality* (2014).



investigation into the geographical delineation of the Mediterranean as centripetal space, and specifically of “cities *in* the Mediterranean” (1; our emphasis).<sup>9</sup> Delimited by a focus on contested urban processes of identity formation and intercultural encounters, the Mediterranean invoked by Ardizzoni and Ferme “embod[ies] a productive *spatial model* to understand similar interactions in other global contexts, where the convergence of languages, religions, musical traditions, urban and rural mores, and cultural spaces is continuously reshaped and redefined through demographic, political, and economic patterns of change” (10; our emphasis). In that reading, the conceptual, critical Mediterranean wanes from view, becoming instead shorthand for the instances of hybridity that it registers—a hybridity imbued with the aura of nostalgic cosmopolitanism,<sup>10</sup> whose rhetoric has historically surged against the weft of nationalist modernity.

Compounding this celebration of common historical legacies and shared roots that the Mediterranean has often come to embody, other transnational projects, which we dub “trans-Mediterranean,” have informed scholarship dedicated to thinking its way beyond the binaries of the post/colonial relation. Though it successfully undermines the contested, fixed identity narratives that pit both shores against one another, the trans-Mediterranean gesture has nevertheless found its natural mooring in the two spaces set in tension by the in-between space of the sea. In this configuration, the sea itself materializes as a topographical expanse to cross, a space to “burn,” in the words of Hakim Abderrezak in his contribution on clandestine migration from Africa to Europe (Chap. 8): a mere point of passage on the way to more enticing—and evidently more focal—points of landing.<sup>11</sup> In the trans-Mediterranean construct, the sea fades away—at turns thematized in literature, at others relegated to little more than a backdrop to more alluring narratives of contact and mixity—and it

<sup>9</sup> Horden and Purcell evoke the well-known dichotomy of “in the Mediterranean” and “of the Mediterranean” throughout their writings (2000: 9, 2006: 729–731), and they level the criticism that “‘history in’ the Mediterranean is only contingently or indirectly Mediterranean” (2006: 730; see also Shavit 1994). Annika Döring and Peregrine Horden raise the dichotomy in Chap. 2, as does Yasser Elhariry in Chap. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Ardizzoni and Ferme mention *lingua franca*, the history of which Jocelyne Dakhlija chronicles in beautiful depth in *Lingua franca: histoire d’une langue métisse en Méditerranée* (2008). For a cogent discussion of nostalgic cosmopolitanism in the modern Mediterranean, see Ben-Yehoyada (2014).

<sup>11</sup> See also Abderrezak (2016: 67–76).

becomes a mimetic topos that may be emulated and romanticized in a number of human contexts.<sup>12</sup>

These research directions have been successful in bringing to light the modern Mediterranean's spatial density, maritime connectivity, and resounding identity politics within the timeframe of modernity. They have mapped out its deep entanglements with notions of globalism, comparativity, and a relentless critique of teleological modernity and its attendant regime of dichotomies. However, this focus has stopped short of liberating the Mediterranean from geographical and what are ultimately land-bound constructs to theorize the Mediterranean Sea in its own right.

### MODERN MEDITERRANEAN, MEDITERRANEAN TIMES

*Critically Mediterranean* explores material, visual, literary, and linguistic cultures of the Mediterranean not just “as a spatial constellation undergoing recurring formation and dissolution,” following Naor Ben-Yehoyada’s ascription, but also as a temporal paradigm, in order to “make the notion of a modern Mediterranean plausible and reveal its structural similarities and connections with the sea’s previous lives,” for, indeed, “the shape and image of the Mediterranean” can “no longer depend on any historically-bounded character [...] nor an essential cultural trait” (2014: 107, 118). The modern Mediterranean’s unique texture renders it a privileged site for its reconsideration as a discursive space marked by multiple concurrent temporalities.<sup>13</sup> Iain Chambers’s paradigm of an interrupted modernity, delineated in *Mediterranean Crossings*, is instructive in this regard, as concepts of critical and alternative modernities anchored in the sea have been relevant to scrutinizing the fruitfulness of the Mediterranean construct to theorizations of modernity and identity, as Antonis Danos argues in Chap. 5.

Building on this line of critical inquiry, our volume reorients the conversation towards theories of time and temporality, plural Mediterranean

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, the essays collected in Carmen Boustani and Edmond Jouve’s edited volume *Des femmes et de l’écriture: le bassin méditerranéen* (2006), in Michel Gironde’s *Méditerranée & exil: aujourd’hui* (2014) or in Jean-Marc Moura and Vassiliki Lalagianni’s *Espace méditerranéen: écritures de l’exil, migrations et discours postcolonial* (2014). Yasser elhariry’s contribution on Mediterranean lyric (Chap. 13) further pursues this critique in relation to Francophone studies.

<sup>13</sup> For an analysis of the Mediterranean as mediation, see Barbé (2006). Recent scholarship has started to emphasize its resonance as a space of cognitive and political dissonance. See Abderrezak (2009, 2016), Pieprzak (2007), Talbayev (2017), and Thomas (2013).

times, and an ethos of crisis in the modern and contemporary periods. The gradual and contrapuntal shift to the temporal paradigm that we propose necessarily de-emphasizes some points of concern borne of considerations of the Mediterranean chiefly in spatial terms: Mediterranean “unity” (Harris 2005: 20–29, 50), for example, or the ensuing issue of “Mediterraneanism” critiqued by Michael Herzfeld (2005: 48). One salient exception to this premise is the consideration of the enduring (self-) orientalizing dynamics surrounding the Mediterranean. Teetering between the unenviable status of romantic delusion and the nefarious influence of residual Orientalism, the Mediterranean as concept first needs to liquidate its fraught exoticist heritage, beginning with the imperial and colonial pasts of its southern littoral.<sup>14</sup> Horden and Purcell’s vision of the new thalassology opens up one possible path towards the *uncolonial* (in John Baldacchino’s coinage in Chap. 9) deorientalization of the Mediterranean. The new thalassology places the focus squarely on the sea instead of littoral lands and hinterlands, which offers the promise of a sea or an ocean history that “makes the oceans and their embayments a way of approaching most parts of the world” (Horden and Purcell 2006: 723). From this vantage point, “the systematic comparison of real and metaphorical seas can suggest a new configuration of history, and one that may attain a global scale” (723). As it cuts across the irreconcilable hierarchies that suffuse modernity’s conception of the Mediterranean as an othered, backward region, the new thalassology’s intrinsic comparativity reinforces W. V. Harris’s proposition of bringing the presence of common denominators underlying the Mediterranean’s past to critical scrutiny. Indeed, Harris undermines the dominant critical model purveyed by Mediterraneanism—“the doctrine that there are distinctive characteristics which the cultures of the Mediterranean have, or have had, in common” (2005: 1, 38)—as dubious at best since it is “so obviously related both to a quasi-Orientalist desire to assert cultural superiority [...] and to touristic nostalgia” (38). Instead, he champions the pursuit of “broader comparisons and a less restricted ethnography” (39) that would allow historical readings deployed across expansive spans of time and space to productively assess any supposed distinctiveness of Mediterranean features.

<sup>14</sup>For the role of the Mediterranean in the development of orientalist discourse and in imperial battles over the construction of empire, see Broers (2017), Clancy-Smith (2012), Fraser (2017), Hannoosh (2016a, b, c), Lorcín and Shepard (2016), Meeks (2017), Murray-Miller (2017), and Piers (1957).

Among the texts collected here, Olivia C. Harrison's contribution (Chap. 11) on Etel Adnan's transcolonial<sup>15</sup> Mediterranean heuristics explicitly takes up and works against the sea's orientalist legacy. It uncovers transregional anti-imperialist alliances that do away with the persistence of colonialism as a shaping force throughout the Mediterranean region. With the advent of European imperialism in the Mediterranean in the long nineteenth century, the legacy of globalization also requires attention to the fractures, inequalities, and forms of disenfranchisement that the new world order has engendered, or what Ian Morris has dubbed "winners and losers" (2003: 33) in relation to Mediterraneization. Hakim Abderrezak's double-edged reflections on the Mediterranean as both an underwater *Seametry* and *cemetery* put the spotlight on the tragedies that continue to beset the African migrants who attempt Mediterranean crossings. His contribution (Chap. 8) focuses on how the body-strewn maritime seabed brings the Mediterranean in line with the Atlantic as a new contemporary middle passage, and resemanticizes Mediterranean crossings in terms of a mortiferous dynamics.

In contrast to historicist visions of a time-bound Mediterranean, and moving beyond considerations of structural similarities across time, this volume proposes that the Mediterranean lends itself to a plurality of temporal divisions. For the Mediterranean Sea is old, very old: humanity's relationship with the environment is so slow, "almost imperceptible" (Braudel 1972: vol. 1, 20), "almost timeless" (Burke 2015: 38), that the Mediterranean Sea may appear untimed and untimely in the strongest senses of the terms, both timeless and out of time in the polysemy of the expressions. The Mediterranean Sea conjures multiple temporalities, innumerable trajectories, and any number of potential histories, both micro and macro. The intersections of these histories engage irresolvable historical questions, posed by the apprehension that "time moves at different speeds," in Fernand Braudel's memorable ascription (1977). Eminently aware of the Mediterranean's position in between contending temporal modes, Braudel sought to structure his magnum opus in such a way as to foreground the very problems of the Mediterranean Sea's times: *The Mediterranean* divides historical time into its geographical, social, and individual components (Harris 2005: 8). These temporal divisions—the slow time of the environment; the fast time of the individual; the intermediate, indeterminate, or plural times of societies and

<sup>15</sup> See Harrison (2015).

cultures (Braudel 1958; Hartog 2015: 14)—intersect with the corollaries of contemporary dyssynchrony and anachronism: the broad temporal divisions of *The Mediterranean* neither necessarily coincide with one another (dyssynchrony) nor shy away from erupting or strategically resurfacing at different moments (anachronism). Part of the Mediterranean’s temporal modes may be observed, for instance, in the generic, transhistorical resurgences permeating contemporary Mediterranean literature, which encompasses forms, modes, and genres from the Melic poets<sup>16</sup> all the way to postcolonial North African writers.<sup>17</sup>

To observe that the history of the Mediterranean Sea as a unique or unusual body of water finds its beginnings alongside Western civilization’s origins is to invoke well-known descriptions of an ancient, microcosmic sea.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, our approach highlights the many eruptions and interruptions of history within modern and contemporary times and imaginaries, and the ceaseless historical disruptions within the contemporary fabric of the Mediterranean. We situate the modern Mediterranean and its cultural proliferation in a privileged moment particularly ripe for critical inquiry, especially from the divergent, often fractal perspectives of the arts. Norbert Bugeja’s analysis (Chap. 7) of Orhan Pamuk and the irrepressible resurgence of the dregs of Turkey’s national history, entombed in fluvial alluvium and spouted forth to the surface in the wake of tectonic crisis, presents a memorable illustration of such hauntings and their contemporary inflections.

Layered and archival, the Mediterranean delineated in these pages grapples with transhistorical relevance “with respect to the present” in Giorgio Agamben’s formulation, as though it were in a caesura, “in a disconnection and out-of-jointness” (2009: 40). Any meaningful reflection on the modern and contemporary Mediterraneans as critical constructs must seek to interrogate temporality within the context of the sea, which we conceive as a temporalized striation and emplacement of events, narratives, genres, and imagined states of dwelling. *Critically Mediterranean*

<sup>16</sup> See Culler (2015).

<sup>17</sup> See elhariry on “Mediterranean Lyric” in Chap. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Part I of Horden and Purcell’s *The Corrupting Sea* begins with the famous epigraph from Plato’s *Phaedo*: “We inhabit a small portion of the earth [...] living round the sea like ants and frogs round a pond” (2000: 7, 10–13, 530–533; see Horden and Purcell 2006: 735–736). In their contribution about Heidegger (Chap. 2), Döring and Horden further probe the centrality of this simile—and of Plato more broadly—in their consideration of Martin Heidegger as Mediterraneanist.

moves beyond the habitual usage of “Mediterranean” as an adjective or modifier, and the ensuing fine degrees of difference between “history *in* the Mediterranean” and “history *of* the Mediterranean” (Horden and Purcell 2000: 9). It outlines “the Mediterranean” as a heuristic category, provides insight into the dynamics of the modern sea, and firmly places the focus on the complicit, anachronistic entanglement of both the historical and the contemporary, within the knotted contexts of the region’s actual geopolitical and cultural configurations. For example, in his contribution (Chap. 12), Naor Ben-Yehoyada examines regionalist imaginaries of the contemporary central Mediterranean. Through his account of the vicissitudes surrounding the recovery of a submerged ancient Greek statue in the Channel of Sicily, he weaves a contemporary account of the modern Mediterranean that engages continuities and similarities across Mediterranean time, revealing the enduring patterns of connectivity that have left their imprimatur on the sea from ancient times to the contemporary period. In contrast, Jonathan H. Shannon’s contribution (Chap. 6) traces the accrued relevance of the resurgent, mythicized trope of al-Andalus as a cultural bridge between both shores, from the premodern period to the context of immigration in contemporary Spain. Shannon probes how music performs and negotiates the contradictions of the “new-old Mediterranean, with its shifting and securitized borders,” and he identifies critical political ramifications of this model of affective affiliation in what he dubs a “new convivencia,” a project for containing difference in multicultural Europe.

Bringing into view the sea’s many discordances, discrepancies, differences, and ruptures, the contributors to this volume argue for an increased consideration of the slow times of melancholia and nostalgia (Jonathan H. Shannon in the context of new incarnations of the trope of al-Andalus [Chap. 6]), the politics of the afterwardly (Norbert Bugeja in his investigation of Orhan Pamuk’s *mise-en-scène* of nostalgia for a cosmopolitan Istanbul [Chap. 7]), deaths and hauntings (Hakim Abderrezak [Chap. 8]), and the return and washing ashore of heritage (Naor Ben-Yehoyada [Chap. 12]). Their wide-ranging disciplinary interventions substantiate alternative theorizations of the Mediterranean—as constantly unfurling textual constructs (besides Norbert Bugeja on Orhan Pamuk [Chap. 7] and Olivia C. Harrison on Etel Adnan [Chap. 11], Isabelle Keller-Privat on Lawrence Durrell [Chap. 3] and Michal Raizen on Edmond Amran El Maleh [Chap. 4]); as fluctuating spatio-temporal models (Jonathan H. Shannon on al-Andalus [Chap. 6], Naor Ben-Yehoyada on local, regional, and transnational frames

of deployment [Chap. 12], and Peregrine Horden and Annika Döring [Chap. 2] on Martin Heidegger as Mediterraneanist); as a category of and for critique and critical inquiry (John Baldacchino on thinking the uncolonial [Chap. 9], Claudio Fogu on the tension between Southern Italy's Mediterranean history and the nation-building discourse of *Risorgimento* [Chap. 10], and yasser elhariry on the Mediterranean lyric [Chap. 13]); and as a transposable, paradoxical, and indefinite aesthetics (Hakim Abderrezak on the *Seametry* and *cemetery* [Chap. 8], and Antonis Danos on Christoforos Savva's Mediterranean modernism [Chap. 5]). What these variegated interventions share is the construction of a critical Mediterranean rooted in the often unexpected ruptures instigated by sudden resurgences of recent and ancient pasts within the fabric of contemporary culture.

### NARRATING THE MEDITERRANEAN

*Critically Mediterranean* probes the critical cut of the Mediterranean—as a theoretical entity, as an aesthetic, theoretical, and hermeneutic category for the interpretation and analysis of culture, and as a spatio-temporal zone of artistic and linguistic density and coterminous symbolic geographies. Though we take the modern and contemporary demarcations of the Mediterranean as our primary locus of inquiry, we do so with a steadfast eye on the discursive origins of the sea (does it exist?),<sup>19</sup> their subsequent modulations (it no longer exists), and the philosophical and narratological principles underlying the sea's critical delineation (how to tell its non-/existence). In so doing, the contributions highlight the narrative—and oftentimes fictional—underpinnings of any concept of the (modern) Mediterranean, redrawing the Mediterranean's confines beyond exiguous time-bound definitions and ecology-centered models. In their place, and against the grain of historical telos, they emphasize the fictional density of all Mediterranean discourse and the Mediterranean's plural temporal deployments as the hallmarks of its inherent state of crisis.

The fictional fabric of contemporary visions of the Mediterranean has been clearly reflected in Claudia Esposito's *Narrative Mediterranean*, which argues that the existence of a "narrative Mediterranean" hinges on an imagined "cultural and literary Mediterranean as a counterpoint to its invention in the disciplines of history and the social sciences" (2013: xiii).

<sup>19</sup> See Stétié (1972) and elhariry (2017).

A “space of contestation and infinite translation,” her concept refrains from the affirmation of an identity politics and its polemics, shifting the focus instead to the recreation and invention of “Mediterraneans often at odds with historical and political discourses” (xiii). These “narrative Mediterraneans” reclaim the pluralism induced by their maritime cross-currents and provide a medium through which to negotiate subjects’ imagined relations to the world around them: “as a conversation between subjects,” writes John Baldacchino in his sketch of Mediterranean aesthetics, “the trans-subjective sense of individuality that pervades the notion of *the* Mediterranean could not avoid construing a plural imaginary [...] read from how it engages with the political realities that construct it” (2010: 141). This encounter with the world inaugurates a new imaginative topography that lends itself to singular engagements, raising interrogations germane to the domains of philosophy, phenomenology, the poetics of both space and time, biopolitics, identities and self-identification, literary theory, poetics, and criticism. Incarnating Sharon Kinoshita’s concept of a “heuristic device” (2009: 602), the Mediterranean enables “continual inquiry into ways of thinking the present” (Esposito 2013: xiii).

Taking the narrative undercurrent further, the Mediterranean that this volume mobilizes is posited in performative, and specifically discursive, terms as “a hypothesis more than an assertive claim [...] a *speech act* [more] than a secure reality” (Talbayev 2017: 23). Claudio Fogu’s contribution (Chap. 10) illuminates the inner workings of the Mediterranean as “speech act.” The Mediterranean as discursive category, he insists, has “both been resurrected *in modernity*, and has been made *in order to make Mediterraneans*.” A highly politicized construct (Fogu 2008, 2010), the Mediterranean scrutinized by Fogu indicts the profound erasure of Southern Italy’s Mediterraneanness, which the nation-building doxa of *Risorgimento* historically operated. It exposes the ultimate vacuity of these homogenizing claims. Fogu’s chapter upholds the geopolitical alignment of “the South” (Italy and, beyond, the global South) and “the Mediterranean” on the basis of a common form of “anti-historicism” as antidote to the most entrenched fractures afflicting modernity. The Mediterranean as discursive category brings to the fore a new methodology anchored in the study of the multiple performative resonances of any and all modern Mediterranean narratives, imbuing the critical deployment of a Mediterranean idiom with a trenchant view across the imagined communities of modern existence.



*Critically Mediterranean* narrates a gradual story, which runs the gamut from modernity to crisis. Its chapters set poles that keep the unfolding of the methodological argument in place: the modern Mediterranean, marked by crisis in the time-space of modernity, exceeds teleological historical narrative and generates alternative temporal, narrative, and poetic modes of engagement with time from within modern and contemporary cultural production. Part 1 progresses from some of the earliest twentieth-century material on the Mediterranean—the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (Annika Döring and Peregrine Horden [Chap. 2]) and the literature of Lawrence Durrell (Isabelle-Keller-Privat [Chap. 3])—to later literary representations of questions of history, faith, and itinerancy in Edmond Amran El Maleh (Michal Raizen [Chap. 4]), and mid-century modernisms in the art of Christoforos Savva (Antonis Danos [Chap. 5]). These four contributions all dwell on questions of Mediterranean modernism and modernity from several distinct viewpoints: the philosophical perspectives of Mediterranean immanence (Döring and Horden [Chap. 2]); an embroilment of aesthetics and poetics within an imposing literary oeuvre that attempts to represent a sea that is irrepresentable in its totality (Keller-Privat [Chap. 3]); the dynamics of twentieth-century modernities that are at play in Arab Jewish studies and Mediterranean literature, whose dual perspective circumnavigates historical watershed moments in the Mediterranean region (Raizen [Chap. 4]); and the role of multiple modernisms through Mediterranean art in unsettling grand narratives (Danos [Chap. 5]).

Part 2 delves deeper into the temporal fluidities and constraints of the Mediterranean. The four chapters grouped in this pivotal section reveal the centrality of the Mediterranean to collective and individual modes of remembrance when it comes to imagining identities and communities (Jonathan H. Shannon [Chap. 6]); they index the slow time of political history to a broader, transregional condition of political fiction (Norbert Bugeja [Chap. 7]); they shift attention to the suppression of migratory politics, and how it is buried deep at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea (Hakim Abderrezak [Chap. 8]); and they speculate how the Mediterranean serves to articulate an anachronistic, temporally unbound, and hypothetical alternative history of the *uncolonial* (John Baldacchino [Chap. 9]).

The four chapters in Part 3 directly address the following question: how may the modern and contemporary Mediterraneans be deployed in terms of political, cultural, artistic, and literary practices? The question expands our implicit critique in this Introduction of the very use of the term

“Mediterranean” as a categorical modifier. The polemics and theoretical potential of the concept of the Mediterranean take new shape in light of the history and politics of Italian cultural history and the mired question of unification (Claudio Fogu [Chap. 10]); the transcolonial politics and artistic, intermedial poetics of identification both across the Mediterranean and in a wider world (Olivia C. Harrison [Chap. 11]); the interplay between transnational connections and regionalist imaginaries in the Mediterranean (Naor Ben-Yehoyada [Chap. 12]); and a transdisciplinary, methodological foray into the genealogy of the field and the study of an ancient poetic mode such as the lyric (yasser elhariry [Chap. 13]). In her closing coda on what comes “Afterward” (Chap. 14), Edwige Tamalet Talbayev brings the book’s argument full circle, as her epilogue illuminates the Mediterranean’s “tranhistorical, imaginative entanglements with [...] narratives of loss and coming of age in the time of modernity.”

### CRITICALLY MEDITERRANEAN

Bruce K. Knauff’s volume *Critically Modern*, to whose titular semantics our own book is indebted, conceptually unfolds “critical modernity” along three axes: it is “the powerful critique of the notion that being or becoming modern betokens the global triumph of Euro-American” modernity; an “understanding of modernity as a differentiated or variegated process”; and a path towards a better understanding of the entanglements of culture and hegemony in the contemporary world (Knauff 2002: 3). A fourth axis of the contemporary as anachronism, after Agamben’s illuminating formulation, allows us to successfully capitalize on intermediary positionalities and the Mediterranean’s fractal relation to time. A *critical* Mediterranean, resonant with a revised version of Knauff’s vernacular paradigm, can successfully launch a counternarrative of modernity, as crafted by Mediterranean subjects from a politically vibrant Southern positionality (Cassano 2012). A critical Mediterranean rescripts the ubiquitous doxa of Mediterranean backwardness—cast in staunch opposition to the historical telos of North-Western European modernity—as productive dyssynchrony. This recalibration of Mediterranean time on the porous, plural mode clears the path for a fitting of our critical practice to the irrefutable hostilities that beset the contemporary Mediterranean region. By placing emphasis on the fruitfulness of discrepant readings of Mediterranean *longue durée*—those emphasizing trauma

through melancholic reading protocols or the recourse to nostalgia—this critical methodology illuminates submerged historical threads that it then forces back to the surface.

Ultimately, our volume claims that we now dwell in an epoch that may be characterized as *critically* Mediterranean. The seascape, culture, and environment of the Mediterranean have been irrevocably altered. Above and on its surfaces, clandestine migrants burn the sea. Beneath it, they strew its seabed. Deeper still, archaeological missions unearth hidden treasures. Across the sea's littoral, cultural and musical politics of new *convivencia* are at stark odds with increasingly technologized security measures. Beyond it, transcolonial alliances continue to spring. Across its plural times, new and old literary and artistic modes violently irrupt into one another. *Critically*, in our usage of the term, stands for both an intellectual and temporal predicament in face of the sea's political crises and artistic innovations. *Critically Mediterranean* eschews the imposition of a singular dogma, staging instead multiple critical interventions on the issue of the Mediterranean, in turn discrepant and overlapping, a Mediterranean whose vibrant, multifarious intersections create the grounds for an ongoing dialogue. We hope that these necessarily incomplete pages will succeed in articulating a poetics of the Mediterranean, one that tirelessly underscores the intellectual moment to which we are inextricably bound as creatures of modernity. The contemporary Mediterranean has now come to connote precariousness and crisis. To be *critically Mediterranean*, then, in the fullest sense of contingency and change, is to be aware and to dwell, on the one hand, in a critical moment, to be on the cusp of ongoing and imminent transformation; to assume, on the other, the acts of criticism and critique necessary for the category of *the Mediterranean* to emerge, to become, to be, as critical construct—always contingent, ever temporary.

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PART I

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Mediterranean Modernities:  
Immanence and Dynamics





## Heidegger as Mediterraneanist

*Annika Döring and Peregrine Horden*

Discussing the fate of the soul and its proper habitation after death, in his last hours, Socrates famously turns geographer. “I believe that the earth is very large,” he says in Plato’s dialogue *Phaedo*, “and that we who live between the Phasis river [in the Black Sea region] and the Pillars of Hercules [at the straits of Gibraltar] inhabit only a small part of it, living round the sea like ants and frogs round a pond, while many others live elsewhere in many similar regions” (Plato *Phaedo* 109a–b, 1913: 374–75). The Western philosophical tradition, as defined by the Greeks, is shot through at its very beginning with maritime terms and imagery (Ricklin 2015: 395–96).<sup>1</sup> Thales of Miletus (sixth century BCE), one of the first of the “pre-Socratic” natural philosophers, developed a cosmology in which water was fundamental. It is no surprise that a work on nautical astronomy was later attributed to him (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 983b 20–27, 1933:

<sup>1</sup> In Bernard Williams’s words, “The legacy of Greece to Western philosophy is Western philosophy” (2006: 3).

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A. Döring (✉)

Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum, Germany

P. Horden

Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK

All Souls College, Oxford University, Oxford, UK

18–19; Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.23, 1925: 24–25). Anaximander, also a Milesian, was reputedly the first to draw a map of land and sea (Diogenes Laertius 2.1, 1925: 130–31). Plato himself was of course no amateur of seafaring. He used the sea as a metaphor for political chaos in the *Politicus* and kept the ideal state 80 stades (10–13 miles) inland in the *Laws*—well removed from the “corrupting sea” (*Politicus* 273D, 1925: 64–65; *Laws* 4.704–5, 1926: 254–57). Yet Socrates’s imaging of life around the Mediterranean basin is not only one of the earliest of its kind; it is one of the most penetrating and resonant, not only for its metaphor of transmarine connectivity, but for its additional implication (far less often quoted) that other quasi-Mediterraneans could be found around the globe (Abulafia 2005: 64–93).<sup>2</sup>

In all the debates of recent decades about the nature of “the Mediterranean”—whether it can be defined in geographical or systemic terms, or whether it is a crude and tendentious reification, and, if so, how that reification came about—the role of philosophers has usually been ignored. And yet, for the historiography of the formation, refinement, or simple perpetuation of ideas about the sea and its hinterland, philosophy ought to be of as much interest as literature, the arts, or the social sciences.<sup>3</sup> Disappointingly, the one recent survey known to us of the place of philosophy in Mediterranean studies begins with the Greeks but soon turns into an account of the medieval transmission of Aristotle’s *Meteorologica*, and then jumps forward from the Middle Ages to contemporary thinkers such as the Italian political philosopher Massimo Cacciari (Ricklin 2015). It does not broach the question of whether the different philosophical traditions of circum-Mediterranean cultures might for any reason be brought together under the heading of “Mediterranean philosophy” (see Clark 2012). To adapt a well-tried dichotomy, it is more an account of philosophy *in* the Mediterranean than *of* it. It concludes: “philosophy lacks, as does the history of philosophy, a Ferdinand [*sic*] Braudel, who confronts the discipline with the elementary fact of its Mediterraneanness” (Ricklin 2015: 400). From Plato onwards, philosophers have often had something to say about the region, but usually in passing or by implication. Who then could be the philosophers’ Braudel, a towering figure to

<sup>2</sup> For a modern view of the networks of “ants and frogs” in Greek colonization, see Malkin (2011).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, among a vast literature Harris; Dabag and Halle; Catlos and Kinoshita.

whom philosophy was in some essential way Mediterranean? The Nietzsche of *The Gay Science* perhaps (Pranger 2005). Is there anyone else?

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) might not be the first name that springs to mind.<sup>4</sup> Here is a man whose philosophy has seemed to many, especially (until quite recently) in the analytic or Anglophone philosophical tradition, to be impenetrable and irrelevant if not downright vacuous—fraudulent in its claims to depth. Here, even on a less hostile account, is a philosophy conveyed in dense prose that depends on untranslatable neologisms, the force of which evolved as Heidegger’s thinking evolved, thus merely adding to the difficulties. What could that have to do with geography?

Our argument in what follows is that Heidegger does indeed articulate a vision of the Mediterranean that is fundamental to his thought. Some of the elements of this vision are individually familiar, but the significance of the ensemble has not hitherto been registered. It is a terrestrial vision: it looks to the landward ecology of the frogs rather than to their communications across the pond. But that is neither exceptional nor a great limitation. Plato was a landlubber; so was Braudel, though he loved the Mediterranean (Horden and Purcell 2000: 31–36). Heidegger’s Mediterranean is constituted by homelands: Provence, as homeland to the painter who, above all other artists, for him discloses the truth of Being, that is, Paul Cézanne; and Greece, as the homeland of philosophy—all philosophy, but especially Heidegger’s particular version of it.

## PLACE AND HOMELAND

Of course, Heidegger exegetes have long recognized in his massive oeuvre, under the broad heading of questioning “the meaning of Being,” the central importance of terms such as *Dasein*, his word for human beings’ or humanity’s way of being, but literally *Da-sein*, “being there”; of a historically and socially conditioned “everyday existence”; of dwelling “under the sky and on the earth”; of “being at home”; of paths and clearings in a wood. All this apparently evokes some sense of place.

Yet what place? The question is side-stepped by much Heidegger scholarship, which has focused on a generalized topology (or spatiality) rather

<sup>4</sup>In what follows, generally agreed facts and ideas about Heidegger’s life and writings are, for concision, left unreferenced. Among recent introductions in English with abundant further bibliography we have found useful: Watts; Inwood; Guignon; Dreyfus and Wrathall.

than specific topographies (Malpas 2007, 2012). If we seek a particular geography that his thinking implies, then his biography naturally points us first to south-west Germany, to the Black Forest, and to the cottage his wife Elfride built for him above the small mountain village of Todtnauberg, in the solitude of which he drafted much of his magnum opus *Being and Time* and sported *Lederhosen*. Good work, he stated, had to arise from the ground, the earth, and here was his (Pöggeler 2002: 172). Rather like Immanuel Kant, perhaps deliberately so, Heidegger seldom travelled far. George Steiner's summary is convincing: "Field and forest are at the heart of the Heidegger world. It is the woodsman and farmer, acting in immortal affinity with their surroundings, that provide Heidegger with a touchstone of existential rightness" (Steiner 1978: 141).

His biography, furthermore, points us to the question of Heidegger's Nazism, with all that it implies for his cognitive topography, a topography which we might assume to have shown overall a "Nordic" tinge. Was his adherence to the National Socialist German Workers' Party a temporary and limited aberration or did it express a deep and enduring vein in his philosophy? (Ramet 2012: 429–30; Watts 2011: 245–62). As recently as 2014, the publication of the *Schwarze Hefte* (Black Notebooks)—the intellectual diary Heidegger started in 1931—reignited a long-running controversy (Heidegger 2014). It revealed with new vividness the deeply anti-Semitic opinions he espoused during this period, inter alia of the Jews as *weltlos* (worldless), rootless, distant from the soil, that is, not bound to a homeland, and therefore subversive (Trawny 2014: 35, 73).

Where then was Heidegger's primary homeland? Where was he most "at home?" The geographical answer, we argue, is the Mediterranean, at least as much as it is the Black Forest. As already indicated, there are two parts to this Mediterranean of his, and the first of them to which we need to turn is Greece.

## GREECE

It is well known that Greece was Heidegger's philosophical homeland (White 2005; Hyland and Manoussakis 2006). His entry into philosophy, and indeed into the question of the meaning of Being that runs throughout his work, came via Franz Brentano's book on Aristotle's ontology. Homer, Sophocles, and Pindar (in Hölderlin's translation) became key points of reference. He saw Greek as the primordial language of Europe,

with German supposedly descended from it (Watts 2011: 168–69). Most importantly, Heidegger found in the pre-Socratic philosophers, especially Parmenides and Heraclitus, the initiators of philosophy as a preoccupation with the totality of Being (Greek *phūsis*); for him, all subsequent philosophical effort, beginning even with Aristotle, involved a “forgetfulness of Being,” a neglect of this preoccupation that had lasted until Heidegger’s own time. “Again we go back to the two decisive thinkers, Parmenides and Heraclitus [...] The misrepresentation of thought and the abuse to which it leads can be overcome only by authentic thinking that goes back to the roots,” that is, to the pre-Socratics (Heidegger 1959: 122, 125).

Of course, Heidegger took a very slanted and limited view of ancient Greeks. As has been said, his Greeks are only some particular Greeks and they are really Germans in togas (Most 2002: 89–94). That passion for them may well be inseparable from his Nazism. His *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1935 not only calls for a return to Parmenides but also looks to an “exemplary leader” who will “point out the path that the people will follow” (Heidegger 1959: 50). It is obvious whom he had in mind.

Heidegger’s profound interest in early Greek philosophy is thus inseparable from his German enthusiasms, including the latter’s most deplorable aspects. Greece is, however, the homeland of art as much as it is the homeland of philosophy, and it is Heidegger’s evolving philosophy of art that reveals the second—crucial—geographical component in his vision of the Mediterranean region.

## ART

Heidegger’s thoughts turned to art in the 1930s at the same time as they turned to the pre-Socratics, to Hölderlin, and to Nietzsche (the last two both in some senses Mediterraneanists as well).<sup>5</sup> His major work on the conceptual origins or the essence of art is the text *The Origins of the Work of Art* (hereafter OWA), based on a lecture first delivered in 1935 and revised, expanded, and annotated thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (2001) is the major study on this point. See also Iain Thomson (2011: 40–119).

<sup>6</sup> In English, OWA is best read in Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes’s translation (Heidegger 2002).

Where does a work [of art] belong? As a work it belongs uniquely within the region it itself opens up. For the work-being of the work presences itself only in such opening up [...] the happening of truth is at work. (Heidegger 2002: 20)

How does truth happen in the work? Not through representation.

A building, a Greek temple portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rocky, fissured valley. The building encloses the figure of a god and within this concealment, allows it to stand forth through the columned hall within the holy precinct [...] the temple and its precinct do not, however, float off into the indefinite. (20)

The temple gathers and structures the material world and, equally, the *ethical* world of a whole historical people. Resting on the rocky ground, the temple enables nature (as we might simplistically call it) to arise and take shape. In Heidegger's special vocabulary, this is "earth." Earth is the "dark matter" of Being, the undisclosed, the ungraspable, yet essential to the full disclosure of truth, *alētheia*, the "unconcealment of beings" (28).

Earth is that in which the arising of everything that arises is brought back [...] and sheltered [...] Standing there, the temple opens up a world while, at the same time, setting this world back into the earth which itself comes forth as homeland [*heimatliche Grund*]. (21)

In attempting to grasp the significance of this passage, we should simply note first that Heidegger's approach is a long way from standard aesthetics as it had been understood by Kant or Schopenhauer or by most twentieth-century philosophers of art—that is, as an aesthetics of pleasure or beauty (Young 2001: 133–34; Thomson 2011: 40–64). Second, he operates with an expanded conception of art, for which he appropriates the Greek term *techne*, and indeed an expanded conception of poetry as the essence of all art (Heidegger 2002: 35, 44). Third, he is talking in this lecture about great art, the art that not only disrupts the flow of everyday existence and overcomes the blinkers of our limited metaphysics but encapsulates and sometimes even creates a historical epoch: "whenever [great] art happens [...] a thrust enters history and history either begins or resumes [...] the transporting of a people into its appointed task as the entry into its endowment" (49). Fourth, art of this supreme kind has a very particular function. It is truth-disclosing: "the setting-*itself*-to-work of truth" (55).

It does this by showing forth the conflict between “earth” and “world,” between “self-opening” and “sheltering and concealing.” “World and earth are essentially different [Heidegger’s “ontological difference”] and yet never separated from one another” (26). “Truth is present only as the strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition between world and earth” (37).

Did art that is great on Heidegger’s criteria—communal, literally epoch-making art—die with the Greeks, or at the latest by the end of the Middle Ages, a period he also considers? Is it confined to the past, as Hegel had thought (51)? Heidegger allows for some uncertainty and admits some grounds for hope.<sup>7</sup> The strongest examples he adduces in the course of *OWA* ought to be the Greek temple at Paestum, southern Italy, and Bamberg Cathedral (20). The Greek temple is certainly evoked at some length. The first example Heidegger mentions, and returns to later on in the text, is, however, the much-discussed one of Van Gogh’s painting of a pair of boots, for which Heidegger was taken to task by the art historian Meyer Schapiro, since he seemed to assume that the boots were a peasant woman’s rather than the artist’s (4; 13–16).<sup>8</sup> The second example, about which Heidegger says curiously little, is a pithy and famous but undistinguished work of around 1858 by the Swiss poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825–1898), “The Roman Fountain,” usually taken to be a fountain in the Villa Borghese gardens (Gover 2008; Sutton 1987; Thomson 2011). These two, the Van Gogh and the Meyer, can, it seems, also be truth-disclosing works although they are very different from the great public statement that is Bamberg Cathedral.

If we recall the Greek temple, then two of three major examples in *OWA* are in a very elementary geographical sense Mediterranean works (two only because the Van Gogh paintings in question, multiple images of boots in fact, were executed in Paris in 1886–1888 before his move south to Arles). All these works are “earthed” not only in Heidegger’s special ontological sense, but, as an aspect of that, also in a straightforward geological way. The Greek temple stands in the middle of a rocky, fissured valley. The Roman fountain may have been taken by Heidegger as an alle-

<sup>7</sup> Compare his assertion in the volume known in English as *Pathmarks* to the effect that art will not be at an end if we get out of aesthetic experience and into *Dasein* (Heidegger 1998: 50 note b).

<sup>8</sup> See Schapiro “The Still Life as Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh,” and “Further Notes on Heidegger and Van Gogh” (1994: 135–51). See also Derrida (1987: 255–383); Thomson (2011: 106–19).

gory of the epochs of art history or—in its vocabulary of rising and falling, veiling (*verschleiern*) and giving, streaming and resting—as an image of the interplay of earth and world (Thomson 2011: 68–71). In any case, the water in the fountain has presumably sprung from the earth, however artificial the immediate aquifer.

The boots are apparently different:

From van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes are [or to whom they belong as Schapiro noted]. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes to which and within which they could belong; only an undefined space [...] A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet. (Heidegger 2002: 14)

“And yet”—for perhaps this “nothing” is a dynamic nothing that also figures in its mysteriousness the conflict of earth and world (Thomson 2011: 90–109). Then there are the boots' insides:

From out of the dark opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes the toil of the worker's tread stares forth. In the crudely solid heaviness of the shoes accumulates the tenacity of the slow trudge through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by raw wind [...] The shoes vibrate with the silent call of the earth. (Heidegger 2002: 14)

A theme of rootedness (*Verwurzelung*, as Heidegger puts it) is evident here: being rooted in the ground.<sup>9</sup> This is the ground of the homeland, out of which any work of art must grow if it is to thrive (Pöggeler 2002: 172).

Significantly, therefore, although it includes material from lectures of the 1930s, *OWA* was first published in the collection *Holzwege* (“timber tracks” or “forest paths”). This first appeared in 1950, and in 1956 Heidegger added an appendix. The collection thus emphasizes the forested homeland in its title as it points us forward from the 1930s to his later thinking about art.

<sup>9</sup> “While the plant springs up, and spreads itself into the open, it goes at the same time back into its roots” (Heidegger 1976: 254).



## MODERN ART, CÉZANNE

Especially in the postwar years, Heidegger developed an intense if highly selective interest in late nineteenth-century and modern art and literature, as well as in that of East Asia (Young 2001: 121). Among poets, Rilke perhaps held his attention most strongly; among painters, Cézanne. And there is a connection between the two. Heidegger encouraged the publication in book form of Rilke's letters on Cézanne written in 1907 after a big memorial exhibition of the painter's work. Heidegger was reading these letters in the late 1940s, perhaps preparing for the lecture on Rilke that he gave to mark the twentieth anniversary of the poet's death, the lecture published in *Pathmarks* (Young 2001: 150; Jamme 1994: 141–45; Cox 2007: 99–101). Rilke led Heidegger to Cézanne, and Cézanne led him to Provence. Provence is the second crucial geographical element in his vision of the Mediterranean, Greece being the other. In *OWA*, the Van Gogh works, as we noted, belong to the painter's Parisian phase: it seems Heidegger did not encounter the paintings that Van Gogh completed in Provence until some years later, in 1956. The link with the Midi is thus not Van Gogh but Cézanne.

In Rilke, Heidegger found a poet whose work “in its course within the history of being, remains behind Hölderlin in rank and position” (Heidegger 1998: 206), but some of whose ideas at least he could remake in his own image. In Cézanne, however, he found an artist with whom he could identify to a remarkable extent: an artist who became in some degree his alter ego as a discloser of truth.

This labor [as Rilke had put it for him, describing Cézanne's art] which no longer knew any preferences or biases [...] and which so incorruptibly reduced a reality to its color content that it resumed a new existence in a beyond of color, without any previous memories. (Rilke 1985: 65)

Heidegger read aloud from Rilke's letter to his friend Heinrich Petzet in November 1942 (Petzet 1993: 142). Petzet's record of conversations with Heidegger is the source of many anecdotes about him in the postwar years. He comments on the unusually close way in which Heidegger was attached to the “appearance and being of the painter” (143). Here after all he found an artist relentlessly opposed to technocratic modernity (as was Heidegger himself), with an implacable work ethic, who stayed in one place, secluding himself in provincial life despite forays to Paris. Some

thought that Heidegger even looked a little like Cézanne (143; Jamme 1994: 146). He would have seen paintings by him in Basel in or shortly after 1947. But it was not until the Provençal poet René Char enticed him to visit Cézanne country in the later 1950s that Heidegger's sympathy for the painter reached maximum intensity (Young 2001: 150–52; Jamme 1994: 146–47; Petzet 1993: 143–44).

Reportedly, Heidegger came to regard the region around Aix, where Cézanne painted in his final years, as his “second homeland” after the Black Forest. At the end of one of the visits to Provence, in March 1958, before lecturing on Hegel and the Greeks, he described the path into the Bibémus quarry, where Cézanne had rented a small isolated cottage, as “the path [*Weg*] to which, from its beginning to its end, my own path as a thinker in a certain way corresponds” (Petzet 1993: 143; Seubold 1987: 65). After another visit, he pronounced: “These days in the homeland [*Heimat*] of Cézanne are worth more than a whole library of philosophical books. If only one could think as directly as Cézanne painted” (Jamme 1994: 146; Young 2001: 151).

Heidegger devoted no lecture specifically and explicitly to Cézanne. The only text we have directly from him on the painter's significance is one of his poems, or more accurately, as he called them, his “things thought”—*Gedachtes* rather than *Gedichte* (Travers 2012). It is, tellingly, dedicated to René Char on his birthday. This is the original version<sup>10</sup>:

“Cézanne”

Das nachdenksam Gelassene, das inständig  
Stille der Gestalt des alten Gärtners  
Vallier, der Unscheinbares pflegt am  
Chemin des Lauves.

Im Spätwerk des Malers ist die Zwiefalt  
von Anwesendem und Anwesenheit einfältig  
geworden “realisiert” und verwunden zugleich,  
verwandelt in eine geheimnisvolle Identität.

Zeigt sich hier ein Pfad, der in ein Zusammen-  
gehören des Dichtens und des Denkens führt?

(The thoughtfully serene, the urgent/stillness of the form of the old gardener/Vallier, who tends the inconspicuous on the/“Chemin des

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger (1983: 223).

Lauves”.//In the late work of the painter the twofold-ness/of what is present and of presence has become one/“realized” and overcome at the same time,/transformed into a mysterious identity.//Is a path revealed here, which leads to a belonging-/together of poetry and thought?)<sup>11</sup>

What Heidegger encountered in Cézanne was an artist hostile to conventional mimesis or representation, who wanted his art to create a structure or harmony of color parallel to that of nature, arising, as Rilke recognized, from a purity of perception that avoided projecting onto nature any prior knowledge (Imdahl 1996: 316). “Nature is not on the surface but in the depths” (Jamme 1994: 147). This is what Cézanne sought to “realize” in the homeland that he loved. “If it were not that I love my homeland so much,” he said, “I would not be here” (Dittmann 2005: 343). He chose subjects for his paintings that he could find in the landscape of this homeland, and, until his late years, most often painted them out of doors, in front of what he called “the motif” (Müller 1990: 40).<sup>12</sup>

Cézanne was, and has remained, a philosopher’s painter. Besides Heidegger, he also found a commentator in the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose essay “Cézanne’s Doubt,” first published in 1945, develops ideas and scattered references in his *Phenomenology of Perception* of the same year.<sup>13</sup> Many of his comments in the essay seem close to Heidegger’s approach to art in *OWA*, but are couched in a less forbidding idiom:

Cézanne wants to represent the object, to find it again *behind the atmosphere* [of Impressionism] [...] The object is no longer covered by reflections and lost in its relationships to the atmosphere and to other objects: it seems subtly illuminated from within [...] He did not want to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear; he wanted to depict *matter as it takes on form*, the birth of order through spontaneous organization [...] *Cézanne wanted to paint this primordial world*, and his pictures therefore seem to show nature pure.

The “happening of truth” is implied in some of that, especially the italicized phrases. Or again:

<sup>11</sup> Translated, each slightly differently, in Jamme (1994: 146–47) and Young (2001: 152). We have followed them but with some modification.

<sup>12</sup> For the setting, see Athanassoglou-Kalymer (2003).

<sup>13</sup> See also Rutherglen (2004).

Motivating all the movements from which a picture gradually emerges there can be only one thing: the landscape in its totality and in its absolute fullness, precisely what Cézanne called a “motif.” He would start by discovering the *geological foundations of the landscape* [...] The task before him was, first to forget all he had ever learned from science, and second, *through* these sciences to recapture the *structure of the landscape as an emerging organism*. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 12–13; emphasis added)

To put the matter in Heideggerian terms, Cézanne wanted to let Being become visible, world emerge from earth, through his system of interrelated colors. His versions of Mediterranean blue, used in his paintings of the Bay of Marseille, are also evident in a large number of his late works and in that sense implicate the Mediterranean in some of his greatest achievements as an artist (Badt 1965: 79–82). And yet, in response to a question in a little album—“What is your favorite color?”—Cézanne had once replied “general harmony,” and he would not have deviated from that (Doran 2001: 101).

Such harmony was crucial to *réalisation*. Heidegger added the following explanation in a later (1974) and longer version of his “poem,” parts of which are once more redolent of Merleau-Ponty:

What Cézanne calls la réalisation [*sic*] is the appearance of what is present in the clearing of coming to presence—in such a way indeed that the duality [*Zweifalt*] of both is overcome in the simplicity [*Einfalt*] of the pure shining of its images. For thought, this is the question of the overcoming of the ontological difference between Being and beings. (Heidegger 2007: 347–48)<sup>14</sup>

The vocabulary has changed from *OWA*, but we can see in these ideas a reworking of the earth/world, concealment/clearing pairings, and the finding that in Cézanne the truth of Being is evident. Objects in his art dematerialize into “the nothing,” the field that is the ground of their individual beings, a field akin to the dynamic “nothing” that surrounds Van Gogh’s boots.

Cézanne’s gardener, Vallier, of whom he painted six oil portraits and three large watercolors, does not dominate nature, his home; he tends it

<sup>14</sup>We have used but not always followed the translation in Figal (2009: 310–11). This longer version, scarcely noticed by scholarship, deserves fuller attention than we can give it here.

with care, and caring was a major theme in Heidegger's philosophy from *Being and Time* onwards (Watts 2011: 78, 265). Vallier is embedded in nature. Ironically, in the present context, there developed at some point the legend that he had been to sea, and some of the portraits of him are known under the implausible title of *The Sailor* (Danchev 2012: 354). In the longer version of his "poem," however, Heidegger the inveterate land-lubber refers more than once to the mountain (*Berg*), even hyphenating it as *Ge-birges*, almost "be-mountained," as if to bring out its interior dynamism. And he brings together, into one "likeness" (*Bildnis*), the gardener and the mountain. Perhaps the gardener is himself the poet-thinker overcoming all dualities, as Heidegger had striven to do ever since he wrote *Being and Time*, a work also "cited" in the "poem" (Young 2001: 153).

Cézanne was, then, a philosopher's painter. But for Heidegger he was more than that. The poem about the painter ends with the idea of a path that leads to a unity of poetic writing and thinking. By poets, Heidegger means artists in general. Therefore, for him painters are poets. And by thinkers Heidegger means philosophers—at least those philosophers whose works question the meaning of Being (Heidegger 1959: 111). A *Pfad* or path is small and narrow. It does not expand into a road since only a few people use it. Those who do are the artists and philosophers. No wonder Heidegger opined in 1956 that "Cézanne was not a philosopher, but he understood all of philosophy" (quoted in Danchev 2012: 362).

## THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Being that Heidegger detected in Cézanne's paintings had much to do with the painter's rootedness in the landscape of his homeland (Pöggeler 2002: 173). But what do Heidegger's homeland and Cézanne's homeland have in common? The Black Forest and Provence are hardly neighbors. This is the point at which we must come back to Greece as Heidegger's *philosophical* homeland. Heidegger drew an analogy between Cézanne and the pre-Socratic Heraclitus as one who hopes for what is beyond hope—and who therefore has some chance of finding it (Beaufret 1974: 207).<sup>15</sup> Yet what connects that philosophical homeland of Heidegger and the homeland of Cézanne is not just intellectual affinity: it is the Mediterranean Sea, for it links the South of France—the Bay of Marseille

<sup>15</sup> Beaufret invokes Heraclitus fragment 18 in the established Diels-Kranz numeration. See Danchev (2012: 356–67).

that Cézanne painted—with Greece. Earlier we quoted the most frequently reproduced part of some preparatory remarks that Heidegger offered his audience before lecturing on Hegel and the Greeks. A longer extract is now in order. The unscripted remarks, which were taken down by Heidegger's friend Jean Beaufret, have been printed in his collected works under the title "Declaration of Love to Provence":

Warum spreche ich hier in Aix-en-Provence? Ich liebe die Milde dieses Landes und seiner Dörfer. Ich liebe die Strenge seiner Berge. Ich liebe die Harmonie von beiden. Ich liebe Aix, Bibemus, das Gebirge Sainte-Victoire. Ich habe hier den Weg Paul Cézannes gefunden, dem, von seinem Beginn bis zu seinem Ende, mein eigener Weg des Denkens in gewisser Weise entspricht. *Ich liebe dieses Land mit seiner Meeresküste, weil sich darin die Nähe zu Griechenland ankündigt.* Ich liebe dies alles, weil ich überzeugt bin, daß es kein wesentliches Werk des Geistes gibt, das nicht seine Wurzel in einer ursprünglichen Bodenständigkeit hat. (Heidegger 2000: 551; emphasis added)

Why am I speaking here in Aix-en-Provence? I love the mildness of this land and its villages. I love the harshness of its mountains. I love the harmony of both. I love Aix, Bibémus, Mont Sainte-Victoire. I have found here the path of Paul Cézanne, to which, from beginning to end, in a certain way, my own path as a thinker corresponds. *I love this land [of Provence] with its seacoasts, because therein its nearness to Greece announces itself.* I love all this because I am convinced that there is no essential work of the spirit that does not have its roots in an original native soil.

That encapsulates our argument: Heidegger's Mediterranean is Greece, Provence, the coasts that link them, and the rootedness of Cézanne, the artist in whom he recognized himself.

### MEDITERRANEANISM

What sort of Mediterraneanist, if any, was Heidegger? There is no sign that he knew much of, let alone took any genuine interest in, the developments in Mediterranean historiography in the postwar years that we associate above all with Fernand Braudel, or indeed that Braudel and the historians of the *Annales* took any interest in him (see Daix 1995; Gemelli 1995; Paris 1999). His contacts with French intellectual life were very different, restricted to poets and philosophers.

In an interview, the poet and philosopher Michel Deguy recalled meeting Heidegger in company with the philosopher-critic Roger Laporte. After a lecture in Aix they travelled to the coast at Cassis.

After the café, Heidegger goes down to the sea, pulling up his right trouser leg and dips his foot and calf into the Mediterranean [...] He said some words about Greece and the Mediterranean. I found this at once interesting and, inevitably, a little ridiculous. We were very pleased to be there. But obviously there were no exchanges between us and the Master. (Janicaud 2005: 79)<sup>16</sup>

Nor, it seems, between the Master and the Mediterranean. He does no more than get his feet wet. He remains always the rural landlubber.

In this way Heidegger escapes the strictures of the anti-Mediterraneanists of the 1980s—the anthropologists Michael Herzfeld and Joao de Piña-Cabral—for whom so much ethnography exoticized, homogenized, and reified the Mediterranean to make it an acceptable subject for research (Horden and Purcell 2000: 20, 486–87; Halle 2015: 80–81). Heidegger does not describe a uniform pan-Mediterranean culture; rather, his Mediterranean is a convenient expansion of Greece and Provence, a macrocosmic synecdoche. He says little about Italy, nothing about the Islamic Mediterranean. Nor does he betray any awareness of the historical connections (cultural and economic) between Greece and Provence other than those arising from his own intellectual preoccupations. His Provence is the (recent) Provence of Cézanne’s paintings just as his Greece is the (ancient) Greece of the pre-Socratics. There is a chronological disjunction.

Indeed, the contemporary reality of Greece appealed rather less than the ancient ideal. When he first actually visited his Greek “homeland,” Heidegger wrote to Erhart Kästner:

This sea, these mountains, these islands, this sky—it surprises me more and more and it is difficult to think [...] that here and only here could *A-lêtheia* bloom [...] that here Being should dominate as presence and create the conditions for human living. (quoted in Cassano 2012: 28)

In the slim volume of philosophical reminiscences of his visit, *Aufenthalten*, translated as *Sojourns* (1989), he wrote with equal frankness about how he had long hesitated to travel, “due to the fear of disappointment.” In the

<sup>16</sup>Not included in the English translation by Raffoul and Pettigrew.

valley of the River Alphaeus, “doubts arose again whether this [Greek] essence, long-cherished and often thought through, was a creature of fancy without any connection with what had actually been” (Heidegger 1989: 4, 13).

Heidegger’s Mediterranean is significant in his cognitive geography as a source of truth. It is not in any usual sense a profound geographical conception. There is more understanding of the Mediterranean as a region and how it has “worked” in Plato’s frequently quoted aperçu with which we began. Yet, if Heidegger ultimately does not tell us much about the Mediterranean, then teasing out and bringing together his scattered thoughts about the sea and its coastlands, as we have attempted here, certainly tells us something important about Heidegger.

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## Lawrence Durrell's Mediterranean Shores: Tropisms of a Receding Line

*Isabelle Keller-Privat*

Lawrence Durrell, the Indian-born British expatriate poet and novelist, always thought of himself as a child of the Mediterranean. Corfu was the island where his creative sensibility was revealed to him, the place where he discovered both what he called his “islomania” (Durrell 1953: 15) and the essence of the Mediterranean that a single word encapsulates: “the blue” (Durrell 1962: 11). Throughout his prose and poetry the writer relentlessly probes a color that progressively becomes as much of a presence as the vines and olives that strew his landscape, making the reader aware of the ambiguous nature of the referent: both water and land, both terrestrial and celestial, Durrell’s blue opens up to all those who sail and strand and dream. It conjures a place of isolation and intense connection where the writer is initiated to the literary brotherhood of Greek poets, learns a new language, discovers a new perspective: “the form of things becomes irregular, refracted [...] wherever you look the trembling curtain of the atmosphere deceives” (11). It is a place of mirages and deluding

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The title is a homage to Hogarth 2008.

I. Keller-Privat (✉)

Cultures Anglo-Saxonnes, Toulouse 2 – Jean Jaurès University, Toulouse, France

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reflections where the dark waters mirror the unreachable starry heavens and where the land simultaneously contracts and expands ad infinitum.

“Not so much a sea as shores” (Bonnefoy 2013: 297),<sup>1</sup> the Mediterranean imposes an inverted perspective which leads man to consider his abode from the point of view of the sea. It is an oxymoron, a “*terre marine*,” a “cluster of lands whose history has been uniquely adapted to the life of the sea” (Purcell 2006: 232). Unsurprisingly, Durrell’s literary representation apprehends this complex, “cellular world” (215) sideways, from the oblique perspective of a multifaceted writing.

Durrell recomposes the Mediterranean from a kaleidoscopic perspective that interweaves essays, fiction, poems, and residence books, so called by their author who, throughout *Prospero’s Cell*, *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, and *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*, chooses to practice travel as a “form of introspection” (Durrell 1959: 15). My analysis of Durrell’s landscape writing will inevitably lead to an examination of the underlying connections with the images of the Mediterranean wrought throughout *The Alexandria Quartet* and his earlier collections of poems, *A Private Country* and *Cities, Plains and People*. Although *The Quartet* was published at a later time, most of Durrell’s representations of the Mediterranean, including those of the novel, were sketched out between the 1940s and the 1960s, at a time when Durrell kept moving from one exile to another, never ceasing to grieve the loss of the Mediterranean. Significantly, his last residence book, *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*, recaptures and synthesizes his vision of the Mediterranean, as if to confirm the young writer’s poetic inklings and to testify to the eternal truth of a Mediterranean world which stands out as the “egg beauty” (Durrell 1944: 22)—a perfect, self-enclosed object that defies time and language, that transcends the various literary forms.

In this chapter, I first examine how the Mediterranean appears as a disjointed whole, the meaning of which may not lie so much in the reassembling of the puzzle as in the careful examination of what is at stake in those gaps, fissures, and chasms that jeopardize the process of representation. The Mediterranean thus becomes far more than a mere backdrop to the writer’s art. It is part and parcel of the very texture of each story, whether autobiographical or fictional. It is endowed with as much significance and potency as its characters. “We are the children of our landscape,” Durrell reminds us; “it dictates behaviour and even thought in the measure to

<sup>1</sup> “Moins une mer que des rives.” All unattributed translations are my own.

which we are responsive to it" (Durrell 1974: 39–40). I then show how the Mediterranean functions as a "heuristic device" (Herzfeld 2006: 58) through which the reader is summoned to consider space no more as a given datum, but as a "dark crystal" (Durrell 1962: 11) which reshapes our view of the world. Ultimately, I wonder how the Mediterranean, as a spatial, sensual, and creative anchorage, functions as a device, a structure that implies both an organized form and works as an informal matrix out of which an unexpected, shattering light emerges which defies language and opens up an aesthetic and philosophical enquiry (Buignet 2008: 498–499).

### DURRELL'S MEDITERRANEAN: A DISJOINTED WHOLE

Durrell's Mediterranean is first and foremost Greek, whether we think of his poems, residence books, fiction, or of his "very personal" guide to *The Greek Islands* (Durrell 1978: 8). In Corfu, Rhodes, and Cyprus, Durrell looks at the Greek world, both ancient and modern, and carries on, even when he is thrown miles away, in Alexandria, Cordoba, or Belgrade. In his last abode in Sommières, Languedoc, he extols a land of "moorland, sage, holm-oak. Dry rocky soil, sunburnt. Like an abandoned corner of Attika" (Durrell 1989: 320). His last residence book, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*, takes us through a country which is "full of echoes from Greece" (Durrell 1990b: 6). Even though he admits that "a fondness for mythology and folklore is perhaps a handicap" (1978: 16), he summons Homer and Aristotle, Alexander the Great and Caesar, Herodotus, Hesiod and Thucydides, Pliny and Plutarch, as often as Cavafy, Seferis, or Ritsos, in order to compose a fragmented reality that marries the classics and the moderns. In so doing, Durrell resorts to the characteristic features of the Mediterranean topos: fragmentation, instability, and connectivity (Bresson 2006: 94). Durrell's Mediterranean is also a topos of Durrellian criticism if we consider the bulk of papers devoted to Durrell's Greek world (Lillios 2004). However, the specificity of Durrell's probing into this common ground, both as a place and as an intellectual construct, has scarcely been taken into account. For Durrell's Greece is not so much a collection of places, sensations, cultural, and literary references, as a road that leads writer and reader into a new world.

Tellingly, his residence books and essays systematically open on a boat journey. Durrell's Mediterranean unfolds as a crossing that reminds one of the historic conquest of the land described by Braudel, who recalls "this

very, very slow conquest [...] this lengthy taming process” (1985: 27–28)<sup>2</sup> of a space which has always challenged man’s strength and will. Likewise, Durrell brings us “from the flat and desolate Calabrian mainland towards the sea,” not to the peaceful sight of the Corfiot coast but to the disquieting encounter with an unfamiliar presence: “you are aware of a change in the heart of things [...] aware of *islands* coming out of the darkness to meet you” (1962: 11). The voyage to Rhodes is equally disorienting, starting with a Conradian storm that blurs the boundaries between land and sea, throwing the travelers “off course” (1953: 20) before they finally spot land, “the merest etching of darkness upon darkness [...] fitful glimpses of its capes and cliffs through the shifting packets of mists” (22). As for the discovery of Cyprus, it plays neither on geographic nor meteorological disorientation, but on artistic illusion: Cyprus is approached through the “liquefying” (1959: 15) view of a Turner-like Venetian watercolor upon which the writer superimposes Mrs. Lewis’s Victorian travel account of Cyprus. And when land comes into view it is unrecognizable: “a gloomy and featureless roadstead, before a town whose desolate silhouette suggested that of a tin-mining village in the Andes” (21–22). Even the more factual descriptions of the guide to *The Greek Islands* do not spare the reader a lengthy voyage, which acts as a threshold preparing him for what lies on the nearby yet distinct shore. Encountering Greece is clearly equated with the painstaking crossing of a frontier—not a geographical, or a political one, but an imaginary, symbolic one, which leads the traveler from “the Italy of finesse [...] cherished and tamed by its natives into a formal sweetness” to a “Greece [...] wilder [...] terrible and unbroken—mistress and goddess without mercy all in one” (1978: 15). Durrell’s perception of the frontier as not so much “a territorial or political boundary” but as a “magic” experience that makes “the traveller’s [...] heart beat to a new rhythm,” that makes “everything [...] seem changed, including the air he breathes” (14), is not alien to the vision of the geographer who sees, beyond the arbitrariness of boundaries, “a zone of transition defined by its potential communications, and not an abrupt discontinuity” (Horden and Purcell 2000: 22). The semi-fictitious, semi-autobiographical projections of the traveler’s dreams and readings enable Durrell to materialize a threshold that opens up new connections in a mysterious literary elsewhere. It paves the way for a prose that veers away from the narrative to capture the ineffable:

<sup>2</sup> “Cette lente, très lente conquête [...] le long apprivoisement.”

'In what ways does Greece differ from Italy or Spain?' [...] The light. One hears the word everywhere 'To Phos' and can recognize its pedigree—among other derivatives is our English word 'phosphorescent', which summons up at once the dancing magnesium-flare quality of the sunlight blazing on a white wall [...] This confers a sort of brilliant skin of white light on material objects, linking near and far, and bathing simple objects in a sort of celestial glow-worm hue. It is the naked eyeball of God, so to speak, and it blinds one. (Durrell 1978: 18–19)

The Mediterranean becomes the very place of an epiphany where the writer becomes aware of an intimate correlation between the inner and the outer world that affects and reorients his perception of the self and of the world. To the geographer's "map of the horizon of communications" (Horden and Purcell 2000: 24), Durrell's cartography adds another, deeper, relational map that connects man to his own senses and heralds a refined relationship with the landscape. Thus the Mediterranean light travels far. Beyond the mutation of its etymology, it carries a radiance that affects our gaze, "linking near and far": it summons in its "dancing magnesium-flare" the "phosphorescent" (Durrell 1974: 847) colors of lake Mareotis where Clea sinks and is brought back to life by the narrator Darley in *The Alexandria Quartet*. It also brings together opposing shores—those of Corfu and Alexandria, those of the travel guide and of the novel—the better to remind the reader that the "magic" of the frontier lies in its crossing and that the Mediterranean is a metaphor for enlightened, displaced, and disquieting connections.

In this respect, Durrell reminds one of the type of "*voyageur-philosophe* [...] aware that changing points of view result[s] in the accumulation of sense impressions and a more complete understanding of complex spatial phenomena" (Armstrong 2006: 254). Yet, when Durrell revisits the classics and confronts them to the moderns, he is not trying to recapture an Antique Eden. Rather, the combination of textual, spatial, and metaphorical echoes unfold distinct yet simultaneous space-times that force one to travel from the landscapes the writer inhabited to those he rebuilt in his fictional work. Durrell thus conjures up a modernist Mediterranean, devoid of any comprehensive viewpoint, and whose beauty lies in its jagged angles, reminding one of Ezra Pound's Canto: "Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel/but it is jagged,/For a flash,/for an hour" (Pound 1964: 653). The paradise Durrell knew was a fragmented one that can never be wholly recaptured, but only hinted at, for the dazzling light of the Mediterranean



“blinds one” (Durrell 1978: 19). It becomes a synonym for disjointed sensations that will haunt the hinterland of the writer’s mind like the shattered fragments of a broken prism, not unlike T. S. Eliot’s “heap of broken images, where the sun beats,/And the dead tree gives no shelter” (Eliot 2002: 53). Durrell’s description of the lost world of Corfu thus reflects the modernist heritage:

the dark uncombed blue of the Cyclades [...]: the dazzling windmills and the grey springs. But they are now like ghosts of the old lucid past in the aura of *that Enormous Eye* [...] caves echoing to the suck and swish of the water; [...] the thousand and one images of that Greece of ours crystallize into pin-points of light. (Durrell 1962: 132; emphasis added)

*Prospero’s Cell* concludes on the throbbing images of the Cyclades, the very same spot wherefrom Darley’s narrative starts in *The Alexandria Quartet*, taking the reader along a circuitous route through a mirrored landscape, which stands for the education of the artist’s sensibility. “*That Enormous Eye*” (131) signals the point where the artist learns to close his eyes to the outer reality and ponder upon the persisting “ghost” images of the landscape, the point where images shimmer and contract, leaving the writer to himself. Indeed, Darley’s progress from the “bare promontory” (Durrell 1974: 17) of the island at the novel’s beginning to the “rippling forest of [the] vine-carpet” (870) at its end encapsulates the writer’s arduous crossing towards a “small private universe” (Durrell 1962: 132) in which he will never cease to probe his own soul. We may then wonder how Durrell’s self-explorative journey through the Mediterranean world shapes out a paradoxical writing that asserts its cohesion through disconnection, a writing that mimics the simultaneous dislocation and compression of those “thousand and one images” (132) that insist on the writer’s inner eye.

### ENTERING THE “DARK CRYSTAL”<sup>3</sup>

When investigating Durrell’s Mediterranean, one is forced to explore a variety of texts and genres in the hope of discovering the microscopic lattice that extends and attempts to comprise the whole. Yet the crystal is a shattered one that ceaselessly breaks up and reassembles, mirroring the object of writing itself. A comparison of four non-fictional texts dedicated to the

<sup>3</sup> Durrell (1962: 11).

Mediterranean—*Prospero's Cell*, *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, *The Greek Islands*, and *Caesar's Vast Ghost*—reveals striking similarities. The incipits of *Prospero's Cell* and *Reflections on a Marine Venus* start with the same adverb, “somewhere,” introducing a spatial exploration in the former—“Somewhere between Calabria and Corfu the blue really begins” (1962: 11)—and a textual one in the latter—“Somewhere among the notebooks of Gideon I once found a list of diseases [...] and among these occurred the word *Islomania*” (1953: 15). Beyond an exploration of the outer world, Lawrence Durrell offers an investigation of the meaning of a decades-long journey: “that is what islands are for; they are places where different destinies can meet and intersect in the full isolation of time” (1959: 20); “the traveller [...] first feels the intimations of a frontier coming to meet him” (1978: 14). Rather than composing guides or mere residence narratives, Durrell builds up a collection of essays delving into an apparently self-enclosed world that appears to branch off constantly. We are led through circuitous routes from the bare coasts of the Attic in the early residence books to the scrubby dry land of Languedoc in Durrell’s last opus, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*; similarly, we revisit the tales of Homer prior to rediscovering those of Caesar’s conquests, so that the Mediterranean truly appears as a land which ceaselessly defies the traveler as much as the poet and the historian, a “dark crystal” (Durrell 1962: 11) perplexing the traveler and reminding him of Braudel’s description of that “huge world that measures up to the men; it is out of joint and contradictory [...] a bulk of facts that defies any rational synthesis” (Braudel 1985: 157).<sup>4</sup>

Yet each and every text is imbued with a pervading desire to encompass the whole: Corfu, Rhodes, Cyprus, and the various isles of *The Greek Islands* function in Durrell’s Mediterranean as synecdoches for an elusive entity. This accounts for the paradoxical representation of Languedoc, a land which the writer discovers after a meandering journey, “swerving down those long dusty roads [...] diving from penumbra to penumbra of shadow, feeling that icy contrast of sunblaze and darkness,” before he finally “set[s] foot in Provence” (Durrell 1990b: 1), as if on an island. Languedoc is thus, unexpectedly, another “*terre marine*” (Purcell 2006: 232), albeit a perplexing one whose heart is to be sought away from “the rather disappointing seaside towns and beaches” (1990b: 9), in the secretive lands “symbolic of what Provence stood for in terms of

<sup>4</sup> “Un monde énorme à la mesure des hommes, disloqué, contradictoire [...] une masse de connaissances qui défie toute synthèse raisonnable.”

Mediterranean destiny, linking in one mood the messages carried by ancient Greece and Rome alike" (11). Durrell's last Mediterranean odyssey leads him away from the sea, into a hinterland where he discloses his lifelong search for a poetic, "semi-mythical" (8) presence to shape his imaginary world. This may be why *Caesar's Vast Ghost* enshrines a unique set of poems, all dedicated to Provence, as so many gems tucked away from the major collection of poetry and hinting at an inner symbolic realm.

This quest is best exemplified by the unexpected layout of *Prospero's Cell*, where the diary entries supposedly written by the young writer compose the first seven chapters, while the epilogue is explicitly attributed to a more mature narrator who is also in charge of the introductory paragraph and the chapter titles. Once again cohesion and dislocation rule as the narrative appears to be torn between distinct authorial voices (the diarist's and the narrator's), distinct time spans (that of the present blossoming of the poet's sensibility and that of its later recapturing), and distinct spaces. This powerful tension of the narrative, vacillating between telling and showing, is best demonstrated by the diary entry devoted to the house inhabited by the author and his wife Nancy, whose presence is minimally symbolized by the capital letter N. The inner space opens upon the outer one. It becomes the very screen reflecting an impossible description:

The windows give directly on to the sea, so that its perpetual sighing is the rhythm of our work and our sleeping. By day it runs golden on the ceilings, reflecting back the peasant rugs—a ship, a gorgon, a loom, a cypress-tree; reflecting back the warm crude pottery of our table; reflecting back N. now brown-skinned and blonde, reading in a chair with her legs tucked under her. (1962: 18–19)

Durrell uses the window to subvert the old perspective frame, taking us simultaneously into an inner and outer journey that defies the boundaries in space and time. *Prospero's Cell* develops a prospect where the expanse of the background floods inwards, bringing the outer world inside. The objects of discourse—the house and the sea—are displaced, the perspective shattered. The expanding pattern of the syntax relying on the dash and the semi-colon, as well as on the three occurrences of the present participle ("reflecting") to slow down the rhythm of the second sentence, forces one to adopt a slower pace as well, and to retrace one's steps. Disturbed by a perspective that abolishes distance, and that relies on

“jagged angles” (Pound 1964: 653) to deny any figurative representation of the Mediterranean sea, the reader looks back upon the scattered symbols (“a ship, a gorgon, a loom, a cypress-tree”) that encapsulate Durrell’s Mediterranean, only to discover his own mirrored image staring at him beneath the shape of N., the elusive companion, the silent reader wrought into the text. Nothing is shown, little is told: the “sea” melts into a sigh, the inner and the outer worlds disperse and blend, the Mediterranean resists any form of interpretation whilst seeping through the poetic cadence of the text.

The various chapters reflect the same tension, highlighting the contrast between the traveler’s outward progress through geographic and historical landscapes, while the entries of the fictitious diary throw the reader into the writer’s private country: “Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape; Greece offers you something harder—the discovery of yourself” (Durrell 1962: 11). Yet Durrell does also explore the “manners,” “lore,” and “landscape” of Corfu as his list of “Peasant remedies in common use against disease” or “Synoptic history of the island of Corfu” evince. His homage to Theodore Stephanides’s research equally testifies to his desire to provide the reader with a learned account of the history, geography, customs, and botany of the island.<sup>5</sup> However, this does not prevent Durrell from following another, immobile, journey. Focusing on insignificant details, he unveils the spirit of place in isolated textual fragments. They create a hiatus within the development of the narrative, and turn our gaze inwards:

The sea’s curious workmanship: bottle-green glass sucked smooth and porous by the waves: vitreous shells: wood stripped and cleaned, and bark swollen with salt: a bead: sea-charcoal, brittle and sticky: fronds of bladder-wart with their greasy marine skin and reptilian feel: rocks, gnawed and rubbed: sponges, heavy with tears: amber: bone: the sea. (34)

The overt purpose of the text is temporarily forgotten as the narrative shifts to poetry, as it invites the reader to travel in circles. Leading us from the sea back to it, Durrell gives a peculiar density to the symbolic vastness of “our great sea” (Harris 2006: 15). In the slow ebb and flow of its barely visible tides Durrell revisits T. S. Eliot’s “chambers of the sea” (Eliot 2002: 7) and singles out the infinitesimal signs of an impending decomposition.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see Theodore Stephanides’s letters to Durrell (2006).

The enumeration of nominal syntagmas that mirror one another on each side of the colons, the alliterations and assonances, the slow erasure of verbal forms, the decrescendo rhythm, build up a poetic prose piece that figures another fragment, part of the flotsam and jetsam cast away by the sea. Not only do the stylistic devices suggest the slow contamination of the writer's art by the very object it attempts to master but they also jeopardize textual cohesion. The reader becomes aware that Durrell's book on Corfu is clearly not "a history but a poem" (Durrell 1962: 20), a hallmark of Durrell's Mediterranean writing.

The second chapter of *Reflections* evinces a similar detour: "The Aegean is still waiting for its painter [...] Looking down upon it [...] you begin to paint it for yourself in words" (Durrell 1953: 40). The subsequent enumeration—"Cerulean sky touched with white cirrus [...] viridian to peacock-tail green [...] the chalky whiteness of the limestone, the chalk-dust that comes off the columns" (40)—sketches out a terrestrial decomposition that mirrors the maritime one in *Prospero's Cell* and betrays a crisis in the act of representation. As Murielle Philippe deftly argues, "the pictorial distorts language [...] the object escapes. The matter one seeks to express, to touch, turns into pure, impalpable light [...] The fragments of matter are a pictorial accident, a crisis which 'interrupts [...] the continuity of the system of representation'" (Philippe 2002: 209, 212–213).<sup>6</sup>

The Mediterranean seems to act as a corrupting agent whose own deliquescence contaminates any attempt to circumvent it. Durrell's writing refracts and magnifies the underlying forces of corruption and erosion through a prose that seems to crumble away. In so doing, Durrell leads the reader to realize that he is only giving him access to the landscape and not to the land. The word "landscape" is originally a pictorial term, as Michel Collot recalls: "It seems it referred to a painting or part of a painting representing a vast prospect or any area. The landscape is not the land, it is an image of the country" (Collot 2014: 174).<sup>7</sup> Durrell does not merely offer us landscapes inherited from generations of romantic travelers imbued with Virgilian odes or historic accounts of the Roman conquests; it reveals the quintessence of the landscape which Collot defines as "the place where

<sup>6</sup> "Le pictural déforme le verbal [...] l'objet échappe. La matière qu'on cherche à dire, à toucher, se transforme en pure lumière, intangible [...] L'éclat de matière est un accident pictural, une crise qui 'interrompt [...] la continuité du système représentatif'" (Didi-Huberman 1990: 313).

<sup>7</sup> "Il semble avoir désigné un tableau ou la partie d'un tableau qui représente une vue étendue d'une contrée quelconque. Le paysage n'est pas le pays, c'est une image du pays."

thought is experienced in space, calling into question the distinction between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*" (188):<sup>8</sup> the perception of space betrays a sensuous relationship to the outer world which cancels out the Cartesian dichotomy between the subject and its environment. As Cécile Ouhmani explains, "Durrell believes in the encounter between two living beings, each one belonging to a different order, man and landscape. He advocates a surrender of the self to this huge, living, all-embracing body" (Ouhmani 1998: 94).<sup>9</sup> The anthropologist Tim Ingold also contends that "land is not something you can see, any more than you can see the weight of physical objects [...] what you see all around" is the landscape; that is, "not the picture in the imagination, surveyed by the mind's eye; nor [...] an alien and formless substrate awaiting the imposition of human order [...] As the familiar domain of our dwelling, it is with us [...] And through living in it, the landscape becomes part of us, just as we are a part of it" (Ingold 200: 190–191). Durrell's writing reaches out towards that pervading entity, that invisible surplus of being that both surrounds and embosoms his existence, defining man's essence and endowing space with an ontological reality.

### "CROSSING AND UNCROSSING" IN SEARCH OF A NEW VISION<sup>10</sup>

By blurring the borderlines of the travel narrative, Durrell renews our apprehension of the world. He creates an intimate relationship between the landscape and the subject that materializes the pervasive influence of the Mediterranean *deus loci* upon the shaping of man. While purporting to explore the geography, history, and customs of the Mediterranean world, Durrell orients our gaze towards the invisible. The Mediterranean is thus to be conceived as a trope (from the Greek *tropein*, to turn), as a device which turns our eye towards an unseen presence. The land gives birth to the landscape, a cradle for thought, memory, creation. As Christine Buignet explains:

<sup>8</sup> "Le lieu d'exercice d'une pensée dans l'espace, qui remet en cause la distinction entre la *res cogitans* et la *res extensa*."

<sup>9</sup> "Durrell croit à une rencontre entre deux êtres vivants, chacun d'ordre différent, l'homme et le paysage. Il prône un abandon de soi à cet immense corps vivant qui englobe."

<sup>10</sup> Durrell (1946: 72).

As the heliotrope turns towards the sun, the image and the text, through the effect of tropism, seem to be able to point in a direction towards which they are temporarily strained; and the ensuing break is so powerful that it throws us into uncharted territory [...] murky yet mesmerizing areas, for, by offering us somehow a surplus of imaginary, they paradoxically turn us and return us towards the real. (Buignet 2008: 502)<sup>11</sup>

Durrell's Mediterranean operates as this trope. It points towards a receding line never to be reached. It evades the writer-traveler, defeats his prose, sneaks into unexpected poetic pieces, and resurfaces in his fiction. The specificity of his Mediterranean gaze lies in the porous nature of textual worlds that entice the reader to travel from non-fictional to fictional oeuvres, to perceive the underlying movement of a writing which never ceases to ebb and flow.

This is how *Prospero's Cell* turns us towards *The Alexandria Quartet*, though not in order to reveal the Mediterranean world, but rather its vanishing point:

In the great quietness of these winter evenings there is one clock: the sea. Its dim momentum in the mind is the fugue upon which this writing is made. Empty cadences of sea-water licking its own wounds, sulking along the mouths of the delta boiling upon those deserted beaches—empty, forever empty under the gulls: white scribble on the grey, munched by clouds [...] Wreckage washed up on the pediments of islands, the last crust, eroded by the weather, stuck in the blue maw of water...gone! (Durrell 1974: 19–20)

The description of the movement of the sea repeats and magnifies the death drift that becomes mimetic of the initial loss to which the writing bears witness. Through self-reverberating prose, Durrell leads the reader to again retrace his steps, and to contemplate in this Mediterranean fugue an absent presence, neither totally there nor totally forgotten.<sup>12</sup> This description is organized from the viewpoint of an unknown island in the Cyclades

<sup>11</sup> "Comme l'héliotrope se tourne vers le soleil, l'image et le texte, par l'effet du tropisme, semblent pouvoir désigner une direction vers laquelle ils sont alors ponctuellement tendus; et la rupture produite est si prégnante qu'elle nous entraîne à son tour dans la perte des repères [...] vers des terrains troubles mais fascinants—car, à travers une sorte de surplus d'imaginaire, c'est paradoxalement vers le réel qu'ils nous tournent, nous retournent."

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of this passage that expatiates on Durrell's borrowing and reappropriation of the contrapuntal composition that is the basic structure of the fugue, see (Keller-Privat 2002: 295–304).

where Durrell contemplates Egypt, a country which Roger S. Bagnall situates on “the fuzzy edges” of the Mediterranean (Bagnall 2006: 340), a country that borrows as much from its Pharaonic past as from its Greco-Roman history, torn between the remote, desertic hinterland looking towards the Near East and its Western Mediterranean shores. Neither an anchorage nor a mere exotic elsewhere that arouses the writer’s curiosity, it is a limbo which reveals the artist’s inner collapse. And it is precisely from this exile that Durrell writes *Prospero’s Cell*,<sup>13</sup> as if any re-membering of the Mediterranean could only take place after its loss and from the peculiar vantage point of one who is simultaneously practicing fictional, poetic, and landscape writing, standing in a spatial and textual vacuum, or, to use Darley’s words in *The Quartet*, who “lie[s] suspended like a hair or a feather in the cloudy mixtures of memory” (Durrell 1974: 20).

The Mediterranean thus functions in the manner of the “Heraldic Element” that Durrell defines in the essay, “From A Writer’s Journal,” as a “creative element [...] detached from the temporal continuum of association and live[s] out a separate existence in a sort of stasis” (Durrell 1947: 52). To solve the multiplicity of images and sensations originating in the Mediterranean, Durrell builds up a Platonic Idea of the Mediterranean, a perfect, eternal, and immutable pattern whose imperfect instances inhabit the physical world.<sup>14</sup> The “deserted beaches”, the scattered “wreckage” (Durrell 1974: 19–20) belie the poet’s inner exile from the Mediterranean. These natural phenomena work as the shadows of an ideal, bygone Mediterranean; they substantiate the presence of a longing that takes the writer away from himself and from the land. As if to mirror the geographic boundaries between land and sea that never cease to fluctuate, Durrell’s prose and poetry offer us an Idea that constantly evades our grasp. In order to reach out to this mysterious country that recedes in the near past and forces him into a lonely wandering,<sup>15</sup> Durrell opts for a form of writing that simultaneously enables him to explore the world of the senses and to distance himself through reminiscence. Writing the Mediterranean, Durrell endeavors to throw a bridge over the essential discontinuity between the world of the senses and that of the intellect, wherefrom he may contemplate the other side of the visible, the elusive

<sup>13</sup> See Durrell’s letter to Henry Miller (1989: 159–160).

<sup>14</sup> See Plato, *La République*, “Livre VII,” 516b–520c and *Phèdre* 249c–250b.

<sup>15</sup> “[...] pathless island waters/Crossing and uncrossing, partnerless/By hills alone [...]” (Durrell 1946: 72).



axis of his inner self. In order to do so and attain what Bonnefoy calls “the true place” which is born of “a gaze, an inner commotion” (Bonnefoy 2005: 16),<sup>16</sup> the writer must accept the necessary death of the ego, he must shed “the last crust” (Durrell 1974: 20) of his old self as a prerequisite to any form of artistic creation:

First this steaming humid flatness—not a hill or a mound anywhere—choked to bursting point with bones and the crummy deposits of wiped out cultures. Then this smashed up broken down shabby Neapolitan town, with its Levantine mounds of houses peeling in the sun. A sea flat dirty brown and waveless rubbing the port. (Durrell 1989: 168)

The reader cannot help but notice the darkening colors of this Alexandrian tableau which, although pertaining to Durrell’s letters, is strongly reminiscent of the fictional descriptions of *The Quartet* where the city appears as a death-saturated world, paradoxically deprived of the intense blue of the Mediterranean. The narrator Darley is indeed shown wandering in “the metallic flavours of exhaustion which impregnate the airs of Mareotis” (Durrell 1974: 38) or amidst “a series of dilapidated houses built of earth-brick and scaly plaster” (42). The stifling vapors of the lake have replaced the sea’s crisp bite and everywhere rise crumbling walls that “render the feeling of loss and destruction even more acute, enticing the reader to consider the city as dissolved matter” (Alexandre-Garner and Keller-Privat 2012: 64). In this forsaken world Durrell recaptures the memory of an eternal sea that shapes history and stories, that devours and cleanses and partakes of an ascetic ethics to which he will lay claim up to his last book: “The first step towards creation is to lose/Complete confidence in oneself and sort of die” (Durrell 1990b: 53). The Mediterranean connects the artist to the metaphysical quest of ancient Greek philosophers who deciphered in the sparse vegetation and frugal diet a lesson in humility and abstemiousness. The reader is brought to recognize in the olives, wheat, and wine that match the fragmented, bare prose, the sparseness of a world where the “only company can be rock, air, sky—the elementals” (Durrell 1962: 13).

Thus the diary entry in *Prospero’s Cell* devoted to Father Nicholas, who is introduced as “a great mythological character” (43), summons back the emblematic figure who presided over Durrell’s early collection of poems.

<sup>16</sup> “Le vrai lieu [...] Un regard, un ébranlement intérieur.”

In search of the “elementals” that inhabit memory and testify to the presence of the irrepresentable, Lawrence Durrell accumulates references that dismantle any classical, well-polished world representation. His scattered historical and literary references do not unveil any logical historical pattern or smooth picture:<sup>17</sup> they make reading an arduous, rough journey. The variety of his truncated sources magnifies the luminous fragmentation of the land. Not only do “rock faces splinter the light” (60), so do the multiple textual layers that create so many anfractuosités, isthmuses, and peninsulas of sensations. Likewise, the intertwining of poetry and prose conjures up a mysterious hinterland made of half-sketched dreams and poetic visions. In the poem “Father Nicholas His Death in the Ionian,” published in *A Private Country*, it is as if the anamnesis, which is at the heart of Plato’s theory of knowledge,<sup>18</sup> was woven into the text itself: the writing reminisces its past forms, conjuring a portrait that takes shape between the lines, a character who is brought back to life in order to testify to the very truth of the poetic act:

The dying and the becoming are one thing,  
So wherever you go the musical always is (Durrell 1944: 21)

The initially elusive poetic portrait of the character, which relies on dismemberment and abstraction,<sup>19</sup> precedes the figurative description of Father Nicholas published a year later in *Prospero’s Cell*, as if to assert the atemporal persistence of this mythological figure. The character exemplifies the perfect osmosis between man and the sea: “an extremely cautious sailor” (44), who “likes to sit and boast by the edge of the sea [...] like an Ionian Canute” (43). Like Homer, he is a shadow bringing in his wake the mysterious presence of an unknown, overpowering element, a sign that points to an enigmatic, distanced presence, and turns our gaze towards the unseen. For, as the philosopher Roberto Casati explains, shadows are “out of the way” phenomena, “half-way between perception and thought”:

<sup>17</sup>We may quote, for instance, Homer, Diodorus, Thucydides, or William Lithgow’s account of Corfu in 1632, as well as eighteenth-century travelers, not to mention the historical and sociological descriptions of Theodore Stephanides, all of which blend with Durrell’s text as quotation marks slowly disappear (Durrell 1962: 55).

<sup>18</sup>See Plato, *Ménon*, 81a–82a.

<sup>19</sup>See the nominalization and personification of the color from “the amazing blue” (1.4) to “the elegiac blue” (1.11), from “Nor ever the less blue” (1.31) to the final line, “And the blue will keep” (1.36).

Every shadow contains a message, neatly folded in its dark envelope. Shadows are fraught with thoughts. But such thoughts are visible by everybody [...] A bit like a word, as long as one knows the language it belongs to. (246)<sup>20</sup>

In between poetry and prose Durrell sketches a new insight into the complex essence of the Mediterranean, which functions as the very crucible of the writer's vision. Exploring its many shadows, he strives to unveil the font of a new wisdom wherein the mortal and the finite harmoniously blend in the eternal:

Hush then the fingerbones their mineral doze  
For the islands will never be old or cold  
Nor ever the less blue: for the egg of beauty  
Blossoms in new migrations (Durrell 1944: 22)

Through his death, Father Nicholas acquires a mytho-poetic status symbolizing the perennial beauty of a world that is continually in flux and which "will never grow old" (1.2). He is one amongst the "Sagacious and venerable faces" (177),<sup>21</sup> who accompany Lawrence Durrell beyond "Eden" (Durrell 1962: 19) through the unknown lands and hardships, where their obscure words, images, and rhythms reverberate "the vowels of an ocean beyond us,/The history, the inventions of the sea" (1944: 70). The *mare nostrum* is thus endowed with the breath and dreams of all those who have been shaped by it, confirming the perfect harmony between the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*: "the place expressing itself through [man's] body and mind as surely as a sculptor expresses himself in the clay he works or in the stone he carves" (1990b: 28). Durrell's Mediterranean becomes an entire world to itself, reminding us of Braudel's description: "It was of old a universe, a planet unto itself" (Braudel 1985: 48).<sup>22</sup> It is not just "a collection of battered vestiges left over from cultures long since abandoned—but [...] something ever present and ever-renewed" (Durrell 1953: 179). It remains so as far as Provence, which stands as the quintessence

<sup>20</sup> "Chaque ombre contient un message, bien enfermé dans son enveloppe obscure. Les ombres sont pleines de pensées. Mais ce sont des pensées visibles à tous [...] Un peu comme un mot, si l'on sait à quelle langue il appartient."

<sup>21</sup> One also recognizes in *A Private Country* Stephan Syriotis, Father Nicholas, Agamemnon, Virgil, and Seferis.

<sup>22</sup> "A elle seule, elle était jadis un univers, une planète."

of the Mediterranean, “a masterpiece of realized memory” (28), in which “history is endlessly [...] perpetuating itself [...] in a momentous simultaneousness” (31). As such it enables man to reflect upon his being in the world and in time: it is a beautiful metaphor for another crossing which takes man to his final abode and spells both his dissolution in space and his desire to challenge time and outlive his own death.

You show us all the way the great ones went,  
In silences becalmed, so well they knew  
That even to die is somehow to invent (Durrell 1973: 54)

## CONCLUSION

Akin to the underwater caves of Paleocastizza that lead the narrator “into the very heart of the earth” (Durrell 1962: 61), Durrell’s Mediterranean leads us into the inner recesses of man’s sensibility and conscience. There, the poet probes the veracity of his secret intuitions, welds the present and the past, adopts a critical perspective on man’s finitude. As Yves Bonnefoy explains: “The ‘mare nostrum’ of olden days [...] is one of those great signifiers that nourish true thought, the one that does not renounce to unfetter itself from myths. The Mediterranean, poetry, is entrusted to poetry. We may hope that poetry will keep it, cherish it, and fight and hope for it” (2013: 305).<sup>23</sup> For poets, writers, and artists, as for historians, the Mediterranean is “a source of meaning” (Marshall 2006: 313), the cradle in which our relationship to time and space and to others is perpetually at stake. Conflating the Greek and Roman influences, Durrell’s Provence is less a territory than a visual device through which the writer allows us to grasp the essence of the Mediterranean: “a sort of laboratory in which the European sensibility was perpetually trying to forge itself anew” (Durrell 1990b: 70). Its exploration yields a new perspective, which, like Dürer’s perspective frame, reshapes our vision of the world:

as in some renaissance painting where the hermit occupies the foreground, seated in his drab ochre-coloured cell, but where, over his shoulder, set like a jewel in the rock, his only window gives onto a limitless panorama of

<sup>23</sup> “La ‘mare nostrum’ de jadis [...] est un de ces grands signifiants qui permettent la vraie pensée, celle qui ne renonce pas à se défaire des mythes. La Méditerranée, poésie, est confiée à la poésie. On peut espérer que la poésie la gardera avec elle, en elle, à combattre, à espérer.”

smiling country [...] symbol of the enamel landscape on which he has turned his back. (Durrell 1953: 107)

Looking into the channels and crevices of the landscape, fathoming its complex past, Durrell offers the reader a new vista that turns him away from the visible surface and unveils the symbolic depth of a new country: “The country [...] of a conscience that can grasp the universe [...] not in the clash of already finite existences, but in the music of essences” (Bonnefoy 2005, 104).<sup>24</sup>

Durrell’s last book on Provence stands out as the writer’s ultimate probing into this “country [...] of a conscience” wherefrom he endeavors to decipher man’s essence through his relationship to place, history, art, religion, and death. From Provence, his last country of writing, Durrell accomplishes the marriage of Oriental and ancient Greek philosophy. As he “looks beneath the flux of everyday reality and sees eternal, unchanging symbols” (Durrell 1990b: 13), he builds up a prose that espouses the curves of the Mediterranean shores, a prose made of half-eaten fragments that turn our gaze towards the resistance of an immaterial yet real essence. Beyond a mere romantic theme, or a source of lyrical inspiration, the Mediterranean wrought through “the haphazard and spasmodic nature” (1990b: 14) of Durrell’s writing carves the bedrock of a new critical vision of man’s place in the world. The receding line of Durrell’s Mediterranean shores functions as the heuristic device through which the poet summons each one of us to invent a new way of being in the world:

Something like the sea,  
Unlaboured momentum of water,  
But going somewhere,  
Building and subsiding (1955: 15)

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## CHAPTER 4

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# The Text without Rupture: Jewish Itineraries of Mourning in Edmond El Maleh's Mediterranean

*Michal Raizen*

*Issaghar was singing plaintive love songs now. He was a cantor, sought after for the beauty of his voice. He was a market vendor by profession. He never left. He was the text without rupture. Edmond Amran El Maleh, Mille ans, un jour (1986: 136)<sup>1</sup>*

The 1986 novel *Mille ans, un jour* (*A Thousand Years, One Day*) by Edmond Amran El Maleh draws to a close with a meditation on the vagaries of exile. After a long sojourn in places as distant and varied as Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, and Paris, El Maleh's Jewish Moroccan protagonist, Nessim, discovers a bundle of letters written by his grandfather dated "Cairo 1880" and embarks on a journey to his native Morocco in search of the bygone world detailed in them (El Maleh 1986: 11). Composed in Judeo-Arabic, these letters offer an intimate glimpse into the comings and goings of a Jewish community whose millennial history was ruptured in

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<sup>1</sup> All unattributed translations are my own.

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M. Raizen (✉)  
Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH, USA



the mid-twentieth century with the establishment of the State of Israel, the rise of Pan-Arabism, and the postcolonial reconfiguration of the region. Among the striking features of El Maleh's labyrinthine meditation on this historical rupture is the author's portrayal of the Mediterranean as an acoustic chamber resounding with multiple and inextricably bound narratives of loss and displacement. With its emphasis on Mediterranean connectivity, *Mille ans* simultaneously speaks to the dissolution of the Moroccan Jewish community and its traumatic exodus, the absorption pains of Moroccan Jews in Israel, the Palestinian refugee crisis, and the civil war in Lebanon. To borrow El Maleh's imagery, the novel's structure resembles a *chbika*, "the game of children who have no toys" (156). Known in English as "cat's cradle," the game of *chbika* involves the transfer of a loop of string between two partners. As the loop changes hands, new and increasingly intricate geometric patterns are formed. The word *chbika* is the colloquial Moroccan variant of the Modern Standard Arabic word *shabaka*, which denotes a web or network. Peppering his French text with words in Moroccan Arabic, Judeo-Berber, Judeo-Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic, El Maleh invites his readers to reflect on the multitude of networks that historically crisscrossed the Mediterranean and left traces, linguistic and cultural, on the populations that inhabited the region.

Published only four years after the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon, *Mille ans* reveals a preoccupation with the ethical implications of a Jewish community conceived in ethno-national terms. The novel features a constant tension between the spiritual journey to and through Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) and the contemporary State of Israel as a point of teleological closure. El Maleh presents the Mediterranean as a space with a historical precedent for a Jewish ethos of inclusivity, juxtaposed in the novel with the zero-sum mentality of the contemporary geopolitical situation. Couched in the extended metaphor of the *chbika*, my reading of *Mille ans* attends to the following questions. What types of alternate empathies emerge when mourning is framed as a function of engaged listening and ethical responsibility? If we classify *Mille ans* under the rubric of "Mediterranean literature," what insights can we glean about connectivity as a productive paradigm with which to view the region?

I am using the term "connectivity" in accordance with the framework outlined by the contributing authors of *A Companion to Mediterranean History*. One of the most salient features of connectivity, as Sharon Kinoshita notes in her chapter on Mediterranean literature, is the paradoxical link between fragmentation and staying power. In conversation

with the notion of Mediterranean unity presented by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2000), Kinoshita reflects on the ways in which pre-modern and early modern Mediterranean patterns of movement and exchange have remained “remarkably resilient through apparent world-historical shifts like the rise and fall of empires or the emergence and spread of new religions” (Kinoshita 2014: 320). Commerce, slave trade, piracy, and pilgrimage established the conditions for human encounter in the early Mediterranean world and thus figured prominently in the literary firmament of the era. The fluidity of textual practices was reflected in the preponderance of auto-translation and bidirectional writing, the intricate relationship between body and marginalia, and the dominance of multilingualism as a mode of composition and transmission. Building on the concept of the literary polysystem as set forth by David A. Wacks, Kinoshita presents medieval Iberia as a case in point.<sup>2</sup> Viewed in this light, Mediterranean literature constitutes an alternative category of analysis to the predominant nation-state model of the region. It “brings into view the patchwork of principalities, city-states, and empires—often multilingual, multi-ethnic, or multi-confessional,” thereby serving as a “project of reterritorialization” (314). Kinoshita notes that the Mediterranean literature paradigm reveals that which the national literature paradigm obscures: “In the monolingual, diachronic, and frequently teleological frame within which literary studies are typically organized, texts are read (implicitly or explicitly) as links in a national literary tradition—set in relationship to earlier or later texts composed in the same language” (315). Similarly, Yasemin Yildiz suggests that multilingualism, far from having disappeared, is continually “refracted through the monolingual paradigm” (2012: 3–4). Literary and cultural studies are lending increasing visibility to multilingual contexts that persistently resist what Yildiz has termed a process

<sup>2</sup> “Between the Muslim conquest of 711 and the Christian reconquest of Granada in 1492, peoples of different languages, ethnicities, and religions co-habited for nearly 800 years. In contrast to dominant perspectives that would compartmentalize Iberian literature into separate Romance (Castilian, Portuguese, Catalan), Hebrew, and Arabic components, a Mediterranean perspective encourages us to understand it as a literary ‘polysystem’ in which texts are both produced and consumed in more than one language [...] Through centuries of co-habitation, these languages ‘translated each other, glossed each other, calqued each other [and] appeared side by side in texts and inscriptions’” (Wacks 2007: 318).

of monolingualization.<sup>3</sup> *Mille ans* inhabits the tension between enduring Mediterranean multilingualisms and national monolingualisms. El Maleh's model of the *chbika* serves to destabilize direct mappings of language onto a national collective. The Judeo-Arabic itinerary outlined in the Cairo letters resurfaces in the context of Nessim's homecoming journey, and disrupts current sociopolitical configurations.

My discussion of *Mille ans* centers on a prolonged scene in which a group of Moroccan Jews from the United States and Canada journeys with a tour company, New York Pilgrim, to the Atlas Mountains, where they attend a *biloula*, a festival commemorating the life of a saint. A *biloula* (plural *biloulot*) typically lasts several days and features a feverish atmosphere of drinking, dancing, singing, and reciting psalms.<sup>4</sup> With its motley cast of characters, the *biloula* scene constitutes a microcosm of the entanglements featured in *Mille ans*. We are introduced to Teddy Yeshouaa, a Moroccan-American whose pained reflections on exile emerge with intoxication and song. Teddy's penchant for hyperbolic expression is contrasted in the scene with Nessim's cool composure. The dichotomy between eager participant and incredulous observer starts to break down with the introduction of Issaghar, the cantor, whose riveting voice facilitates a journey through history and memory. Oren Kosansky notes in his contributing chapter of *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa* that the *biloula* serves as a means of curating a notion of Moroccaness.<sup>5</sup> A typical opening statement at a *biloula* might read:

This ceremony, which is the mark of a tradition common to all Moroccans, is the symbol of a mystical convergence rooted in this land. Each year this ancient rite brings us, Muslims and Jews, to this holy place. Here, we confirm the link between our two religions, both issuing from the same divine

<sup>3</sup> Yildiz situates Kafka's writing in early twentieth-century Prague as a prime example of the "postmonolingual condition," a concept that she defines as a "field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself and multilingual practices persist or reemerge" (2012: 5).

<sup>4</sup> The fictional *biloula* in *Mille ans* features a pilgrimage to the tomb of Rabbi Salomon Bel-Hench, one of the most revered saints in the Moroccan Jewish folkloric tradition. Festivals commemorating his life still take place at his tomb in the Valley of Ourika in the Atlas Mountain region.

<sup>5</sup> Kosansky offers the following insight to the performance of Moroccaness at the *biloulot*: "The colonial presentation of pilgrimage as a window into the real Morocco (*le vrai Maroc*) is mirrored in post-independence characterizations of pilgrimages as proof of 'Moroccaness' (*marocanité*) that transcends religious boundaries" (2011: 343).

source, but also establishing above our obvious differences the proof of our Moroccanness. (Kosansky 2011: 342)<sup>6</sup>

Under the French protectorate, the shrine came to represent a microcosm of a chaotic and unruly society in need of colonial intervention, especially in the realm of hygiene. Moroccan independence ushered in a shift in rhetoric whereby the *biloula* became a privileged site for the performance of a national identity anchored in notions of ethno-religious pluralism. “In these efforts,” writes Kosansky, “the idea of Judeo-Muslim pilgrimage in Morocco was transformed from evidence of pagan origins and sociocultural chaos into an emblem of interfaith congruence, religious tolerance, and common heritage” (350). By placing one of the pivotal scenes of *Mille ans* in conversation with the highly politicized realm of *biloula* oratory, El Maleh draws attention to narratives that fell through the cracks in the transition from a colonial language of containment to a national language of pluralism.

El Maleh belonged to a group of writers and intellectuals, among them Abdelkebir Khatibi and Abdellatif Laâbi, who played an active role in the anticolonial struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. Drawing inspiration from French deconstruction and poststructuralism, this group fashioned itself as a politically committed avant-garde with an anti-colonial rubric. Their journal *Souffles*, founded by Abdellatif Laâbi in 1966, called on both the readership and the contributing authors to draw alliances across national borders in order to take an ethical stance on issues such as human rights and political sovereignty. Ronnie Scharfman notes that the contributing authors of *Souffles* attached a specific meaning to the word “itinerary,” namely the “coming and going, within the same text, among the political, the narrative, and the discursive” (Scharfman 1993: 136). This idiosyncratic usage falls in line with what Kinoshita identifies as a distinguishing feature of Mediterranean literature: “In the pre-modern Mediterranean, the boundary between ‘literary’ and ‘non-literary’ texts is porous and in large measure artificial. Histories, pilgrimage and travel narratives, and saints’ lives often draw on the same historical contexts and narratives as epics, romances, and tales” (Kinoshita 2014: 322). By foregrounding the

<sup>6</sup>Quoted from a speech delivered in 1980 at the shrine of Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan, this excerpt attests to the discursive value of the *biloula* as a venue for the reiteration of a Moroccan national character anchored in a historical notion of interfaith mingling and shared heritage. Such speeches were often transcribed and circulated in the Moroccan press.

*biloula*, a storytelling genre that oscillates between officially sanctioned narratives and forays into personal and collective memory, El Maleh expands the narrative of Moroccanness to include departures, ruptures, and Mediterranean crossings. The Jewish cantor, cast in the novel as the “text without rupture” (El Maleh 1986: 136), constitutes a narrative arc between a Mediterranean encounter that pre-dates the region’s colonial history and a contemporary reenactment of this encounter.

The critical scholarship on *Mille ans* centers predominantly on the novel’s treatment of the prevailing notion that the dispossession of Palestinians was a necessary correlate to the expulsion of Arab Jews from their countries of origin and their absorption by Israel. Ronnie Scharfman (1993) and Gil Hochberg (2007) both explore the ways in which *Mille ans* presents Palestinian and Arab Jewish narratives of dispossession in terms of interconnectedness rather than necessary casualties of reconstituted borders. Though Nessim grieves for the dissolution of the Moroccan Jewish community, his thoughts are repeatedly punctuated by the image of a Palestinian child, Hamad, wounded in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Scharfman suggests that the historical violence perpetrated against the Moroccan Jewish community figures in *Mille ans* as a double colonization, “that of Morocco by France, and that of a vulnerable Moroccan Jewry by Ashkenazic Israel” (Scharfman 1993: 138). She regards Beirut as the “noisy, bloody version of the silent erasure and disappearance of [Nessim’s] people” (139). Hochberg notes that *Mille ans* “traces the vicious trajectory of violence accelerating from French colonialism and German fascism to the role of Israeli occupation over Palestinians” (Hochberg 2007: 30). In conversation with both of these studies, I explore the ways in which entangled narratives of loss and mourning function in the context of Mediterranean connectivity. By casting Issaghar the cantor as the “text without rupture,” El Maleh offers a sustained commentary on the liturgical traditions that undergird the act of mourning as both performance and practice.

We are reminded time and again that Nessim has neither the linguistic capacity nor the requisite quorum to recite the mourner’s *Kaddish* (the Jewish prayer for the dead). Moreover, it is unclear whether he wishes to recite the prayer for his deceased grandfather or for the victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacre. The context for mourning in *Mille ans* is structured around several fleeting but affectively charged sequences that weave in and out of the basic frame narrative, Nessim’s journey to Morocco after a prolonged absence. We first encounter Nessim in Paris where, against

the backdrop of a violent summer storm, a cry resounds, "The Lebanon war!" (El Maleh 1986: 9). Without clear demarcation, the setting morphs into a seaside cemetery in the coastal Moroccan town of Essaouira. Accompanied by a Muslim groundskeeper, Nessim walks among the dilapidated tombstones and overgrown vegetation with the understanding that he cannot decipher the Hebrew inscriptions in order to locate his grandfather's grave. He finds himself murmuring the word *Kaddish* until a dirge starts to take shape. With every subsequent utterance, Nessim darts between fragmented memories of his youth and the scene of carnage in Lebanon. His mind races from his aborted effort to learn Hebrew under the tutelage of a distant cousin from Palestine to the image of Hamad in his hospital bed, from the somber light of Yom Kippur to visions of coagulated blood and a scorched landscape. After a series of flashbacks interspersed with images of war-torn Lebanon, we are offered a glimpse into Nessim's thought process:

Pray, pray for the dead children, the children of the same land, Palestine. A journal clipping, framed, the word *Kaddish* in the title, someone suggested this prayer. Nessim did not know how to pray, but that was not a major concern for him. He looked at the child, he looked for a return glance [...] He repeated the word *Kaddish* like a slow and solemn meditation, because he felt the need for silence, for respect [...] A Hebrew word for an Arab child. (26)

The process of mourning unfolds in *Mille ans* as part of a syncretic expression of faith in which the dislocated Hebrew liturgy comes into contact with secular musical traditions, local forms of Sufi mystical expression, trance, and sacred music in a festival setting. The *hiloula* scene is prefigured early on in the novel through Nessim's reading of the itinerary outlined in his grandfather's letters:

We were mixed, Jews and Muslims; the latter were headed to Mecca for their pilgrimage. We had a *shohet* [ritual slaughterer] and so we could slaughter sheep and chickens, and our Muslim friends could partake with us. There were musicians, a singer with a voice of gold, and we would pass the nights listening to him [...] God willed that we would have more than twenty Jews in this caravan. And so, in this desert, in front of his tomb, we would don our *taletts* [Jewish prayer shawls] and we would pray, pronouncing *le Kaddish* for the soul of Haj Thami so that he could ascend to Paradise by the will of God [...] When one morning at dawn, we set eyes on Cairo, that

magnificent city, I fell to my knees and touched my trembling lips to the ground, this sand. I no longer knew in which dream I was dwelling, everything was jumbled in a sort of drunken stupor [...] Lost, I did not know which language to speak, nor which sign would reassure me. (13)

When considered alongside Nessim's solitary *Kaddish* for Hamad, the *Kaddish* recited by a Jewish quorum for a Muslim Haj serves to destabilize narratives of loss predicated on exclusive claims to territory and patrimony. In an article on the Israeli national poet Hayim Nahman Bialik, the Moroccan-born activist, scholar, and poet Sami Shalom Chetrit points to the tension between Eretz Yisrael as a way station, spiritual and physical, along a vast and varied network of trajectories, and Eretz Yisrael as a repository for ethno-national aspirations: "The Eretz Yisrael of contemporary Sephardic poets is an actual place to which they travel back and forth as part of life in the Mediterranean Middle-Eastern expanse [...] immigration to and settlement in Eretz Yisrael is a well-known religious commandment, but it does not evolve into a desire for territorial nationalist ideas" (Chetrit 2010: 8). Chetrit's article details a political awakening born out of the realization that the North African *piyut* (liturgical poem), familiar and forsaken, was in fact a form of Hebrew poetry.

In *Mille ans*, El Maleh undergirds the entire narrative structure of the novel with a centuries-old form of Hebrew poetry that resists being aligned with a national canon. The *Kaddish*, when presented as a "Hebrew word for an Arab child" or a Jewish prayer for a Muslim Haj, introduces a poetics based on empathy and engaged listening. Moreover, the liturgical substratum of *Mille ans* follows the pattern of Mediterranean connectivity by establishing a narrative arc between the thousand years, the *longue durée* of the Moroccan Jewish experience, and the one day, the moment of rupture in the twentieth century.

In the *biloula* scene, Teddy Yeshuouaa and Nessim represent two distinct narratives of departure and loss. A solemn and introspective character, Nessim recoils at the thought of wholeheartedly engaging in the spectacle. In comparison, Teddy enters the scene as an eager and fully-absorbed participant:

Teddy, the young American who addressed the young guide in *chleu*, sprang forth with great animation from the Tower of Babel where language and desire collide, and proclaimed standing, an improvised actor: I am a son of the *mellah*, from here, don't look for me in New York, I am not there any-

where, my whole family is from here, ask those who remain, [ask] Issaghar the market vendor. (El Maleh 1986: 131)<sup>7</sup>

Teddy's mention of the Tower of Babel harkens back to the pilgrimage detailed in the Cairo letters and the phrase "Lost, I did not know which language to speak." Hochberg notes that the *mellah* (the historical Moroccan Jewish quarter) emerges in *Mille ans* as a "site of contradictions and ambiguities, which, thanks to its endless and continual transformations, seems to escape any restrictive historical borders" (29). Disorientation and linguistic confusion constitute both a source of pain and a potential challenge to the confines of identity articulated in ethno-national terms. El Maleh's characterization of Issaghar as the "text without rupture" situates the storytelling endeavor in *Mille ans* as a function of shared mystical-emotional experience. Just as the *munshid* (a vocalist in the Sufi tradition) facilitates the encounter between listener and mystical text, the Jewish cantor serves as a conduit for the Hebrew liturgical poem.<sup>8</sup> Teddy, who enters the scene as a caricature of sorts, is overcome by the plaintive love songs of Issaghar and journeys through the deepest recesses of memory and loss:

Teddy Yeshouaa was speaking now in his intimate interior voice, the tragic adventure of our departure [...] I'm tired, I'll tell you another time about Dimona [...] Now you will become real Jews, you were idolaters, *Avoda*

<sup>7</sup>The Chleuh are a Berber people from south-west Morocco.

<sup>8</sup>In *Memory, Music, and Religion: Morocco's Mystical Chanters*, Earle Waugh describes the *munshid* in the following terms: "The *munshid* is the fulcrum for the process of merging the text, music, and memory; it is during his inspired interaction with the text and music that this mythic domain is accessed and brought to the foreground. The merged text-music-memory functions something like the hypertext in contemporary computer jargon, that is, it operates as a metacoding system that is not regarded as random or decentered by the believers but rather enlivens the memorized text and music during the rituals [...] It follows that the mystical discourse cannot be frozen into a permanent articulation; the individual *munshid* remembers the words sung in the past that delivered the most powerful transformation experience, and aims to bring this kind of experience back" (Waugh 2005: 15). In "Tarab in the Mystic Sufi Chant of Egypt," Michael Frishkopf elaborates on the triangulated relationship between listener, performer, and poet: "Here I focus upon the role of the Sufi poet, the affective power of his poetry, and his relation to the *munshid* [...] I argue that it is the shared domain of Sufi thought, feeling, and practice that enables a Sufi poet to communicate intensive mystical emotion, through the medium of language, to a *munshid*, who perceives the poet's words so strongly as to experience the affective state that engendered them" (Frishkopf 2001: 235).



*zara* [the worship of foreign Gods] [...] Dimona, Dimona, Dimona our tears! The first city of the Negev, rocks, shanties, scorpions, serpents, we the troglodytes, the men of caves, descendants of the Atlas Mountains. (130)

His monologue vacillates between pained reflections on the traumatic process of settlement in the southern Israeli development towns, such as Dimona, and a rehashing of Zionist rhetoric on the settlement of a “land without a people.” Ronnie Scharfman has aptly characterized the *hiloula* as a “breaking down of ego frontiers, a regression that is also a narrative” (Scharfman 1993: 145). The voice of Issaghar allows Teddy to access repressed memory and to trace his experience from the Zionist training camps in Algeria to the ill-fated Mediterranean crossing that marked his arrival in Israel. Nessim stays up “with a keen eye and an attentive ear” and allows himself to be transported by the music: “[Issaghar] was a cantor, sought after for the beauty of his voice. He was a market vendor by profession. He never left. He was the text without rupture” (El Maleh 1986: 136). The idea of a text without rupture allows Nessim to extricate himself from experience circumscribed by discourse and to recognize an earlier version of himself in his namesake, the grandfather who penned the Cairo letters. Nessim characterizes this particular *hiloula* as a “paroxysm of our momentous times” (131). A sudden and uncontrollable burst of emotion, paroxysm also carries an additional meaning, namely, the intensification of pathological symptoms.

This second definition leads us to the idea that certain melancholic attachments are deemed pathological in the current sociopolitical mappings of the Mediterranean, where laying claim to loss is part and parcel of the struggle over territory. The hyperbolic nature of the *hiloula* serves to set into relief the rhetoric that was used to pathologize melancholic attachments to homelands other than Eretz Yisrael. Such attachments, in mainstream Zionist discourse, were antithetical to the concept of *kibbutz galuyot* (the ingathering of the exiles). El Maleh refigures the concept of “ingathering” to reflect the motion of return among a group of “tourists,” the majority of whom left Morocco in the 1950s under extreme duress. Though the *hiloula* is staged for tourists, the participants of New York Pilgrim are not ordinary tourists in the sense that almost all of them belong to the generation that left Morocco in the 1950s. As such, they bear the memories and the scars of historical trauma. The meticulously choreographed night of drinking, singing, and reciting psalms releases a torrent of emotion and unveils personal narratives that have been repressed: mem-

ories of violently tossing boats, seasickness, immigrant transit camps in Israel, the day-to-day struggles of carving out a life in the southern Israeli development towns, and, for some, the abandonment of the Zionist dream and ultimate departure for the United States or Canada.

I originally approached *Mille ans* from the perspective of Arab Jewish studies, a line of academic inquiry invested in lending visibility to literary and cultural constellations pre-dating or actively resisting contemporary mappings that posit Arab and Jew as antagonistic terms of identification. Consistent with the notion of Mediterranean literature as a “project of reterritorialization,” Arab Jewish studies illuminate itineraries—literary, political, and spiritual—that circumnavigate watershed moments such as the establishment of the State of Israel, the rise of Pan-Arabism, and the postcolonial reconfiguration of the Mediterranean region. In *Poetic Trespass: Writing Between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine*, Lital Levy builds on Jacques Derrida’s notion of the “monolingualism of the other” and suggests that Arab Jewish texts reflect a “multilingualism of the other”: “Written in hyper-language,” such texts constitute “performative repudiations of Israeli Hebrew” (Levy 2014: 240). The network of languages ensconced in El Maleh’s French assumes a similar function. The fictitious hiloula in *Mille ans* involves not only the performers and participants of New York Pilgrim but the voices of past and present others. I have argued that the novel unfolds as an ecstatic journey punctuated by moments of private solemn supplication and exuberant collective incantation. This constellation of spiritual practices and performances points to a web of interrelated catastrophic events. To mourn one event means to mourn them all. Connecting premodern and contemporary, physical and meta-physical, a North African shore to a European shore, Israel and Palestine, El Maleh’s Mediterranean unfolds like a cat’s cradle: with every change of hands, the narrative forms new and intricate horizons of possibility.

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## Mediterranean Modernisms: The Case of Cypriot Artist Christoforos Savva

*Antonis Danos*

### INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the century, there has been a proliferation of critical engagements with “modernity” (as historical “reality,” as ideological construct, and as hegemonic discourse), and with the manifestation of “modernism.” Central to many of these discussions has been the deconstruction, or at least the ideological exposure, of the earlier, dominant (“hegemonic”) accounts of both modernity and modernism, especially of the ahistorical, universalizing pretensions of these master narratives, whereby Europe, the West, or the North Atlantic pose as the creators and the spaces of origin of all that is modern. From there, the social, political, and economic conditions of modernity, as well as the corresponding ethics and aesthetics, were “diffused” to the rest of the world, where, inevitably, only belated and/or incomplete versions of “original” modernity and its accompanying modernisms could materialize. In opposition to this

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A. Danos (✉)

Department of Fine Arts, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus

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discourse, contemporary analyses have been proposing and arguing for “alternative,” “incomplete,” “world,” or “vernacular” modernities and modernisms.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the related literature has, geographically and temporally, been focusing on the former European colonies in Africa and Asia (especially India), the Caribbean, and Latin America. It is my contention that such discussions would be greatly enriched if we were also to focus on the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean is a milieu which—both in its historical trajectory and also as an ideological and aesthetic “category”—undermines Western narratives. More particularly, with regard to modernity and modernism, the Mediterranean can be examined in the *longue durée* as a space which challenges the singular, universalizing pretensions of Western modernity.

Within the Mediterranean, we can locate a gamut of experiences of modernity, temporally and spatially contingent, yet open ended and constantly reshaping, and always containing the embodied, lived experiences of individual agents. More pertinently to my analysis, these experiences are intertwined with discourses that have largely refused the hierarchical binarisms of tradition versus modernity and “high art” versus “low art.” It is within the space of such an experience and discourse that I locate the oeuvre of Cypriot artist Christoforos Savva (1924–1968), which is the focus of this chapter.

I examine the central position of Savva’s work in twentieth-century Cypriot art, especially during the late 1950s and the 1960s, within the framework of Cyprus’s place-specific modernity on the European periphery. At the same time, I approach him as partaking in a wider Mediterranean imaginary, which enabled him to transcend such a seemingly marginal positionality. Rather than exhibiting a delayed-modernism character (as Western center-periphery discourse would have it), his oeuvre constitutes both an alternative case of modernism as well as of avant-gardism, one that is outside the spatial and temporal confines of the “historical” avant-gardes.

Though considered the leading Cypriot modernist, Savva escaped normative modernism’s central tenet of the opposition between “tradition” and the present. Instead, he negotiated “tradition” as a living reality in the present, which simultaneously extends backwards and forwards. His oeuvre begins with an intertwining of European modernism with Cypriot vernacular and Byzantine traditions, within a modernist representational framework. It then matures into a simultaneous production of abstract

<sup>1</sup> “Geomodernisms” is another such term, proposed in Doyle and Winkiel (2005).

and of non-naturalistic figurative work—the latter characterized by a hybrid mixture of materials and processes, which makes the case for an alternative or “place-specific” modernism, one that conflates the Western narrative’s division between modernism and postmodernism. Of special note is his incorporation of the (largely female) craft tradition of weaving, needlework, and quilt-making in a group of works that anticipates analogous manifestations in feminist art production. In addition to Savva’s non-normative modernism, I argue for his alternative avant-gardism through an interrogation of (Greenbergian) canonical modernism’s high versus low art hierarchies, and the anticipation of the feminist deconstruction of such dichotomies (with the incorporation of women’s artisanal tradition into fine art). I propose that such a place-specific modernism and alternative avant-gardism is enabled by, as much as it foregrounds, the alternative, hybrid, and polymorphic character of cultural discourses within the Mediterranean.

#### INTERROGATING GRAND NARRATIVES: HEGEMONIC MODERNITY, “TRADITION,” AND THE MEDITERRANEAN ALTERNATIVE

In Western narratives, “*modernity* as a historical stage,” as well as “*modernization* as a socioeconomic process that tries to construct modernity, and *modernisms* [as] the cultural projects that renew symbolic practices with an experimental or critical sense” (García Canclini 2005: 11, note 3), have all been traditionally presented as “universalist projects.” Not only are the first two of these concepts characterized by a Hegelian kind of an inexorable progress toward an almost preordained course of fulfillment; all three have been narrated as originating and spreading from a “center,” which, in historical, political, and cultural terms, has, of course, been the West.<sup>2</sup>

More than a historical stage, however, modernity has been projected as “the awareness of a ‘new age’ that no longer relies on criteria from the past. As Hegel put it [in *The Phenomenology of Mind*], modernity is the awareness of a ‘new world’ that breaks with the past, a ‘birth-time, and a period of transition’” (Steuerman 1989: 53). While, throughout the ages, the “modern” expressed an epoch’s consciousness of its newness vis-à-vis what went on before (Hans Robert Jauss’s recounting of the diachronic

<sup>2</sup>The most sinister aspect of this hegemonic discourse has manifested itself in imperialism and colonialism.

*querelle des anciens et de modernes*), in nineteenth-century Europe, the “radicalized consciousness of modernity” disassociated itself from specific historical ties, and “made an abstract opposition between tradition and the present” (Habermas 1987: 4). Essentially, modernity invented “tradition” as its necessary other: it defined it in opposition to “notions like progress, science, rationality, modernization, development, and now globalization” (Clifford 2004: 152). Having been presented as “a foil to the modern,” tradition was thus declared incapable of being “transformative or forward-looking” (152). It is a foil that is integral in the notion of modernity: “Modernity invents tradition, suppresses its own continuities with the past, and often produces nostalgia for what has been seemingly lost. Tradition forms at the moment those who perceive it regard themselves as cut off from it” (Friedman 2006: 434).

Western modernity claimed for itself independence from the past, which was relegated into the role of “tradition,” which, in turn, was equated with a non-living past—a past no longer existing or not contained within the present—against which modernity fashioned itself. Contrary to such Enlightenment-descended orthodoxy, “tradition” has recently been negotiated as possessing a “dynamic, contemporaneous nature” (Yadgar 2013: 465). As Susan Stanford Friedman points out in reference to Tayeb Salih’s novel *Season of Migration to the North*, “‘tradition’ is always in process of change and ‘modernity’ is never as complete a rejection of the past as it seems” (2006: 436). She calls for the “need to look for the interplay of modernity and tradition *within* each location, that is, within both the West and the regions outside the West” (434), and for “the recognition that the ‘periods’ of modernism are multiple and that modernism is alive and thriving wherever the historical convergence of *radical rupture* takes place” (439; my emphasis).

In spite of her substantially critical engagement with Western modernity’s narratives, including the classical periodization of modernism,<sup>3</sup> and, especially, her interrogation of the notion of “tradition,” Friedman retains and reinforces the “radical rupture” discourse of normative modernism. Her “strategic definition of modernity,” as she calls it, “is relational, emphasizing the temporal rupture of before/after wherever and whenever

<sup>3</sup> Roughly, the century that spans the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, thus, “cut[ting] off the agencies of writers, artists, philosophers, and other cultural producers in the emergent postcolonial world just as their new modernities are being formed” (Friedman 2006: 427).

such ruptures might occur in time and space” (433). It is the “rupture” discourse, however, that validates the negotiation of “tradition” as modernity’s other—a negotiation she rightly opposes. In the modernities and modernisms of various non-Western locations—places and temporalities that Western modernity has relegated to peripheries and margins—“tradition” has not functioned as the conservative foil to modernity. Instead, it has become a “critical reweaving of roots” (Clifford 2004: 157), emerging as a process of “dis- and re-articulation[s]” (162), and thus an integral aspect in the (contemporary) production of art, which can be approached as “a site of ongoing translations and articulations (including disarticulations)” (159).<sup>4</sup> Within these other frameworks, “tradition” is what produces “the new and thus confounds the narrative order and hierarchies of the ideologies of modernization and modernism” (Kraniauskas 2000: 114–115).

Much of the analysis concerning those spaces where the order and hierarchies of modernity have been confounded has focused on the former colonial lands—in Africa, Asia, the Atlantic—as well as on Latin America. Yet an even stronger case for the deconstruction of North Atlantic hegemony can be made if the Mediterranean also becomes the focus for alternative versions of modernity and modernism.

[T]he Mediterranean is a fertile ground for the exploration of “other spaces,” other spatial metaphors, transcending the mere search for boundaries and containers, and capable of recovering those very ambiguities and plurality of voices that make the Mediterranean an invaluable source of inspiration for the experience of “alternative modernities.” (Giaccaria and Minca 2011: 346)

Part of the discourse whereby the West placed itself as the center from where history emanated, and (modern) culture was and is produced—in parallel and intertwined with its colonial project—was the relegation of the Mediterranean (in historical and cultural terms) to a periphery. Europe had to invent an “idea of the Mediterranean” that was much like the Orient of Orientalism (Jirat-Wasiutyński 2007: 5). It constructed the

<sup>4</sup>Though Clifford’s remarks here concern specifically contemporary articulations of indigenous traditions, I believe they can be applied to contemporary art production in general.



Mediterranean as a region “remote in time and space,” into which it projected the premodern past (4).<sup>5</sup>

Such a construction was necessary, because the Mediterranean—with all its accompanying extensions (“elsewheres”)—had been a space of continuous production of political, economic, and cultural capital. Recent literature (including the bringing into prominence of older work by non-Western scholars) presents the Mediterranean as either constituting a “world system” or as being the central component in such systems during Europe’s Middle Ages and the early modern period. Indeed, in that era, Europe “was certainly ‘underdeveloped’ and in the periphery of a ‘world system’” (Chambers 2008: 35). What is perhaps even more important is that in those world systems—unlike the later Western European ones—no single power was dominant (35).<sup>6</sup>

What emerges from this scholarship is the Mediterranean (in continuity from Antiquity, but in even more dynamic terms in later centuries) as a space of age-long crossings, exchanges, and of constant formations and reformations of identities, borders and cultures—whether by coercion and domination or by peaceful and creative interactions. In the constant flux, nothing seems to have stayed still long enough to sediment into fixed, inflexible hegemonic/grand narratives or universalist claims of any kind. This scholarship reintroduces in the making of the Mediterranean those agencies, cultures, and spaces which were erased by Eurocentric modern narratives: North Africa and the Middle East; Judaism and Islam; cosmopolitan, mostly Eastern, Mediterranean port cities; and connections further afield into central and north-east Europe, India, and the Sahara. Their elimination was part of the process whereby the Mediterranean was relegated to a position of periphery, and, at the same time, to become a border separating the West from its southern and eastern Others.

<sup>5</sup>For the emergence of “the Mediterranean” as “cartographic concept and representation” in Europe, see Armstrong (2005), Bagnall (2005). For a wider exploration of Europe’s modern construction of the (idea of the) Mediterranean, particularly regarding the relationship between geographies and modernities, see Giaccaria and Minca (2011).

<sup>6</sup>Such works include S. D. Goitein’s *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of Cairo Geniza* (1967–1993); Ammiel Alcalay’s *After Jews and Arabs* (1993); Amitav Gosh’s *In An Antique Land* (1993); Janet L. Abu-Lughod’s *Before European Hegemony: The World System, AD 1250–1350* (1989). Since direct engagement with these works would have been beyond the scope of the present text, I have referred to them via Chambers (2008), Clifford (1994), Cooke et al. (2008), and Roberts and Hackforth-Jones (2005).

It should be noted, however, that, when it comes to dealing with the period from the late eighteenth century onwards, most of these texts negotiate the Mediterranean within the confines that were forcefully inscribed upon it from without—namely, from the rising North-Western hegemony, during this period—and, at best, critically deconstruct this discourse to reveal its ideological pedigree. However, only the ideology of the ascription is examined critically. The ascribed “peripheral” status of the Mediterranean is itself left unquestioned, owing to the presumed “realities” of the not-quite-as-modern socioeconomic conditions of the area, as compared to hegemonic modernity’s North-Western “centers.” My contention, instead, is that the Mediterranean is revealed as a space where modernity escapes the dogmatic confines of the North-Western discourse. Within this space, a number of agents (artists, writers, architects) have produced alternative, anti-canonical, non-normative modernisms and vanguardisms, which both interrogate and deconstruct normative narratives, as well as overturn the presumed “peripheral” status of the Mediterranean within modernity.

### MEDITERRANEAN MODERNISMS

In examining the modernisms that have developed within the Mediterranean, we must—in opposition to the singular experience and universalist claims of hegemonic modernity and its complementary notions of premodernity and postmodernity—adopt the notion that they, as well as modernity in general, unfold within specific cultural contexts (Gaonkar 1999). This “place-specific” approach acknowledges “the determining factors of local traditions, indigenous reference, and contingent meanings” (Mansbach 2002: 289), and it allows us to reintroduce “tradition” as a valid interlocutor of “innovation,” and thus also contest avant-garde’s anti-tradition pretensions.<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, such interrogations have already been taking place with regard to “canonical” modern art and artists. Robert Rosenblum declares that we have moved away from modern art’s claims of ahistoricity (at the time when it was on the road to “a new epoch of abstraction”), or modern

<sup>7</sup>In his introduction to *Critically Modern*, Bruce Knauff writes that “the alternatively modern may be said to address the figure-ground relationship between modernity and tradition as these are locally or nationally perceived and configured” (2002: 25).

architecture's equivalent posture as "the international style," and their determination to

leave behind the bewildering diversities and enmities of national traditions. But by the late twentieth century [...] we have become attuned once more to discerning the national flavors that, for instance, have begun to locate Mondrian's pure rectilinear order as rooted in Dutch soil or Malevich's extraterrestrial icons as emanating from a Russian heritage [...] [I]n terms of style, subject and emotions, Picasso's identity as a Spanish rather than as a French or universal artist has become even more apparent in recent decades [...]. (Rosenblum 1996: 61–62)

In parallel fashion, and against earlier narratives of "rupture" in the emergence of early twentieth-century Russian avant-garde art, Alan C. Birnholz (1972–1973) argues for the continuities of the latter with various, prerevolutionary Russian traditions prior to 1917, including nineteenth-century art forms and folk art. Regarding the Russian avant-garde, more extensive research has been conducted on its multifaceted—thematic, aesthetic, technical, sociological, metaphysical—connections with Byzantine art, particularly icons (Spira 2008). Byzantine art has also been shown to be intricately connected with various strands of Western European modernism and avant-gardism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as French Symbolism, Austrian Jugendstil, German Expressionism; aspects of the oeuvre of Gauguin, Cézanne, Matisse, and the Bloomsbury group, among others; and the related critical and theoretical discourses of Roger Fry, Matthew Prichard, Maurice Denis, Clive Bell, and others.<sup>8</sup> This enthusiasm for Byzantine art in various quarters of modern European art—"modernism's Byzantium"—, which was sidelined in mainstream art-historical narratives in the latter part of the last century, reveals "Byzantium's modernism," namely, the engagement with Byzantine art "through the aesthetics of modernism" (Nelson 2014: 27). This engagement offers "a more nuanced interpretation of modernism itself," rather than the hitherto claim of an "utter rupture with the past" (36).

Such revisions, therefore, not only situate major artists and movements within their historical, temporal, and spatial specificity, they also interrogate the "anti-traditionalism" of the (historical) avant-gardes in view of

<sup>8</sup> On Byzantine and modernist mosaics, see Bullen (1999).

their deeper connections and appropriations of what were considered as past artistic traditions.<sup>9</sup> The “locality” aspect of such reassessments of canonical modern art, however, remains locked in the framework of nationally based histories, from which even the classical narratives of modernism have not escaped, despite their universalist claims—hence, *French* Impressionism, *Belgian* Symbolism, *German* Expressionism, *Italian* Futurism, *Russian* Constructivism, even the overt emphasis on the (*US*) *Americanness* of Abstract Expressionism, where the supposed ahistoricity and the non-contingency of modernism was at its most pronounced, at least in rhetoric. My contention is that by looking anew at the forms of modernism developed within the Mediterranean, not only we will *not* be (re)introducing “national flavors” into our analysis of modern art, but, rather, we will be removing the “locality” or “place-specificity” factor from the stifling, national(ist) contours of classical modernity/modernism discourses. By virtue of the Mediterranean’s geographical and cultural extensions through and above nationally based entities, its modern localizations are uncovered as involving continuous crossings, translations, and dis- and rearticulations. While such processes have been shown to have characterized the Mediterranean in periods that precede the late eighteenth century, I argue that they have been in place *also* during the time of Western modernism’s heyday. This approach aims to reintroduce the Mediterranean into modernity, from where it was exiled by North-Western discourses and, more specifically, to challenge the marginalization of the Mediterranean in the canonizing narratives of modern art.

If we accept that “[a]ll modernisms develop as a form of cultural translation or transplantation produced through intercultural encounters” (Friedman 2006: 430), as well as the role of “tradition” as the “critical reweaving of roots” (Clifford 2004: 157), then the Mediterranean emerges as a paradigmatic milieu for such translations, transplantations, and reweavings. The Mediterranean makes manifest the existence of transcultural and translocal modernisms—not in the ahistorical sense of hegemonic discourses, but rather as time- and place-specific: the temporal dimension escapes the specific periodization of the former discourse, and the spatial relates to an entity that is not only wider from the national state parameters, but also fluid and resistant to definite demarcation.

<sup>9</sup> Andreas Huyssen refers to the avant-garde as the “embodiment of anti-tradition” (1981: 23–24), adding that the historical avant-gardes (now themselves a “tradition” of sorts) “fundamentally and on principle despised and denied all traditions” (32).

Various scholars have recently been defining a twentieth-century “transnational Mediterranean modernism” (Lejeune and Sabatino 2010: 1), one that was especially prominent in the realm of architecture. They stress “the creative debt that twentieth-century modernist architecture owes to extant vernacular traditions of the Mediterranean region” (6). Importantly, their references to the “vernacular” allude to the wider region rather than to specific nation-state frameworks. When Le Corbusier, a central figure in the hegemonic discourse of “international” architectural modernism, engaged with the Mediterranean vernacular as a source for the “purist phase” of modernism in the 1920s, he was “giving even more credence to the individuation of a genealogical ascendancy of an aesthetic abstracted from the ‘Mediterranean myth’” (Gravagnuolo 2010: 31). Put differently, his negotiation of the “vernacular” was one of a Mediterranean translocality.

Such transcultural and translocal modernisms are encountered not only in architecture but in all of the arts in the twentieth century. We find agents whose work exhibits the conscious intermingling of what were regarded as distinct traditions (modernist or older), or the active engagement with what was deemed local (“vernacular” or “popular”) in the cultures where they were themselves situated, including artists who hold major places in the dominant history of modernism. Hardly any other visual artist holds more of a central place in modern art than Pablo Picasso. But while his appropriation of African art for his major breakthrough in Cubism is well established in classical art history, less common are analyses concerning his engagement with Iberian traditions—both the vernacular tradition, and, interestingly, that of Spanish old masters, such as El Greco and Diego Velázquez. Aspects of vernacular Spanish, particularly Andalusian, culture (in its mixture of gypsy and various intra-Mediterranean strands) abound in Federico García Lorca’s poetry and plays. The Mediterranean is responsible for much of the spatio-temporal and formal hybridity in Salvador Dalí’s Surrealism, in part announced by Giorgio de Chirico’s landscapes, in which “past and present, tradition and contemporaneity cohabit the same space, but without sharing the same temporal continuum” (Loriggio 2006: 27). In his idiosyncratic language and the eclectic use of historical anecdote, Constantine Cavafy’s “peripheral” modernism recreates a Hellenistic poetic topos, which, even if it is “a terrain that is not contained within the geographical space of the Mediterranean but rather in the wider context that Cavafy equates with the Mediterranean event” (Baldacchino 2010: 38), is nevertheless anchored in the early

twentieth-century south-eastern Mediterranean. In addition to Cavafy, John Baldacchino's examination of a series of "artists, poets and authors whose immersion in the Mediterranean imaginary made them uncomfortable with a formulaic sense of the avant-garde, even when they appear to have adhered to several 'aspects' of Modernism" (147–148) includes, among others, Lorca, Luigi Pirandello, and the Sicilian painter Renato Guttuso. Their "discomfort" was especially pronounced whenever modernism was adopting a "performative posture that attempt[ed] to deny historical contingency" (148). I consider Guttuso's transition from abstraction to naïf-like representational painting as a parallel deviation from normative ("formulaic") avant-gardism, as that of Christoforos Savva's simultaneous production of abstract and representational art in 1960s Cyprus. They both constitute cases of Doyle and Winkiel's "unveil[ing]" of "both 'unsuspected' experiments in 'marginal' texts and unsuspected correlations between those texts and others that appear more conventional or more postmodern" (2005: 3). Doyle and Winkiel propose that we should think in terms of "interconnected modernisms" (3), which are "formed against and through each other" (1). It is to these interconnections that Stavros Deligiorgis must have been alluding when, some decades earlier, he asked: "What native equivalents to the foreign elements are being evoked in the work of the translator, or the mind of the audience?" (1972: 194). While his use of "native" and "foreign" might suggest a negotiation that subscribes to notions of clearly delimited separate cultures, on the contrary, his astute analysis makes a strong case for the claim that "nothing gets anywhere unless a good part of it is already there" (198). And even though Deligiorgis does not spell it out as such, his text proposes that "translations" in the Mediterranean throughout the ages manifest the actuality of a diachronic hybridity. The work of Greek composer Manos Hadjidakis is an important case of such hybridity, whether it is his setting to music of Greek translations of Bertolt Brecht, Pirandello, and Lorca, or his seminal contribution to the creative renewal of twentieth-century Greek popular music by the appropriation of the musical tradition of *rebétiko*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> A genre of urban vocal music, *rebétiko* is a hybrid mixture of occidental and oriental elements. Though already encountered in nineteenth-century Athens, its spread was largely owed to the influx into Greece of refugees from Turkey, mostly from Istanbul and Izmir (Smyrna), in the second decade of the twentieth century. It remained an "underground"

What connects the above artists and writers, along with several other important figures from either “central” or “peripheral” modernisms, is their positionality in the Mediterranean geographical and cultural continuum. Moreover, the Mediterranean is the spatial and temporal topos in which the work of these creators (and of others, including many situated elsewhere) unfolds: the Mediterranean anarchism of the neo-impressionist painter Paul Signac; the texts by Albert Camus, Gabriel Audisio, and the other writers of the so-called *Ecole d’Alger*; Thomas Mann’s *Death In Venice*, which “reveals how the sea transforms and sensualizes,” and “the consuming power and passion of the sea to corrupt the reason and routine of the modern world” (Cooke et al. 2008: 283–284); the literary works of Giuseppe Ungaretti and Naguib Mahfuz; Orhan Pamuk’s more recent novels such as *The White Castle* and *My Name Is Red*; and Greek-Egyptian-Italian Demetrio Stratos’s musical intertwinings and vocal experimentations, a most fascinating case of Mediterranean transculturality.<sup>11</sup>

Such literary and artistic works provide Mediterranean configurations that are in stark contrast to the narrow Orientalizing ones contained in European hegemonic narratives, formulated from the eighteenth century onward, solidifying in the nineteenth, and persisting into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—especially in European populist political rhetoric in the wake of the ongoing financial crisis.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, a complex, multilayered, dynamic Mediterranean emerges, which (re)establishes itself as an active, polymorphic and polycentric milieu, one that contains a gamut of transcultural and translocal experiences of modernity and of their corresponding expressive dimensions (modernisms). I continue in the next section by focusing on Cyprus as a space where such an experience has unfolded, and then by reading Savva as one of its agents, whose work constitutes another non-normative Mediterranean modernism.

genre until the middle of the century (for Hadjidakis’s “flexible” employment of *rebétiko*, see Andreopoulos 2001).

<sup>11</sup> For all the above see Dymond (2003), Ohana (2003), Foxlee (2006), Loriggio (2006), Beard (2006), Stanivukovic (2006), Talbayev (2007), Cooke et al. (2008), and Chambers (2008). Francesco Loriggio emphasizes that Mediterranean geography, more than being “one of the exemplary spaces of modern Western literature and art,” is “implicitly or explicitly, one of the chronotopes of the criticism, of the thought by which modernity has explained—or explains—itsself to itself” (2007: 42).

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, in large segments of the Western and Northern European press, the derogatory designation PIGS—jargonistic acronym for Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain—accompanied by old clichés of laziness, lack of discipline, and political and economic corruption, supposedly endemic in “southern societies,” which “inevitably” led to their financial crises.

## CYPRUS: MODERNITY AND MODERNISM ON THE “PERIPHERY”

In its centuries-long history, Cyprus emerges as a Mediterranean microcosm that has been constituted by continuing processes of crossings, intermingling, hybridism, constant flux, and change. As a crossroads of peoples, products, cultures, and imperial systems, and a place of linguistic, religious, and ethnic variety, its long historical trajectory cannot easily be incorporated into discourses of national or cultural “homogeneity” or perennial “authenticity.” In 1571, Cyprus was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. Even though it was ceded to the British in 1878, it entered the twentieth century in an essentially premodern, agrarian state. It was at that time that ideologies of nationalism and notions of cultural separateness began forming on the island. Nationalism was largely imported from Greece and then Turkey, but it was also coupled with a colonially imposed discourse, as part of the British effort to frustrate any Cypriot claims to independence from colonial rule. The result of these discourses of nationalism was to turn the two main religious communities—Christian and Muslim Cypriots—into Greek and Turkish “nationals” (Pollis 1996: 75–76). By the 1930s, nationalism’s grand narrative was adopted by the newly formed “ethnic communities,” first, and especially, the now self-defined Greek Cypriots, for their own (largely separatist) agendas (Morag 2004).

Yet, despite the emergence of nationalist ideology—a hegemonic construct—Cyprus’ experience of modernity was one of a “periphery” vis-à-vis a number of centers: Greece and Turkey (as mostly ideological “national” points of reference for Greek and Turkish Cypriots), and the UK, as well as Europe, or the West in general. Moreover, linguistic and other cultural pluralisms further undermined nationalism’s totalizing claims, even within each of the two separate “ethnic communities.”

With regard to art, there has been a complete absence of any hegemonic narrative, both in terms of theoretical-critical discourse, as well as in actual practice and production. Cypriot modern (not necessarily modernist) art dates from the early twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> The main figures that make up what can be classified as the first generation of Cypriot art were

<sup>13</sup> In Greek, the general equivalent of modern—in a wider sense than strictly “modernist”—is *neoteros*, which in the case of Cyprus usually signals the period that begins with the establishment of British rule on the island in 1878, or with the official declaration of a colonial status in the early twentieth century. I make use of “modernist” when I intend to make such specific associations (particularly with regard to art).



born in the first decade of the century, and their earlier mature works are from the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> Even though by that time the ideology of nationalism had made firm inroads among Greek Cypriots, it was London rather than the state Fine Arts School of Athens that was the main point of reference for most local artists, both as a destination for artistic studies, as well as a source of information in the form of illustrated art magazines and other media.<sup>15</sup> Coupled with the (continuing) absence of a high-level state fine arts school on the island, this meant that no local artistic establishment was in place as either a dominant artistic school or an ideology to enforce any sort of hegemonic narrative. Within this polysemic “peripheral” predicament, the most important first-generation Greek Cypriot artists produced what can be described in formalist terms as mildly modernist work. Their production on the one hand tried to negotiate national aspirations (independence from colonial rule and union with Greece) by engaging with “high” Hellenic cultural “heritage” and with vernacular “tradition”; on the other, it was imbued with transnational or cosmopolitan artistic aspirations.<sup>16</sup> It amounted to an effort to establish a collective presence in the colonial moment and to imagine a brighter, modern, post-colonial future (Danos 2014).

The artists who can be regarded as constituting the second generation of Cypriot art were born from the late 1910s to the mid-1930s, the older of whom started showing work in the 1950s. With them, we have the first collective effort both to upgrade the local art scene and, more importantly, to “modernize” Cypriot art; namely, to synchronize their art production with international developments. In the mid-1950s, they set up the first artists’ association and curated group exhibitions. As the anti-colonial armed struggle of the late 1950s gave way to the independent early 1960s, their engagement with more contemporary artistic trends

<sup>14</sup>There are a few artists who were born in the last fifteen or so years of the nineteenth century, who, being too few to be grouped separately, are usually included in the “first generation,” the span of which is often extended to also include artists born in the early 1910s.

<sup>15</sup>My analysis of Cypriot art largely concerns the Greek Cypriot experience. Bibliographical sources in Greek or English on Turkish Cypriot artists and other producers of culture in the twentieth century are scant, especially for the pre-1974 period. Despite the partial opening of borders in 2003, the ongoing de facto partition of the island since the 1974 military invasion by Turkey has greatly hampered any relevant research.

<sup>16</sup>As Susan Stanford Friedman writes, nationalist movements and liberation struggles from colonial rule by newly emergent nations and colonies are central to their own modernities. Therefore, “the creative forces within those modernities [...] are engaged in producing modernisms that accompany their own particular modernities” (2006: 427).

intensified. This was in line with the wider process for political, social, and economic modernization upon which the newly founded Republic of Cyprus embarked, striving to establish itself as a modern post-colonial state.<sup>17</sup> During the 1960s and through the early 1970s, most of the second-generation artists conceived of the project of artistic modernity as a formal and theoretical engagement with the currents of Geometric Abstraction, Hard-Edge Painting, and Minimalism. Integrated into their modernizing Western-style project was the perhaps inevitable rhetoric of “rupture,” both with older artistic traditions, especially local popular art, as well as with the work of the previous generation of Cypriot artists. On the contrary, Savva, the most important member of this generation and arguably of twentieth-century Cypriot art, followed a distinctly different course. Situated in the particularities of place and time, his work creatively translated both modernism *and* “tradition.” I argue that Savva’s art can be placed within a transcultural, Mediterranean artistic discourse, which subverts normative narratives, including modernism’s spatial and temporal foundations—its “constructed universals” (Brown 2008: 556), *and* avant-garde discourses.

### CHRISTOFOROS SAVVA: ALTERNATIVE MODERNISM AND AVANT-GARDISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Coming from Cyprus, a colonial province only recently engaged with the discourse of modernity, Savva found himself in a peripheral relation with both the European centers, where he pursued artistic studies and a career in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, as well as with the very “language” of modernism.<sup>18</sup> From the early 1947 (when he first left Cyprus) to 1959 (when he returned to the island permanently), Savva spent years

<sup>17</sup> Processes of social and economic modernization had already been initiated earlier in the century, especially after Cyprus officially became a Crown colony from 1925 on. This intensified after the island acquired independence in 1960.

<sup>18</sup> Savva was born in 1924 to peasant parents, and, like the vast majority of children in rural Cyprus at the time, he only attended primary school. There are no indications that he had any early interest in artistic matters, while his first important encounter with art (possibly museum visits) seems to have taken place at some point in the mid-1940s when he was stationed in Italy in service of the Cyprus Regiment of the British Army. Taking advantage of the immigration opportunities offered to army veterans, his flight to England in 1947 probably had more to do with a desire to escape his Cypriot social predicament rather than a passion for art, at least initially. For more on Savva’s life and work, see Danos (2009).

of art schooling in London and in Paris, including several months of travel, especially across the French countryside where he visited museums and painted, and visits back to Cyprus for more painting and exhibiting. He also attended contemporary art exhibitions in main European cities. Though what he “translated” into his own work at the time came mostly from earlier modern art, he kept himself informed of more recent idioms, such as *Art Informel* and Abstract Expressionism, even though he was puzzled by his first encounter with the latter. During these years, he produced paintings that contained references to early twentieth-century modernism—such as the work of Paul Gauguin, Fauvism (especially Henri Matisse), and a late Cubist idiom—and Cypriot popular and Byzantine traditions (see Figs. 5.1 and 5.2). Flat colored areas, naïf

**Fig. 5.1** Christoforos Savva, *Female Portrait (Village Girl)*, c. 1954, oil on canvas, 58 × 36.5 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)





**Fig. 5.2** Christoforos Savva, *Scenes from the Countryside*, 1955, oil on canvas, 150 × 250 cm, collection of Hellenic Petroleum S.A. (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)

drawing, absence of depth and vertical development of the depicted subject, usually arranged in a schematic, loosely Cubist manner, constituted his own version of modernist “primitivism.” Interestingly, this syncretism (imbuing Western modernist art with Cypriot vernacular and Byzantine art) was most accomplished in the paintings that he produced while back in Cyprus, in between the UK and France, from the summer of 1954 to April 1956 (see Figs. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4). Similarly, it was after his permanent return to the island in 1959 that he started producing his more mature work.<sup>19</sup> While part of his painting moved toward abstraction, he also continued producing figurative works, especially his three-dimensional

<sup>19</sup> Soon after his return, Savva found himself at the center of the effort for Cyprus’s artistic and cultural “renewal” when he established the *Apophasis* [Decision] Gallery in 1960. It was the only independent, professional gallery in Nicosia in the 1960s, and it was also the focal point of cultural activity, with the organization and the hosting of exhibitions, lectures, plays (including the very first performances on the island of works by Ionesco and Beckett), film screenings, and discussions, at times with guest artists from abroad, such as Russian film director and actor Sergei Bondarchuk. Savva founded the *Apophasis* with fellow artist Glyn Hughes (1931–2014), a Welshman who moved to Cyprus in 1956 and lived there for the rest of his life. When the gallery moved to new premises a few months later, Savva gradually took over its entire responsibility. In 1961, he opened a tavern under the same name, and this also became a meeting place for the arts and culture crowd.



**Fig. 5.3** Christoforos Savva, *Self-portrait*, 1955, oil on canvas, 75 × 55 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)

and relief works, in which he began incorporating unorthodox materials, including found objects: his *Crucifixion*, which was included in his December 1959 solo show in Nicosia, features straw sticks and a fork among its materials (see Fig. 5.5). In the same exhibition, he also showed what was probably his first wire sculpture, as well as the first of his *ifasmatografies* (appliqués or patchworks), *Basketball* (see Fig. 5.6).<sup>20</sup> In the

<sup>20</sup> *Ifasmatografies* was a term of his own invention: it was included in the exhibition's brochure, while the invitation, which had come out earlier, referred to "tapestries."



**Fig. 5.4** Christoforos Savva, *Deposition*, c. 1955–1956, oil on wood, 84 × 51 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



latter, the formal and compositional elements of his earlier paintings were translated into a cloth collage, where the over-emphasized stitching both functioned as the outline of the chromatic areas and became part of the decorative elements.

In the following years, up to his untimely death in 1968, abstraction—whether in the guise of *Art Informel* (see Fig. 5.7), of a symbolism-laden expressionism (see Fig. 5.8), or of more geometric painting (see Fig. 5.9)—comprised a substantial part of his painting. Parallel to this, he continued his experimentation with various materials, especially in his sculptures, most of which, however, were figurative creations (see Fig. 5.10). Also

**Fig. 5.5** Christoforos Savva, *Crucifixion*, c. 1959, mixed media on wood, 61 × 31 × 10 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



figurative were the majority of the *ifasmatografies* that he continued creating (see Figs. 5.11 and 5.12). This simultaneous presence of abstraction and naïf-like figuration in his work amounts to a subversion of modernism—particularly of its “high” hegemonic phase as it was articulated by US critics such as Clement Greenberg (1939, 1965) in the middle of the twentieth century: to the earlier, modernist demand of “novelty” of form, the notions of medium “purity” and “autonomy” had been added, coupled with an emphasis on the juxtaposition between “high art” versus “kitsch” (meaning, hybridity of media, and method). Savva’s alternative

**Fig. 5.6** Christoforos Savva, *Basketball*, 1959, mixed media on cloth, 198 × 111 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



“place-specific” modernism interrogates such a dogma, and it anticipates feminist avant-gardist strategies of foregrounding craft and artisanal traditions within “fine” arts.

On the more immediate level, the *ifasmatografies* continued Savva’s fertile engagement with popular art that was manifested in this paintings from the 1950s. Several fellow artists and commentators in Cyprus recognized this, and the *ifasmatografies* were met with an overwhelmingly positive reception. The works were eulogized equally by conservative artists and critics as well as by the more progressive, modernizing ones. All of





Fig. 5.7 Christoforos Savva, *The Poet's Tomb*, 1962, oil and sand on sack, 60 × 79 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)

them emphasized what they saw as an imaginative encounter of modern art with popular art, Byzantine painting, and crafts such as weaving and knitting (Danos 2009: 41–43). This hybridizing of fine art with crafts did not raise any objections among adherents to a more normative modernism. Instead, they all emphasized the value of the translation of this tradition into contemporary artistic creation. Despite the posture of breaking with the past, which some of the Cypriot modernizing artists would adopt toward the end of the decade (though it was more as a rhetorical trope than in actual practice), any antithesis between “tradition” and the “modern” held little currency in Cyprus’s experience of modernity. In the colonial and recently post-colonial Cypriot conditions, “tradition” was negotiated as a living reality in the present.

It is in this milieu that the *ifasmatografies* reveal Savva’s avant-gardist strategies.<sup>21</sup> In these works he taps into the world of vernacular home economy (of weaving, needlework, quilt-making) and of crafts (for centuries at the margins of fine arts), which had constituted a semi-private, female domain in the post-Renaissance European tradition. The separation

<sup>21</sup> My negotiation of the “avant-garde” is, of course, outside the spatial, temporal, and theoretical frameworks of the “historical” (Western) avant-gardes.

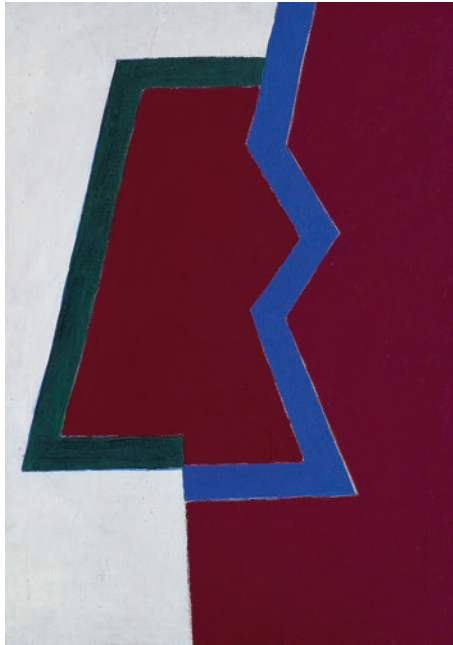


**Fig. 5.8** Christoforos Savva, *Composition*, c. 1965, oil on canvas, 119 × 79 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)

of “high” and “popular” was first contested by the European historical avant-gardes, but it was never really overcome:

The effort [in some avant-garde art movements] to overthrow the hegemony of the fine arts by merging them with the applied arts tended to benefit painting rather than embroidery; to modify masculinity rather than to transform femininity. Embroidery was employed as a fine art medium

**Fig. 5.9** Christoforos Savva, from *New Shapes and Colors*, c. 1966–1967, oil on canvas, 100 × 70 cm, Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



because of its association with femininity and nature. It was to be a disruptive influence on the male dominated fine arts, but this was to be a one-way process. The character of embroidery was assumed to be fixed and unchanging, eternally feminine. (Parker 2010: 191)

The full-on assault on the hierarchy of fine and applied arts did not materialize in Western discourses until the late 1960s, and then principally within feminist art discourse.

[A]rt forms that had previously been seen as “craft” rather than “high art” forms such as weaving, quilting and embroidery, were reclaimed as fluent and accessible languages for seriously pointed art making [... by] feminist artists doing this work in the 1970s and early 1980s. (Reckitt and Phelan 2001: 31–32)

Savva’s temporally and spatially alternative avant-gardism is manifested in his seamless incorporation of “low” art within his overall production. His *ifasmatografies* did not aim at “benefiting painting,” because they

**Fig. 5.10** Christoforos Savva, *Icarus*, c. 1964–1965, cement and other media, 85 × 14 × 9 cm, State Collection of Contemporary Cypriot Art (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



stand autonomously as a medium, an art-form, or genre which is as valid and “self-contained” as painting is. In the *ifasmatografies*, the processes of quilting and stitching are not deprived of their presence by being effaced within the medium or the norms of painting: they are, in their own right, main compositional and expressive elements.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, Savva’s

<sup>22</sup> Rozsika Parker writes that “the stitches themselves convey meaning. Linda Nochlin [in reference to Louise Bourgeois’ use of cloth and embroidery] has commented on the ferocity of the bad sewing, with large, awkward stitching, far from the tradition of professional tapestry making” (Parker 2010: xviii). In “The Savva Exhibition: Spot the Burnt Matches in a Gay Show,” a 1959 article from *The Times of Cyprus* on Savva’s exhibition at the time, Savva is reported to have rightfully “declined the offer of a seamstress to affix [presumably in a professional manner] the various pieces of cloth to his design, preferring to do the giant ‘saddle-stitching’ himself” (3).

**Fig. 5.11** Christoforos Savva, *Daisy*, 1961, mixed media on cloth, 139 × 45 cm, private collection (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



“rehabilitation” of this vernacular, feminine, artisanal tradition is free from the tensions that were embedded in the later feminist discourse regarding issues of decorativeness and expressive creation, or abstraction and representation. Contrary to feminist art’s ideological appropriation of embroidery and patchwork, Savva’s work valued the very decorative impulses, the processes of craft, and the affective power of the materials that were at the core of those traditions. As a result, he kept the *ifasmatografies* mostly within a figurative-decorative framework, not subscribing to any “need” to imbue his exploration of this handicraft tradition with any “significant abstraction,” demanded by mainstream modernism.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Rabinovitz (1980–1981: 38–39) on Judy Chicago’s inner “conflicts,” on the occasion of her *Dinner Party* (1979); and Garb (1986) on Miriam Schapiro’s “need”



**Fig. 5.12** Christoforos Savva, *Woman with Flowers*, 1966–1967, mixed media on cloth, 115 × 67 cm, State Collection of Contemporary Cypriot Art (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



In terms of intention and practice, Savva's explorations were part of his wider engagement with various traditions, and of his experimentation with materials, forms, and methods (see Figs. 5.13 and 5.14). In terms of ideological and theoretical analysis, his work escapes the construction of

to imbue her own work with "significant abstraction" while incorporating "the *despised* and *decorative* products of the women's handicraft tradition" (131–132; my emphasis), which had been required by high modernism. Savva's valuing of decorativeness can also be compared to Henri Matisse's "goal of a modern decoration," as John Klein (2007: 148) points out, with regard to his paper cut-outs, created in the late 1940s and early 1950s "in the Mediterranean ambience" (146).

**Fig. 5.13** Christoforos Savva, *Untitled (relief with pins)*, 1967–1968, mixed media, 117 × 70 × 3 cm, Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)



“tradition” as Western modernism’s “Other.” To borrow from T. S. Eliot’s notions of the importance of “tradition” to the making of a substantial writer (“anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year”) or artist, Savva was an agent of that “historical sense” which involves the perception not only of the “pastness of the past, but [more importantly] of its presence” (Eliot 1982: 37). This “sense” is what makes the writer or the artist “more acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity” (37).<sup>24</sup> Savva’s relation to “tradition” was critical—

<sup>24</sup>However, Savva’s engagement with tradition was free from the “authoritarian” aspects of Eliot’s application of tradition, which would neither forego the “superiority” of Britain/



**Fig. 5.14** Christoforos Savva, *Recreation*, 1964, relief with colored cement and other media, approx. total size 320 × 540 cm, original arrangement (front/back view), Miramare Hotel, Limassol (Courtesy of En Tipis Publications, Nicosia, Cyprus)

“not only concerned with the past but also [and above all] with the quality of aesthetic production in the present” (Adorno 1992: 80).

Such a foregrounding of Savva’s work contributes, I hope, to the interrogations of the earlier, normative constructions of the notion of the “avant-garde” located within “a linear, homogenous chronology (which underpins the ‘advance guard’ as a combative frontier that pushes toward the future)” (Mercer 2005: 11). As we have already seen, modernists and avant-gardists, from Gauguin to Picasso and the Russian Constructivists, engaged with and creatively incorporated a gamut of traditions, whether under primitivism’s appropriations of non-Western (“native”) cultures, or in dialogue with other, older art-forms closer to home (vernacular, Byzantine, post-Renaissance European). Savva’s avant-gardism is located in his successful subversion of normative modernism, particularly of the division between “high” and “low” art. Such an interrogation had been an

Europe, nor interrogate the “separation of the ‘West’ from the rest” (see Yúdice 1999: 57–58).



important aspect—though not ultimately successful—of the early avant-gardes, even if it has been downplayed in narratives that focus on the discourse of “rupture.” From the late 1960s onwards, this interrogation resurfaced within areas of what is often defined as postmodernism, such as feminist art—a project not without its tensions, of which Savva’s work was free owing to his location within a wider Mediterranean imaginary.

## EPILOGUE

Savva’s non-normative (“alternative”) modernism and avant-gardism can be situated within a translocal Mediterranean discourse. His oeuvre was enabled by his positionality in a space of crossings and exchanges, devoid of hierarchies and grand narratives, in a “periphery” within the wider Mediterranean milieu. Throughout history, the Mediterranean has been a great patchwork of individual experiences, and collective cultures and histories. It has manifested a multifaceted contemporaneity and a diachronic polyphony that synchronically contains past, present, and future. It enables us to (re)think modernity and modernism, both as a strategy of uncovering the earlier, hegemonic articulations of North-Western discourses and, especially, as a negotiation of our present, “globalized” predicament that would allow us to resist and deconstruct the contemporary manifestations of such hegemonies. We may thus paraphrase Franco Cassano, and begin to think not simply of the Mediterranean in light of modernity, but of modernity and modernism(s) in the light of the Mediterranean.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cassano refers to “the South” (2012: 1); of the various “Souths” explored in his writings, the Mediterranean emerges by far as the paradigmatic example of the concept.

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PART II

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Mediterranean Temporalities:  
Remembrance, Haunting, Slow Time,  
Anachronism



## Old Anxieties in New Skins: The Project of al-Andalus and Nostalgic Dwelling in the New Mediterranean

*Jonathan H. Shannon*

### TURBULENT TRIBUTARIES

Trained as a pharmacist and a musician, Omar Metioui is one of the foremost interpreters of Morocco's Andalusian musical heritage. In many ways a typical *Tanjawi* (a native of multilingual Tangier), Metioui is comfortable conversing in Arabic, French, and Spanish, as well as navigating the various roles of pharmacist, performer, ensemble director, cultural translator, researcher, and social entrepreneur. In 2004, he founded the cultural association "Confluences musicales/Rawafid musiqiyya" [musical tributaries] dedicated to documenting, preserving, and performing the musical legacies of "the two shores of the Mediterranean" [*les deux rives de la*

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J. H. Shannon (✉)  
Department of Anthropology, Hunter College,  
City University of New York, New York, NY, USA

*Méditerranée*].<sup>1</sup> The association is located in an old building in the Tangier *medina*, whereas he and his family reside in a home outside the city that looks across the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain. A plaque near his front door reads “Las Dos Orillas” [the two shores], evoking like his association the medieval concept of *al-ʿudwatan* or the two shores of al-Andalus—the African and the European, spanning the Mediterranean. Metioui straddles these two shores as a performer, as a person.

In 2004, Spanish artist Begoña Olavide, the founder of the Ensemble Mudéjar (dedicated to recreating the musics of medieval Iberia), and her husband, luthier Carlos Paniagua, relocated from Andalucía, Spain, to Tangier to work with Metioui on the Association. They resided there for several years, performing regularly with Metioui’s ensemble, conducting master classes on music and lutherie, and participating in the cultural life of the city. In May 2004, they gave a concert in Fez to commemorate the anniversary of the May 16, 2003 Casablanca terrorist bombing. Metioui introduced the concert by stating that they hoped that their music might begin to heal the wounds not only of the terrorist bombings in Casablanca, but of the March 11, 2004 train bombings in Madrid, as well.<sup>2</sup> The concert to an audience of local aficionados, many from the Fassi elite, featured Metioui on *ʿūd* (Arabian lute) with a small traditional Moroccan ensemble, including *rabāb* (a two string fiddle), *tārr* (small tambourine drum), violin, and vocalist; Olavide accompanied on *qānūn* (zither) and sang in Arabic, Spanish, and Ladino. They performed several songs from the traditional Andalusian repertoire of Morocco (called *al-Āla*) and strove for authenticity in their interpretation.

In a later discussion, Metioui said that musical collaboration is an important key in bridging cultural divides and promoting mutual understanding, especially between Europeans and North Africans, and, by

<sup>1</sup> See <http://tangier.free.fr/confluencesmusicales>. They also have a page on Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/confluencesmusicales/>.

<sup>2</sup> The bombings in Madrid’s commuter rail system, known as 11-M in Spain, killed 191 and injured 1800. They are generally thought to have been planned and executed by Moroccans linked vaguely to al-Qaeda, though controversy lingers over the perpetrators and the handling of the subsequent investigations. What is less a matter of debate is that the attacks—the most significant in Spanish history—brought Spain, and Europe, more squarely into a US-led “war on terror.” Moroccans also point to the May 16, 2003 suicide bombings in Casablanca as another example of the implication of their country in a global war on terror.



extension, between Christians and Muslims. For him, the concert was proof that if different peoples can perform music together, then they stand a better chance of getting along.<sup>3</sup> Olavide and Paniagua agreed that there was hope; this is partly why they had decided to move to Morocco, to work on a project larger than the music itself. By drawing on a heterogeneous musical and cultural past, they aimed to combat a monocultural view of Spain and Spanish history, and open up bridges between Spain and Morocco at the same time. Musical *convivencia* on the stage—performing songs from a common Muslim, Jewish, and Christian heritage—held the promise for a deeper *convivencia* in daily life among peoples.

A few years later, I wandered through the alleys of Granada's Calderería Nueva, in the "Moorish" quarter of Albaicín. Passing a small *artesanía* or craft shop, I noticed an *'ūd* resting against some cushions, so I went inside and spoke with the shop worker about the instrument, wondering if he played and who made it. He ducked out of the shop and returned a minute later with a small retinue: Yussef, who managed the shop and owned the *'ūd*, and Uzman Almerabit, who had made the instrument. After discussing my interest in the *'ūd* and Arab-Andalusian music (and allowing me to play it), they invited me over to the Dar Ziryab tea shop around the corner so we could speak some more. It turned out that Uzman was not only a luthier and performer, but also the founder and director of the Dar Ziryab Cultural Center [*Centro Cultural Dar Ziryab*], which opened in the Albaicín in January 2009.<sup>4</sup> He also leads the Al Tarab Ensemble, in which Yussef plays *qānūn*. The three friends all hail from the Tétouan and Tangier, and claimed to know Metioui and his ensemble. At the time of our meeting, they had already been in Spain for many years and were active in the local and regional music scenes.

In addition to the tea shop, the *Centro* hosts workshops [*talleres*] on lutherie, crafts such as woodworking, Arabic calligraphy, art and dance exhibitions, conferences on al-Andalus and music, poetry recitals, and, of course, musical performances. I asked them how they felt about living in Granada and being in the Albaicín, the so-called "Moorish" quarter.

<sup>3</sup> This is similar to the message espoused by the famous West–Eastern Divan Orchestra, led by Daniel Barenboim, cofounder of the initiative with the late Edward Said. The West–Eastern Divan Workshop brings together performers from the Arab lands, Europe, and Israel to perform European classical music together, building on the idea that all peoples are "equal in music."

<sup>4</sup> See <http://darziryab.blogspot.com>, though it has not been updated in many years.

Yussef claimed it to be “Zwīna [beautiful], like Tétouan!” They all concurred: they were happy in Granada. I then asked them how they got along with their Spanish neighbors and the numerous *conversos* (converts to Islam) and if there are any recriminations or problems, mentioning that just that morning I had seen another “¡Moros Fuera!” [Moors Out] graffito on a nearby wall. The younger man who had been running the shop said that they didn’t have any problems, and that the Spaniards seemed to be more interested in their culture than the “Arabs” (mainly Lebanese, Palestinians, and Syrians) and other North Africans in Granada. Yussef agreed, but Uzman, who is in many ways their leader, shook his head. “No! Maybe in Madrid they are, or Barcelona. But here in Granada, the [Spanish] are more narrow-minded, conservative.” “And the Moroccans here?” I asked. “We are new [*jdūd*] to the city, so in a way still learning how to get by.” With a play on words, I jokingly suggested that they are also grandparents [*ajdād*], that is, the ancestors of the modern Spaniards. “Of course,” he replied. “We influenced Spain. You can see our heritage here,” as he gestured with a sweep of his hands at the surroundings. But when I suggested, again half-jokingly, that Granada was therefore their land [*bilādkum*], he replied with a shrug of the shoulders. “Ya’nī,” meaning both yes and no. “I don’t know about that,” he said. “There’s a lot of fear here. The people are very conservative,” referring to both the North African immigrants and the native Granadinos. It seemed there were some problems after all.

When I asked him what music they performed at Dar Ziryab, I half-expected him to defend the “pure tradition” of Arab-Andalusian music, the music of Ziryab (the ninth-century avatar widely considered to be the founder of the music). But instead he said, “Our audience is mostly Spaniards and tourists, so we have to mix our music: Arab, Andalusian, Turkish, flamenco, Sufi, and others. It’s a mix, but we have to do it. It’s not like we are living in the Middle Ages. The Moroccans and *conversos* usually don’t come to hear us.” They all agreed that their music was enjoyed mostly by those outside their own community, even if a few North African and Arab fans attended their shows. Indeed, at a concert of Middle Eastern music the following evening, from what I could surmise, the audience at Dar Ziryab consisted mainly of Europeans. Tellingly, the concert was promoted as *música del mundo* [world music], not as Arab or Middle Eastern music.

In both Metioui's and Almerabit's projects, the rhetoric of Andalusian *convivencia*—of living together and cultural sharing—takes center stage. Yet these projects of musical outreach and coexistence not only draw on an ideology or rhetoric of a shared Andalusian history, one of tolerance and *convivencia*. They also promote ideological and political projects that are part of how Arab, North African, European, and global audiences understand and negotiate cultural difference—especially the difference posed by Islam and Muslims in such places as Granada (Shannon). These negotiations have taken place in the context of a global war on terror, at once drawing on deep-rooted suspicions of Muslims as racialized and Orientalized subjects within “Fortress Europe” while announcing new ideologies of belonging that are part of a cosmopolitan, postmulticultural world. In an era of neoliberal crises of confidence as much as of economy, the rhetoric of al-Andalus and the suggestion (if not expectation) of *convivencia* have become powerful tools for managing cultural boundaries in the twenty-first century.

#### THE PROJECT OF AL-ANDALUS: BRIDGES AND BARRIERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BEYOND

Many North African performers and culture brokers promote the rhetoric of the sea as a cultural bridge uniting peoples of different faiths, even as their own nations are complicit in the new border regimes. As a result, their musics perform the contradictions of the new–old Mediterranean, with its shifting and securitized borders. Both Metioui's and Almerabit's projects advocated for music's potential to form bridges between peoples; their many concerts and recordings are testament to this potential. This sentiment resonated as well with the famous West–Eastern Divan Orchestra (founded and directed by Daniel Barenboim) and the many other musical groups working under the ideological flag of the “Three Cultures of the Mediterranean” (meaning Christianity, Judaism, and Islam).<sup>5</sup> For his part, Eduardo Paniagua, brother of Carlos and founder of the Pneuma record label, issued a recording that echoes this idea, *Puentes sobre el Mediterraneo* [Bridges over the Mediterranean], which depicts the Mediterranean as a space of musical–cultural bridges and confluences (Paniagua 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes a fourth “culture,” the Roma or *gitano* is added to the mix for tours in Granada.

Indeed, the trope of the sea as a bridge between cultures constitutes one of the main gatekeeping concepts for the anthropology of the Mediterranean across the twentieth century (Bromberger 2007).<sup>6</sup> Scholars, literary figures, and the tourism industry have long promoted the idea of the Mediterranean as a polyphonic zone of mixing, hybridity, tolerant coexistence, and even “Mediterranean thinking” (Cassano 2012; Bromberger 2007: 293). Paniagua’s recordings and Metioui’s and Almerabit’s performances capture this idea. However, a closer examination of the bridges formed through music reveals that they usually offer only one-way access; that is, they offer a bridge for European artists and consumers to come to North Africa and the Middle East, but usually a wall for those coming from the opposite shores (Bromberger 2007: 294–5). For example, Olavide and Paniagua could live for years in Tangier, and Metioui, who is a successful pharmacist, would have little difficulty securing a visa to Europe. His fellow Moroccan musicians, however, being less cosmopolitan and well connected, would find it very difficult to leave. In the eyes of the European border patrol regimes, they are little better than the thousands of so-called “harragas” (undocumented migrants) who attempt to cross the Strait every year, often in small boats.<sup>7</sup> For their part, Yussef, Uzman, and their friends in Granada are rare among their compatriots in having residency papers that allow them to go back and forth between Morocco and Spain. Many of the North African and Middle Eastern musicians I met in Granada were recent immigrants and most were undocumented. Only Arab star musicians may travel with ease in Europe; others must endure a tedious and costly application process with no guarantee of being granted a visa, or risk their lives in the treacherous Mediterranean crossing to Europe.

<sup>6</sup>In a similar manner, the ethno-musicological study of the Mediterranean also shares this notion, whether through the concept of the region’s musical cultures as constituting a mosaic (Plastino 2003) or as sharing musical DNA (Magrini 2003: 20), though I am uncomfortable with the biological metaphor. The anthropological and ethno-musicological studies of the region both draw extensively from the work of Braudel (1995 [1972]).

<sup>7</sup>The harragas (“those who burn,” from the Arabic verb *harraga*, to burn) refers to North and West African migrants who burn their identity papers so as not to be easily identified by European border patrol for the purposes of repatriation (the act of migration itself is called “el Harga”). These migrants often attempt to traverse the Mediterranean on small boats such as the flat-bottomed boats known in Spanish as *pateras*, inflatable Zodiac rafts, or other craft. See Gatti (2008), Lydie (2011), Teriah (2002), among others.

The notion of *convivencia* and the trope of the three cultures of the Mediterranean have increasingly been invoked by institutions and state actors in Europe to promote pluralism, mutual understanding, and tolerance. For example, in Spain, several initiatives aim to build bridges between Europeans and the country's Muslim citizens under the guise of a *nueva convivencia*, although they also serve broader projects of control and surveillance. The Three Cultures Foundation/Fundación Tres Culturas del Mediterráneo, based in Seville, was founded in 1998 by the regional government of Andalucía (Junta de Andalucía) and the Kingdom of Morocco to promote "peace, dialogue and tolerance" among the three "cultures" of the Mediterranean. To that effect, it organizes cultural initiatives such as concerts, art exhibitions, seminars, and other activities with the aim of "breaking down stereotypes and promoting respect among different peoples and religions."<sup>8</sup> It also has affiliated commercial offices and offers a master's degree in International Diplomacy. In 2006, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation inaugurated the Casa Árabe, a publicly funded cultural center with headquarters in Madrid and Córdoba established to be "a strategic center for Spain's relations with the Arab world, a meeting point where different role-players and institutions, both private and public, from the worlds of business, education, academia, politics and culture can dialogue, interact, establish lines of cooperation and undertake joint projects." Far more than an art gallery, library, bookshop, and conference center, Casa Árabe aims to be "an active platform and tool for Spain's public diplomacy, with activities which it has integrated into those of a strong network of similar Casas, including the Casa de América, Casa Asia, Casa África, Casa del Mediterráneo and Centro Sefarad-Israel."<sup>9</sup> Along with Fundación Tres Culturas, Casa Árabe promotes the ideology that the Andalusian legacy can serve as a bridge between West and East, and between the past, present, and future.

However, the trope of bridges is belied by the reality of increasingly rigid barriers and regimes of surveillance and border control characteristic of Europe's stance toward its Mediterranean neighbors. European leaders have tightened immigration quotas and greatly securitized their borders, making the Mediterranean more a zone of conflict and suspicion than of polyphonic mixing and hybridity. Faced with a growing and increasingly

<sup>8</sup>[http://www.tresculturas.org/en/?page\\_id=25](http://www.tresculturas.org/en/?page_id=25).

<sup>9</sup>All quotations are taken from the English version of the Casa Árabe website: <http://www.casaarabe.es>.

urgent refugee problem, these contradictory processes have intensified. Anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise in much of Europe, leading to “Fortress Europe” mentalities and programs.<sup>10</sup> Yet Europe is a fortress only for those racialized subjects who reside in non-preferential regions, typically countries outside the Schengen Area though in effect most of Africa and Asia. New technologies of surveillance and control, including the multibillion euro Frontex and Eurosur initiatives and the Spanish Integrated System for External Surveillance (*Sistema de Vigilancia Exterior*, SIVE),<sup>11</sup> are hard power complements to the soft power multicultural projects of Andalusian *convivencia*.<sup>12</sup> In other words, these projects of Andalusian multicultural tolerance are proxies for mostly European concerns with the management of internal Others.<sup>13</sup> In the context of the new Mediterranean, with its shifting and securitized borders (Andersson 2012, 2014; Suárez-Navaz 2004), European leaders hope that by containing and controlling the discourse, they might contain and control the populations.

### MUSIC, *NUEVA CONVIVENCIA*, AND NOSTALGIC DWELLING IN MODERNITY

Those who embrace the medieval Andalusian past in order to promote a vision of future tolerance do so by drawing selectively on nostalgia for an era that, in fact, others would like to forget. In the context of a contemporary world rife with radical restorative projects (from both militant Islamists and right-wing ideologues), they concurrently endeavor to advance a form of multicultural tolerance that secures the present hegemonic order by bringing Muslims into the national and regional polity—that is, by “taming”

<sup>10</sup> Fortress Europe policies are not limited to Europe’s Mediterranean and Middle Eastern borders but also apply to the borders with Eastern Europe as well. See Follis (2012).

<sup>11</sup> For more on the operations of SIVE, see Carling (2007) and Andersson (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Frontex is the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union and was established on October 26, 2004. While not responsible for border control, Frontex coordinates border management technologies of member states. Eurosur (European Border Surveillance System) is “an information-exchange system designed to improve management of the EU external borders. Eurosur enables near real-time sharing of border-related data between members of the network, consisting of Schengen countries and Frontex.” See <http://frontex.europa.eu>.

<sup>13</sup> On the role of NGOs in the management of Islam in Granada, see Rogozen-Soltar (2012a, b).

them, as it were, not unlike the old *mudéjar* population of Spain, those who were allowed to remain in a reconquered Spain.<sup>14</sup> Contemporary calls for a *nueva convivencia*, then, must be understood as part of a program of domesticating difference at home while at the same time enforcing border maintenance policies externally.<sup>15</sup>

The forms and practices of nostalgic attachment to the Andalusian legacy therefore are battlegrounds for negotiating these competing projects of inclusion/exclusion. Following Svetlana Boym, I understand nostalgia to be a quintessentially modern phenomenon rather than a traditional or archaic form of wistful remembrance. In other words, nostalgia is tied intimately to the processes and contradictions of modernity. To confuse nostalgia with longing alone is to misunderstand its complex history and to underestimate its contemporary relevance.<sup>16</sup> Boym distinguishes two main varieties of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Whereas the former emphasizes the *nostos*, the home, and attempts to reconstruct a (lost or imagined) home, the latter focuses on the *algia*, the pain of longing, and defers the return home for an ironic attachment to the past. According to Boym, restorative nostalgia does not appear as nostalgia per se but as tradition, heritage, and the truth. For this reason, many revivalists, cultural nationalists, and religious movements engage in forms of restorative nostalgia; by remembering, they are preparing the conditions for a return. By contrast, reflective nostalgia does not call for a return of lost essential truths and foregoes any sense of reviving heritage.

Neither Metioui nor Almerabit is under the illusion that their music will bring back the *convivencia* of medieval al-Andalus; their projects are more reflective than restorative. They are also savvy culture brokers and social entrepreneurs drawing from a deep well of frustration with the current situation and hoping to find avenues for trust and cooperation while at the same time promoting their artistic visions and careers. However, like

<sup>14</sup> *Mudéjar* (those allowed to remain behind after the fall of al-Andalus) probably derives from the Arabic term *mudajjin*, meaning a tamed or domesticated animal that is allowed to remain indoors.

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note, following Suárez-Navaz (2004), that Europe's border enforcement strategies extend well beyond the national frontiers into North and West African nations, as well as across the interior of the European mainland. This has had the effect of transforming much of Europe and the Mediterranean into a borderland.

<sup>16</sup> Formed from the Greek roots *nostos* (home) and *algia* (pain, malady), nostalgia referred initially to a medical condition among displaced persons, such as Swiss soldiers removed from home, and was treated as an curable ailment. See Boym (2007: 7–8).

so many in the growing cottage industry of Andalusian studies,<sup>17</sup> they promote an Andalusian-inspired time-space of cross-cultural belonging, what Amanda Lagerkvist calls “nostalgic dwelling” (2013).<sup>18</sup> In her study of memory and mass-mediation in the construction and performance of Shanghai, media scholar Lagerkvist argues that nostalgia is a form of future-directed memory making; that is, it is a “nostalgia for the future” (Boym’s prospective nostalgia), a highly mediated process through which imaginings of a past are conscripted into the project of constructing a future present. In the words of Ackbar Abbas (quoted in Lagerkvist 2013: 102), this is not so much “Back to the Future” as “Forward to the Past.” In a similar fashion, we can understand the musical performance of al-Andalus in such memory sites as Fez and Granada as illuminating and echoing past future-oriented projects of nostalgic dwelling. Not coincidentally, both are United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites, indicating the ways in which nostalgic dwelling in these spaces is linked to global circulations of ideas of authenticity, cultural ownership, and nostalgic consumption.<sup>19</sup>

The chronotopes of nostalgic dwelling (Lagerkvist 2013: 111) in Morocco and Spain reveal different, if complementary, projects of modernity and attendant nostalgias and regimes of historicity (Hartog 2003).<sup>20</sup> In Morocco the performance of Andalusian music primarily engages a reflective nostalgia for a less distant past temporally and spatially. Given many Moroccans’ strong sense of actual connection to medieval Spain, musical performance enacts a temporary restoration of that past but not for the purposes of restoring it so much as for reflecting on what might have been. There are some elements of restorative nostalgia at work, especially as cultural entrepreneurs such as Metioui convert the reflective into the restorative as a way of accessing greater cultural and often financial capital. In such cases, al-Andalus, to borrow from Claude Lévi-Strauss

<sup>17</sup> Among others, see Jayyusi and Marín (1992), Mann et al. (1992), Menocal et al. (2000), Menocal (2002), Dodds et al. (2008).

<sup>18</sup> Anthropologist Beebe Bahrami (1995) calls this time-space “Andalus time.” In the hands of the tourist industry, it has transformed into what Tremlett, perhaps cynically, terms “Moorishland” (2008).

<sup>19</sup> On Fez, see Porter (2001, 2003); on Granada, see Murillo Viu et al. (2008). Many other sites in Morocco and Spain are on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

<sup>20</sup> Chronotopes (time-spaces) in the work of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin are used to analyze the intrinsic connectedness of space and time in language and literature. For Bakhtin, literary genres can be identified by their different configurations of time and space.



(1964, 1966), is “good to think”—that is, it fits well with a cultural logic of nostalgic remembrance and consumption in contemporary Morocco. Across the Strait, in Spain, we find a curious mixture of restorative and reflective nostalgias, in addition to what Lagerkvist identifies as a nostalgia for the future. The symbolic and material contests over Granada and the ongoing debates about the place and role of Islam in Spain today are to a large degree contests over types of memory and nostalgia. Whereas reflective nostalgias and chronotopes of dwelling promote rereadings of history and a negotiation of the meaning of such places as Granada’s Alhambra palace and Córdoba’s Mezquita mosque-cathedral, restorative nostalgias in these very sites aim to reappropriate what was once lost and to restore it for future generations (mainly of Muslims). In this way, the struggle for European self-identity plays out in the symbolic struggle for these polysemous sites of memory and memory-making.

This raises the question of the possible links between artistic and everyday performances on the one hand, and what Boym defines as restorative nostalgia on the other. Richard Schechner (2010: 36) defines performance as “restored behavior” because it is the recollection of an earlier behavior or act that is re-presented, re-created in performance and hence restored. Boym argues that “to understand restorative nostalgia, it is important to distinguish between the habits of the past and the habits of the *restoration* of the past” (Boym 2007: 14, original emphasis). This yields seeming paradoxes in the performance of Andalusian musical traditions in my two cases. In a rapidly modernizing country, Metioui emphasizes the pure traditions, whereas in an already advanced capitalist society, Almerabit opens his musical embrace more widely. Regarding this contradiction, Boym notes that “first, the more rapid and sweeping the pace and scale of modernization, the more conservative and unchangeable the new traditions tend to be. Second, the stronger the rhetoric of continuity with the historical past and emphasis on traditional values, the more selectively the past is usually presented” (2007: 14). Metioui and Almerabit (and other culture-brokers) dwell nostalgically in their respective modernities, but draw on a shared legacy to enact different future-oriented projects.

They may be engaging as well in what Boym called “ersatz nostalgia” (10)—nostalgia for what may never have existed in the first place, let alone been lost. Notwithstanding the Castro–Sánchez-Albornoz debate over Spanish historiography (Castro 1984; Sánchez-Albornoz 1956), many scholars have problematized or rejected the extent of medieval *convivencia*, let alone its relevance for today (Fanjul 2002, 2004; Rothstein 2003;

Fernández-Morera 2006; Doubleday 2008; Rodríguez Marcos 2009; Shannon 2015). Musical performances that speak to these debates usually do so from the side of optimism—and commercial opportunism. The rhetoric of Andalusian *convivencia* has currency in the contemporary Euro-Mediterranean market. This is not to downplay either the artistic integrity of the performers or the seriousness of their projects. Metioui and Almerabit have invested great stores of cultural and material capital in promoting their projects, and their resonances in Tangier, Granada, and beyond may speak to prospective or even anticipatory nostalgias (Boym 2007: 8, 10)—yearnings for what might yet come to pass, what might have been, and what is now passing. In this way, imaginings or even fantasies of the past—of medieval *convivencia*, for example—have a direct bearing not only on present practice but on future cultural and political configurations. This is what motivates the likes of Metioui, Almerabit, and Barenboim, among others: the hope, possibly naïve, possibly prescient, that the reality of musical *convivencia* promises actual, lived *convivencia*.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I have endeavored to illuminate how the rhetoric of al-Andalus, especially as enacted in musical performance, engages not only with readings of the past but with contemporary cultural politics at the heart of national debates. These national debates, in turn, animate the regional circulation of ideologies and practices related not only to the medieval past, but to the contemporary world, and even the future. In Spain, the rhetoric of al-Andalus allows immigrant North Africans, new Muslims (*conversos*), tourists, and government agencies to negotiate the place of Islam in modern Spain. The idea of a shared Andalusian heritage in Spain has been linked to a variety of projects, from nostalgias that feed the tourist industry in “Moorishland” (Tremlett 2008), to projects that aim to reproduce an Andalusian-inspired sense of *convivencia*, or even a reconquered Islamic polity.

Andalusian music—as performed by Metioui, Almerabit, or any of the many groups performing in Morocco and Spain—resonates with the contradictions and ambivalences of the medieval past as it is understood and manipulated into the present. The old tensions of maurophilia and maurophobia (Fuchs 2009) remain relevant today as Spaniards, like other Europeans, attempt to understand and manage the presence of Muslims in their communities and their integration into the national consciousness.

In sites such as Tangier and Granada, *lieux de mémoire* that are also sites of trauma and amnesia,<sup>21</sup> musical performance promotes practices of world-making that draw selectively on readings of history, imaginings of the past, and projects for the future (see Stokes 2004, 51). They also help us to understand how various readings of the past and “regimes of historicity” (Hartog 2003) promote different modes of being in the world and different ways of reinvesting sites with meaning to create conditions of nostalgic dwelling. To extend Susan Stewart’s (1984) insights, if we can say that nostalgia in musical performance serves as a meta-commentary on contemporary issues, then the performance of Andalusian music in and around the Mediterranean provides a meta-commentary on a current Mediterranean region marked by crisis and conflict. As mediated by the circulation of ideologies and sounds on concert and festival stages, the rhetoric of a once and future Andalusian imaginative space produces forms of nostalgia even as it performs our (post)modern anxieties.

Returning to Metioui’s Tangier, the view across the Strait to Europe—so near, so far—now appears more complex than before. One can trace, like an aquatic palimpsest, the routes of past migrations, past circulations of peoples and their dreams and aspirations, their memories and losses, between the “dos Orillas,” the two shores (Chambers 2008). In the contemporary context, one can also trace the flows of migrants and their hopes floating (and too often drowning) in a troubled sea of suspicion and fear. Their circulations in and around the Mediterranean, like the circulations of the rhetorics and projects of al-Andalus, call into question our cherished notions of identity and culture, let alone the humanity of our current political cultures and the regimes of surveillance and punishment they foster.

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<sup>21</sup> See also Bal et al. (1999), Huyssen (2003).

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## Haunting the Mediterranean? Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book* and Its Politics of the Afterwardly

*Norbert Bugeja*

It is Friday, December 7, 2012, a cold evening in Istanbul. Together with a group of students, I am walking up Yeni Çarşı Caddesi, the steep, uphill street that from the Çucurkuma district on the left bank of the Bosphorus leads all the way up to the city's famed İstiklal Caddesi. The Avenue is the beating heart of the Beyoğlu neighborhood, a long-standing symbol of Istanbul's historic cosmopolitan identity and its multiethnic conviviality, especially in the later Ottoman period. Our destination? The Cercle d'Orient building at no. 124 on the İstiklal, home to İnci Pastanesi, the historic pastry shop renowned the world over for its profiteroles, and the subject of an entire chapter in Istanbul writer Orhan Pamuk's novel *Masumiyet Müzesi* ("The Museum of Innocence"). The patisserie, a historic rendezvous point of Beyoğlu's locals and expat communities alike, was set up in 1944 by Lucas Zigoridis, a Greek migrant hailing from Albania, at a time when various nationalistic government policies were being adopted with the intent of creating a hostile quality of life for

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N. Bugeja (✉)

Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

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Istanbul's surviving non-Muslim communities after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

What greeted us as we approached our destination was a horrifying sight. The historic patisserie was being gutted and dismantled piece by piece.<sup>1</sup> The site was cordoned off by means of two heavy-goods trucks parked face to face at an angle, and surrounded by a detachment of police armed with machine-guns. The interior of the shop itself was a mess of debris, broken panels, loose tentacles of cabling everywhere, and stray pieces of İnci's old wooden serving counter. As we elbowed our way through the crowd, we caught a glimpse of a pastry-mixer being man-handled into one of the lorries. The workmen went about their jobs with a business-as-usual demeanor that only added to the pathos of the scene. TV camera crews and press photographers were busy taking vox pops and first reactions. There were loud sobs and tears of desolation everywhere. Outside, leaning against the doorway of the Rüya ("Dream") cinema next door (another location in Pamuk's fiction), a girl in her twenties in a skinny black biker jacket and Motörhead shirt was bent over, retching.

The moment was disturbing in its sheer matter-of-factness: old Istanbul was being orphaned of one of its historic love-objects, of an enduring "institution" of its memory, a surviving element of the city's transition from a post-Ottoman to an early republican-secularist ("grounded in Islamic culture yet constitutionally secular" [McGowan 2001: 290]) frame of mind. The transition itself proved to be disastrous to the ex-Ottoman city's multiethnic legacy. Now, at İnci, a new wound to the city's already delicate memorial condition was being opened under the eyes of then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AK-led (Freedom and Justice Party) government—and recorded live. Only five months later, in May 2013, the Gezi Park protests erupted, putting beyond any doubt the seething discontent with his ruling party's patently despotic way of governing.<sup>2</sup> The gutting of İnci Pastanesi to make way for yet another shopping mall—symbolic of Turkey's newly acquired affluence under Erdoğan and of the economic disparities it has created—offers a palpable example of the planned elimination of an evocative post-Ottoman space that

<sup>1</sup> The new İnci Pastanesi is now located on a street just off the İstiklal. It has nothing to do with the historic significance of the old one. See also "İnci Pastanesi" 2012.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed report on the Gezi Park Protests, see Amnesty International, "Gezi Park Protests: Brutal Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Turkey," Index: EUR 44/022/2013 October 2013. Available Online: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/eur440222013en.pdf>.



effectively struck at the Beyoğlu inhabitants' ability to recall, cherish, and live in the spirit of the district's immensely rich humanist past. Counter to this, the move on İnci and other sensitive historic locations across the city cannot but be understood, to use Balca Ergener's phrasing, as "a perpetuation of the official policy towards non-Muslim citizens since the foundation of the Republic, and as part and parcel of attempts to create a homogenized nation-state and a national bourgeoisie" (Ergener 2009: n.p.).

The İnci case was understood by many as the removal of a historic love-object for both old Istanbul and the city's migrant and expat communities—such that its subjects are now experiencing a double bind: they were at once İnci's bereaved inheritors and, by the same token, inexorably beholden to its ongoing presence in the city's wounded imaginary, clinging to the fragments of a historic communal gathering place forced out of existence. In this sense, they are forced into the role of an absent love-object's psychic "hostages"—to use Vincenzo Consolo's term—even as they can no longer experience the solace of its fabled and nuanced historical delicacies, now rendered fugitive. They live in the aftermath of its demise and are haunted by it, just as Orhan Pamuk's own fiction—the literary concern of this chapter—is profoundly haunted by it. This brings me to a concern that in many ways underpins the arguments I'd like to expound in this chapter. To invoke the condition of being "critically Mediterranean," to speak of a "critical" Mediterraneanity, also entails affirming the critical as a certain mode of living "precariously": as a postimperial condition that, like the Turkish Republic's stage-managed dismantling of the Ottoman and post-Ottoman city's vestiges, evokes in its experiencing subjects an unshakable intimation of living "after-the-blow" or, to use Jean Laplanche's incisive turn of phrase, to endure life in the moment of *l'après-coup*, or of "the afterwardly" (Laplanche 1999: 258–265).

In his memoir *Istanbul—Memories of a City*, Pamuk proposes a name for this melancholic condition as it manifests in his native city, a mood that affects the modern metropolis's postwar inhabitants as they live amid the ruins of a former imperial metropole, enduring its brooding aftermath: Pamuk calls this *hüzün*. What I want to suggest here is that the harrowing intimation of living in the moment of a political epilogue is, in particular instances of Pamuk's fiction, filtered through the cultivation of a disturbing, spectrally informed aesthetic of both geographic and historic spaces. This is an aesthetic that, in the work being addressed here, accrues as a

result of a fraught inheritance of national memory, one that is registered early on in the novel around an anxious exposition of the Mediterranean. As Predrag Matvejević has observed in his magisterial *Mediterranean—A Cultural Landscape*, “The Mediterranean is not merely geography” (1999: 7). Through an important allusion to the Mediterranean sea early on in his novel *The Black Book* (2006b [1990]), Pamuk implicitly opens up the cue suggested by Matvejević, realigning the historic, micro-regional geography of Istanbul’s Bosphorus waterway as a realm of both retrospective and future-oriented political import, as the Turkish Republic itself is seen to have reached a point of profound existential crisis.

In this respect, Pamuk’s work prompts the awareness that to speak at this moment in time of a “critically Mediterranean” mode of being is to identify with those efforts at re-membering, re-calling, reaffirming oneself and often also one’s community that operate against the perilous tide of a prolonged alienation of political memory. Pamuk’s vignettes of Istanbul acquire much of their poignancy, in fact, from those idiosyncratic modes of existence—often in historic as much as in fictional time—through which they endure or survive through the political moment of the Republic itself as an ordeal of political memory. In this sense, Pamuk’s reconceptions of political subjectivity echo those of Roger Caillois’s Paris—the city as a *socius* wherein, in the latter’s words, “the chimerical being would never have emerged if he didn’t correspond to the longings and aspirations of society. He is its fabulous, invulnerable projection; sometimes its mirror image” (2015 [1974]: 42). Caillois’s pointed allusion to the chimeric as a trope of causality bears heavily upon any prospect of reading the exercise of fiction and its reconceptions in various parts of the Mediterranean region today. Pamuk’s work is not alone to have revisualized in spectral terms those phenomena that are emerging in the wake of, and as outcomes of, what may be read as the region’s ongoing, politically “afterwardly” moments. Very often, this imagery takes on an aesthetic personality all of its own—a “chimerical being” that, far from being restricted to the realm of fantasy, acquires a powerful historic materiality through its poignant and often allegoric immediacy, its ability to occasion profound crises of political self-assessment and reidentification. This is the case, for instance, with Tahar ben Jelloun’s *Leaving Tangier* (2009 [2006]), a novel of migration, in which the character of Azel decides “that this sea has a centre and that this centre is a green circle, a cemetery where the current catches hold of corpses, taking them to the bottom to lay them out on a bank of seaweed” (Ben Jelloun 2009: 5).

Along the lines of Caillois's "chimeric being", Pamuk's Mediterranean, like Jelloun's sea, comes to be reimagined as an unnerving *tableau vivant* of the social-historic affections that have occasioned its very invocation. My own memory, of watching as the old İnci Pastanesi disappeared under the eyes of the satellite powers serving the interests of Erdoğan's rule, remains a similar one, holding forth a tense image of the political present as a haunting dialectic of both psychic devastation and its ensuing, restless need for renewed political deliberation. The Mediterranean itself plays host today to a memorial body of writing willing to receive, and to breathe new life into, those amongst its stories that have been orphaned of, and by, the politics that spawned them. It is a space in which these accounts circulate and come to be amplified into a transregional flux of accident, of recall, of fugitive historic affections. It is a geography of writing through which the condition itself of "writing after" comes to be reviewed as a salient mode of legitimating its subjects' political ability to excavate, to rally, to discern and gaze into the uncharted. In this sense, its operations seem to be reminiscent of the notion that "the time after is not the morose, uniform time of those who no longer believe in anything. It is the time of pure, material events, against which belief will be measured for as long as life will sustain it" (Rancière 2013: 9). This thought, echoing a faith in melancholy narrative itself as an act of political survivability, leads me on to Pamuk's own wistful text.

### THE MEMORY-OBJECT: HAUNTING A NATIONAL IMAGINARY

Appearing first in Turkish as *Kara Kitap* in 1990, *The Black Book* was published as the Cold War era was in the throes of its demise. In Turkey, the novel coincided with unprecedented levels of popular disenchantment with *devlet*, or the Republican-secularist state as laid out by its founder, Mustafa Kemal "Atatürk" in 1923. Its perceived *étatisme*, the increasingly exhausted credibility of its emphasis on secularist modernization, and its oppressive reforms were, at the time, fast giving way to the rise of Islamist politics, the hegemony of which endures in present-day Turkey.<sup>3</sup> The novel centers around the quest of the lawyer Galip to find his disappeared wife Rüya—a quest that the protagonist of Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*, Kemal Basmacı, also undertakes in relation to his own vanished lover Füsün—as well as the enigmatic columnist Celâl, whose identity

<sup>3</sup> For more insightful historiographic detail and analysis, see Örnek and Üngör (2013).

Galip tries to put on in the course of his quest. But, besides its strong emphasis on postmodernist questions of alterity and multiple and fragmented identification, the novel is, perhaps at a more profound level, concerned with the political crisis of identification plaguing the country itself—and Pamuk’s native city—as the entrenched world distributions of power established in the Cold War era began to dissipate. At this delicate political juncture, Pamuk’s critique of the Turkish Republic’s embedded nationalism and its solipsistic ethos begins to come through with greater force than that evinced in his previous work. In the novel’s fifth chapter (not coincidentally titled “Perfectly Childish”), the novel begins to function as an assertive countermemory to the despotic inclinations of Republican nationalism. Pamuk writes:

A memory: Many years ago, in middle school, when [Galip] and Rüya were in the same class, sitting in the same row, listening to their hideous history teacher with all the patience and goodwill they could muster, there’d be times when this teacher would grimace all of a sudden and yell, “Get out your pens and paper at once!” As they sat in cowering silence, dreading the test for which they were all unprepared, someone somewhere would tear a sheet of paper from a notebook, even though they all knew how she hated this sound. “Don’t tear pages from your notebooks!” she’d scream in that shrill voice of hers. “I want loose sheets! People who tear up our nation’s notebooks, people who destroy our nation’s property—they’re not Turks, they’re degenerates! I’ll give them zeros!” And she did. (Pamuk 2006b: 49)

The most obvious thrust of this passage is Pamuk’s metaphoric undermining of the Republic’s nationalist credo—what I called earlier its “solipsism” that will not allow for the remembrance and access to the nation’s anterior forms of existence—not least, for Pamuk, the value of its Ottoman memory, one that is as yet “unprepared” for the sweeping advent of the Turkish Republic. The history teacher is not simply angry, but easily prone to provocation in the insecurity of her nationalist entrenchment. But the more intriguing aspects of the excerpt lie in how it places the episode of nationalist bullying and how it narrates the moral exhaustion of Republican discourse—by couching it within the parentheses created by the opening and the coda to the paragraph. The passage opens as “A memory,” that of the crisis of Kemalist discourse, but then ends with the abrupt phrase “And she did,” leaving its reader to savor the ensuing silence, to reflect on the traumatic fallout from the teacher’s punishment—itself a thinly veiled

metaphor for the totalizing imposition of Turkish Republican memory at the cost of the staggering diachronic vista of what preceded Kemalism in Istanbul, the historic capital of three empires. Hence, the novel steps in as an agent of memory when the latter's object—the city's own past—is subsumed within the ruling paradigm itself, by virtue of its very imposition, as a phantom. In her incisive descriptions of the present as an epoch in which progressive politics has run out of its historic credibility, Wendy Brown judges the term “nihilistic” to be inadequate as a descriptor of its ongoing political crisis (2001: 139).<sup>4</sup> Pamuk's own pitching of Kemalist discourse as a histrionic act, underscored by a profound insecurity, also begins to make sense in this particular light.

*The Black Book* reacts to the post-Ottoman memorial void which it locates and highlights by periodizing itself within the afterwardly (“A memory”) as a work of responsibility, a work that seeks to address the demise of what Paul Ricœur (1990) would term the “eidetic” capacity, or the vivid recall of the contingency of the past, such that the latter is experienced or endured in the closest possible quality to its real-time occurrence. In this sense, the work of *l'après-coup* finds its narrative legitimacy within this quest, the hosting, and reinstating within a usurped national imaginary of those forms of “lacerated consciousness” (Agamben 1994: 42) exorcised in the wake of the prevalence of Kemalism in Turkey. Galip's personal motive, his quest, hence becomes a vehicle for the exploration of that psychic abyss that obtains when the exercise of recall becomes, in Ray Brassier's words, “correspondence without a concept,” that is, when memory is reduced to a desire to recall without an apposite referent or interlocutor, without the fulfilling object of its labor. It is at this juncture of a national memory dispossessed by the incumbent political discourse of what it *should* achieve through recall that afterwardly writing acquires an assertive capacity: a certain jurisdiction, in other words, to open up and

<sup>4</sup>For more insight into this question, see Wendy Brown's *Politics Out of History*, wherein Brown initiates an incisive critique of what she terms “postprogressive time.” Among other arguments, she writes that “our capacity to intervene in the trajectory and the wide range of effects of capital [...] appears exhausted. So history surges on, but with no promise that past suffering will be redeemed, with no promise of eventual worldwide or even local emancipation, well-being, wisdom, or reduction of suffering. *Nihilistic* seems far too thin a term to describe such circumstances” (2001: 139). In her book, Brown offers unprecedented insight on the question of the enervation of various paradigms operating under the sign of progressive politics, its long fallout and implications, as well as on the question of the resulting, unrequited past suffering and its critical genealogy via Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida.

look into the resources and symptoms of a melancholy born in the course of the “orphanization” of memory itself. As the sensitive object of memory—the past moment of a historical violence—withdraws into state-sanctioned silence, the novel begins to sound the memory-object itself: it begins to invoke within its own perimeter the presence of found, tangible objects, and to tap within the history of their accidents and tribulations the presence of a metaphysic of and connection to the historical consciousness of its national community. This, it seems to me, is emerging to be a shared dynamic of many present-day novels around the Mediterranean littoral.<sup>5</sup>

Pamuk’s novel exploits precisely this invocational capacity of the found object: its status as historical revenant, its presence in narrative as a perpetuation of and attestation to the occurrence of historical violence. *The Black Book* is a novel of found objects, just as *The Museum of Innocence* is: in both novels, the narrative plot can be mapped through its protagonist’s recourse and relation to a string of things that can trace and embody both the affective and the political itineraries of the story as well as intimating its embattled characters’ fates.<sup>6</sup> It is not by accident that, in the epigraph to *The Innocence of Objects* (the catalogue to the actual Museum of Innocence he set up in Çukurkuma), Pamuk harks back to the traumatized postwar silence that followed the Turkish state’s persecution of its ethnic minorities and their effects by quoting Montale’s poem “Lemon Trees:” “See, in these silences / in which things yield and seem / about to betray their ultimate secret” (Pamuk 2012). It is the object’s evocative stillness within a traumatized present continuous that, for Pamuk, sustains its status as revenant, as a being in perpetual, ghostly return. This haunting quality of the object, and especially of the belongings of those communities that were ostracized in the Republic’s race towards national modernization, is for Pamuk the quality that can agitate the national sensorium

<sup>5</sup>This is the case with various national literatures and historiographic meta-fictions across the region, from the so-called “postcolonial” novels and memoirs of Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and, further afield, to the fictionalized historiographies of al-Andalus, the Greco-Turkish conflict, Second World War narratives, and many other examples. Graham Harman has written extensively on what he incisively terms an “object-oriented metaphysics,” which I reference later on in this chapter. While I consider the possibility of reading some of his tenets in relation to the question of historical consciousness, his own position is of course de-anthropocentric by definition.

<sup>6</sup>For an incisive reading of Orhan Pamuk’s *The Museum of Innocence* as a novel of found objects, see Ertuna (2010).

back into a consciousness of the trampled voices of its own history. Hence, in a crucial passage to the novel's political subtext, and with the vanished Rüya bearing upon his mind, an errant Galip meets the son of pioneer mannequin artist Bedii Usta and descends with him into his father's basement, a cellar peopled with crowds of old-fashioned mannequins. Metaphorically, the cellar acts as the unconscious or repressed recess of a Cold War national imaginary hijacked by the Republican assimilation of a Western agenda, abetted by successive Turkish governments' pro-American affiliations and McCarthyist practices. Attempting to reestablish a national signifier that can offer its community a meaning outside a repressive state philosophy, the novel gives voice to Bedii Usta's son, who points out to Galip "that 'the special thing that makes us what we are' was buried inside these strange and dusty creatures" (Pamuk 2006b: 61). Pamuk writes:

We had come by way of a muddy alley off Kuledibi, along a filthy pavement, down a steep flight of stairs, and now here we were, in the cellar of a dark cold house. All around us were mannequins, squirming and fidgeting, hoping perhaps that by moving they might come to life. Gazing at us through the shadows of the half-lit cellar were hundreds of eyes, hundreds of faces, staring at us and at each other. Some were seated, some were talking, some were eating, some laughing, a few were at prayer. Some seemed to defy the outside world by their very existence—an existence that seemed to me at the time to be unbearable. This much was crystal clear: These mannequins were possessed of a life force stronger than anything you might see in the crowds swarming across the Galata Bridge, let alone in the display windows of Beyoğlu or Mahmutpaşa. The very complexions of this crowd of squirming, breathing mannequins were lit up with life. I was entranced. I remember approaching one mannequin (a fellow citizen, an old man buried in his troubles) with a passionate trepidation, wanting to tap into the life I sensed pulsating inside him, wanting to become part of this other world and know its secrets. But when I touched him, his thick skin was as cold and terrifying as the room itself.

[...] But still there was something about these mannequins, these sorry creations, that broke your heart and made you want to flee back to the daylight world above. There was something wrong about them—how can I put it?—something dark, painful, irksome, terrifying! (Pamuk 2006b: 62–63)

I would not desire, here, to indulge the run-of-the-mill postcolonial reading of Pamuk that will have the reference to Bedii Usta's mannequins

reduced to the (all-too-real) problematic of Istanbul's assimilation into the structures of a Eurocentrist modernity, thereby indulging a facile East/West polarized reading and positing the mannequins as forlorn or by now surpassed figurations of the late Ottoman city and its manner. What we have here instead is the novel itself that acts as a dimension of what Graham Harman would term "vicarious causation," wherein the character of Galip and the memory-objects he consults (the mannequins) "are two separate entities inhabiting the interior of a larger entity that contains [them] both": namely, the cellar of an extra-*étatiste* consciousness and its imaginary that, having been compelled like the old-fashioned mannequins to "recede into the monastic solitude of private vacuums," now operate beneath the untrustworthy radar of the state's modernizing agenda that is rapidly changing the face of pre-Republican Istanbul (Harman 2010: 169). Crucially, Galip describes "this crowd of squirming, breathing mannequins [...] lit up with life" as possessing within them "something dark, painful, irksome, terrifying!," an "other" life that he senses "pulsating" within them and that impels him, the inquirer of history, "to become part of this other world and know its secrets" (Pamuk 2006b: 62–63).

Galip's account here reinforces Harman's own stance on the metaphysics of the object, namely, that "[t]he world consists of only two elements: objects and their interiors. Those interiors are speckled with intentional objects, which we have also called images or simulacra [...] on the interior of objects, something does happen. This is a place where one object [...] is sincerely occupied with images, and where various images crowd side by side, each of them encrusted with countless accidents" (2010: 160). The fictive cellar here mediates "vicariously" as a space of relation between the postimperial inquirer and a community of late Ottoman object interlocutors that troubles his existence. The mannequins people the intimate interior, the "cellar" of a history driven underground, now "speckled," to use Harman's words, with its countless, uncanny accidents—the Republic's "sorry creations" that become almost unbearable for Galip to account for. Their unbearability, derives, of course, from Galip's realization that this crowding of historical accidents is a prosthesis or extension of the troubled state of his own life as a non-alienated Istanbulu: the intimation, that is, that the found object of history acts relentlessly to replenish the lacerated memory he himself imbibes as he tours Istanbul's melancholy backstreets in search of his own elusive referents.

The novel here is allowing its reader to audit the tension, and the terrifying realization that arises from the exchange between the agency of the



human and that of the historical matter that often governs its responses to experience—an exchange all too often muted, lost, or subsumed within the treacherous itinerary of *l'histoire événementielle*, or the “great” history of human political events.<sup>7</sup> True to Erich Auerbach’s own representational device of the *figura* in his *Mimesis*, wherein each of two agents attains meaning and self-affirmation from its prefiguration of the other, the one comes to be “both preserved and fully realized in the latter, and the two historically unrelated [entities] now come to signify each other,” to use Kader Konuk’s words (2010: 18).<sup>8</sup> Already, in this context, one of Pamuk’s great predecessors, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, had suggested, in his last novel *The Time Regulation Institute* [*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, 1962], that “it is indeed possible to see in an old hat or a pair of shoes all the whims of its owner—his foibles and particularities, even his many pains and sorrows” (2014: 12–13). But Tanpınar, who had lived the city’s historic marginalization in the early twentieth century first hand, was still sufficiently in touch with the physical vestiges of the late Ottoman city to confidently afford to subject them to the whims and accidents of his human subject. In Pamuk’s hands, in the longer aftermath of the Republic’s ravages of the city, the direction of influence reverses: Pamuk’s postimperial historical subjects are themselves haunted by a world of stray objects which, like Bedii Usta’s lapsed allegories of history, now return to disturb the Republic’s erstwhile peace with their “emanations,” the self-same accidents they sustained as the Republic hounded its ethnic minorities over the long twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

This is a salient reason why Pamuk, in *The Innocence of Objects*, figures the persecution of Istanbul’s non-Muslim communities through what he terms “the massacre of objects,” as the city’s Westernized bourgeoisie and the generations brought up under the Republic destroyed, throughout the Cold War years, “the things left behind from [the city’s] Ottoman past and its non-Muslim inhabitants” (Pamuk 2012: 43). For Pamuk, this systematic “massacre” of the erstwhile belongings of the city’s expelled Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and other communities “left behind an eerie emptiness, similar to the void created in the wake of the burning of the

<sup>7</sup> *Histoire événementielle* is of course Fernand Braudel’s inspired phrase.

<sup>8</sup> For an intriguing discussion of Auerbach’s period in Istanbul, *Mimesis*, the *figura*, humanism in Turkey as well as other aspects of Auerbach’s magisterial work, see Konuk (2010).

<sup>9</sup> “Emanations” is Graham Harman’s word.

city's wooden [Ottoman] mansions in the 1950s, or the emptiness I saw in the streets of Cihangir and Galata during the mid-1960s" (44). That void, that space of emptiness, is the operative location of the afterwardly—the space of interlocution wherein the object secretes what Laplanche would call an “enigmatic” inscription, one that can seep into the capillary reaches of our psychic disposition or readiness to look away from past ravages. In this agitative capacity, the object of history will not be easily grasped as only a melancholic entity but, through its inclination to haunt, through its “weird” emanations induces within its subject a more intense emotion (see Harman 2010: 157–65). This state of nervous anxiety may perhaps be termed a splenetic consciousness or, in Jonathan Flatley's words, “a state in which one is exceedingly aware of, angry about, and interested in the losses one has suffered [...] losses that [...] have penetrated into the very structure of subjectivity” (2009: 6). Early on in *The Black Book*, the agitated response of such a consciousness, inflicted with deep ethnic-national bereavement, is plunged willy-nilly into the rising waters of the Mediterranean.

#### PAMUK'S EPIDEMIC: THE AFTERWARDLY AND ITS SPLEEN

One attribute that makes *The Black Book* such a special text in Pamuk's entire oeuvre is its second chapter, titled “When the Bosphorus Dries Up,” which explicitly frames Turkish concerns within a broader macro-Mediterranean map of political agitation (Pamuk 2006a, b: 16–21). This brief and undercited chapter is almost unlike anything else Pamuk has written, in the way it accounts for the relation between Turkey's embattled politics of secular progress and its perturbing ghosts in a dramatic idiom of revenance and haunting. In this allegorical piece, Pamuk conjures a Bosphorus that comes to be radically transformed in the wake of a cataclysmic event and pitches the emergence of its effects as a terrifying eschatology that infests the Republic. In this excerpt, the tectonic movements of the Mediterranean basin propel the Bosphorus seabed to the surface, exposing the spectral conglomeration of repressed or “misnamed” national histories that surfaces with it. The excerpt depicts a scenario in which “modern urban life becomes apocalyptic” while at the same time evoking a certain authorial “nostalgia” for a damaged present, one that is inflected by unfathomably disturbed pasts (Boym 2001: 23). The chapter depicts

Pamuk's disturbing vision for the country of his birth; one that has coalesced around the imperatives of ethnic homogenization and the preservation of a prevalent state ideology.<sup>10</sup> Pamuk writes:

The Black Sea, we are told, is getting warmer, the Mediterranean colder. As their waters continue to empty into the great caves whose gaping holes lie in wait under the seabed, the same tectonic movements have caused Gibraltar, the Dardanelles, and the Bosphorus to rise. After one of the last remaining Bosphorus fishermen told me how his boat had run aground in a place where he had once had to throw in an anchor on a chain as long as a minaret, he asked, Isn't our prime minister at all interested in knowing why?

I didn't have an answer for him. All I know is that the water is drying up faster than ever, and soon no water will be left. What is beyond doubt is that the heavenly place we once knew as the Bosphorus will soon become a pitch-black bog, glistening with muddy shipwrecks baring their shiny teeth like ghosts [...] But that is not the worst of it, for in this accursed cesspool watered by the dark green spray of every sewage pipe in Istanbul, we can be sure that new epidemics will break out among the armies of rats as they explore their new heaven, this drying seabed strewn with turbot and swordfish skeletons and polluted with the mysterious gases that have been bubbling beneath the surface since long before the birth of history. This I know, and this I must impress upon you: The authorities will seek to contain the epidemic behind barbed wire, but it will touch us all. (Pamuk 2006b: 16–17)

The novelist chooses to activate the relation between the republic's past and its present here by drawing up a fictional schema for the return of its repressed historical inscriptions in their most sordid incarnation. These wraithly objects emerge as symptoms of the obscured events that have shaped Turkey's ethnic-nationalist itinerary over time: those unwieldy memories and subjectivities figured here in the archaic sewage of history, the "shipwrecks" of a failed national modernity that are now "baring their shiny teeth like ghosts" surfacing from the Mediterranean's depths. For Pamuk, the violence of Kemalist history in Istanbul seems to demand the city's rendering in fictional narrative as "a question posed in its radicality" (Ricoeur 2004: xvi), a nightmarish tableau vivant of a history of progress disintegrating at its perceived apotheosis, a veritable *mise en abyme*. Pamuk therefore resituates the republican city onto its (palimpsestic) seabed by way of defacing its vaunted national and originary myths. The Bosphorus

<sup>10</sup>In her brilliant argument Boym portrays Baudelaire, Benjamin, and Nietzsche as "modern nostalgics and critics of progress" (2001: 23).

becomes the Republic's final cryptograph: in Pamuk's vision, the dark strata of the city's constitutive pasts are exposed in a momentary flash, a repressed archive that bursts, a piling up of history's undesirable debris that threatens to saturate the brief, terse, self-contained experience of the novel itself.<sup>11</sup>

In this sense, Pamuk's haunted seascape is reminiscent of what John Baldacchino has theorized as a politics of the "*apochryphós*" in the Mediterranean, or what he terms "the politics of the hidden:" a "thalassic" mode of agency that "takes a life of its own, and roams beyond the walls of the polis, where even language is reinvented and gathered once more to give us the opportunity to rearticulate the world" (Baldacchino 2015: n.p.). Taking this intriguing angle further, Pamuk's wraith-infested seascape calls for a consideration of how, as Baldacchino observes, "the notion of the walled state is complemented by the analogy of the Minoan myth whereby prosperous walled cities remain at the mercy of monsters housed in their labyrinthine foundations—the sewers—of their polity" (Baldacchino 2018: in this volume). Through a very similar dialectic, Pamuk's "haunted" chapter engages both the Republic's oppressed historical revenants demanding their vindication, as well as the "modernized" city itself, now helpless, by representing their exchange on the inside (in Harman's terms) of a specific relation: the epidemic itself, which Pamuk presents in the excerpt as a two-pronged phenomenon. The epidemic, he writes, is uncontainable. It transcends physical, political, and geographic boundaries, and "will touch us all": it will touch its subjects, that is, with its thinly veiled symbolization of the repressed victims of the Republican city's past, not least its persecuted communities. But the epidemic has itself become so "progressive" because of the self-same context that nourished it in the first place: it grows unboundedly because it is a child of Republican politics, itself a ruthless paradigm of national and economic progress at any cost. And now the epidemic returns to eat up its progenitor, to disturb the depths of the polity's past with its unforgiving spleen. What the epidemic gives rise to, therefore, is an eminently ambivalent political subject: one that draws upon both bygone political action and its present-day spectral returns, and negotiates its own relation to

<sup>11</sup> Adrian Grima has discussed Maltese poet Daniel Massa's metaphoric transfer of the Maltese republic into the Mediterranean sea.

them as legacies that are both fatally intertwined and over-determining of each other's fates.<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, Pamuk's afterwarly vision of the Bosphorus opens with the Mediterranean basin depicted as a repository of ostracized memory. Its politicized seabed is compelled by "tectonic movements" to rise to the surface of his nation's consciousness and to contaminate with its bizarre presence those discourses that submerged it in the first place. In this sense, Pamuk's Mediterranean becomes a political inscription: one that mediates between Turkey's vaunted Eurocentrist ambitions and the deluded polity it has now become as a result. What kind of politics, however, is this particular "Mediterranean" holding forth? What does it stand for, and why does Pamuk use the specific term "Mediterranean" to suggest this politics in his chapter? True to Matvejević's conception of the Mediterranean, Pamuk's Mediterranean will not be reduced to a geography, or to a neat geopolitical reality that can be appreciated only on its own terms, in isolation from those modes of emotional existence that have been spawned within it over time, largely as a result of the impact of a long European colonial modernity. Pamuk's dictum in his memoir *Istanbul* that "[t]he roots of our *hüzün* [melancholy] are European" (Pamuk 2006a: 233) is thus a nuanced and ambivalent one: the region's melancholy is both the affective product of European domination and, by that same virtue, its salient form of legitimation.

In its latter role, it exploits its own self-conscious wistfulness as a broad rallying space for the host of side-lined political inscriptions that succeeded European imperialist rule. Pamuk's own Mediterraneity, in this afterwarly context, emerges as an affective mediation, a melancholic mediation: a space that hosts those psychic complexes that haunt his own nation and that work to "derange" his people's jaded ability to remember. As such, Pamuk's Mediterranean is a space of agency created from the relation between memory, hospitality, and melancholy; a rapport that, as his fiction demonstrates, can verge on the neurotic and, by dint of this, gain access to his reader's most intimate political fears, hopes, and doubts. In such conditions as the post-Republican epidemic that emerges from the Mediterranean depths to take hold of one of the sea's greatest metropolises, Pamuk is demonstrating how a political subject such as Galip, living in the

<sup>12</sup> Appropriately, the chapter ends on the narrator's exhortation to his "distant love," another avatar of the Republic's history: "as darkness encroaches, let us lock ourselves in a last embrace and silently await the hour of our death" (Pamuk 2006b: 20).

wake of the region's political disenchantments, must necessarily be "a being that is at once the agent of [political] action and the matter upon which that action is exercised" (Rancière 2010: 29). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that *The Black Book* gives a similar psychic profile to the enigmatic columnist Celâl, in many ways Galip's own alter ego and an object of his quest. Celâl says:

When the garden of memory begins to dry up, a man cannot but dote on its lingering rosebuds, its last remaining trees. To keep them from withering away, I water them from morning until night, and I caress them too: I remember, I remember so as not to forget! [...] Had the garden of my memory not begun to wither, I would perhaps have no reason to complain, but every time I pick up my pen, I see you, my dear readers, and as I remember what you expect of me, as I survey my arid garden and struggle to reclaim the memories that have abandoned me, one by one, all I see are the traces they left in the dry soil. To be left with only the trace of a memory is to gaze at an armchair that's still molded to the form of a love who has left never to return: It is to grieve, dear reader, it is to weep. (Pamuk 2006b: 21, 22, 40)

Celâl's confession here sums up the quandary of a subject who is taking stock of the ravages of the political frame of mind Pamuk and his generation were born into: Kemalism as a "new-nations ideology dedicated to constructing a modern Turkish identity" based on a Westernizing ethos (Apter 2004: 88). In this sense, Celâl embodies the "dissensual" relation as observed by Rancière (2010: 27–44): he is both a product of the Republic's postwar drive to erase Istanbul's pre-Republican past and, at the same moment, one who digs deep into its resulting disenchantments to extricate from them the contours of a post-Republican national imaginary. His melancholy here becomes an acquired internal wisdom, expansive enough to host the emotive rift between a lapsed paradigm and its subjects, and to hone it into a relation of memorial retrieval. The garden's "lingering rosebuds," that is, the traces of a late Ottoman world that had survived into Turkey's postwar and early Cold War era, can certainly be doted upon; but Celâl is also aware of himself as an afterwordly subject and, therefore, as an agent who cannot be satisfied with the (important) comforts of ennui, lamentation, or nostalgia alone. Celâl's "struggle to reclaim" his recall will not only be contained in the affective sphere of melancholy alone. It is a more strenuous assertion, containing an urgency of voice and the character's gauging-to-onese of the extent of the violence done to the city's memory. It contains a hyper-awareness, that is, of the magnitude of loss that I have earlier described as splenetic.

Ultimately, Pamuk's spleen evinces a burning, nervous, dogged urgency to reach further back, to locate the "apocryphal" (Baldacchino) sources of the originary wound, to salvage its traces, those often disrupted symptoms of memory still "molded to its form" today and that, in their unallayed pain, are now clamoring today more loudly than ever to be heard. To be haunted by these symptoms, as Galip is by Bedii Usta's mannequins, and as Beyoğlu is as an orphan of İnci Pastanesi and its meanings, is to traverse the fine line proffered by Ricœur between having a political and a cultural memory of one's own (*mnēmē*) that is rapidly vanishing and having to "set off in search of a memory" (*anamnēsis*) (Ricœur 2004: 4). This is a leap of faith that requires those at the receiving end of political amnesia today to recognize it as a fecund legacy; that is, as an informed cue and injunction towards the role of memory in the reinstatement of conscience. To identify as "critically Mediterranean" today is to profess a condition of existence that harbors within its folds these delicate transitions.

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## CHAPTER 8

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# The Mediterranean *Seametry* and *Cemetery* in Leïla Kilani's and Tariq Teguia's Filmic Works

*Hakim Abderrezak*

In April 2015, Western mass media put cross-Mediterranean clandestine migration on the world's radar. However, the phenomenon is not new, nor is its coverage:

The first narratives of maritime tragedies in Gibraltar then by the Canary Islands or Lampedusa, the unbearable photographs of bodies washed ashore beaches in the Canary Islands and Sicily, lying amidst seemingly indifferent tourists, as well as the striking episode of unarmed “assaults” by hundreds of migrants upon the fences surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco in the fall of 2015, made the headlines. (Mazauric 2012: 18)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Les premiers récits de naufrages, à Gibraltar, puis au large des Canaries ou de Lampedusa, les photos insoutenables, sur des plages canariennes ou siciliennes, de corps noyés parmi des touristes semblant indifférents, ou encore l'épisode marquant des “assauts” désarmés menés par des centaines de migrants, à l'automne 2005, contre les enceintes des enclaves espagnoles au Maroc de Ceuta et Melilla, ont fait les titres des journaux.” All unattributed translations are my own.

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H. Abderrezak (✉)

Department of French and Italian, University of Minnesota Twin Cities,  
Minneapolis, MN, USA

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What is new is the fact that, for the first time, the coverage of drowned and missing strangers mobilized individuals, institutions, and governmental officials, who vowed—in unprecedented ways—to stop humans from dying at sea, to dismantle trafficking networks, and to envisage political and military solutions to tragedies occurring at the doors of Europe.

An important difference is that the individuals mentioned by Mazaauric are migrants, whereas those who triggered what has been termed “Europe’s biggest humanitarian crisis since WWII” in mainstream media are refugees. Apart from the difference in legal status, the phenomenon is similar in nature. Indeed, both those commonly called “economic migrants” and victims of war cross the Mediterranean sea, travel clandestinely, and head to Europe. In addition, they entrust their lives to smugglers and use precarious modes of transportation. Furthermore, the line that separates migrant from refugee is often difficult to discern, as in the case of those fleeing Tunisia during the Jasmine Revolution that sparked the Arab Spring. Finally, among the refugees who traversed the sea in 2015 and 2016 from neighboring and remote countries to escape from war, chaos, abuses, and poverty were also “economic migrants.” While different in status, the two groups are inextricable in practice. Thus, to label pre-“refugee crisis” individuals *migrants* and post-“refugee crisis” individuals *refugees* can be deceiving. I will therefore refer to all those who (attempt to) cross the Mediterranean as “burners,” or rather, as they call themselves in the Arabic language, namely, *harragas*.<sup>2</sup> The clandestine sea passages are unlikely to stop or even slow. As Virginie Lydie indicates, ever since Europe closed its doors to “legal” immigration, clandestine crossings have increasingly become the norm (Lydie 2010).

This chapter focuses on unauthorized maritime journeys originating in Africa. Traditionally defined as a crossroads, today’s Mediterranean sea is also the locus of human tragedies. I revisit the contemporary Mediterranean from the angle of clandestinity in order to understand the sea in the context of human migratory tragedies. One of my goals is to examine language pertaining to the phenomenon in order to better understand what is at stake, both for *harragas* and for Europe. I look at the interdiction against leaving the southern rim of the sea and the consequences of this

<sup>2</sup> I use the *s* to differentiate the plural form from the feminine (*harraga*). Although *harragas* is not a term commonly used in the Mashreq (countries east of Tunisia) it could well be applied in that the idea of “burning the sea” is relevant, as Gianfranco Rosi has made clear with the choice of title for his 2016 film *Fuocoammare* (*Fire at Sea*), which features “refugees” coming from these parts of the world.

forced immobility. By making this theme central to their artistic productions about clandestinity, filmmakers and writers invite us to question dominant Western discourse surrounding *leavism* and clandestine crossings.<sup>3</sup> In my study of the representations of this phenomenon in Leïla Kilani's and Tariq Teguia's films, I tackle the *Seametry*<sup>4</sup> and the *cemetery*,<sup>5</sup> in connection with each other—the confinement experienced by (North) Africans is a result of unbearable circumstances at home amid simultaneous pressure on their governments from Europe to prevent northward emigration. The solidification of the sea suffocates the cities bordering it to the south. By the same token, as the doors of Fortress Europe close, the sense of confinement increases in the global South, pushing ever more desperate individuals toward the sea.

### MARITIME CLANDESTINITY IN LANGUAGE

Because language shapes and reflects our conceptualization of the world, revealing both imagination and reality, it is crucial to tap into vernaculars in order to better understand clandestinity in and around the sea. It is all the more important to do so since politics and mass media have institutionalized interpretations of the phenomenon through repeated commentary, which has been imposed on the general public as the only truth. Hegemonic discourse is never impartial, for it serves purposes and interests and therefore is biased and flawed. In examining pervasive rhetoric, it is also important to look at alternative narratives that originate in the lives of those whose language allows a subtle recounting of experiences, and which contrast with propaganda that inscribes the phenomenon as an evil act with negative effects. Inés D'Ors remarks that, in the current context of Mediterranean crossings, the verbs employed to refer to the crossing of

<sup>3</sup> I call *leavism* the desire to leave felt by a large number of people hoping to find across the sea the Eldorado dangled before them by the cinema industry, the media, and expatriated fellow-citizens.

<sup>4</sup> Although the concept could well be spelled in lower case, I capitalize "Seametry" in order to build upon the already capitalized Mediterranean Sea by adding what has been expanding in its core: the cemetery. In so doing, I propose to stretch our thinking of the sea further, well into the abyss, because the seam that composes its name, which is supposed to stitch a wounded region, is one that keeps pulling *harragas* asunder. In the context of today's tragedies, the Mediterranean Sea written as such does not reflect what is at stake in the basin. The Mediterranean Seametry provides a way to name what lies under its surface.

<sup>5</sup> I call "cemetery" the feeling of confinement permeating day-to-day life spent in claustrophobic, crumbling, cement, or concrete buildings depicted as tombs.

the Strait of Gibraltar are “to cross (to traverse, to pass, to jump) the Strait” (D’Ors 2002: 62).<sup>6</sup> In French, “*traverser*” (the equivalent of “*atravesar*”) is used. It is a neutral term that circulates widely, partly because the crossing of the Strait has less resonance in the French imagination. In Spanish, a more symbolic set of expressions has developed. They involve the marine element precisely because the encounter between Spaniards and *harragas* begins taking place just before and immediately upon the latter setting foot on their shores. Thus the immigrants are often attached to the seascape and the fish that live in it (or are washed upon the Spanish shore). As the following sentence shows, the use of a lexicon pertaining to the practice of fishing has a dehumanizing effect: “In Northern Africa the appellation *tuna* has come to designate those who try to cross the Strait of Gibraltar; and the attempt to reach the Spanish coast aboard rickety boats is known as *to go like tuna*” (D’Ors 2002: 57).<sup>7</sup> The terminology reflects new dynamics that indeed have affected the way *harragas* travel and, by the same token, the way others perceive them, from seafarers to seafood.

I call maritime clandestine crossings “burning the sea” (Abderrezak 2009), echoing the words used in Maghrebi Arabic to convey unauthorized migration. The Arabic terms *brig* and *harga*, from the same triliteral root, denote fire. They express the symbolic act of leaving everything and everyone behind for the northward journey. I use this expression—“to burn”—in relation to “the sea” to study the Mediterranean passage. There is in Arabic another expression conveying the crossing of the sea, “to cut the sea” (*qaṭaʿa al-baḥr*). However, it should be noted that in spite of the violent nature of the image, “to cut the sea” generally points to regular and state-sponsored crossings across or over (in the case of plane voyage) the Mediterranean.

Whether through burning or cutting, crossing the sea is conceptualized as a daunting task. While a state-sanctioned journey may connote ease of travel, it requires passports, administrative paperwork, screening, delays, and (repeated) attempts at securing a visa. In order to enable the conception of a way through, a radical reconceptualization is acted out in the local language—the solid sea must be cut and the water must be burned. In the first instance, the difficult nature of free movement is underlined by

<sup>6</sup> “*Cruzar (atravesar, pasar, saltar) el Estrecho.*”

<sup>7</sup> “En el Norte de África se ha extendido la denominación *atún* para designar a aquellos que tratan de cruzar el Estrecho de Gibraltar; al intento de alcanzar las costas españolas en embarcaciones de fortuna se le conoce como ir *de atunes*.”

a cut in the mass of paperwork and bureaucratic processes, whereas in the second instance, the sea is a rigged game and thus must be done away with. Nowadays, the water is a hard line; as the current world order has it, the Mediterranean is no longer “a sea between lands,” but rather a stiff border forbidding multidirectional seafaring. For *harragas*, “la Grande Bleue” (the Big Blue) is synonymous with warfare because of patrols and military ships that sustain the wall made of the sea and sky fused in an effort to fortify further Fortress Europe. The sea has ceased to be the body of water whose homogeneous and harmonious blueness signifies an undisturbed natural continuum. Stained by drowned and bloody corpses, it is no longer the element of unity and peace that is central to its Arabic name, “the White Sea of the Middle” (*al-baḥr al-abyaḍ al-mutawassit*). However, in current times and amid the European stance on the handling of South-to-North human migratory movements, it is possible to see the Mediterranean’s “white” in a different light. This is to be understood both in racial and symbolic terms. Indeed, Europe is eager to keep the sea white, not brown or black. Additionally, though white is the color of such happy events as weddings, and though it symbolizes purity in various societies (including in the Maghreb), it is also the color of death and mourning in Islamic cultures. Moreover, for the Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun, the sea has a central green component to it: “Azél has decided that this sea has a center and that this center is a green circle, a cemetery where the current catches hold of corpses, taking them to the bottom to lay them out on a bank of seaweed” (Ben Jelloun 2009: 5).<sup>8</sup> His choice of color is not random. In the West, the color green is associated with hope, but there is no hope in this sea. Furthermore, green is the color of Islam, the faith of the majority of *harragas*. The association Ben Jelloun makes between “green” and “cemetery” suggests that drowned Muslim *harragas* are martyrs, saints in their own right. Indeed, in the Maghreb, the vaults of saints are covered with a green fabric, representing their privileged attachment to Islam. Visitors utter prayers while touching the green drapery to request the Muslim saint’s intercession before Allah. Besides portraying the drowned as martyrs in a sea at war, pervaded by “an electronic surveillance system along its beaches, with infrared and ultrasound equipment, ultra everything, along with automatic weapons”

<sup>8</sup> “Azél a décidé que la mer qu’il voit face à lui a un centre et ce centre est un cercle vert, un cimetière où le courant s’empare des cadavres pour les mener au fond, les déposer sur un banc d’algues” (Ben Jelloun 2006: 13).

(Ben Jelloun 2009: 34),<sup>9</sup> the author implies that even the dead Muslim migrants are not free to move around in their final home, for their cemetery is encircled by a green line. In Ben Jelloun's cemetery the migrants are dead prisoners confined by European policies to a designated area away from the northern shores, so that their corpses may not resurface to tell the circumstances of their death, taunt policymakers and haunt historymakers.<sup>10</sup>

### THE SEAMETERY IN LEÏLA KILANI'S *TANGIER*, *THE DREAM OF BURNERS*

For a few years now, the Mediterranean has been called "the migrants' cemetery" in mainstream media ("200 migrants" 2015). My renaming of this entity as the "Seametry" aims to draw a few key aspects out.<sup>11</sup> First, there is a regional specificity in that the deaths in the Mediterranean are a direct consequence of policies implemented in Europe to freeze the movements of people coming from predominantly Muslim countries. Second, the sea with its associated notion of fluidity has failed to function as a stitching (seam-) apparatus between countries, continents, and cultures with a longstanding history of conflicts. Globalism vowed to diminish these tensions yet has only served to widen the divides. My coined term evokes a few images conveyed by the phonetic nature of the word, such as the seam that lays to the ground (*terre/tierra/terra*) and the sea that *seems* (with the homonym "seam") like a burial ground. The Seametry is also a place for reflection for the characters that populate a growing number of literary and cinematic works, and who witness, relate, or anticipate the perilous crossing and its often fatal outcome. The Seametry takes center stage in Leïla Kilani's *Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs* [Tangier, the Dream of Burners] and Tariq Teguia's *Rome plutôt que vous* [Rome Rather Than You]. These two films are shot in major Moroccan and Algerian cities bordering the Mediterranean, and both tackle the sea through the lens of clandestinity.

<sup>9</sup> "Un système de surveillance électronique, avec infrarouge, armes automatiques, ultrason, ultra tout" (Ben Jelloun 2006: 48).

<sup>10</sup> For instance, in Manu Chao's title song "Clandestino," a dead migrant compares himself to a stingray, and swims around in the depths of the Strait between Ceuta and Gibraltar. For an analysis of this song, see Abderrezak (2016).

<sup>11</sup> For an in-depth analysis of this concept, see Abderrezak (2018 and forthcoming).

Before directing her first full-length feature *Sur la planche* (On the Edge), which triggered conflicting and passionate reactions among Moroccan audiences, Leïla Kilani made another documentary (*Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs* 2002) concerned with social realism. Kilani's distinctive perspective on Tangier is apparent in both oeuvres. Instead of reproducing a tourist rendering of this former international destination—once home to many Western writers, hippies, and artists—the director shows the city through the eyes of *harragas*. Kilani's setting is portrayed in an intimist fashion. The narrative's minimalist dialogue in Arabic and French is articulated by a handful of hopeful *harragas* hailing from the city as well as far-away countries such as Ghana. Filmed with few sound effects, the testimonies of men and women who have attempted the crossing and of those who are considering it for the first time sound like intimately shared stories imploring the help of God and the sympathy of the extradiegetic viewer. The camera follows Christian sub-Saharan migrants in an improvised church, where the congregation pray that their journey to Europe will be successful. Tangier is presented to us as an open-air prison.<sup>12</sup> The feeling of confinement is enhanced by cinematic techniques, such as placing the camera in front of a window—a symbolic marker of openness to the world—barred with a wrought-iron grid, revealing the city's liminal nature as an unnatural limit. The filmed landmarks include a visit paid to a wall erected to stop *harragas* on their journey to Europe, which locks them between a deadly desert and an inaccessible sea. Rumors of arrested sub-Saharan *harragas* punctuate the narrative, while those remaining free to roam have been wandering in circles, sometimes for years, waiting for the time when they will make the deceptively short yet costly journey to the Spanish coast. Spain is represented in the background in the form of a mountain one can see from Tangier. Lights flicker to convey the message that a Panopticon-like apparatus monitors every move of those who set off to sea. At the same time, these lights twinkle in the night as if the Spanish Siren were batting her eyelashes to court migrant hopefuls. The seductive nature of the neighboring country is made clear by a prospective *harraga* who declares, "Spain is calling." By pointing at pull as well as push factors, the filmmaker reminds us that the responsibility for clandestine migration is

<sup>12</sup> Ports on the North African coast have recently been associated with prisons. Such is the case of the nearby Spanish enclave Ceuta in Jonathan Millet and Loïc H. Rechi's (2014) documentary titled *Ceuta, douce prison* (Ceuta, Prison by the Sea).

equally shared between the place of departure and the destination. Additionally, ferries waiting to take vacationing Moroccan expatriates back to Europe tease undocumented individuals in the port. The flickering lights are a semiotic apparatus that send a mixed signal. Indeed, while the North issues a warning, the South receives it as a green light to move forward.

The call is heard by all characters who desire to leave. The aforementioned prospective *harraga*, who works in an open-air parking lot and barely earns enough to support her household, is adamant to leave no matter what. She adds that she is willing to board any vehicle: “a *zodiac*, a semi or anything else.” Modes of transportation and ways of hiding within these boats or vehicles are constant topics of conversation among the film’s *harragas*, who gather to discuss their shared project of burning and, in doing so, educate one another on the best ways to cross the sea. By sharing the news of those who have been arrested, those who perished, and those who made it to the other shore, they brainstorm to find innovative ways of burning in order to outwit the vigilance of local customs officers and Spain’s Guardia Civil. Thus the tragic story of a thirteen-year-old whose body was crushed by the reclining axles of the semi in which he hid as it entered the ferry not only prompted the border agents to act even more strictly against intercepted *harragas*, but also urged the young men to think of original ways of becoming stowaways. One of the protagonists confesses to the camera that he is contemplating hiding in one of the garbage bins that come full of refuse to North Africa and return empty to Europe. The double-edged nature of this image reminds the extradiegetic viewer that unwanted trash is being dumped in a location, which in turn exerts a push effect on prospective *harragas*. This emphasizes the feeling of rejection of prospective *harragas* by reminding them that their lives are merely a backdrop and their homeland is a backdoor for the global North’s refuse. While the Spanish enclave of Ceuta built a wall to ward migrants off and the nearby Spanish coast has been endowed with an electronic surveillance system to monitor clandestine passages, a symbolic wall of Europe’s unwanted waste is being built in Tangier.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The surveillance system is known as SIVE. This acronym stands for *Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior* (Integrated System of External Vigilance or Integrated External Surveillance System).



The enticing pull factor is paradoxical. Indeed, while its lights and ferries are in constant contact with Tangier and act as continuous bait, the Spanish media coverage on Tangerine screens warns *harragas* that the Mediterranean is synonymous with death when traversed “illegally.” The foreign media are meant to be a source of information for locals and sub-Saharan individuals, who learn about the city they are hoping to leave and the sea journey they are hoping to survive. In *Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs*, a relatively long segment of Spanish news coverage of burning is shown. Gathered in a room, the sub-Saharan migrants quietly watch the images of other black individuals floating in the water, as Spanish speakers collect additional information from the commentary of the Spanish reporter. But what is framed as information is discarded by the intradiegetic viewer as pure fiction at best and as palpable propaganda at worst. One of the migrants maintains in English that images of the Seametery are no deterrent and in fact argues that the opposite is true. He then continues that the only possible way for Moroccans and Spaniards to stop the momentum is to dry the sea and erect a wall, a fence, up to heaven, but then adds: “Remember, the wall will have been built by human beings and we are human beings; we will cut down the wall.” Oddly enough, according to the young man, the body of water is not a life-threatening frontier. Could a dried sea be one, the same way the Sahara is?<sup>14</sup> The various sub-Saharan interviewees insist upon the deadly nature of the desert they had to cross on their way to Tangier, suggesting that even nature is adamant about deterring them from migrating north. One speaks of the “millions who died in the desert.” Trapped between a sandy Saharan cemetery and a Mediterranean Seametery, the individuals are determined to continue gambling their lives now that they are a mere 14 kilometers away from their final destination. But the sea is treacherous. The female Tangerine explains that summer is the best time to cross because the sea is calmer. When her husband remarks that a sailor, who by definition is familiar with the water, died in it, she claims that even an expert is powerless when dealing with the sea. No matter how small the strait of Gibraltar seems to be, it is a daunting hurdle. One of the Ghanaian men admits that he thought he would find a road between Morocco and Spain. His expectation may appear far-fetched, but the building of a bridge between the two adjacent

<sup>14</sup>Ferdinand de Lesseps, who obtained permission from the Khedive of Egypt and Sudan to construct the Suez Canal, had plans to fill the Sahara with water brought from the Mediterranean Sea.

kingdoms used to be a planned endeavor. The project did not materialize, and the bodies of *harragas* have since then built an underwater bridge, in which each corpse represents a milestone or a gravestone in the world's largest Seametry. In an exorcizing exercise of wishful thinking, the Moroccan locals who stayed behind reveal on two occasions that their hope is to "burn this mouthful of water."

### THE CEMENTERY IN TARIQ TEGUIA'S *ROME RATHER THAN YOU*

*Rome plutôt que vous* (Roma wa la n'touma [Rome Rather Than You]) is a 2007 feature film. The plot takes place during Algeria's decade-long civil war of the 1990s, also known as the "Black Decade," which claimed over 100,000 lives. Tariq Teguia's production establishes a link between a traumatized Algeria and the decision of many young individuals to turn their backs on the country's dreadful past and seek (or simply dream about) opportunities for revival and renewal beyond the sea. This generation is represented by Zina (Samira Kaddour) and Kamel Azeggar (Rachid Amrani), who long for a Europe signified by Rome in the film's title, a symbolic city meant to represent the West, the North, the Other, the Empire's belligerent past, and the Algerian characters' peaceful future lives. Zina's and Kamel's names mean "beautiful" and "complete," respectively.<sup>15</sup> Allegories in their own right, these representatives of Algerian society are also ironic figures in that the Algeria they inherited has been disfigured and emptied of its living constituents.

Light is a crucial element in the film—one that assists in establishing meaning. The lighting has a clinical quality and the film's various enclosed locales are reminiscent of hospital wards. It is no wonder that Zina works in a private clinic. Characters are depicted as zombies: one night, a stranger knocks at a door and inquires, "Who died?" His interlocutor retorts, "You did. For us, you are dead." Teguia's protagonists are broken individuals who long to have their minds stitched to a different routine. The director shoots most of the film in both subdued and vivid colors. The livid greens emphasize the industrial grays and whitewashed tones that lock the protagonists in a massive cement maze. The glaring white of the tile in Zina's parents' tiny kitchen and the hospital where she works contrast with the

<sup>15</sup> In Modern Standard Arabic, "Zina" can also be translated as "decoration" or "ornament."

many dark scenes of the film, acting as a blinding spotlight on Zina, who is a prisoner striving to be outside as much as possible in order to combat her sense of ennui. Yet the exterior shots of streets, alleys, buildings, and even the port are empty of human life, as if to show that the oppressive feeling of confinement cannot be avoided. The interior and many of the exterior scenes are filled with silence to heighten the sense of boredom and the urge to take leave. As in Beckett's play, they are waiting—not for Godot, but for Bosco. Also known as “the sailor,” this smuggler's sobriquet is a common name of municipalities in Italy. Bosco, whose real name is Ferhat, is supposed to bring false passports but never shows up. Hoping to take one last road trip within the decrepit city and its suburbs before they leave for Europe, bored Zina and Kamel are doomed to wander aimlessly in the *bled* (country, back home), like the undead.

Echoing the notion of the Seametry, Tariq Teguia's Algiers and seaside town play the role of a cemetery, namely an architectural setting that turns a living space into a stifling and sinister site that signals impasse or death. The panoramic beach view shows buildings in the distance, paused in their construction, looming like remnants of a town after a bombing. In one of the rare scenes where Zina and Kamel are shown having a good time, playing soccer with a friend and kids, reality is reestablished by a camera pan of slabs of concrete, cranes, and a cement mixer. The cemetery evokes a war-like setting which suggests that Zina and Kamel should be allowed to emigrate and find shelter elsewhere. The city—once bustling with life—is turned into a timeless, still, skeletal structure. The claustrophobic feeling that accompanies the extradiegetic viewer throughout the film is partly due to this aesthetic decision, but also springs from the fact that Zina and Kamel are caught between two topographies signaling the hereafter, namely the cemetery and the Seametry. One sequence shows a cabaret as an imposing grey building hiding most of the sea, as if imprisoning it. It is located in a suburb of the capital, where Ahmed takes Zina. They drive between construction sites that all look the same: they all have “two floors, two garages, and two apparent pillars,” which Zina remarks upon before asking her friend why he brought her to “this hole.” The tainted windshield participates in the covering of the seemingly deserted area with a screen accentuating the heavy atmosphere of collective fear. The frequent traveling shots of the camera emphasize the ironic position of the characters, that of not being able to travel abroad. They spend the entire narrative looking for Bosco to take them to Italy or the Netherlands or Belgium ... or

anywhere else for that matter. "All that matters is that I get out of here," confesses Ahmed.

In the cemetery, Zina and Kamel find the corpse of Bosco lying in a dark room in his villa, whose tiled walls make it look like the simulacrum of a mausoleum. Zina adds another layer to this already stifling environment by burying the body under a heavy tarp, implying that all those who remain in Algeria are hidden. Indeed, after looking at her lover's photograph, she concludes that he has the face of someone who is already hiding. In turn, Kamel interjects that she is, too, as he places a towel over her head to mimic a veil or, perhaps, a shroud. Abandoned before the construction is complete, the villa may crumble upon the murdered corpse that the couple leaves behind. The deserted streets and unoccupied houses in the neighborhood recall a ghost town. Satellite dishes bloom like mushrooms on individual balconies and terraces; their whiteness recalls steles on tombs. Nearby, the Mediterranean fails to guarantee opportunities for change, departure, or new beginnings. Indeed, the torpid sea with its unmoving ships signifies that leave-taking has become a dead-end issue. Static and silent, the sea is portrayed as a scrapyard where even cargoes appear numb. Contrary to other Algerian films, where the Mediterranean signals a planned trip northward aboard ferries or dinghies, in Tegui's narrative Zina and Kamel list all the destinations they envisage without taking them seriously. Kamel says Marseilles is calling and that Arabs have not settled things with the Kingdom of France, that Barcelona is still theirs, that the inhabitants of Naples are their cousins, that America is a fair place where no one is persecuted, and that Australia only has sheep and kangaroos. The scene is riddled with ironic statements such as Zina's, that "it is only money and merchandise that travel ... Arabs are the ones they deport," and Kamel's exultation, "Long live globalization." The sea is so distant that it is hard to discern, grey like the buildings around it, as if it, too, were made of concrete.

Caught between two cemeteries, Zina and Kamel are like disposable visitors not in *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), but in *lieux sans mémoire* (sites without memory) or *lieux-mouroir* (death sites). Indeed, as historian Pierre Nora explains, "an object becomes a site of memory when it escapes forgetfulness" (Nora 1989: 7).<sup>16</sup> The world appears to have forgotten about these two characters in the decaying remnants of a forsaken past. The lives of Zina and Kamel are shown as mere objects in their country's

<sup>16</sup> "Un objet devient lieu de mémoire quand il échappe à l'oubli."

history, stuck between two dead zones. These liminal spaces are posited as criminal places, for they have allowed many innocent victims to perish (the culprits being the civil war on one side and harshened anti-migration policies on the other). In 2008, the Algerian government criminalized clandestine migration. The “illegal” nature of leave-taking is known to most Algerians. Zina and Kamel are surely aware of the Mediterranean’s transformation from a flowing body of water transporting individuals from shore to shore to a solidified entity constricting around migrant hopefuls, the cement-like sea turning into a tomb.

Unlike *Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs*, in *Rome plutôt que vous* the call of Europe is more insidious, for the northern rim of the sea is further away, less accessible. This distance lures the characters deeper into the Seametry. The film shows no way out, for even the sea seems cold, indifferent, impassible and impassable. A black migrant in Kilani’s documentary argues that those who undertake this desperate voyage are simply “dogs,” in other words wandering and hungry beings who are generally not popular in the region and can be mistreated by strangers in the street. Similarly, the Zina–Kamel duo in *Rome plutôt que vous* appears sluggish. The couple are distraught and going in circles around the last vestiges of life in an apocalyptic wasteland. Ironically, the duo’s lives stand in stark contrast with their names. As allegories, Zina’s “beauty” and Kamel’s “completeness” can be read as signaling nostalgia or pessimism—or both: Tegui’s saturnine characters do not live up to their names and the future that lies ahead is bleak. Kamel’s parents are never shown. As for Zina’s father, a figure metonymic for traditional culture, he is said to be out of touch with the world, as if to convey that through his nostalgia he has lost interest in, and perhaps hope for, present-day Algeria. The film is slow paced and nihilistic. Sparse in its use of dialogue, special effects, and plot development, *Rome plutôt que vous* is a low-budget film in which the symbolic narrative is strewn with inescapable existential questions. Amidst the few possible choices to be made, the characters must decide which fate to endure—to be enclosed in the cemetery or engulfed by the Seametry.

### FATAL WORLDS, FINAL WORDS

The film *Rome plutôt que vous* is an illustration of *dégoûtage*, a regional neologism based on the French *dégoût* (disgust) and expressing the forced confinement in a desolate nation amid a globalism that, instead of broadening horizons, builds walls and closes doors to opportunities for a better

life. The close yet closed Mediterranean has ceased to serve its purpose as a door to the world, and is instead a gate at which the characters gaze. As prisoners of the oppressive cementery, they reflect upon their exclusion from the highly selective club, “the global village.” Deceitful, pitiless, and discriminatory in its choice of victims, the (xenophobic?) sea is no outlet and the city will not let its people out.

In Kilani’s film, the unsuccessful sea crossings witnessed on a Spanish news report foreground the ethnic and racial discrimination at play in northward transnational migrations. The importance of media in how Mediterranean tragedies are perceived on both shores of the sea is highlighted in the cinema of clandestinity at sea. As Boualem Sansal writes:

We’ve all witnessed it: satellite TV beams back the pictures of corpses lying broken on the rocks, or tossed by the waves, frozen or suffocated in the cargo hold of a boat, a plane, in the back of a refrigerated van. As though we did not already have enough, the *harragas* have invented new ways of dying. Even those who succeeded in making the crossing lost their souls in the terrible kingdom of the undocumented immigrant. What kind of life is it, to be *forever* condemned to a clandestine existence? (Sansal 2015: 38; my emphasis)<sup>17</sup>

In Tegui’s narrative, Kamel is also of the opinion that Algerians are doomed to lead their lives in perpetual clandestinity, as evidenced in the following dialogue: “You want to live there as a harrag?” asks Zina, to which Kamel replies, “Here, you are a harraga even more.” Zina summarizes the absurd nature of the methods of burning by pinpointing an existential dilemma: “You pay [the sailor] and you don’t even know if you’re going to make it.” In many cinematic works, waiting for passage on the Mediterranean Styx is more dreadful than the risk of losing one’s life. In *Tanger, le rêve des brûleurs*, prospective *harragas* anxious to undertake the last stretch of their journey watch a news report of yet another tragedy upon the sea they hope to cross. One of the *harragas* says that death is part of life, thus insinuating that *harragas* have had to internalize the idea that their lives are not granted much value by those who keep making it harder and harder for them to

<sup>17</sup> “On le voit, ce sont les télé du satellite qui ramènent au pays les images de leurs corps échoués sur les rochers, ballotés par les flots, frigorifiés, asphyxiés, écrasés, dans un train d’avion, une cale de bateau ou le caisson d’un camion plombé. Comme si nous n’en savions pas assez, les harragas ont inventé pour nous de nouvelles façons de mourir. Et ceux qui réussissent la traversée perdent leur âme dans le pire royaume qui soit, la clandestinité. Quelle est la vie souterraine?” (Sansal 2005: 46–47).

cross over to Europe. But burning the sea is no guarantee of a better life abroad, or even life at all. After all, *destiny* is hidden within *clandestinity*, the improbable, stowaway hope of a brighter future.

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## Resemblance, Choice, and the Hidden: Mediterranean Aesthetics and the Political “Logics” of an *Uncolonial* Subjective Economy

*John Baldacchino*

To speak of an *uncolonial* subjective economy is to articulate an aporia. It is a state of affairs that folds onto itself. It is sustained by a state of permanence. It is more likely to be expressed through the *specialty* of an aesthetic narrative, as it defies any foundation, presumed or otherwise, against which it could be measured. For those who are unfamiliar with Mediterranean studies, this would not make much sense. To start with, the notion of a *subjective economy* appears dubious. To further suggest that it reveals an *uncolonial* state of affairs is even more perplexing.

Such an opening statement requires unpacking, not only because as a term the *uncolonial* could immediately raise the factual objection of history

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J. Baldacchino (✉)  
University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI, USA



(after all colonialism is an historical fact), but because the notion of an “*uncolonial* subjective economy” is easily confused with a “post-colonial economy of subjects.” Furthermore, to claim (as this chapter does) that an aporetic state of affairs is in itself of any use to those who are trying to make sense of a context that emerges from centuries of colonialism may well be misleading unless critically contextualized in what will here be identified with the *thalassic* imaginary around the Mediterranean shore. As I will argue later, this imaginary *of the sea* provides us with uniquely creative possibilities that would often appear to be paradoxical; which, however, also denote *other* possibilities that, to start with, begin to move beyond the subject-object divide.

To start with, a *subjective economy* negates an *economy of subjects*. Here economy implies a system of value that has a wider structure than a financial system. By *an economy of subjects* we mean a system that reinforces the idea that people are subjects of colonial homogeneity. To claim that a subjective economy is *uncolonial* implies that it implicitly rejects this homogeneity. While an economy of subjects suggests a political arrangement where a state of subjectivity is read from a particular historical point in time, in contrast, a subjective economy reclaims its plural and hybrid identity, thus posing a different, radical discourse.

The *aporia* of an *uncolonial* subjective economy points to the latter’s immediate *impossibility*, and implies that there are other conditions besides those of colonialism, even when the actual history of colonialism is empirically established. This means that a discussion of the *uncolonial* requires a meta-theoretical approach that transcends the measured facticity of what is historically determined to be a colonial state of affairs.

To propose the *uncolonial* as a subjective economy that reasserts its peoples’ hybrid and heterogeneous identities is to refuse to measure history against reducible assumptions, by which history is turned into a speculation over (1) *what-has-been*, which articulates a revisionist set of colonial myths that result in a conservative politics of apologetic nostalgia; (2) *what-could-have-been*, which is a discourse of precolonial myths practiced by the reactionary politics of false nostalgia; and (3) *what-should-have-been*, which embodies the postcolonial myths of progress that have since come to an impasse. Beyond these myths, the *aporia* of the *uncolonial* reveals another order in whose subjective economies we begin to find a way of articulation. This is primarily expressed in parallel with—and ultimately beyond—colonialism and the myths that it continues to perpetuate in its presumed demise.

This chapter argues that the Mediterranean is an optimum case by which we could articulate the *uncolonial*. The political and cultural narratives that make the Mediterranean confirm that there is no last word on such or any matter. This is to say that the subjective domain enables us to reach over further horizons where one could think and act beyond the limits that bind us all once, twice, and more times over.

As one speaks of a subjective economy one can never avoid or ignore the classic “double-bind” (indeed the result of an aporetic state of affairs) by which we are all kept aware of the choices that we make as participants, actors, observers, or commentators. Again, this double paradox, which rather than neutralize itself sustains itself *as such*, becomes another indicator of the thalassic imaginary on which a creative discourse prevails. This leaves us with an implicitly non-identitarian approach that helps us *anticipate* what appears and is often proven to be a sense of permanence, a stalemate, or impasse that leaves us with two scenarios.

The first scenario is familiar. It belongs to what the mediatized culture of immediacy does when there is war in any part of the region, when the nth crisis hits the Middle East and North Africa, and when the next economic stalemate shifts the social and economic boundaries of Southern Europe. The second scenario appears rather sedate, though no less potent. We realize that beyond the strife and unexplained tumult, there remains a sense of permanence by which an author such as Naguib Mahfouz could survive and write until the end of his long life. In *Echoes of an Autobiography*, Naguib Mahfouz captures this phenomenon. He recalls how the Sheikh, the long retired teacher of Arabic, whenever he feels tired, “sits down on the pavement, or on the stone wall of the garden of a house, leaning on his stick and drying his sweat with the end of his flowing *gallabiya*.” We are reminded how the Sheikh has “forgotten relatives and neighbors, students and the rules of grammar” (Mahfouz 1998: 6). But in his forgetting, the Sheikh seems to have gained a sense of permanence by which wisdom does not emerge from his mouth, but from his manner of being there, by dint of his sheer existence.

### ANTICIPATED PERMANENCE

There is a disparate epistemological ordering in the kind of existence that is exemplified in the hidden and willfully forgotten memory of Mahfouz’s old teacher of Arabic. Apart from being ontological from its inception, this is an aesthetic ordering that mostly inhabits the negative

spaces of what we could call (and identify with) a Mediterranean imaginary. Politically speaking, these instances present us with a state of anticipation that becomes akin to an art form. But in this crossing between aesthetics and politics, we immediately stumble into many questions that are neither political nor aesthetic. In taking a regional approach we also need to explain how this form of political aesthetics becomes an art of anticipations. Put another way, we need to find out how it provides an expressive sense that reveals the political permeability of its economic impermanence.

Elsewhere I have argued that there is a case for the *actually modern* as a perpetual state of partial ascendancy across the Mediterranean's disparate epistemological ordering. This permanent modernity is not only *à l'ordre du jour* but asserts itself continuously because to seek to break its recurrent cycle would be merely tautological (Baldacchino 2010: 147). This has nothing to do with the notion of a cyclic recurrence that repeats itself and reasserts its permanence. On the contrary, this comes from an awareness that events could only *move on* by falling back on their own sense of anticipation where such events would *transmute*—as Deleuze would describe Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence. Becoming is a double: "becoming-active and becoming-reactive, becoming active of reactive forces and becoming reactive of active forces" (Deleuze 2013: 66). This rightly presents an ambiguous relationship with modernity as we know it. It appears to suspend the dialectical assumptions of a negation followed by an affirmation of the new as *il modo*—that which *is*—of modernity.

I would argue that in the Mediterranean imaginary the *events* of being and becoming, just as those of action and reaction, remain consistently and consciously modern to the extent that modernity itself ceases to be remarkable in any way. The modern becomes common sense. This is why I would categorize this state of permanence as an aesthetic state of affairs.

This modernist anticipation is *aesthetic* because it emerges within the expressive field of human living, offering further iterations that appear to inhabit other places of normality. This kind of modern permanence provides a horizon of multiple expressions, which, without paradox, represent a desired juncture through the Mediterranean's vast region. In its convergent character, this region prompts us to rethink history as a continuously "modern" *modo*—a manner of doing whose permanence concurrently represents continuous disruption.

This sense of a disruptive permanence is found in the art that emerges in the Mediterranean, especially in how the paradoxical nature of the

region has inspired in artists a multiplicity of approaches by which they feel compelled to defy the constraints of style and trend. Those familiar with Mediterranean artistic representations would confirm how another sense of modernity reveals unexpected contrasts with what emerged in the metropolitan cities of Paris and New York, especially when Modernism reached its peak.

Consistent across many Mediterranean art forms, one does not sense an anxiety or avoidance of influence. Rather, anything that appears to be disruptive carries within it a sense of continuity that sharpens disruption as it becomes deeper. In Luigi Nono's most violent sounds, there remains a sense of lyricism that takes one back to the romantic heritage from which he breaks (Griffiths 1986). Likewise, Renato Guttuso's visual and stylistic appropriation of the avant-garde retains a traditional articulation of the real in that it prompted many of his critics to call this lifelong member of the Italian Communist Party an aristocrat both in lifestyle and artistic endeavor (Baldacchino 1998). More so the vibrancy of Nikos Kazantzakis's modernity is found in his strong recognition of a lineage that seamlessly runs through Homer, Buddha, Christ, Nietzsche, and Lenin. In dialogue with their work and personas, Kazantzakis brings characters together on a timeless stage with no foreground or background, with everyday life as the only link left (Kazantzakis 1973).

The Mediterranean remains perennially modern in how it anticipates the paradoxical and anachronistic plurality that it perpetuates in the iterations that precede and succeed Modernism. This artistic horizon is often identified as being *Mediterranean* not because it is any different from other artistic expressions found elsewhere, but by how it is contextualized in a Mediterranean topology, which in turn facilitates this sense of permanence as a state of *being placed* rather than simply *being* (in an ontological sense).<sup>1</sup> The place makes an art that gives expression to a polity. There is nothing new in this, only until one finds that the new is itself invalidated of its newness as a perpetuation of themes and notions that remain recurrent, whether they occur in the Homeric yearning of Odysseus's return; in a trilogy by Naguib Mahfouz; during a memorable performance by Umm Khultum; in an epic poem by Odysseus Elytis; or a long nostalgic film by Theo Angelopoulos.

<sup>1</sup> In an interview with Andrew Horton, Theo Angelopoulos mentions a very interesting discussion he had with Andrei Tarkovsky on how the Russians and Greeks each claim special ownership of nostalgia in their aesthetic imaginary (Angelopoulos 1997).

Being *placed* within the Mediterranean story, one begins to engage with works of literary, performance, and visual arts that recount this story. This partakes of a broad yet ever-changing consensus on what remains an impossible category: that of Mediterranean aesthetics. As old and new Mediterranean myths would continuously confirm, Konstantinos Kavafis's urge to internalize one's knowledge of one's polity—Ithaca—by perpetuating one's ontological journey (Cavafy 1992: 36) remains an apposite point by which one could approach the very concept of Mediterranean aesthetics. Yet Kavafis also tells us that Ithaca is articulated by a journey that stays away from it. This *pentecostal* attribute seems to work in reverse. Returning to Ithaca is only possible once one leaves it, by exiting into a world that is found beyond Ithaca—indeed, by leaving the polis and forfeiting everything that gives one freedom and identity. In the image of the Christian Pentecost, those who exited into the world were confronted by the vast narrative of the Mediterranean sea—just as Paul, who was not with the Apostles to share their Pentecostal outing, subsequently saw the light on his way to Damascus, but soon made haste to the Mediterranean as a world into which he sought to *exit* and thereby *enter* his epic mission. One could argue that just like Odysseus and Aeneas, Paul's journey forms part of the same canon that sustains a Mediterranean aesthetics.

These claims cannot ignore the value of what is, after all, a necessary contingency, which, in a term such as *Mediterranean aesthetics*, is expressed as a perpetual state of *partial ascendancy* invested in perpetuating the journey rather than completing it. This journey has specific characteristics, which here I am attributing to three peculiar orders: *resemblance*, *choice*, and the *hidden*. Though aesthetic and theological in origin, these orders have a strong political bearing in how the Mediterranean remains a term whose “logics” are plural inasmuch as immanently political.

The political “logics” of the Mediterranean offer the most salient points by which the region comes across in its entire history. The Mediterranean's is a history of oppression, of power, and of constant struggle. There is no utopian valor found in Kavafis's Odyssean urge to keep Ithaca in one's mind. Nor is it particularly heroic to opt to travel with Paul to Rome, where, for a Christian, the possibility of death was inevitable, given that pagan emperors were unlikely to sympathize with a creed that guarantees liberation through *kenosis* and crucifixion.

Beyond any impossible hope, one keeps the polis in mind to preserve a point of reference that in the process of exiting promises a thread of return,

as Ariadne would regale us all whenever we visit the labyrinths of history.<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, this is also a thread that appears not only in the labyrinths by which we try to make sense of the aporia of the *uncolonial*, but also in how the idealized senses of redemption are invariably prefaced by being colonized into the same historically inscribed and idealized polities that we seek to leave. These labyrinths are not simply darkened by their uncertainty, but more so by the benign assumptions that we often take for granted while retaining a place in the sewers of history.

### A THALASSIC IMAGINARY

Located within the parameters of a political imaginary, the aesthetic condition of a *thalassic imaginary* is at best a speculative concept by which one could borrow sufficient grammatical rigor to build an argument and to identify possible conditions for change. Speculative discourse folds onto itself as soon as it is uttered. It is implicitly held hostage to its own contradictions. At its worst, speculative discourse is latched to an imaginary that could accommodate the dangers attributed to the moment when aesthetics and politics are manipulated where, Walter Benjamin tells us, “fascism seeks to give [the masses] an expression while preserving property” (Benjamin 1973: 243).

Nevertheless, a politics of aesthetics is unavoidable. With all its contradictions, any discourse that begins from speculation must take its course. It has to assume political manifestations that may be neither palatable nor feasible. This is where we find value in the speculative end of a thalassic discourse such as the Mediterranean’s. While normally the *thalassic* is intended to designate what belongs to the sea as an implied geographic boundary, here it moves beyond a cultural or physical boundary. The *thalassic* is premised on the transgression of *all* boundaries, be they actual or representational. In its aesthetic qualities, this transgression specifically rejects the customary politics of a cultural identity as found in localized, nationalist, or secessionist narratives. By force of the same aesthetic qualities that it adopts, a thalassic imaginary remains deeply rooted in the same myths by which the sea—presented as an identitarian narrative—gains a violence marked by a walled and exclusive political system. Walled political systems are built on the cultural and systemic rejection of the other. More so, walled political systems are *not* a passive consequence of mismanaged

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of my concept of exiting and the polis, see Baldacchino (2012).

diversity (as reactionaries and racists keep insisting when confronted by the emergence of Daesh and their terrorist activities in Europe). Liberal democracies are not immune from being walled in because they are more likely to do so through a politics of fear.

Identitarian concepts of cultural economies have invariably characterized the Mediterranean as a region of Balkanized states that are walled in by their inward self-interest. The notion of the walled state is complemented by the analogy of the Minoan myth whereby prosperous walled cities remain at the mercy of monsters housed in their labyrinthine foundations—the sewers—of their polity. It is easy to associate this labyrinthine foundation with corruption, authoritarianism, occult economies, and discriminatory politics. However, in this dark place there are other political configurations, which, unsurprisingly, are seen as benign. These configurations include community politics, the struggle for inclusion, and the claim for emancipation.

This immediately prompts a question about why community, inclusion, and emancipation are potentially monstrous. However, the question should rather be about what makes a humane cause become an instrument of the polity's sewers. Apart from the obvious explanation of a double bind in which community, inclusion, and emancipation are invariably caught, I would say that unless we begin to engage with a subjective economy by which we could assert an *uncolonial* way of living, everything that we do in terms of our political, moral, and aesthetic imaginaries is prone to become monstrous.

Not unlike any other economy, a subjective economy is a distributive state of affairs. This economy distributes the sensible just like any other form of accumulated capital. It is easy to presume that we hold the sensible in common. As Jacques Rancière argues, the distribution of the sensible becomes “a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution” (Rancière 2006: 12). However, we also know that this is not a ground that naturally articulates or facilitates conviviality, let alone a working assumption of emancipation or autonomy. This is why Rancière's emphasis is not put on the nature of sensibility, but on the mechanisms that share the sensible.

In the language of myth, the Mediterranean imaginary is emptied from any possible contention and then floated over everything that happens to be in its way. The Mediterranean imaginary confirms that participation

emerges from forms of dispute and antagonism rather than spaces of conviviality. Far from fixed or identifiable values, the Mediterranean imaginary is an opportunistic approach whose politics includes the art of capturing contingent states to make them appear as if they were necessary. Apart from superstition, which is found almost everywhere, the representation of the contingent as necessary is also a way of turning the necessary into a contingency. By dint of a sensibility for permanence (which is never a mere desire for some perverse form of the status quo), the reversibility of accident into a necessity is a form of anticipation by which being is spared from a struggle for survival. Reflecting back on Rancière, this is not that different from the politics by which sensibility is apportioned where participation is key.

We can sketch the makings of a *thalassic* subjective economy as follows: characterized by struggle and uncertainty, as the relational distribution of a thalassic imaginary, this economy signifies a commonality that comes across by force of the contingency that molds it. Rather than presumed as a natural outcome, this form of participation is taken by stealth. While it remains transactional, this economy implicitly defies the objective expectations of measure and predictability. As a distributive form of sensibility, it signifies a complex structure by which women and men sustain their moral and existential imaginaries through a common-held yet continuously disputed way of living, as they also reject those persistent colonial attempts to homogenize them.

### RESEMBLANCE, CHOICE, AND THE HIDDEN

By way of sketching what an *uncolonial* subjective economy would look like, I am identifying three broad themes that could be triangulated and presented as an approach that suspends the political and cultural predictability by which an economy of subjects is often described. One gets a better sense if one were to identify these themes as: (1) the order of *resemblance*, (2.a.) the discourse of *choice*, and (2.b.) the politics of the *hidden*, which I borrow from the works of Leonardo Sciascia and Nikos Kazantzakis.

To align *order*, *discourse*, and *politics* with *resemblance*, *choice*, and the *hidden* is to identify points of triangulation in an unusual relational context. In the Mediterranean that gives them meaning, *the order of resemblance*, *the discourse of choice*, and *the politics of the hidden* begin to move from an expected spatial and geographic order to a relational thalassic



narrative whose boundaries are transgressed by their own contingency. Unlike the notion of space as a receptacle, the thalassic imaginary prompts us to consider a hermeneutic approach expressed as a confluence of horizons, and thereby as a groundless state of affairs. Here, definitions remain contingent upon the relational patterns that emerge from the political logics by which resemblance, choice, and the hidden construct their peculiar subjective economies.

### *The Order of Resemblance*

“The order of resemblance” is a concept developed by Leonardo Sciascia in his essay “Antonello Da Messina: l’ordine delle somiglianze” [Antonello Da Messina: The Order of Resemblances (Sciascia 1967)]. Sciascia shows how descriptions of Sicily and what is Sicilian appear to have an illusion of coherence, even when these descriptions appear across many centuries and are deemed to be dislocated. This prevalent consistency is a self-inflicted illusion, which is passed on from one Sicilian to another. Initially, this order appears to be folkloristic and a product of badmouthing between neighbors. However, Sciascia perceives something more substantial than neighborly spite. He identifies a methodology that, in its aporetic nature, offers a unique form of describing what is ultimately indescribable:

This appearance, this illusion, emerges from Sicilian reality, from the ‘way of being’ Sicilian [*modo di essere’ siciliano*]: and so it forms an intrinsic part of it. In other words we find ourselves in a vicious circle, in a kind of *aporia*; which is then the substance of that notion of Sicily that is altogether commonplace, a ‘current idea’ [*idea corrente*], and the cause of an unambiguous and profound inspiration in art and literature [*motivo di univoca e profonda ispirazione nella letteratura e nell’arte*]. (Sciascia 1967: 6)

Sciascia opens a plethora of possibilities, a Pandora’s box. He claims spaces and occurrences that are normally considered irrelevant to prevalent hegemonies. He adds considerable weight to possibilities that have been ignored by mainstream analyses. Sciascia reminds his readers that what is ignored by mainstream chatter is far more important than what the mainstream claims to own by its claims on common sense. He pays attention to a rich oral, written, sung, enacted, and painted heritage, where narratives converge and where unlikely connections begin to make *sense*. This sense is never uniform. What makes no logical sense is put to use to bring

together and make sense of a horizon that remains broadly *uncolonial*, both in its heterogeneity and by force of the plurality of its subjective economies.

Sciascia looks out for a method by which he could engage with quirky works of art, such as Antonello da Messina's *Ritratto d'uomo* (Portrait of a Man), known as *Ritratto dell'Ignoto Marinaio* (Portrait of an Unknown Sailor, 1465–70). Works gain their aura by dint of their dubious connections and the myths that feed them. Antonello's man is unknown. The portrait is open to any story that would provide some hermeneutic credibility. Like other paintings by Antonello, it forms part of a body of work that is somehow universally tied to what was then the coherent cosmos of a Catholic imaginary. Yet, in its Sicilian approach to the world, it equally retains a distance from the universal assumptions of Catholicism—it is somewhat heretical.

Antonello's world is unique and incongruent to the canon. Yet *aporetically* speaking, it is bound by the paradox that allows us in its labyrinthine meaning. One enters from its point of exit. Similarly, Sciascia's point of exiting into this forgotten fray is found in resemblance, as an order—almost a grammar—that sustains the unexpected, but which remains normal to those who follow it.

In Sicily, the game of resemblance is a delicate and very sensitive measure [*scandaglio*], an instrument of knowledge. Whom does the newborn baby resemble? And what about the colleague, the neighbor, the fellow traveller? Whom does the Madonna on the altar resemble? And Monreale's Pantocrator? The monster of villa Palagonia? There is no order without resemblance. There is no knowledge, no judgement. Antonello's portraits "resemble," they are the very idea, the *arkhé*, of resemblance. (Sciascia 1967: 6)<sup>3</sup>

### *Choice and the Hidden*

From Sciascia's play with resemblance, we move to Kazantzakis's discourse of choice, which cannot be understood without the politics of the hidden. Kazantzakis's work is characterized by the same aporetic mechanisms. Like Sciascia, Kazantzakis invites his readers to reject the conventional

<sup>3</sup> Sciascia's word for this measure, *scandaglio*, is an instrument used by sailors to measure the sea's depth.

tools by which we make sense of the polity. He takes note of the other questions by which we make choices that are normally ignored.

These questions are laden with values. They attract censure from Church and State. Kazantzakis runs on the binary track of heresy and the apocryphal, which recall the ancient Greek words *áiresis* (choice) and *apochryphós* (hidden). In Kazantzakis's work, choice becomes a discourse whose rules are paralogical, which means that they change in each step. This also eludes a sense of parachronism, wherein time is suspended and its order becomes exchangeable. This is a perfect environment for a politics of the hidden that floats beyond the spatio-temporal walls of the polis. Even language is reinvented. It is widely known that Kazantzakis's work is characterized by a use of words from outside the canon.

Kazantzakis also seeks to mediate faith with life through other heretical choices. They are heretical in two senses, being autonomous and transgressive. The heretic's choice asserts one's autonomy from the canon. At the same time, one claims a right to the canon by transgressing it. But, in Kazantzakis's work, this is not reserved to some article of faith or ideology. Rather he exerts his heretical choices on the narrative of everydayness, which is apocryphal by implication.

With Kazantzakis, one can speak of a politics of the hidden that implies a method which rejects those borders that define legal, religious, political, and other canonical expectations. Just as Sciascia chooses to explain Sicilianity from its aporetic and thereby *impossible* methods of representation, Kazantzakis suggests that as individuals we make these choices in an effort to reclaim the particularisms of reality from the assumed divinity by which universality is normally privileged. At this point, the heretical image and the apocryphal story begin to construct a semblance of what one could identify with the impossible representation of the Mediterranean persona, where the realization of love, duty, and happiness renders irrelevant any Platonic division between art and beauty, the body and the soul.

### THE *UNCOLONIAL* AND ITS POLITICAL "LOGICS"

As we seek a method that helps us define the colonial character, a politics of aesthetics constantly resorts to figure, image, and word in an attempt to construct what an *uncolonial* state of affairs might look and feel like. While a postcolonial imaginary is a good way to describe the aftermath of a form of colonial segmentation, it cannot be folded onto itself. To break away from the fragmented aftermath of colonialism warrants a method that

begins to create another possible imaginary. As seen in both Sciascia and Kazantzakis, this imaginary is invariably awkward and random. Yet in its arbitrary discomfort it helps us identify a set of tentative and fluid possibilities for which one seeks to shape a logic—or, in this case, a plural event of logics—that lays bare the interdicted enclosures of the polis.

Walled communities have a habit of insisting on systems of governance that only entertain those politics sustained by systematic means of exclusion. The democratic polis managed to develop an expedient mechanism around which colonies have gathered and grown within the narrative of Empire. When confronted by Empire, the thalassic imaginary turns its transgressive nature to good use. It sets aside a caveat by means of the conditions that are distinct and specific to it. Its struggle is localized, and its suspicion of ideologies warrants other uses that willfully secularize religion, myth, and ideologies in one go. Struggle is a choice. Hence, it becomes heretical. Instead of being trapped in the double bind of a post-colonial condition, a thalassic imaginary helps one move away. This begins to articulate the *uncolonial*.

One begins to imagine how an *uncolonial* state of affairs provides a creative approach by renouncing symmetric means of struggle. To contest ideology and organized religion, an *uncolonial* imaginary does not provide a counterideology or a renunciation of faith. Rather, the *uncolonial* suspends the obvious and seeks the unpredictable.

It is not coincidental that Sciascia's order of resemblance begins with the Byzantine image of Christ the Pantocrator found in Monreale's Cathedral and the image of the Virgin found in any parish church across Sicily. These are points of perceived origin. In his acknowledgement of such perceptions, Sciascia shifts meaning away from the center that such myths once occupied. This provides him with a leverage by which he could suspend every meaning or sense of certainty. As he appears to assume another form of certainty, Sciascia moves seamlessly on to the likeness of a parliamentarian who might as well be a Communist or a Christian Democrat because it makes no difference. What really matters to the MP's voters is whether he looks like Saint Joseph or has the misfortune of resembling the village Mafioso. If anyone reserves any doubts on the political value of the organic positioning within the quotidian, Sciascia's examples are crystal clear. Likewise, Kazantzakis narrates his own apocryphal stories by weaving them into everyone's individual life history. In these stories, Jesus, Buddha, Nietzsche, and Lenin share a

horizon on which we are all human beings who were born, have to live in some way, and will certainly die.

An *uncolonial* imaginary is a method of phenomenological suspension—a method of *epoché*—by which one abandons the conditions that have often stopped us from recognizing and appropriating the peculiarities that give the Mediterranean's thalassic imaginaries their own specific significance. Sciascia and Kazantzakis make this possible by inhabiting those locations, seeking truth from the lens of their relations, and finding the promise within those unremarkable grounds that we take for granted.

This method of suspension is prompted by a desire and effort to thread between essentialism and universalism. A thalassic imaginary is a method on whose trajectories one could run the possibility of an *uncolonial* imagination. Though pronouncedly marginal and liminal, this is an imagination figured by its everydayness and by other forms of normality that *prima facie* do not transgress while, in effect, they commit the most significant forms of transgression known to political action. These are equivalent to forms of squatting in legal, religious, and economic spaces that are normally ignored because the discourse of Empire deemed them to have no value.

As one triangulates the logical-representative implications of an order of resemblance, a discourse of choice, and the politics of the hidden within the political logics by which a literary and aesthetic narrative begins to inform a subjective economy, several expectations are radically challenged and some of them become irrelevant. Within the specificity of a Mediterranean imaginary, this challenge is made possible by the thalassic condition on which these economies present themselves. In such economies, a political logic could find forms of expression in those fluid forms of everyday living by which communities tend to define themselves and each other.

By dint of this logic's thalassic nature, any definition remains suspended over a number of contexts that are neither firmly grounded in time nor spatially defined within identifiable boundaries. Ultimately, we have no other choice but to engage with the confluent possibilities that these given contexts provide, whether they are found in the likeness to a statue of a legendary saint, an unknown sailor, or the Communist MP who looks more like Don Corleone than Antonio Gramsci. As these possibilities are recognized, they begin to clarify what we mean by an

*uncolonial* imaginary. This immediately privileges an essentially *uncolonial* possibility by way of the same *aporias* that define this state of affairs as being *critically* Mediterranean.

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PART III

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# Deployments



## We Have Made the Mediterranean; Now We Must Make Mediterraneans

*Claudio Fogu*

The provocative title of this chapter transliterates the most famous and puzzling motto in Italian cultural history—“Italy is made; now we have to make Italians”—attributed to one of the most esteemed fathers of the Italian nation, Massimo D’Azeglio, who, in the aftermath of unification (1860–1861), signaled the task of “making Italians” as the true test of Italian nationhood, and the primary goal for generations of cultural-political elites to follow (Hom 2013). The very name given by Italian patriots to the unification process, *Risorgimento*, implied a unified body of a nation ready to be resurrected, whereas D’Azeglio’s statement signaled at best its fragmentation, or even the non-existence of the cells that that body presupposed. The devastating irony of this motto did not escape even contemporary observers. But one would not be far off the point to read the entire history of the Italian nation as an unending series of plans to “make Italians,” of which Fascism may have just been the most self-evident and self-confident. Most remarkably, despite the separatist movements still animating a large sector of Northern Italians, and “state within state” organizations such as the Mafia, the ‘Ndrangheta, and the Camorra—which exercise a capillary control over both territory and social relations in large portions of the Italian

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C. Fogu (✉)

University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA, USA

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nation-state (not only in the south)—both “Italy” and “Italians” have effectively been made in the course of 150 years, despite all odds. The odds in fact did not seem to be on the side of a nation-state borne out of the efforts and the activism of a minuscule (albeit highly motivated and politicized) minority. This minority was also sharply divided in two camps—Republicans versus Monarchists—that fought against each other for decades prior to the final push in 1859–1860. D’Azeglio was clearly wrong about the first part of his statement that Italy was “made.” Years of civil war ensued, which pinned the inhabitants of the ex-Kingdom of the Two Sicilies against the Italian nation-state, and almost a third of the male population of the newly born nation (most of them from the north) abandoned it before they could ever be made into Italians (Gabaccia 2000; Choate 2008). Given these beginnings, and the notorious resilience of prenational forms of local self-identification with one’s *campanile* (bell tower) all over the peninsula and its islands, it is quite remarkable that Italy has remained a unified nation-state, and that contemporary Italians do tend to identify themselves as such. But what does all this have to do with the Mediterranean and Mediterraneans?

I am framing this discussion via the iconic motto of “making Italians” to highlight two general characteristics of the current discourse on the Mediterranean, which bear upon the peculiar contributions that Italian critical theory has made and can still make to it. First of all, there is the question of an aqueous physical space whose name was not even solidified until the sixteenth century, but that has been invoked quite insistently in the course of recent decades as if “the Mediterranean” had always existed as a unified space, and was resurrected by the poetics of Fernand Braudel’s *La Méditerranée* (Dainotto 2003; Rancière 1994). Second, there is the idea that its unity goes back to the Roman *Mare Nostrum*, the very same historical point of reference that Risorgimento Italians took to declare their nation a unified body ready to be resurrected. Like Italy, “the Mediterranean” may be thought of as an object of discourse that has both been resurrected *in modernity* and has been made *in order to make Mediterraneans*. As such, one can find in this discourse (academic or otherwise) the same aspirations to the creation of a form of collective identity that may be observed in all nation-building processes throughout the nineteenth century, but also that peculiar reversal we find in the Italian case, in which the nation-state was posited as the fiction that the making of its citizens would have made into a reality, rather than the other way around.

The discourse we are engaging is akin to the invention of a community (à la Benedict Anderson), and is therefore immune from the critique that its conspicuous object of interest, “the Mediterranean,” is instantiated only by its discourse. It was the very icon of Risorgimento that instantiated the preexistence of an Italian unified nation to be resurrected, quite against the evidence of its centuries-long fragmentation and the recalcitrant *campanilismo* of its people. So be it: let us yield to calls for a theory, a history, an anthropology, even an ecology of the Mediterranean, to the philosophical reveries of a United Europe turning its head towards its “other heading” (Derrida 1992), towards the literary pluriverse and multiverse of Mediterranean-ness (Yourcenar 1954). Mediterraneism may share with Orientalism the original sin of othering, but it has also been appropriated by the other it supposedly created. Since the late 1980s, the list of participants in this discourse has included political-cultural elites who inhabit lands identified with the solid borders around the Mediterranean sea, making Michael Herzfeld’s notorious accusation of Mediterraneism levied against Northern European anthropology somewhat obsolete (Herzfeld 1984, 2005; Horden 2005). A Mediterranean Mediterraneism animates the literary production of writers such as Tahar Ben Jelloun and Orhan Pamuk just as much as the philosophical musings of Jacques Derrida on the destiny of a United Europe, or the poetic voice of Predrag Matvejević, just to name a few of the most well-known Mediterranean enthusiasts of Mediterranean-ness (El Younssi 2014; Pourgouris 1988; Derrida 1992; Matvejević 1987).

As Anna Botta highlights in a recent tribute to Matvejević, the publication in 1987 of *Mediterranski brevijar* and its translation into more than twenty languages (it appeared in English in 1990 as *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*) may be considered the starting point for this new Mediterranean discourse searching for an “intramediterranean culture beyond stereotypes,” unfettered by nostalgia for an “*ex-world*,” which has been passionately pursued by philosophers and intellectuals from every corner of the Mediterranean world (Botta 2010). In fact, within four years of its publication, the most influential Mediterranean philosopher of the twentieth century, Jacques Derrida, would set the stage for the geopolitical stakes of Mediterranean Mediterraneism. Commenting on Paul Valéry’s 1930s writings on Europe and the Mediterranean in a lecture delivered in Turin in 1990, Derrida elaborated the idea of a Europe that is but “a cape [...] an ‘appendix’ to the body of the ‘Asian continent,’” into an idea of cultural-geographical predicament, a “heading” towards the

North African shore of the Mediterranean (Derrida 1992: 19, 35). Facing the twin historic events of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany, Derrida refused to celebrate the victory of capitalism and continental unity by calling instead for a “European cultural identity” that would be “responsible for itself, for the other, and before the other, to the double question of *le capital*, of capital, and of *la capitale*, of the capital” (16). In what may turn up to be the quintessential untimely meditation of our times, the Algerian-born philosopher expressed the kernel of a novel kind of Mediterraneanism: at once the exploration of the Mediterranean as “a negative limit and a chance [...] that is the opening of identity towards its very future,” and that of a Europe “opening onto a history for which the changing of the heading, the relation to the other heading or to the other of the heading, is experienced as always possible” (17).

Matvejevic and Derrida’s writings set in motion the spectacular growth of a Mediterranean intellectual and artistic *koyne*, which has been building up ever since across the three continental shores of the internal sea.<sup>1</sup> And yet this Mediterranean-based conversation on the Mediterranean has also been growing so fast and so extensively as to even make an account of its participants, let alone a comparative evaluation of common themes and key contributions, an impossible enterprise. As Roberto Dainotto has remarked, one cannot help noticing a “certain inflation of discourses about the Mediterranean,” when a catalogue search in any American University library returns “more than 107 books with *Mediterraneo* in their title, 229 with *Méditerranée*, and 1260 with *Mediterranean*—more than two thirds of which were published in the last fifteen years” (Dainotto 2003: 5). The conversation, Dainotto also notices, has progressively expanded far beyond the Mediterranean basin. The Mediterranean has become a “global business: books sell, research centers spring up, and Mediterranean Studies have migrated from Tunis and Bari to Ottawa, Durham (North Carolina), Sidney, and Katmandu” (5). In this respect, Dainotto contends that the foundational metaphor of Mediterranean discourse, “liquidity,” has also become its discursive *modus operandi*, thereby

<sup>1</sup> As an example of this Mediterranean conversation, we may think of the authors of the splendid series of ten volumes on *Les Représentations de la Méditerranée* (Representations of the Mediterranean), published by the Maison Méditerranéenne des Science de l’Homme: Mohamed Afifi, Edouard al-Kharrat, Muhammad Barrada, Ahmad Beydoun, Eduardo González Calleja, Feride Çiçekoglu, Edhem Eldem, Thierry Fabre, Jean-Claude Izzo, Elisa Khuri, Gregor Meiering, Rania Polycandrioti, ‘Abd al-Magid Qadduri, Wolfgang Storch, Takis Theodoropoulos, and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán.

reproducing the very “logic of the market, of competition, of the free circulation of goods and labor” (6). In a word, the new Mediterraneanism has increased the “Westernization” of the world rather than, following Derrida, contrasting, stopping, or transforming it from the inside. Under the celebration of Mediterranean “liquidity,” Dainotto charges, first-world intellectuals of all geographical descent—specifically those situated in the hegemonic institutional sites of European, North American, and British universities—have concealed, whatever their “good or utopian intentions,” the fundamental “asymmetry” between the European and non-European gazes on the Mediterranean. They have “[sold] the contemporary Mediterranean as the best of all possible worlds” (7). As Dainotto concludes: “Any Italian may write about the Mediterranean [...] without bothering with citing Abdelkebir Khatibi, Albert Memmi, or Taieb Belghazi. For a Turkish or Algerian author it is instead impossible (or suicidal) not to confront the ‘Mediterranean’ canonized in European literature—provided, of course, that said author wishes to reach a Mediterranean audience beyond its national borders” (7).

What Dainotto has uncannily failed to notice, however, is the peculiar absence of Italian voices in this widespread global conversation. While it is certainly true that Italian authors *may write about the Mediterranean without bothering to cite* North African- or Turkish-shore intellectuals, the reality is that there are remarkably few who have taken up the critical task of writing the Mediterranean in Italian, and—until very recently—none who seemed to *deserve to be translated and cited* by other European Mediterraneists.<sup>2</sup> The peculiar absence of Italian voices in this new Mediterranean-based discourse on the Mediterranean can be partially explained by the role that an older sort of Mediterraneism has played in Italian cultural history. When thinking of an “Italian” Mediterranean, one cannot help conjuring the mental image of the Roman *Mare Nostrum* sung by Giovanni Pascoli and Gabriele D’Annunzio at the beginning of the twentieth century in support of Italian imperialism in Libya (1911–1912), and simultaneously translated by Giuseppe Sergi into a racial theory of Italians as the “Mediterranean race” par excellence, which was later enshrined at the symbolic center of the fascist imaginary (Re 2010; De Donno 2006).

<sup>2</sup>This imbalance has been partially rectified by the publication of Norma Bouchard and Valerio Freme’s *Italy and the Mediterranean: Words, Sounds, and Images of the Post-Cold War Era* (2013).

This Imperium model of Mediterranean-ness characterized the “making of Italians” from the early twentieth century through Fascism (Fogu 2008). On this score, the absence of imperialist Italian voices from the contemporary conversation about Mediterranean-ness is not surprising. But things did not begin this way for the Italian nation-state, and the erasure of “the Mediterranean” in Italian culture and discourse is not a recent affair, nor one that is attributable to a lack of interest by European peers for Italian thinkers. It started with the very process of national unification and was marked by specific signs of repression that impacted the “making of Italians” for generations (Frascani 2008).

Throughout the Risorgimento and for the first forty years of national history, whether in political thought and action or literature and poetry, the Mediterranean sea, along with its maritime cultures, its coastlines, ports, and economies of trade, was all but suppressed in the collective imaginary of Italians. It was, for the most part, either ignored or figured as an enemy, an obstacle, or a place of tragedy. In the minds and words of the agrarian elites who made the Risorgimento and led the unified nation into modernity, the sea was first of all associated with the ever-present threat of cholera epidemics that had reached the peninsula through its ports throughout the nineteenth century. Until the successful expedition of Garibaldi’s *mille* (one thousand), its shores had marked the demise of all patriotic insurrections (Frascani 2008: 30–31),<sup>3</sup> so much so that not even the epic Garibaldian *gestae* would bestow a maritime imaginary to the resurrected Italian nation. Despite his having been raised a sailor, and having spent most of his military life as a captain of vessels, Garibaldi is remembered in Italy as a “general,” and in most paintings and in the dozens of monuments that immortalize him in Italian villages and cities he is always represented on a horse, or standing, but never as a captain at sea.<sup>4</sup> The Mediterranean was literally vacated from the image of the “resurgent” body of the Risorgimental nation. Immediately following unification, scores of small Mediterranean islands all around the peninsula were turned into prisons for those who had opposed or continued to reject the resurgent Italian nation: from the Tremiti in Puglia, to the Giglio in Tuscany,

<sup>3</sup> In 1860, General Garibaldi commanded a military expedition of some 1000 volunteers that left by sea from Genoa and landed at Marsala (Sicily), and then successfully defeated the Bourbon army, thereby setting the stage for the unification of Italy.

<sup>4</sup> Erika Garibaldi, *Qui sostò Garibaldi* (Fasano, It: Schena Editore, 1982).

Lipari, Ustica and Lampedusa in Sicily, Ponza and Ventotene in Lazio, and Procida in Campania. In turn, this circle of prison islands reflected and implemented an imaginary of Mediterranean insecurity, an “encirclement syndrome” as it was named by the political-military establishment of the time, which found traumatic confirmation in the disastrous defeat inflicted by the Austrian fleet to the Italian Navy at the battle of Lissa in 1866 (Frascani 2008: 51; Ferrante 1987). While decades later nationalist writers such as Gabriele D’Annunzio would find poetic inspiration in the memory of Lissa to push Italians back towards the *Mare Nostrum*, at the time of its occurrence, the defeat fueled instead a truly national erasure of the sea from the newly born Italian imaginary. The cultural suppression of the Mediterranean was even observed in the voices of authors born in the southern regions and islands of the peninsula, where 63 % of the total population of the peninsula living in harbor cities and coastal areas resided (Frascani 2008: 7). In fact, the most relevant and profound erasure of the Mediterranean from collective Italian consciousness is to be found in the very “question” that should have been posed in “Mediterranean” terms, and was named instead *la questione meridionale* (the “Southern Question”).

Developed out of cultural material sedimented over the span of an entire century, the projection of a dichotomous Italy—split between an industrializing-and-progressing North and a backward-to-atavistic South—began to take shape in the mid-1870s. It gave a specific referent to the ill-defined process of making Italians: quite simply and conveniently from the 1870s onwards, “to make Italians” became first and foremost a question of making Southerners into Northerners (Moe 2002). Yet the participants to this discourse were not only Northerners. On the contrary, *meridionalisti* (as commentators on the “Southern Question” came to be called) were first and foremost Southerners, and in this respect the discursive construction of the “Southern Question” has been justly credited with having nationalized at least a large sector of southern elites (Moe 2002: 224–49). In the process, however, the former “Kingdom of the Two Sicilies” was literally territorialized, that is, it was *made South* by virtue of suppressing its long-standing biogeographical centrality *in* and *to* the Mediterranean.

Beginning with Pasquale Villari’s famous *Lettere meridionali* [Southern Letters, 1875], generations of *meridionalisti* have produced analyses and proposed solutions that, although diametrically opposed to the often racist overtones in which the question was posed by representatives of northern elites, did not challenge the fundamental tenants of the question, nor

the polarization between an industrial north and an agricultural south. That Tuscan landowners such as Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino would not dedicate a single page of their famous *Inchiesta in sicilia* [Inquiry into Sicily, 1876] to the importance of the Mediterranean to the history, society, and cultural imaginary of Sicilians is not entirely surprising. But it is rather shocking to find the same absence in all of the major texts of *meridionalismo* written by Southerners, from Napoleone Colajanni's *Settentrionali e meridionali* [Northerners and Southerners, 1889], to Giustino Fortunato's *Il mezzogiorno e lo stato italiano* [The South and the Italian State, 1926], all the way to Antonio Gramsci's *Note sulla questione meridionale* [Notes on the Southern Question, 1926]. Even where, as in Francesco Saverio Nitti's *Napoli e la questione meridionale* [Naples and the Southern Question, 1903], Naples' maritime history before 1860 was given some consideration, this was done in purely quantitative terms, and only to conclude that Naples "never played any important role in maritime commerce" (Nitti and De Masi 2005: 69).

Given these premises, it is quite important and remarkable that the most important Italian voice in the current discourse on the Mediterranean has decisively broken with the discourse of *meridionalismo*, by insisting on the intimate connection between the Mediterranean and Italy's south, making the two virtually interchangeable. I am referring to Franco Cassano, whose *Pensiero meridiano* (1996) has remained untranslated for over fifteen years and has finally appeared in English, collected with other essays on the Mediterranean, as *Southern Thought* in 2012.<sup>5</sup> According to Cassano, "thinking the Mediterranean" has become the cipher of an internal, that is, a Mediterranean-area-born discourse among Mediterranean-born intellectuals and artists aimed at rescuing the image-concept of the "South"—not the Mediterranean per se—from any Northern inflection of Mediterraneism. "Southern thought" is therefore a response to the Mediterraneism denounced by Herzfeld as a Northern European construction of a minor other (Cassano 2001: 1). In Cassano's own words, it is the discourse of an "autonomous South" that has regained "the dignity of being subject of its own thinking, and interrupted its being a mere 'object' of thought for Northern Europeans" (Cassano 2012: xxxviii, 1–6). In this respect, "the theoretical move enacted by southern thought" is very different from both the discursive object and the theoretical

<sup>5</sup> Before this translation, Cassano's work had appeared in English only once in a short article entitled "Southern Thought" (2001).

description of Orientalism (xxxviii), the key difference being not only that “southern thought” has come to confront Northern Mediterraneist discourse head on, but also that for Northern Mediterraneism the Mediterranean does not resemble the exotic Orient-Other against which Europe constituted itself as West. Rather, the Mediterranean is a “not-yet,” an “incomplete North” (xxxv). Oscillating “between a paradise for tourists and an archaic hell dominated by the mafia,” the Northern Mediterraneist depiction of the Mediterranean-South presupposes the imposition of a teleological “conception of historical time,” by means of which the promise to the South to become North is simultaneously affirmed and negated (xxxix). Cassano’s *Pensiero meridiano*, then, proposes itself as both a description of southern thought and an exemplary act of counter-Northern Mediterraneism.

Unmistakably, the tone rather than the content of Cassano’s reflections testifies to a novel sense of self-assertion. At the same time, it follows very closely upon the path opened by Derrida’s writings, for it carries with it a frontal attack on Europe as both continent and capital. It is not so much the Mediterranean that is being thought here, but a European-Atlantic compound that is being deconstructed. *Southern Thought* aims at rescuing the Mediterranean from its identification with nostalgia and the pre-modern, while at the same time articulating a relationship between Mediterranean-ness and modernity able to counteract and reject the dominant Western-Atlantic vision of the modern.

Cassano’s Southern thought turns out to be nothing less than a radical reworking of Western ideas of time and space rotating around the chronotope of Odysseus’s voyage, the going out to sea *in order* to return to land. From this chronotopical principle, Cassano derives the three essential elements of Southern thought: (1) the rejection of all forms of “fundamentalism,” but in particular that of capital(ism), intended as an unrestrained drive towards the abstraction and dematerialization of all values; (2) the anchoring of history to an idea of “slow time” radically different from the Faustian-Hegelian time of indefinitely accelerating progress endorsed by the West in its Atlantic phase, and symbolized by Melville’s Ahab;<sup>6</sup> and above all, (3) a “sense of measure” in all things that prevents the Mediterranean imaginary from pursuing the Atlantic path of transcending both time and space (Cassano 2001: 3, 7, 10). Southern thought, to

<sup>6</sup>Slow Mediterranean time, by contrast, is symbolized for Cassano by Odysseus, the hero of “return.”



summarize, posits Mediterranean-ness as a dialectic of leaving *for* returning, as owning time, and as living within a bounded horizon.

Of course, Cassano knows that Southern thought is not a “natural” form of Mediterranean thinking. In fact, he readily admits that Mediterraneism is a mode of thought that even Mediterranean intellectuals—whether European, North African, or Turkish—have absorbed, held onto, and reproduce constantly, just as Herzfeld charges in “Practical Mediterraneism” (Herzfeld 2005: 52). Yet Cassano also claims that Southern thought has made inroads among Italian intellectuals and artists and the larger public because of the unique weight of the “Southern Question” in Italian history, politics, and collective consciousness (Cassano 2012: 5–6). Following Pier Paolo Pasolini’s early elaboration of “Southern thought,” Italian intellectuals have internalized the “connection between the Italian South and all other Souths in the world.” They are prone to conceiving the Mediterranean and Mediterranean-ness in explicit geopolitical terms (4).<sup>7</sup> In this respect, Cassano’s equation of Mediterranean-ness with Southern thought has not been called forth solely by the Risorgimental erasure of the Mediterranean under the symbolic weight of the “Southern Question.” It has also responded to forces outside the internal development of an Italian Mediterranean imaginary.

Since the early 1990s, the combination of the European processes of economic and political unification with the related activation of the Mediterranean as a waterway facilitating the immigration of refugees via the Italian island of Lampedusa and the coastal regions of Sicily and Puglia has made the Italian perception of the Mediterranean ever less a *Mare Nostrum*—our sea—and ever more a threatening *Mare Aliorum*—a sea of *the others* (Fogu 2010). Cassano’s equation of “Mediterranean” and “South” speaks specifically to this geopolitical configuration by rejecting at one and the same

<sup>7</sup>Implicit in Cassano’s enterprise, we therefore find the recognition, assertion, and even exploitation of the configuration that positions Italy as a global signifier of Mediterranean-ness. In fact, the geophilosophical premises of *Pensiero meridiano* have been developed by Cassano in later works, such as *Paeninsula* (1998) and *L’alternativa mediterranea* (2007)—not yet translated into any other language—in which he has proposed a more sustained reflection on the geopolitical implications of Italy’s physical aspect and position in the Mediterranean (Cassano 1998: 45–58; 2007: 78–110). This geophilosophical development in his thought has not changed the basic tenets of southern thought for Cassano. Rather, as evidenced by his 2005 introduction to *Pensiero meridiano*, it has signaled a lively and productive conversation by Cassano with other Italian and Mediterranean thinkers such as Massimo Cacciari, the Italian philosopher most closely associated with geophilosophy.

time the *Imperium* imaginary that sustained the “making of Italians” for much of the twentieth century, and the suppression of Mediterranean-ness in *meridionalismo*. In this respect, the translation of *pensiero meridiano* as “Southern thought” is both correct and somewhat limiting. *Meridiano* translates into “meridian,” and though it has assonance with *meridionale*—that which is “southern”—it stands for a geocritical thought of latitude, spanning from north to south, and always of the same measure: a Southern thought that aspires to become Mediterranean, and consequently, to make not only Southerners but all Westerners into Mediterraneans.

Along these lines, the centrality that Cassano attributes to “the South” in thinking the Mediterranean has been recently echoed in the work of Iain Chambers, the English-born scholar whose life and work in Naples demonstrates that the Italian inflection of Mediterraneism is not a question of birthplace but of cultural-historical milieu. In *Mediterranean Crossings*, Chambers merges a deep homage to the “European, Mediterranean, and world city” of Naples, with a postcolonial critique of the Euro-humanist tradition that transits through the historicism of Neapolitan philosopher Benedetto Croce (Chambers 2008: 110). Chambers begins by using the geophilosophical image of Mediterranean “fluidity” to criticize the way in which the land-bound, nation-bound foundations of modern historical consciousness have not only suppressed vast chunks of non-European hegemony in the Mediterranean (2), but also negated a Mediterranean “hearing” of history modeled after the plural “voices” and “rhythms” of its “polylinguistic and polycultural composition” (32), the “tributary histories that flow into the ‘modern’ framing of the world” (15). Against the vision-driven, progress-driven, monotheistic “fundamentalism of Occidental humanism,” Chambers proposes the “baroque” notion of a historical writing that looks into the (Deleuzian) “folds” of modernity in order to disavow the “empty, homogeneous continuum of historical time” (26). This would be a historiography that would relocate the gaze “in the historical swell of a tempestuous sea, where no single perspective is ever able to fully impose its view” (33), and thus produce a history “lost at sea,” “vulnerable to encounters,” a historical poetics of “pulsation” akin to the experimental prose of Walter Benjamin’s *Passequenwerk* (27).

Chambers’s is no mere “call for” a Mediterranean poetics of history, but a battle cry. Self-confident in the unfolding of metaphors of fluidity, he goes from reminding us that before decolonization North Africa was the

“southern border” of Europe, to denouncing the historiographical silence about “Arab-Ottoman hegemony” over the Mediterranean between the eighth and eighteenth centuries, to pointing out the intimate connection between Italian politics of colonial forgetting and the academic attribution of the “postcolonial” as the province of non-Italian literatures, cultures, and histories (6, 16, 29). To hold it all together, Chambers adopts the figure of the “modern migrant,” who is not only “suspended in the intersections of economic, political, and cultural dispossession,” but is also a “condensed interrogation of the very identity of the modern political subject,” the image of a “precariousness [that] is ultimately also *ours*” (7). As a migrant-historian, Chambers gestures towards the body that savors the plurality of “migrating cultures” via the “incredible composition of the Mediterranean diet” (37), and hears the “cultural testimony of music” (42) that makes of the Mediterranean “a complex echo chamber where the migrancy of music suggests histories and cultures sounding off and sounding out, transforming and transmuting each other” (48). At the end of his migrant tour, we meet the signs of a deep subaltern memory captured by the 1992 hit song “*Figli di Annibale*” [Sons of Hannibal] by the Neapolitan group Almagegretta. “Hannibal defeated the Romans, remaining in Italy as a ruler for fifteen or twenty years, that’s why many Italians have dark skin,” recites one of the key passages of this song. Chambers rightly sees in this refrain both a “critique of a ‘Neapolitan’ song tradition that represents itself as though it were an autonomous grammar of being” and a place where “the African and European shores are rendered proximate, and mutually translatable, as subaltern music (dub, reggae, Neapolitan dialect, raï, and urban Arab mixes) mingle in a shared sea of sound” (47). Yet here, Chambers—and Cassano with him—may have also met the limits of their militant anti-historicism.

Cassano and Chambers’s brands of Mediterranean thought intersect at the crucial nexus of a critique of historicism sustained equally by the wandering movement of Odysseus traveling and the Deleuzian fold of a baroque historiography. They imagine Mediterranean-ness as an escape from such a historicism, but, along this line, they have both failed to recognize the historical emergence of a Southern-Mediterranean matrix of identity during the times between Odysseus’s wanderings and Hannibal’s challenge to Roman *Imperium* when southern Italy was not Italy’s south but the “biogeographical” center of the ancient Mediterranean (Horden and Purcell 2000: 339). These were the times of the Mediterranean of *emporía* (trading settlements), which began around the first quarter of the

eighth century BCE, when, following the maritime routes of Mycenaean sailors from the island of Crete, the first band of Greek sailors coming from the island of Euboea founded Pythekeoussai—the first Greek *emporion* in the west—on the island of Ischia (in front of Naples) in order to come into contact with the Tyrrhenian people who had occupied the island of Elba, several miles to the north of Ischia. Within a few decades, trade between Greek, Tyrrhenian, and Phoenician *emporion* connected the whole Mediterranean basin and its islands to the mainland.

The Euro-Western historical imaginary dates the beginning of “the West” to these times, but has endorsed the Roman meta-narrative of territorialization that connected the name *Magna Graecia* to *Imperium* and *Mare Nostrum*. It has therefore imposed an identitarian logic onto a multicultural trading space created by islanders, which responded instead to the solicitations of a maritime matrix of identity operating outside the earth-bound experience of rootedness in land, language, traditions, and collective self-sameness. The Mediterranean of *emporion* was a space of oscillation rather than dialectic resolution—as dramatized by Thucydides in the celebrated Melian dialogue—which fostered a non-identitarian form of belonging that has eluded precise definition, but has found echo in almost any literary or scholarly expression of the Mediterranean imaginary. Whether in the form of endemic conflict and interconnectedness (Horden and Purcell), or in that of an ever elusive search for unity (Braudel), or in the quintessentialization of multiculturalism, diversity, and variety encountered in much cultural discourse on the Mediterranean, Mediterranean-ness harks back to its island-bound beginnings, lifting the notion of identity from its land-bound metaphors to imagine it as inherently fluctuating and relational. This, however, does not mean that the space of *emporion* was only one of peace, cooperation, hospitality, and empathy. As Peregrin Purcell succinctly puts it, the ancient Mediterranean comprised all sort of “relations,” including “competition, mutual predation, parasitic violence, and subjugation [...] alongside coexistence and peaceful economic cooperation” (Purcell 2014: 62).

In fact, trade developed side by side with piracy, which became endemic to the Mediterranean of *emporion*, and can be thought of as the continuation of fishing by other means. How else should we speak of the wait for the prey hidden behind a promontory, the surprise attack, the chase, the trepidation about the nature and size of the booty? Similarly, we can liken the shape of this ancient Mediterranean matrix to the technology that has guaranteed the survival and thriving of island communities anywhere: the

fishnet. A crisscrossing of north–south and west–east sea-routes connected dozens of *emporia* across the entire perimeter of the Mediterranean Sea. Like fishermen, all *emporia* were aware that those on all sides of the net needed to do their pulling (north–south, east–west), and each *emporion* needed to maintain maximum flexibility and openness to the solicitations coming from the others. Rather than fish, however, the Mediterranean net caught islands. Large or small, entangled like prey, Mediterranean islands played the vital role of tightening, soliciting, and activating the trade routes that traversed them. They were the shifting capitals of a blue continent without nations where power was endemically liminal, for it resided literally at the continent’s *limes* (boundaries), in the *emporia* that dotted its borders with the lands that surrounded it.

As we know, the Mediterranean of *emporia* came to an end with the rise of the superpower Rome, which transformed the fishnet into a spider’s web and a sea of island capitals into a territorialized *Mare Nostrum* in which all sea routes “led to Rome” (Rickman 2011). As David Abulafia argues, Rome’s *Imperium*-spider’s web model has proven to be the chief temptation for all the thassalocracies that over the centuries have attempted to recreate a *Mare Nostrum*. Medieval Arabs, Byzantines, and Latin Christians pursued policies of control over large stretches of the Mediterranean, as did the Spanish and Ottoman empires after them (Abulafia 2014). And even for Horden and Purcell, the temptation to unify and control the Mediterranean region politically and/or militarily is inscribed at the very heart of its corruptible matter (Horden and Purcell 2000: 144). Yet Purcell has also reminded us that “tropes of Mediterranean integration, differing in their spatial configuration, scale and in the genesis, nature and mutation of the processes which identify them,” can be found throughout Antiquity, even after the rise of Rome (Purcell 2014: 62). He has recognized the key and enduring roles played by “archipelagoes and island chains” in channeling connectivity (68). Mounting evidence also suggests that, however dominant at the level of the political imaginary it may have been, the spider’s web model never did away with the fishnet matrix of Mediterranean connectivity.

Even though Byzantines, Arabs, and Latin Christians competed for the creation of a medieval *Mare Nostrum*, and in the process, as Henri Pirenne famously argued (Pirenne 1954), severed north–south sea routes, dividing the Mediterranean into a Christian-dominated North-West and an Arab South-East, Dominique Valérien has insisted that “exchange and conflict coexisted, and the increase in maritime trade encouraged both competition

for control of strategic ports and shipping routes *and* the search for diplomatic agreements promoting trade” between Christians and Muslims (Valérien 2014: 76). And just as in Antiquity, she adds, “dominating shipping routes” in the medieval Mediterranean “required the control of crossing points, straits and islands,” so that “changes over rule over islands corresponded to changes in the control of sea routes” (80). But her observations are easily extendable to all periods of Mediterranean history. From the age of Empire to the present, the Mediterranean fishnet has transfigured itself into shapes that have marked every age both *of* the Mediterranean and *in* the Mediterranean (Horden and Purcell 2000: 3–4).

The history of Mediterranean fishnets is of course a subordinate, subaqueous, and often parasitic history, at odds with the controlling mission of successive spider’s webs, not to mention the Atlantic currents of progress. It is a history in the folds of the Western meta-narrative, as Chambers would want it, and it is a history that comprises the development of piracy and slave trading as endemic parasites to the dominion pursued by every imperial ruler over the Mediterranean space from Roman times through the early nineteenth century. It also includes the spread of early Christianity from the heart of the Empire through all major maritime communities (just think of the Pauline epistles), the revival of trade in the early Middle Ages thanks to the Muslim conquest of Sicily, and the ascendancy of Amalfi as exclusive Latin-Christian trading partner in the West for both Byzantines and Arabs (Citarella 1968). It is a history that climaxed with the Italian maritime Republics of Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, and, above all, Venice. With its archipelago structure, its reliance on islands for its maritime trade, its perennial oscillation between commerce and military conflict with the Ottomans, and its tenuous ties to the land, Venice represented the most faithful embodiment of the fishnet matrix in modernity. It may therefore be appropriate to end this excursus into the Italian contribution to the expansion of Southern into Mediterranean thought with the words of the Venetian philosopher-mayor Massimo Cacciari, who, in response to Derrida’s call, Mediterraneanizes Europe itself. He reimagines it as an “*archi-pélagos*,” an ensemble of distinct islands “divided by the sea, and by the same sea intertwined; all nourished by the sea, and endangered by the same sea” (Cacciari 1997: 16).

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## Etel Adnan's Transcolonial Mediterranean

*Olivia C. Harrison*

### DECOLONIZING THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean—the sea and the region—haunts the work of the Lebanese-American poet and artist Etel Adnan, from her first poem, a romantic encounter between sun and sea written in the mid-1940s (“Le livre de la mer” [The Book of the Sea]) to the elemental, mythical prose poems of *Sea and Fog*, published in 2012.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1925 in Beirut to a Syrian father and Greek mother and educated in Lebanon, France, and the USA, Adnan embodies the multicultural, plurilingual, and transnational dimensions of the Mediterranean as it has been theorized in the past half-century (Braudel 1972; Camus 2013; Khatibi 1993). Equally at ease writing in French and English and “paint[ing] in Arabic” (Adnan 2014a: 253), she is a quintessential Mediterranean artist, navigating in body and soul from her native Lebanon to France, Morocco, Iraq, Palestine and, across the straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic Ocean, her adopted California. Yet Adnan’s Mediterranean is not a placid sea. Raised in

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<sup>1</sup> *The Book of the Sea* (Poestenkill: Kaldeway 2010) and *Sea and Fog* (New York: Nighboat 2012).

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O. C. Harrison (✉)  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

French-ruled Lebanon and a longtime advocate of anti-colonial and anti-imperial causes from Algeria to Palestine, Vietnam, and Iraq, Adnan self-consciously writes against the colonial Mediterranean—not only the geopolitical extension of European and Euro-American hegemony overseas, but also the Mediterranean as a European category of thought or as Eurocentric trope. As I will show in my readings below, Adnan’s poetic evocation of the Mediterranean sea and its transoceanic imperial reaches refuses and ultimately undoes the colonial Mediterraneanism that has shaped a region still engulfed in (post)colonial warfare.

Adnan’s multilayered engagement with the Mediterranean raises a paradoxical question, which in turn poses a challenge to Mediterranean studies: how does one deploy a colonial conceptual category to decolonial ends? Indeed the modern genealogy of the Mediterranean is a decidedly colonial one, from Napoleon Bonaparte’s ill-fated 1798 Egyptian expedition to former French president Nicolas Sarkozy’s attempt to exhume a modern Mediterranean Union from the ruins of “Latin Africa.”<sup>2</sup> As Alexis Wick has shown, the European imprimatur of the idea of the Mediterranean is also evident when we attend to the genealogy of the word in modern Arabic. If in classical Arabic sources the sea is known as *al-baḥr al-shāmī* (“the sea of al-Sham”) or *al-baḥr al-rūmī* (the Roman sea),<sup>3</sup> the appearance of the term ‘middle’ or ‘inner’ sea (*al-baḥr al-mutawassiṭ*, *al-baḥr al-dākhlī*) in the nineteenth century shifts the epistemic center of the map of the region away from the Ottoman and Arab interior in favor of modern

<sup>2</sup>See Veli Yashin’s introduction (2014) to the recent CSAAME dossier on the Mediterranean, which clearly situates the emergence of the Mediterranean as object of study in the converging contexts of an ascendant European imperialism and the rise of modern disciplines. Thierry Fabre (2000) gives a thorough account of the genealogy of the Mediterranean as a strategic and colonial project in France. On the concept of “Latin Africa” see Patricia M. Lorcin, “Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria’s Latin Past” (2002), and Seth Graebner, “Louis Bertrand and the Building of *l’Afrique Latine*,” in *History’s Place: Nostalgia and the City in French Algerian Literature* (2007). Madeleine Dobie’s succinct survey (2014) of twentieth- and twenty-first-century French Mediterraneanism, from Germaine Tillion to Paul Valéry and Nicolas Sarkozy, foregrounds the Algerian roots of both pluralistic and ethnocentric conceptions of the Mediterranean.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Sham is the region encompassing present-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel-Palestine. For a nuanced reading of the central and contested place of the Mediterranean sea in medieval Islamic maps, see Karen Pinto (2013). For a reading of early modern Ottoman and Arab representations of “the white sea,” as the middle sea is known in Ottoman Turkish, which in turn raises important questions on the historiography of the Mediterranean, see Palmira Brummett (2007).

(European) port cities (Wick 2014: 405–17).<sup>4</sup> Though the term *Mediterranean* was subsequently coopted to serve a quite different purpose—that of imagining a plural and multiethnic space—its colonial genealogy remains at work in unproblematic uses of the term.<sup>5</sup>

While I am convinced by the work of a number of scholars who deploy the Mediterranean to exert pressure on centripetal national, imperial, and linguistic cartographies (Esposito 2013; Talbayev 2017), I would like to argue here that epistemic decolonization needs to be posed as a condition of Mediterranean thinking in the twenty-first century, lest what Sharon Kinoshita productively terms “strategic regionalism” unwittingly become a new form of cultural imperialism, window dressing for a less than savory colonial past, a palatable form of colonial nostalgia, or yet another naturalized area carved up for study in the West.<sup>6</sup> If, however, we attend to the Mediterranean as a *transcolonial* space, shaped by “the shared, though differentiated, experience of colonialism and neocolonialism (by the same

<sup>4</sup>For a more contemporary analysis of “self-stereotyping” by self-proclaimed Mediterraneans, see Herzfeld (2005).

<sup>5</sup>Albert Camus’ case is particularly instructive. Writing at the height of the Algerian war of independence and despairing of the possibility of Muslim–Christian cohabitation he had so ardently fought for, he went so far as to claim that a couple of generations of European settlers were as indigenous to Africa as the Jews and Muslims who had lived there for centuries: “The French of Algeria are themselves an indigenous population in the full sense of the word” (Camus 2013: 177). For a more generous reading of the epistemological decolonization made possible by these writers’ uses of the Mediterranean, see Edwige Tamalet Talbayev (2007). Likewise, Fernand Braudel’s magisterial mid-century study of the Mediterranean, which in many ways enabled postcolonial approaches to the region, remains unapologetically Eurocentric. Thus, when he mentions a non-European Mediterranean, it is either to speak of the region’s transatlantic empire or to evoke the coherence and homogeneity of a region firmly centered in Christian Europe: “I retain the firm conviction that the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian” (Braudel 1972: 14).

<sup>6</sup>Sharon Kinoshita, keynote address, “Mapping the Mediterranean” (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, October 2013). The most exciting work in the field of Mediterranean studies deploys this colonial trope precisely in order to destabilize Eurocentric notions of the Mediterranean, as well as competing but similarly centripetal cartographies, such as the Mashriq-centered map of Arabic literature or, in the Maghreb, the hegemony of Arab and Islamic references over, say, Amazigh or Jewish ones. For scholars working at the intersection of the French, Arabic, and Tamazight (Berber) languages and at the crossroads of the Maghreb, the Mashriq, and France, the Mediterranean thus provincialized eschews the pitfalls of Francophone, Arabic, and even postcolonial studies, which necessarily rely on a series of binary pairs or oppositions, even when they seek to undermine them: France/Maghreb, Maghreb/Mashriq, French/Arabic, colonizer/colonized.

colonizer or by different colonizers),” we can begin to connect heterogeneous but overlapping imperial histories that appear to be discrete when we adopt an exclusively national, linguistic, or area-studies lens (Lionnet and Shih 2005: 11).<sup>7</sup> In this reading, the Mediterranean is the name of a particular postcolonial condition and set of problems rooted in the triangular relationship tying Europe (France, Britain, Italy, Spain) to its former Maghrebi and Mashriqi colonies. My use of the expression “transcolonial Mediterranean” goes one step further, attending to transcolonial alliances across the (former) colonial empires anchored in this region, as well as forms of anti-(neo)colonial critique that are rooted in a catachrestic comparison between heterogeneous colonial situations that extend beyond the Mediterranean—in the case of Adnan, Palestine, Algeria, Vietnam, and the USA.

This chapter rethinks the Mediterranean from a transcolonial perspective, moving from a critique of the term’s colonial genealogy to a reconceptualization of the Mediterranean as a site of (neo)colonial subjection and anti-(neo)colonial resistance. I propose to investigate the Mediterranean as a transcolonial site, a region that has been and continues to be shaped by overlapping forms of imperial rule as well as by transregional South–South alliances beyond its shores. Without implying that the colonial is past or that we are mired in coloniality, a transcolonial Mediterranean perspective opens up the possibility of a critical relation to the region’s colonial past and its neocolonial present, as well as the prospect of alternative or even transformative political and cultural alliances across and beyond the area we commonly—and problematically—refer to simply as the Mediterranean.

### “MY MEDITERRANEAN”<sup>8</sup>

Adnan’s oeuvre illustrates with particular acuity what I am calling the transcolonial Mediterranean, imagined as a crossroads of anti-(neo)colonial struggles and a decolonized literary topos. From the outset, Adnan’s Mediterranean is self-consciously positioned against the colonial reverber-

<sup>7</sup>Iain Chambers similarly characterizes the Mediterranean as a postcolonial space, which continues to be traversed by the currents and riptides of the colonial encounter and by the aftershocks of neocolonial forms of dominance, most spectacularly manifested in the bodies that disappear in the middle passage from Africa to Europe (Chambers 2008: 27).

<sup>8</sup>“I recognize my Mediterranean,” Adnan writes to a friend during the first Gulf war (Adnan 2014a: 86).

ations of the term. While the first poem Adnan wrote as a French-educated twenty year old living in French-ruled Beirut waxes lyrical on the sea in a mode comparable to Albert Camus' mythical, cypress-lined Mediterranean, this is no longer the case in her subsequent writings, particularly after the Algerian war of independence and the onset of the Vietnam war. Before I trace the emergence of the Mediterranean as a site of decolonization and transcolonial solidarity in Adnan's early poetry, let me pause on a later text that makes crystal clear her critical stance on colonial Mediterraneanism.

In an essay titled *Paris When It's Naked*, written at the cusp of European integration and during the quincentennial of the colonization of the Americas—"the year of the Indian's return, in Latin America, and the end of 'France,' with Europe's birth: a cataclysmic year in greatest silence" (Adnan 2014b: 143)—Adnan wryly assesses France's strategic use of the trope of the Mediterranean:

Paris: sitting in a storm's eye, with placid self-confidence, repeating its age-long gestures the way old people still get up in the morning like they did when they were children. Paris is no child. It looks soft, non-committal, but hides in its bowels an iron will. It's not going to be submerged by Europe, not going to yield its rank to the Italians, be bullied by the Americans. When speaking to its former colonies, it shows a nordic visage. When dealing with the Anglo-Saxons, it reverts to its mediterranean culture, mixing seduction with ruthlessness not unlike our (unrealistic) image of what we call banana-republics, but with much more affluence, and much less nakedness in its use of power. There's so much firmness in the smallest notice from the Post Office or any of the Ministries that I instantly understand what the gulag must have been. [...] In the suburban cafés the fear of deportation is growing. (136)

What does European integration have to do with the deportation of undocumented workers, the reader might ask? In this passage, the swift transformation of France the European regional player into France the (still) colonial nation-state tellingly operates via synecdoches of state power—the post offices and ministries of a bureaucratic machine that elicit, without transition, the image of Soviet and Nazi camps. Adnan's evocation of the imagined "gulags" of the *banlieue* and the "deportation" of postcolonial migrants exemplifies what Michael Rothberg calls "multi-directional memory"—the deployment of one mnemonic discourse (here the imagery of the camps) to uncover and elucidate another site of trauma, one that, in 1992, remained repressed (and arguably still is): France's

colonial past and the continued reactivation of this past in the purportedly postcolonial present (Rothberg 2009). A subsequent passage confirms that, for Adnan, Paris emphatically remains the capital of a colonial power:

Paris is also, I wish I could sometimes forget it, a colonial capital. The capital of a colonial empire. The coffees we drink, the rubber we roll on, the precious wood we buy... are suspicious products; we don't know if they're paid a fair price for... or extorted by 'diplomatic' means. (142)

In Adnan's account, France the twentieth-century European power remains an imperial nation-state, both in the relations it entertains with its former colonies—the “iron will” (136) a Nordic country manifests in its Mediterranean *pré carré*—and the fear it cultivates amongst its postcolonial migrants, evoked metonymically via the “suburban cafés” where they gather.

*Paris When It's Naked* presents a sinister picture of “strategic regionalism” as it is practiced by neocolonial powers.<sup>9</sup> For Adnan, the Mediterranean is the mask France holds up as a bulwark against Northern dominance, just as the North becomes its identity of predilection against its former Mediterranean colonies. Against this nefarious form of strategic regionalism, against the colonial Mediterranean, Adnan writes “her Mediterranean,” a region in ruins buoyed by a sea that represents hope, for the most part—though, as we will see, the Mediterranean becomes an increasingly menacing force in her writings.

To visit Adnan's Mediterranean, we need to travel south and east of Paris. The names that reverberate throughout Adnan's war writings, from *Jebu*, *Sitt Marie Rose*, and *The Arab Apocalypse* to *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* and *Jenin*, are those of Palestinian and Lebanese camps, villages, and cities destroyed by colonial and postcolonial warfare: Qalqilya, Tell Al-Zaatar, Sabra, Shatila, Jenin, Beirut. As these names suggest, the Mediterranean is a decidedly Arab space. *Arab* here does not denote ethnicity or language alone, far from it. Rather, the word captures a condition, an inheritance, a history structured by and through the experience of colonization. It functions as a metonym for the colonial condition, broadly conceived, and a call to anti-colonial revolt. Adnan's writing

<sup>9</sup> In using Kinoshita's apt coinage for critical approaches to the Mediterranean here, I wish to underscore the uses to which this term has been deployed in the domain of international relations. This does not mean one cannot practice critical Mediterraneanism, of course, but it does mean that we have to self-consciously distance ourselves from problematic uses of the term.

is repeatedly punctuated and punctured by a series of interconnected (post)colonial wars: the Algerian revolution; the Palestinian resistance and Israel's successive military interventions in the region, including Lebanon; the Lebanese civil war; the first Gulf war; the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, with all the terrible consequences it has unleashed; and, of course, the ongoing American military operations in the region. War here is not just an abstract force of destruction, though Adnan's poetry powerfully conveys war as a timeless and universal condition. Her depiction of war is rooted, specifically, in a critique of colonial warfare.

Recognized with the 1978 publication of her novel *Sitt Marie Rose* as the first female writer of the Lebanese civil war, Adnan's engagement with war in fact began earlier, with the iconic anti-imperial struggles of Vietnam, Algeria, and Palestine. To these three figures of anti-colonial resistance we must add a fourth: indigenous America. As I will argue in the concluding section of this chapter, the latter figure opens up the Mediterranean to a non-geographically bound understanding of coloniality—that is, the Mediterranean as a colonial condition mandated by “Europe” in its fullest extension (including the USA), and coextensive with potentially any part of the world that falls under its sway. Bracketing for now the transatlantic and transpacific reach of the Mediterranean, I begin with the transcolonial comparison Adnan draws between Algerians and Palestinians in one of her first war poems, “Jebu.”

First excerpted in “For the Palestinian Revolution,” a special issue of the Moroccan journal *Souffles*, two years after the June 1967 war that led to Israel's unilateral annexation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, “Jebu” establishes anti-colonial solidarity across a region self-consciously divested of its colonial names. Adnan's paradoxical use of the Biblical figure of the Jebusite to evoke contemporary colonial conflicts—Palestine and, as we will see, Algeria—deploys irony and myth to decolonize the lands claimed by colonial Europe and Zionist nationalism.<sup>10</sup> If the poem begins by citing, in epigraph, the Biblical injunction to kill the native inhabitants of Jerusalem—surreptitiously exposing the indigeneity of Palestinians that

<sup>10</sup>The name Jebu is derived from Jebusite, a Canaanite tribe and the name the Hebrew Bible gives to the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time of King David's conquest. The Biblical Jebu stands in for the figure of the contemporary Palestinian in Adnan's poem, contesting Zionist claims to historical legitimacy, but in an epic and mythical mode that draws attention to rather than naturalizes the production of historiographic narratives. For a thorough analysis and critique of the use of the figure of the Canaanite in modern Israeli and Palestinian discourse, see Basem L. Ra'ad (2010).

is inscribed in the Bible—the ancient appellation quickly becomes a declaration and performance of *sumūd* or “endurance,” a form of survival that is compared explicitly to the passion and resurrection of Christ:

Jebu Canaanite founder of Jerusalem  
tells the Crucified:

you have suffered for three days  
I have suffered for three millennia (Adnan 2014a: 30)

If Biblical intertextuality functions allegorically in Adnan’s poem to render permanence and timelessness, it also outmaneuvers the nomenclatures imposed by colonialism—both the countervailing Biblical referent that forms the bedrock of Zionist nationalism and the European names imposed upon the territories it acquired from the dismembered Ottoman empire after the First World War. Though the poet invokes “the sea” as a site of *sumūd*—“how swift is the sea under the feet of/those who have fled your children Canaan have remained” (25)—nowhere does the name “Mediterranean” appear. The sea, and the region, remain resolutely (pan) Arab and anti-colonial.

The excerpt of “Jebu” published in *Souffles*’ special issue on Palestine fittingly begins with a comparison between the Algerian war of independence and the Palestinian struggle for national sovereignty, placing both movements within a larger anti-colonial context spanning the entire Arab world. The evocation of the June 1967 war, known in Arabic as *al-Naksa*, “the setback” (“more dead/Arabs than stone in this desert!”), summons the collective memory of Algeria, auguring the return of colonialism after the fleeting joys of liberation and calling for the continuation of anti-colonial struggle: “We had learned sorrow in Algiers/lived a happy moment and now/it has to be started again” (28). Jebu, mythical ancestor of the Palestinians, embodies a multipronged, collective resistance that stretches back in time and across space to include all humanity:

Jebu has millions of roots innumerable heads  
a proliferation of bodies he is the whole and  
each one of us since the first break of Time

The absence of punctuation in these verses melds the different parts of Jebu’s plural body into one, bridging both time and space by collapsing a



millennial past and a present that extends across colonized lands. Jebu appears at the moment of anti-colonial revolution—etymologically, a return, but a transformative one—to remind us of our timeless subjection and millennial endurance in face of death:

Arabs are but a mirage which persists...

In the beginning Jebu had been killed  
 his eyes are the Tigris and the Euphrates  
 his belly is Syria his penis the Jordan  
 his long leg is the Nile Valley  
 one foot in Marrakesh  
 his bleeding heart encased in Mecca  
 his hair is still growing on the Sannine  
 The X-ray of his being on the day of Hiroshima  
 like a sweat appeared on the Jerusalem Wall (31–32)

Silently replacing the Mediterranean with the ancestral names of the region colonized by Europe, these verses sketch a body politic made up of all Arab peoples and emblemized in the mythical figure of the Palestinian: “he is the whole and/each one of us since the first break of Time” (31). The first person plural draws an inclusive map of the Arab world, confirming the poem’s adherence to pan-Arab, anti-colonial solidarity in the wake of *al-Naksa*. The final lines of this stanza gesture toward an even more capacious map of anti-colonial solidarity, metonymically projecting Hiroshima onto the Jerusalem Wall. When the poet returns to Algeria, the modern avatar of Jebu expands to include a timeless and global community of the oppressed and revolted in the first person plural:

In the Algerian Resistance a people shook its  
 slumber and the double visage of Jebu  
 appeared: alone vulnerable obscure prophet  
 he is all of us since the prehistoric  
 cell and the rivers that followed (35)

Though Algeria does not often figure in Adnan’s poetry, it played a fundamental role in her trajectory as a writer and artist. In an important autobiographical text, “To Write in a Foreign Language,” Adnan confesses

that she stopped writing in French—at the time, the only tongue she could write in—during the Algerian war, and began to “paint in Arabic” instead (Adnan 2014a: 253). This is only partly a play on words. Much of Adnan’s graphic work incorporates Arabic lettering and even words or passages she copies out without necessarily understanding them, as a sort of meditative practice or communion with the never-known father tongue (see Figs. 11.1 and 11.2). In a *leperello* or Japanese folding book Adnan made in 1978, for example, the word *Allah* is transcribed across the entire breadth and width of the folded paper in a practice of translinguistic *Zikr* (“remembrance,” a central tenet of Islam and a devotional practice perfected in Sufism) oriented not toward God but the language that has been “forgotten” (in Adnan’s case, never known) and is here remembered in graphic—and calligraphic—form. Adnan compares this practice of non-semiotic remembrance to the turn to abstraction in modern Moroccan painting, which represented a way out of the linguistic predicament of the (post)colonized subject (Adnan 2014a: 253). The simple form of



**Fig. 11.1** Etel Adnan, *Zikr*, 1976, watercolor and natural dye on paper, c. 14 × 10 inches (210 × 10 inches when opened), Institut du Monde Arabe (Courtesy of Etel Adnan)



Fig. 11.2 Etel Adnan, *Zikr* (detail) (Courtesy of Etel Adnan)

calligraphy Adnan practices in *Zikr* as well as the abstract, arabesque shapes painted across the surface of the folding book can likewise be read as a conquest over the inability to write the father tongue. As I will show below, this pictoriographic arrangement of the unsayable echoes a hybrid poetic and visual text she published two years later, *The Arab Apocalypse*.

Adnan did not stop writing after the Algerian war. Ironically, what prompted her to begin writing in English, her acquired language (at the time she was teaching in California), instead of French was another

colonial war: Vietnam. If the French war to retain Algeria made it impossible for her to write in the language she acquired in the context of French-ruled Lebanon, in her host country she felt free to conquer and subvert the imperial tongue to express transcolonial solidarity. Her first poem in the English language, published in an anti-war magazine, is declaimed in the voice of a Viet Cong, cryptically referred to as “V.C.” (Adnan 2014a: 1, 3). Adnan’s Vietnamese liberation fighter prefigures the Algerian *mujāhid* and Palestinian *fedāʾī* of “Jebu,” but also the indigenous American who becomes, with the Palestinian, a privileged figure of colonial subjection as well as resistance and endurance (*ṣumūd*) in her work.

### TRANSOCEANIC AFFILIATIONS

I alluded earlier to the growing importance of the Pacific, conceived as an imperial extension of the Mediterranean, in Adnan’s work, from the Hiroshima summoned in “Jebu” to the quincentennial of the colonization of the Americas evoked in *Paris When It’s Naked*. Like the Mediterranean and even perhaps more so, the American continent, particularly its Pacific shores, figure prominently in Adnan’s poetry and prose, almost always as a colonized (and colonizing) space. In this sense, Adnan’s Mediterranean is an open body of water rather than a landlocked *Mare Nostrum*, a porous sea that spills over into the Atlantic all the way to the Pacific, sketching an indigeneity continuum from Palestine to Algeria to the Americas.

Adnan was one of the first poets to draw a connection between the plight of indigenous Americans and Palestinians, and indeed her work privileges these two figures of colonial subjection and anti-colonial resistance (Alcalay 2014: xiii). *The Arab Apocalypse*, a book-length poem first published in 1980 and Adnan’s second major work on the Lebanese civil war, powerfully encodes this transcolonial connection in graphic and telegraphic form from the very first stanza: “A Hopi a Red Indian sun an Arab Black Sun a sun yellow and blue/a solar Hopi a solar Indian reddening a solar Arab darkening” (Adnan 1989: 7–8). The disintegration of communicative language in these telegraphic, paratactic verses is further interrupted by cryptic graphemes that draw loosely from Hopi iconography, and whose only semantic function is to collapse American indigeneity and Arabness (see Fig. 11.3). Unlike the binding force of the calligraphic writing Adnan uses in works such as *Zikr* however, the staccato doodles of *The Arab Apocalypse* signify a crisis of meaning, even as they punctuate an Arab poem written in the language of empire with indigenous American

## XXVIII

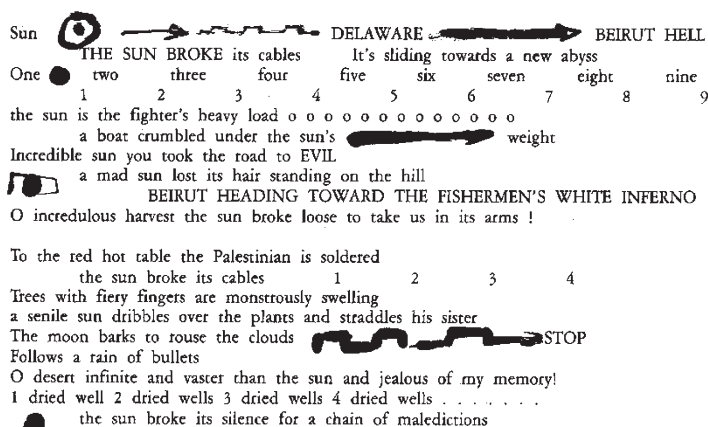


Fig. 11.3 Etel Adnan, page from *The Arab Apocalypse* (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press 1989) (Courtesy of Etel Adnan)

aesthetics (albeit forged by an Arab-American artist). Even though some signs are ideographic, for example the schematic sun of the first stanza, their habitual, positive valence unravels under the pressure of the chaotic verses that surround them. So if, as in Adnan's first poem, "Le livre de la mer," the sun and its feminine counterpart the sea remain central motifs, in *The Arab Apocalypse* they symbolize war, destruction, death, whether figured as absolute stillness—"Oh how flat is the sea she is laminated" (32)—or infanticidal mother—"the sea is a belly dilated to receive the stillborn" (51). The romantic image of an encounter between masculine and feminine elements cedes way in this poem to the sexual violence of conquest, recalling the "repeated rapes in the belly" of Palestine in "Jebu" while debunking the aura of an all-too-phallic revolution (2014a: 32). If, in "Jebu," Arabness signifies transcolonial solidarity, here it has turned into a dystopic vision of death and destruction, one that is rooted in the region's colonial past and its neocolonial present.

Though the sea remains a source of fascination throughout Adnan's oeuvre, it becomes a metonym for the wars waged beyond its shores. *Of Cities & Women (Letters to Fawwaz)*, written during the first Gulf war,

encapsulates Adnan's bitter disappointment with the sea, which she can no longer divorce from its colonial genesis:

Another outbreak of war, in the Arab world, the Apocalypse? I still want to believe that it won't happen. I sit in the same café, in the Hotel Adonis, and contemplate the sea with despair. I expect everything from her, the way I did as a child in Beirut, on the way home from school. But now something is different, the innocence is gone. We have buried so many dead. (2014b: 87)

In her final letter, written from Beirut on the occasion of her return from exile, the sea morphs into the destructive sun of *The Arab Apocalypse*: "Then, the sea beyond my windows isn't an ally anymore. She resembles the sun too much and burns my eyes. She becomes as terrifying as the militia's heads" (128). The sea has been tainted by the colonial and post-colonial wars bloodying its waters.

Paradoxically, it is another body of water, the Pacific Ocean on whose shores Adnan wrote her first anti-war poem, that enables her to move from a critique of colonial Mediterraneanism to something more generative: transcolonial solidarity across and beyond the Mediterranean. In her introduction to *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*, a collection of alternatively autobiographical and fantastical prose poems written over the course of thirty years, Adnan evokes her first return to Beirut after many years spent studying and teaching in California: "California was on my mind, working like a filtering device" (2005: xii). The eponymous poem of the collection, written during this first reunion with the native sea, begins with a paragraph titled "PLACE":

So I have sailed the seas and come...  
to B...  
a city by the sea, in Lebanon. It is seventeen years later. (1)

Rather than reinscribe the poet within an unproblematic Mediterranean home, the Pacific becomes the condition of a modified relation to her birthplace, one that is rooted in identification to indigenous Americans:

If I came to Beirut from that far away, it is to bemoan the Pacific. My passion is for the beach. Pisces-born, I am the Indian salmon originating in an Arab land. (7)

Writing in 1972, a few years before the outbreak of violence that would come to be known as the Lebanese civil war, Adnan imagines herself as an indigenous American salmon that has battled its way upstream to return to its original birthplace, yet mourns the Pacific it has left behind.

When Adnan wrote this poem she had no way of knowing that the war would force her into exile a few short years later. But even in this untroubled period, Adnan refuses to indulge in a naïve celebration of the Mediterranean. On the contrary, the map she draws here establishes transcolonial identification across the Mediterranean to its Pacific imperial reaches:

One road after another, from ocean shore to ocean shore. From Beirut to the Red Sea. From Aden to Algiers. From Oregon to La Paz. (11)

Without even naming the Mediterranean—here, it is simply and summarily replaced by the ocean—Adnan formulates an implicit transcolonial critique of colonial Mediterraneanism. Envisioned from a Pacific perspective, the sea becomes a site of transcolonial solidarity and even more so of transcolonial identification, as Adnan's becoming-salmon suggests. Adnan's is indeed an ever-decolonizing Mediterranean: "To come close to the sea, to look into her until nothing else is visible, and finally, for a fraction of a second, to finish in the gaze of this shifting mass that has neither beginning nor end... to look at the sea is to become what one is" (2014b: 110). As the unfinished revolutions of the 2010s and the ongoing struggles for indigenous rights from the Americas to Palestine make clear, much remains to be done to decolonize the Mediterranean, writ large.

I began this chapter by positioning Adnan as a quintessentially Mediterranean artist whose biographical trajectory and imaginative output straddle the multiple locations, languages, forms, and communities born in the colonial crucible centered in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Indeed the sea has never lost its power of attraction over her, even after what she describes as her loss of innocence. In the wake of the second Gulf war, she remains committed to writing her Mediterranean, against colonial Mediterraneanism and the myriad and seemingly never-ending wars it has engendered. And yet her work offers ample evidence that the Mediterranean needs to remain a site of transcolonial critique if we are to do justice to the fraught human histories the name so capaciously encompasses. If the Mediterranean's colonial genealogy necessarily



remains the starting point of a self-conscious decolonization of the term, our ever-receding “horizon of thought” must be an emphatically transcolonial Mediterranean.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>I borrow the expression “horizon of thought” from the title of an early version of Abdelkebir Khatibi’s seminal essay “Pensée-autre,” “Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée” (1993).



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## Heritage Washed Ashore: Underwater Archaeology and Regionalist Imaginaries in the Central Mediterranean

*Naor Ben-Yehoyada*

Anyone following the rise in international attention to unauthorized migration across the Mediterranean in recent years might suspect that this would push scholars to reexamine their views of the contemporary Mediterranean. Yet the prevailing set of views about the relationship between modernity and the Mediterranean has prevented such a consideration. On the one hand, most historians agree that the Mediterranean of premodern glories no longer exists, even if they disagree both on the definition and on the timing of the shift from a Mediterranean to a modern world (Ben-Yehoyada 2014a). On the other hand, when scholars of the contemporary Mediterranean seek to reconcile the social realities we encounter with this historiographical position, we find ourselves at an impasse. If we apply premodernist definitions of the Mediterranean to the present, we either run the risk of anachronism (creative or otherwise),

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N. Ben-Yehoyada (✉)

Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

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or explicitly declare some elements in our analysis as relics of a premodern past (attitudes, practices, relationships, societies, and so forth).<sup>1</sup>

What perspective do we need to adopt in order to bring our accounts of the contemporary state of affairs on an analytical par with reconstructions of the sea's pasts? To address this question, I follow the clue that lies in the name that Pope Francis used to christen the Mediterranean, particularly its seabed: "a massive grave" (Vatican 2013). This image draws our attention from the surface to the bottom of the sea. In the current Mediterranean, several practices and infrastructures that either lie on the seabed or pass through it play a key role in cross-marine connections. Motorized navigation and fishing, gas pipelines, underwater optic fiber cables, and maritime archaeology all emblemize modernity and its technological advances. At the same time, these infrastructures furnish a steady stream of reimaginings of Mediterranean pasts: when people talk about these new forms of cross-marine connections, they often frame them through past moments of such connections. In other words, when people make sense of these kinds of connections across the sea, they relate between the past, present, and future Mediterraneans that they share.

It should not surprise us that the connections sustaining social life—say under nation-states—are related to the kinds of collectivities that people around the Mediterranean imagine in the past and claim they are merely reproducing in the present (even if the shape of that relationship is under constant discussion: Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991; Herzfeld 1982). Yet modern Mediterraneans are confronted with two obstacles that most of their nationalist fellow-nostalgics avoid: the present they share is transnational rather than national (or supranational); and the scholars of those pasts which they share argue that those Mediterranean pasts are long gone.

This chapter examines the interplay between transnational connections and regionalist imaginaries in the Mediterranean. To probe this interplay, I examine the trajectory of the "Dancing Satyr"—a bronze statue that

<sup>1</sup>For their comments and suggestions, I would like to thank Sebastiano Tusa and Giovanna Fiume, as well as Jessica Marglin, Daniel Hershenzon, Corey Tazzara, Cyprian Broodbank, Katherine McDonald, Yasser Elhariry, and Edwige Tamalet Talbayev. All inaccuracies or shortcomings remain mine alone. Some parts of the first section are elaborated from my contribution to the discussion with Giovanna Fiume of Horden & Kinoshita's 2014 *A Companion to Mediterranean History* in *Quaderni Storici* 153 (3): 841–866.

reached the 500 meter deep seabed of the Channel of Sicily at a certain point between the fourth and second centuries BCE and resurfaced towards the end of the twentieth century. In March 1997, a Sicilian trawler *Capitan Ciccio* returned to its homeport in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily, with the left leg of a 2.5 meter high bronze statue. A year later, in March 1998, the same trawler reported to have recovered the torso and head of the same statue in its net while operating in the same fishing zone—in international waters between the Italian island of Pantelleria and Cap Bon, the tip of the Tunisian coast. The statue underwent restoration before embarking on a global tour: from the Italian Chamber of Deputies in Rome (2003) to Japan (2005), and to the Louvre's exhibition on Praxiteles and Attic sculpture (2007). It is now on display in a museum dedicated to it in Mazara. The discovery of the satyr triggered investigations against the captain of the Sicilian trawler that found the statue for suspected illicit possession and attempted selling of items of Italian national heritage (Frau 1998). It pushed Italian actors to step up their public accusations against the US-based underwater archaeologist Robert Ballard (whose other discoveries include the *Titanic* and the *Bismarck*), who had been surveying parts of the central Mediterranean seabed, for looting the maritime heritage of Mediterranean countries (Bohlen 1998). In another branch of the story, one of the leading provincial mafiosi was suspected of attempting to organize the theft of the statue before its transportation to Rome for restoration (Giacalone 2009). According to some of the key actors involved, the discovery also contributed to the signing of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (Tusa 2004).

Any such discovery or resurfacing depends on a healthy dose of luck. Yet, in its voyage from the bottom of the sea to its home in Mazara, the satyr also revealed the more permanent inhabitants of the world it had to traverse: motorized seabed trawling, underwater reconnaissance technologies, and archaeological maritime heritage projects.<sup>2</sup> Motorized trawlers provide the most frequent contact that contemporary maritime mobility shares with its historical predecessors (Ziniti 2010). Since the 1960s, hundreds of trawlers have ploughed the central Mediterranean's seabed, dredging up anything they encounter, including ancient relics (Tusa 2009).

<sup>2</sup>Other combinations of transnational connections and regionalist imaginaries abound, such as the dynamics following the discovery of offshore gas reserves along the eastern Mediterranean continental shelf (Reed and Krauss 2014; Antreasyan 2013).

These fishers usually find amphorae. More recently, nets have contained human remains from Europe-bound migrants' shipwrecked vessels. Through all these kinds of resurfacing, trawlers provide the constant flow of contact with the sea's remote and recent pasts. If modern trawling provides the casual discovery of underwater artefacts, underwater imagery technologies—such as sonars and submarine robots—enable in-depth examination of the sites of discovery. Such discoveries have sent maritime archaeologists to the ever deeper seabed of international waters. While state-funded archaeological institutions usually lack the funds to operate such technologies on a regular basis, the companies that construct underwater pipelines and optical fiber cables, as well as national navies' submarine units, use them extensively throughout the central Mediterranean.

Most accounts of these maritime archaeological discoveries separate the various infrastructural and technological conditions of accessing the past from the relics they enable us to access. As a result, this separation of the story of the relic's voyage to the seabed from that of its reemergence implicitly judges the various current transmarine forms of connection as dissimilar from any form of premodern connectivity. In *The Corrupting Sea*, for example, the Mediterranean ceased to exist as such with the advent of steam shipping and the collapse of the kinds of coastal and micro-regional connections that have characterized it in earlier periods (Horden and Purcell 2000: 3, 34). As a result, any kind of continuity that people wish to draw between the past and the present is deemed discursive manipulation of the past, if not ideological regionalism. Against this view of *dissimilarity* and *discontinuity*, I offer the story of the satyr to argue that our accounts of the modern Mediterranean must show how the present constellation combines *similarities* to the sea's previous lives with the *continuities* that region-making projects chart as they conjure up these pasts. While in this chapter I postulate more than substantiate these similarities, they condition the kinds of continuities that people draw from the ancient maritime pasts they access and the transnational present they inhabit.

The similarities that interest me here appear in the infrastructure of maritime connection and movement (Larkin 2013). Such a focus permits us to compare moments across the premodern-modern divide. Ancient varieties include means for navigation, grain and liquid storage, and long-distance communication on one level, which facilitate constellations of reciprocity, redistribution, and exchange (Harris 2005b: 15–19; Algazi 2005; Broodbank 2006). These ancient varieties structurally resemble

the maritime infrastructures that emblemize modernity: pipelines and optic fiber cables, nautical technology and skills, which facilitate energy distribution schemes, migration and interception networks, and social networks and surveillance schemes (Fiume and Ben-Yehoyada 2016).

My formulation of connectivity is made to draw our attention to the different kinds of *relations* that “connectivity” permits. In *The Corrupting Sea*, Horden and Purcell define connectivity as “the various ways in which microregions cohere, both internally and also one with another in aggregates that may range in size from small clusters to something approaching the entire Mediterranean” (2000: 123). Their use of the term encompasses various kinds of relation because it foregrounds the evidence of connection sustaining all of them. As a result, our eyes are trained on the long history of such connectivity, and the differences in these relations (economic, political, social, cultural) go out of focus (Algazi 2005: 242). As a result, modern regionalist projects disappear from view for two reasons: to examine them, we need to distinguish between connections and relations in a way that “connectivity” combines; and we need to examine together the two periods that all Mediterraneanist historiography keeps apart—the modern and the premodern.

The *continuity* that interests me is that which people themselves (including scholars) construct between the present state of their cross-marine relations and past constellations: how people conjure up past moments of relationship—such as ancient moments of connectedness and imperial expansion across the sea—and how they project them onto their relationships in these emerging scenes.

By addressing the relationship between similarities in connectivity and the continuities that regionalist projects conjure, I attempt to achieve two goals: to sketch a contemporary account of the modern Mediterranean following the demise of the sea’s premodern glory; and to show the role of Mediterraneanist imaginaries—the schemes of relatedness across the sea that people project onto these transmarine connections—in shaping the current Mediterranean moment. This is not the only way to go about such an examination of the current or modern Mediterranean. In a recent example of this direction, Jessica Marglin articulated the term “connectivity” in ways that reconcile it with modern transimperial networks and diasporic identity (2014).

If we differentiate infrastructural similarities between past and present Mediterraneans from the continuities (of identities, relationships, and

obligations) that people conjure between them, we would be able to examine how exactly the sea has reemerged as a maritime constellation in our times—in part resembling its past incarnations, in part shining in the light that these incarnations shed on this present Mediterranean.

### FISHING FOR THE PAST: THE STORY OF THE *SATIRO*

Let us begin with the version of the fishing captain who brought the satyr to Mazara del Vallo, Francesco Adragna, as he told it to the editor of the book celebrating the satyr and the story of its discovery (Curti 2004). According to Adragna, the first time his trawler, the *Capitan Ciccio*, had fished over that specific part of the Channel of Sicily, the ship stopped. In such situations, which happen often when the net runs into some underwater obstacle, the crew hauls in the net to assess the damage. This time, the net came onboard intact. Nevertheless, the captain stayed out of that area for some time. Then, in March 1997, the *Capitan Ciccio* found itself again over the same zone because of the strong winds and currents that day. At the end of the trawling run, when the crew was hauling in the net, the ship's hydraulic hauling machinery worked more heavily than usual for a short while—a sign of a heavy net—and then suddenly rolled faster again. Once the crew had hauled in the net, upon opening it on the aft deck they saw the leg of a bronze statue. The captain ordered his crew to go back to their fishing routine, and asked his colleagues for advice over the radio. They consulted him to throw overboard the relic to avoid all the various problems and hassles that befall captains who collect such items. In fact, many fishers the world over collect various amphorae that their nets encounter, and often face accusations for illicit holding of archaeological relics. Yet against his colleagues' advice, the captain decided to keep the bronze leg because, according to him, "already looking at the marvelous relic, we became ecstatic and fascinated. It would have been a sin to throw it overboard. What if we kept fishing in the same zone and found the rest?" (10).

The *Capitan Ciccio* continued to fish in the Channel of Sicily for several days until it entered port, in time to sell its fish for Easter at the end of March (importantly, no report or person actually notes the exact day of the bronze leg's initial discovery). Once in Mazara, the captain went to declare the relic he had brought in from the sea. The naval officer at the port authority told him to take the bronze leg to the office of cultural heritage in town. According to the captain, at that point he requested and

received an authorization to transport the relic in his car, in case he was stopped by the police and accused of illicitly withholding archaeological treasures. At the office, the captain handed the leg over together with the geographical position of the event at sea. This ended the first chapter of the satyr's tale.

Several months later, in July 1997, the Provincial Superintendent of Cultural Heritage prepared for a survey of the seabed around the original discovery's position. The extended survey was needed, since the geographical position at the moment of discovery does not exactly index the position of the shipwreck at the bottom of the sea, for several reasons. First, because the captain marked his trawler's position at the end of an hours-long fishing route, whereas the net could have encountered the shipwreck at any point along the miles-long route. Second, because the position marked the boat's location on the surface of the sea, not where the relics lie, about 500 meters below sea level. Nevertheless, the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage declared the survey successful, because the reconnaissance attempts produced "targets" for further inspection: several locations of abnormal mass, including of metallic substance. This brought the marine archaeologists of the Sicilian superintendent to conclude that "the presence of the rest of the load [carried by the ship that transported the satyr] was anything but unlikely" (Tusa 2004: 62).

The survey did not find any more relics. Nor did the *Capitan Ciccio*, which, according to Captain Adragna, avoided the site for almost a year, so as not to "mix up the seabed" by dragging the trawling net over it. Then, a year after his initial discovery, Adragna learned from a television show that "an American submarine was going around the Channel of Sicily looking for underwater treasures." With news of Dr. Ballard's presence, Adragna decided to resume his trawling over the area:

After having fished the leg, our fishing runs would stop a mile before the 'hot' zone. Now that I knew of the presence of the Americans, I concluded that if the sculpture would be recuperated by the Americans, who would then make some beautiful exhibition of it in who knows what museum, I preferred running the risk of damaging the satyr as long as I knew it remained in Italian hands [...] What sense did it make to stop fishing [over the zone]? Who would stand to benefit from our safety measures? We certainly didn't want it to be the Americans! (Curti 2004: 12)



Then, on March 3, just about a year after the discovery of the bronze leg, the *Capitan Ciccio* dredged up in its net the torso and head of the same statue. The captain informed the naval base immediately, and returned to port the following night, greeted by leading Sicilian archaeological experts, the press, and the Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage (“*Beni Culturali*”), who declared that the crew would receive their “finder’s prize,” 25 % of the statue’s assessed value, 700 million Italian lire at the time (about half a million dollars today).

Since its arrival ashore, the satyr raised many more questions, doubts, and mutual accusations among national and regional officials and between them and the crew. The officials of the Sicilian Cultural Heritage Superintendent accused the crew of mismanaging the relic. The crew had handed over the relic clean of mud. Upon their arrival, they explained that they had cleaned the statue while it was still hanging in the net above the water, to ease its hauling in. Some archaeological experts accused the crew of handing over the statue in a state different from that in which they had found it. The same issue raised the suspicion of the Provincial Attorney General that the statue was not found that night at sea, but that the crew—aided by some functionaries of the superintendency—had actually been trying to sell it on the illicit market for ancient relics before handing it over to the state (the investigation was archived without any indictment; Ziniti 2003). In response, Captain Adragna accused the state of “not wanting to pay the real price” of the finder’s prize. Together with the trawler’s two owners, he requested that the satyr be restituted to them, because they had found it in international waters (*La Repubblica* 1998). According to him, this is why the minister declared the prize on the evening of the trawler’s return to Mazara, long before the statue was appraised, six months later, in Rome. Moreover, the captain also contested the validity of the accusation leveled at him: “illegal possession of cultural assets belonging to the state” (Curti 2004, 18):

But which state? If it came from [Tunisia], I could have understood. But we were 65 [nautical] miles from the Italian coast! [...] We didn’t steal anything. If someone can lament losing something that belonged to them, it is the sea!

In the interview, the captain described in the same rancorous tone the ceremony for the unveiling of the satyr in the Italian Presidential Palace in Rome in 2003:

I didn't expect them to shout "*Erriva il capitano!*" But some recognition would have been expected. They didn't even mention the crew of the *Capitan Ciccio*. I entered Montecitorio with pride and came out with disdain [...] At the end, it was us who had found and gifted this once-in-a-millennium marvel to everyone.

Asked by his interviewer what he thought of the law following the events of the previous six years, Captain Adragna concluded: "It does not encourage the cooperation of us fishermen—the principal discoverers at sea—and the state" (19).

### AGAINST THE (SECOND) "NORTHERN INVASION"

Whatever one might think about whether the miraculous double discovery of the satyr had actually occurred as reported or not, several key themes in the story—which other accounts corroborate—outline the interplay of similarities and continuities between the present and past transmarine constellations. By following these themes we will be able to see how this interplay shapes the role that cultural heritage—tangible artifacts that groups claim to have inherited from (their) past generations—plays in Mediterraneanist projects, be they national or international, which promote regionalist cultural agendas about the sea's past, present, and future.

First among them is the dependence of national underwater cultural heritage officials on those forms of movement and connection that emblemize modern transmarine connectivity. First of them are motorized trawlers, which dredge up the things that lie on the seabed daily.<sup>3</sup> The long history of maritime heritage—near the coast and in deeper waters, in Sicily and elsewhere—is paved with stories of fishers' discoveries, filling up the Mediterranean nautical chart with around 3000 sites (Tusa and Li Vigni 2010). Until the spread of motorized seabed trawling and the technological development of scuba-diving (both accelerated after the Second World War), underwater archaeology was limited to shallow waters mostly along the coastlines. Artefacts that are found in shallow waters close to the shore, and well within the 12 nautical miles of territorial waters—safely within that part of the sea that is still considered the watery extension of

<sup>3</sup> In the few cases that end up with an important discovery, these fishers' operations are celebrated as the main way to access relics of the past. What remains uncovered is the damage that these trawling nets incur on the seabed—flora, fauna, and archaeological relics included.

national territory—are self-evident candidates for naturalization as national heritage like their landed counterparts (Herzfeld 1991). In addition, such relics' distance from the shore and the shallow depth around them also facilitate their discovery and excavation. Artefacts that reside in deeper parts of the Mediterranean seabed differ from the shallow-dwellers in two respects: first, they have waited longer for the technological capacity to find them either casually or during a directed expedition; second, their location does not lend itself so easily to national incorporation by any one state. As a result, the multisided struggle among various states over access to such relics and their control combines the technological, political, and cultural/ideological dimensions of such underwater artefacts' resurfacing. The technological dimension emerges from the kinds of transmarine technologies that participate in the artefacts' discovery and recuperation. The political and cultural dimensions emerge from the set of actors (national and world heritage organizations, archaeologists, treasure hunters) and their interaction, which take place across borders as much as within them. The wider story of the satyr's resurfacing and reappropriation exemplifies this.

The second theme that the satyr's story foregrounds is the transnational (rather than just transmarine) aspect of this type of artefact. As Captain Adragna protested, the statue lay at the bottom of the sea far from Italy's territorial waters. More generally, such relics' location at the bottom of the sea detaches them from any immediate and self-evident claim to ownership by any one state. Instead, in the case of occasional discoveries (as against directed expeditions), several states related to different moments in the relic's life could have made claims to some binding relationship to it until recently. According to Article 149 of the 1982 Montego Bay United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea, "Archaeological and historical objects" (United Nations 1982):

All objects of an archaeological and historical nature found in the Area shall be preserved or disposed of for the benefit of mankind as a whole, particular regard being paid to the preferential rights of the State or country of origin, or the State of cultural origin, or the State of historical and archaeological origin.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The term "the Area" refers to "the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction" (United Nations 1982, 82/31363: 26).

In the concrete terms of the current Mediterranean, the states whose preferential rights should enjoy such “particular regard” are (1) the state whose flag the finders fly, (2) the state that reigns in the ancient place of the statue’s production (or its place of holding), if such locations could be established, and (3) those whose territorial waters abut the sea stretch of the relic’s discovery. Of these three categories, the first depends on anything from happenstance, through concerted effort, to an established advantage in access to the required technologies. On the contrary, the second and third (geographical contiguity, historical relevance) combine to give the general transnational constellation a regional, that is, a Mediterranean shape.

The specific shape of the satyr’s transnational trajectory becomes clear when we consider that Dr. Robert Ballard’s expedition and the US Navy nuclear submarine it deployed certainly belonged to neither of these latter two categories of geographically contiguous or historically germane states. Moreover, the expeditions drew several Mediterranean actors’ attention after Ballard’s team published their findings of a cluster of Roman shipwrecks in the Channel of Sicily. The cluster of shipwrecks are located at a depth of about 800 meters near Skerki Bank, at the north-western edges of the Channel of Sicily, about 80 nautical miles north-west of Trapani, at the western tip of Sicily (Wilford 1997; McCann 2004). By usurping the presumed right of Mediterranean countries to discover and maintain their own buried cultural treasures, Ballard reenacted “the Northern Invasion.”<sup>5</sup> As in the aftermath of the original “Northern Invasion” (Hershenson 2016), the “invasion” accelerated Mediterranean nation-states’ attempts at uniting against their common Atlantic adversary.<sup>6</sup> The result was the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, which the United States did not join, and which expands the relevant articles from the 1982 Montego Bay Convention into an attempted regulation regime (UNESCO 2009). Most relevant for us is

<sup>5</sup>In Molly Greene’s words, “The northern invasion argument asserts that the Dutch, the English and the French swarmed into the Mediterranean with their superior sailing ships early in the seventeenth century, and seized control of the sea’s commercial, financial and maritime life [...] This picture has been endorsed by many others, and is easily the dominant model for the Mediterranean world in the seventeenth century” (2002: 42).

<sup>6</sup>Of the six states that initially sought to include a regime for protection of underwater heritage in the UN regulations, four are from the Mediterranean (Italy, Greece, Malta, and Tunisia) and the other two host the first legs of Europe’s Atlantic colonial expansion: Portugal and Cape Verde (Scovazzi 2012: 754).

the way in which the Convention was designed to stimulate regional, bilateral, and multilateral accords for the programming and management of archaeological research in extraterritorial waters. In other words, the Convention unfolds on a global scale to articulate and promote actual collaborations on lower scales. Palumbo's conclusion about UNESCO and the cultural politics of heritage in Sicily definitely applies to this transnational set of scales of action: "If conflict and aggression are basic characters of local (and regional) political scenes, the presence of a self-proclaiming universalistic and peaceful transnational institution directly produced and reproduced them [...] Like every political process, the construction of a heritage scenario produces conflicts at each level (or step) of its processing procedures" (Palumbo 2011: 8; see also Palumbo 2003).

In this Sicilian and Italian mobilization against the American looters, "The Mediterranean" emerged as a palpable scale of mobilization and recognizable battle cry for cultural-political protectionism. The defending actor combined subnational (Sicilian) and state-national (Italian) scales;<sup>7</sup> the overarching universalistic umbrella was global in aspiration, if not in actual reach (UNESCO); and all converged on the regional scale of the Mediterranean, both conjuring it and granting it further palpability. Together, the two themes—archaeologists' reliance on fishers' transmarine operations and the transnational power dynamics of underwater archaeology and the cultural politics of heritage—reveal how underwater surveying technologies, transnational political imaginaries, and national interests shape each other. Neither Ballard's arrival nor the satyr's discovery were the first triggers of this dynamic. Yet both events raised the stakes of underwater cultural heritage in the contemporary central Mediterranean:

It was in fact the real archaeological *raid*, conducted by Ballard in a zone that is geographically and culturally contiguous with Italian and Tunisian territorial waters, as well as the cultural pertinence of the *plundered* wrecks and the relics to the ancient community of the Mediterranean, which set off an almost total and violent reaction on the part of the international scientific community and government authorities. (Tusa 2004: 43; emphases added)

In the Channel of Sicily, regional multilateral negotiations towards such a bilateral accord envisioned a "museum of the history and the culture of

<sup>7</sup> As Sicily is an official region of the Italian state, this subnational scale would merit the term "regional," but in order not to confuse it with transnational regions such as the Mediterranean, I've termed it "subnational" throughout this chapter.

the Channel of Sicily.” The idea behind the museum was “to strengthen [literally, to weld again] Mediterranean identity and civilization” (Tusa 2004: 67–68). Since the projected museum was supposed to treat the Channel of Sicily, the adjective “Mediterranean” would refer to the character of a geographic area smaller in scope. In their fear of the technologically superior expeditions that the post-Cold War US Navy can furnish to American archaeologists—with nuclear submarines and advanced reconnaissance technologies—Sicilian, Tunisian, and Italian archaeologists and cultural heritage officials have come to reconsider their shared interest regarding ancient relics in the Mediterranean (Scovazzi 2010). In the process, they have harnessed the various technologies at their disposal to excavate and represent relics from a “civilization” and an “identity” that they share and that excludes the United States.<sup>8</sup> The regionalist shape of transnational action took the shape of Mediterraneanism.

The thread that connects the struggle over the satyr and the project of the museum exemplify Tunisian–Sicilian “kinshipping” of sorts: reaching back to the distant past to inform and then change present political relations (Smail and Shryock 2011: 32, 52). As in other segmentary dynamics (Dresch 1988; Shryock 1997; Herzfeld 2005; Palumbo 2010), this Mediterraneanist heritage project alluded to the shared sources of identity that distinguishes those potentially allied with each other against their to-be-excluded Others. In the Channel of Sicily, “political relations are relative and dynamic [...] [They] are best stated as tendencies to conform to certain values in certain situations, and the value is determined by the structural relationships of the persons who compose the situation” (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 137; quoted in Dresch 1986: 317). This does not make the project surrounding the satyr purely reactive or entirely reducible to present dynamics. The kinds of continuities that various actors proclaimed had their canons of probability. These measures for a successful conjuring of the past for present purposes include all the material conditions that underwater artefacts and their accessibility provide for such projects, but they also include the kinds of relations that people can make between past and present as well as among themselves in the present through the past. These kinds of relations depend on the transnational political imaginaries

<sup>8</sup>These various projects include mapping initiatives, the construction of underwater diving routes near shipwrecks, such as “*CULTura, TURismo Attivo e Sostenibile*” and ARCHAEO MAP (“Soprintendenza Del Mare—CUL.TUR.A.S.” 2015; “ARCHAEO MAP—Archaeological Management Policies” 2015).

that people invoke when they try to convince each other that they are related and in what way exactly they are related (Ben-Yehoyada 2014b).

Moreover, the conjuring up of the Mediterranean as the shape of Sicilian–Tunisian transnational alignment did not oscillate between the bifurcated scale of the global and the local. It rather set a specifically regionalist alternative to this duo of extremes. This alternative had national (Italian, Tunisian), subnational (Sicilian), and regional (Italian–Tunisian, Sicilian–Tunisian) elements. Global goals, collectives, and values appeared through a combination of the UN and the United States. Article 149 of the Montego Bay Convention cites “the benefit of mankind as a whole” (United Nations 1982). The United States Navy has been operating for some time now under the belief, which it strives to spread, that its vessels’ actions pursue this goal (Ho 2004). Yet the US Navy’s capacity to collect underwater ancient artefacts around the world under the aegis of this goal improved significantly when submarines such as NR-1 found themselves more available than before, at the end of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup> The same goes for Italian underwater archaeologists’ access and capacities, if not for their government’s globalizing political aspiration. Their attention to the existence of relics in deep waters rose following one of the massacres (*stragi*) that hit Italy because of the combination of its geographical position and somewhat ambiguous relationship to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance during the Cold War. In June 1980, a DC-9 airplane of the airline *Itavia*, on its way from Bologna to Palermo, crashed into the Tyrrhenian Sea not far from the island of Ustica (for which it received its name, “*la strage d’Ustica*”). The chain of criminal, parliamentary, and civil investigations of the massacre continued until January 2013, when the Italian Court of Cassations ruled that the aircraft had crashed after being hit by a missile or colliding with another airplane, and that in any case, the massacre occurred owing to an act of war (Gaetano 2013). Yet already in 1989 the Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism had issued a statement to that effect (Coco 2015). During the search for the aircraft’s wreck and clues about the flight’s fate, a remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) surveying the seabed at a depth of 3000 meters discovered and filmed an ancient shipwreck carrying a significant cargo of amphorae. In drawing connections between such events and their accounts of the history of underwater archaeology, Italian marine cultural heritage

<sup>9</sup> A war which itself staged the struggle between two self-proclaimed universalist programs of promoting “the benefit of mankind.”

officials seem to weave their successes in reaching the ever-deeper seabed with their own national histories of belligerently propelled technology; only that here the threat did not take the shape of an egalitarian enmity but Italian subservience to the French and American powers, under whose orders the fighter jet that would have shot the missile at the Itavia DC-9 airplane operated.

If the allusion to the *Strage d'Ustica* set the scale of patrimonialization at the national level, other elements in the story foregrounded the subnational scale and preferred the Sicilian perspective over its Italian counterpart. This perspective, which made use of a regional scale of Mediterraneanism, distinguished between the national and the subnational, and offered a Sicilian alternative to the Italian control over the process. This alternative comes out of the Sicilian account of the satyr's restoration. If all Italian actors seemed to have shown a united national pride in trying to protect their relics from foreign looters (Conti 1998), the Sicilians among them still claimed that a relic found by a Sicilian trawler and brought to its Sicilian home port should be restored by Sicilian experts and housed in the island. The question of the satyr's final home has followed the statue ever since it landed ashore. Yet it probably found its most articulate expression during the discussion over which institute should conduct the restoration procedures. If some Sicilian experts hoped to keep the operation on the island, the work ended at the hands of the national Central Institute of Restoration in Rome (Istituto Centrale di Restauro, nowadays the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro). The elegy that one archaeologist dedicated to this decision, which I summarize here, can clarify the tensions between the national and the sub-national scales of identity and prestige:

Given the nobility of [the relic's] rank, the highest officeholders of the State and the Sicilian Region in the field of cultural heritage rushed to its bedside. Another consequence of the relic's importance was that one of the best "hospitals" in Italy and in the world was immediately chosen for [the relic], even if not without controversies [...] Shortly after its discovery, the statue followed the route of many Sicilians who leave Sicily to find hospitals in the north [...] Whatever motivated the choice at the basis of the emigration of the Satyr, I regret to admit that "Sicilian culture" did not demonstrate its best in abdicating to others the direction of the operation of restoration, which, I'm convinced now as I was then, we neither could have nor should have delegated to any other person. (Tusa 2004: 46)



In this subnational calculus, Sicily had a chance to prove that it was more Mediterranean than Italy, just as much as Italy is more Mediterranean than the United States. The Mediterraneanist political imaginary charted political relations—including historical continuities, present identities, and claims to cultural patrimony—from the center of the sea. But to materialize the claims that such an imaginary offered, Sicilian actors needed to maintain control of the tangible artefacts of such continuities and identities (Cuno 2008). In failing to do so, they also lost a chance to assert their Mediterraneanist primacy over Italy.

### THE PREVIOUS LIVES OF THE SATYR

The specific Mediterraneanist shape of the satyr's story involved a conflictual setup on subnational, national, and transnational scales not only during the statue's journey from the seabed to the surface, but also in the debates about the satyr's trajectory to the bottom of the sea. The many questions that the archaeological investigations have opened shed light on the echoes and reverberations between the various epochs in the satyr's life as well as between the satyr's story and Mediterraneanist tales on wider historical and geographical scales.

The only undisputed fact about the statue is that it was a part of the load of a boat that capsized between Pantelleria and Cap Bon. The statue depicts a male character in mid-leap, with his head thrown back, his back arched, and his hair swinging, continuing the swirling movement of his neck and head. Initially, some experts suspected that the statue depicted the Aeolus, the god of winds in Greek mythology (Viviano 1998). Later it was established that the statue depicts a dancing satyr. Some archaeologists have argued that the statue was the figurehead of a ship, judging the statue a good classicist piece of art rather than a masterpiece. Yet several key archaeologists have debated this view, arguing instead that the statue would have belonged to a Dionysian cycle, probably accompanied by a maenad in the swirling ecstatic dance (Moreno 1998). This later view—that the statue depicts a unique form of movement—serves the wider argument about the satyr's importance. If it is a piece of classic art, its context remains mainly Greek, even if transmarine. The satyr's artistic characteristics would in this case be divorced from the statue's ancient route across the Mediterranean. This view is held, for example, by the leading French archaeologists and classicists (*La Repubblica* 2007).

If, on the contrary, the satyr represents the unique specimen of an innovative kind of sculpture that dates to the first moments of the Hellenistic period, then its presence at the bottom of the sea may index the historical relationship between Greek and Roman society, art, and mobility. This version would give the statue (and, by association, its finders and keepers) an ancient Mediterraneanist pedigree: the satyr would be “Mediterranean” not only because it was found in the middle of the sea, but also because the early Hellenistic version would make the statue and its trajectory signify a recognizable Mediterranean constellation in ancient times. Assuming that this was indeed a masterpiece from the middle of the fourth century BCE, it would have travelled along the routes of the cross-Mediterranean traffic in art, which dates to the second century BCE. Through this traffic, which multiplied with Roman expansion across the Mediterranean, Romans “copied,” “looted,” and “robbed” the works of Greek artists. In this view of the mobility of Hellenistic works of art across the Roman Mediterranean, the satyr would have been about 200 years old when it boarded the ship with which it reached the seabed. And assuming that the statue was two centuries old when it reached the seabed, the same view concludes that it probably travelled onboard a vessel belonging to a scrap merchant, who traveled around the Mediterranean in search of bronze pieces of different shape and nature, and who also collected precious objects such as the satyr.

The satyr’s uniqueness according to this account sets up its earlier lives in an ancient world of connections and movements that mirrors the present. This version provides a composite image of a Mediterranean constellation of mobility—combining Roman expansion and looting, Greek precious artefacts that come to be subsumed in the Roman project, and objects whose value depends on their movement (licit or not, consensual or not). In this version, the satyr would be a Greek work of art that traveled the Mediterranean because it was appreciated by the rising and expanding Roman powers. In other words, the statue’s form, its mobility, and the political context of that mobility condition each other (Gill and Chippindale 1993: 626). By implication, once the statue is understood through this Mediterraneanist lens, it becomes an emblem of this specific view of the Mediterranean (Broodbank 1992). In turn, this image serves as a scheme for understanding the technological, political, and cultural dimension of the present constellation—the same, very modern constellation, which conditioned the satyr’s resurfacing. It is this version that the leading Sicilian maritime archaeologists have promoted, and which they

sought to spread together with the satyr in recent years (Tusa 2004: 58–62). The Sicilian archaeologists' version about the satyr's origin, path, and context of drowning ultimately served to forge an even longer continuity between the present and the Mediterranean's ancient past.

## CONCLUSION

The satyr's trajectory to the seabed and back to land illuminates how contemporary forms of maritime connection and regionalist imaginaries interact to condition the current shape and image of the Mediterranean transnational constellation. More broadly, the trajectories of underwater artefacts from maritime pasts into the present reveal the similarities between the ancient and current kinds of connectivity, as well as the kinds of continuity that present actors draw—on the basis of such similarities—between the past and the present. As long as we limit our view of Mediterranean connectivity to premodern times, we would be unable to examine current connections that resemble them, as well as the kinds of continuities that actors make of these similarities. To move beyond this limitation, we need to examine not only when and how people are connected, but also how they come to see each other as related: what terms they use to inform such claims of relatedness; what roles, relationships, and obligations they promote, impose, or deny; and how they conjure up past relationships between their (proclaimed) respective past generations.

No matter how we define the switch from the premodern to the modern—the arrival of steam shipping, the nation-state order, or Europe's neglect of the Mediterranean in favor of wider colonial pursuits—the means to access past Mediterraneans rely on the technologies of mobility and connectivity that shape the present Mediterranean. Modern maritime technologies of transnational fishing and underwater surveying and operations technologies (developed mainly for Cold War submarine warfare and pipeline or cable construction) have shaped the accessibility of the central Mediterranean transnational constellation for those archaeologists who could enjoy them. They have conditioned international struggles over marine resources (Ben-Yehoyada 2012), collaborations for the transportation of energy (Hayes 2006), and the role of the Mediterranean Sea and its surrounding countries in the control over key maritime routes and scenes of potential naval warfare (Ambrosetti 2001). At the same time, these technologies have also shaped the fortunes of underwater artefacts that—once resurfaced—emblemize the cultural heritage that

Mediterranean states (potentially) share. In other words, the same technological conditions of current maritime connectedness that contribute to the similarities between past and present moments of connectedness also provide the material conditions—the resurfacing of underwater artefacts—for the projects that claim continuities on subnational, national, and regional scales. These projects transform connectedness into claims of relatedness.

When they emerge in international waters, underwater archaeological objects become emblems of Mediterraneanist cultural heritage. Because these objects lie in international waters, they decenter states' national heritage projects (Herzfeld 2014; Abu El-Haj 2001). They do so by pointing away from national territories and their consolidated histories and towards a potentially shared transnational past. At the same time, these objects enter the struggle over ownership and representation among various heritage projects, which attempt to harness the Mediterraneanist energies emanating from these objects to their national (Italian or Tunisian), subnational (Sicilian, Mazarese), or wider (European, Western, North African, Mediterranean) cultural projects. Contemporary interaction and exchange across the sea shape Mediterraneanist imaginaries, and the people—moved by these imaginaries—in turn and remake the Mediterranean.

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## Mediterranean Lyric

yasser elhariry

“Poetics,” writes French structuralist and genre theoretician Gérard Genette, in a moment of cheek toward the end of *Introduction à l’architexte*, “is a very old and very young ‘science’: the little that it ‘knows’ is perhaps best forgotten” (1979: 76).<sup>1</sup> His wager has neither gone unnoticed, nor has it been entirely heeded. For *Introduction à l’architexte* sought to set the record straight on lyric: Genette traces the “historicity” (75) of the three “archigenères” (lyric, narrative, dramatic)<sup>2</sup> from Plato and Aristotle to the apex of his strain of structuralism in the 1970s—a calling, we see in this chapter, that critics and intellectuals have continued to pursue (Rabaté 1996; Guerrero 2000; Jackson and Prins 2014; Culler 2008, 2015). After the advent of semiotics, structuralism, and poststructuralism, new analytical tools—indebted to the advances of Saussurean linguistics, Russian formalists such as Roman Jakobson, and their French counterparts such as Émile

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<sup>1</sup> All unattributed translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> As a modern idea, what Genette calls the three “archigenres” was first put forward by Goethe in “Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Diwans” [Notes and Essays for a Better Understanding of the West-Eastern Divan] (1981). See also William Elford Rogers, *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric* (1983).

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y. elhariry (✉)  
Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA

Benveniste—have, toward the end of the twentieth century, helped usher in the age of New Lyric studies.<sup>3</sup>

So poetics seems not to forget. It cannot but remember—lyric returns, lyric remains, and poetics has a long way to go before ever doing away with it altogether. Contemporary poetry has for several years now been enjoying a renewed lyric turn, return, or revival (Rabaté 1996: 7; Jackson 2008: 183; Sastri 2014: 191; Culler 2008: 201). Originating in the Mediterranean's classical poetic treatises, plucked from oblivion by humanism, especially in Italy and France (Guerrero 2000: 69), fully blooming in the post-Enlightenment period (Vadé 1996: 12, 21; Rabaté 1996: 66) through its inflection via the German romantics (Combe 1996: 41), and then permutating throughout the unfolding of poetic modernity from the nineteenth century onward, contemporary verse from Mediterranean shores has always had to address the lyric question and its complex system of transhistorical and constantly problematized modal enunciations.<sup>4</sup> Before I turn to some of these debates, their critical genealogies, and a sampling of poetic instantiations of Mediterranean lyric, an overview of larger methodological issues pertaining to the Mediterranean and literary scholarship will help set up the necessary framework for the incursion of poetics into Mediterranean studies.

### IN FROM OF ABOUT

At its heart, this chapter asks a larger question: What is “Mediterranean literature?” It advances the specific category of “Mediterranean lyric” through select examples from the contemporary francoarab Mediterranean world of the late twentieth century. Together, the cases outline a methodology for further inquiry into the region's other languages. One immediate consequence of the Mediterranean's critical polysemy involves the infinite broadening of the scope of what “Mediterranean” signifies in the first place: an oft-critiqued propensity for “the fundamental fluidity of the concept,” and a tendency to generate multiple “Mediterraneanisms” that “encompass different meanings and indeed in some instances [...] signify the opposite of what [the concept] at first glance suggests” (Dobie 2014: 403).

The sea's fluidity has engendered a literary corollary that may help constrain the Mediterranean as categorical modifier. In her contribution to *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, Sharon Kinoshita echoes criticisms of the Mediterranean as an analytical category for critical inquiry in the work of such historians as David Abulafia and Michael Herzfeld,

<sup>3</sup> See “The New Lyric Studies” (2008) in *PMLA* 123 (1): 181–234.

<sup>4</sup> See Burt (2016).

but differs in opening her essay by raising what had thus far remained a curiously unasked question, “What is Mediterranean literature?” She observes that “none of the key works of the emerging discipline of Mediterranean Studies [...] has much to say about texts we would call literary and, as a sub-field, Mediterranean Studies has found less purchase in literature than among historians in many sub-disciplines.” Reading in this belatedness “the tenacity in literary studies of the nation,” she “maps out some of the forms that something called ‘Mediterranean literature’ might take” (2014: 314), and stresses such a literature’s multilingual (315–317), cross-linguistic (318), and connective (320) characteristics. Although the self-essentialization of the recent examples of Mediterranean literature she provides (Jean-Claude Izzo, Andrea Camilleri, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Batya Gur) suggests the near exhaustion of “the Mediterranean’s utility as an analytical category” for literary studies, Kinoshita concludes with the practical suggestion to consider “the contents, contexts, and trajectories of pre-modern texts,” which “[may map] some of the terrain that such a reterritorialized history” of post/colonial Mediterranean literature “might take” (326).

Lyric maps some of this terrain, as would a translational and intertextual reevaluation of canonical pieces of the twentieth-century’s trans/national literatures, for “poets themselves, reading and responding to predecessors, have created a lyric tradition that persists across historical periods and radical changes in circumstances of production and transmission” (Culler 2015: 3–4). Prior to offering a few germane examples of lyric’s remapping of the Mediterranean’s literary traditions, I would like to outline literary criticism’s recent attempts to integrate the Mediterranean as an analytical category into textual and linguistic criticism, through the case of French and francophone literary and cultural studies and their entwined recent critical histories. Contra John Baldacchino’s analysis in this volume of the regionalist approach to the Mediterranean, much research within the exclusive regional-geographic conception of the Mediterranean has focused on women writers and refrained from probing the “political aesthetics” of literature when circumscribed by/to the sea (Veauvy et al. 2004; Boustani and Jouve 2006; Dermenjian et al. 2008). Then in 2010, *PMLA* (125 [3]) published a special *Theories and Methodologies* section dedicated to the oceanic turn. While not without their detractors (Lionnet 2011, 2013), the *PMLA* essays attempted to articulate an understanding of the maritime that extends beyond the geographic, the thematic, or even the metaphorical.

Taking this approach further, Claudia Esposito's *The Narrative Mediterranean* reads the contemporary Mediterranean as a "space" (xi) that "lies around, between, outside, and beyond" such critical axes as "France and the Maghreb" (2014: xii), "where writers have re-created and invented their [own] Mediterranean(s)" (xiv), and where "the Mediterranean becomes [...] a metaphor for literature, and for narrative" (xxii). The *PMLA* essays pointed to the many theoretical blind spots in readings of the most seafaring of writers, from Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe to Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad. Recasting his reading of Mediterranean modern political culture in *Mediterranean Crossings* (2008), Iain Chambers writes that "the Mediterranean turns out to be a porous region that potentially provides a passage for other understandings of modernity, often arriving uninvited from elsewhere [...] The sea becomes the countersite or heterotopia of modernity" (2010: 679). Heavily resonant of Gaston Bachelard, Eugène Guillevis, Michel Foucault, and Édouard Glissant, other essays highlight how the richness of the maritime stems from its unmatched potential to propose "teraqueous geographies," or "new geographic and spatial scales," which "have their own timelines" (Cohen 2010: 658–659), and which feature "new forms of relatedness" (Blum 2010: 671). Oceans and seas provide "a planetary space in which man and humanism are not the only measure" (Chambers 2010: 681). By promoting "a new spatial order" (Connery 2010: 686) of "ideological fluidity" (Craciun 2010: 697), these massive bodies of water "complicate binaries, moving us away from the simplicities of the resistant local and the dominating global and toward a historically deep archive of competing universalisms" (Hofmeyr 2010: 722).

In French and francophone studies, the same year as the *PMLA* essays, Marta Segarra published her study, *Nouvelles romancières francophones du Maghreb*, which opens with a promising chapter entitled "La construction d'un sujet-femme dans une perspective méditerranéenne." In it, Segarra rightly points to the contemporary emergence of a feminine Mediterranean subject deserving of critical consideration. For Segarra, then, the Mediterranean offers a geocultural locus whose social structures have historically favored patriarchy, and have impelled the pressing task of its ongoing critique (2010: 20). Yet contra Segarra and others, the growing body of scholarship around the Mediterranean impels a necessary intervention that would better align French and francophone studies with

Mediterranean studies. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's off the bat distinction in their seminal work, *The Corrupting Sea*, between history and research "*in* the Mediterranean" and "*of* the Mediterranean" (2000: 9), reveals a critical intellectual blind spot in the preceding cases: the literature discussed is literature *in* or *from* the Mediterranean, without in the least being or attempting to be *of* the Mediterranean. In the best and rarest of cases, the literature studied may be *about* the Mediterranean: as Michel Gironde's edited volume *Méditerranée & exil: aujourd'hui* (2014) unwittingly continues to illustrate, the attempts of literary studies to broach the corrupting sea all too frequently lead to little more than "a thematic analysis" (Mansueto 2014: 127) of the sea in the works of the usual round-up of writers *from* the Mediterranean—"always Assia Djebar," in Richard Serrano's woeful, illustrative lamentation about the great, late Algerian author (2005: 175). A cursory glance at any of the tables of contents of the aforementioned studies drives his point further home.

By "*of* the Mediterranean," I mean to designate the emergence of a different literary contemporaneity: a literary aesthetics of persistent deferral (translation) and referral (intertextuality), of untimeliness and anachronism. To be *of* the Mediterranean, literature would form "a singular relationship with [a writer's] own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it [...] *through a disjunction and an anachronism*" (Agamben 2009: 41), such that the hegemonic lenses of "modernity" and "postmodernity" latent throughout the *PMLA* essays become "less useful for [...] inquiry than the more dynamic concept of a (chaotic) continuous contemporary" (Retallack 2003: 13). The recent resurgence of interest in the New Lyric studies opens a decisive *cæsura* within the modish intellectual fashion of coupling the Mediterranean with contemporary literary and cultural studies. As we will see, Mediterranean literature could instead "[inscribe] itself in the present by marking [itself] above all as archaic" (Agamben 2009: 50), either at its point of origin or genesis, or through its non-decisive and circular moments of dialectical finality or exit. Only then may Sharon Kinoshita's plea—to consider "the contents, contexts, and trajectories of pre-modern texts" (2014: 326)—be mapped onto the contemporary.

So much for literature. Let us now come to terms with a brief understanding of that essential Mediterranean literary mode.

## LYRIC

A “diffuse sign” (Guerrero 2000: 7) of “subjective effusion” (Rabaté 1996: 66), on which Roman Jakobson premises his notion of the emotive and expressive function of poetic linguistics and its relation to private life (1973: 119), the specter of lyricism has haunted the Mediterranean for a long time. From Sappho and the Melic Poets to Catullus, from Horace to Petrarch,<sup>5</sup> classical dialogues and treatises over the nature of literature, its modes, and genres, have revolved around a tripartite classification of poetic writing (lyric, narrative, dramatic). When Gérard Genette takes up the question of lyric in the 1970s, he scrutinizes a critical tradition that has been attributing the origins of lyric as mode to Plato, especially through misreadings of Aristotle’s *Poetics*.<sup>6</sup> Unmentioned in the *Poetics*, lyric occupies an ambivalent historical relation to the two modes exposed by Aristotle (dramatic and narrative), at best contending for the mixed mode that combines both (Genette 1979: 40). Though contemporary criticism typically points to romanticism as the founding moment of modern lyric expression, the early modern cachet of “Pléiade poetics” (in Graham Castor’s classic coinage) already denoted centuries-long accumulations of literary neoplatonizations that were “exhumed” at the zenith of humanism in Renaissance Europe. Within this context, Genette distinguishes the expository, mimetic nature of dramatic and narrative writing from lyric. He observes that during the Renaissance, poetry “may have [had] for its subject an idea or a feeling that it simply exposes or expresses” (35), that it was “pure expression [...] without imitation” (36). Only later would poetry adapt to the definition of an art that “starts as subjective lyric, then elevates to objective epic, and reaches at last synthesis, or dramatic ‘identification’” (47).

The genealogy of lyric in modern criticism complements Genette’s intervention in 1979, which owes much of its legacy to German poetic inquiry. In contrast to the primarily narratological preoccupations of the Anglo-Saxon New Criticism and French structuralism, which have bequeathed us sophisticated tools for the analysis of prose forms at the expense of poetics, the German tradition privileged poetry and lyricism instead in its attempts to define modernity. Käte Hamburger’s *Die Logik*

<sup>5</sup> For nine prototypical lyric poems from across the Western tradition, see Jonathan Culler (2015: 10–33).

<sup>6</sup> As further confirmed by W. R. Johnson, “On the Absence of Ancient Lyric Theory” (1982).

*der Dichtung* (1957), for instance, offers a touchstone analysis of the *lyrisches Ich* in relation to the philosophy of language and phenomenology (Combe 1996: 39; Wellek 1967). A few years after Genette, Jean-Marie Gleize's reevaluation of nineteenth-century French poetic modernity in *Poésie & figuration* (1983) delved deeper into and gestured forward from Genette's reappraisal of lyric, in that it lends force to Aristotle's estimation that poetry is more noble and philosophical than historical chronicles, because it evokes or provides figurations for "that which may be" (Guerrero 2000: 32).

An indeterminate, storied, modal genre, lyric today has assumed an important elegiac, epigrammatic strain, in its "search for an object" (160) within the determinations of its historically constructed, subjective world. In addition to its ambivalent distinction from prose, dramatic, narrative, and historical writing, further complexities surround lyric's performative and circumstantial natures (Zumthor 1983: 145–147; Rabaté 1996: 69–72; Guerrero 2000: 22). The issue of defining poetry—what poet Salah Stétié (b. Beirut 1929) calls a *définition-infinition* (2004: 250), or a dynamic resistance to accurate, logical delineation—trails throughout these debates, as does the persistent linguistic issue of "enunciation" (Frye 1957; see Vadé 1996: 18). Émile Benveniste refers to "the *figurative framework* of the enunciation" (Benveniste 1974: 85; Rabaté 1996: 69). Roman Jakobson insists that, though the poem and poetry may very well be near impossible to define or situate,

*poeticity*, as the formalists have highlighted, is a *sui generis* element, an element to which we cannot mechanically reduce other elements. This element must be denuded, and it is necessary to make its independence appear [...]. In general, poeticity is only one component of a complex structure, but a component which necessarily transforms the other elements, and determines with them the comportment of the ensemble [...] If poeticity, as a poetic function with a dominant reach, appears in a work of literature, we may then speak of poetry. (Jakobson 1973: 123–124)

Gleize's study in *Poésie & figuration* sheds light on Jakobson's idiosyncratic form of poeticity. Gleize conceives of poeticity through the linguistic intersection of enunciating and situating poetry. For him, it all starts with Alphonse de Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques* (1820), in particular the eleventh meditation "Le lac." Gleize defines his central theme of "poetic 'figuration'" as

the study of the figurative processes and [...] the study of ‘what’ is figured in a poetic apparatus [*dispositif*]; this ‘figured’ won’t be envisaged in the diversity of its thematic forms, rather I will be interested primarily in two ‘objects’: the self and the landscape. These two objects are in effect both the privileged objects of representation and the very condition of all poetic representation or enunciation [...] My approach [...] is situated at the level of the conditions of possibility for these themes and forms: it is from this point, where an enunciative strategy takes hold, that the thematic and formal mutations which make up the history of poetry become visible. (Gleize 1983: 11)

Since poetry, in Gleize’s study, seems inseparable from its persistent, unending, and ever-renewed task of having to situate itself, the essential lesson of Lamartine’s “Le lac” reveals “the installation of poetry in its place” (46). Within this place, lyric constitutes a “space” (47) in which “the growing autonomisation of a saying [*un dire*] [...] shows, narrates, exposes less and less,” and instead “intransitivizes and literalizes itself, all the while being constantly worked around its borders, with which and against which [the poem] is composed: narrativity, scenery, knowledge” (304–305).

As a way of looking at things concretely, in the next section I offer three separate but intertwined and succinct readings of lyric: the translational rewriting by Habib Tengour (b. Mostaganem 1947) of a foundational Arabic poetic genre; a decade-long project of composing sequences of textual poeticities by Emmanuel Hocquard (b. Cannes 1940) that efface the lyric subject; and the surrealist poetics of invective political commitment in a poetry chapbook by Serge Pey (b. Toulouse 1950). The three poets illustrate the cumulative theory of lyric exposed by Gleize, in that they foreground scenery (the site of ruins for Tengour), a graphically problematized narrative knowledge of existence (Hocquard), and the anachronistic contemporaneity of poetic action (Pey). They also begin to outline the kinds of “texts we would call literary” (Kinoshita 2014: 314) in Mediterranean studies, for they instantiate what I have called a literary aesthetics of persistent deferral (translation) and referral (intertextuality), of untimeliness and anachronism: they mark themselves above all as archaic (Agamben 2009: 50) as they map themselves over the vagaries of old lyric.



In 1993, the Algerian poet Habib Tengour published an eleven-page poem, “La sandale d’Empédocle” (“Empedocles’s Sandal,” trans. Pierre Joris 1999), in French poet-philosopher Michel Deguy’s influential poetry review *Poésie*. Tengour’s poem engages at depth the long literary history of Arabic letters in its relation to poetic post/modernity. “La sandale d’Empédocle” presents a translational calque of the Arabic *qaṣīda*, or the polythematic ode, which forms “the first chapter in Arabic literature” (Arberry 1957). The *qaṣīda* may furthermore be conceived as a nomadic genre, an itinerant, iterological (Butor 1974: 13) lyric composition (Jones 1996: 19–22) that loosely follows a codified suite of movements, themes, or stations, after which James Montgomery titled his seminal study of the form *The Vagaries of the Qasidah* (1997).

Tengour’s Mediterraneanization of lyric with “La sandale d’Empédocle” is threefold: (1) he reinscribes the genre-in-translation within the domain of classical Greco-Roman poetics and philosophy; (2) he invents the poem’s architecture through a reimagination of the stations of the *qaṣīda*, reshaping “that old formal ghost,” “invisible for the reader” (Joris 2009: 22–23); and (3) he contributes to our understandings of lyric through a carefully constructed tension between the relationship of the *lyrisches Ich* to the post/modern world, for he inscribes an exergue from Hölderlin’s unfinished drama, *Der Tod des Empedokles* (1797–1800), at the beginning of his poem (Tengour 1993: 77).

At first glance, there may appear to be no indication that Tengour’s text is based on the thematic movements of the *qaṣīda*, or that it is no more than an ode to the post/modern condition or a homage to Hölderlin. Yet he inscribes the poetics of his lyric at the site of ruins and traces (Ar. *aṭlāl*), which forms the classical opening trope of the *qaṣīda*. Tengour’s poem generates a chronotope that links the *qaṣīda* to elegiac discourses (Weber 1955: 400–416) from Renaissance Pléiade poetics (Du Bellay’s *Les Antiquités de Rome* and *Les Regrets*, for example) to Germanic poetic modernity. In this light, the first line of the poem:

Traces/Renown/Shades/Urns/Life(s)/Epoch/Zenith/Lucid/  
Strangely/Suspended (trans. Joris 2009: 20)

unravels an unexpected pronouncement: it announces the different movements of the *qaṣīda*, and the different poetic themes through which the postmodern poet of old lyric forms will proceed.

In 1990, a few years before Tengour’s compositional forays into the multilinear, transhistorical comparative poetics of the Mediterranean, Emmanuel Hocquard published *Les Élégies*, a suite of seven numbered,

untitled elegies, whose intertextual and historical references include Spurius Maelius, Aurelia Orestilla, Plotinus, Strabo, Theocritus (Hocquard 1979: 27, 77, 83, 101, 137), Ptolemy, Ovid, and Lysias (Hocquard 1990: 29, 49, 73). Hocquard first collected some of these elegies in previous publications: “Élégie 1” through “Élégie 4” were first interlayered against other pieces in *Les Dernières nouvelles de l’expédition sont datées du 15 février 17...: élégies et autres pièces* (1979), and “Élégie 5” appeared in *Un privé à Tanger* (1987), the first of Hocquard’s two main collections of critical writings.

The focal point concentrated in the image of the Strait of Gibraltar forms a crucial nexus in Hocquard’s writing of the Mediterranean. Born in Cannes but raised in Tangiers, he first develops at length his vision of a Mediterranean poetics in *Album d’images de la villa Harris* (1978), then expands it in *Une journée dans le détroit: récit* (1980). Here, I will focus on one discrete grammatical and typographical aspect of Hocquard’s elegies in order to demonstrate a divergent mode of Mediterranean lyric that may at first appear anti-lyric in its resolute opposition to writing the subject and to engaging lyric’s figurative framework of enunciation.<sup>7</sup> Hocquard does not read as lyric right off the page, though his writing remains embroiled with the “challenge of lyricism,” in Glenn Fetzer’s expression (2005). A closer look reveals Hocquard to be only too engaged with lyric, and conscious of the enunciating subject’s disappearance in and from the world.

Tengour’s formal work in “La sandale d’Empédocle” may complicate our understanding of Mediterranean literature and lyric across history and languages, but his modes of enunciation never veer far from the figurative framework of the *lyrisches Ich*. Hocquard, on the other hand, makes extensive usage of a typographical mode of enunciation—the parenthetical—in order to actively “disappear” the lyric subject (*être*, being) from the world. The first time Hocquard makes use of this parenthetical mode occurs at the end of “Élégie 2.”

<sup>7</sup>Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins’s discussion of “Avant-garde Anti-lyricism” (2014: 451–459) is illuminating in this regard. An “anti-lyric” move by a poet such as Hocquard “makes it possible to see how readers and writers committed to this strain of anti-lyricism are part of the very tradition they critique” (7). Commenting on Marjorie Perloff’s “Can(n)on to the Right of Us, Can(n)on to the Left of Us: A Plea for Difference” (1987), they suggest that such a view on “avant-garde poetics would not be anti-lyrical” in the literal sense of the term, but would propose “a lyric in a way we have yet to learn to recognize as such” (454), “sustain[ing] an expanded sense of the lyric in [...] new critical practices” (456).

A présent nous voici au cœur de l'hiver  
 Un lieu doublement enfoncé dans (effacé de) l'histoire (Hocquard 1990: 35)

[ Here we are now in the heart of winter  
 A place doubly sunk in (effaced from) history]

Henceforth parenthetical effacements haunt Hocquard's elegies.

le jardin  
 (est) un jardin d'hiver (39)

« Ses os (était) de jade » (44)  
 aucune fleur (n'est) colorée (47)

la Saint-Jean (sera)  
 le signal (51)

[ the garden  
 (is) a winter garden]

“His bones (were) of jade”  
 no flower (is [not]) colored

the Saint-Jean [holiday] (will be)  
 the signal]

Hocquard's elegies draw visual attention to the superfluity of the verb *être*: “to be” is the weakest verb in our languages, and in a language such as the Arabic that ghosts Tengour's poetic composition, its present tense is rarely ever used, even frequently grammatically impossible to parse within a line. Hocquard would agree. Here he writes in “La notion d'objet” about his grammar lessons as a child in Tangiers.

La grammaire du lycée Regnault distinguait trois ordres de verbes: les *verbes d'état* (dormir), les *verbes de changement d'état* (maigrir) et les *verbes d'action* (enfoncer).

Quant à *être*, qui est habituellement rangé parmi les verbes d'état, il n'appartient, me semble-il, à aucun des trois ordres. Il est même discutable que ce soit un verbe. Il est le cœur de la tautologie. *Avant le sens*. (Hocquard 2012: n.p.)

[The grammar manual at the Lycée Regnault distinguished three orders of verbs: *stative verbs* (to sleep), *progressive verbs* (to lose weight), and *dynamic verbs* (to thrust).

As for *to be*, which is usually classified among the stative verbs, it does not belong, it seems to me, to any of the three orders. It is even questionable as to whether it is a verb at all. It is the heart of tautology. *Before* meaning.]

This brings us to Hocquard's most extreme stretching of the effacement of existence, the finest example of how his parenthetical poetics expands but only to enclose, efface, and subsume an entire semantic unit. In "Élégie 4," for example.

|            |                                    |  |
|------------|------------------------------------|--|
| MAINTENANT | les feuilles<br>somb<br>e      s   |  |
| rien       | ou à peine<br>d'autres<br>souvenir | le souvenir<br><br>s (Hocquard 1990: 58) |

Here and now, something new and untranslatable is happening. In the broken lines, "MAINTENANT/les feuilles/sombr/e s," *e s*, as the second person indicative singular of the verb *être*, doubles as a grammatical plural ending to "sombres" ("the dark leaves"). Hocquard also stresses the second-person indicative present of *être*, *es*: the horizontal ocular stretch, the white space that separates the letters *e* and *s* from one another. At its most extreme, the verb *être* is reduced to the unsounded, closing *s*, historically elided in the form of the circumflex accent from the Middle French *estre*, and in an ultimate stroke of sense-effacement, Hocquard provocatively writes in *Théorie des tables*: "Une robe es rouge" (Hocquard 1992: 44)—"A dress are red," as his American translator Michael Palmer puts it.

The detached grammatical prosody of Hocquard's *Les Élégies* forms a sharp contrast to Tengour's generic, lyric, translational rewritings of the Mediterranean region's historical literary forms. In a third instance, we may situate Serge Pey's Mediterranean lyric somewhere in between Tengour's transhistorical formal work and Hocquard's extreme graphic prosody. Even though Pey engages immediate political upheaval in his work (seemingly going against the grain of Agamben's theorization of the

contemporary: that is, to be a contemporary, one cannot coincide with one's own time), he is deeply indebted to surrealist poetics to a point of anachronism: to be a surrealist when there no longer are any surrealists, to be a surrealist after surrealism. Pey's project seeks to understand the present through the philosophical poetic aesthetics of the past, as in the invective political commitment of his chapbook, *Interrogatoire* (1995), to which he gives the long subtitle *poème pour les assassins de Tahar Djaout, Rabah Zenati, Abdelhamid Benmenni Ammi Marengo Saad Bakhtaou Abderrahmane Chergou Djamel Bouhidel Mustapha Abada Smaïl Yefsah Mustapha Saddouki Hamoud Hambli Rabah Guenzent Laadi Flici Mahfoud Boucebcı Djilali Belkhenchir Abdelkader Alloula et les autres...* Pey benefited from the support of Centre international de poésie Marseille (cipM), the major Mediterranean hub for poetic creation, where he composed *Interrogatoire* while in residency between July 1, 1993 and January 30, 1994. His time at cipM closely coincided with the assassination of Algerian poet and novelist Tahar Djaout, who was attacked on May 26, 1993 by the Armed Islamic Group, dying a week later on June 2 after falling in a coma.

Pey is an iconoclastic figure in the landscape of contemporary poetics. He is committed to the vein of ethnopoetics expounded by American poet Jerome Rothenberg (b. New York 1938), he is president of the Cave Poésie René Gouzenne in Toulouse (perhaps the last European outpost of the avant-garde in the Dadaist and surrealist traditions), and leads a radical political creative writing and performance workshop at the Université Toulouse 2-Jean Jaurès on *poésie d'action* (action poetry) at the Centre d'Initiatives Artistiques du Mirail (CIAM). As a performance and visual artist, Pey champions a live form of ritualized lyric performance and enunciation, which, in its insistence on the first person and a Sartrean ideology of speech as act (*parler c'est agir*), resists the grammatical asceticism of such French verse as Hocquard's, and has no pretense of engaging generic literary transhistoricity, translation, and intertextuality in the breadths and scopes of either Tengour or Hocquard. He binds his paradoxical lyric to the present moment, producing an experiential lyric of circumstance that he complicates with his fidelity to the internationalist legacies and revolutionary reach of surrealism, which Tengour's "Le surréalisme maghrébin" (2012a: 156) outlines. The question of referentiality to daily life has been a touchy topic for surrealist poetics at least since the fracas triggered by the French author Louis Aragon's publication in 1931 of the poem "Front rouge" in *Littérature de la révolution mondiale*, which was edited by the

Moscow-based Union internationale des écrivains révolutionnaires. The scandal operated on two levels: a public one that involved the legal prosecution of Aragon, and a second one internal to the fluid blend of aesthetics and politics within the surrealist group. There was public outrage at the poem's vicious opening and its depiction of bourgeois vanity, and Aragon even faced legal prosecution owing to the poem's violent call for the murder of "all the social-fascist doctors," to its unequivocal "Fire on Léon Blum/Fire on Boncour Frossard Déat" (Aragon 2007: 496). Aragon's poem was the source of a serious rift within surrealism that culminated with his decisive move into the world of realist historical fiction in 1934. While the surrealist group rallied in a public show of support of Aragon's poem, the group's leading theoretician André Breton found himself in an aesthetically and philosophically compromising position. On the one hand, he defended Aragon for a poem that he found bereft of any enduring poetico-philosophical merit, while at the same time lodging deep within his public defense of Aragon an important critique of contemporary *engagé* poetics: the referentiality of Aragon's poem and its "return to the exterior subject" conflicted with Breton's vision of poetic evolution (Breton 1964: 352).

At the time of its publication, Serge Pey's *Interrogatoire* situated itself at the withering tail end of surrealism's polemical history. Pey's style bears all the hallmarks of surrealist aesthetics: shocking and incongruous images, scatology, dark crude humor, automatic writing, dreamlike illogic. A long, meditative interrogation of death and the impulse to murder, the chapbook is composed of two, stele-like columns. Its lyricism stems both from the transhistoricity of surrealist poetic expression, and from what Stanley Fish describes as acts of recognition, "the fact of its [a poem] being recognized as a poem in the first place" (Fish 1980: 322).

[...]

"A house for Tahar Djaout

"A chair for Rabah Zenati

"A bed for Abdelhamid Benmenni

"A shoe for Ammi Marengo

"A shirt for Saad Bakhtaoui

[...]

Where we were reciting the red alphabets  
with T.B., A.L., A., J.B., M.G., A.S., H.S.,  
A. C.,

and Kateb Yacine (Pey 1995: 17, 22)

Pey further imbues his long poem with a recognizable elegiac mode in the form of litanies of inscribed names and initials (32–33, 35), which list the names of the Algerian deceased. He erects a visual lyric, an elegiac homage to the secular proponents of the Algerian revolution.

When read together, Tengour, Hocquard, and Pey illustrate the divergent, intertwined paths that modern Mediterranean lyric may follow in the francoarab context. In his ongoing poetic project today, Tengour continues to reimagine the Arabic *qaṣīda* within the context of Mediterranean literature and lyric, as with his 2006 chapbook *Césure*. That same year, Hocquard spent a three-month residency at the Institut français de Tanger Tétouan sponsored by the cipM, where he started the composition of a five-volume book cycle, *Une grammaire de Tanger* (2006–2012). In it, he condenses his lifelong career of back-and-forth writings, rewritings, and effacements, between and across both shores of the Mediterranean, and especially via his peregrinations through and across the Strait of Gibraltar. Pey persists with his anachronistic mode of surrealist writing and performance in Toulouse and across the Global South. The poet-historian Jean-Michel Maulpoix (b. Montbéliard 1952) once riffed off a line found in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem "To the Oracle at Delphi," which the American poet (b. Bronxville 1919) and founder of City Lights brings to a close with the following lines.

Far-seeing Sybil, forever hidden,  
Come out of your cave at last  
And speak to us in the poet's voice  
*the voice of the fourth person singular*  
the voice of the inscrutable future (Ferlinghetti 2001: 93; my emphasis)

Echoing a general critical consensus on the "indefinition" of poetry and lyric (Gleize 2009: 54; Stétié 2004: 250), Maulpoix observes outright, in a move fraught with poetic shock value, that "the lyric subject does not exist." But, he qualifies, in a nod to the figurative framework of the enunciation,

neither does the fourth person singular imagined by Ferlinghetti, which appears to be the only way to conjugate all [poetic] figures. This fourth person is neither the biographical 'I' of the individual, nor the dramatic 'you' of dialogue, nor the epic or novelistic 'he,' but a potential and contradictory person that these three instances 'work' together, in orchestration. (Maulpoix 1996: 153)

It seems to me that a literature of the Mediterranean, lyric especially, with its concerted orchestrations of multiple linguistic, generic, aesthetic, and historical figures, may hold the key to this impossible new fourth mode.

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## Afterward: Critical Mediterranean Times

*Edwige Tamalet Talbayev*

*And the more I think about it, the more I find it extraordinary that Burt Lancaster, who was so often perceived as an “aristocrat” in the film industry, was in fact born in New York in 1913, the son of Anglo-Irish immigrants, and pieced together these two identities coexisting in the name Lampedusa: he is the prince and the migrant. Maylis de Kerangal, à ce stade de la nuit (2015: 18)*

With these musings on the ambivalent aura of Burt Lancaster in two of his most evocative roles in the 1960s, French writer Maylis de Kerangal’s *à ce stade de la nuit*—an oneiric, deeply affective response to the capsizing of a migrant boat near Lampedusa in October 2013—offers an unexpected reflection on the double bind of Mediterranean melancholia in times of crisis and affiliative rupture. The enduring Mediterranean temporal crisis the narrative pinpoints is knotted around two iconic, historically resounding moments of loss associated with the evocative name Lampedusa, each embodied by one of Lancaster’s most revered thespian compositions: Don Fabrizio Salina in Luchino Visconti’s 1963 adaptation of the masterpiece *Il Gattopardo* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa; and Ned Merrill, the athletic, well-heeled, if discontented, protagonist of Frank Perry’s 1968

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E. T. Talbayev (✉)  
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, USA

*The Swimmer*, who sets out on a quest to swim his way home from a friend's pool across other residential swimming pools through the affluent valley that separates both estates. If the conflation between Perry's film, set in Connecticut, and Lampedusa might seem tenuous at first, de Kerangal establishes it through the (not unproblematic) construal of Merrill himself as a synecdoche for the 300 real-life migrants swallowed by the voracious sea on that October night in proximity to the island, an embodiment of the "damaged migrant following an increasingly painful trajectory, an itinerary crippling his body, making it sore and feeble while he himself feels progressively alienated from the world around him, doubting his own reality" (17). The prince and the (universal) migrant: Burt Lancaster's sober acting register brings both of them to life, illuminating their transhistorical, imaginative entanglements with Mediterranean narratives of loss and coming of age in the time of modernity.

The thread tensely stretched between both cataclysmic moments is tied around the foundational episode of loss experienced by Visconti's protagonist: in de Kerangal's reading, the moment when Don Fabrizio, the prince, welcomes Don Calogero, an enriched businessman on an unstoppable rise to power, only to realize that his visitor will eventually dispossess him of his entrenched, hereditary privilege. At the end of the scene, as Don Calogero prepares to make his way to the family's living quarters, Don Fabrizio's demeanor grows distant, almost wistful, in sharp contrast to his earlier playful deriding of Don Calogero's appearance. De Kerangal reads this shift as the tipping point in the narrative, the moment when it becomes clear that "the Sicilian aristocracy is capsizing" (15). This seemingly innocuous scene thus provides a glimpse into the dual nature of Mediterranean melancholia: as the mournful sentiment elicited in the viewer in response to the elegiac loss of an easily circumscribable and often mystified past that is being dispelled by the passing of time;<sup>1</sup> but also, and maybe more important, the ominous sense of dread permeating Don Fabrizio's own gradual realization. For, in de Kerangal's words, his is "a gaze overcast with melancholia, he is already in death" (14). On the cusp of this historical watershed, it is no accident that her focus should fall on

<sup>1</sup> This feeling is reminiscent of the nostalgia for the Mediterranean cosmopolitan ethos that was brought to a close by the advent of nationalist processes (Ben-Yehoyada 2014). In fact, upon watching the restored version of the film, de Kerangal confesses her nostalgia for the lost nasal accents resounding throughout the earlier French dubbing of the dialogue. She perceives these anachronistic voices as incarnations of the passing of time according to shared, mutually recognizable standards.

Lancaster's eyes, "of a liquid blue [...] prob[ing] this interior space of vacillation and confusion" (15).<sup>2</sup> Only his eyes betray the deep sense of alienation permeating his character—his deep position of estrangement reflective of his own malleability as an actor, but also of Don Fabrizio's removal from the timeline of a historical modernity in the making. Through his eyes, his bereavement is enacted. It unhinges his persona from the certainty of his smile, negating its confident anticipation of the unfolding of time. By prioritizing the gaze over the smile, the uncertain over the programmatic, de Kerangal's reading reclaims the performativity, the non-coincidence between subject and time, a critical outlook that highlights the fundamental vacillation of the subject's assured anchoring in a stable, ordered form of reality.

This intuitive excavation of Burt Lancaster's look brings to light the complex, paradoxical position of dispossessed modern Mediterranean subjects with regard to their own sense of historical existence. Beyond that, it sheds light on this volume's critical methodology in relation to history and experiences of historicity in the modern Mediterranean. Despite the temporal distance and the jarring historical contexts separating them, Visconti's character and the dehistoricized migrant that de Kerangal adjoins to him are but "two versions of the same humanity" (17). They incarnate the enduring tension uniting land and sea in its contrasting embrace: "the ornate and the bare, the land ownership and the dream, the earth and the water, the continuous and the discontinuous, time and the instant," all antipodal pairs positioned to better set off the common sorrow, a "fathomless *tristesse*" (17), afflicting them. Although tethered to spaces of a different nature, the prince and the migrant share common ground in their alienation from a society in the process of excluding them. Reconciled through their common estrangement, their disparate yet cognate experiences delineate a spectrum of dispossession cutting across polarized models of identity. Undoing the binarisms of sea versus land and migrant versus aristocrat, this shared crisis of temporality layers otherwise incompatible subjectivities in a variegated space partaking of both physical realms—a terraqueous continuum, possibly akin to Massimo Cacciari's concept of the *archi-pélagos* with which Claudio Fogu concludes his essay, wherein

<sup>2</sup> Although her narrative is unclear on this point, it is possible that de Kerangal is here conflating the greeting scene, in which the audience is denied a clear view of Lancaster's eyes, with the close-up shot at the end of the ball that shows the prince gazing at himself in a side room mirror, tears rolling down his cheeks.

notions of emplacement and a geographically deployed Mediterranean give way to considerations of timeliness and conflicting models of historical existence in modernity.

Paradigmatic Mediterranean subjects at the height of crisis, the prince and the migrant come into full view as melancholic personas interweaving various registers of time. They are two salient examples of the kind of subjectivities and timeliness afforded by the recurring moments of violence that have made the history of the sea and its hinterlands: from piracy and slavery in the medieval and early modern periods, to colonial incursions, annexations, and nationalist nation-building efforts. Rather than helping us define what a Mediterranean modernity is or could be in strictly historiographical terms, the subjects' bereavements cast new light on the notion of subjective time. From the stance of trauma or other colocations of historicity and chronological unfolding, they foreground the relevance of a *critical* rather than strictly historiographical methodology; that is, a model stemming from the specific temporality of *crisis*, with which it shares significant semantic grounds.

This critical effort should not be construed as being ahistorical. If it is entangled with the "Mediterranean poetics of history" that Fogu develops in relation to Franco Cassano's *Southern Thought* in his contribution to this volume, it also extends beyond it by laying claim to historicity and agency in the postlapsarian context of contemporary politics. In contrast to dominant teleological conceptions of history, this volume's critical engagement with historicity is not based on events or *longue durée* blocs of time. It proceeds from singular knottings of subjective experiences of time following from moments of undoing, when violence and trauma subvert and upend dominant modes of temporal dwelling. Bearing in mind the layered temporalities that this volume investigates, dwelling may be defined as a form of existence encompassing both "brevity and eternity, delaying and remaining, the temporal and the physical" (Elhariry 2014: 134). In the context of Yasser Elhariry's analysis of Edmond Jabès's Cairene poetic corpus, dwelling underscores the texts' propensity to being "placeless and untimely: subject to continuous revising," while gesturing toward "temporal simultaneity" (130)—and, one might add, incommensurability between the poet's various temporal registers. For the poet's concern with belonging, first approached through the lens of exile and movement, engages his sense of place, as well as his racking uncertainties regarding his own perennity in the *longue durée* of literary tradition. This reflection on belonging also portends the shift from the spatialization of experiences of

dwelling to the restoration of their chronological dimension, entwining the apprehension of place and its associated reflection on liminality with a thorough consideration of temporal frames. It performs what Elhariry has dubbed the “temporalization of *demeure* [dwelling ... as a pendant] to what Heidegger calls ‘a double space-making’ in which one may in all fullness truly dwell” (136). From this resemanticization of “dwelling,” models of temporal layering surge to the surface, forming “neither synchrony nor diachrony, [but] an anachrony of all instants” (Jacques Derrida quoted in Elhariry 136).

Undoubtedly, this embedding of temporal and spatial dimensions is not particular to Jabès’s poetical output. A similar permutation informs de Kerangal’s appropriation of place in the Mediterranean. Against the well-known trope of Mediterranean landscapes in literary texts concerned with the perpetuation of orientalist visions of the sea as a pristine, untouched site of felicitous barbarity, de Kerangal’s revisitation of spatial Mediterraneans executes its own model of temporalization. Through the excavation of repressed levels of consciousness, it welds the exhuming of memory to the physical experience of the land. The object of intuitive insight into the true nature of things, de Kerangal’s landscape rises above considerations of sensoriness—through the touch or even sight. It is the repository of a “mnestic substance” (2015: 52), retrievable only through an affective process, as is witnessed in the rich polysemy of the line “nous [l’] éprouvons” as both “we feel it” and “we put it to the test.” As de Kerangal confesses, “I like the idea that the experience of memory, in other words, the *act* of remembering, turns places into landscapes, transforms illegible spaces into narratives” (53).

This alternative form of narrativization relays experiences running counter to the meta-narratives of a teleological form of history. Critical Mediterranean stories thrive in these gaps,<sup>3</sup> these sites of discrepancy whose elucidation requires alternate reading grids that are more attuned to human experiences. In this context, anamnesis, which is but another name for the “act of remembering” portrayed by de Kerangal, illuminates that which has heretofore been obscured. It shifts the focus from

<sup>3</sup> “Gaps” is the English translation of François Hartog’s concept of *brèches*. Hartog borrows the concept from Hannah Arendt’s *Between Past and Future*, where it is defined as a moment “in historical time, during which one becomes aware of an interval in time which is entirely determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet” (Arendt 1993: 9).



meta-narratives informed by teleological templates to subjective self-narratives. At the same time, it revitalizes alienated forms of cultural memory and commits singular experiences to writing. This shift recasts literature as the depository of these silenced testimonies, of other experiences of time. The Mediterranean materializes as “a repository of ostracized memory,” a “politicized seabed,” “a broad rallying space for the host of side-lined political inscriptions” (Bugeja in this volume). Its emergence holds forth a counterhistory, whose “connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch 2012: 5). In this imaginative topography, Lampedusa figures in good place as the infamous tragedies that have beset it have turned it into an iconic locus of resistance. On the edge of modernity, lying on its ever-elusive threshold, Lampedusa shines as a beacon of solidarity and humanity, a symptom of “the condition of the world, a completely different kind of narrative” (de Kerangal 2015: 74).

As the introduction to this volume has suggested, being *critically Mediterranean*, in the context of the Mediterranean modern postulated and critiqued by our contributors, requires bridging the gap (*brèche*) between the pervasive sense of precarity fracturing the region and the creation of conditions favorable to critical interventions geared towards dialogue and future-oriented collective politics.<sup>4</sup> As current scholarship points the spotlight on the exhaustion of history as a narrative of progress and social advancement, it is urgent to devise a heuristics cognizant of the “afterwardly self-consciousness and [...] melancholic outcomes” at work in the Mediterranean and dedicated to “operate against the perilous tide of a prolonged alienation of political memory” (Bugeja in this volume).<sup>5</sup> In order to stand the chance of possible success, this delicate balancing act necessitates the promise of a different form of history where resurgent memories can develop at an angle to national forms and ascriptions. This heuristics also requires lending a voice to singular, posttraumatic forms of cultural memory to formulate a mode of historicity lying beyond the fractures and limitations imposed by moments of crisis and violent dissolution. Ultimately, this project entails restoring the thwarted dimension of

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Bugeja; Shannon; Abderrezak.

<sup>5</sup> As his contribution makes clear, Norbert Bugeja’s use of the concept of the “afterwardly” channels Jean Laplanche’s argument on the psychoanalytical concept of *l’après-coup*. The complex intersection of anamnesis, melancholia, and their resonance as a political act has also been studied in Eng and Kazanjian (2003), Khanna (2008), Gana (2011), Talbayev (2017).

the future to Mediterranean subjects' sense of time, in order to nurture a possible praxis to come. To borrow Ernst Bloch's paradigm, this involves rekindling a "principle of hope" in subjective experiences of historicity bereft of any form of forward-looking yearning, that is, rescripting longing not just as retrospective nostalgia but also and concomitantly as prospective "anticipatory consciousness" (Bloch 1986). In the remaining pages, I would like to delve deeper into the critical potential of the Mediterranean as concept for reflections on history and temporality.

Reinhardt Koselleck has argued that "hope and memory, or expressed more generally, expectation and experience—for expectation comprehends more than hope, and experience goes deeper than memory—simultaneously constitute history and its cognition [... they] provide guidance to concrete agencies in the course of social or political movement" (Koselleck 1985: 270–71). Discussing the conditions needed for historical time to emerge, François Hartog emphasizes the necessity of maintaining unresolved tensions between the two poles identified by Koselleck: it is in the gaps and in the opposite undertow of past and future, beyond any dialectical thrust for sublation, that historical time unfolds. In this reprise of Koselleck, experience is past made present, awareness and remembrance, construction of memory. In turn, expectation is future infiltrating the present. It is "personal and interpersonal" (Hartog 2015: 272), the smallest possible unit conditioning intersubjective relationality. Without awareness of both the past of the wound (*trauma*) and the ever-delayed future of hope, time stagnates, mired in the suspension of belief, forever arrested in the instant.

Working under the assumption that the contemporary present differs in substance and density from previous presents, Hartog postulates the existence of a contemporary "regime" of disorientation in which both past and future have been curtailed to the benefit of an "omnipresent present ('omnipresent' like 'omnivorous')" (xviii). Although variegated in its experiential dimension, its obliterating movement has cannibalized any fulfilling, grounding experience of time, leaving in its trail dereliction and a crisis of historical existence. This all-encompassing "presentism" (xviii) is declined across a wide spectrum ranging from empowerment to powerlessness, agency to obliteration, pitting vast swaths of population against one another in an increasingly fractured world. Whether a present of opulence and global mobility for those born on one side of the North/South divide or a present of destitution and loss elsewhere, this depleted present

languishes at a juncture where the past is only experienced as a liability, while the future recedes in an ominous horizon of hopelessness.

In contrast, Hartog's reliance on the concept of "regimes of historicity" engages with what he fashions, following Michel De Certeau, as "the discursivity of understanding" (xviii). Hartog's concept distances itself from "a notion of history driven by a single time, whether this is the *staccato* of the event or, at the other extreme, the immobility of the long or very long *durée*" (16). In its stead, his concept foregrounds pluralized and desynchronized time as a segue from Fernand Braudel's musings on the polyphony of Mediterranean time (Braudel 1958). Of critical importance for the study of the modern Mediterranean, Hartog's concept operates as "a heuristic tool which can help us reach a better understanding [...] of moments of crisis of time" (16), wherein the articulation of future, past, and present flounders. Hartog emphasizes an "en-deçà de l'histoire": something short of history, be it "a genre or a discipline"; something rooted in "an experience or experiences of time" (17).<sup>6</sup> In its French acceptance, the vocable *régime* intimates a probing of "the idea of degrees, of more or less, of mixtures and composites, and an always provisional or unstable equilibrium" (xv). It evokes a free-evolving layering of time. It blurs the demarcation lines between the past, the present, and the future, whose collocations follow fluctuating degrees of dominance. *Régime* thus opens the door to anachronism as a privileged mode of relation to reality.<sup>7</sup>

Against the grain of a teleological notion of temporality tethered to scientific criteria, Hartog's election of "historicity" as an ordering principle brings the spotlight on the human element of temporal dwellings, "the human being's self-awareness as a historical being, on his finitude, on his openness towards the future [...] this primary experience of *estrangement*,

<sup>6</sup>The French quote appears in Hartog (2003: 27). Saskia Brown translates this "en-deçà de l'histoire" as "something not yet history" (Hartog 2015: 17), but in my opinion the determinism implied by her translation is missing from the original French.

<sup>7</sup>On the anachronism of contemporariness, Agamben writes, "Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it [...] through a disjunction and an anachronism. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it" (Agamben 2009: 41). Like Don Fabrizio laying his eyes on an unstoppable Don Calogero and measuring his own undoing in the shrinking distance separating them, the ability to approach one's epoch from a perspective of remove is a resounding mandate of the kind of Mediterranean critical practice that this volume suggests.

or distance between self and self, to which the categories of past, present, and future give order and meaning” (xv–xvi). This primordial estrangement restores the subject to the core of a critical process focused on contingent experiences of time and resemanticizes him as a *guetteur*, “vigilantly watch[ing] over the present” (xvii). Hartog’s non-dialectical, non-universal take on history brings otherness to its core—otherness to oneself as the fundamental estrangement of the subject’s experiential take on history, but also non-concomitance of the paradigm to itself. By setting contradictory historicities in tension, Hartog’s critique of historical meta-narrative reframes history along more capacious lines. It productively intersects with the mandates intrinsic to a Mediterranean critique of time. Hartog’s emphasis on historicity rather than history is inclusive of posttraumatic singular self-narratives. It downplays rigid taxonomies anchored to the sequential time of modernity. But most of all, it highlights the performativity intrinsic to any reckoning of Mediterranean time, and heralds the foundational contingency and otherness to itself of the Mediterranean critical category that this volume delineates.

Undoing considerations of genealogy and grounding in the canon of disciplinary discourses (through affiliation with Mediterraneanism, Mediterranean history, and other such ordering concepts), our critical Mediterranean highlights the performativity of a reality being formed as it is articulated. Cognizant of the *longue durée* of a traumatic past and pointing forward to Koselleck’s expectation, it gives shape to fluctuating knottings of time resting on singular, cross-sectional “experienced time-units” (Norbert Elias, quoted in Hartog 2015: 211, n57). By so doing, it encourages the critical rememorialization of past moments of disavowal besetting the Mediterranean subject’s sense of historicity with an eye to political self-affirmation. Denying the possible failure of its endeavor, it rescripts the order of time as “the interval ... between an injustice and its punishment or redress” (Hartog 2015: 11). It bespeaks the need to effect the reutopianization of disoriented history, to restore an “anticipatory consciousness” longing for a future of accountability. For as Bill Ashcroft has suggested in his study of postcolonial utopias, “memory is not about recovering a past but about the production of possibility—memory is a recreation, not a looking backwards, but a reaching out to a horizon, somewhere ‘out there’” (Ashcroft 2009: 706). It chooses as its object other histories, other archives, other reckonings of modernity to relate. The history of the bodies dotting the seabed (Abderrezak’s chapter), the history of the vicissitudes of a submerged statue found in a contentious

maritime zone (Ben Yehoyada's chapter), or even the literary history of lyric, traced through its multiple incarnations in the corpus of Mediterranean literature written in French (elhariry's chapter)—all crystallize an alternate relation to historicity based on textual constructs and plural imaginaries. They foreground a story of hope or despair, a call for action, a space of self-fashioning and multiple fictionalizations of historicity. They emphasize the insistence on auctorial prerogative rather than objectification. They materialize in an anticipatory consciousness feeding from the ferment of the past, in a cultural memory that is respectful of singularized temporal dwelling and that delineates a future alternative to national ascriptions. Through a “prophetic vision of the past” (Glissant 1997: 15), they leave room for postlapsarian incarnations of a revitalized, indispensable utopianism that has survived the crises and failures of Mediterranean nationalisms—be it postindependence, postunification, or postkemalism in Turkey. Rather than illustrate what a history of the modern Mediterranean would look like, they have staged a performance of time that underlies the deployment of the Mediterranean as a critical category.

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