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The *pensée de midi* Revisited: Mediterranean Connectivity Between Paul Arène, Albert Camus, and Louis Brauquier

Abstract: The following article discusses the “*pensée de midi*” and formations of Mediterranean relationality in canonical and non-canonical literary texts. The “*pensée de midi*” is seen as a corrective that dissolves binary oppositions and brings different (literary) spaces and topoi into dialogical relation. Texts from the 1880s to the 1950s will be examined that implement the “*pensée de midi*” in the field of tension between regionality and transnationality, using literary strategies that, despite all the Mediterranean topoi, undermine an essentialization of a unified Mediterranean by means of techniques of projection and alienation. If Paul Arène’s novel *Paris ingénu* (1882) serves as an impulse text that changes the view of Paris through the imaginary of Provence, Jean Grenier and Albert Camus later considered the French South in a transnational context. For them, Lourmarin became a point of reference for a transnational “*pensée de midi*”. In Jean Giono’s work in *Manosque* instead, another form of Mediterranean-meridional mythology emerges that functions on a level of abstraction, namely the transferability of imaginary landscapes and mentalities. The intent of this paper 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.

1 From Albert Camus Back to the Félibriges

Albert Camus and other intellectuals established the *pensée de midi* as a humanistic-sensual counter-device of modernity against the backdrop of European totalitarianism and imperialism, as well as in opposition to the increasing commercialization of almost all areas of life. This article aims to contextualize the *pensée de midi* and to put it into perspective as a symbol of connectivity, oscillating between Meridionalism and Mediterraneanity, which historically date back much further. Despite having slightly differing connotations, the *pensée de midi* is in this context understood as portraying an anti-hegemonic view of the South, and not a reference to a geographically fixed space. This article looks at Paul Arène (1843–1896), Albert Camus (1913–1960) and Louis Brauquier (1900–1976) as models in examining how this figure of thought can be observed throughout (southern) France’s literary his-

tory of modernity. As divergent as their individual works are, all three authors are tightly connected, in an intellectual and biographical sense, to the Mediterranean region; specifically, the historically French departments of Basses-Alpes, Bouches-du-Rhône and Vaucluse, as well as Algiers and Constantine in Algeria.

Based on the work of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2019, 208), Mediterranean connectivity is understood as a multi-layered interaction of highly distinctive “Mediterranean microregions”. In addition to the evident “movements of peoples and goods and information”, the three authors examined in this article also imagine, in different ways, “shifting terrestrial or maritime networks” as well as sensual-fluid “lines of sight and lines of sound” that often transcend the Mediterranean. In this sense, we assume that for all three authors the Midi represents a space of reflection, open in the direction of the North and the South. Within this space, the three authors constantly explore the tensions between regionality, nationality and Mediterraneanity. Regarding the “border space ‘Mediterranean’”, their texts also reflect the “gaze-bound nature of border demarcations” (Burtscher-Bechter and Mertz-Baumgartner 2006, 12 and 14), i.e., the interdependence of North and South or city, country and sea.

Arène’s stories from the 1880s and the 1890s, Camus’s essays and Brauquier’s poems from the 1920s and the 1930s stand for three different forms of Meridional-Mediterranean connectivity, which correlate with divergent forms of exoticism and orientalism: Paul Arène, against the background of his socialisation as a *Félibrige* from Haute-Provence and a career in the Parisian literary milieu, takes a ‘provincializing’ look at the capital. Paris becomes a place of sensual strolling characterized by a decelerated-associative, i.e., transregional, perception. Albert Camus, on the other hand, theorizes the *pensée de midi* as a figure of thought for characterizing a meaningful human life. In the sense of a territorially delimited South, his origins in French Algeria, his Parisian career and his residence in Lourmarin in the department of Vaucluse, all condense into an imaginary space of deceleration, simplicity and physicality. Louis Brauquier extends this legacy with his lyrical work in the form of a trans-Mediterranean exoticism. The *pensée de midi* appears in the texts of the nomadic lyricist without boundaries. The Midi, the Mediterranean and the Pacific become analogous places of melancholic projections of wanderlust and homesickness.

2 The Midi, the Sea and the Hinterland

When looking at the Mediterranean region as a “sea of literature”, French colonialism becomes evident as a historical framework for reflection. For a long time, the Midi was considered an archaic and underdeveloped region, often perceived

in quasi-colonialist terms by Paris. This clearly changed with the French occupation of Algeria (1830) and its annexation to France (1848). The Midi became a liminal space between Central France and the new Algerian departments, and it subsequently experienced a socio-economic and cultural upswing (Borutta 2014, 201–205). It was increasingly perceived as a “Mediterranean space-time continuum”, which is reflected, among others, in the Saint-Simonists’ vision of “an administrative and infrastructural interconnection of the Mediterranean coasts” and a “southern extension of France” (Borutta 2014, 206). The literature of the late nineteenth century depicts this socio-economic and conceptual transformation of the South of France as a symbol of connectivity: the Midi becomes the starting point of numerous shipping voyages by Orientalist authors, as well as the *topos* of an inner-French Orient. Marseille in particular is evoked as the *Porte de l’Orient*, where one can already sense the allure of the Other without having to confront the socio-economic and linguistic-cultural differences present in the new departments (Winkler 2007, 95–96).

Against this backdrop, many Mediterranean discourses of a topographically expanded southern France at the threshold of the twentieth century appear to be permeated with imperial implications, even if they are intended to be anti-nationalist. The desire to think of the Midi and the Mediterranean as fluid zones manifested itself in the early twentieth century in the Marseillais journal project *Cahiers du Sud* (1925–1965), which, from a contemporary perspective, laid the foundation of a cosmopolitan *pensée de midi*. After its foundation in 1914 by Jean Ballard and others, the *Cahiers du Sud* helped establish a circle of cosmopolitan authors such as Gabriel Audisio and Louis Brauquier throughout the 1920s. The journal gained an international reputation for its anti-nationalist Mediterranean thinking, which dissociated itself from *latinité* ideology, i.e., the perception of the Midi as an archaic hinterland, which can also be traced back to the *Félibriges*.¹ The *Cahiers du Sud*’s location and title were intended as a way to distance the journal from the Paris center and establish it as a transregional and transnational opening. Issues such as “L’Islam et l’Occident” (1935) and “Le Génie d’Oc et

1 Camus referred to this tendency as a “nationalisme du soleil” and a “régionalisme méditerranéen” (qtd. in Fabre 2000b, 9) at the opening of the Maison de la Culture in Algiers in 1937. In the sense of a “séparation entre deux mondes, deux pays, deux imaginaires” (Fabre 2000b, 6), Provence is cut off from its medieval and early modern Jewish-Arabic heritage, as well as from the influences of the Age of Enlightenment. In the form of folk festivals and literary and lexicographical projects, Mistral attempted to revive specific regional and linguistic traditions. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the South of France was constructed, in the sense of a “renaissance du Midi” (Séréna-Allier 2000, 33), as a cultural area that could be clearly delimited territorially, linguistically and in terms of its population.

l'Homme Méditerranéen” (1942) make this intention particularly clear (Témime 2002, 123–143).

In this ideological area of tension, the current article sees the *pensée de midi* as an oscillating figure of thought that helps to question hegemonic perspectives again and again; in this way it can be traced back to (southern) French literature in the nineteenth century. The journal *La pensée de midi* (2000–2010), founded under Thierry Fabre in Marseille and Arles as a successor to the *Cahiers du Sud*, hints at such a perspective in its first issue on “Les territoires de l'appartenance Provence – Méditerranée”. It is true that the concern formulated here is to give back to the traditionally marginalized South “son statut de sujet de la pensée et d'acteur de sa propre histoire” (Fabre 2000a, 3). At the same time, however, the Midi is also conceived as an imaginary space intended to inspire our sensibility and illuminate our gaze, especially in the sense of a “point de vue sur le monde” (Fabre 2000a, 2). The *pensée de midi* is thus formulated as a meaningful rethinking of humanist concerns, which, following Camus, should make us aware of the physical and moral limitations of human life and action. Accordingly, we understand the *pensée de midi* as a reflective space that repeatedly places diverse forms of Mediterranean relationality in a new dialogical relationship. This raises the question of which different literary strategies are used by modernist authors to overcome particularistic thinking and the essentialization of unilateral Meridionality.

3 The Félibrige Paul Arène and his Midi on the Move

Born in Sisteron in 1843, Paul Arène's work evinces two conflicting trends of the late nineteenth century: the renaissance of Provençal under the auspices of the Félibriges, and the first wave of a Provençal-exoticist literary fashion in Paris driven by artists from the Midi. Arène, who had trained as a teacher, moved to Paris in his early twenties and spent most of his life there until he moved to Antibes, where he died in 1895. In the Parisian bohemian environment of the Rive Gauche, he worked as a theatre critic for Léon Gambetta's *République Française* and as a ghostwriter for established authors such as Charles Monselet and Alphonse Daudet. He maintained contact with Frédéric Mistral from 1863 onward, founded the cultural association Cigale in Paris (1878) and became a member of the Félibriges de Paris (1879). Arène's origins soon served as the basis for his own literary work, which centered on numerous stories that, unlike his early Provençal poetry (especially up to 1871), were written in French (Petry 1911, 5–18).

His stories are of particular interest since they reflect an ambivalent relationship with his origins and the Félibriges. Arène's views largely obscure developments around social modernization and mechanization; alongside tradition and nature, he works through themes of poverty and marginality with an often distinctly flippant tone for a national audience. Already in his first collection of novels, *Jean-des-Figues* (1870), transregional connectivity becomes a theme; indeed, he has the title character move back to Provence after two years of Parisian bohemia. Numerous collections of stories, such as *Contes de Paris et de Provence* (1887), also set the poles of Provence and Paris in relation to each other and repeatedly re-explore North–South relations in the field of tension between idealization and irony (Fournier 1994).²

A *pensée de midi* avant la lettre can be discerned in Arène's work in the form of a South that is often spatially and temporally delimited, even if the Provençal hinterland is the core of its frame of reference. A *pensée de midi* can also be seen in his work in the sense of a balanced geographical or inner center. The introduction to the story collection *Le Midi bouge* (1895), dedicated to his Félibrige friend, the journalist and deputy from Arriège Albert Tournier, illustrates this: the title refers to a marching song he himself wrote during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, which culminated in the siege of Paris. The warlike refrain "Le Midi bouge / Tout est rouge!", which paraphrases the mobilization of the peasant South to the occupied region of north-western France, becomes the title of a book made up of rather jocular tales (Petry 1911, 10–11). The refrain, meant to be patriotic, is used as a popular song by the "septentrionaux malicieux" to ridicule the South, "à l'encontre de ce Midi que nous aimons tous les deux". This also leads to a self-stigmatization of French Southerners (Arène 1895, VI). In postcolonial terms, Arène's re-appropriation of the title is an anti-hegemonic 'writing back' intended to re-establish the dignity of the French South in centralist France. The book's title, devised by Arène's satirical tone, serves two further purposes: on the one hand, the author calls attention to the popular title's advertising function for his publishing house ("Après tout, ça fait toujours un peu de réclame et Flammarion sera content!", VI); on the other, he points out that the title suggests that the South of France, long imagined as static, stands up for its own highest interests ("Attention! Aujourd'hui le Midi ne bougera pas", VII).

2 There is no current research available on the Arène texts discussed here. Concerning Arène in general, in addition to older works (e.g., Duché, René. *La langue et le style de Paul Arène*. Paris: Dierville, 1949), we refer to Grenier, Roger. *Paul Arène. Sa vie, son œuvre*. Raphèle-les-Arles: CPM, 1993; Coll., *Paul Arène 1843–1896. Célébration du 150^{me} anniversaire de sa naissance*. Digne-les-Bains: SSLAHP, 1995, and the edition of the *Annales de Haute-Provence* 327–328 (1994) dedicated to him.

At the intersection of idealization and irony, a *pensée de midi avant la lettre* is presented by using stories that usually describe country life through food and customs, métiers and vegetation. An imaginary Midi is outlined in the sense of a holistic life, as opposed to the North, which Arène characterizes as a space of acceleration and associated with the “générations modernes” (VII). He connects this with a mentality that often praises new trends unreflectively, overdramatizes inconveniences and takes itself too seriously. For him, Southern thinking is thus manifested above all in an almost Epicurean attitude to life that distances itself from current events and focuses on people, their habits and their environment. In contrast to the “je ne sais quels brouillards venus du Nord”, the Midi stands for a sensual mentality of serenity that does not overestimate the individual eventualities of life. *Le Midi bouge (pas)* would prove in this sense “avec quel beau calme et quelle sereine philosophie, quel détachement supérieur et avisé des passagères contingences, le vrai méridional sait éviter de prendre au tragique certains accidents de la vie” (VII).

In a completely different way, Arène designs a space of connectivity with his collection of short stories *Paris ingénu* (1882), which assumes the gaze of a *flâneur* and directs it at the city. The short portraits and atmospheric images speak of death and marginal milieus from the ‘old’ Paris of the Rive Gauche before ‘Haussmannisation’. Instead of the modern neighborhoods of the bourgeoisie and the bohemian scene, he focuses on the small alleys, old canals and métiers as well as the suburban Paris “loin des quartiers riches” (Arène 1882, 202). The capital appears in the form of a ‘naïve’ proximity to nature, which is ironically interrupted: the *flâneur* as the alter ego of Arène’s neo-Parisian filters the hustle and bustle of the big city and looks down on it from the green margins of the city. Already in the first story “La campagne à Paris”, he notes that in the city there are “plus d’arbres qu’à la campagne” (1). In this line, Arène creates often rural impressions that are diametrically opposed to Paris’ status as the “capitale du XIX^e siècle” (Benjamin 1939).

On closer inspection, it becomes clear that the often very short texts serve two semantic functions. The naïve strolling of the narrator generates a provincializing *dispositif*. The green vegetation and the “idéal rustique” (2) only come to the fore from the perspective of peasants who have become Parisians by choice, because “trois quarts au moins de ceux que nous appelons Parisiens sont des paysans mal déracinés” (1). Correspondingly, the ‘village’ of Paris is often characterized by figures, plants and impressions that reveal a broadly understood South. Particularly striking is the figure of an Auvergnat who appears again and again either as the epitome of provincality or as the connectivity of the metropolis (in “14 juillet”, among others). Peasant figures from the Midi such as “mon ami Alpinien” – whose daughters, described as “fleurs d’Orient”, further expand the Midi in an Oriental-

izing manner (59–60) – illustrate the fluid South as well as many impressions of nature and milieu. Cicadas and chestnut trees, maroon and coal merchants, fields, hills and pastures are described by the strolling narrator and appear as the epitome of the rural-rustic and sunny-southern, from the Rive Gauche to the popular outskirts of the city and into the surrounding countryside (279).

In *Paris ingénu*, the strolling gaze controls the perception of space and time at least as much as the selection of marginal places, people and milieus. This is illustrated by the sketch “Paysagiste”, which depicts a landscape painter whom the narrator meets in an “aride coin du Midi”. There, he visits a small valley, an “oasis microscopique dans un Sahara de cailloux”, and eventually begins painting the valley’s only tree (237). Although this landscape reminds him of Normandy, later in Paris he adheres to a “nostalgie du Midi” (237). In an abandoned quarry without grass cover, which seems to him “merveilleusement provençal”, he paints and dreams of white limestone, blue skies and burning sunbeams (237). Here, the reverie of the *flâneur* and his object eludes the hegemonic zeitgeist and a clearly graspable regional location. Arène thus casts an alienating gaze on the metropolis. The political and cultural center of the country is gutted while traditional oppositions, such as those between center and periphery, are dissolved.

If strolling per se symbolizes a perception marked by association and deceleration, city and country, North and South connect through sensory impressions of Meridional-Mediterranean nature, cuisine and culture. In the very first text of *Paris ingénu*, the narrator discovers an idyll of nature in a tree nursery on Rue Vavin. A “bouquet de maronniers qu’entoure un taillis de lilas” (5) harbors some twenty beehives and a meadow, which is dotted with daisies and other plants typical of southern France, such as thyme and lavender, as well as a small stream in the sense of the “précepte virgilien” (6). In addition to descriptions of nature, there are striking comparisons in the stories referring to a barren and charming Midi; these dynamize the capital through connectivity. In the chapter “Les choses qui s’en vont”, the cry of a man in the halls of Paris who has gambled away his money in Monaco is associated with the storm-like roar of a “cigale solitaire cramponnée aux branches d’un tamaris” of the “côtes désertes du Languedoc” (170).

In the section “Bouts de croquis”, the short story “Mistral parisien” depicts a veritable ‘galéjade’ of Marseille, i.e., a fib story. The anthropomorphized mistral wind flows out of the open suitcase of one of the narrator’s cousins, who has just arrived from the Midi, and it proceeds to take over the station concourse and then undertake a tour of the sights of Paris, during which it transforms the Seine into a blue sea with waves and white foam “comme on les voit en Méditerranée, quand le ciel est clair et que le vent souffle” (227). The tale of a grape harvest in the rather cool environs of Paris also references the South. It is said that such harvests cannot be compared to the “fêtes païennes du Midi”, because

there, unlike in the North, the smell of crushed grapes alone would entice the youth to dance due to their high sugar and alcohol content (287).

No less frequent are borrowings from the broader Mediterranean, which ‘Mediterraneanizes’ Paris: there are hedgehog eaters here as in Spain (278); the Seine has more “riants jardins” than the Arno in Florence – indeed, Paris is the real “ville des fleurs” (205); the extinct profession of ‘pifferari’ musician is placed in the context of Italian Paris on the slopes of the “montagne Sainte-Geneviève” (168). Such *flâneur* impressions of the Mediterranean are followed by numerous references to water. More and more titles refer to bridges and boats, fishing and floating ice. The banks and the water of the Seine are repeatedly charged with maritime significance: in “Le passeur”, there is an account of swallows and flies which “faisaient danser la Seine comme une mer” (159) with their fluttering wings. In “A bord d’un bateau de charbon”, the river resembles an “oasis” of silence where only the sound of boats, sparrows and fishermen can be heard. Finally, the associations “pêche”, “quais” and “baignade” convey an entirely Mediterranean impression: “Paris, sous le soleil qui crible la Seine de paillettes d’or, apparaît comme une Venise” (76).

Paris ingénu contains many narratives that, in the style of a portrait, show clear borrowings from the Mediterranean in detail. A striking exception is “Le démon de la nature morte”, which references a transcontinental *pensée de midi*. The painter M. Senez, who is a friend of the narrator and specializes in still lifes, lives in a rustic *maisonnette* in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, where a Southern atmosphere unfolds *en passant*. It is from Antibes that a consignment of oranges, lemons, watermelons and pomegranates is delivered (33). They form the basis of a *tableau* that oscillates between Southern French and North African associations: a “plat hispano-arabe” is revealed next to porous clay jugs from Kabylia on an oriental carpet. The result is an atmospheric image that Arène, referring to literary *topoi* of the time, ironizes as hot and mysterious “comme une atmosphère de harem”. Not only are all sexual fantasies alien to the painter, but at the same time “toutes les poésies du Midi ensoleillé” are evoked with associations of pine trees and cicadas (33). The episode thus symbolizes Paul Arène’s understanding of the Midi as an interreligious and intercultural space.

Two years later, in 1884, Arène published his next book, *Vingt jours en Tunisie*, the poetization of his only intercontinental journey to visit his brother Jules, vice-consul in Sousse. Here, too, Tunisia is observed through the lens of associative strolling, only this time it occurs from the other side of the Mediterranean: “la Tunisie se révèle d’abord sous un aspect bonhomme, agricole et provincial [...]. L’humanité, partout, reste identique à elle-même ; et je serai tout étonné demain de trouver, coiffés de turbans, ces paysans d’Afrique qui, à travers les phrases, m’apparaissent avec la figure tannée et résignée de nos paysans français” (Arène 1983,

98). As we can observe in this text too, Arène's *pensée de midi avant la lettre* reflects a sensual, decelerated attitude to Mediterranean life, where Christianity and paganism form an "organic unity" (Petry 1911, 81). Thus, Arène repeatedly poetized the Mediterranean connectivity, i.e., the divided topography, vegetation, cuisine and mentality, integrating the influence of the Arabs and Moors in the fatalistic and communal mentality of the South (Petry 1911, 63, 81–83).

4 Albert Camus: The *Pensée de Midi* as a Philosophical-Aesthetic Space

Arène dynamizes the opposition between North and South, between the paradigmatic metropolis of modernity and the archaic South, as an ironic negotiating of the relationship between the center and southern periphery. About fifty years later, the Algerian-French Albert Camus, born in 1913, began to develop a more conceptual *pensée de midi*, which emphasized a political and aesthetic dimension of connectivity: already in his poem "Méditerranée" (1933) exist rudiments of what would develop in the course of his life into a comprehensive Mediterranean *esprit* that pervaded his work up to his unfinished final novel, *Le premier homme* (published posthumously in 1994).³ In the early 1930s, Camus joined a Mediterranean fad that had emerged around Gabriel Audisio's *Jeunesse de la Méditerranée* (1935). The emphatic lyrical search for peace and (physical) unity around ideals of simplicity, characterized by sun and sea and giving color to even the loneliest and poorest towns (Témime 2002, 118), evoked passion in the young Camus.⁴

However, the Parisian philosopher and author Jean Grenier, who had taught at the University of Algiers between 1930 and 1938, became his real mentor. Grenier's prose volume *Les Iles* (1933), the 1959 edition of which included a euphoric foreword by Camus, represented a literary awakening for him at the young age of twenty.⁵ With his 1939 collection of essays *Noces* ("Noces à Tipasa", "Le vent à Djémila", "L'été à Alger" and "Le désert"), which Camus himself saw as a response to Grenier's *Les Iles*, he laid the literary foundations of his Mediterranean ideology

³ Camus's *pensée de midi* is theorised and explained in detail in the conclusion of his philosophical-political essay *L'Homme révolté* (1951).

⁴ In the period between the two World Wars, the formulation of Mediterranean ideals also represents an attempt to establish a common European identity (cf. e.g., Rufat 2017).

⁵ Camus begins his preface as follows: "J'avais vingt ans lorsqu'à Alger je lus ce livre pour la première fois. L'ébranlement que j'en reçus, l'influence qu'il exerça sur moi, et sur beaucoup d'amis, je ne peux mieux les comparer qu'au choc provoqué sur toute une génération par *Les Nourritures terrestres*" (Camus 1959, 9).

and aesthetics. In the works of both authors, the Provençal Lourmarin became the symbol of a transnational and transcontinental *esprit méditerranéen*.

Lourmarin, which lies in the Lubéron mountains and looks towards Marseille and Algiers, became a tangible metaphor for a non-contemplative, lustful and intense life unburdened by excess material possessions, especially in Grenier's *essais* "Terrasses de Lourmarin" and "Sagesse de Lourmarin", published in 1936 in *Cahiers du Sud*. For the two intellectuals, the commune in the Provençal hinterland became a nostalgic solar projection of a *pensée de midi* germinating in Algeria. Here, present and past, northern and southern shores, simplicity and sensual perception flowed together into a Mediterranean model of life and literature that transcended the shore. The exuberantly life-affirming sensuality of the thoroughly lyrical essays in Camus's *Noces*, which his later texts never praised as a leitmotif (Kampits 2000, 52), is also connected to his tuberculosis, which led the author to seek admission into a sanatorium in southern France as early as 1930 (Grenier 1987, 20).

At the latest in 1936, however, he visited Grenier in Lourmarin (Sommer 2011, 57), which became his "port d'attache et d'évasion" (Todd 1996, 1019). Here, Camus found the light of his native Algeria (Sommer 2011, 57), and in 1958, he bought a house there with the money from his Nobel Prize. Thus, the author of the "printemps à Tipasa" found himself in the "autumn of Lourmarin" (Todd 1996, 1024), catching glimpses of the Algerian Mount Chenoua in the Lubéron (Sommer 2011, 56). "[E]n envoyant la main, je touche l'Algérie" is how Suzanne Ginoux delivers Camus's words (Todd 1996, 1016). In the third essay of the *Noces*, "L'été à Alger", the Provençal hills become the antithesis of the intellectual hustle and bustle of Paris, i. e., the symbol of a life spent in silence where man can escape from his humanity and gently free himself from himself.⁶ Still in "L'énigme", one of the essays of *L'été* (1954), he states: "tout se tait devant ce fracas et le Lubéron, là-bas, n'est qu'un énorme bloc de silence que j'écoute sans répit" (Camus 1959, 141).

Likewise, in the sense of a transnational Mediterranean connectivity, Rome and *latinité* are not portrayed as the center of the Mediterranean (historical-geographical) continuum. Instead, Greece, with its opening to the Orient, becomes for Camus the exemplary embodiment of a Mediterranean "bassin international" (Grenier 1987, 37). Against the backdrop of the Algerian War and the two World Wars, national thinking becomes a sign of decay while internationality becomes a means of restoring real meaning to the Occident (Camus 1983, 55). The notion

⁶ "Ailleurs, les terrasses d'Italie, les cloîtres d'Europe ou le dessin des collines provençales, autant de places où l'homme peut fuir son humanité et se délivrer avec douceur de lui-même" (Camus 1959, 35).

of transgressing social, political and national borders on the path to a universally conceived humanity engenders in Camus an anti-totalitarian and anti-colonialist outlook (Témime 2002, 1000). In the notion of united anti-fascist nations, Greece becomes, following the tradition of classical antiquity, the ideal of measure and balance, symbolized by the Greek goddess Nemesis (e.g., “L’exil d’Hélène”, 1948), to whom Camus dedicated a short poetic text written in Lourmarin in 1959 (Todd 1996, 1025).

The lessons of light that Camus collected in connection with his early stays in southern France and readings of Grenier had a lasting influence on his view of his Algerian homeland and childhood. Already in his first publication, *L’envers et le droit* (1937), the interrelation of the themes of poverty and light are addressed, and the same is portrayed in the *Noces*. In the *Carnets* from May 1935, Camus also speaks of a “nostalgie d’une pauvreté perdue”: “à des gens riches le ciel, donné par surcroît, paraît un don naturel. Pour les gens pauvres, son caractère de grâce infinie lui est restitué” (Camus 1983, 17). The sunshine thus becomes the place of the poor, the shade that of the wealthy (Grenier 1987, 9), and the two sides are mutually dependent. This tense Mediterranean political arc between these connected poles will be repeatedly taken up, particularly in *Le premier homme*. In the part of the novel written in Lourmarin, Camus recalls the poor conditions of his childhood and portrays this stage of life, more than any other, as being marked by light. On the ship to Algiers, the protagonist Jacques (Camus’s alter ego), rocked by the ocean waves and illuminated by the sun, falls into a slumber in which he is entirely determined by the “pauvreté chaleureuse” that has never left him (Camus 1994, 53).⁷

Here it becomes clear that only by looking from a distance can Camus consciously locate the significance of light in the years of his childhood: “la patrie se connaît au moment de la perdre”, as he stated explicitly in “L’été à Alger” (Camus 1959, 48). Likewise, his family’s financial circumstances become, from the position of the advanced intellectual, the ideal of Mediterranean simplicity. The present is here illuminated by the past, as is childhood through the eyes of the forty-six-year-old author (Ellison 2009, 111). The two times and sides of the Mediterranean are brought into a dialogue that is associated with the constant *balance-ment* of the Mediterranean.

With its roots in Belcourt, a poor district of Algiers, Camus’s *pensée de midi* as a Mediterranean and moderate concept thus initially refers to a social-geographi-

7 “Il respirait, sur le grand dos de la mer; il respirait par vagues, sous le grand dos de la mer; il respirait par vagues, sous le grand balancement du soleil, il pouvait enfin dormir et revenir à l’enfance dont il n’avait jamais guéri, à ce secret de lumière, de pauvreté chaleureuse qui l’avait aidé à tout vaincre” (Camus 1994, 53).

cal imprint. Not least through the class and race differences he personally endured as well as his experiences with illness, Camus was struck by a (literary) thirst for freedom and community, balance and justice, which he took to the extreme. Drawing on these early influences, Camus developed a political, ethical and literary-aesthetic programme of *dépouillement*. In the process, the deprivations of the social milieu in which he grew up were idealized by means of spatial and temporal distance and became the basic prerequisite of a solar manner of thinking. Furthermore, he linked the need of the *gens pauvres* to be content with the immediate to a special sensitivity towards experiences of nature, which is particularly evident in the “lyrisme exceptionnel” (Rufat 2011, 197) of the *Noces*.

The tension between (external) poverty and (internal) wealth that unites seemingly opposed poles is also reflected in other forms of polarities that Camus resolved through the concept of a Mediterranean-solar connectivity marked by simplicity: the *Noces* celebrate not only the marriage of light and the sea (“l’unité s’exprime ici en termes de soleil et de mer”, Camus 1959, 47) but also the physical contact between man, culture and nature, in which man’s incongruity with the world seems to dissolve for a moment. In the first of the lyrical-sensual essays, “*Noces à Tipasa*”, the ruins of a Roman temple, which had not been fenced in with barbed wire in the 1930s but remained freely accessible, merge with the Mediterranean vegetation, the sea directly below and the open sky. The narrator describes himself as a “race née du soleil et de la mer, vivante et savoureuse, qui puise sa grandeur dans sa simplicité” (Camus 1959, 21). The Algerian scents, sounds and temperatures are (sensually) erotically charged in the sense of a “goût de la chair” (Camus 1959, 47). Entirely in the tradition of Gide’s apologia of the corporeal in *Nourritures terrestres* (1897), they put the reader into a state of synesthetic excitement.

This aesthetic of sensory intensity is supported at the level of lexis and syntax by a style of deliberate simplicity and materiality (Monte 2003), which gives the appearance of a (seemingly) direct documentation of evidential occurrences. The pleasurable life among aromatic plants, the silver shield of the sea (Camus 1959, 11) with its embracing waves, the blue sky, the hot stones that can be touched with one’s hands and kissed with one’s lips, however, do not correspond to unmediated impressions. Rather, they are elements of a comprehensive worldview and poetics. Camus’s Mediterranean aesthetic is thus reflected in an “écriture unificatrice” that describes natural phenomena partly in terms of a sexual union: “on assiste à un véritable acte d’amour”, writes Pacchiani (2013, 17–18), underlining the author’s lascivious language as a hymn to a physical-sensual drunkenness. The stylistic conspicuousness can thus be attributed to an “écriture méditerranéenne” without essentializing it; as Philippe Jousset (2016) puts it, “il n’y aurait d’écriture

méditerranéenne qu'à la façon dont il existe des illusions optiques. Et il existe bien des illusions optiques".

In the second essay, "Le vent à Djemila", the metaphorically charged Algerian spring and its fullness of life around Tipaza is abandoned in favor of the ruins of Djemila and a reflection on transience. Finally, in "L'été à Alger", the Algerian capital, like other seaside cities, is granted the privilege of an opening to the sea (Camus 1959, 33). In the Algerian population, Camus observes a glorification of the body as well as a "richesse sensuelle" (Camus 1959, 45 and 34): "comment ne pas s'identifier à ce dialogue de la pierre et de la chair à la mesure du soleil et des saisons?" (Camus 1959, 37). The "peuple enfant", as Camus further describes the Algerian people whom he strongly idealizes, are "sans leçons", characterized by a simple happiness ("bonheurs faciles") and a lavishly passionate zest for life ("c'est une précipitation à vivre qui touche au gaspillage", Camus 1959, 41–42).

In "Le desert", the fourth part of the *Noces*, Camus allows Italian painting to become the ideal of his Mediterranean conception of art. This concluding essay, dedicated to Grenier, reads like an echo of Camus's stay in Tuscany, which, in its lessons about passion,⁸ becomes another point of reference for Mediterranean ideals and idealizations. Based on paintings and frescoes from the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance, painters alone are given the ability to satiate those hungry for art. They alone work in an eternal present, and they alone have the privilege of making themselves novelists of the body ("ils ont le privilège de se faire les romanciers du corps", Camus 1959, 54). The corporeal is thus explicitly linked to an ahistorical attitude. Natural phenomena are given human attributes; for example, when the landscape resembles the "premier sourire du ciel" or a "cri de pierre" (Camus 1959, 67).

In short, the light of the Mediterranean world, in all its fluid, physical states, is for Camus the metaphorical materiality of a "lost happiness" of poverty and home (Sommer 2011, 47), whereby his "écriture fluide et lumineuse" (Pacchiani 2013, 15) allows the *carnal* to triumph and becomes part of an artistic revolt in which humanity and nature, an enduring presence and the tension between (over-) abundance and austerity, converge. In a broader sense, the material *dépouillement* programmatically portrayed by Camus is ultimately linked to literary creation. It becomes the necessary basis of an ardent existential as well as a textual liveliness and directness. Birgit Wagner (2000, 20) also speaks of a linguistic "warmth that arises from concreteness", which expresses itself on a semantic as well as syntactic

8 In Camus's works, passion results from the rejection of any hierarchy of values and of any given fulfilment of meaning (Kampits 2000, 53).

level, and which reflects Camus's conception of the *pensée de midi* as a physically lived philosophy rather than a complex, abstract *raisonnement*.⁹

5 Outlook: Louis Brauquier's Voyages Between Marseille and the World Sea

In Albert Camus's work, the Mediterranean as a connecting space is first and foremost an intellectual literary metaphor of Mediterranean connectivity, whose nostalgic solar projection site becomes the Provençal Lourmarin. In Louis Brauquier's work, on the other hand, it appears as a concrete working reality spread across continents. It is transferred into his poetry – mostly in French, though sometimes also in Provençal – and there is a permanent correspondence between the author's working life and creation (Audisio 1966). The poet, painter and photographer Brauquier was born in Marseille in 1900. His work repeatedly references the geographical Midi while, in contrast to Camus and Arène, encompassing a much broader maritime perspective. He worked for almost forty years at the Messageries Maritimes in Marseille, which sailed to Africa, Asia and India, and he was stationed in various ports between the Mediterranean and the Pacific for most of his life. From 1926 onwards, he travelled the oceans and described the ambience of the world's port cities in his poetry.

Brauquier's poetry fuses his experiences in Alexandria, Djibouti and Nouméa, Sydney, Colombo, Diego-Suarez and Saigon with the exotic trends of the time. In the process, Marseille runs through his entire oeuvre as a nostalgically charged anchor point to which he returns again and again: "tout commence à Marseille, tout continue pour Marseille, et finalement tout reviendra à Marseille" writes Gabriel Audisio (1966)¹⁰ about his fellow poet. Indeed, Brauquier developed an exalted and mystified image of his hometown (Audisio 1966), for example, in the poems "Fondation de Marseille" or "Litanies pour Notre-Dame de la Garde", among others. In addition, Brauquier repeatedly dreamt of places around the Étang de Berre, the area to the west of Marseille characterized by industry and working-class culture, where his family on his father's side came from and where he would retire in 1960 (Anderson 1993, 3–10).

⁹ The "rhétorique du moins" also corresponds to this idea, in particular the rare use of antitheses and oxymora, which reflect a rational, logical and complex perception of reality, or, in contrast, the frequent, not thought-through or ordered, enumerations or semantically reducing synecdoches (cf. Monte 2003).

¹⁰ Audisio's study does not contain page numbers in the e-book version.

At the same time, Marseille is ‘nomadized’ by Brauquier’s pen (Audisio 1966): in addition to constant homesickness, Marseille is associated with a permanent wanderlust. Meanwhile, the longed-for port also becomes the starting point for long journeys by ship. Brauquier was not a sailor at sea, however, but a clerk at a shipping company on land (Frébourg 2018, 9–24).¹¹ Thus, the texts, which often start in harbor pubs, oscillate between impressions of land and sea, long-distance and homesickness, loneliness and exile, moods of arrival and departure. “Toutes les puissances du globe”, for example, explicitly speaks of a noisy bar in an unspecified port city, “où débarquent, brûlent et passent/ Les races multiples” (Brauquier 2018, 45). On the other hand, the poem “Pour nous qui n’avons pas vu”, which, like the poems above, can also be found in *Et l’Au-delà de Suez* (1922), is emblematic of the need for distance. A group of islands in the Antilles, the Iles Sous-le-Vent, becomes here an almost communicative crystallization point of exoticism expressed in sensual charms. The lyrical I, who wants to travel on the ship, associates the Antilles with ocean waves, exotic spices and rum, i.e., articles imported to France.

In many texts, port cities and their resonant names become a special sensual attraction. Inspired by his time in Australia, Brauquier transforms the Malay Archipelago into a fiery culinary symbol of “Des noms de villes brûlants/Comme du carry sur la langue” (77). In general, similar to Camus’s essays, many of Brauquier’s poems foreground a sensory-erotic perception of nature in an exoticized environment elsewhere in Mediterranean rurality: “Je voudrais être une pierre”, “Le vent”, “La pluie”, “A la mer”, “Un sein” or “Naissance du soleil” speak exemplarily of the longing for a sensual union between the skin and the four elements. Repeatedly, erotic word fields metaphorically transmit Mediterranean sensory impressions: the lyrical I recalls a “baiser de l’eau fraîche/sur mon corps nu comme l’été” (515) or makes female breasts swell like a peach “quand le soleil chauffe ses pores” (404). Brauquier’s metaphorical fields, drawn from pungent Mediterra-

11 This ambivalence between exoticism and existential security has made Brauquier a literary figure. Long after the success of his play (1929) and film *Marius* (1931), Marcel Pagnol admitted that his wanderlust-addicted title character in a harbour bar had been inspired by Brauquier and his first volume of poetry *Et l’Au-delà de Suez* (1922). With regard to the editorial team of *Fortunio*, which included Pagnol, Ballard and Brauquier, Pagnol gives the following information in a 1959 interview: “Louis Brauquier qui nous rebattait les oreilles, à Marseille, avec sa mer, ses îles, ses bateaux... On se moquait de lui : il ne partait jamais! Tous les jours il allait gratter son papier dans un bureau... Et puis un jour, il est parti... Tu sais que je l’ai revu ? Il est rentré définitivement. Parce que, là-bas en Australie, quand il est arrivé, tu sais ce qu’il a fait ? Eh bien, il est entré dans un bureau et il s’est remis à gratter toute la journée ! Et pendant vingt ans... Alors, vous voyez, mon Marius, je n’ai eu qu’à le regarder, qu’à l’écouter et à écouter d’autres autour de moi” (Pagnol qtd. in Maumet 1997, 25).

nean and distant scents and tastes, or other, especially maritime, sensory impressions, often appear highly repetitive and globally transferable from one area to another. In the poems that incorporate port cities or shipping as their theme, it is striking that Brauquier sticks to the language of his maritime everyday life, while in poems compromising themes outside his professional milieu, material and technical terms relating to shipping are repeatedly made to appear poetic.

The imaginary space Brauquier opens up looks, as in Camus's works, at social and geographical margins away from urban and bourgeois centers. Above all, however, his poetry, for which he finally received the Grand Prix littéraire de Provence and the Grand Prix de poésie of the Académie française after his definitive return to France, can be understood as a cosmopolitan culmination of the *pensée de midi* that is completely removed from the continent (Frébourg 2018, 39). In this sense, Brauquier's life and poetry also reflect or mirror the spirit of the *Cahiers du Sud*, for which he also mediated shipping advertisements. In the sense of Jean Ballard's editorial of 1926, this is a territorially delimited extension of the Midi. The "vague sens géographique" of the journal would incorporate all the tendencies of the "vastes contrées qui entourent et prolongent Marseille", and its title would be the "enseigne d'une bonne demeure", "où l'hospitalité la plus large peut être offerte à quiconque la demandait dignement" (Ballard 1926, 53). In summary, the hospitality referenced here can be read in Brauquier as a lived *pensée de midi* which stands as the symbol of a trans-Mediterranean exoticism and shows the transferability of maritime landscapes and mentalities.

Brauquier's poetry thus confirms and condenses the ideal of a Mediterranean connectivity into a world-oceanic one, in which elements of both Arène's fiction and Camus's essays are synthesized: in Arène's work, the outskirts of Paris become imaginary transitional spaces between North and South, province and metropolis. Strolling through Paris gives rise to a dynamic dialogue with deceleration, vegetation and a mentality traditionally associated with Provence or provincialization. In contrast, Camus's *Essais* open up an ethical-aesthetic space of a sensual-moderate *pensée de midi*, which, in addition to Italian, Greek and Spanish symbolic references, is based in particular on Algerian-Provençal references. Brauquier's poetry can be read here as an outlook that goes beyond the Mediterranean *esprit* of Arène and Camus: Provence's countryside, Marseille's borders and international ports become connecting thresholds. They combine Mediterranean spaces and references with cosmopolitan vagabondage. Both are transferred from Brauquier's maritime everyday life into a sensual-nostalgic metaphor and aesthetics.

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