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Mapping the Mediterranean with Language: Matvejević's *Mediterranean Breviary*

Abstract: Among the most relevant works on the Mediterranean, Predrag Matvejević's *Mediterranski brevijar (Mediterranean Breviary)* stands out. In this book, which was first published in 1987 and translated into several languages, Matvejević recounts the most remarkable aspects (such as the ideas, traditions, religions, and languages) of the area. Due to their complexity and heterogeneous nature, these elements do not seem to fall into consistent categories. Therefore, in opposition to other works on this topic (e.g. Braudel's contribution), Matvejević's breviary denies the existence of any possible classification of the Mediterranean. However, Matvejević provides an alternative way of reading the Mediterranean space, which seems aligned with Peregrine Horden's and Nicholas Purcell's formulation of "connectivity and fragmentation". By considering the linguistic mechanisms ruling the Mediterranean – in particular, those resulting from contact situations – Matvejević is able to draw unconventional but more fruitful borders around it.

Transcending classifications

The *Mediterranski brevijar (Mediterranean Breviary)*¹ is probably the most famous and internationally acclaimed work by Predrag Matvejević (1932–2017), a literary scholar born in Mostar, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who taught at the universities of Zagreb, Rome and Paris. This work stands among the most significant contributions to the Mediterranean discourse along with the classic works of Ferdinand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, and Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, just to mention a few. Matvejević's breviary was originally conceived at the *Mediterranean Cultural Traditions* symposium, which was organized in 1973 in Zagreb. However, it took a long time for the first edition of the book to be published in 1987. In fact, Matvejević revised the book, adding new material and re-elaborating the text multiple times, making it a real work in progress which struggled to reach its final version.

¹ Instead of using the English official translation of the title (*Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*), I use the literal translation of the title, *Mediterranean Breviary*.

In comparison with other works, Matvejević's *Mediteranski brevijar* seems to dismantle the possibility of providing a coherent and unitary classification of the Mediterranean space. All his efforts to identify converging elements that would lead to a unified whole collapse when faced with the heterogeneity and fragmentation of this complex area, which has been constantly reshaped over time. While Fernand Braudel's magnum opus considers the physical, geographical, historical, and economic elements of this "landlocked sea" in order to distinguish it from "the kinds of land that surround and confine it" (24), Matvejević cannot identify a single Mediterranean distinctiveness. In an interview he states: "Everything has been said on this 'primary sea' [...] We have known for a long time that it is neither a 'reality in its own' nor a 'constant': the Mediterranean as a whole is made up of many subsets that challenge or reject unifying ideas" (Matvejević and Gursoy 2006).

Matvejević's book belongs to a longstanding tradition of books that celebrate the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean basin, the links that exist between the different civilizations living there, their cultures and languages. However, the book also stands out as it questions the limits of the Mediterranean as a discourse in the traditional sense, corresponding to a sum of elements from which it could derive its definition². The Mediterranean, according to Matvejević, should rather be approached using alternative perspectives. Among them, languages certainly play a key role in understanding the Mediterranean core and its porous boundaries, as I shall demonstrate in this analysis, where I shall also consider passages taken from *Kruh naš* 'Our bread' (2009) and *Druga Venecija* 'The Other Venice' (2002). The former focuses on "bread", a food which is "older than books, and older than writing" (7) and travelled from Mesopotamia to the Far East, the classical civilizations, and the New World. *Druga Venecija* explores Venice in an unusual way, taking into consideration disparate topics, spanning from flora and fauna to history, trades, linguistic annotations etc. Not only do these two works share a similar approach and storytelling with the *Mediteranski brevijar*. They also further contribute to an understanding of the Mediterranean space and its inextricable links and networks.

Let me begin by introducing the way Matvejević approaches the Mediterranean. Depicting the Mediterranean for Matvejević requires the ability to find common – or at least compatible and assimilable – elements which would lead to drawing a border around the area. In other words, to find a criterion to distinguish elements which might fall into the Mediterranean space or be excluded from it. In

2 See, among others: Abulafia (2005); Chambers (2008); Minca (2003).

Matvejević's breviary, however, nothing seems to be more variable and changeable than borders:

Its boundaries are drawn neither in space nor in time. We know neither how to determine them, nor by what. They are neither economic nor historical, neither state nor national: they are like a circle of chalk that is constantly drawn and erased, that waves and winds, works and inspirations widen or narrow³. (8)

What seems to hinder Matvejević's ability to find a common Mediterranean ground is, as I have already hinted at, the heterogeneous nature of the elements that characterize the area. These are highly promiscuous and include sets of "ideas, religions, traditions, and languages", which have historically contributed to form this space (Dauverd 2002, 483–484). All of them put together, they seem not only to diverge and lead into separate directions, but they might also contradict themselves, as detailed by the writer in the following passage:

In every period, on various parts of the coast, there are Mediterranean contradictions: on the one hand, clarity and form, geometry and logic, law and justice, science, and poetics, on the other, everything that opposes it. The Holy Books of Reconciliation and Love and the Crusades or Jihad. Ecumenical spirit and fanatical ostracism. Universality and autarchy. Agora and labyrinth or aleteja and enigma. Dionysian joy and the stone of Sisyphus. Athens and Sparta. Rome and the barbarians. Orient and Occident. North and south coast. Europe and Africa. Christianity and Islam. Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The teachings of the Nazarene and the persecution of the Jews. (15)

The difficulty faced by Matvejević in seeking to outline the Mediterranean is already stated at the beginning of the book. Apart from the impossibility to delineate this space, even when supported by previous attempts, Matvejević is also challenged by the identification of a comprehensive list of necessary components to be considered part of the Mediterranean. Some may be forgotten, some are in contrast between themselves, others are simply hard to capture, such as the color of the sea. The latter varies considerably according to the weather and season but also to the linguistic framework available to the viewer. This is only a short series of uncertainties which troubled Matvejević's approach to the Mediterranean, complicating his starting point, which could be multiple: "shore or scene, harbor or event, cruise or story" (8). Despite lacking any explicit reference to these difficulties, Matvejević's *Kruh naš* and *Druga Venecija*, too, could have started in a similar way. Multiple elements could be indeed used to explore the history and travels of

3 The translations from Matvejević's *Mediteranski brevijar* are mine.

bread and Venice, a city which has been historically at the center of broad networks and therefore in contact with many other civilizations.

The strategy used by the writer to approach the Mediterranean in his breviary is an unusual one. Rather than advancing through the addition of new elements, Matvejević progresses by subtraction, drawing a picture through its negative. For instance, he underlines that the Mediterranean cannot be understood either only through geography – given that its boundaries are not easily detectable in space and time – or history. Religion and politics are also coordinates which struggle to be put into a system. For this reason, Matvejević's approach sounds very contemporary. As suggested by Giaccaria and Minca (2003, 345):

Mediterranean space today does not necessarily entail finding a 'solution' to this question but, rather, calls forth a critical reflection on the reasons why a stable and reassuring mapping of this sea has never been possible.

To describe the Mediterranean, Matvejević's text therefore requires a narrative able to accommodate disparate elements, which could appear and reappear in the narrative throughout the entire book. Not every literary genre is as flexible as the one needed by Matvejević. It follows that he had to create his own narratological space, through the personal elaboration of a rather peculiar genre, the breviary, as I will now explain.

The *Mediterranski brevijar's* narrative

As the title itself suggests, Matvejević's work takes an unusual form, which is defined by the writer as a *breviary*. His breviary should not be conceived in the common sense. Originally, a breviary, also called a liturgy of the hours, is defined as a "liturgical book in the Roman Catholic Church that contains the daily service for the divine office, the official prayer of the church consisting of psalms, readings, and hymns that are recited at stated hours of the day" (Encyclopedia Britannica). Matvejević's book cannot be defined as a *breviary stricto sensu* because neither liturgies nor prayers are included in it but rather an amalgam of material belonging to the domain of the Mediterranean Sea. For this reason, in the *Introduction* to the book, Claudio Magris defines this work as a breviary that has its own form, which lies at the intersection of different genres such as the essay, the portolano, and the glossary. It is therefore a *breviary* in the less common sense of a *compendium* or *abridgement*, "a collection of concise but detailed information about a particular subject, especially in a book or other publication" (OED).

For the type of material Matvejević aspires to include in his work, he needs a fluid and potentially hybrid genre, which is flexible enough for a huge amount of information belonging to disparate fields, times, and spaces, written in multiple languages, to be arranged in a workable way, which does not necessarily follow a strict sequential order. As suggested by Anna Botta, the breviary format seems to provide a suitable answer to this challenge. It is indeed ideally shaped to “*trespass* [...] across languages, countries, genres, media, and even across Matvejević's oeuvre itself” in order to grasp “the very impetus for studying the borderless world of seas and oceans, for giving particular attention to the diasporic movements of people, ideas, and goods”, which would not be otherwise satisfied “with more traditional approaches which study cultures and histories from the national point of view” (Botta 2010, 8, my emphasis). To put it another way, Matvejević's narrative, organized in a *breviary* form, represents the perfect framework for a transnational and transdisciplinary work to take place.

The flexibility required by Matvejević is captured by the structure of the work itself, which is divided into three main sections: Breviary, Maps, and Glossary, which correspond to three different ways of travelling. The writer's travels do not, however, differ according to the mode used. As underlined by the writer himself, the same travels are repeated through the different modes; firstly, sailing the sea; secondly, via studying old maritime maps; finally, with the help of the writings made by travelers, sailors, and wayfarers of the past. Botta (2010, 19) points out that “[t]he three parts complete each other, and their boundaries are ceaselessly trespassed by their author; who returns time and again to descriptions of their shared elements”. The same story is therefore offered several times to the reader through a different perspective. The result is that the material might seem “disnarrated” (Botta 2010, 15) or composed by “a wealth of interesting but rather disconnected information” (Sedlar 2004, 249). This narrative, however, is the only one which offers Matvejević the agility he needs to tackle the complexity of the Mediterranean space.

This fluidity is also rendered by an accurate choice of the sections' composition. The three sections are carefully named and formulated. Just to give an example, Matvejević's third section is named ‘glossary’. He underlines that: “Glossaries have more freedom than other dictionaries. They can be read in random order, whatever one needs or likes. They are a separate category: linguistic or literary” (155). As in the case of the *breviary* here, Matvejević also shapes his own meaning of *glossary*. The reader who expects a list of words, usually in alphabetical order and followed by their explanations, will be surprised by a narrative which includes philological, linguistic, and literary comments. However, strictly speaking, it is not structured in the way a standard glossary is. Matvejević's glossary rather includes comments and annotations – some of them already presented in the pre-

vious sections – and expands further the meaning and etymology of some key words and literary references.

The *Mediterranean breviary* is an unconventional work that also dismantles any traditional classification of the Mediterranean through its form – a form, which, as I have demonstrated, is carefully and unconventionally tailored by the writer. The goal of such a work follows a different logic, which has its own rules dictated by the material collected by the writer during his wanderings around the Mediterranean and not by the need to provide a classification.

One and different

In comparison to Braudel's magnum opus, Matvejević's work might seem to downsize the goal of attempting a comprehensive classification of the Mediterranean built around the dialectic relationship of geography and history. The *Mediterranean breviary* presents alternative goals, such as the examination of similarities and differences which characterize the area. At the beginning of his breviary, Matvejević provides a key to understand this mechanism: "Sometimes all the seas look like one, especially when sailing for a long time, sometimes each one is different" (7). In this sense, the breviary shows a greater affinity with Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* than with Braudel's work, given that they both disassemble the Mediterranean's areas into regions or micro-regions – this allows them to conduct more subtle investigations and establish more comparisons between the areas – ruled by "topographical fragmentation" and "internal connectivity" (2006, 733), to use Horden and Purcell's words.

Microregions are central in Horden and Purcell's examination because there is "no significant intermediate level between the very small and the very large" (2000, 518). Their formulation rather allows for a remarkable fragmentation of the Mediterranean, which could easily be detected through an analysis of its variable landscapes and the need for interactions and communication to coexist. In their words: "Because it [the model] is 'micro' in scale, it avoids the near-insuperable problems set by the pursuit of a single historical ecology of the Mediterranean region as a whole" (2006, 733). To clarify further the meaning of the antithetical unity and difference explored by Horden and Purcell, let me point out here that their idea of unity derives more from the "connectivity between structurally similar microecologies" than from any other sort of wholeness, for instance of an "ecological or cultural type" (2006, 734).

Even though the focus of Horden and Purcell's and Matvejević's works might appear rather disparate – the formers' ecological model diverges from Matvejević's poetic prose – they work around "a fragmented world, nonetheless united by the

connectivity that overcomes that fragmentation" (2006, 735). Additionally, for Matvejević, the Mediterranean "mosaic" – as defined by Magris in the *Introduction* to the breviary – is constantly dismantled and reshuffled through the mapping of differences and similarities. The writer provides a practical example on how he advanced along the coordinates of the mosaic:

Let me start from the Adriatic, from its eastern side. The north coast, from Malaga to the Bosphorus, is closer and more accessible to the one who leaves from here. On the south side, from Haifa to Ceuta, there are fewer bays and harbors. Visiting the islands, first the Adriatic, then the Ionian and Aegean, the Cyclades, and the Sporades, I looked for similarities and differences between them. I was comparing Sicily and Corsica, Mallorca, and Minorca. I did not dock along all the shores. I stayed at the mouths of the rivers the most. It is difficult to get to know the whole Mediterranean. We do not know for sure how far it extends: how much of the land by the sea it occupies, where it ends both on land and at sea. (7)

While Matvejević's attitude fits in with Horden's and Purcell's approach, it seems to diverge from it in the sense that Matvejević's similarities and differences only constitute a temporary methodological approach but not a pillar on which a system could be built. They should rather be part of a framework which works at its best when it is hybrid. The sum of multiple approaches, where to language is given a special place, is the only way to unlock the Mediterranean complexity.

Contact languages

In Matvejević's breviary, languages are used to understand differences and similarities that exist between different civilizations. The language issue concerns primarily the third section of the book, the glossary, but it is constantly recalled throughout the book as a whole to depict various recurrent aspects of the Mediterranean. Language seems to be used by Matvejević for multiple purposes. It is certainly a key ingredient of his writing soaked in cultures, landscapes, and traditions as well as in people's lives, in the flora and the fauna of the area. The maritime domain is strongly characterized by nomenclatures and terminologies, but it is also extensively used by Matvejević because it is an integral part of travelling. There is no travel – be it made by the writer or by travelers, sailors, tradesmen of the past – which does not involve linguistic issues.

Matvejević seems to be particularly interested in constructing a linguistic Mediterranean as the outcome of changes induced by the contact of different languages. The latter are the result of the interaction of two or more languages or varieties, corresponding to "any linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation" (Thomason 2001, 62). This, in the Mediterrana-

mean, happened as the result of trade, exchange, and commerce between the civilizations that, across time, operated in the area.

Language contact can have multiple outcomes, such as the creation of borrowings or loan words, calques, language convergence and relexification. It can also lead to the formation of pidgins and creoles, or to the use of code-switching and code-mixing. Matvejević's breviary is not a linguistic essay, however, and does not explore all the options the Mediterranean gives to him. His aim is rather to see itineraries through the language lens, to show words that still tell us about past connections and to explore lands through the privileged tool of language. Just to give an example, let me quote a passage in which Matvejević retraces the origin and the diffusion of words belonging to the lexical domain of the *market*:

The types of oriental markets and the paths that led to them are truly fabulous: their connection to the fables that have reached us is not accidental. Bazar and čaršija are Persian words [...]. The Crusaders admired the richness and diversity of the bazaars (markets). The Turks, on the one side, and the Arabs, on the other, transmitted the art of trade of the East to the West. Muhammad II erected his famous bazaar in Istanbul, a symbol of sultans' power and luxury. The Constantinople Kapali Bazaar became one of the main institutions in that city. The famous Bezziastan (vulgo: bezistan, silk market) surpassed the old cities of the East in its splendor. The Turks transferred the dućan, the shop, (from the Arabic dukkan) to the Balkans, the Arabs to other countries. The magazine (Arabic makhazin) has travelled around the world. (149)

The paths drawn by Matvejević clearly show linguistic interactions between neighboring civilizations. As suggested by Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006, 2): "Historically, every language must have undergone a certain amount of influence from its neighbours". The degree of the impact could be stronger or weaker according to a great number of factors and the fact that some linguistic features may be more *borrowable* than others. Nouns are certainly the most *borrowable* feature, as explained by Matras (2009, 168): "The high borrowability of nouns is thus primarily a product of their referential functions: nouns cover the most differentiated domain for labelling concepts, objects, and roles". In Matvejević's passage, one could notice that while some words were easily transferred or sometimes adapted into a neighboring language and more widely to the world (e.g. magazine), others (e.g. čaršija) spread around in a more restricted way.

The ways in which language contact work are manifold and their outputs could diverge considerably, leading both to an alteration or a preservation of the original linguistic system (Aikhenvald and Dixon 2006, 19–20). To be more precise, language contact could create three types of contact situations: language maintenance, language shift, and language creation (Winford 2003, 11–21). The one considered by Matvejević seems to belong to the first category, language maintenance,

which often occurs in cases of trade, immigration, and exchanges involving “varying degrees of influence on the lexicon and structure of a group’s native language from the external language with which it is in contact” (Winford 2003, 12). This means that the recipient or borrowing language only incorporates forms, constructions, or patterns from the donor or source language, without switching into or becoming another tongue. This type of influence, Winford (2003, 12) argues, “is referred as ‘borrowing’”, as I will explain in the following section.

Lexical Borrowings

When languages come into contact, one possible outcome is the transfer of foreign linguistic features from one donor language to a recipient language. This may include heterogeneous material. As outlined by Aikhenvald (2006, 15): “borrowed forms may include a lexeme, a pronoun, an affix, a phoneme or intonation pattern, or a way of framing discourse”, as well as nominal, verbal categories, syntactic features, lexical and semantic patterns (2006, 15–18). In Matvejević’s work, however, the focus is mainly on lexical borrowings, in particular loanwords, which constitute one of the most common forms of contact-induced linguistic change (Grant 2015) and are certainly the most relevant type of borrowing to accomplish the writer’s aim to travel with words.

In the breviary, Matvejević explores lexical borrowings multiple times, especially in relation to maritime lexicology. The writer, explaining the borrowing of words such as *sea*, *waves*, *winds*, *boats*, aims to demonstrate the linguistic interactions which constantly shape the Mediterranean space. Let us consider the words *sea* and *waves* in the language of the original Slavic populations who reached the Adriatic Sea for the first time, as well as in Greek, Castilian, and Albanian. While the word *sea* was already present in the language of the original Slavic populations, the word for *waves* was borrowed from Greek, as explained by Matvejević:

Populations went down to the sea and called it with different names. Breaking onto the Adriatic Sea, the South Slavs heard Greek and Roman names for the scene that opened before them. Some philologists claim that the dialects they spoke changed the phonetics and adapted it to the environment. They kept their own word for sea. In meeting the Greeks, they heard *thalassa*: so, they began calling the waves the sea that ripples. The name *pelagos* has been preserved in the south of the Adriatic, around the island of Sipan [...] Our ancestors brought from the ancient homeland the words *ađa*, *brod*, *korab(lja)*, *veslo*, *jedro* for broads. They did not have a mast: it is from the Latin trunk. They had their own hook and net. The latter, which they used to hunt on the river, was lent along the way to Hungarians and Romanians, in whose languages it remained. [...] From the inhabitants of the former Roman province and the Byzantine theme, from the Illyrians and Dalmatian Romans, newcomers kept many terms: for fish they had not eaten before, for devices they did not have, for tools they did

not use. Italians, later Venetians, knew more about sea: from them everyone learnt something in the Mediterranean. (123)

What Matvejević's passage shows is that these original Slavic populations probably lacked the words for *waves* as well as several other terms for the different types of saltwater fish and maritime tools. Lexical borrowings typically fill a lexical gap in a language for two reasons: to fulfil a *need*, "the internal pressure of borrowing a new term for a concept in the language", and *prestige*, "the external pressure of borrowing a term from a more prestigious language" (Matras 2009, 150). Matvejević's cases illustrate the need to express a new concept, which is already possessed by the donor language. Greek, in particular, had multiple words for sea, even though somehow only *pelagos* and *thalassa* were borrowed by Slavonic languages:

The Greek had several names for the sea: *hals* is salt, the sea as a substance; *pelagos* is the high sea, the sea as a sight; *pontos* is the sea as vastness and path; *thalassa* is a general term (of unknown origin, perhaps Cretan), the sea as an experience or event; *kolpos* means the bosom or under protection of and in an intimate way signifies the part of the sea which has embraced the coast: a bay or a gulf; *laitma* is the depths of the sea, dear to poets and suicidal people. (118)

The names of winds were also mainly borrowed from the languages of neighboring civilizations or of the civilizations these Slavic populations came into contact with, such as Greek, Latin and Arabic:

For the winds on the Adriatic, the inhabitants often borrowed foreign names: *bura* (from Greek through Latin and Romance languages) blows from the north, *levanat* (Italian *levante*) comes from the east, *pulenat* (Italian *ponente*) from the west; the one from the south is probably not a loanword: the desire for the southern wind surged the Old Slavs to migrate; *šilok* or *wide* (Italian: *scirocco*) is a hot wind in southern Europe and northern Africa (the word comes from the Arabic *shark*, which is not unimportant for some rains and their color); *burin* is a small *bura*, *buraca* a quiet breeze, and *buraska* sudden and cold; *neverin* is a diminutive of *nevera* (from the Italian 'neve', for snow, which sometimes flutters along the Mediterranean shores): a sudden storm or calamity, which folk etymology associates with faith(lessness) or (in)fidelity; *garbin* and *garbinada* a blow from the southwest that can be unpleasant (in Arabic *garbi* means western); *lebić* and *lebićada* are southwestern, but not in every region (the name comes from the name of Libya, Italian *libeccio*, with a somewhat distorted idea of the position of that country, which is not unusual in the Mediterranean); *tramuntana* (Ital. *tramontana*) blows from the mainland, over the mountains. (162)

The logic of lexical borrowing is a complex one, as words are not simply transferred from one language to the other when needed or for prestige. There are unpredictable variations due to multiple factors such as the historical, political, social, and linguistic relationships that exist between different civilizations and

the type of contact established between them. In Matvejević's words: "The shores lend the names of the winds to each other, not hesitating to change their name or direction, encouraging, sometimes intentionally, misunderstandings. From this it can be concluded which side ruled the sea more and managed the fleet" (203).

The linguistic outputs of lexical borrowing may be rather erratic. For instance, the Castilian word *mar* ('sea') has two genders, both feminine and masculine – this is because in Latin *sea* was neutral and had to fit into one of these categories. *Sea* has different genders along the Mediterranean coast: "in Latin and Slavic it is neutral gender, in Italian it is masculine, in French it is feminine, in Spanish it can be both masculine and feminine, in Arabic it has two masculine names, in Greek it is, when put together with other names for it, of all genders" (186). Additionally, in Albanian the word for *sea* is "det", which exists only in that language. The Mediterranean is seen by Matvejević as a "theatre where semantic variety and constant semantic slippage feed on each other", leading both to the enhancement of "linguistic differences and campanilismo" and "facilitating borrowings and permeability, which both derive from and reinforce a common cultural substratum" (Botta 2010, 18).

This is also true for expressions which are borrowed from one tongue and adapted into another or are developed in different ways according to the context. That sort of unpredictability, which most of the time could be explained in practical terms, is often explored by Matvejević. For instance, in *Druga Venecija*, he compares the way eastern and western Adriatic peoples conceived the idea of twilight, which has to do with the geographical configuration of determined territories: "On one shore the sun rests at sunset on the surface of the water and sinks into it. On the other it sets at day's end behind the shore's own elevation. In the east, the twilight is called the *suton*, from the Slavic words *sunce tone*, "the sun is sinking". In the west it is the *tramonto*, from *tra i monti*, "across the mountains" (emphasis in the original) (16).

At the same time, differentiations and nuances happen also within the same context and do not necessarily have to be found far away from each other. Every context, in other words, develops its own rules and specifications. This is well exemplified in *Kruh naš*, where Matvejević details the kinds of bread which are typical of the Hippocratic diet:

Synkomostos, made of whole meal, unsifted flour, helps the intestines work better; *aleton kathon*, made of finely sieved flour, is nourishing but harder to digest; *xylos*, which contains yeast juice, is healthy and is not heavy on the stomach; *ipnitai* are rolls baked in an open oven, but one must be careful not to overbake them because then they become hard; *klibanitai* stick to the sides of the pan, have a soft crust and are recommended for older people; *enkryfiai*, baked in ashes, and dry and tasty, retain the nutritious qualities of the grain; *semi-*

dalis contains semolina and is good for digestion; *hondros*, made with wheat flour and tasty, is harder to digest. (12)

Some parallels could be drawn with other contexts – for instance, to Acron of Agrigento's diet or the Schola Medica Salernitana's diet but also with Arab bakers etc. At the same time, the Hippocratic diet was developed primarily in its own environment. All these mechanisms lead to the definition of atypical borders, which better grasp the Mediterranean essence.

Drawing borders with languages

Languages represent a privileged way of travelling as they illustrate that the Mediterranean could be one and many at the same time. This attests to a specific logic that rules the area. On the one hand, the need to preserve specificities and peculiarities: every micro-area in the Mediterranean has its own unique shape due to the combination of geographical, historical, linguistic factors, which cannot be found anywhere else. On the other hand, the Mediterranean links and connects civilizations and the “names used for winds, colors, borders, peoples, insults and curses, ships, nautical items, tools” travel “from one culture to another mutually affecting each other and denoting a commonality of life practices” (Botta 2010, 18).

By following this logic, Matvejević draws unconventional borders around the Mediterranean, which are based both on local and transnational dynamics. The Mediterranean is divided into areas which have historically created their own distinctiveness, distancing themselves from the continent. This is constantly reiterated by Matvejević, who underlines a real fracture between the Mediterranean and its hinterland which could be best seen through the language. At the same time, the Mediterranean is connected to other spaces which are geographically distant from each other due to the connections established by the sea. By drawing alternative boundaries, Matvejević offers a new reading of the Mediterranean, showing the vulnerability of traditionally conceived borders and spurring the discourse into a new direction which cannot transcend linguistic contributions.

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