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Introduction

Mediterranean Literary Studies – Definitions, Purpose, and Applications

1 The Mediterranean as a System

The study of the Mediterranean region has long since become a classical field of research, and is well established in the academic world, especially in Historical Studies. This can be seen in the existence of numerous standard scholarly works, such as Fernand Braudel's magnum opus *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Peregrine Horden's and Nicholas Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* or David Abulafia's *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean*, to cite just a few particularly prominent texts as examples. Fernand Braudel's role here is that of a founding figure, for he demonstrated that the Mediterranean region shares a unity based on climatic and natural features and that these natural conditions decisively shape Mediterranean civilizations and their history. Braudel thus formulated, on the one hand, the dependence of history on nature and, on the other hand, the need to understand Mediterranean history not only as a sequence of events but also as a manifestation of the overall Mediterranean system. This notion of the Mediterranean as a system whose parts are determined by their connection to the whole set a standard that has not been abandoned by recent historical research, although modern historians certainly distance themselves from Braudel's grand design. David Abulafia, for example, criticizes Braudel for neglecting the actions of people, the exchange of goods and ideas, and the relationships between cultures. The subtitle of his Mediterranean book, *A Human History of the Mediterranean*, even expresses this distancing with its emphasis on the human (as opposed to Braudel's geographical thinking). And yet, even for the British historian, the systemic idea is preserved, as one must always keep the whole in view when devoting oneself to the detail. An essay by Peregrine Horden points in a similar direction, succinctly distinguishing between two historiographical approaches to the Mediterranean. One he calls "history in the Mediterranean," by which is meant an account of individual items in the Mediterranean but not strongly reflecting the Mediterranean context; the

other, “history of the Mediterranean,” whose interest is the Mediterranean as a whole. (Horden 2005: 27)

This fundamental distinction between a systematic and an episodic approach to the history of the Mediterranean can also be applied to literature. If one wants to establish a methodologically independent literary studies of the Mediterranean, it is not enough to deal with individual texts that originated in the Mediterranean region and/or represent it. We should only speak of a Mediterranean literary studies if the context of the Mediterranean region as such comes into view. Let us briefly explain this with an example from Italian literature, namely Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel *Il gattopardo* (1958, English translation as *The Leopard*, 1960). It is a modern Italian classic that, in the background, tells the story of Sicily in the second half of the nineteenth century: beginning with the arrival of Giuseppe Garibaldi’s troops in Sicily in May 1860, it tells of the end of the rule of the Spanish Bourbons, the unification of the island with the newly founded Kingdom of Italy, the decline of the old aristocracy and the rise of new bourgeois classes linked to organized crime. The novel focuses on the fate of the family of Prince Don Fabrizio, which illustrates the impact of historical developments on the Sicilians. For long stretches of the novel, the protagonist’s point of view dominates the interpretation of events: for Don Fabrizio, the new Italian government merely continues the series of foreign dominations over Sicily, while the Sicilian population, in habitual apathy, bows its neck under a foreign yoke. Instead of being enthusiastic about the new, for the prince, this newness is only a repetition of the ever same. For him, Sicilian identity is the result of the interplay of a cyclically repeating history with the extreme nature of the island, especially the mercilessly blazing sun. Lampedusa’s novel thus sketches the image of a closed, impenetrable Sicilianity and has thus entered the canon of modern Italian national literature.

But what changes if *Il gattopardo* is considered a Mediterranean novel, or if it is analyzed from a Mediterranean point of view? It is clear, first and foremost, that such an analysis must read the novel against the grain, that is, it must uncover repressed and hidden relationships between Sicily and the Mediterranean that are rather concealed in the novel. Thus, instead of seeing the work solely in the context of Italy’s national history, one could take the prince’s statements about the series of conquerors of Sicily as an opportunity to critically inquire how differentiated this view of the so-called invaders is in the first place. The text goes to great lengths to construct an intrinsically rigid Sicilian identity, demarcated from the nation-state of Italy as much as from the island’s Mediterranean environment – but we need not adopt this construction; we can expose it as an ideology, explore its causes and functions. A critical deconstruction of the discourse of identity would be able to recognize the radical distinction made in the novel between the Sicilians and their Mediterranean conquerors as a form of historical falsifica-

tion; it would thus allow us to pose the question of Sicily's relationship to the rest of the Mediterranean in a new way. From a methodological point of view, other texts could be consulted that offer alternative historical narratives, or *Il gattopardo* could be compared with works of other Mediterranean literatures to identify commonalities, etc. In any case, the viewpoint of national philology would have to be abandoned and replaced by a decidedly Mediterranean contextualization. As Sharon Kinoshita urged with regard to other literary phenomena, abandoning the confines of national philology is absolutely necessary if such relationships are to be given space. Indeed, national historiography and single-language limitations must be replaced by transnational and pluri- or translingual approaches (Kinoshita 2009, 602; Kinoshita 2014, 314; Akbari 2013, 5) if the real textual, cultural, and other interconnections of the Mediterranean are to be adequately addressed. The strong contemporary interest in Mediterranean studies is probably due in part to the fact that we live in an era of migration, decolonization, and globalization, in which nation-states continue to perform important functions but no longer have the integrative power to create comprehensive identities. This explains the fascination with the comparative, transnational challenges of Mediterranean literatures.

2 Memories and Identities

In addition to a comparative approach, which is capable of uncovering relationships between the literatures and languages of the Mediterranean region, memory studies, as established in the German-speaking world by Jan Assmann (e.g., Assmann 2011) and Aleida Assmann (e.g., Assmann 1993) who developed the methods of Maurice Halbwachs (1925; 1939), are of outstanding methodological importance. The basic assumption is that the social cohesion of groups – which also include states – is created by collective processes of memory. These procedures include, among other things, the creation of canons that define, for example, what is to be counted as literature of a country and what is not, or which historical events are to be given special value and which are not. The founding of modern nation-states is often accompanied by a preference for certain linguistic developments and by the identification of outstanding cultural achievements that are appropriate for creating a national identity. A closer look, however, reveals that such canonization processes and memory endowments come at the expense of alternative versions. Thus, fundamental works on medieval literature (Menocal 1987; Mallette 2005) have shown that, for example, the exclusion of Arabic as a cultural language from the national memory of Italy or Spain by modern philology must be revised, because without the consideration of Arabic, which may stand here only as an example for other, similar cases, real conditions in the Middle Ages can-

not be adequately described. How Mediterranean memories are formed and what consequences this has for the identities of groups, but also for the cognition of texts, is one of the most important fields of research in Mediterranean literary studies. Cases of shared and contested memories are of particular interest in this regard: different groups may refer in their memories to certain events, dates, or epochs that have significance for their identities, but arrive at quite different evaluations. A shared Mediterranean memory is therefore always a contested, disputed memory.

Several articles in the present volume are dedicated to the analysis of Mediterranean memories. The opening article *Tales of the Adriatic* by Cristina Benussi presents a historical and geographic journey through genres and texts that narrate events set in or related to a macro-region of the Mediterranean, namely the Adriatic Sea, in what appears to be a broad literary reconnaissance extending from the manuals and portolans of Humanism to the reportages of the present. This series of selected narrative, memorial, odeporic or poetic references shows how the Adriatic area – in the different seasons that have characterized it and that are punctuated by the account of pilgrimages, voyages of discovery, conflicts, and myths that span from *The Argonautica* to Claudio Magris' Danubian readings – reflects the multiplicity of Mediterranean cultures that have scattered significant traces along its shores.

Central to Sara Izzo's contribution *Interconnected Histories and Construction of Collective Memories* are the *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora). A related analytical approach derives from the studies of Maryline Crivello who has applied the concept of *anti-lieu de mémoire* to the Mediterranean (Crivello 2010, 19), as a cross-roads of multiple narrative identities that are based on the continuous overlapping of different memories, in a constant process of inscription and reinscription, that, according to Izzo, operates in a rhizomatic vision of a palimpsest-like memory. Crivello's considerations are equally in tune with Michael Rothberg's (2010, 3) concept of the *noeuds de mémoire*, which aims to examine the interactions and conflicts that develop on a supranational scale. Izzo analyzes French and Italian travel writings in the context of the imperial and colonial expansion of the late 19th and early 20th centuries from this perspective, particularly regarding Carthage, which becomes an exemplary case of nationalistic and/or interconnected memories (with Gabriel Audisio's 1936 travelogue *Jeunesse de la Méditerranée II. Le sel de la mer* [Youth of the Mediterranean II. The Salt of the Sea] and the travel writings of Giacomo di Martino and Gualtiero Castellini).

In *A Story of Two Shores – Transnational Memory and Ottoman Legacy in Modern Greek Novels* Charikleia Magdalini Kefalidou focuses on the forms of representation of the Ottoman legacy – in terms of identity and otherness – in two Greek texts: Dido Sotiriou's biographical novel *Ματωμένα Χώματα* (Farewell Anatolia,

1962) and Soloup's graphic novel *Aivali* (2016). The era portrayed – in the wake of a series of memoirs also diversified by genre – is that of the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire between the end of the First World War and the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). From Brian Catlos' (2014, 375) historical considerations and Nicholas Doumanis' (2013) concept of intercommunalism to the places of memory theorized by Pierre Nora (1989), the contribution opens up a series of varied considerations around genre (i. e., biographies and autobiographies *in primis* and the thematization of the boundaries between reality and fiction) and different ethical approaches towards memory, on the one hand, and forms of connectedness such as intertextuality, intermediality (regarding the different semantics of the graphic novel), and especially the presence of multiple languages on the other, as a function of transnational narrative modes that hypothesize a reterritorialization (Kinoshita 2014, 314) of the area in question.

Elisabeth Stadlinger's essay *The Literary Construction of Mediterranean Identity – Memory and Myth in Maria Corti* weighs distinct aesthetic approaches in the construction of Mediterranean identity. Her references are Maria Corti's *L'ora di tutti* [Everybody's Hour], a novel in three parts that deals with the conquest of Otranto by the Ottoman Empire in 1480, and *Il canto delle sirene* [The Sirene's Song], a hybrid text that transforms ancient Mediterranean mythology (in which mermaids are timeless metaphors) into a global literary discourse. Examining memory and myth, Stadlinger's essay focuses on Maria Corti's aesthetic construction and conceptualization of the Mediterranean in relation to the two texts under consideration. The Mediterranean acquires importance in this regard as a mental space, that is, as an interaction between imagination and reality and as a symbolic construction. In this sense, for Maria Corti, the Mediterranean presents itself as a semiotic universe, based on the connectivity of knowledge.

Adrian Grima shows in his contribution *Elusive Mediterraneans – Reading beyond Nation*, that Malta presents a special case concerning the question of whether one can truly speak of a Mediterranean literature. Indeed, historical, or political circumstances can occur that create temporal interruptions or prevent an awareness of the existence of a Mediterranean literature. That seems to have happened in Malta, as Grima demonstrates. He bases his indictment on a series of negative examples that reveal forms of concealment or certain shifts in perspective. After attempts to recalibrate the national imaginary before and after Maltese independence, the 1990s reveal a clear orientation that goes beyond the regional and national. To illustrate this, Grima analyzes the poems of Antoine Cassar and the autobiographical novel *L-Eżodu taċ-ĊIkonji* (*The Exodus of the Storks*) by Walid Naban, which refer to representations of the Mediterranean on a discursive level. In doing so, the analysis follows the hypothesis of a Mediterranean literature that can function as a “heuristic tool” as proposed by Michael Herzfeld (2005) and Shar-

on Kinoshita (2017). Whether this can apply to Maltese literature, especially in relation to the question of the existence of a Mediterranean literature that avoids euro- or arabocentric traps, i.e., the barriers set by religion, remains open.

The analysis to which Steffen Schneider's contribution *The Forger as an Ambivalent Muse* subjects Leonardo Sciascia's *Il consiglio d'Egitto* (*The Council of Egypt*, 1963) illustrates a similar ambivalence of Sicily towards the Mediterranean. The novel is about the true story of a forger named Giuseppe Vella, who, in the eighteenth century, created two faked Arabic codices on the medieval history of Sicily. The prerequisite for the success of this extraordinarily popular forgery was the almost complete suppression of the island's Muslim past. Leonardo Sciascia uses the figure of the forger to revise the common interpretation of Sicilian history. In place of the fixation on the traumas of Sicily's unification with Italy, characteristic of twentieth-century literature, Sciascia sets a new, culturally open version: with Vella begins the rediscovery of Sicily's Arab history and the island's Mediterranean connections.

3 Social and Linguistic Spaces

If this introduction to the main features of a Mediterranean literary studies has been opened with a reference to the historical sciences, it is because the latter have already reached a high methodological standard of Mediterranean studies. In addition, the concept of a geographic-climatic-cultural unity of the Mediterranean (Braudel) and the notion of connectivity (Horden/Purcell) are readily adopted by literary studies. To all appearances, then, a literary study of the Mediterranean may closely rely on historical studies. However, for literary studies, following the methods of the historical sciences bears the danger of neglecting the aesthetic characteristics of literary texts.

It is therefore essential for Mediterranean literary studies to use appropriate spatial concepts to describe the fictional and non-fictional Mediterranean region. To this end, it can adapt the variety of approaches and methods that have developed in relation to the so-called spatial turn in cultural studies. It is useful to distinguish three literary manifestations of the Mediterranean space: (1) First of all, the Mediterranean Sea is a geographic space: it consists of the water as a habitat and transportation route, the surrounding coastal zone, the islands, the settlements, and the different peoples along with the languages spoken there. This space is studied by historians, geographers, biologists, and experts from other disciplines, but it also plays a role for literary scholars. (2) The space encountered in literature, however, is not reduced to this physical space, but includes its fictional representation and construction that evokes reality in different ways. (3) Finally,

the Mediterranean can also be described as a conceptual space, that is i.e., a space that in the course of the time has generated an enormous variety and abundance of ideologies, discourses, and concept about the Mediterranean. These three spaces, described in detail below, are obviously separable only in theoretical abstraction, while in the reality of the phenomena under consideration they interpenetrate and support each other.

Real space plays a role for literature to the extent that producers are taken into account: indeed, the places where authors, translators, publishers, and critics live, or the dynamics of relevant literary markets, play a significant role in the creation of literary texts. Personal networks, social conflicts, and linguistic realities shape the poetics and aesthetics of literature. The Mediterranean is abundant with such literary sites: there is the translators' school of Toledo, where the Arabic, Jewish and Latin worlds meet and share their knowledge; there is the court of Frederick II in Palermo, where the world of Occitan troubadours and Arabic poetry meets Sicilian courtiers who begin to write poetry in their vernacular and thus initiate Italy's medieval lyricism. There is the Tangier of the International Zone, where Western emigres and bohemians congregate and produce texts. There is colonial Algeria, where in the 1930s the French intellectuals Gabriel Audisio, Albert Camus, Emmanuel Roblès and others meet and decisively shape the Mediterranean thinking of the twentieth century. The conditions of literary production can be investigated with a combination of approaches and questions; for example: what are the relevant constellations and networks regarding Mediterranean literary production? Through which institutions, personalities, or networks do texts move back and forth between cultures, languages, or dominion territories? In addition to the places themselves, the movements in these spaces are of importance for literary production. Migration, flight, travel, tourism, mercantile movements, or enslavement are factors that affect the producers of literature. The experience of exile, flight, and displacement, as well as that of travel, affect the texts in different ways. Moreover, it is not only people who move through the Mediterranean, but also texts or literary materials. The study of migratory texts is of great relevance to Mediterranean literary studies because it can shed light on the extent to which there is a shared Mediterranean textual archive: which texts from a particular social group or language were actually studied, read, received by other groups in the Mediterranean? How were they adapted and modified to meet their respective cultural needs? And what role do translations play in all this?

The translation, reception and circulation of Latin and Arabic texts are investigated in Daniel G. König's contribution *Latin-Arabic Literary Entanglement and the Concept of "Mediterranean Literature"*, which proposes a possible definition of Mediterranean literature, namely as "the sum of literary themes and concrete works shared between different linguistic orbits that form part of the historical

and contemporary literary landscapes of the geographical Mediterranean". The article investigates to what extent forms of "Mediterranean literature" have emanated from the entanglement of different literary spheres, each characterized by a particular language. In view of the many languages spoken in and around the Mediterranean since prehistorical times (Grévin 2012), it is impossible to trace the history of literary entanglement both in the *longue durée* and by considering more than two linguistic systems. By focusing on the literary entanglement of Latin and Arabic, this article – written by a historian – contributes to this volume as a kind of "pre-history" and "collateral history" to the role played by Romance languages in the formation of Mediterranean literature(s).

Marianna Deganutti's *Mapping the Mediterranean with Language – Matvejević's Mediterranean Breviary* questions real space, actors, and languages in light of a range of possible classifications. Predrag Matvejević argues against a coherent and unified reading of Mediterranean space as it is subject to continuous shaping over time. For this, the author resorts to a specific literary genre, the breviary, which he interprets independently, emphasizing its accommodation of a considerable amount of information in a scattered order. In this direction, in addition to examining the similarities and differences that characterize the area (which denotes a certain affinity with the categories of connectivity and fragmentation identified by Horden and Purcell), the breviary is characterized by a variety of approaches in which linguistic interactions between neighboring or contacting civilizations (e.g., in marine lexicology) are of particular importance and allow for unconventional boundaries to be drawn around the Mediterranean space from a transnational and transdisciplinary perspective.

Karla Mallette in *Territory / Frontiers / Routes: Space, Place, and Language in the Mediterranean* focuses – in light of a series of constructive questions regarding the role of languages and literary traditions within Mediterranean Studies, in what she calls "a defining exercise" – on several key terms, in particular that of cosmopolitan language (i.e., that which makes possible the circulation of people and texts as opposed to the languages of the here and now) along with the concepts of space and place and of frontier and boundary in a discourse that intends to reconsider their specificities beyond individual disciplines such as history and geography. The time span covered via a selection of literary examples – from Alatiel's Decameronian novella to Jean-Claude Izzo's *Marseille* – is broad, reaching from the pre-modern era to the twenty-first century, and allows for the assertion that, beyond periods of intensification or attenuation, Mediterranean connectivity – and a critical vocabulary that takes into account their suggestive literary traditions – is ever-present.

4 Fictional Spaces

The relationship between text and space changes as soon as one enters the level of representation, which no longer presupposes in any way the presence of the person writing in the Mediterranean since the limitation is determined solely by the object of fiction. The fictional space both represents as well as constructs the Mediterranean or its parts. Its analysis is concerned with the semantic, aesthetic, and political values that fiction ascribes to the geographical space. Literary representations often draw on real space, using the experiences of merchants and sailors, pilgrims and warriors, to lend authenticity to their depictions. But no matter how close to reality a literary representation of the Mediterranean may be, texts always subject what is depicted to secondary coding, ascribing to it new semantic meanings and aesthetic value.

As far as literary space is concerned, although it is not possible to delve here into the large number of literary theories investigating its substance, perception, or forms of representation in relation to Mediterranean studies, some significant approaches or readings can be identified; for example, those aimed at considering space in a symbolic, moral, or religious key. This is accompanied – beginning with the Renaissance – by a vertical or horizontal perception of space through the use of pictorial or cartographic perspective until the postmodern era in which one can see the prevalence of a heterogeneous reading of space and its changing nature (e.g., according to the smooth or nomadic space codified by Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Bertrand Westphal's (2007) geocritical approach may also play a significant role in some cases for the purposes of the legibility of literary places located within or on the margins of the Mediterranean.

Of course, emphasizing the autonomy of literary representation of Mediterranean topography does not preclude literature from emphasizing the characteristics of geographic space. Regarding the *Decameron*, for example, Kinoshita notes that “this unruly patchwork of states and political actors, combined with the fragmented geography of myriad islands and rugged coastlines, made for an ideal environment for piracy and corsairing to flourish.” The same is true for its literary representation. In this regard, and in relation to the connectivity identified by Horoden and Purcell (2000) and the interdisciplinary approaches of what is informally referred to as the “California school” of Mediterranean studies (to which Brian Catlos also belongs), Sharon Kinoshita in “Avendo di servidori bisogno”: *Decameron* 5.7 and the Medieval Mediterranean Slave Trade focuses on a specific medieval novella from a demonstrative perspective. The intent is to illustrate, through precise analysis, the importance of historical studies and perspectives in ensuring the proper interpretation of Mediterranean literary texts in the totality of their references

(where the more explicitly Mediterranean elements are present in the notes or in the glossaries and via the comparison between the primary sources and the text itself).

Representations of the real and the metaphorical sea together with the heterotopias that are produced in the Mediterranean is another one of the essential keys to interpretations of the space under consideration as demonstrated by Roberta Morosini, in *For a Geo-Philology of the Sea. Writing Cartography, Mapping the Mediterranean Mare Historiarum, from Dante to Renaissance Islands Books* questions the ways in which the sea can be read as a narrative space, starting with Dante's *Commedia (Divine Comedy)* and continuing through the Italian Trecento and the first nautical charts until granting space to the island books. Focusing on geo-cultural aspects, Roberta Morosini's investigation thus produces an image of the sea as a "geographic space that ultimately tells the story of humanity". In what she calls "an exercise in philology and mapping the Mediterranean with the support of geocriticism," Morosini proposes a set of epistemological tools useful for reading the sea from Dante to the genre of Renaissance island books, namely "space, maps, crossings, symbols and time."

Renaissance island books are also covered in Verena Ebermeier's and Jonas Hock's contribution *Concepts of Mediterranean Islandness from Ancient to Early Modern Times – A Philological Approach* which examines the literary concept of Mediterranean insularity from antiquity to the early modern age. Their analysis focuses on the literary forms that shaped the access to the spatiality of islands located within the Mediterranean or related to it, for example, as a place of departure. It then goes on to consider the Mediterranean as a palimpsest in which various forms of insularity can be seen as metaphors (the most frequent case) or allegories that prepare one for courtly life; in which the question of different paradigms of travel is addressed, from the life of Ulysses to that of the character thematized by Cristoforo Buondelmonti's *Descriptio Arcipelagi insularum [Description of the Island of Crete]*; as assessing the connection established with the semantics of paradise, between real and fantastic island spaces and between what is known and what is unknown; between utopias of different signatures that refer to spaces located beyond the Mediterranean; and where what is signified is more the landing place (also in relation to archipelagos connecting islands and micronarratives) than the voyage or the itinerary itself.

Marília Jöhnk's essay *Marseille and the Mediterranean in the Writings of Yoko Tawada and Tahar Ben Jelloun* analyzes Marseille both as an intertextual paradigm of Mediterranean literary studies and in relation to its nature as a multicultural port city and its function as a link between different authors, languages, and backgrounds. It starts with Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Marseille, comme un matin d'insomnie* [Marseille, Like a Sleepless Morning] (1986), then continues with Yoko Tawada's

short story *Die Zweischalige* [The Two-Shelled] (2002) to Jules Supervielle's poem *Marseille* (1996). While the German-Japanese writer Yoko Tawada focuses on the port and the role and significance of language and translations, the Uruguayan-born French poet Jules Supervielle welcomes the multicultural dimension and allegorical reflections of the city in his verses written in 1927; greater prominence, however, is given to the combination of Tahar Ben Jelloun's poems and Thierry Ibert's photographs depicting the Port d'Aix quarter in its transformation and gentrification, granting space to nostalgia and aspects linking it to Camus, a name that, together with Izzo, recurs frequently in multiple contributions in this volume. In this fabric of different identities, the literary Mediterranean with Marseille at its center thus qualifies as a complex system dense with intertextual connections.

Angela Fabris in her essay *Heterotopic and Striated Spaces in the Mediterranean Crime Fiction of Amara Lakhous and Jean-Claude Izzo* focuses on the one hand on the presence of heterotopias (as particularly significant counterspaces in the variegated and multiethnic landscape of Mediterranean metropolises, even those that can be defined as such despite not benefiting from a direct sea outlet). On the other hand, her contribution considers the presence of smooth and striated spaces (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) which, in their constant mutation in the face of ever new hindrances or infractions – in singular analogy with crime which also constitutes an obstacle or a sort of interruption in the normal flow of life – represent the texture of the geo-socio-political space of urban environments reflected in the detective stories of J.-C. Izzo and A. Lakhous. In these novels, Mediterranean space is connoted in a multi-ethnic sense as a space of resistance and, in its urban offshoots, as a palimpsest undergoing continuous redefinition.

5 Conceptional Spaces

The Mediterranean is an intensely discussed place in every sense of the word. Literary, scientific, and other conceptions of this space have existed for millennia, and it does not appear that the production of Mediterranean discourses will come to a halt in the near future. It is therefore not just a metaphor to understand the Mediterranean as a discursive, epistemological, or conceptual space. Thus, it is impossible to comment on the Mediterranean without drawing on the enormous archive of discourses that have already been expressed. The fictionalization and representation of the Mediterranean and the development of Mediterranean aesthetics and poetics moves within this conceptual space, it is never free of the discourses and epistemologies of the Mediterranean, it is always shaped by them. The ways in which texts refer to the Mediterranean discourses are never limited to the adoption of existing conceptions, but include their critique, transformation, actu-

alization. It is equally clear that literary texts are also part of the conceptual space insofar as they contribute to its constant ‘discursivization’. From a methodological point of view, examining the Mediterranean as a conceptual space means focusing on the intertextual space that connects the literary works within the discursive network, and in doing so, examining what kind of relation is involved in each case.

Albert Göschl’s article *A Mediterranean Utopia – The Renaissance Fiction of Plusiapolis as an Ideal of Mediterranean Connectivity* examines the utopian impact of Mediterraneanism. Literary utopias serve as manifestations of this phenomenon, such as Filarete’s *Libro architettonico* (*Treatise on Architecture*). Written shortly after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the manuscript is traditionally regarded as a testament to theoretical architecture. However, adopting a literary perspective, it reveals a complex metadiegetic novel that envisions an imagined society infused with an abundance of ‘boundless’ Mediterranean elements. Göschl shows how within this narrative, the protagonist establishes an ideal utopian city, uncovering remnants of an ancient counter-town named Plusiapolis, characterized by urban structures and influenced by the imagery of oriental and eastern Mediterranean architecture. Göschl thus re-interprets Filarete’s *libro architettonico* as one of the first early modern Mediterranean utopias, investigating the influence of the Eastern Mediterranean on literary utopias and exploring the potential impact of the book on the post-Ottoman conquest and reconstruction of Constantinople.

In *La pensée de midi Revisited: Mediterranean Connectivity Between Paul Arène, Albert Camus, and Louis Brauquier* Sophia Schnack and Daniel Winkler favor a form of interchange between different literary spaces and topoi as a challenge to hegemonic forms of literary representations of that space. In considering a range of French texts – canonical and non-canonical – from the 1880s to the 1950s, the two scholars elucidate different forms of regionality and transnationality as an alternative to a Mediterraneanity understood from a unilateral perspective. If Paul Arène’s novel *Paris ingénue* (1882) connects north and south, city and country, modernity and archaism to the point of reversing the hegemonic gaze, Jean Grenier in his lyric texts and Albert Camus in his nonfiction excursions look to the South – that is, to Lourmarin in the Provençal hinterland in one case and to Algeria in the other – as proof of a transnational connectivity in which present and past and north bank and south bank converge in a Mediterranean and transnational model of life. The intent here is to contextualize the *pensée de midi* by putting it in perspective as a symbol of connectivity and as a representation of an antihegemonic vision of the South. Again, based on the studies of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, Mediterranean connectivity is understood as a multi-level interaction of highly distinctive Mediterranean micro-regions.

Beyond the traditional divisions based on national affiliation, there is a growing tendency to develop discourses of a transnational character. According to Stéphane Baquey's *The Possibility of the Mediterranean and the Contribution of Poetic Cross-Cultural Philologies*, this is the case of poetic formulas that, while belonging to distinct epochs and spaces, still share a common reference to al-Andalus, which serves as an illustrative model for Federico García Lorca's poetry in 1920s and 1930s Spain, for Louis Aragon as the author of *Le Fou d'Elsa* [Elsa's Fool] (1963) in post-World War II France, and Mahmūd Darwiš with his 1992 poetic suite *Aħad 'Ašar Kawkabān 'alā Ājir al-mašhad al-Andalusī* [Eleven Planets over the Last Andalusian Scene] in 1980s/1990s Palestine. These authors expressed themselves in relation to different spaces and times – based on the layered and contrapuntal reference of al-Andalus – in a de-territorialized philology, highlighting a transregional Mediterranean perspective in literary studies.

Thus, it is possible to observe the production of echoes and influences that determine successive intertextual relations and spillovers alongside a chronological succession of different figurative coagulates. Such a case is presented in the article by Charles Sabatos and Ceyhun Arslan, *Đurišin's Interliterary Mediterranean as a Model for World Literature*, who rely on Đurišin's interliterary theory of the Mediterranean in their examination of a specific Arabic prose text, *Al-Sāq 'alā al-sāq* (Leg over leg, 1855) by the Ottoman-Lebanese writer Ahmad Fāris al-Shidyāq. In it, we witness the journey taken in the Mediterranean and beyond by an autobiographical narrator who, on his travels, is confronted by different linguistic and political hierarchies. From this it becomes clear that the interliterary Mediterranean – as a space of knowledge – is an ideal environment for comparatists to study world literature and its ability to accommodate geographical criteria broader than national or linguistic ties (Đurišin 1992, 156) and to recognize the role of minor literatures (in the wake of the lucid reflections of Deleuze and Guattari 1986). It thus highlights the possibility, on the one hand of undermining specific hegemonies and, on the other, the fact of opening to the cultural hybridity of the Mediterranean (Sabatos 2016, 52–53). This critical path leads to the assumption of “the existence of a trans-Mediterranean geographical space” in its bringing together different textual and linguistic textures and fabrics (MacDonald 2013, 58, 59), which brings Đurišin's concept of interliterary communities closer to the “connectivity and fragmentation” identified by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2000, 5).

Conceptions of gender and of a gendered Mediterranean South are discussed in Serena Todesco's *A Female Mediterranean South? Italian Women Writers Gendering Spaces of Meridione*. Todesco's theoretical considerations inquire into the narrative strategies used by several contemporary female writers to identify and break down patriarchal stereotypes related to the South, opening up to a non-



Figure 1: Prunes, Mateus, active 1553–1599 [Chart of the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and the coasts of western Europe and northwest Africa], In civitate Majorica: Mateus Prunes, anno 1559. © Library of Congress.

regulatory configuration of Sicilian southern spaces. Along with the resumption of a series of wide-ranging theoretical propositions, the essay offers a close reading of the novel *Addio, fantasmi* (2018) by Sicilian writer Nadia Terranova, in which she observes how the gendered conceptualization of space involves a complex destabilization of identities and social relations. Considering the narrative reinventions of the South as a “female psychic-body-spatial landscape” (Milkova 2021, 4), we witness the analysis of different strategies implemented to link the often-stereotypical representations of a backward and patriarchal Meridione with the presence of female subjectivities that oppose forms of resistance and reinvention of that reality.

Iain Chambers’ essay *Learning from the Sea – Migration and Maritime Archives*, which proposes alternative ways of mapping the Mediterranean in order to challenge prevailing historical and geopolitical accounts regarding this marine perimeter, also takes this antihegemonic view by positing that to ask “who gets the map, frame and configure the world, that is to understand geography as power, is also to ask who has the right to narrate”. This is accompanied by the consideration that “the sea promotes an irreducible otherness.” In this sense, paraphrasing what was argued by Deleuze on cinema, a theory of the sea for Chambers is in essence a theory about the concepts to which the sea gives rise. This means opening oneself to an understanding of the Mediterranean as something that is subject to reconfigurations, that is, to processes that attempt to subvert resistant hegemonies.

Concluding this journey through genres, languages, traditions, epochs and critical and theoretical approaches, methodologies and connected disciplines, we would like to refer back to the image that accompanied our international conference in 2019, namely Matheus Prunes’ 1553 portolano, which seems to visually synthesize to perfection many of the aspects that resurface from one essay to another in this volume.

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