

## Sea of Literatures

# Alpe Adria e dintorni, itinerari mediterranei

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Letteratura e cinema di confine

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# Sea of Literatures



Towards a Theory of Mediterranean Literature

Edited by

Angela Fabris, Albert Göschl and Steffen Schneider

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Angela Fabris (University of Klagenfurt), Albert Göschl (University of Graz), Steffen Schneider (University of Graz)

## 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-*lieux 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 *nœuds 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 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Dumanis' (2013) concept of intercommunality 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-Ežodu tač-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 – Matvejevi's Mediterranean Breviary* questions real space, actors, and languages in light of a range of possible classifications. Predrag Matvejevic 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 Horden 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.

Marilia 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 Conceptual 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 architetonico* (*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 architetonico* 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 Brauquie* 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 ingénu* (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 Maḥmūd Darwīš with his 1992 poetic suite *Aḥad 'Ašar Kawkabân '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 Aḥmad 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, fantasma* (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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## Part I: **Memories and Identities**



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# Tales of the Adriatic

**Abstract:** The tales set in the Adriatic Sea show the different cultures that have crossed it and the different situations experienced by those people: pirates, trade, pilgrimages to the holy land, wars, relief, sporting events and more, in different historical periods have left significant traces along its coasts. They reflect the multiplicity of Mediterranean cultures.

## 1 Geography and History

The Adriatic is a stretch of the Mediterranean, a sea longer than it is wide, oblique, oriented as it is from north/west to south/east. Its low, sandy west coast has no ports, unlike its rocky, jagged west coast, which is rich in moorings. This particular configuration, in addition to the system of winds and currents, for many centuries has forced sailors to zigzag between the Italian and Illyrian coasts, at least until the advent of steam ships. The trade of typical products of the two coasts has been therefore intense, and the movements of entire family groups belonging to the ethnic groups located on the opposite shores were frequent: from the Balkan area workers of various kinds arrived in the west, while Italian entrepreneurs left from here towards the east.

Since the year 1000 the Adriatic waterways were controlled by the Republic of Venice, which aimed to expand to the east. The opportunity was offered by the victory of its fleet, led by Pietro II Orseolo / Peter II Orseolo, against the Nazarene pirates that infested the Mediterranean: the coastal towns of Istria and Dalmatia spontaneously submitted to the power of the Serenissima. Reported since pre-Roman times, the attacks of the pirates, especially Saracens and Turks from the Ottoman Empire, were confirmed in the late Middle Ages by merchants and pilgrims to the Holy Land: in those waters they risked, if not the loss of life, certainly that of their property. The various merchant fleets that sailed the Adriatic, as Fernand Braudel tells us (1987), were still governed by sailors from the North Sea, or from the Illyrian coast. Even the deep-sea fishermen found a valuable help in the most experienced colleagues from the north or from the east coast. The Adriatic was a sea where many people could meet, crossing on its different shores: Ashkenazi Jews arrived mainly in Trieste and Venice; Corfiots and Sephardites found a home along the Italian peninsula, where there were also many settlements of Slavic, Turkish, Armenian, Albanian, Montenegrin people, etc. The contamination of different religions and cultures made the Adriatic Sea the backdrop of tales that



very often began with the stories of the origins of different cities, especially coastal ones. From the very first centuries, in fact, narratives of Ragusa, Sibenik, Trogir, on the one hand, Venice, Ravenna, Rimini and Ancona on the other were elaborated. Pirate conflicts, wild clashes for survival, linguistic crossbreeds, intense trade and so on had given rise to a real Adriatic repertoire that recounted the birth and rise of its dominant cities.

## 2 Mythical Historiography: Humanism

An example of the mythical historiography of the humanistic age is the poem by Gian Mario Filelfo, born in Constantinople, who in the 1470s composed his *Chroniche de la città de Anchona* (1979). He told of the fortunate journey of Fidefora, a queen forced to flee from Schiavonia after the death of her husband. Like Dido, who had escaped from Tyre to Carthage where she founded a kingdom, Fidefora, too, stopped on that Adriatic promontory and gave rise to a city, Ancona. However, it is puzzling that in describing the conquest of power by Ancona's inhabitants, no explicit mention is made of their victory over the Turks. Obviously, the author had good relations with them, since he called them generically "*popoli d'oriente*" / "peoples from the East", arrived nearby to plunder the rich Ravenna. Their defeat was not attributed to their tactical inferiority, but to the perilousness of the navigation along the coast of the Adriatic's eastern shore, on whose rocks their ships would easily get stranded. In this blatant manipulation of historical data, Filelfo therefore appears much more diplomatic than Enea Silvio Piccolomini who, still shocked by the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when writing his *De Europa* five years later described the Turks as a "*truculento, svergognato, fornicatore*" / "truculent, shameful and fornicating" people. But he was to become Papa Pio II / Pope Pius II and precisely against them he wanted to organize a new crusade, which however he was unable to set up. Historiographically more correct, he sought to disprove fabulous allegations, starting with those about the Argonauts: according to him Jason and Medea did not sail from the Black Sea to Istria along the inland river system, nor did they follow the course of the Istro, before taking the Po. The documents he consulted, of course, did not mention such accounts.



### 3 Manuals, Diaries and Pilot Books of the Renaissance Bourgeoisie

It was the merchants who gave a new face to the Adriatic, such as Benedetto Cotrugli, a Dubrovnik citizen who lived between 1410 and 1469. Not only did he write the first *Libro de l'arte de la mercatura*,<sup>1</sup> but he also composed a *De navigazione* (1464/65), a description of life on board. With the pragmatic sense of those who look at the result rather than at theoretical hypotheses, Cotrugli taught the use of instruments useful for navigation and suggested ways to avoid possible dangers. He recommended sailors to maintain a friendly relationship with all those who practiced the trade, including Turks, beyond flags and religions. The two manuals have as corollary a firm principle of the early capitalistic economy, that is the need to profit from the enterprises but to limit it to a just profit, in order to distribute benefits also to the customers, who would be well disposed to buy other goods, if the merchant was honest.

A Venetian probably of Longobard origin, Marin Sanudo (1466–1536), called the Younger, was rather reluctant to take up positions in the maritime colonies of his Venice, which he loved deeply. In his *Diaries* (1879–1903) he has described in detail, in the form of a chronicle, the historical events that involved Venice from 1496 to 1533. The most interesting part of the story is the portrayal of the real strength of the Maritime Republic, that is to say its merchant fleet: Sanudo described the preparations for the departure, the assessment and planning of supplies, the forecast of risks such as pirate assaults and shipwrecks, basing his depiction on the reports provided by survivors. The powerful narration of the Arsenal, founded in 1104, is so famous that Dante took it as a benchmark for the Circle of Malebolge: in the XXI Canto of *Inferno / Hell*, the poet condemned those who used public office for personal benefit, to be immersed in boiling pitch like that of the Venetian shipyard. This place was actually a superb manufacturing site in which specialised workers carried out the individual operations of assembling standard components along an assembly line. It was one of the oldest examples of a pre-industrial economic-productive structure. Another subject of the *Serenissima*, originally from Rhodes, Gioseppe Rosaccio, in 1598 wrote a *Viaggio da Venetia a Costantinopoli. Per Mare, e per Terra, & insieme quello di terra Santa / Journey from Venice to Constantinople. By Sea, and by Land, & together that of the Holy Land* ([1598] 1992). The trauma of the collapse of the Eastern Empire had been overcome and this geogra-

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<sup>1</sup> *Il trattato De navigatione di Benedetto Cotrugli* (1464–1465). Commented edition of ms. Schoenberg 473 with the text of ms.557 di Yale. Ed. Piero Falchetta. *Studi veneziani* LVII (2009): 16–334.

pher celebrated Lepanto where the Holy League, of which Venice was a member, had beaten the Ottomans. He could not possibly know that, despite such victory, from that moment on the decline of the Serenissima would begin, and therefore he wrote with all the pride of the son of a powerful homeland to which he owed obedience and respect. The route, the ports, the winds, the morphology of the coastal and inland territories, the agricultural and manufacturing production of the individual localities, the trade rules, the rarest goods, the descriptions of the habits of the locals, but also the legends of the foundation of the main places and their subsequent history, are accurately reported because, as the subtitle states, his study is “*utile, a Mercanti Marinari, & à Studiosi di Geografia*” / “useful, to Sea Merchants, & to Scholars of Geography”. The pirates, especially the Turks, and the garrisons of the fortifications erected in defense, became characters of a passionate representation. Rosaccio, however, wanted to reassure travellers that the Venetian Republic was very careful to make the Adriatic and Middle Eastern traffic safe. The good merchant did not hesitate to underline that the two civilizations, Christian and Ottoman, had both left impressive signs and that they could coexist with fruitful mutual exchanges. And this was true also for another purely Italian matter: nothing to object that in 1525, in his *Prose della vulgar lingua* / *Prose of the vulgar language*, the Venetian Pietro Bembo had recognized the primacy of Tuscan as a literary language. The important thing was that the Mediterranean commercial language remained Venetian.

## 4 Dossiers, Autobiographies, Letters: Towards the Modernity of the Enlightenment

The Serenissima had to contend with other forces in the Italian peninsula and in the rest of Europe that were changing the political balance and control of trade with the Levant through the Adriatic Sea, otherwise known as the Gulf of Venice. After Lepanto (1571) and seventy years of peace with the Turks, the conflict resumed. With the peace of Passarowitz (1718), the trade flows were strongly threatened by the competition from France and England, while the Habsburgs stepped in and in 1719 founded the new free port of the Austro-Hungarian empire in Trieste, which was to compete strongly with the city of the Doges. In fact, in the second book of his *Mémoires*,<sup>2</sup> Giacomo Casanova recounted the delicate diplomatic task

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<sup>2</sup> *Le Mémoires de J. Casanova de Seingalt, écrits par lui-même* is the title of the old edition of Giacomo Casanova's memoirs. Written in French between 1789 and 1798, they were published posthumously around 1825 in a censored version, and placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1834,

entrusted to him by Venice, in 1741/42, at the court of Constantinople, when he was just twenty years old. As an old man, he recalled his round trip from Venice to Constantinople and back again along the classical route, the Istrian Vrsar, the Dalmatian and Dubrovnik outposts, the commercial, military and cultural settlements located in Kotor, Corfu and Korcula. He described vividly his sea voyage, insisting, however, above all on his romantic vicissitudes, without forgetting to equate the art of sailing with the wisdom of governing oneself and the things of the world. When he then fled from the Piombi, to earn merits and be able to return to his motherland in 1772 he went to Trieste. Here he spied on land and sea traffic, sending precious Adriatic information to Venice: number and type of ships, imperial concessions, goods traffic of the Habsburg fleet, and other useful information for the competition.

The relevance of factual information, the abandonment of mythology, and the need to adhere to the historical truth are the basis of the eighteenth-century narrative, born from the need for rational clarity invoked by the Enlightenment. Travellers and historians presented essential and objective facts, possibly free from prejudice. The legendary and adventurous aura disappeared and the Adriatic turned into a sea described with historical and scientific interest, according to the new genre inaugurated by the reports of the *Grand Tour*. The odeporic perspective, which at the end of the eighteenth century was promoted by members of the bourgeoisie in search of success, underpins, for example, the short story by Antonio De Giuliani (1785)<sup>3</sup> from Trieste, who used economic terms to describe the morphological, climatic and political characteristics of the free port of Trieste, which he believed to be underexploited. An example of an epistolary novel is the *Journey to Dalmatia / Viaggio in Dalmazia* (Fortis [1774] 1986) by Alberto Fortis, one of the precursors of the genre. The nine letters of the collection are grouped according to the topographical districts explored by the author considering three aspects: geology, ancient history and the retrieval of information economically useful to identify possible resources for the Serenissima. And so, we find detailed historical reconstructions, which come from the observation of the stratification of the different civilizations exposed by the force of bradyseisms and now visible under the water line. There are accurate descriptions of shells, marbles, phosphoric marine lights, stones useful to detect the fertility of the land. The intent is to push the motherland to refine agricultural and fishing techniques so as to draw

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along with all the author's other works. A new edition, in line with the original manuscript, has replaced the old title with its original one by *Histoire de ma vie* (12 vols.), Wiesbaden-Paris, F. A. Brockhaus-Librairie Plon, 1960–1962.

<sup>3</sup> Other eighteenth-century travellers on the Adriatic: Carlo Gozzi 1797; Ruggero Boscovich di Ragusa 1759–1760; Zaccaria Valaresso 1769/70; Francesco Grisellini 1780; Francesco Apostoli 1801.

more resources and thus reduce the import of goods. Often the author, distracted by the beauty of the places and the flavours of their cuisine, indulged in discussing navigation techniques. Another eighteenth-century traveller, Giambattista Casti, in a refined literary prose, suggested itineraries and seasonal times suitable for avoiding bad weather when undertaking a journey of extraordinary tourist interest: Venice, Corfu, Zakynthos, the Dardanelles, Constantinople, and then back via Athens. Also Casti did not fail to inform the reader about the military power, the state of finances, religion, customs, administrative, legal and school legislation, and the gastronomy of the areas he was passing through; he also gave precious information about Turkey, against which the Austro-Russian coalition had just been formed.<sup>4</sup> The point of view was always that of a Venetian, who considered western civilization absolutely superior and who took care to confide it also to his female readers. In fact, a female public began to form, made wider by the incipient industrial revolution which favoured the inclusion of the bourgeois classes. Giacomo De Concina, with his *Journey to Coastal Dalmatia / Viaggio nella Dalmazia litorale* (De Concina 1809), twenty-three letters addressed to a friend, portray Fortis' itinerary, focusing on certain themes, such as topography, soil fertility, the river and road network, ports, cities, mines, natural resources and the products derived from them. The perspective of the government officer, of the scholar and of the scientist did not exclude that of the man of culture, who managed to grasp the link between the different civilizations and to appreciate artistic details that reminded him of the great Venetian school, from Titian to Tintoretto, from Palma il Vecchio to Veronese. While admiring the beauty of that steep coast, Casti also found time to make frequent observations on navigation techniques. But in the meantime something had changed: with the advent of Napoleon, that shore had ceased to be Venetian and was about to become Austrian. A fact well known to Ugo Foscolo, a native of Zakynthos, an island of the Serenissima, where his father, a ship's doctor, had chosen to live. Although immersed in the culture of classical Greece, Foscolo felt Venetian and therefore, as a betrayed patriot, reacted vigorously to the signing of the Treaty of Campoformido, with which in 1797 Napoleon handed over Venice, Istria and Dalmatia to the Habsburgs (Zakynthos remained French). The theme of exile was thus strongly raised in Foscolo's *A Zacinto* written between 1802 and 1803, one of the most famous poems in Italian literature. The writer, fleeing from the Austrian police, compared his wanderings to Ulysses' perilous *nostos*,

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<sup>4</sup> *Relazione di un mio viaggio fatto da Venezia a Costantinopoli l'anno 1788, con alcune osservazioni attinenti al medesimo, particolarmente sul Serraglio attuale del gran Signore. Operetta inedita piacevole ed istruttiva dell'abate Giambattista Casti*, 1802. It is an epistolary novel with a complex editorial story. To learn more about it please refer to Pavarini (2009).

but unlike Ulysses who managed to see his homeland, the “petrosa Itaca”, again, Foscolo sensed that he would never be back.

## 5 Poems, Opera Librettos, Novels: the Birth of Nations and Romanticism

After the Congress of Vienna, which restored the dynastic equilibrium of the past, the bourgeoisie of trade and industry began to regain power, encouraged by the results of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s achievements. Romanticism was the movement that accompanied the demand for autonomy, including national autonomy. The struggle against absolutism in the name of constitutional liberalism was in fact identified in many national communities with the struggle for unity and independence of the various peoples dismembered or enslaved by the policy of restoration. The Italian Risorgimento, one of the many movements that perturbed nineteenth-century Europe, experienced defeats and victories: the Adriatic began to tell other stories, which reversed the roles and made the sea a liquid plain that divided instead of united. In the romantic nineteenth century, Venice the conqueror, which had placed the “*schiavi*”, that is the Slavs, at its service, became the emblem of an oppressive system of power that provided content to the melodrama, a new popular narrative genre: powerful emotions, underlined by the power of musical romances in which good and bad guys, heroes and traitors, patriots and spies were clearly recognizable, made opera librettos vehicles of political propaganda too (Sorbi 2015). Venice became a negative example of an evil power. Melodramas such as Verdi’s *I due Foscari* (1844) with a libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, or Enrico Petrella’s *Morosina* (1859) with a text by Domenico Bolognese, or Alessandro Magotti’s *L’ultimo Faliero* (1877) with words by Luigi Scalchi, now put the figure of the pirate in a positive light, the Uskoks became the bearer of alternative values to those of the Serenissima. The archetype was Schiller with his *Die Räuber* (The Robbers) (1782) and, musically, *Il Pirata* (1827) by Vincenzo Bellini with lyrics by Felice Romani. Sailing by sea and attacking Venetian ships now meant opposing a civilization from which one would deliberately choose to walk away, because it was oppressive and unjust. That was the time when Niccolò Tommaseo gathered the *Tuscan, Corsican, Illyrian and Greek folk songs / Canti popolari toscani, corsi, illirici e greci* (1841/42) along the shores of the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic Sea, as a sign not only of respect for cultures neglected by the cultured class, but also of attention to the values and ethical principles of peoples until then subjugated. Tommaseo, who engaged in the Risorgimento struggle, would never forget his place of birth, Sibenik in Dalmatia, where a good part of the pop-

ulation in the hinterland was Slavic, like his mother. When he returned home, he felt the need to learn his mother tongue, especially after finding out that some Dalmatian folk songs had spread throughout Europe. From enemy to hero, the Uskok was the one who, in the name of freedom, had to become an outlaw to oppose unjust tyranny. Even the Trieste-born Leone Fortis, with the musical aid of Francesco Petroncini, arrived at La Scala in Milan with his *L'Uscocco* (1862). And in 1873 the *scapigliato* Antonio Ghislanzoni with Fosca, set to music by Antonio Carlos Gomes, sided with the enemies of Venice, in a story set in the first centuries of his fortune, in the year 900. Meanwhile, there had been Lissa, who for years remained a shame to be washed away for the Italian Navy. Another *scapigliato*, Arrigo Boito, in the verses of the *Mona Lisa / Gioconda* (1876) set to music by Amilcare Ponchielli, staged a Venice in ruins destined to drag any project of happiness into the mud. The Adriatic, like every sea, showed its funereal aspect more than ever.

## 6 The Epic of the Great War

D'Annunzio perceived this sense of gloominess following the red sails of *Canto novo* that left the coasts of Abruzzo heading to the shores of Dalmatia and Istria. The Adriatic was the place where the ships set sail from opposite ports and crossed their routes – as told in one of the *Novelle della Pescara*, *Il Cerusico di mare*, whose protagonist was a doctor who tried in vain to save a passenger. For this sea of death and glory, the poet wrote verses full of nationalistic ardour, starting with *March 12, 1882 / 12 marzo 1882*, a poem composed on the occasion of his nineteenth birthday. Towards the end of August 1887, together with Adolfo de Bosis, D'Annunzio decided to take a cruise on the small yacht “Lady Clara”: the travel plan was to sail up the coast to Venice, then on to Trieste and Zadar, to finally reach the Bay of Kotor moving from island to island. The journey stopped before reaching Venice, as the inexperienced sailors lost their way, taking some risks. The following year, in an article on the “Tribuna”, which later became the prologue to the book on *L'Armata d'Italia*, D'Annunzio recalled that episode; but the adventure was cloaked in a patriotic symbolism: the poet's experience was transfigured into the tragic destiny of Faà di Bruno, who was swallowed up by the sea in Lissa when the ship “King of Italy” / “Re d'Italia” sank with its four hundred sailors on board. Through a series of successive passages, the poet concludes with a complaint about the loss of Italian dominion over the eastern Adriatic coast, which he hoped would be regained. The season of irredentism began, a movement that claimed the need to conquer the lands where Italian was still spoken. Venice became a positive example again. Moved by some political intention, D'Annunzio spent some time composing *La nave*, in which the Venetians, confined in the lagoon, became the protagonists of

a struggle for the conquest of their Adriatic dominion. When the war broke out, D'Annunzio retired to Venice, from where in January 1916 he thought of making an inspection in Trieste, which he intended to fly over by airplane. But a defect in the carburetor forced him to make an emergency landing: it was on this occasion that the poet suffered the eye damage that forced him into darkness, and that led him to the extraordinary experience of the *Notturmo*. In October 1918 he organized the famous Bakar raid, an incursion against the Austrian navy that had a resounding echo.

During the First World War, the Adriatic Sea, on which trade routes had been suspended, became the scene of clandestine events: from its shores one sailed to escape conscription, and so, in Trieste, the Austrian Admiralty (Haydée 2015) illuminated the surface of the water with a spotlight placed on the heights of Opicina. Stuparich, too, in his novel *Ritornaranno / They will return* (1942), has his characters look at the horizon, waiting to see the Italian ships appear, a sign of victory. This victory finally arrived, but looked so “mutilated” that D'Annunzio decided to occupy Fiume with his troops of legionnaires.

## 7 A Mass Society: Reportages

Arturo Marpicati was among D'Annunzio's followers. Soon after the end of the “Impresa di Fiume” (the Italian Regency of Carnaro) he wrote about his experience in his *Piccolo romanzo di una vela* (1922). It was a travel diary, a competitive and relaxing journey at the same time, a bit of a regatta and a bit of a cruise, that the writer made aboard a cutter between Fiume, Venice and Zadar, in waters that were Italian at the time. The irredentist satisfaction is evident, while the tension of the sporting challenge made the novel a sort of symbolic initiation into life: youth became the season of transition from the firm security of the mainland to the fascinating liquidity of the sea, full of uncertainties. The desire for adventure made the daring protagonist similar to Homer's Ulysses, although more attentive to the charm of the changing shades of colour of the seascapes than to the search for existential and cognitive experiences. A narrative genre emerged that followed the *reportages* made popular by Paul Morand, Evelyn Waugh, Pierre Loti, Valéry Larbaud. This was also the genre used by another legionnaire, Giovanni Comisso, for his *Il porto dell'amore* (1924), an account of the “Impresa di Fiume” provided from a non-politically oriented point of view: war aggressiveness, patriotic ideals and sexual impulses were correlated in D'Annunzio-esque expressions, which had the blue sea of the Carnaro as their reference point. In some way this view anticipated the collection *Gente di mare* (1928): here the author described the joys of a small cabotage vessel that allowed him to come across fishing boats, colorful, dec-



orated and painted with sacred scenes able to protect them from the sea when it got rough. Comisso wrote of places between the lagoon coasts of the west and the rocky coasts of the east that had different characteristics but had all been forged by civilizations capable of dialoguing with each other. It was the wind, in all its directions and qualifications – sirocco, mistral, bora, libeccio – that unified the various stories: diaries, reportages, memories, chronicles, sketches or paper articles – the various pieces of the collection spoke of men and women of the sea able to measure themselves against the forces of nature. In the case of the futurist Vladimir Miletti (Miletti 1937) waves and wind represented the challenge that has always attracted man. Indeed, the father of Futurism, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, had emphasized the beginning of a new era by celebrating the strength of the primordial elements, which would sweep away the decaying archaic civilization: he did so in the novel *La Conquête des Étoiles*, written in French in 1902 and translated into Italian in 1920. Those were the years in which the exhibition of physical strength and overcoming challenges were the prerogatives of the new fascist man: Nico Ledvinca with *Remi sull'Adriatico* (1933) described the physical effort that rowers had to make on a *jole* (a type of boat) called “Vittoria” (Victory) to reach the finishing line. Ledvinca highlighted the competitive effort but also the enjoyment of the beauty of nature in moments of rest. The cruise became a sort of initiation journey for young people with a goliardic spirit, who, upon going ashore, would go wild engaging in dances, amorous adventures and imitations of pirates. Obviously, sailing on the sea of Buccari, their thoughts went to the intrepid D'Annunzio who had mocked the Austrian navy.

## 8 A Disturbing Symbolism and the Return to Myth

In the interval between the two world wars, the Adriatic Sea became a “training ground for life” but was threatened by a negative force. Another devastating war was on its way. One of Giani Stuparich's most beautiful stories, *L'isola / The Island* (1942), has the sea as its narrative backdrop: the author is on a boat scheduled to bring his terminally ill father back to his native land, Lošinj, for the last time. Beyond the enchantment of the landscape, the emotion felt in seeing the father find the places of his childhood, the lasting impression is that of the protagonist staring at the horizon that finally swallows the profile of the Dalmatian town. On the return journey, from the deck of the boat, Stuparich looked at the Lošinj island disappearing in the distance and perceived it as an epitome of his own life, spent between a melancholic adolescence and a missed youth, waiting nostal-



gically for something that sometimes had been lost and sometimes had never happened and that was now progressing towards an inevitable death.

Between 1921 and 1943, the Adriatic Sea experienced a steady flow of Jews from Trieste to Palestine or the Americas. The city, in fact, was the only Italian port from which ships would sail to the East. Until the 1930s refugees from Eastern Europe fled from the Russian and Polish pogroms, but then, with the advent of Nazism in 1933, Jews arrived in Trieste from all the territories occupied by Hitler: the city thus became a full-fledged “*Shaar Zion*”, “*Zion Gate*” until 1943, when emigration ended with the Nazi occupation of the entire regional territory. More than 150,000 Jewish people fled, assisted by the Jewish Agency, which provided accommodations and material, economic and morale support.

Then, after the Nazi-Fascists lost the war, it was the turn of the exiles from Istria, Fiume/Rijeka and Dalmatia, who sometimes chose to flee by sea, in precarious clandestine boats or, from 1947 onwards, aboard the Toscana motor ship with regular service from Pula, a predominantly Italian city now under the dominion of communist Yugoslavia. In all cases, the pain for the loss of people and things, the nostalgia for what was being left behind, the anxiety for an uncertain future but also the hope of being able to start again elsewhere were feelings associated with the image of a sea that is one of the most tormented in history. In *Mai vele più / Never more sails*, Biagio Marin described his Grado through the chromatic language of the coloured sails, which resembled butterflies standing out against the blue sea; he wrote of the fishing boats with their polychrome decorations, of the stained *bragozzi*, and of the steamboats with their dark sides, which sailed towards the blue into a dreamlike and reassuring dimension. However, after the war the poet from Grado carried out an operation typical of those who had seen the lands of Istria and Dalmatia being annexed to Yugoslavia. Those lands entered into the realms of memory and were transformed into a fabulous entity, associated with the figure of the father, the helmsman of a lugger on which he would sometimes take his son: “*Ero tutt’occhi: E mio padre diceva il nome di ogni punta, di ogni secca, di ogni rada. E ogni nome suonava in me come una parola magica, che mi aprisse nuove prospettive*” / “I was all eyes: And my father said the name of every point, every shoal, every road. And each name sounded like a magic word in me, opening up new perspectives” (Marin 2007, 28–29). On that big yellow-sailed lugger, the father returning from his travels would bring nuts and sweet figs, raisins and wine, and stories of people known on the same paths travelled by Ulysses, so that the wood of the boat smelled of strange scents and retained the echoes of distant voices. Umberto Saba, instead, in his early poems, looked at sails and ships only from afar, firm on the shore, as if he were a Telemachus waiting for the return of Ulysses, the joyful and light-hearted father who had abandoned him before his birth. The sea was a symbol of adventure and openness towards a life still full

of dreams. In the poem *Ulisse* the roles are reversed. The poet, now an adult, embodies the Homeric hero, but in the version of the myth reworked by Dante: he doesn't return to his Penelope and does he renounce Ithaca as he is too strongly attracted by navigation, or by life, full of pitfalls yet fascinating, which is like the slippery rocks of Dalmatia, splendid like emeralds, but dangerous for sailors when they disappear under the surface of the water, made invisible by the tides.

Another death-related symbolism characterizes the sea portrayed by Pier Antonio Quarantotti Gambini. In one of his long stories, *L'onda dell'incrociatore / Cruiser wave* (1947), taking place during the fascist period, the writer staged the sordid relationships between his characters trapped in an unconscious and naive game bordering on sadism. The protagonists, perpetrators and, at the same time, victims of physical and moral violence, are fixed in the changing summery light of the sea. Devoid of any filial or fraternal loving piety, they were educated in a hedonistic and turbid sensuality that often led them to behave in an arrogantly, lively and ambiguously. Jealousy turned two boys into the involuntary killers of an Alpine soldier who was in Trieste to celebrate the victory in Africa and drowned in a *maona* (a type of boat) hit by the wave of a cruiser sailing off-shore.

In addition to poems and tales that capture landscapes and soulsapes of the Adriatic, a number of works considered the human tragedies that occurred in this sea over the centuries and re-proposed one of its strongest myths. So, Claudio Magris, from *Assirtidi*, in *Microcosmi / Microcosms* until the more recent novel *Alla cieca / Blind* (2005), has taken up the story of the Alexandrian poet Apollonius Rhodius, who in the fourth book of his *Argonautics* (III a. C) told the story of Jason and Medea and their companions; after the conquest of the Golden Fleece they sailed up the river Istro until they reached the Adriatic Sea. According to Magris, that river was most likely the Danube, which through the Sava and its tributaries flowed into the Adriatic. In a place along the coast of this sea, where the group had stopped, Medea's father, wanting to convince his daughter to leave Jason, sent his son Absirto to talk to her. But Absirto was killed by his sister, torn to pieces and thrown into the Carnaro. From its boiling waters emerged the three islands of Cres, Lošinj and Krk, called, in honour of the young man, Assirtids (or Absirtids). «*Il mare è luogo d'agguato e di morte*» (Magris 1997, 166) / "The sea is a place of ambush and death," said the author.

That violence has become an emblem of a constant destiny of division and dismemberment, both in the mythical past and in the recent history of those lands. This is confirmed by various narratives: Nelida Milani and Anna Maria Mori in *Bora* (1999) made it almost a prologue to the terrible story of the deportees in nearby Golj Otok, who arrived by sea to the island which housed the concentration camp where Tito's opponents were jailed. Pietro Tarticchio with *Nascinguerra*

(2001) has taken up the myth again, with the description of some ancient graffiti common to the two shores of the Adriatic, a symbolism that recalls stories of fragmentation, loss and rupture of an order. Because sometimes, unfortunately, history can repeat itself.

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# Interconnected Histories and Construction of Collective Memory: Theoretical Approaches to the Perception of the Mediterranean Sea as a Palimpsestic *nœud de mémoire* in French and Italian Literature

**Abstract:** This paper aims to examine the Mediterranean Sea in the context of memory studies and to discuss its function as a transnational *lieu de mémoire* in French and Italian literature. In the case of the Mediterranean Sea the national perspective of Pierre Nora's concept of *lieu de mémoire* has to be enlarged on a supranational scale. Indeed, the Mediterranean Sea can be considered as a privileged object of investigation to raise the question about interconnected pasts and memory conflict. For this purpose, we will take into consideration the theoretical model of *nœud de mémoire*, or memory knot, developed by Michael Rothberg, that imposes the vision of the Mediterranean Sea as a rhizomatic network of knotted memory. The treatment of *lieu de mémoire* in a Mediterranean context involves a pluridimensional interaction of diverse pasts and states that memory has to be explored somewhere in between of national and cultural cohesion, crossing and dispersion. These theoretical reflections will be supported by references and examples from French and Italian literary texts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in which Carthage is coded and recoded as one of those Mediterranean memory knots.

## 1 The Concept of *lieu de mémoire* in the Mediterranean Context

Pierre Nora's concept of *lieu de mémoire* conceptualizes "the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists" (Nora 1989, 7). In this context, the present paper aims to examine the Mediterranean Sea as a zone of entangled and superposed memories in French and Italian literature. Nora's study limits the notion of *lieu de mémoire* to national historiography; the study has, for instance, been widely criticized for neglecting the conflict-ridden imperial and colonial aspects of French history (Anderson 2009, 161–162). Further, Nora's oeuvre does not treat the Mediterranean Sea as a site of memory: the third volume,

*Les France*, incorporates a singular record of “Le front de mer” (Mollat du Jourdin 1997, 2721–2764) in the section titled “Conflits et partages – partages de l’espace-temps”. This entry attends to the two French coasts, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, to investigate the maritime identity of the French nation. The discussion of the overlapping or interconnected histories and memories within and beyond French and Francophone cultures is ignored despite the suggested heterogeneity of the collective identity in *Les Frances*.

The historian Maryline Crivello recently developed the approach of applying the concept of *lieu de mémoire* to the Mediterranean (Crivello 2010; 2017). She regards the Mediterranean as a preferred object of investigation through which interconnected pasts and memory conflicts can be examined on a supranational scale:

Les acquis de la recherche [...] s'exercent de manière privilégiée dans le cadre méditerranéen, qui est à la fois espace d'identification et espace d'affrontements de 'mémoires' ou d'identités narratives multiples. L'instrumentalisation du passé à des fins politiques n'est donc pas une spécificité méditerranéenne, mais elle a pris dans cet espace aux identités fragiles une coloration particulièrement vive. (Crivello 2010, 14)

The collective identification with the Mediterranean as a territorial and historical entity is described as a crossing of multiple narrative identities. Her envisioning of a more dynamic conception of the continuous overlapping of pasts is articulated through the notion of “anti-lieux de mémoire” (Crivello 2010, 19). Indeed, memory is no longer crystallized in or embodied by the Mediterranean once and for all; rather, a constant process of inscription and reinscription is provoked by diverse memories that remain in contact or even clash. The conception of an “anti-lieux de mémoire” describes the palimpsestic nature of the superposing pasts encompassed in the Mediterranean; namely,

une fabrication de ces ‘lieux mémoire’ [...] qui donne à voir des phénomènes de déplacement, de superposition, voire d'hybridation, qui résultent de la confrontation des regards et des usages. Ainsi certains lieux palimpsestes, multifonctionnels et polysémiques, dessinent une Méditerranée du partage, syncrétique et hybride, mais aussi hétérogène, intolérante et conflictuelle. (Crivello 2010, 20)

This characterization of a palimpsestic site of memory bears intimate resemblance to Michael Rothberg’s theoretical conception of “knots of memory” (Rothberg 2010, 3). Rothberg’s theory denotes an endeavor in the domain of memory studies to overcome Nora’s omission of pluralized memory, as well as to create a transition from national to trans- or supra-national sites of memory. Rothberg recalls (Rothberg 2010, 7) that Nora himself used the word ‘knot’ as a loose translation of the French ‘lieu’, which is also understood in German as ‘*Knoten*’ (Nora 2001, 685).

However, Rothberg's theoretical conception of memory knots, the *nœuds de mémoire*, intends "to explore the 'knotted intersections' of history and memory that cut across categories of national and ethnic identity" (Rothberg 2010, 8).

Contrary to the more static image of the *lieu de mémoire*, the idea of the knotted nature of collective memory implies the intersection of diverse pasts, agents and catalysts of memory (Rothberg 2010, 9). In Rothberg's words, "[s]uch agency entails recognizing and revealing the production of memory as an ongoing process involving inscription and reinscription, coding and recoding." (Rothberg 2010, 8–9) The notion of memory knots represents the rhizomatic vision of a palimpsest-like memory, a concept that appears to be a promising point of discussion in the context of the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean can thus be conceived and perceived as a rhizomatic network of knotted memory. To summarize, applying the concept of *lieu de mémoire* in the context of the Mediterranean involves the pluri-dimensional interaction of diverse pasts. Applying the concept in this way implies that memory must be explored in the spaces between national and cultural cohesion, crossing and dispersion.

## 2 The Function of Literature in Constructing the Mediterranean into a Sea of Memory

"La mémoire est un récit, et tout récit est une création. La mémoire, tout comme l'histoire, est le récit que nous produisons sur notre passé tant individuel que collectif" (Polycandrioti 2010, 183). The creation of an individual or collective memory narrative is based predominantly on the process of textualization. Crivello emphasizes the importance of the literary field in constructing a collective Mediterranean identity without offering details: "Le 'récit méditerranéen' dans ce contexte se repère dans la construction d'un espace méditerranéen dont les principaux acteurs se trouvent dans le champ littéraire [...]." (Crivello 2010, 18) The conception of a Mediterranean identity is grounded in a geographic, geo-cultural and often a geo-strategic mapping of the Mediterranean basin, which is conceived as an ever-changing spatiotemporal constellation. Literature has a crucial function in the creation of a Mediterranean chronotope whose specific narrative configuration reflects the geopolitical aspirations of nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Colonialism and imperialism act as engines for such nationally determined interpretations of the Mediterranean Sea. This circumstance is particularly depicted in literary texts that reflect the official memory politics of a country and perform the function of *legitimation* in terms of Aleida Assmann's typology of memory functions (Assmann 2009, 133). Assmann distinguishes functional memory