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Mediterranean at Large

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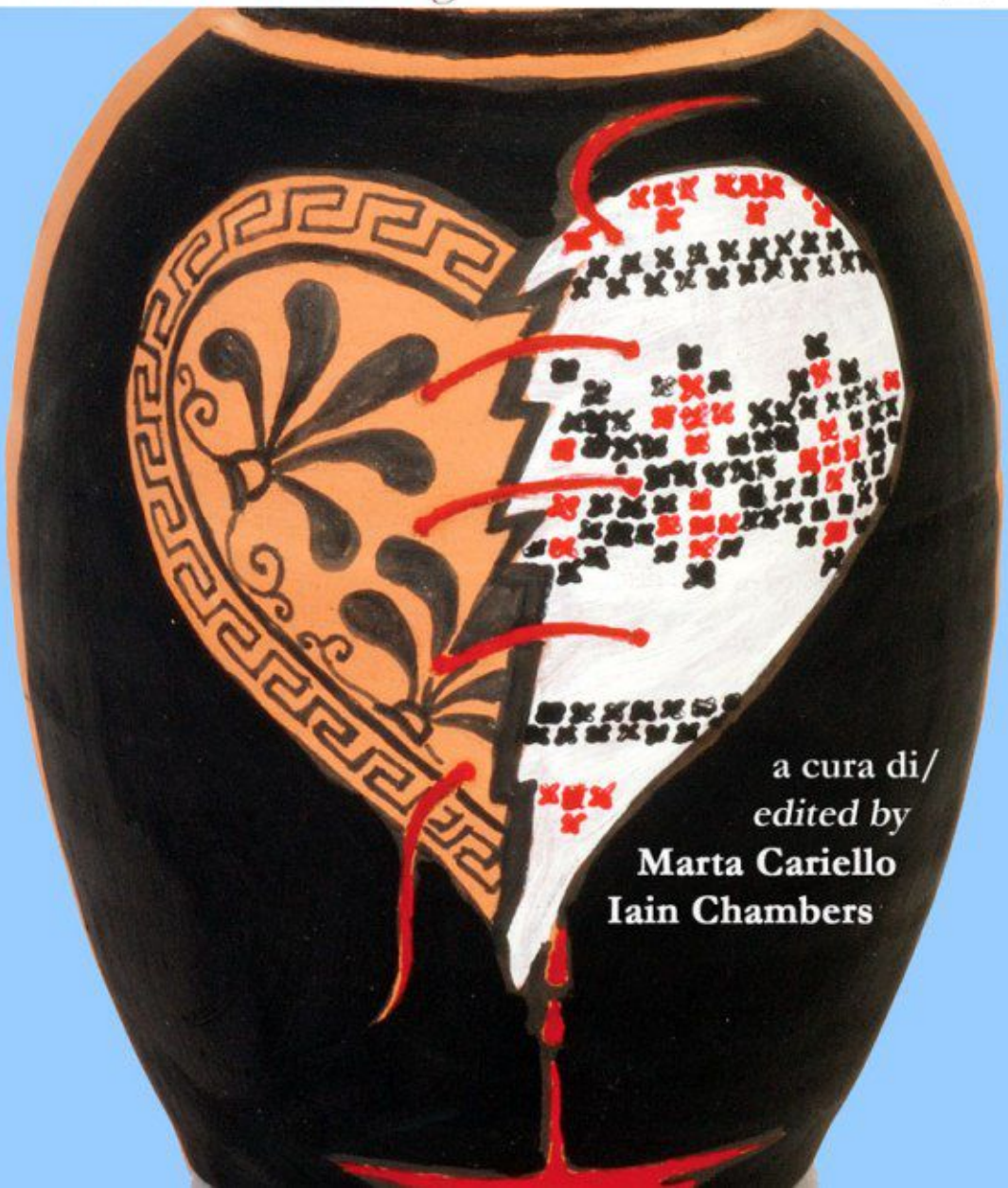

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A Giulio Regeni,
che ha attraversato il Mediterraneo sospinto dal vento della verità,
trovando la morte per mano di chi usa la politica come solo strumento di dominio.

To Giulio,
who crossed the Mediterranean urged by the wind of truth,
and found death at the hands of those who use politics only to exercise power.

Ciao Giulio (1985-2016)

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Editorial/Introduzione

Marta Cariello - Iain Chambers

To politically and historically conceptualize the Mediterranean in the present conjuncture is very much a crucial exercise in establishing new coordinates and bearings. Habitual understandings, very much stemming from Occidental hegemony and an overwhelmingly European-derived set of definitions and perspectives are clearly insufficient. Events since 2011, and the continuing war in Syria, point to deeper rhythms in the political composition of the present – for example, the rarely acknowledged colonial construction of this geo-political space – and the urgent necessity of elaborating a new lexicon and language with which to interpret it.

Rather than simply seeking to respond to the existing state of Mediterranean affairs and subsequently adjust inherited maps and understandings to meet new circumstances, we perhaps need to change key and shift our critical resources into an altogether less protected space. When events, subsequently known as the "Arab Spring", broke out in North Africa in 2011, Western government and media were taken largely unawares. Autocratic governments, implementing the neo-liberal directives of the IMF, and fully supported by Occidental power, rapidly and spectacularly came undone. The pressure of public protests, voicing a social and political lexicon through technique and technology that the West could not fail to recognize, disrupted the expectancies of most accredited observers. Insisting on freedom to publicly acknowledge poverty and the negation of civil rights could not be easily disavowed in public cultures that from Berlin to Baltimore were rhetorically steeped in the liberty of expression.

The media scrambled around for labels to frame the events and render them intelligible to Western eyes. Eventually the frames of analysis were rolled out and Occidental definitions once again secured, particularly as events on the ground were eventually pushed back into older political patterns of alliances, partnerships and interventions. Revolt and revolution were set in perspective (whose?) to be defined, disciplined by a dented but still robust Occidental policing and politics.

What is perhaps worth pointing out here is that these recent events – even (with the exception of Tunisia) if they are seemingly rolled back into their older authoritarian coordinates in Egypt or else become a microcosm of a regional war in Syria – open up a far deeper rent in the explanatory tissue than area studies, political science and their *realpolitick* continue to measure and peddle. When the languages, lexicons and technologies of the West are deployed to contest precisely the political arrangements that the West itself has historically and culturally supported and encouraged in the pursuit of allies and its particular interests then the existing coordinates of comprehension can no longer simply pass unchallenged. The maps, the models and methodologies – no matter how "objective" and "scientific" they pretend to be – cannot be permitted to escape revaluation, even critical dismantling. The waves unleashed by crisis also wash through the languages of apprehension and explanation.

Of course, in critical honesty, we have to register that none of this has publicly been registered. It has certainly not been translated into a significant political or cultural shift. Occidental government continues to treat the multiple souths of the world in a neocolonial manner, betraying the deep-seated colonial configurations of the present. The dismal social sciences continue to exercise their authority untroubled by dissent voices and refusals to respect their verdicts. Europe remains the template, its model of revolution and change (these days monumentalized in the moribund remains of eighteenth century liberal constitutionalism) was not enacted in Egypt. The failures of North African rebellion and revolt (subsequently aggravated by Western intervention in Libya and Syria) only endorse the time scale of "progress": the time not yet ripe, the actors not yet mature. And yet this linear fashioning of reasoning, charted along the axis of progress and which always finds the Occident at the apex of its development, can no longer hold. For if the West has clearly worlded the world, incorporating it into conflict shared temporal-spatiality, then its measure can no longer be the property of a singular geopolitical provenance. While the languages, lexicons and technologies of the West are ubiquitous, ready to frame multiple diversities and localities, they simultaneously annul any absolute outside or exterior. We are left to move within a differentiated communality, a translated state of transit, together with the associated historical, cultural and political responsibilities for this state of affairs.

The predominant refusal to register and recognize this emerging critical constellation invariably depends on deeply asymmetrical relations of power – political, economical, military, and epistemological. The Mediterranean, particularly its African and Asian shores, remains an object of analysis and intervention: from the economical and the military, to the cultural and the academic. It remains held in the vice of an orientalism that is unwilling to be challenged by other subjectivities, other

histories and cultures. In this sense, we can begin to appreciate that the Mediterranean today resists and persists also as the site of deeper archives whose contemporary presence operates a pressure on our language, potentially disseminating unruly voices in the account. What was assumed to have past and to be locked up in earlier instances of the archive (the pre-modern, the colonial) turns out to be virulently vital.

The Mediterranean is thus, today, a complex cultural and political figuration, tangled up on the one hand in the web of power relations leveraging on mass migrations, terror, financial hauntings, and the fragile narrative of European identity; on the other, in the rhetoric of Modernity that has confined the region to romantic and orientalist fantasies of opulence and wilderness, or scornful examples of corruption and "backwardness". Its recent becoming a very visible and unavoidable focus of political action, with military, humanitarian and cultural strategies of securitization implemented along European borders in the face of pressing migrations and disseminated conflicts across the Middle East calls for our attendance, as scholars, to the region *and* the discourse of the Mediterranean: its "unsafe" borders, and its tragic load of desperation and death, its part in the construction of the global, interconnected contemporaneity is material, but also symbolic.

This is why, in proposing a journal issue on the Mediterranean, we feel it is important to extend the conversation to the cultural figurations that are at work today in and around the region, within the tracks laid by Edward Said's fundamental study of orientalism and the global patterns of imperialism, but also inside forms of resistance that let counter-narratives emerge in composite localities and what Paul Gilroy has recently referred to as "offshore" humanism.

Once again, it becomes imperative to appreciate the necessary disbanding of the spatial-temporal coordinates that endorse the verdicts and authority of the social sciences, and their subsequent application in polity and legislation. The causal linearity of explanation falls into ruins when there is no longer a clear exterior alterity against which to measure its verdicts. Both space – the critical distance between inside and outside, center and periphery – and time (of progress and development) fold into each other. This is not relativism, but rather a theory of relativity and interconnectivity that produces a manifold modernity, one that is simultaneously differentiated and universal. To localize and provincialize the authority of existing explanation, that is, of Occidental hegemony, is to register both its political and epistemological limits and the violence it continues exercises on the world as it pursues its verification.

The undoing of an inherited political order – fundamentally incubated in Occidental colonialism and its mapping of the world – is today underscored when its objects

insist on their rights to narrate as historical subjects: whether on the streets of Cairo or seeking a better life crossing the Mediterranean and returning to haunt that heart of darkness that Conrad rightfully identified in the heartlands of the European colonial enterprise: London, Brussels, Mr Kurtz. The return of those histories, further emphasizing the centrality of colonialism to the making of modernity, bear silent witness to the present institutions of the West – both political and intellectual – as a set of ruins. The contemporary migrant, whose body is declared "illegal" by the political-juridical proceedings of European democracy, and whose history is negated and rendered "clandestine", is not simply an economic or political refugee. She is also an ontological interrogation. Her presence tears our map, folds our lives and well being into the rougher furrows of an altogether more extensive locality. The latter is too vast to be appropriated or reduced to a single – no matter how powerful – point of view. The very constitution of our very selves, of our knowledge and politics, of our daily lives, is challenged, rendered vulnerable to a world that is never simply ours. What we historically, culturally, politically are depends, according to present government, legislation and political endorsement, on historical and structural exclusion. It depends on the rendering the non-West inferior, reduced through racialized differentiation to a lesser state of being to be dispersed in the anonymity of facile labels: black, Africa, Arab, Muslim, migrant… The critical uncovering of such procedures and politics has perhaps nowhere become so intense in recent years as in the intersecting border zone of the Mediterranean. Here Europe is literally put on trial. Its hypocrisies exposed, its vaunted humanism stained. The limits of its polity and culture, for those willing to register and work these borders, are indelibly marked. Here the modern Mediterranean, reduced in recent centuries to the marginal playground of Western modernity (sun, sea and ruins), unexpectedly turns into a central laboratory in a political modernity yet to come.

* * *

Engaging with the fine grain of the power dynamics at play in the region, we decided to look at the "Mediterranean at Large"[*], in a paraphrase of Arjun Appadurai's famous work, encompassing the "political" and the "cultural" into one larger – and yet more detailed – picture, that is also an elusive one, "at large" from definitions. It is, indeed, a picture with no frame, whose margins overflow in the un-fixedness of definitions and disciplines. To speak of politics is to speak of power relations, and the terrain for such relations and negotiations is always (also) cultural; it is always a

[*] Per il titolo in italiano abbiamo scelto di mantenere la traduzione dello stesso titolo di Appadurai, a cura di Piero Vereni (Meltemi, 2001): "Mediterraneo in polvere". Si tratta di un'immagine non necessariamente aderente (la traduzione è feconda proprio perché riscrive sempre) all'espressione inglese, ma che evoca (appunto, in modo fecondo) un "supplemento" di esplosione, di frammentazione e di disseminazione, che si aggiunge all'elusività del Mediterraneo "at large" ovvero fuggito via.

struggle over language, over narratives, over what is made to constitute "the common sense", as Antonio Gramsci wrote.

This is why this issue of *Politics. Rivista di Studi Politici* contains two sections that speak of the Mediterranean in different critical languages, and that also speak to each other, underlining the mutual relevance of history, political theory, grassroots movements, literature, cinema, the arts in general. The Call for Papers for this issue received 18 proposals, of which 10 were accepted and have become issue 5 (1/2016).

Part I opens with Luigi Cazzato's discussion of the Mediterranean "as discourse", analyzing colonial and de-colonial politics and practices in and of the region. Cazzato's article focuses on what he calls, after Michael Herzfeld "Mediterraneanism", parallel to but different from Orientalism and Meridionism. The three categories do share the same the colonial logic of power, but whereas Meridionism can be distinguished from Orientalism in that it indicates the way the South has been the constitutive other *inside* Europe, Mediterraneanism is read as providing both this same cultural tool, and the tool for the implementation of European colonialism in the Maghreb and Mashrek. Cazzato offers examples of counter-narratives and de-colonial thinking in the ethics and practice of hospitality of a Southern Italian bishop, in *Io sto con la sposa*, a 2014 docu-film by Antonio Augugliaro, Gabriele Del Grande and K. Soliman Al Nassiry, and in the "The Charter of Lampedusa", a set of rules of hospitality sanctioned in the island that has become materially and symbolically crucial for present-day Mediterranean crossings, and that, somewhat symbolically, also closes the second section of the journal issue (see Carotenuto).

Antonio Iodice addresses the space of the port, looking in particular at the institution of the free port in the Mediterranean area between the XVII and XIX centuries, and the way this institution, born out of economic interests, favored politics of exchange and hospitality. The Mediterranean free ports brought in fact a great number of ship owners, traders or salesmen to relocate to the region with their families, helpers and employees, while maintaining relations with their motherlands. It is indeed significant that the free ports began their decline with the affirmation of the nation-states, whose protection interests clashed with the principle and practice of the free port itself. The peculiar regulations governing these ports can be studied as a composite system that at the time contributed to the overcoming of social, cultural, linguistic and political barriers within the Mediterranean space.

Caterina Miele's article takes us from a history of miscegenation to the re-writing of the colonial matrix of inter-Mediterranean relations, analyzing the historical events that have taken place in the Mediterranean area between Libya and Italy, from the

colonial war, to anti-colonial resistance, decolonization, the rise and fall of Gaddafi's regime. The author's theoretical proposition is that the current grammars of exclusion and of subversion within the Mediterranean area do not respond to any binary (neo)colonial logic, but rather that the region (both on the ground and in its aerial space) is a political space crossed at once by multifarious and multi-directional conflicts and processes of resistance that challenge the representation of the past. In particular, Miele points to the "oil for borders" pact between Libya and Italy as relocating the border of the colonial world and fragmenting the European juridical space, through the institution of "the camp", a "force field" that generates differential access to citizenship.

The section ends with a view of the North African region, opening up the difficult debate on the revolutionary movements of the past years in a number of Arab countries and the role of history and locality in political and cultural transformation. Norbert Bugeja explores the relation between Tunisia's post-independence political legacy and a political memory that appears to be strategically sabotaged. Through Balibar and Rancière, and through the analysis of party-formation and democratic practice in Tunisia, the author maintains that a "Tunisian exception" today necessitates modes of civil-society organization within the legacies of Arab-Muslim reformist praxis, as well as its post-independence implementations.

Part II seeks to assemble "visions" and narratives that speak from, to, and sometimes against the discourse on and around the Mediterranean. With regards to the specific politics of "Hellenism" and its connected mythology, Simos Zeniou proposes a particularly interesting aspect of cultural construction in relation to the figuration of the Mediterranean, through the reading of P. B. Shelley's lyrical drama *Hellas* as a critical encounter with early XIX century philhellenic discourse. Zeniou challenges the dominant interpretation of Shelley as an archetypal idealizing philhellenist, maintaining that the poet instead underscores the appropriation of Hellenism by hegemonic political and cultural discourses and its entanglement with imperial politics.

The section also offers a composite look at the cultural politics of othering, as well as literary and cinematic practices of commonality and resistance inside and from the Mediterranean. Aneta Lipska's analysis of E.M. Forster's "Italian" novels adopts a Levinasian perspective to reflect on the Mediterranean as locus for narratives of othering. In particular, Italy is read in its "alterity" to the British narrative of the turn-of-the century (though the "Italian" novels look more to the XIX century), against its own present-day projection of alterity on the migrants arriving on the shores of the Mediterranean. In this sense, the literary characters of Forster's novels serve as metaphor for the national constructions of "self" and "other".

Robert Watson turns his gaze on the way Francophone Tunisian Jewish and Muslim film-makers deal with the contradictions of the Jewish presence and role in post-revolutionary Tunisia. The author maintains that these contradictions are dealt with by agreeing to enter into a new kind of nostalgic co-production, in a form of "postcolonial triangulation" that refers to the ways that Tunisian Jewish identity has been situated on screen, in Jewish-Muslim collaborations, between various other, external forces, especially France and Israel, rather than as an internal question between Jews and Muslims.

Claudio Masciopinto offers a gaze on the contemporary Mediterranean as a laboratory, this time through an analysis of port cities as social spaces marked by the constant flow of people, objects, ideas and meanings. With a look at the history of port cities and their continuous contact with specific issues such as immigration, economic development and identity crisis of sea communities, the author brings to the fore the peculiar nature of such locations, with a specific look at the port city of Bari (Italy) as a space of territorial, communication and intercultural experimentation.

Elisabetta Serafini, in a sense, also situates the Mediterranean discourse on the Italian shores, this time under a historical and literary perspective, tracing in what terms the region was experienced by Italian travellers before national unification. In this sense, an interesting "Italian Mediterranean" emerges in the XIX century until the unification, in a literary construction of the region that is clearly imbued with orientalistic notions, and interlaces with the official, colonial narrative describing those leaving the peninsula in those decades as "men of the Risorgimento", while they were mainly exiles, escaping prosecution, though also partaking in the colonial practice and action.

Exiles and the sea are the closing images that come, at the end of this issue, almost as homage to the dead and dying today in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean. Silvana Carotenuto reads two creative renderings of the migratory events taking place in the contemporary Mediterranean, namely *Les Clandestines* by Youssouf Amin Elalamy (2000), and *Trilogia del Naufragio* by Lina Prosa (2013). Carotenuto brings to the fore the painful question of testimony, taking narration, theater and visuality to bear personal and collective involvement and the possibility of elaboration of human suffering and mourning. Through the Derridean deconstruction of the holocaust (not capitalized, as Derrida wrote it) and its ashes, this labor of pain and connection is shown as working also – or only – in the respect of alterity, and the promise of a different future.

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Mediterranean: Coloniality, Migration and Decolonial Practices

Luigi Cazzato

Abstract

The aim of this essay is to examine the connection, on the one hand, between discursive formations like Mediterraneanism, Meridionism and "coloniality of power", on the other, between these and the present un/walling of the Mediterranean. The migration question is now offering a historical chance to Southern Europe/Northern Mediterranean to distance itself from the *imperium* of the colonial matrix of power set by Euro-modernity and to refuse to merely become the patrolling army of Fortress Europe. Present-day ethics and practice of Mediterranean hospitality, as exemplified by the Southern radical bishop Tonino Bello, the journalist-blogger and film director Gabriele Del Grande and the activists of "The Charter of Lampedusa" (stating the rights and liberties of migrants) seem to be part of a decolonial strategy that aims at rejecting such a role.

Keywords

Coloniality - Mediterraneanism - Meridionism - Migration - Decolonial Practice

> *L'Europa che vorrei non ha confini, non ha campi di accoglienza, non ha permessi di soggiorno, non ha barriere, non espelle, non rispedisce a casa i profughi, non li abbandona a morire in mare, non presidia le coste, non spende enormi quantità di denaro per difendersi da nemici che non esistono più.*
>
> *L'Europa che vorrei si apre sul Mediterraneo come sempre è stato, lo guarda come una porta sul mondo e non come una proprietà da gestire.*
>
> (Armino 2014)

Famously, according to Edward Said, Orientalism was the distorting lens through which the West saw the East. «Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient – its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness – into a separate and unchallenged coherence» (Said 2003, 205). However, according to the historical north-Eurocentric biased perception

not only the Orientals but also the southerners are sensual, backward, inaccurate, lethargic. So, to a certain extent, they are internal Orientals and share the same "oriental" destiny.

Indeed, in the Enlightenment perspective, progress tracked the same route as the sun, from East to West (Voltaire 1773, 377), but it also travelled from the timorous South to the brave North (Montesquieu 1748, XVII, 3). Once this North-West/South-East axis is recognized, the next step is to turn progress into teleology. Hegel, who claimed that the history of the world is the progress of the consciousness of freedom, also claimed, echoing the *Philosophes*, that it «travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning» (Hegel 2010, 103). It goes without saying that Africa (the South) «is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature» (Hegel 2010, 99). Hence, these are Jacques Derrida's conclusions:

> Europe takes itself to be a promontory, an advance – the avant-garde of geography and history. It advances and promotes itself as an advance, and it will have never ceased to make advances on the other: to induce, seduce, produce, and conduce, to spread out, to cultivate, to love or to violate, to love to violate, to *colonize*, and to *colonize itself* (Derrida 1992, 49; my emphasis).

But what is South for Europe? South is both the Southern European countries and the whole Mediterranean, of which Southern Europe is a part. And yet, Southern Europe is quite clearly not only Mediterranean. Hence the need to distinguish the different, though related, discursive formations which operate within Europe as far as its South and the rest of the Mediterranean are concerned. I would not speak of Orientalism (Said 2003) but of Meridionism (Pfister 1996) and Mediterraneanism (Herzfeld 2005).

Meridionism or Imperial Difference

Following the practice in modernity of translating geography into a moral space, at the end of the 18th century, the northerners (English and French in particular) began to map Southern European frontiers trying to understand where the advancement of History and Progress stopped. In other words, they were looking for the threshold through which one passed from progress to backwardness, from civilization to barbarism; in short, from proper Europe to the first glimmers of the African continent. Here are a couple of quotations among the many. Napoleon's official A. Creuzé de Lesser, around the turn of the 18th century, claimed: «L'Europe finit à Naples et même elle y finit assez mal. La Calabre, la Sicile, tout le reste est de l'Afrique» (Creuze de Lesser 1806, 96). While S.T. Coleridge, during the first decade of the 19th century, working in the British protectorate of Malta, wrote: «It is interesting to pass from *Malta* to *Sicily* – from the highest specimen of an inferior race, the Saracenic, to the

most degraded class of a superior race, the European» (Coleridge 1835, 257). Half a century later, the eminent Victorian John Ruskin, while studying «the nature of the Gothic» on Mediterranean soil, opposed the Northern tribes'

> strength of will, independence of character, resoluteness of purpose, impatience of undue control, and that general tendency to set the individual reason against authority, and the individual deed against destiny … to the languid submission, in the Southern, of thought to tradition, and purpose to fatality…" (Ruskin 1925, 202).

What is operating here is Quijano's «coloniality of power». To the Peruvian decolonial thinker, «one of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination» (Quijano 2000, 533). But this power matrix, which expresses the basic experience of colonial domination, is not exhausted in the problem of "racist" social classification. It pervaded the basic instances of the entire Eurocentered colonial/modern world. As Quijano clarifies, coloniality of power allowed the constitution of «a new geocultural identity: Europe – more specifically, Western Europe […] as the central site for the control of the world market. The hegemony of the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Iberian peninsula was displaced toward the northwest Atlantic coast in the same historical moment» (Quijano 2000, 537). This moment occurred some time during the 17th century and, importantly, to the detriment both of non-European and European peripheries.

As a consequence, this kind of power does not operate only within the historical colonialist project but also within the broader borders of the modern episteme. Coloniality, as a matter of fact, is the invisible but constitutive side of the whole of modernity. To this extent, the workings of coloniality have also governed the relations within Europe. In short, Europe has constituted itself not only against the Orient but also against its South, which has been the constitutive outside, even though it was and is *inside* Europe. Therefore, we have to speak of Meridionism (Pfister 1996; Cazzato 2012)[1], which, although it shares its rhetoric and a good deal of its repertoire, is not Orientalism. Moreover, both Orientalism and Meridionism are but two of the discursive formations belonging to the progeny of the colonial matrix of power, which was generated with the rise of the Atlantic world. Indeed, to Walter Mignolo: if postcolonialism (as a cultural critique of modernity from the Global South) presupposes Orientalism, «in the Americas the question is "Occidentalism", the very

[1] It is Manfred Pfister who first spoke of about "intra-European Meridionism" as something different to global Orientalism: «This intra-European Meridionism has not had the same far-reaching and devastating political consequences that Orientalism brought upon mankind by legitimising colonialism, the disempowerment, exploitation, and humiliation of almost all non-European peoples, it has played an incisive role in the formation of British and European cultural self-understanding…" (Pfister 1996, 3).

condition of possibility of Orientalism. Without Occidentalism there is no Orientalism». Furthermore, he goes on: «without coloniality there is no modernity. Modernity, Occidentalism and Coloniality are all members of the same club» (Mignolo 2000, 28). To this extent, decolonial thinkers claim that postcolonial thought is not sufficient to deconstruct the entirety of the Western project of modernity, both in historical and epistemological terms[2]. Be that as it may, the colonial discursive club is larger than Orientalism and includes all the discursive formations that the modern episteme has contrived, among which we find Meridionism.

However, not all of them operate on equal terms. Indeed, Mignolo distinguishes between «colonial difference» and «imperial difference». The first difference occurs between colonisers and colonised. The second difference is within the imperial domain and refers to the power relations between European countries which had fully succeeded in building an empire and those which no longer had one or had not succeeded yet, positioning themselves in the lower ranks of the hierarchical ladder of coloniality and lagging behind in the race for progress. As a consequence, Mignolo expounds:

> A degree of inferiority is attributed to the "imperial other" that has not been colonized in that it is considered (because of language, religion, history, etc.) somewhat behind (time) in history or, if its present is being considered, marginal (space). (Mignolo 2007, 474)

Therefore, if colonial difference has played, since "the first modernity" (the *discovery* of America), a major role in the construction of European modern identity as a superior civilisation, imperial difference has played the same important role but at the expense of Southern European countries since "the second modernity" (the *discovery* of Reason). In other terms, imperial difference allowed the hierarchical process of distinguishing between "advanced" North-West Europe and "backward" South-Eastern Europe. Therefore, Meridionism firstly operates within the space of imperial difference, where Southern Europe is othered, secondly it relates to but does not overlap with Orientalism, which on the contrary operates in the space of colonial difference. As a matter of fact, Southern Europe:

- is not the Orient, despite its intercourse with the Eastern Mediterreanean shores;
- was not the object of historical colonialism but the object of the colonial/modern power matrix;
- is not sheer *otherness*, like the Orient, but deficient *identity*.

[2] As to the main differences between the postcolonial and the decolonial, see Grosfoguel (2011).

Finally, if Orientalism was born as a cultural tool for the implementation of European colonialism, Meridionism was born as a cultural tool for the foundation of modern European identity.

The problem today is that it still works as a tool for the implementation of the colonial matrix of power within contemporary Europe, which is haunted once again by the old stereotypes of corrupt southerners and virtuous northerners, indolent Mediterraneans and vigorous Teutons. Infamously, the acronym P.I.G.S. (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain) has been used as an abbreviation for Euro-Mediterranean countries since the adoption of the euro as a common currency and, above all, since the implementation of the Schengen Treaty for the abolition of borders was signed and a fear of border trespassing was felt. Indeed, Euro-southerners' "laxity" (case in point towards their Mediterranean neighbours on the other shores) is trifle if compared to their "lower intelligence" as detected by psychologist Richard Lynn through his "scientific" research proving that «IQs decline steadily with more southerly latitude» (Lynn 2010, 99). Why are southerners less intelligent? Because of the diffusion of genes from the Near East and North Africa. We have come, then, to the core problem: the Mediterranean is not *simply but dangerously* the sea between the lands, as the etymology reminds us. Southern Europe is too close to Africa and Asia to be considered "authentic" Europe, the colonial story goes, proving that «the model of power that is globally hegemonic [still] today presupposes an element of coloniality» (Quijano 2000, 533).

Mediterraneanism or Colonial Difference

"Mediterraneanism" is a term first used by Michael Herzfeld to describe the category invented by historians and anthropologists in order to confirm the stereotypes they wanted to study and thus serving, according to him, «the interests of disdainful cultural imperialism» (Herzfeld 2005, 48). To Herzfeld, the move from the ecological unity, that Braudel saw, to the cultural unity of the Mediterranean, that Horden and Purcell (2000) are convinced of, contributed to such discursive formation, above all in the Anglo-Saxon area. According to Herzfeld, by concentrating on supposed Mediterranean values such as honour and shame:

> Mediterraneanist anthropology suggests a pervasive archaism. This reinforces the hierarchical relationship between nation-state and village culture [...] The nation-state - by its own reckoning, the ultimate symbol and embodiment of modernity – serves as the touchstone against which Mediterranean society and culture acquire their distinctive characteristics, their fundamental otherness, and above all their removal to a more primitive age (Herzfeld 1987, 11).

It is the other epistemological manoeuvre in modernity, which translates geography (space) in a chronology (time). By the end of the 19th century, the masters of historical time completed the colonial work of reducing everything that did not overlap with their values to a wreckage of time, according to the ideology of linear progress still dominant today. To this extent, Horden and Purcell agree that this Mediterranean is an invention of the 19th-century master narrative of the nation-state.

Nevertheless, they think «honour and shame are indeed deeply held values right across the region», since these values are not only values invented by imperialist anthropologists. To them, the Mediterranean is striking for its otherness, consisting in «the sheer intensity and complexity of the ingredients» (Horden and Purcell 2006, 739), which other similar seas do not have. Predrag Matvejević seems to agree when he writes: «Nations and races have conjoined and disjoined here over the centuries; more peoples have lived with one another and clashed with one another here than perhaps anywhere on the planet» (Matvejevic, 1999, 10). As far as I am concerned here, it is not interesting to verify whether or to what extent these values are real. Indeed, every stereotype as a massive *essentialist* generalisation is a lie, it only tells «a single story», as Chimamanda Adichie (2009) would say. At the same time, though, it may have a grain of material truth connected to history and culture. The real problem is that these single stories mobilise issues of hierarchy, they serve the function of deciding what is modern and what is not; what is superior and what is inferior. In short, they emerge and thrive within the sheer space of colonial difference, where coloniality of power worked and where, «unlike in any other previous experience of colonialism, the old ideas of superiority of the dominant, and the inferiority of dominated under European colonialism were mutated in a relationship of biologically and structurally superior and inferior» (Quijano 2007, 171).

As a consequence, on the one hand, Orientalism, Meridionism and Mediterraneanism work in parallel and share the same the colonial logic of power. On the other hand, they need to be distinguished from one another, since the history of the northern Mediterranean shore is not the same history as that of the eastern and southern shores. The Mediterranean Sea is the fracture and suture of continents and civilisations. It is both North and South, both Europe and Africa, both West and East. Its supposed unity is more looked for than found. The Mediterranean Sea is a *pluriverse* rather than a *universe*, a space of negotiation, of encounters and clashes. It is true that the peoples of the Mediterranean are like frogs around a pond, as Plato would have it, and may share cultures and climates. Yet, it is also true that its Northern shores are European and in such a *Prosperian* position they have participated, if to different degrees, in the feast of modernity and colonialism (Santos 2006). But, again, their Europeanness is imperfect, quasi-*Calibanesque*, dangerously near as these countries are to African and Eastern shores, and far from the core of the perfection of “real”

Europe. Therefore, if Meridionism has been a cultural tool that helped to position the core of modern European identity at North-Western latitudes, Mediterraneanism has provided both this cultural tool and the tool for the implementation of European colonialism in the Maghreb and Mashrek.

Migration, Universal Human Rights and the Colonial Matrix of Power

Historically speaking, modernity redefined the movement of people in an extreme way. Colonizers asserted the crucial right to freedom of movement (explorations and settlements) while controlling and determining the movement of the colonized (deportations and slave trade). The present migration movements provide a striking example of the colonial legacy since its direction is South to North, mostly from former colonies (migration source countries) to former imperial metropolises (migration target countries). Above all, the cultural reaction to it is an illustration both of «Europe's undigested colonial history» (Gilroy 2016, XI) and of a neocolonialist politics exerting control on source countries under the pretext of limiting "illegal" immigration at disordered continental borders. Actually, in Giuseppe Campesi's analysis of Frontex[3] what emerges is that this agency is

> uno strumento pratico di quella che è stata efficacemente definita una "geopolitica dell'incorporazione", […] dove incorporazione non significa solo progressiva espansione del confine europeo sino ad inglobare uno spazio formalmente extraterritoriale, ma anche creazione di una struttura istituzionale di gestione della frontiera separata e diversa dalle entità che le danno vita (Campesi 2015, 192).

In short, Frontex is an administrative tool for both a new form of colonial control beyond European borders and a form of post-modern empire with its multi-layered political space (from the countries perfectly integrated in the Union to the cooperating

[3] In 2004 Frontex (The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union) was established, in order to patrol the external borders of the Shengen zone. This apparatus, as Campesi points out, «reproduces the paradoxes of a humanitarian policy which is intended to protect the bare life of migrants and asylum seekers, while violating their fundamental rights to escape and find asylum elsewhere» (Campesi 2014, 132). Moreover, the modern-day immigration system is a chance for Europe to extend its control over its Southern neighbours. Maghreb governments act as (cruel) janitors in the service of Europe to restrict migration at their own borders. The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation between Italy and Libya was a bi-lateral agreement signed in 2008, to allow Libya to control its land borders by a system financed jointly by Italy and the EU. In this way, not only does the EU watch its own borders, but may extend its power of border control to its Southern neighbours, which are, predictably enough, formerly colonized countries. Lately, "Operation Mare Nostrum", a naval and air operation commenced by the Italian government in 2013 to tackle the ship wreckages off Lampedusa, was superseded in 2014 by Frontex's "Operation Triton", which unlike Mare Nostrum basically focuses on border protection rather than search and rescue.

neighbour countries), where there are power asymmetries and the neighbourhood policies reproduce the logic of the imperial *limes*. Given this complex context, the migration issue is now offering a historical chance to Southern Europe to distance itself from the imperial-meridionist dicta of Euro-modernity; a chance to refuse to become just the patrolling army of Fortress Europe. Indeed, like a super-Nation-State, Europe has (im)permeable borders[4] and embodies deep contradictions between the proclamation of universal human rights and the exertion of national sovereignty, to say the least. Or to say more, after Ramón Grosfoguel, on the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the concept of «human beings born free and equal in dignity and rights» has:

> Universal pretensions but provincially defined and narrowly applied. Without decolonizing the concept of the "human" from a Western-centric patriarchal gaze and without decolonizing the global coloniality of power from the hegemony of Euro-American White Supremacy as the leading country of the postwar Western Imperialist United Front, it was simply impossible to have a more cosmopolitan and multi-epistemic concept of human rights and to even implement the present hegemonic concept of human rights in a fair and coherent way (Grosfoguel 2009, 90).

Indeed, notwithstanding what Kant wrote in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795)[5], propounding the universal right to hospitality, universal human rights belong to the Western-centric conception of the human, and behind Kant's transcendental subject hides the white man and his "coloniality of power".

As Darko Suvin (2012) puts it, echoing Marx, not even all the nations put together have property rights over the earth's surface and people should be seen as citizens of a general Nation of Humanity. Yet, in European history, because the rulers drink «injustice like water» (Kant 1983, 119) people have been seen as citizens of a *particular* nation of humanity. As a consequence, contradictions have thrived between the idea of unlimited freedom and the practice of limited forms of citizenship, between nativity and nationality, giving rights, despite universal claims, not to all men but only to some. Hence the postcolonialist and decolonialist disapproval of European universalism as «parochial» (Said 2004, 53) and «provincial» (Grosfoguel 2009, 90). On the contrary, in pre-Nation-State times, merchants, pilgrims, scholars, students, etc. moved more easily across Medieval Christendom or Islam, whose limits were only the

[4] Actually, the EU calls its borders "smart" because they select *travellers* according to whether they are trusted or not, by a process of profiling and risk targeting (see the paragraph "Identificare e classificare" in Campesi 2015).

[5] «This right to present themselves to society belongs to all mankind in virtue of our common right of possession on the surface of the earth on which, as it is a globe, we cannot be infinitely scattered, and must in the end reconcile ourselves to existence side by side: at the same time, originally no one individual had more right than another to live in any one particular spot» (Kant 1983, 120).

borders within which the official languages were spoken, regardless of ethnicity. Braudel reminds us that the 16th-century Mediterranean world was still a world of indispensable migrants (Braudel 1995) and John Locke in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) extolled the Ottoman Empire for its tolerance. Refugee mass displacements seem to begin with bourgeois Nation-States and their economic and religious wars (from the beginning of 16th century until 1648 – "The Peace of Westphalia" – Europe was plagued by wars of religion and, as a result, by the mass displacement of people).

Therefore, the Southern European shores – shores of historical mass emigration – have in front of them a bifurcation. They may follow the ancient epistemological force of their waters: the Mediterranean has always been «a continual interweaving of cultural roots and historical routes», as Chambers reminds us (2004, 430), turning into a humanist bridge. Or they may go on building the inhuman *wall* against which the migrants crash, as a result, turning itself into a trench where the North-Western fundamentalism of the marketplace and the South-Eastern fundamentalism of religion clash and thrive.

Decolonial practices: Don Tonino Bello, Gabriele Del Grande, and the Lampedusa Activists

The Italian and European walling of the Mediterranean through control apparatuses (migration laws, detention centres, patrolling and "push back" operations – violating the international principle of non-refoulement) is well known: a policy that has brought almost 30.000 victims in the last 30 years[6], in the attempt to prevent the "wretched" from crossing over the Mediterranean water wall[7]. What are probably less

[6] According the accurate report of Gabriele Del Grande's blog "Fortress Europe": «Dal 1988 sono morte lungo le frontiere dell'Europa almeno 27.382 persone [...] Il dato è aggiornato al 2 febbraio 2016 e si basa sugli incidenti documentati dalla stampa internazionale negli ultimi trent'anni». http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/p/la-strage.html. Accessed 16 July 2016. Here is the heading of the blog in the English version: «Six years of travelling around the Mediterranean along the borders of Europe. In search of the stories that make history. The history that will be studied by our children who will read on the school textbooks that in 21st century thousands died at sea around Italy and thousands were arrested and deported from our cities. Whilst everybody pretended not to see». http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/2006/02/immigrants-dead-at-frontiers-of-europe_16.html. Accessed 16 July 2016.

[7] In 2004 Frontex (The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union) was established, in order to patrol the external borders of the Shengen zone. This apparatus, as G. Campesi points out, «reproduces the paradoxes of a humanitarian policy which is intended to protect the bare life of migrants and asylum seekers, while violating their fundamental rights to escape and find asylum elsewhere» (Campesi 2014, 132). Moreover, the modern-day immigration system is a chance for Europe to extend its control over its Southern neighbours. Maghrebian governments act as (cruel) janitors in the service of Europe to restrict migration at their own borders. The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation

known are the attempts at Mediterranean dialogue and the practice of hospitality in the space of imperial difference, where the condition of imperial otherness (the southerner as the imperial other) may help to deconstruct colonial otherness (the Mediterranean as the colonial other). These practices implicitly denounce the common colonial matrix that governs, if differently, all Mediterranean shores. It is a cultural-political dimension that sees, for instance, radical bishop Antonio Bello, the "Charter of Lampedusa", and media activist Gabriele Del Grande, as part of a Mediterranean strategy of de-imperial and de-colonial thinking and practice. Indeed, if Quijano's conceptual frame is to be accepted, the only way to interrupt Western vertical monologue and start a horizontal one would be to finish the 20th century's incomplete project of decolonisation, commencing *within* Western (epistemological) borders.

Antonio Bello (1935-1993, known as Don Tonino) was a bishop in the Apulia region. He loved to be driven integrally by the Gospel "sine glossa". He dedicated his entire life to the "wretched of the earth". The first thing he did when he was appointed bishop was to receive in his bishop's lodgings the dispossessed (Albanian and Africans migrants, prostitutes, homeless people, etc.). His homilies could not but touch dramatic events such as the mafia killing of the town mayor or the commemoration of the killing of the Salvadoran Liberation theologist, Mons. Romero. During the Eighties and Nineties he was in the front line against all wars. The only thing that could stop him was an unyielding cancer that caused his death in 1993. His death arrived just four months after the last courageous achievement that he inspired: a peace mission to Sarajevo, in former Yugoslavia devastated by war.

Going back to his actions, he was imbued by what he used to call «the conviviality of differences». In his homily in Milan (1989), "A Welcoming City", he started by quoting another bishop who had emigrated to Milan, the African St. Augustine. Speaking of the elected gathered for the final judgment, St. Augustine offered his audience this icon of solidarity:

> Adamo significa in greco tutto l'universo. Il suo nome si compone infatti di quattro lettere: A, D, A, M. In greco, appunto, i nomi dei punti cardinali cominciano con queste quattro lettere. *Anatolé* significa l'Est. *Dysis*, l'Ovest. *Arktos* il Nord. E *Mesembrìa* il Sud … Per questo Adamo è sparso su tutto il globo terrestre. Una volta si

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between Italy and Libya is a bi-lateral agreement signed in 2008, to allow Libya to control its land borders by a system financed jointly by Italy and the EU. In this way, not only does the EU watch its own borders, but extends its power of border control to its Southern neighbours, which are, predictably enough, formerly colonized countries. Recently, "Operation Mare Nostrum", a naval and air operation commenced by the Italian government in 2013 to tackle the ship wreckages off Lampedusa, was superseded in 2014 by Frontex's "Operation Triton", which unlike Mare Nostrum basically focuses on border protection rather than search and rescue.

> trovava in un solo posto, poi cadde e finì in cocci che cosparsero di sé il globo terrestre. Ma la misericordia di Dio raccolse dappertutto questi cocci e li fuse nel fuoco dell'amore e rimise insieme ciò che era stato diviso (Bello 2007, 37).

This passage contains an image of humanity as a migrating species and of migration as an ontological human feature, thanks to which mankind has spread all over the planet, roaming towards each cardinal points, and reunited in the figure of Jesus Christ, the new ADAM.

Don Tonino's question was: can Milan become «una grande palestra spirituale dove genti di estrazione diversa si allenano a vivere quella "convivialità delle differenze", sulla cui tavola si sperimenta la pace?» (Bello 2007, 40). At the end of his speech, he turned his question into a wish: may the new ADAM – «in whom not only the West and East, but also the North and the South reunite» – give Milan the honour of introducing itself to Europe «come luogo di pace, dove si svolgono le prove generali di una nuova solidarietà planetaria» (Bello 2007, 43). For him, Southern Italians, as a people belonging to the global South, cannot play «un ruolo che non ci appartiene né per vocazione di Dio, né per tradizione degli uomini», according to which they have to be «gendarmi di rincalzo nel Mediterraneo per il servizio di controllo, se non di repressione, sulle folle disperate del terzo e del quarto mondo» (Bello 2007, 20). To Don Tonino, as a man of the South, *planetary* solidarity meant first of all southern *local* solidarities: «questa porzione di terra è quasi il *luogo paradigmatico* dove si svelano gli stessi meccanismi perversi che, certamente in modo più articolato, attanagliano tutti i Sud della terra» (Bello 2007, 55).

From 31 January to 2 February 2014, the organization "Melting Pot" called for a meeting on the island of Lampedusa, the destination for most smugglers' boats leaving Tunisia or Libya. A large number of North African and European associations, movements and networks concerned with migration issues met to put together a charter stating the rights of migrants and, in the long-term, to hopefully change European policies about migration[8].

The island was chosen for the meeting after the refugee tragedies of October 2013, when at least 366 migrants died, thus underlining the political decision to actively engage with the island's population. The preamble reads that the charter does not want to be a law or a petition to Governments, but a constituent pact of commitment among those who produce and sign it. In this sense, it is clear that grass-roots subjects will give life to its chapters by taking action against the current policies managing people's movements.

[8] http://www.lacartadilampedusa.org. Accessed 16 July 2016.

The assumption of the charter is that humans are born migrant and the Earth is a communal space to be shared. As a result, it considers the whole planet as the space of implementation of what it sanctions, the Mediterranean as its place of origin with the island of Lampedusa right at its centre. The European politics of migration have forced upon this island the role of border-wall, on the one hand, and the position of compulsory crossing space, on the other: conclusively, a space that has become a watery cemetery. The charter has two sections: the 1st section sanctions a series of principles regarding several freedoms; the 2nd section faces the many issues connected with migration, such as the militarization of borders, racism, exploitation, inequality.

Among the principles included in the first section, it recalls the freedom of movement in a world where migratory policies have become the main expedients through which social (class) divisions and colonial (race) disparities have re-emerged. Another principle is the necessity of basing the relationship between institutions and persons not on national belonging but on dwelling (a citizenship based on *ius soli*), thus overcoming the incongruity between human rights and citizenship rights (Agamben 1995). Finally, another principle I wish to recall, is the freedom of resistance:

> The Charter of Lampedusa affirms everyone's Freedom to resist policies which foster inequality and disparity, intended to create divisions, discrimination, exploitation and precariousness of human beings, and which generate inequalities ("The Charter of Lampedusa", I.6-Freedom to Resist).

Probably with this idea in their mind, an Italian journalist and a Palestinian poet decided to help five Palestinians and Syrians in Milan, who in 2013 landed on the Italian island of Lampedusa as survivors of the tragic October 2013 shipwreck, after fleeing the war in Syria and heading for Sweden. This decision implied the violation of European law and at the same time the enactment of the not yet written Charter, at that time, of Lampedusa. They resolved to do so by faking a wedding, a kind of masquerade that helped them cross the frontiers. They also thought to film their journey and turn it into a movie, called *Io sto con la sposa/On the Bride's Side* (Augugliaro *et al.* 2014).

The movie is a kind of "reality show" about migration, a sort of masquerade in opposition to the masquerade of politics, which turns a continent into a fortress and in opposition to the masquerade of media communication, which spreads alarming fake figures on migration, while hiding the numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean because of inhumane laws and procedures. Finally, it is a political reality show on migration in opposition to the reality show of national and continental politics as a whole. It is a work of art that resists the policy of walling the Mediterranean, thanks to

the representation of the world through a decolonial practice, in that what triggers action is not "our" pity towards "them" but solidarity "among us", where any hierarchy has been erased. As Del Grande states in an interview:

> To me it is very simple. If my neighbour's home is burning, I open my door. There's nothing to consider – you let them in and figure out how you can share what you have later. If you shut the door, the neighbour is going to die. We have the war in Syria, war in Gaza, war in Libya, the war against the Islamic State. The region is in a perilous state. I'm not just an Italian; the Mediterranean Sea is part of my identity and it has two shores: north and south. It's my sea, these are my people, and we have to show solidarity (Zafeiri 2014).

As with Don Tonino and the activists of The Charter of Lampedusa, no asymmetries are allowed here. The journey was performed by both Middle-Eastern and European travellers and the "action-movie", in the true sense of the term, was directed by two Italians and a Palestinian. There is no contrast between "us" and "them", but only an enlarged, Mediterranean, decolonized "us" on the bride's side, whichever nationality she is; a bride who, in a scene from the movie, wonders why the moon and the sky belong to everybody but this is not the case as far as the earth is concerned.

This is the unity the Mediterranean can think of and look for: the unity of solidarity with the «wretched crowds» (Don Tonino Bello) or with those whose «home is burning» (Del Grande). What is important here is to stress, with reard to Don Tonino Bello's thoughts, the Lampedusa Charter's claims and Gabriele Del Grande's activism, their shared grass-roots attitude: the commitment among people to erase the hierarchies of coloniality and act in solidarity, regardless what the new forms of colonialism sanction and perform.

Mongrel Mediterranean: Living on the Border

This approach leads to what the Mediterranean waters have taught their people for centuries: that «cultures are intertwined and can only be disentangled from each other by mutilating them» (Said 2004, 52). Therefore, what Europe has before itself is either mutilation or supplementation. If it chooses the second, the "intrusion" of the global South into Euro-North, far from being a negative contamination – as the supporters of walling apparatuses would have it – may offer the chance for European culture as a whole to expose and amend its insufficiencies through the others' culture. If taken differently, the other is a source and a resource for a better and more critical understanding (supplementation) of the self. Secondly, Southern Europe may have a chance to be seen as no longer an imperial periphery, but the centre of a new creolizing world, in which the Mediterranean may retrieve its ancient role of cultural and economic crossroads. Paradoxically, thanks to the traffic of human beings towards

Europe, the Mediterranean finally has the chance to re-experience its *pluriverse*. Its many peoples are incurable mongrels: their identity is full of alterity, Franco Cassano claims. The latter may utter the final words here:

> Mediterranean today means putting the border, that line of division and contact between people and civilizations, center stage […] We do not go to the Mediterranean to seek the fullness of our origins but to experience our contingency. The Mediterranean shows us the limits of Europe and of the West (Cassano 2012, xlvi).

In other terms, the Mediterranean can teach what Walter Mignolo, following thinkers such as the Chicana Gloria Anzaldua, calls «border thinking»: the epistemic response of the subaltern to the Eurocentric colonial project of modernity, still working today (Mignolo 2007, 455). Decolonial thinking and practice may be the means for a double resistance. They can resist the Prosperian Meridionist discourse, which sees the Euro-South as a sort of semi-Caliban, a not-North yet. They can resist the neocolonialist politics that the Euro-North, and Europe as a whole, are implementing in the Mediterranean anew, hazardously triggering what Said's contrapuctual critical approach wanted to avoid: the «destructive politics of confrontation and hostility» (Said 1994, 18), or the tragic end of the smiling woman in the limerick:

> There was a young lady of Niger
> Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
> They returned from the ride
> With the lady inside,
> And the smile on the face of the tiger[9].

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L'istituzione del porto franco in un Mediterraneo senza frontiere

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Abstract

The free port has played a primary role in the Modern Age Mediterranean economic policy. In order to give a boost to the local economy, favourable regulations to the arrival and rapid integration of foreigners within the pre-existing socio-economic environment were established.

In the Mediterranean ports – namely Genoa, Leghorn, Marseille, Trieste and Fiume, Messina, Nice, etc. – a great number of ship owners, vendors, simple traders or salesmen, together with their relatives, house helpers and employees used therefore to arrive. They moved there whilst maintaining tight relations with their motherlands. The local élites, scared of losing their power, opposed these ventures. It is possible to pinpoint and single out a few common elements in the regulation of these ports, which appealed to the contemporaries, and thanks to which social, cultural, linguistic and political barriers were being shattered. What stands out from this analysis is an image of a dynamic and open-minded Mediterranean and Europe.

Keywords

Free Port - Mediterranean - Tolerance - History of Trade - Levant

Introduzione

Nel corso dell'età moderna, a partire dall'area mediterranea e con ripercussioni sull'intero contesto europeo, si diffuse una nuova misura in campo economico-commerciale: il porto franco[1]. Questa istituzione si inserì in un momento delicato per gli equilibri nel Mediterraneo. L'arrivo di nuove potenze straniere tra il XVI e soprattutto il XVII secolo, in particolare di inglesi e olandesi, in mari che per secoli avevano visto il dominio incontrastato di pochi stati italiani o delle monarchie di Francia e Spagna, aveva determinato un riassestamento dei rapporti di potere. Le

[1] Le ricerche storiografiche sui porti franchi sono sporadiche e datate. Dopo una prima fortuna del tema tra la metà del XIX secolo e i primi anni del XX l'argomento è rimasto legato alla storia locale. Spesso viene preso in considerazione un aspetto o l'altro di questa normativa in lavori di carattere più ampio, cfr. Carrière 1973; Andreozzi, Panariti e Zaccaria 2009; Lo Basso 2002; Bottari 1983; Dumond, Durand e Thomas 2007; Kalc e Navarra 2003.

conquiste ottomane e la guerra di corsa con le reggenze barbaresche avevano contribuito a creare, anche nel racconto storiografico del XIX secolo, un'immagine di decadenza e stagnazione che avrebbe influenzato tutta l'area mediterranea.

Il porto franco si impose come una invenzione originale che visse in pochi anni una rapida evoluzione, specifica dei singoli contesti di riferimento. Nella definizione offerta da Jacques Savary de Brulons nel suo *Dictionnaire Universelle du Commerce* del 1750, «il porto franco, in termini di commercio marittimo, è un porto dove l'accesso è libero per tutti i mercanti, di qualunque nazione siano, per scaricare le loro merci, e ritirarle qualora non fossero riusciti a venderle, senza pagare diritti di entrata o di uscita» (Savary de Brulons 1750, 309).

Negli editti si cercava di creare una legittimazione teorica richiamandosi alla presunta continuità con gli antichi privilegi medievali, espediente di alcune grandi città marittime mosse dalla volontà di mantenere e coltivare il mito di una tradizione di brillanti commerci ininterrotti. Il termine stesso di franchigia richiamava le franchigie portuali di cui avevano beneficiato i veneziani nei territori bizantini o le famose fiere franche diffuse in tutta Europa (Dermigny 1974, 521). E tuttavia il passaggio da parziali franchigie portuali al porto franco fu netto e richiese una evoluzione mentale e politica della società stessa (Finardi e Moroni 2001, 23-56). Si trattava di un passaggio dal particolarismo economico, fondato spesso su un patriottismo cittadino o regionale, ad un'organizzazione dello spazio più ampia. I vari porti si andavano riconoscendo in un sistema, in questo caso il sistema degli scambi mediterranei, sempre più complesso e coerente, in parte determinato dall'aumento del traffico internazionale e dal nuovo scenario socio-politico. Il porto franco si costituiva come una realtà moderna risultato della lenta formazione di stati centralizzati e dell'orientamento mercantilistico della loro politica.

Questo tipo di franchigia si sviluppò tra il XVII e il XVIII secolo affermandosi, soprattutto nel corso di quest'ultimo, come uno strumento per alimentare i transiti, dilatare gli affari, accrescere le occasioni di lavoro e l'afflusso di introiti fiscali. I due aspetti più evidenti che ne caratterizzavano la normativa erano l'abbattimento delle gabelle e delle tariffe doganali e l'incentivazione per l'insediamento degli stranieri. Tra le due direzioni non era sempre possibile individuare una politica precisa, si arrivava alle formulazioni dei vari editti dopo tentativi ed esperimenti: anche nella stessa definizione del porto franco ci si riferiva a realtà spesso diverse tra loro.

Inoltre bisogna tener conto delle motivazioni economiche e ideologiche, quando presenti, che spingevano ad adottare tali politiche liberiste. Ai discorsi più tecnici si affiancavano idee di libertà e tolleranza religiosa, spesso dettate da opportunismo, che suscitavano un desiderio di riforme ed inquietudini anche in contrasto con le dottrine economiche diffuse.

In città come Livorno, Marsiglia, Nizza o Trieste, la decisione di istituire il porto franco scaturì dalle autorità statali, che lo consideravano uno strumento in grado di incrementare il commercio a danno dei porti concorrenti vicini. Nella repubblica aristocratica di Genova questa decisione venne presa in una situazione di emergenza – una crisi alimentare – dai mercanti, armatori e artigiani insieme ai magnifici di palazzo ducale e ai protettori delle compere di san Giorgio con l'obiettivo di rifornire la città di vettovaglie nel minor tempo possibile.

Una volta istituito, il porto franco funzionava come un'entità politica e amministrativa dinamica, alimentata e rinnovata continuamente dai dibattiti e dagli scontri che sorgevano in occasione delle modifiche alle disposizioni. Le discussioni erano continue e i dubbi numerosi, i punti più contestati potevano riguardare il lasciar entrare tutte le merci o fare una selezione, esigere gabelle aggiuntive o rimuoverne o, ad esempio, come rispondere ai porti franchi che si sviluppavano in aree vicine. Giulio Giacchero ha paragonato i dibattiti durante i rinnovi del porto franco genovese ad una sorta di equivalente dell'agorà greca o del foro romano, dove si alimentavano «lo scontro di idee, il confronto di opinioni e, tema ricorrente, l'ansia di libertà» (Giacchero 1972, 13).

Nascita e diffusione dei porti franchi nel Mediterraneo

Sebbene Genova sia stata tecnicamente il più antico porto franco del Mediterraneo, nel 1590, a Livorno già dal 1565, per volere del granduca Cosimo I de Medici, i provveditori delle gabelle e dogane di Pisa avevano attuato una prima riforma doganale. La città, in seguito alla partenza dell'ultima guarnigione spagnola nel 1543, era diventata oggetto di una precisa politica granducale. A partire da Cosimo I, i granduchi successivi intrapresero una serie di misure volte a fare di Livorno il principale porto della regione, rendendo la Toscana una potenza navale nel Mediterraneo (Filippini 1998; Prosperi 2009; Fischer 2006; Braudel e Romano 1951; Addobbati 2007). Per popolare questo piccolo borgo, situato in un'area paludosa e malarica, serviva una normativa che potesse attirare persone e mercanti di qualunque nazionalità, religione e moralità. I lavori di bonifica dell'area, l'ampliamento del tessuto urbano e delle infrastrutture portuali, insieme a una forte normativa di stimolo all'immigrazione di stranieri, permisero una crescita spettacolare di Livorno, che solo in pochi anni divenne ovunque oggetto di ammirazione ed invidia, alimentando la nascita del successivo mito del porto franco.

Con la promulgazione delle leggi passate alla storia come "Livornine", volute dal granduca Ferdinando I tra il 1591 e il 1593, a Livorno si concedeva «a tutti mercanti hebrei turchi, e mori, et altri mercanti reali, libero, et amplissimo salvo condotto, e libera faculta, e licentia, che possiate venire a stare, traficare, passare et abitare con

le vostre famiglie, o senza esse partire, tornare, e negotiare nella detta nostra Citta e Porto di Livorno & anco stare per negotiare altrui per tutto il nostro Ducal dominio senza impedimento, o molestia alcuna reale, o personale per tempo durante di Anni venticinque prossimi» (Prosperi 2009, 47). Marrani, spagnoli ed ebrei levantini si traferirono in città, stabilendo rotte commerciali e collaborazioni internazionali eccezionali per l'epoca (Trivellato 2009). Livorno divenne inoltre il punto d'appoggio dei nordici nel commercio mediterraneo e italiano, degli inglesi in particolare (D'angelo 2004).

Sebbene la città non abbia ottenuto ufficialmente lo statuto di porto franco fino al 1614 (Filippini 1998, 119), le norme per la riduzione delle gabelle sulle merci e l'invito verso gli stranieri di qualunque confessione o nazionalità svolsero un ruolo esemplare nei confronti delle città vicine. L'afflusso di stranieri fu tale che nel 1642 il 73% dei negozianti registrati a Livorno non era composto da toscani cattolici (Fasano Guarini 1980, 212). Il porto franco iniziò a diffondersi nel Mediterraneo come la risposta di alcuni stati ai cambiamenti e alle sfide imposte dai nuovi assetti economici internazionali. Gli effetti di questa normativa furono molteplici e duraturi, sebbene non tutti i porti franchi abbiano avuto la stessa fortuna del caso livornese. Sicuramente le facilitazioni per l'arrivo di stranieri e l'esplicito invito anche verso musulmani ed ebrei a trasferirsi in territori cristiani contribuirono in modo significativo a ridurre le distanze tra le varie sponde del Mediterraneo, creando un certo grado di convivenza e tolleranza che si perse nei secoli successivi, in seguito alla netta polarizzazione dei rapporti di forza tra potenze.

Gli stati si ingegnavano nel trovare nuove fonti di guadagno con qualunque mezzo. L'obiettivo comune, si auspicava, era riportare il traffico e i commerci al livello dell'epoca d'oro delle repubbliche marinare. L'istituzione del porto franco rappresentava allo stesso tempo il frutto di una necessità e l'espressione delle rivalità che impedivano ai singoli stati di attuare delle politiche comuni. Per queste ragioni Livorno non rimase a lungo un esempio isolato.

Nell'agosto del 1590 venne approvato il primo editto del porto franco genovese, limitato alle sole imbarcazioni con la stiva piena per due terzi di granaglie, per cui venne chiamato porto franco delle vettovaglie (Giacchero 1972, 58-9). I raccolti granari del periodo 1586-1590 erano stati pessimi in ogni paese del Mediterraneo e la situazione non sembrava destinata a migliorare. Si diffuse, tra Paesi Bassi e Germania, l'annuncio che Genova avrebbe trattato l'acquisto di grani per qualsiasi quantità e da qualunque provenienza, pagando prezzi remunerativi per i mercanti e gli armatori. Il documento riecheggiava, nello stile e nel contenuto, il testo per la riforma doganale di Livorno, mentre l'accoglienza verso gli infedeli procedeva di pari passo con le Livornine, promulgate solo pochi mesi dopo. L'obiettivo era di attirare le navi nordiche,

in particolare olandesi, dirette a Livorno (Grendi 1987, 307-64; Kirk 2005, 185). Centinaia di navi cariche di frumento approdarono nei mesi successivi, 192 arrivi solo nel 1592, tanto che da Genova si firmarono accordi per il rifornimento dei domini spagnoli in Italia. Di fronte al successo di una tale iniziativa nel 1609 il provvedimento fu esteso a tutte le merci che fossero transitate per lo scalo ligure (Kirk 2005, 159), mentre nel 1623 si dichiarò il «Portofranco libero, generale e generalissimo», esteso a «ogni qualsivoglia vascello di che portata si sia, che venirà da qualsivoglia parte del mondo oltre Antibo verso Ponente, e oltre Viareggio verso Levante, e così ancora da mezzo giorno nel presente porto di Genova, con qualsivoglia sorte di robe, e merci»[2]. Il carattere di continua contrattazione e i limiti che caratterizzarono la storia del porto franco di Genova, tuttavia, non permisero di raggiungere i livelli di traffico dello scalo livornese che rimase la meta favorita di inglesi e degli ebrei levantini (Urbani e Figari 1989, 307-37). Il porto franco genovese, sebbene nel preambolo sembrasse rifarsi agli editti di Livorno, nella pratica se ne allontanò. Il limite di provenienza alle imbarcazioni fu una peculiarità oggetto di numerosi dibattiti. Si trattava di una misura per evitare la concorrenza dei vicini porti di Livorno, Marsiglia e Nizza, che andava ad escludere le navi con queste provenienze dai benefici del porto franco. Inoltre la franchigia a Genova era organizzata come un emporio franco piuttosto che come un vero porto/città franca. Solo una certa porzione dello spazio all'interno del porto era riservata ai magazzini pubblici per le merci, da cui potevano essere riesportate gratuitamente dopo quattro anni. Queste limitazioni rappresentavano il timore dei genovesi che, sebbene desiderosi di resistere alla concorrenza livornese e nordica, non osavano modificare radicalmente gli equilibri della città.

Negli stessi anni, con un primo editto del 1612 seguito da lettere patenti dell'anno successivo, Carlo Emanuele I dichiarò Nizza e Villafranca porti franchi. Oltre alla concessione delle franchigie per le merci questi editti rappresentavano anche un salvacondotto per gli stranieri di qualunque grado, condizione o nazionalità. La franchigia era quasi totale, con esenzione dalle tariffe doganali e dalle tasse sulle mercanzie, con numerose immunità per i mercanti stranieri che fossero arrivati in città. Tuttavia l'impresa savoiarda non raggiunse il successo sperato: per quanto si potesse estendere la franchigia, senza la presenza di adeguate infrastrutture portuali capaci di accogliere e gestire l'accresciuto traffico stimolato dal porto franco, gli approdi di Nizza e Villafranca rimasero confinati nel loro ruolo di redistributori ed empori regionali (Bottin 1979, 1-23; Bessi 1972, 17-32; Lo Basso 2002). Fino al 1750 la quasi totale assenza di una adeguata struttura portuale e la difficoltà nell'attraversamento delle vie di terra verso il Piemonte, dove una prima strada realmente carrozzabile comparve solo nel 1788, impedirono il decollo di questa regione. Inoltre i vantaggi di una franchigia estesa divenivano sempre più trascurabili con il passare degli anni. Dal 1623

[2] Archivio di Stato di Genova, Casa di san Giorgio, 3, 00082.

Genova aveva ampliato il suo porto franco e ben presto altre località ne imitarono l'esempio. La moltiplicazione dei regolamenti favorevoli diminuiva l'originalità e l'attrattiva dei vantaggi offerti. La futura franchigia di Marsiglia, nel 1669, avrebbe reso quello che finora era stato un potente vicino un nuovo pericoloso concorrente nello stesso tipo di partita.

Nel 1662 anche l'Inghilterra provò a utilizzare il sistema del porto franco in un contesto particolare. In quello stesso anno Carlo II aveva ricevuto la città di Tangeri dai sovrani portoghesi come dote per il matrimonio con Caterina di Braganza. Per assicurare il rifornimento e il rapido popolamento di questo nuovo possedimento decentrato e situato in un territorio ostile, il sovrano dichiarò il porto franco con un apposito proclama[3]. Venivano invitati mercanti e stranieri di ogni nazione amica dell'Inghilterra, i quali rimanevano soggetti a una modesta tassa sul valore delle merci. Come nel caso genovese, si stabiliva un limite alla provenienza delle imbarcazioni. In questo caso tale limite fu scelto per evitare una concorrenza sfavorevole per i mercanti inglesi della madrepatria. Erano escluse dal porto franco le navi provenienti dalle piantagioni inglesi e tutte quelle che fossero arrivate da oltre il capo di Buona Speranza.

In risposta ai porti franchi di Livorno, Genova e Nizza, nel marzo 1669 venne istituito il porto franco di Marsiglia. Si trattava di una forma ancora diversa di applicazione del concetto di franchigia, rivisitata in chiave mercantilista dal ministro Colbert e dalla Camera di Commercio locale. Caratteristica del porto franco marsigliese fu l'imposizione dall'alto di un provvedimento inizialmente giudicato, da parte del ceto mercantile, non vantaggioso per gli interessi locali (Bergasse e Rambert 1954, 204-21). Louis Dermigny ha definito l'editto «una misura contro Livorno, molto più che in favore di Marsiglia» (Dermigny 1956, 252). La città era stata scelta, insieme a Rouen sull'Atlantico, come l'unico scalo dove fosse consentito portare merci dal Levante. Si soppressero le gabelle sulle merci in entrata ma fu proclamata una tassa del 20% sul valore delle mercanzie del Levante che fossero arrivate su navi non francesi, tassa applicabile anche sulle stesse navi francesi qualora queste «fossero state sbarcate a Genova, Livorno o altre città di paesi stranieri»[4].

Nonostante il nuovo statuto e il preambolo dell'editto che sembrava non porre limitazioni alle promesse di franchigia e all'insediamento degli stranieri, il porto franco marsigliese costituì quasi un Atto di navigazione della Francia per il commercio levantino, di cui Marsiglia diveniva l'emporio ufficiale. Era una pratica comune la tendenza a voler favorire i propri mercanti, marinai e imbarcazioni. Il porto franco nell'interpretazione marsigliese ha costituito un originale incrocio di libertà e privilegi,

[3] Il testo del proclama è consultabile online all'indirizzo: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A32397.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext;q1=Tangier++Morocco (ultimo accesso 15 luglio 2016).

[4] Archives Chambre de commerce de Marseille, I 58, Recueils divers, 10 Juillet 1703.

senza per questo minare la crescita della città che anzi vide la sua popolazione aumentare in maniera costante per tutto il XVIII secolo, con un periodo di recessione solo in occasione della peste del 1720-1723 (Carrière, Cordurié e Rebuffat 2008; Carrière 1979). A Marsiglia inoltre uno dei cardini del porto franco quale l'invito verso gli stranieri e in particolare verso i levantini era quasi assente. Gli armeni e gli ebrei, le popolazioni diasporiche dedite al commercio nelle principali piazze europee, erano esplicitamente invitati in città per volere di Colbert (Clément 1863, 679; Depping 1852, 470). Tuttavia, gli ebrei furono espulsi ufficialmente nel 1681, accusati di connivenza con i loro correligionari di Algeri e Livorno. Riguardo gli armeni invece, l'intendente di Provenza promise che avrebbe imposto loro condizioni tali da non poter competere seriamente con i mercanti locali, un atteggiamento che riassume bene l'indirizzo complessivo che orientava la franchigia di Marsiglia[5]. Allo stesso tempo vennero promulgati regolamenti e restrizioni per evitare un predominio di imbarcazioni straniere nel commercio marittimo della città.

L'esempio marsigliese è un'ulteriore dimostrazione di come il concetto di franchigia, apparentemente semplice, si riveli complesso e diversificato nella sua applicazione pratica. Caricato di significati diversi, il termine iniziò a essere sottoposto a un esame teorico solo nel XVIII secolo. Nei discorsi di alcuni economisti era diventato quasi una formula magica, sinonimo di ricchezza e prosperità. Nei primi anni del XVIII secolo Camillo Albertini, annalista anconetano, descriveva il porto franco come «l'unico e infallibile strumento oggi impiegato da tutti i principi per introdurre il commercio e la ricchezza nei loro stati» (Caracciolo 1965, 55). Tale sembrava essere la motivazione alla base della creazione di molti porti franchi. Un altro esempio è il caso di Messina. La creazione di un porto franco fu proposta dal viceré Uzeda per permettere una rapida ripresa della città, recentemente uscita dalla rivolta anti-spagnola del 1674-1678. La limitatezza della franchigia tuttavia, attuata solo nel 1695 e per una zona franca simile al modello genovese, con un recinto per il deposito delle merci, non ebbe un particolare successo. Fu in seguito ai terremoti del 1783 che si tornò a parlare del porto franco messinese. Ferdinando I decise di riconfermare i privilegi di Messina e di estendere il consumo delle merci franche all'intera città (Celesti 1837, 17-8), determinando un rapido afflusso di stranieri (D'Angelo 1995).

Oltre al triangolo di scambi commerciali tra Marsiglia, Genova e Livorno, un'altra simile competizione si sviluppò nell'Adriatico tra Trieste, Ancona e Venezia.

Gli Asburgo d'Austria avevano recentemente raggiunto la pace con i turchi e ottenuti nuovi possedimenti in Italia. Nel 1717 dichiararono la libertà di navigazione nell'Adriatico e nel 1718 firmarono un trattato con la Sublime Porta per la reciproca

[5] Archives Chambre de Commerce de Marseille, B 76, Correspondance passive de la Chambre de Commerce, 1694.

libertà di commercio. In questo nuovo equilibrio politico Trieste divenne ufficialmente porto franco nel 1719. L'esempio sul piano teorico restava Livorno, ma la franchigia nella sua applicazione reale sembrava piuttosto ispirarsi al precedente genovese. Il porto franco era limitato alla zona portuale e non all'intero tessuto urbano, sebbene fosse estesa a quest'ultimo la politica di accoglienza verso gli stranieri, senza distinzioni di nazionalità o religione. Le merci consumate in zona franca o spedite nell'interno rimanevano soggette a tassazione, così che Trieste assunse i connotati di una Livorno molto limitata, senza l'apertura di nuovi cantieri che ingrandissero l'area portuale o le infrastrutture esistenti. Negli anni '70 del XVIII secolo il co-reggente e futuro imperatore Giuseppe II, visitando la città, ne rimase negativamente impressionato. Riferì alla madre Maria Teresa, oltre alla propria delusione, il dubbio riguardo la necessità di continuare a investire in una impresa che non stava dando i frutti sperati (Kalc 2003, 47; Curiel 1922, 169-79). La politica di immigrazione straniera del porto franco triestino si consolidò lentamente, permettendo alla città di crescere con costanza, anche se a un ritmo più lento rispetto alle aspettative. Una significativa attrattiva era costituita dall'estrema debolezza del ceto dirigente locale, incapace di formare una opposizione o una seria concorrenza contro i nuovi arrivati (Gatti 2008, 70). Dopo una lenta partenza, a partire dagli anni '60 del XVIII secolo, Trieste riuscì comunque a superare Ancona e Venezia (Dermigny 1974, 581), passando dai 3.800 abitanti del 1730 ai 6.400 del 1758 e ai 30.000 del 1800 (Montanelli 1905).

Solo una dozzina d'anni dopo toccò ad Ancona l'introduzione della franchigia come strumento per far rifiorire i commerci. Il papa aveva già istituito un porto franco nei suoi territori, in particolare nella città di Civitavecchia nel 1630. Si trattava tuttavia di una "franchigia sulla carta" (Caracciolo 1965, 71), applicata in modo molto limitato e quasi simbolico, come se la semplice affermazione dei principi del porto franco fosse sufficiente a portare alla rinascita dei traffici e al cosmopolitismo che caratterizzavano i vicini porti concorrenti. Il principale fine della franchigia di Civitavecchia fu l'approvvigionamento di grano per rifornire Roma, un ruolo simile a quello del primo porto franco istituito a Genova (Calisse 1898, 459-60).

Dal 1720 il consiglio comunale di Ancona aveva reclamato a sua volta la franchigia, invocata come unico rimedio per la decadenza economica cittadina (Caracciolo 1965, 53-66). Il porto franco fu ufficialmente istituito solo nel 1732 a seguito di un dibattito decennale. Anche in questo caso furono sancite norme per favorire l'arrivo di stranieri di ogni nazionalità e religione, oltre che la libertà di portare le proprie merci pagando tasse di entrata molto ridotte e di riesportarle gratuitamente. Ulteriore beneficio per gli stranieri, un probabile richiamo al precedente livornese, fu l'esenzione per dieci anni da una tassa che colpiva i ricchi, a beneficio di tutti gli stranieri che si fossero trasferiti in città con la propria famiglia (Caracciolo 1965, 91-2). Da tempo il papato cercava di attirare marrani iberici ed ebrei levantini in città, nel tentativo di ricreare

una Livorno nell'Adriatico dove potessero convivere e commerciare liberamente italiani, turchi, ebrei e gente di ogni nazionalità (Saracini 1675, 362). Dai porti di Livorno e Messina arrivarono inglesi e olandesi, mentre erano in gran parte francesi le navi provenienti dagli scali del levante di Smirne e Alessandria (Moroni 2009, 95). Grazie alla presenza fisica di una piccola comunità ebrea in città – un ebreo anconitano fu tra i primi a proporre il porto franco ad Ancona (Caracciolo 1675, 28, 54) – e alla dichiarazione imperiale delle libertà di traffico nell'Adriatico, Ancona riuscì, più di Trieste e Venezia, a sfruttare la franchigia per attirare i commerci internazionali. Come a Livorno, arrivavano per trasferirsi in città mercanti stranieri mentre la popolazione continuava a crescere. Alla diffusione dei porti franchi corrispose la perdita di potere di Venezia nell'Adriatico, dove la città perseverava nella propria politica doganale protezionista, anche se mitigata da un progressivo abbassamento delle tariffe avviato nel 1736 (Diedo 1751, 342).

Una nuova prospettiva, la crisi del sistema delle franchigie

Sulla tendenza alla proliferazione delle franchigie portuali si interrogarono anche gli economisti del XVIII secolo. Merita di essere ricordata la riflessione di Antonio Genovesi del 1765: «Il porto franco è stato ed è l'idolo di molti economisti. […] Se le nazioni vicine avesser tutte, o la maggior parte, un porto franco, non si potrebbe allora far di meno di averne anche noi; perché è deserto chi resta solo» (Genovesi 1824, 313-4).

Tuttavia, sul finire del XVIII secolo e nel corso del XIX, in particolare a seguito della Rivoluzione Francese e delle guerre napoleoniche, i porti franchi entrarono in una nuova fase. Sebbene continuassero a essere occasionalmente rilanciati da una parte del pensiero economico contemporaneo, iniziava a essere messa in dubbio l'utilità della loro istituzione e a entrare nel mito il ruolo che essi avevano esercitato nel recente passato. Nel mondo atlantico le franchigie arrivarono con un certo ritardo e senza conseguire i risultati, pratici e simbolici, che avevano caratterizzato la loro applicazione nel Mediterraneo, al quale questa innovazione resta legata. Una debolezza fu la precarietà che caratterizzava le franchigie, spesso dipendenti dalla volontà di un sovrano o di un ministro o dagli interessi non sempre coerenti dei ceti mercantili locali. Lo scontro tra esigenze finanziarie immediate e il bisogno degli stati moderni di trovare nuove fonti di introito, contro la necessità di una espansione commerciale diffusa che aveva bisogno delle franchigie portò a una progressiva riduzione delle libertà commerciali e a rinnovi saltuari.

In seguito al modificarsi della congiuntura economica e mentale che aveva permesso la nascita di questa istituzione iniziarono a sorgere dubbi riguardo la sua utilità. Le prime critiche risolute contro i porti franchi, accusati di essere artefici di illusori miraggi, furono avanzate nel 1743 dal napoletano Carlo Antonio Broggia nel suo "Trattato dei

tributi". Broggia affermava come portasse «più conseguenze di soda utilità all'essenziale della Toscana un cantone di Firenze con le sue perfette manifatture di seta e coll'industria della seta stessa in pregio appo la gente più colta che non sono più Livorni» (Broggia 1804, 192-3). Altra vicenda esemplare del progressivo decadimento del mito del porto franco avvenne nel Regno di Napoli. Carlo di Borbone avrebbe voluto rispondere ai porti franchi creati nell'Adriatico con altri due porti franchi all'interno del Regno, a Brindisi e Pescara, ma ne fu dissuaso dalla Giunta del Commercio che non la ritenne una misura vantaggiosa per le finanze regie (Schipa 1904, 559-60). Persino a Livorno, a partire dal 1765, durante il regno di Pietro Leopoldo, si inaugurò una politica di potenziamento del commercio toscano e di sviluppo dell'agricoltura, da affiancare alla storica franchigia (Ciano 1989, 81-91). Con la diffusione delle idee liberali nel XIX secolo il ruolo del porto franco venne ulteriormente ridimensionato. La franchigia iniziava a essere considerata non solo anacronistica ma dannosa per la sovranità nazionale, che con quelle norme avrebbe sacrificato parte delle proprie prerogative a favore degli stranieri. È possibile ritrovare un segnale dell'avvenuto mutamento culturale di questi anni in un saggio in risposta a un nuovo progetto di porto franco a Napoli nel 1836, scritto dall'economista Mario Luigi Rotondo: «ci avea un tempo, e non è gran fatto lontano in cui taluni negozianti ci venivano abbagliando con questo vocabolo porto-franco dandocene ad intendere l'istituzione siccome sorgente d'oro e di prosperità» (Rotondo 1836, 64). Sul finire del secolo avvenne una parziale ripresa del tema, a seguito del ritorno di un'ondata protezionistica che colpì l'Europa in recessione e che portò a una ripresa del discorso in ambito politico. Un esempio sono le relazioni e le proposte di legge in Francia che chiedevano la reintroduzione della franchigia di Marsiglia così com'era stata in Antico Regime (Bertas 1898; Estrine 1899; Amiot 1899).

Conclusione

Il porto franco ha rappresentato, per molti paesi affacciati sul Mediterraneo tra il XVII e il XVIII secolo, una sorta di panacea per la crisi e l'arretratezza del commercio. Sia che servisse a dare linfa a un porto in decadenza sia che dovesse promuovere e accrescere un nuovo scalo, questa istituzione si diffuse rapidamente da un porto all'altro. In particolare, il porto franco nacque come un'arma degli stati più deboli, della quale i forti potevano anche fare a meno (Masson 1904, 201-2), come dimostra il tipo particolare di franchigia che s'impose a Marsiglia. I porti franchi convenivano alle città che non avevano niente da perdere dall'affidare parte del proprio commercio alle potenze straniere. Fin dalle sue origini tra gli obiettivi di questi editti vi era la necessità di attirare le imbarcazioni straniere per sopperire alla debolezza della flotta nazionale o per ridare slancio a quest'ultima grazie all'intensificazione dei traffici. Attraverso il ricorso a capitali e imbarcazioni estere le località marittime avevano l'opportunità di

rilanciare il proprio commercio e di uscire da un quadro regionale o di dipendenza da una potenza maggiore, come poteva essere il caso delle città del litorale adriatico nei confronti di Venezia. L'istituzione del porto franco conobbe, infatti, una certa popolarità nei mari chiusi, dove in una stessa regione erano concentrati scali di più nazionalità e si svolgeva una grande redistribuzione di merci. Tale era la situazione del Mediterraneo, dove questa istituzione nacque e si diffuse, ma condizioni simili erano presenti anche nei mari del nord o nei mari caraibici (Dermigny 1974, 627), dove si cercarono di introdurre, sebbene con minor diffusione, simili esperimenti.

Il successo di uno scalo rispetto a un altro poteva essere influenzato, come si è osservato, dalle condizioni geografiche e climatiche, dall'effettiva applicazione degli editti, dalle particolari interpretazioni che ne venivano date o dalla presenza di un porto capace di accogliere le navi che si cercavano di richiamare con tale normativa. Ma l'aspetto più importante e forse il più emblematico fu la capacità del porto franco di attirare un certo "capitale umano". Gli ebrei, che fossero iberici o levantini, erano spesso gli stranieri più ricercati e desiderati in quanto parte di una rete di relazioni internazionali a lungo raggio e capaci di unire il porto dove risiedevano al più grande sistema mediterraneo o atlantico. Ma allo stesso modo si cercava di attirare inglesi, olandesi, tedeschi, greci, armeni, turchi e altri stranieri, richiamati per delle specifiche competenze (come i calafati e maestri d'ascia greci di cui si auspicava l'insediamento a Livorno) o per favorire semplicemente il rapido popolamento di una città che sarebbe dovuta diventare tappa fondamentale per le principali rotte commerciali. Questo tipo di normativa ha favorito lo sviluppo delle comunicazioni tra popolazioni differenti in un tentativo di convivenza pacifica, intento dichiarato esplicitamente in molti editti, come per il porto franco di Marsiglia, firmato da Luigi XIV: «*Comme le commerce est le moyen le plus propre pour concilier les différents nations, et entretenir les esprits les plus opposés dans une bonne et mutuelle correspondance*»[6]. Dopotutto era nell'interesse del paese ospitante che questi stranieri fossero trattati bene e che i loro connazionali commerciassero inviando le proprie merci. Spesso in questi porti erano presenti anche cimiteri e luoghi di culto di popolazioni di altre religioni (Giunti e Villani 2004, 35-51; D'Angelo 1995; Bertrand 2002), indice del grado di tolleranza promosso dalle autorità, che poteva essere più o meno esplicito (Do Paço *et al.* 2010; Antunes *et al.* 2014). Si sviluppava un'abitudine verso l'altro e il diverso la cui presenza, considerata utile e benefica per il commercio, si confrontava ogni giorno con l'istintiva repulsione del gruppo omogeneo ospitante. Capacità di adattamento e senso della relatività – uniti ai bisogni del commercio e della politica – stimolarono la riflessione e la presa di coscienza necessarie per il riconoscimento del 'diverso', in una polverizzazione delle distanze che tendeva a «*réduire l'univers en une province*» (Thuau 1966, 289).

[6] Archives Chambre de commerce de Marseille, I 58, mars 1669.

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Force Fields between Libya and Italy: Camps, Air Power and Baroque Geopolitics Challenging the Geography of the Mediterranean

Caterina Miele

Abstract

From 1911 to 2011, the Mediterranean space between Libya and Italy has been the scenario of crucial historical events: the colonial war and the anti-colonial resistance, the decolonization, the rise of Gaddafi's regime, his banishment and rehabilitation, finally his fall and the securitization of the Mediterranean passage. Through an historical ethnography of the postcolonial pact between Libya and Italy (oil-for-borders), with a particular focus on the role of migration management, on the relationship between internal borders and aerial spaces and on the colonial genealogy of humanitarian camps, I would suggest that the current grammars of exclusion and of subversion within the Mediterranean do not respond to any binary (neo)colonial logic. Many different subjectivities are fragmenting and relocating borders and the Mediterranean appears as a multi-crossed political space able to shape the relation between the countries that lie on its shores as well as the representation of the past.

Keywords

Colonization - Border - Camp - Drones - Migration

(Neo)colonial wars and postcolonial perspectives

From 1911 to 2011 the Mediterranean was the scenario of major processes of colonization and decolonization; nevertheless, Italy still seems to consider Libya as a sort of colony. After the downfall of Gaddafi's regime, Italy continued to claim a leading role in the international community's plan to bring stability to the country, fallen into political chaos since the military intervention of 2011, still tormented by civil war and secessionist trends. Over the past years, Libya has almost been disintegrated: two separate conflicting parliaments and governments, two parallel armies, police and security structures emerged. On December 2015, the UN Security Council voted and unanimously approved Resolution 2259 to end the civil war; under its auspices, on January 2016, a new government was created (the Government of National Accord) led by Fayez Sarraj, with the aim of restoring the unity of the country, steering it out of armed conflict and reuniting the split sovereign institutions. As Sarraj seems unable to rule without the support of the Western countries, Libya is likely to be "stabilized"

again thanks to a new military intervention of the international community. As various other nations, Italy has never hidden its designs on the Libyan treasure, one of the largest oil and gas reserves on the planet (European Council 2016; Proglio 2016; Negri 2016).

On 14 February 2016, Angelo Panebianco, the renowned Italian columnist of *Il Corriere*, in regard to the possibility of a military intervention to support Libyans against the rise of the Islamic State in their territory, reiterated that political unification could be achieved only through cannons and that Italy should have a leading role, due to the historical relations between the two countries (Panebianco 2016). A month later, Italian Minister of Defence Roberta Pinotti said that under no conditions would Italy accept a military intervention in Libya without a request by a legitimate government: support from Italy in military training or surveillance of sensible targets but also in other kinds of operations, such as raids against the enemy positions, nevertheless, could not be excluded (Valentino 2016). The Minister's efforts to prepare the public opinion to a new war on the other side of the Mediterranean seemed to respond to Panebianco's concerns; more broadly speaking, her declarations were totally consistent with several and long-term attempts by the Italian governments to re-legitimate a kind of colonial relationship with Libya. Many scholars have pointed out clear evidence of neocolonialist attitudes among Italian politicians, together with signs of removal of the colonial past from national consciousness. However, if we look back at the relationship between Italy and Libya – particularly at the centrality gained by migration issues since the end of the Nineties – we could reject the idea that colonial relations can be re-established *tout court*. Even the idea of the "colonial memory repression", one of the main topics of Italian post-colonial studies, has exhausted its heuristic role, as it focuses on the former colonizer's processes of construction of the past and does not take into account the role of the former colonized and other subjectivities in reformulating, moving, breaking up and replacing the old colonial conflict.

I would propose to recast, from a postcolonial perspective, the aforementioned narratives: on the one side, I would suggest, current biopolitical devices of population management can be dated back to the Mediterranean colonial past; on the other side, new forms of political and social resistance are continuously emerging within the same Mediterranean space. It would be worth, in this sense, to look at «border as method» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), which means to take a critical perspective on borders, not described only as means of oppression, exploitation and securitization, but rather as complex social institutions (Vila 2000), marked by a tension between reinforcement and crossing practices, that «manifests itself in border struggles» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 9-13). In other words, I am addressing «the conflictual determination of the border» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 13), in order to point out that the current

grammars of exclusion and subversion in the Mediterranean space do not respond to any binary (neo)colonial logic (North/South; colonizers/colonized; dominants/subalterns). Rather, the area between Italy and Libya represents a "borderscape" where practices, performances and discourses «instrumentally use the border to affix a dominant spatiality, temporality, and political agency» and then to challenge its meaning «between belonging and non-belonging» (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007, xx-xxi). My aim is to emphasize to what extend migration, war and colonial rule have shaped the edges of a space – both historical and geographical, imaginary and empirical – while, at the same time, continuously challenging them. In the following paragraphs, I will focus, first, on the postcolonial pact between Libya and Italy, dealing in particular with the conflictual construction of the past and the role of migration management; I will then address the relationship between internal borders and aerial spaces, to point out the relocation of the colonial border and the fragmentation of the juridical European space.

Oil for border

After the Second World War and the British Military Administration, the Kingdom of Libya obtained from Italy the payment of 2.750.000 Libyan lire, as a contribution to the economic reconstruction of the country, in exchange of the guarantee to protect the resident Italian citizens' estates. As soon as he came to power in 1969, Muammar Gaddafi disavowed the agreement and ordered the expulsion of the Italian former colonizers and their descendants as well as the confiscation of their goods. Despite this act of vengeance and the country's reputation as a "rogue state", Italy has always been Libya's main trading partner while Gaddafi continued to ask for a "grand gesture" to overcome the wounds of the colonial past. In 1998, for the first time, an Italian government apologized for the «suffering caused to the Libyan people as a result of the Italian colonization» and declared its intent to «remove as far as possible its effects and to overcome and forget the past». (Dini and Mountasser 1998). Concretely, Italy committed to build infrastructures; to implement development projects; to clear landmines left behind during WWII and to build a specialized medical centre for people wounded by mines; finally to return «all manuscripts, artefacts, documents, monuments and archaeological objects stolen by Italy, during and after the colonization» (Dini and Mountasser 1998). By virtue of the application of the joint statement, the Great Jamahiriya would have had no more grounds for dispute or controversy concerning the past. In 1999, Massimo D'Alema was the first Western Prime Minister to visit Libya after the suspension of sanctions by the UN, thus vouching for the rehabilitation of Gaddafi and his new position against terrorism. D'Alema also returned the Venus of Leptis Magna to Libya, subtracted by fascist governor Italo Balbo and then donated to Goering, and paid tribute to the monument to the Libyans killed

in the first Italian-Turkish War. On 15 February 2006, Italian Minister Roberto Calderoli was shown on Italian television wearing a T-shirt on which the Danish cartoons satirizing Mohammed and the Islamic religion were printed. Two days later, in Benghazi an angry crowd protested outside the Italian Consulate: the Libyan police reacted by firing on demonstrators, killing 11 people. On that occasion, Gaddafi declared that it was the lack of compensation by Italy for victims and damages caused by the colonial domination to unleash the wrath of his people. After eight years of negotiations and meetings, finally in 2008 Rome and Tripoli signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation that would become the legal framework for a special and privileged bilateral cooperation. The Treaty referred to the «deep bonds of friendship between the two peoples» and their common intention to strengthen peace and security in the Mediterranean region. In order to close down the «painful chapter of the past», Italy undertook to implement infrastructure projects in Libya for an amount of 5 billion US dollars in 20 years to be entrusted to Italian companies. Cooperation in other domains, from the scientific and cultural fields to energy and defence, was also foreseen and an Italian-Libyan Friendship Day, to be celebrated on August 30, was established. Gaddafi landed in Italy for his first State visit on 10 June 2009; on the lapel of his military uniform he had attached a picture of Omar al-Mukhtar, hero of the anti-Italian resistance. During the Arab League summit in Sirte, in 2010, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi greeted Libyan leader Gaddafi kissing his hand, an image picked up by media around the world that caused accusations against the Italian government of submitting to a dictatorial regime.

The use of the colonial past as political blackmail was not an isolated initiative of the Libyan leader. Trying to debunk the Western obsession with Gaddafi, it would be worth rather to look at this history also from the point of view of Libyan people. According to historian Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, the 1969 revolution was not «an anomaly» as in Western journalists' view, «but firmly rooted» in the hinterland society «with their pan-Islamic culture, kinship autonomous organizations, fear of the central state, and mistrust of the West based on bitter colonial experience under Italy» (Ahmida 2005, 72-4). Gaddafi just rearticulated those popular feelings, turning the memory of the anticolonial resistance into a revolutionary "down-to-earth" ideology and building the Jamahiriyya [state of the masses] as a populist modern state (Ahmida 2005, 72-4). As a consequence of the resentment over the colonial period, Italy was often forced to politically support its former colony, in order to safeguard its economic interests.

If being a *rentier* state did actually enable Libya to raise the stake, at the same time we could be emphasised the way the Treaty of Friendship subverted the classical theories of colonialism. On the one hand, the Treaty seemed just to confirm the colonial division of roles between dispensers of technology and capital and land owners and

unskilled labour providers; on the other hand, for the first time, this division of roles appeared as the consequence of a conscious stance by the former colony concerning the counterpart of the exchange (Capussotti 2009). The new era of "friendship and cooperation" was based on the power to negotiate from both parts in the frame of a radically changed geopolitical scenario. The postcolonial pact achieved by the Libyan *rais* in the Nineties was, ultimately, an oil-for-compensation-and-border pact: the Italian apologies were exchanged with the safeguard of the Italian economic interests and Libya's involvement in border surveillance. As a space of transit for migration flows originating in different areas of Africa and Middle East, Libya could establish a new kind of relation with the EU, not based on mere allegiance to its dictates, but rather on the power to negotiate foreign investments. The country's involvement in the EU migration management demonstrates the complexity of the postcolonial border, externalized and dispersed everywhere (Balibar 2003), also affecting in multiple ways the same European juridical space it aims to protect, turning it into a fragmented space (Ong 2013) where the clear boundaries of the colonial world (Fanon 2007) blur and become hypertrophic.

After the so-called Arab Springs, the Berlusconi government declared the state of emergency in order to manage the exceptional flow of citizens from North Africa. This was only the last step of a process of "surmediatization" of the sea passage of migrants transiting in North Africa that «feed the actuality with spectacular and tragic images» while «the strong natural and symbolic opacity of the obstacles (the largest desert in the world and the sea) gives the impression of an inexorable wave» of a «migratory pressure which always draws farther in the South of the world and always projects farther to the North» (Bensaâd 2011, my translation). In the global present, we are used to dealing with images of displaced populations, mostly migrants and refugees, forced to leave their countries and homes. The obsessive representation of these people in mediatic and political discourse has the (intended) effect of giving the impression of a "surplus humanity", an inexorable displacement without any solution but their internment in a sort of camp (Rahola 2003).

If many scholars have recently stressed the fact that the camp-form – both in its 20th century version of concentration or prison camps and in the most recent model of the refugee camp, humanitarian camp or identification camp – has its roots in the colonial era (Picker and Pasquetti 2015; Rahola 2001), I would like to address the specific Mediterranean genealogy of a security device, to use Foucault's words, extensively used in the European migration system. To start we can consider that in the joint statement of 1998, as *sine qua non* condition to overcome the colonial past, Libya asked for Italy's cooperation in the search for Libyan deportees and a «material and moral» recognition for their descendants and for the Libyan people. The statement referred to one of the bloodiest episodes of Italian colonialism, occurred during the

conquest of Tripoli in 1911, when Italian troops were captured and killed in Sciara Sciat by the Turkish-Libyan forces; the Italian commanders responded with a series of massacres of Libyans civilians and with the deportation to the penal colonies of Tremiti, Ustica, Ponza and Favignana of the thousands of Libyans who escaped death in the harsh retaliation (Del Boca 1988, 109-15). Many deportees died during the trip or because of cholera and other epidemic diseases in the caverns near the sea where they were placed. A few survivors could return home in 1913 (Salerno 2005 113-20; Malgeri and Hasan Sury 2005). In the last phase of the occupation of Libya, the campaign of "pacification" carried out in Cyrenaica against the anti-colonialist forces – what an historian called the «blackest page of Italian colonialism» (Salerno 2005, my translation) – the Egyptian border was closed with a 10 meter-wide grid to prevent the passage of supplies while almost the entire population of the so-called "rebel" zones was transferred to concentration camps, in order to dismantle any liaison or support between fighters (Bono 1991).

Given the massive use of "detention camps" for defeating the anti-colonial resistance, it is remarkable that the landmark rapprochement between Italy and Libya was reached in the same year of promulgation of the so-called *Turco-Napolitano* Act, the law that established, for the first time in Italy, the use of detention centres for the administrative crime of "illegal" immigration. The fact the two events were somehow connected is proved by the agreement between the two countries signed in 2000, which identified the battle against "illegal migration" as a priority (Accordo Italia Libia 2003). Only a few years later, the *Bossi-Fini* Act (2002) confirmed the possibility of the expulsion of "irregular" migrants (possibly escorted to the border) and their internment in Centri di Permanenza Temporanea [Temporary Detention Centres] for up to sixty days. In order to implement the law, the Accordo Italia-Libia was ratified in 2003, so ensuring the total closure of the Libyan illegal immigration routes and providing various «forms of technical cooperation between the two countries» (Accordo Italia-Libia 2003), among which the financial contribution for the construction of detention centres in Libya, for technical equipment and for the charter flights for the repatriation of illegal immigrants stranded in the North African country (*La Repubblica* 2003). In 2004, after the withdrawal of the EU embargo on Libya, the Italian Parliament provided the possibility for the Ministry of the Interior to finance the construction, in third countries, of «structures aimed to contrast irregular migration flows of population toward the Italian territory» (Law 271/2004), without any reference to the respect for the minimum standards of detention or for the principles of the Geneva Convention. Even before the Treaty, therefore, the cooperation between the two countries in this field was causing tragic effects: the details were revealed only in the spring of 2005 in the report by the European Commission Technical Commission, which ascertained that since 2003 Italy had financed detention

camps for illegal immigrants in Libya along with a program of charter flights for their repatriation to their home countries, including those, such as Eritrea, ruled by notoriously illiberal and repressive regimes. The report mentioned arbitrary arrests and detentions, overcrowded camps with insufficient food, mass expulsions, lack of the minimum guarantees of defence (European Commission 2005; *La Repubblica* 2006). Only three years later a new Treaty would be signed in order to build a control system of the Libyan borders, to be entrusted to Italian companies with the necessary technology skills, along with regional and bilateral agreements with the countries of origin of migration flows.

Beyond analogies and differences between the confinement of colonial populations that marks the whole history of the Western expansion and the proliferation of migrant detention centres, it is worth focussing on anti-colonial resistance and migrants struggles as counter-conducts against the established order but also as symptoms of its crisis. It is well known, for example, that in order to crush the Libyan rebels in the Thirties, the fascist General Graziani made use of traditional military actions at first. Since these actions failed in their purpose, he forced the nomadic population of the highland to move their settlements but, again, did not manage to completely defeat the Libyans' anti-colonial feelings. As a final and definitive action, he ordered the construction of concentration camps (Salerno 2005, 90) and was finally able to achieve his goal. Just like Graziani's colonial military efforts and the Libyans' anti-colonial struggle, the EU attempts to reaffirm a continuously challenged border system and the multiple, ever-changing strategies of the migrants to cross the border and overcome surveillance should be considered in the light of the above mentioned "border as method" perspective. I would emphasize, ultimately, «the conflictual determination of the border» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 13) and the fact that, just like the management of colonized populations, the postcolonial devices of biopolitical control address more the migrants' self-determination than the number of people coming to Europe, more the struggle than the mobility.

Bombs and Drones in the Mediterranean Sky

Despite Peter Sloterdijk's belief, the historical transition from war to terrorism didn't happen on European soil in 1915 (Sloterdijk 2009), but rather in the colonial space, specifically during the first war of conquest of Libya, in the autumn 1911, when the war flights and rudimental aerial bombardment in history were carried out by the Italian army. This sad Italian record opened the way to a new kind of imagination of the colony: from that point on, Libya would represent a test field for the Italian Air Force, what Guernica represented for Nazi aviation (Salerno 2005, 59-61). In 1917, incendiary bombs were launched on the barley camps of the rebel populations of

Tripolitiania. Between 1924 and 1926, planes were used to indiscriminately bomb the oases not controlled by the Italian troops, sometimes with mustard gas: in their «precise and systematic plan» to separate the civilian population from the rebels, the Italian military commanders carefully analysed the number of victims, the immediate effects of chemical death, but also the delayed effects on those who were touched by gases (Salerno 2005, 64). In Cyrenaica in less than one year, between November 1929 and May 1930, the Italian Air Force launched 43.500 tons of bombs (Salerno 2005, 71). It is no surprise that among the films ordered by the fascist regime to celebrate the Italian colonial "adventure" and the proclamation of the Empire, the one with the highest approval from critics and audiences was *Luciano Serra Pilota*, a movie dedicated to an air force pilot who volunteers for the colonial campaign in East Africa where he is wounded and then killed, not before undertaking heroic actions in the enemy territory, such as saving a train attacked by the Abyssinians. In the film, all the themes of the fascist propaganda appear, in particular heroism and the Italian way to modernity, perfectly embodied by the air force.

A century after the first raid on the Libyan population, the Italian Minister of Defence granted seven Italian military bases and eight aircrafts to the NATO forces. Italy's role in that campaign would be clarified in November 2012 at the House of the Aviator in Rome. During the presentation of a publication by the air force dedicated to the 2011 Libya Mission, the intense activity of the Italian Tornados in the Odyssey Dawn operation was described in detail: in seven months, 1.900 sorties, more than 7.300 flying hours, 456 bombing missions (*Huffington Post* 2012).

Over the years, within the Mediterranean space between Italy and Libya, aircraft and aerial technology has been used even outside the strictly military domain. As recently as in August 2014, an Italian Navy ship, the *San Giusto*, intercepted a boat adrift 40 miles off the coast of Libya. The boat identification occurred through a drone, equipped with an electro-optical and infrared sensor that allows, in real time, to extend the capability of the ship to see beyond the limit of its sensors, both on sea and on land. The *San Giusto* was the first unit of the Italian Navy to employ an unmanned aerial vehicle in Search And Rescue operations. A correspondent for the Italian broadcaster TG2, was on board during the first operations and was able to film the aid given to the migrants by the crew, in particular the rescue of a 20-day-old baby and his parents who were on the boat, perfectly fitting the rules of the «spectacle of the border» (De Genova 2013). The video also reports the images recorded a few hours before by the drone that intercepted the boat: the people aboard show no reaction, because, as the captain of the San Giusto reveals to the journalists, «they cannot know they are seen» (TG2 2014). When Italy was still acting out the role of the guarantor of Libya in front of the international community, the need to end the embargo was presented as the only possibility to supply the North African country with the technical

tools for a more effective contrast to illegal immigration, such as helicopters and airplanes to control the borders of the desert (*La Repubblica* 2004). In the aftermath of an umpteenth shipwreck off the island of Lampedusa, when hundreds of people lost their lives, Italy launched a brand-new operation, *Mare Nostrum*, born «to face the ongoing humanitarian emergency in the Stretto di Sicilia, due to the exceptional flux of migrants» (Ministero della Difesa - Marina Militare 2014). In the same year, for the first time the Italian and Libyan Ministers of Foreign Affairs foresaw the use of Italian unmanned aerial vehicles for supporting local authorities in the surveillance of the southern Libyan border (Ministero della Difesa 2013).

The *Mare Nostrum* operation, with the use of aerial reconnaissance to search the sea for suspect vessels and monitor activity in the Libyan ports (Brady 2014) is part of the increasing attempts by the EU member states to invest resources in deploying the most up-to-date technologies to stop undesired migrants (Marin and Krajčíková 2015; Pugliese 2013). Drones represent, at the same time, the last stage of the rise of air forces in Europe, connected, on the one hand, to the emergence of a bio-political power aimed to ensure national security, on the other, to a necropolitics that denies the very humanity of the enemy, above all if colonized (Adey 2010; Mbembe 2003). In the first half of the 19th century, the colonial populations that were considered "rebels" were the main target of the aviation, a military technology aimed to prepare the ground for war, to protect national interests and the security of the border (Caplan 2013a). In air power, to win means to have the enemy constantly in sight. The technology that since WWI combined camera/machine/weapon gave birth to a lethal techno-science and to a radically different "logistics of perception", where the representation of the object is more important than the object itself, while the physical presence and the direct vision of the war were substituted by a vicarious experience of the battlefield mediated by its video or photographic images (Virilio 1989; 2005). Aviation in colonial warfare and aircrafts and drones in border management share the same logistics of perception.

The combination of a totalizing system of border surveillance – as a hypermodern and mobile panopticon, the drone can see without being seen – and the possibility of experiencing the battle from above have huge implications on the elaboration of new imaginary geographies of the Mediterranean with all its political and anthropological consequences. In early 20th century Europe, the poor level of preparation of airmen and the lack of technology of their vehicles showed in the total uncertainty of the bombings, which created panic in civilians and arbitrary casualties. That same effect was then sought in aerial war (Caplan 2013a) and nowadays pursued by the use of drones in the new world order warfare, deliberately aimed at breaking the morale of civilians in order to achieve a more rapid victory. It has been observed that, compared to conventional war, the use of drones seeks to respond to the asymmetric threat

posed by small mobile groups of non-state actors, with small flexible units, human or preferably unmanned, according to the logic of the targeted attack. The war paradigm is no longer a duel between two fighters but rather a hunter who stalks a prey whose aims is to run away and hide (Chamayou 2013; Crawford 2008). As in the classical frame of governmental power (Foucault 2009), the need is no longer to punish the enemy, but instead to defend society.

If using drones in border surveillance is apparently aimed at different goals, nevertheless the so called Search and Rescue operations in the Mediterranean, unifying military and humanitarian targets – what Didier Fassin (2012, 135) called the oxymoron of «compassionate repression» – seems to pursue a similar logic. Even more in recent times, border surveillance takes the Manichean, moral approach typical of anti-terrorism police operations: not fighting the enemy (i.e. Islamist terrorism) but identifying every potential threat, above all if coming from the sea, or even defeating the threat in the location where it originates. The latter point demonstrates the need to involve North African countries in this postcolonial hunt. The increasing use of aerial border surveillance, then, promotes a binary representation between military and non-military, citizens and non-citizens, targets and non-, now part of a widespread view of the Mediterranean, in particular from the Northern shore, that goes along with the effects of desensitization affecting those who command drones (Chamayou 2013) but also the general public (Dal Lago 2012). The fact of being inexorably involved in a paranoid representation of border violations, thanks to the aerial images of the Mediterranean transmitted by the media, makes ordinary people feel like guards and, at the same time, less touched by the human stories of migrants. Aerial border surveillance, then, portrays the entire Mediterranean as a potentially unbounded virtual battlefield.

A final implication concerns the enemy/victim/prey, the people who attempt to cross the Mediterranean, whether migrants or refugees; just as the human targets of the recent wars, they have no means to fight death coming from above, unless through a kind of *camouflage* (Caplan 2014). The frequent shipwrecks question the idea of an absolute visibility in contrast to the constitutive elusiveness and opacity of the "unauthorized" migratory movements. Rather, the Mediterranean appears as a discontinuous assemblage of moments and spaces of (in)visibility, due to the limits of the surveillance tools but also to an unequal distribution of the value of the lives the humanitarian policies aim to take charge of: migrants are always subject to the irregular rhythms of mobility management, which sometimes becomes blind and lets people die, other times exercises a firm hold on their bodies (Tazzioli 2015). Despite the huge apparatus aimed at gathering and analyzing data, the practices of border crossing make it virtually impossible to keep a constant view and record of the changing migratory routes. Along with their ability to take advantage of the media and

to invert the sense of the camp from site of dehumanization to space of political claiming, the camouflage of the migrant routes determines, ultimately, an intermittent governamentality while representing another example of border struggle.

Conclusion

Just as the "civilization mission" is not an ex-post legitimation of colonial domination, but rather the discursive device that makes the conquest possible, so Libya's requests for compensation represent the discursive frame through which the country recasts its image as forefront of border surveillance. That means that the Mediterranean is a complex postcolonial space, the effects of which reverberate on territories far beyond the two shores. It has been observed, in this regard, that the Sahara is nowadays re-emerging from the state of latency to which it was reduced during colonization and that it is renewing its transit function, also with temporal effects of reactivation of seemingly lost pre-colonial memories and practices. The word "'abd", for example, once used in the Arab-Muslim world to indicate servants, slaves *and* the black race, is now in Libya «almost sole identifier of Africa migrants» (Bensaâd 2011, my translation). The Mediterranean crossing is «a dramatic metonymy» that stands for the complexities typical of modern migration; the same consistency of the sea, its «liquid and slippery substance, with no obvious limits and rigid boundaries», holds a «polysemic function of barrier and transit area and feeds attitudes of power supported by the moral panic that modern migration spreads on the North Coast» (Chambers 2012, my translation).

Over the course of a century, several human fluxes have crossed the stretch of sea between Italy and Libya, sometimes in the opposite direction from contemporary migration routes. In 1911, the troops, preceded by adventures and businessmen, crossed the sea in the conquest of Libya. A few days after the military occupation, the Libyan deportees were conducted from Tripoli to the Italian detention islands. Other "rebels" followed over the years of the military campaign in Cyrenaica. Their deportation left room for the Italian settlers summoned by Italo Balbo for the agricultural improvement of the "Fourth Shore". In the Fourties, at the outbreak of the war, the Italian settlers' children sailed the sea to reach the Fascist Youth summer camps in Italy: many of them would return only after six years or more, some on makeshift boats, as "irregular immigrants" in a country which they did not belong to anymore. When Libya obtained the independence, most Italians remained, except for the peasants of the "colonization villages" who decided to leave. For thousands of Italians who came back to the Motherland, newcomers arrived in Libya attracted by the oil industry: the old settlers called them "the imported". In October 1970, a new migration from the South had the taste of revenge: 20.000 "Italians of Libya" were forced to flee the country as refugees. After their departure, Italian technicians and entrepreneurs continued to migrate toward the former "sand box", now a

Mecca of black gold. Migrants who are crossing from Libya to Europe today are, therefore, only the last protagonists of a multifaceted history, every phase of which has had its own diasporas and displacements, engraving imaginary furrows on the sea and demonstrating that post-colonial time is a permanent transition, overlapping different temporalities, striated juridical spaces, multiple sovereignties and hierarchized citizenships, all of them built in a space of conflict.

Within the complex historical relationship between the North and the South shore of the Mediterranean, several practices of crossing, conflicts, insurgencies against forms of racialization and capitalist accumulation demonstrate that different subaltern subjectivities have always tried not to be reduced to "bare life", acting relentlessly on the colonial and neo-colonial sovereign power of neoliberal migration management. Within that history, the border represents a set of «practices and discourses that "spread" into the whole of society» (Paasi 1999, 670), because it affects even those who feel more as hunters than prey. That is exactly what Caplan (2013b) defines as postcolonial war: a war that seems far away – because it is seen and fought from above, an effect multiplied by the media coverage of the contrast against irregular migration or because it appears encapsulated in oases like the detention camps or centres – that affects every aspect of our life, just like the toxic effects on gender of the militarization of borders spreading all over society (Mohanty 2015). In this war, many subjectivities overlap and take on shifting roles: to speak of border struggle is not to indulge in a naïf image of the heroic figure of the migrant able to overcome former colonial relations. I would suggest, instead, to consider the Mediterranean in the frame of those baroque economies that mark the effects of neoliberalism from below, i.e. the proliferation of different styles of life able to reorganize the notions of freedom, interest and compliance, to elaborate a new kind of collective rationality and affectivity and to negotiate benefits in a context of dispossession through dynamics that blend forms of intensive exploitation and new social unrest (Gago 2014).

In this perspective I have tried to drawn the colonial roots of "camps" and other forms of confinement, but also of the complex processes which are changing European spaces and Mediterranean countries in the face of the ever-increasing pressure from the edge of the Empire. Without underestimating the imbalance of forces between the two shores of the Mediterranean, to speak of neocolonialism tout court, as well as of memory repression, means to erase the very idea of an ability to resist and re-articulate the terms of the relationship by the "overseas". The Mediterranean is no longer a space of conquest the relations between nations lying on the two shores, but rather a multi-crossed political space able to shape those relations through conflict, new forms of exploitation but also processes of resistance that continuously challenge the representation of the past thanks to those subjectivities that are reformulating new imaginary geographies.

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Tunisia's Endangered Exception: History at Large in the Southern Mediterranean

Norbert Bugeja

Abstract

This article explores some facets of the relation between Tunisia's post-independence political bequeathals and the legacy of a political memory that, today, is being sabotaged and rendered fugitive, not least through the acts of terror that have recently hit the country and crippled its tourist economy. Arguing that Tunisia's democratic trajectories are at stake today and risk being "orphaned" of their history of reformist precedents accrued over the past one hundred and fifty years, the author reflects on the current political state of play in Tunisia and makes a case for a restored dialectic of interchange with specific luminary tenets of Tunisia's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century enlightenment movement. The engendering of political subjectivities in post-revolutionary Tunisia and the piecing together of its multi-faceted national imaginary require today what Balibar would term a «differentiation» of the change towards a non-despotic democratisation brought about in 2011.

Keywords

Reformism - Political Memory - *Ijtihad* - Tunisian Exception - Destourian Thought

There can be no other place in the world
where you grasp better than you do here the curious parallelism
between the soldier's watch and the mystic's deliberate dreaming […]
why shouldn't it be the site of a harmonious accommodation
between the abiding presence of a spiritual outlook implanted in its countryside
and the modern world's passion for change?

(Duvignaud and Kahia 1965, 13, 21)

Mais, en nous, résonnent encore le chant âcre de la
déraison, l'ample folie des eaux vives et l'astre
aveugle de la foi.

(Majed 2013, ch.10)

On the 16th of January of 2016, the impoverished, rural west-central town of Kasserine in Tunisia was home to a very distressing event – the latest in a series of its kind that happened elsewhere in Tunisia after 26-year-old Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire on December 17 2011 at Sidi Bouzid, another of the country's towns with the highest rates of unemployment and lowest average income per capita. This time round, the incident in Kasserine, (itself a hotbed of anti-despotic sentiment during the Jasmine uprising that ousted Zine el Abidine bin Ali) involved Ridha Yahyaoui, a 28-year-old unemployed man who was turned down when he applied for a position with the Tunisian public service. In a moment of profound anguish, Yahyaoui scaled an electrical pole and electrocuted himself (*The Economist* 2016). Ridha Yahyaoui's self-immolation occurred in the wake of a number of other suicide attempts in Kasserine and elsewhere – acts of despair that stemmed from the dire fiscal situation Tunisia finds itself in today, after its already weather-beaten tourist economy received a strategic blow following last year's terror attacks on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis, at a tourist beach resort in Sousse, and in central Tunis itself, just off the capital's main avenue.

In a brief statement to Reuters news agency, Yahyaoui's father Hathmane pointed out that «Ridha killed himself because he lost hope […] I have lost my son, but I warn the authorities, my son will be the new Bouazizi and his death will create more protests for work and dignity» (Amara 2016). The emerging statistical data on the state of Tunisia's economy in 2016, does, at first glance, seem to lend plausibility to Yahyaoui's desire for a "new Bouazizi" and a new wave of «street-level politics» (Brennan 2015). The country's current unemployment rate stands at more than 15% – worse than the unemployment situation prior to the 2011 uprisings. Around a third of young people in Tunisia today are jobless. New graduates need an average of six years to obtain a steady job and, according to World Bank figures, half of all Tunisia's graduates are still unemployed at 35 years of age (*The Economist* 2016). On-the-ground sources now suggest that over 400.000 Tunisians have lost their jobs in the tourism sector as a direct result of cancelled holiday bookings in the wake of the Bardo and then the Sousse shootings – and counting. Directly or indirectly, tourism in Tunisia accounts for about 15% of GDP and 14% of the total workforce (*The Economist* 2016).

But, much as Yahyaoui's and others' gestures of despair are symptomatic of this bleak economic turn, the public response to them was a far cry from the nationwide sense of empowerment triggered by Bouazizi's self-immolation five years ago. Sentiments in Tunisia today are divided even with regard to Bouazizi's own act and the ensuing convulsions – political, economic, social and constitutional – it unleashed. Ambivalent responses to the current situation are strong – as is the implicit interrogation of various facets of the discursive inheritances and political legacies that have characterized the post-independent nation, some of which have returned to possess –

and often to haunt – the political sphere that emerged after ben Ali's fall and the subsequent collapse of the country's first freely-elected government, led by the Islamist *Ennahda Movement* party, in January 2014. In this article, I would like to explore the question of political memory and its dialectic of interaction with Tunisia's present, fledgling democratic formation. This relation is underpinned by a constitutionalist ethos that today looks increasingly nomadised, and risks being "orphaned" of an eminent history of reformist precedents accrued over the past one hundred and fifty years. The article will, therefore, seek to revisit the specific state of play outlined some years ago by Larbi Sadiki, namely, that in Tunisia «The mirror images between past and present struggles are dazzling. The liberation ancestry's moral flame, emancipatory passion, and resistance against colonialism are deeply etched in Maghrebi common memory» (Sadiki 2008, 110).

Vertical interchange and a memorial precedent

Various strands of critical, historiographical and cultural-anthropological thought on the modern and contemporary Mediterranean have repeatedly flagged transactional relations of trade, barter, bilateral diplomacy and other forms of reciprocity as salient paradigms that have characterized relations and defined and redefined historic cross-border and cross-regional rapports along the littoral[1]. But to dare transfer the question of a tried-and-tested "horizontal" reading of the geopolitics of reciprocity in the Mediterranean region onto a postcolonial discursive plane confronts us with a specific problematic. The region's current desolation in relation to its antecedent and familiar ideological discourses increasingly requires specific modes of harnessing the region's dynamics of interchange as a matter of tapping the trans-temporal intersections between past and present practices through which the political has been and is being worlded[2]. To speak of a postcolonial Mediterranean today entails, amongst other labors, the delicate task of diversifying or at least expanding the range of significance of this historic paradigm – of interchange as *also* a cross-temporal political relation – to accommodate a patently vertical reading of it: a dialectical trade-off between the memory of past (pre- and post-independent) political legacies, and the flux of a present that is as yet to pronounce and commit itself firmly in their regard, one that is now patently seeking to negotiate its path through the pitfalls and the disenchantments occasioned by the political past's on-going *revenants.*

[1] The activity of exchange, trade and reciprocal commercial and other relations is variously exemplified and engaged with, for instance, in Fernand Braudel's epic work on the region's geo-human strata and, later, discussed by Nicholas Purcell and Peregrine Horden's in their *The Corrupting Sea* as well as David Abulafia's more recent *The Great Sea*.

[2] An intriguing study in this regard is Wendy Brown's *Politics out of History*, where she lays out in detail the notion of a "postprogressive" political time (Brown 2001).

As Iain Chambers has argued in *Mediterranean Crossings*, his work on the postcolonial Mediterranean, «the horizontal plane of representation remains perpetually vulnerable to a vertical axis where we are pulled into the sedimented depths of time where bodies bleed, birth and death occur, lives are lived» (Chambers 2008, 11). The vista on the present-day political state of play in Tunisia offered here arises precisely from the need to approach the question of the country's post-colonial Mediterraneity as a multi-lateral and cross-temporal political dialectic that subscribes to what Étienne Balibar has discussed as the «heteronomy of heteronomy» of political modernity (Balibar 2002, 1). In present-day Tunisia, this double-heteronomic relation takes the shape of a discursive agonism between the country's post-colonial and post-independent trajectory on the one hand, and the ongoing unstable post-regime moment on the other, spawning in the process a dialectics wherein, to quote Balibar's own explication «the conditions to which a politics relates are never a last instance: on the contrary, what makes them determinant is the way they bear subjects or are borne by them» (Balibar 2002, 1).

How does one begin to grasp the dynamics of such a dialectic of interchange in terms of its ongoing engendering of political subjectivities in the current Tunisian transition, wherein the anteriority of political memory itself informs a sustained effort to grasp the modes of political possibility it holds forth, even as it stands up to their very scrutiny? This question takes us directly to the popular designation of post-2011 Tunisia as *l'exception Tunisienne*, a notion largely taken to signify Tunisia's relative successes in beginning to re-construct a constitutional and representative-democratic polity in the wake of bin Ali's ousting. One consideration that, in my view, lies at the very kernel of the so-designated "Tunisian exception" is the basis for social organization which the post-ben Ali polity began to re-discover, a thought-framework that can be traced back to Tunisia's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reformist movement. This "enlightenment" movement, or *nahda,* was spearheaded by social activists, politicians, scholars, public intellectuals and trade unionists such as Farhat Hachet – founder of the historic *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (1946), one of Tunisia's main syndicates –, Abdelaziz Thaalbi, Tahar ben Achour, who pitched the importance of the reading of Islamic law, doctrine and sacred texts as a labor of the intellect, and Tahar Haddad, whose work made foundational arguments towards the social emancipation of women in Tunisia and the broader Muslim community. The movement advocated, amongst other aspects, a raft of necessary social freedoms and civic rights, «a more equitable relationship between genders», a strong welfare society and the belief that a strong economy will need to be predicated on an equally strong social-emancipatory ethos (Perkins 2014, 140).

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It was this reformist and emancipatory ethos that Tunisia's first President Habib Bourguiba deployed and drew upon as a roadmap, both for his seminal post-independence-policy decisions as President as well as his introduction of a whole gamut of social reforms, the establishing of a functionable welfare society, a Personal Status Code without precedent in the Muslim world that established social and gender emancipation on numerous counts including divorce legislation, a renewal of relations between the country's main trade unions and government, as well as the establishing of the Neo-Constitutional Party, or Neo-Destour, which in many ways, and despite the often devious means by which Bourguiba maneuvered it, furnished the required strength to oversee Tunisia's tough postcolonial transition[3]. It is, in part, owing to his success in translating the ethos of the *fin de siècle* Tunisian reformist movement into a comprehensible public form of knowledge that many Tunisians today, when evaluating the hindsight of the intervening ben Ali years (1987-2011) are not prepared to judge Bourguiba's tenure as severely as it might deserve. Bourguiba's own insidious and often ruthless brand of despotism is often subsumed into the historic (and sometimes mythic) retrospect that would have his political trajectory depicted in some quarters as the most exemplary period for the country since its independence. It is certainly not an accident of destiny that the modernizing, reformist and secularist frame of mind spawned under his leadership, often referred to as *bourguibisme*, is perceived as a legacy the rightful ownership of which is a major bone of contention amongst the main parties currently represented in Tunisia's Assembly of the Representatives of the People.

Perhaps one of the most recent signs that an emancipatory-reformist agenda is ongoing at grassroots level in Tunisia today was the immediate reaction to the latest terror attack to befall it: Daesh's on 7 March 2016 assault and armed clashes at Bengardane, a town on Tunisia's Libyan border. The attack, which left 55 people dead, was possibly even more insidious than both Bardo and Sousse because Daesh here were not only seeking to strike fear, but to actually carve out an autonomous militarized enclave within Tunisia itself, one that would give it a base from which to carry out operations including weapons-smuggling into Tunisia (*Al Jazeera* 2016). Among the dead at Bengardane, besides the Daesh militants and the Tunisian security and military reinforcement officials, there were also seven private citizens. What happened at Bengardane (even though various major media outfits failed to report it) is that several of the town's inhabitants went out, arm in arm with the security forces, to ward off the Daesh attack, directly risking their lives, and some of them died in the crossfire.

[3] For more historiographic detail on Bourguiba's reforms, see Perkins, and in particular the section sub-titled 'The Transformation of the Social Environment', 140-6.

That people from one of the lowest-income-earning and highest-unemployment areas of the country have actively chosen not to destabilize the country's hard-earned democratic and constitutional mechanisms, and to take "street-level" ownership of the security crisis in the face of an otherwise inadequate security apparatus, without actually destabilising the term of government and thereby giving the Islamist *Ennahda* Movement a fighting chance to govern, is very significant. Even as many people are aware that Daesh has been getting stronger in Tunisia by feeding on the country's massive unemployed cohort, the current popular sentiment gives credence to a widespread resolve through which «Democracy has […] become consolidated – routinised behaviourally, attitudinally, and constitutionally» (Storm 2013, 272). The patent unwillingness to destabilize the country's currently delicate democratic *pluralisme* testifies to an itinerary that, as Storm suggests, «takes time» (Storm 2013, 272), and is being negotiated in Tunisia in a cumulative manner, as an onerous calibration of consensus that accrues slowly and through sheer experience, rather than some foreign "democratic" or constitutional import that can be surgically implanted. The "routinization" and firmness of a liberatory desire is not only underpinned by the legacy of Tunisia's *fin de siècle* reformism, but also, and despite its flawed implementation, bridged into a post-colonial modernity through Bourguiba's own reformist effort. In this sense, the events at Bengardane reaffirmed the horizon of a sustained public agenda in Tunisia today – one that seems intent, however, on subtracting itself from the despotic methodology Bourguiba deployed to implement his reformist policies. Both Storm and Alcinda Honwana are, I believe, correct in primarily diagnosing not a democratic deficit in present-day Tunisia at grassroots level, but the increasingly evident inability of its current political class to deliver on specific practices and expectations of post-Jasmine democratization (Storm 2013, 270-2; Honwana 2013, 193).

While a "routinization" of democracy arising from the social base seems to represent a crucial step for Tunisia today, this also comes with a widespread, quasi-implicit sense that «[i]t is no longer the time of "power to the people" and the politics of the street or the square» (Honwana 2013, 195). So much, it would seem, for the prospect of another Bouazizi, at least not in the shorter term. Besides the eerie silence that now reigns in many of the country's hotels and tourist resorts, from Hammamet to Sousse to Tabarka near the Algerian border, the capital itself is quieter than it was a little over a year ago, before the Bardo attack. Along Tunis' central thoroughfare, the *Avenue Bourguiba*, in the old kasbah, across Lafayette, at the bohemian hangout of *Cafè l'Univers*, the younger cohorts talk about the situation over a *kahua* or *te bil-lous*. Rifts deepen and tempers sometimes flare. There is an impatience with the current disagreements crippling the *Majlis* (the Assembly) and its posse of compromised politicians who have «quickly move[d] in to occupy the institutional vacuum» that

followed from ben Ali's exit (Honwana 2013, 195). And this impatience is coupled with what seems to me a political inclination to disparticipate in the face of a representative-democratic model that, having raised high expectations following the plurality mandate given to Beji Essebsi's "big-tent" coalition *Nidaa Tounes* in October 2014, is now feeling increasingly unable to address the welfare, employment and social security concerns that are escalating as the country's coffers dry up.

But more importantly, the impatience and the disparticipatory takes are symptoms of an ongoing conversation, of a persistent, even daily exchange of sentiments many in Tunisia are conducting today with a political memory that has repeatedly, over more than a century, held forth what Balibar would term «the [revolutionary] proposition of equal liberty», and its consequences, ones that present a crucial crossroads for the country today. On the one hand lies the recognition that «it is impossible to conceive and institute equality […] based on despotism (even "enlightened" despotism) or on a monopoly of power» (Balibar 2002, 3). This itself is a crucial criterion upon which Tunisia's *shabab* have chosen both to oust ben Ali and to avoid embracing Bourguiba's mixed legacy (reform-by-despotism) wholesale. On the other hand stands the condition described by Balibar as the «reciprocity clause» of any egalitarian horizon, namely, that «No one may be liberated or elevated to a position of equality – let us say, may be emancipated – by an external, unilateral decision, or by a higher grace. Only reciprocally, by mutual recognition, can this be achieved» (Balibar 2002, 3-4).

While the dialectic of the two propositions might, under more serene circumstances, have been perceived as an adequate model to chart a way forward for the country's governance, it is the latter, the problematic of *reciprocity* affecting the Tunisian representational system, that today holds forth the demand not to emancipate the state from single-person (Bourguiba) or single-party (ben Ali) despotism (Sadiki 2010, 121), but to re-organize and free both its current representational praxis *and* its structures of governance along the lines of the Balibarian relation of reciprocity within the country's highest institutions[4]. This labor will require both the governing and opposition groups to grasp at resources of intra-party and intra-individual principle, belief and resolve that may lie beyond literal or *prima facie* adherence to Tunisia's constitution, its wording, enshrinements and stipulations. Tunisia today is, as Majed would argue, a laboratory of democratic practice in and for Arab societies. In his moment, that of leading the country out of its colonial period, Bourguiba could afford

[4] In an engagement with Hamid Dabashi's work in the wake of the 2011 uprisings, Caroline Rooney notes that the former «aptly proposes that the Arab Spring serves to reconvene the understanding of democracy» (Rooney 2015, 52). In the case of Tunisia, the democratic change brought about by ben Ali's ousting, and that resulted in the first freely-elected government (and its failures), is now at another crucial juncture – it needs to be opened up and freed of its inheritor parties' individual agendas, precisely in terms of inevitable "differentiation of change" broached by Balibar – a question I engage with here as a central aspect of the essay's argument.

to pitch himself, even without actually stating it, in the traditional role of a *wali al-amar* – a paternal figure and leader who assumed responsibility for and towards a community in post-colonial transition. He did not even need to derive this positioning from its conventional religious sources of legitimacy: on the contrary, Bourguiba's legitimation of his paternalistic attitude derived precisely from his post-colonial and reformist credentials. Ben Ali himself, though certainly not to *bourguibiste* proportions, occupied this role in the eyes of many, not least due to the economic accomplishments in his first years of presidency. But what Tunisia achieved in 2011 was precisely a deconstruction (and a nation-wide critical revisitation) of the *wali* role – henceforth, the country's democratic structures will need to forge ahead on the long-term premise of a democracy without its *wali*.

Refusing the Call

I raise the basic question (following Balibar, Storm and Honwana) of Tunisia's ongoing need to review its approach to its structures of democratic governance, both at government, ministerial, civil service and crucially at Assembly level, because it is now very clear that what has been taking place between the different factions in the *Majlis* over the past months no longer truthfully reflects or respects the manner, or indeed the direction, that the various sectors of the electorate wished to be represented after the October 2014 elections that gave *Nidaa Tounes* [Call of Tunisia] its parliamentary plurality. *Nidaa Tounes* was offered a relatively enthusiastic electoral response with a mandate to divert the perceived danger of having *Ennahda* and its "troika" government agree upon and articulate an Islamist or Islamist-leaning constitution, opening up the possibility that the country's hard-earned rights and freedoms would be tampered with[5].

But at present, the strength (both parliamentary and popular) of *Nidaa Tounes* is flaking away fast. Within Beji Essebsi's government, which continues to sustain an avowedly "secularist" agenda for the State, there is also an ongoing and now increasing willingness to collaborate with *Ennahda.* Currently, *Ennahda* is being represented in cabinet by a Minister with a powerful portfolio. Essebsi's compromise with *Ennahda* has and will continue to create new tensions. Almost 40 members of the left-wing bloc of *Nidaa Tounes*'s tenuous majority recently left its parliamentary bloc because they refuse to make any compromise with *Ennahda* – a compromise, however, which the more right-leaning factions within *Nidaa*'s broader movement are more prepared to make. The memory of former dissident, liberal and long-term human

[5] See Storm 2013, 279. For a detailed and incisive commentary on the Hamed Jbaali and Belaïd affairs and the fear of regression into religious authoritarianism, as well as the state of power distributions in Tunisia after bin Ali, see Storm 2013, 277-85.

rights activist Moncef Marzouki's coalition of convenience with *Ennahda* in 2011 is still smarting. The parliamentary members that left *Nidaa*'s governing bloc represent a third of its parliamentarians. The schismatic group is loyal to Mohsen Marzouk, *Nidaa's* secretary-general, who believes the President's son Hafedh Essebsi is moving to create a governing dynasty (*The Economist* 2015). As Maha Yahya has observed, in *Nidaa Tounes* today there is «no unifying ideology, no political programme, no socioeconomic vision» (*The Economist* 2015). Marzouk's bloc wants *Nidaa* to firmly re-assert its secularist credentials. If these tensions are not resolved soon or deteriorate further and the split becomes unbridgeable, this may well make *Ennahda* the largest party within the *Majlis,* thereby affording it a newly-found vigor and authority (*The Economist* 2015). Analysts such as Steven Cook have argued that if Essebsi's government «survives [till the 2019 general elections], as expected, that may be its biggest accomplishment» (Cook 2015, np).

Today, in fact, the *Ennahda* party itself appears to be all the wiser, having learnt various lessons at its own expense over the past four years. The present fractures in *Nidaa* come slightly too early for Tunisia's Islamist political outfit. *Ennahda* seems intent on allowing the governing party to run its full term of government till 2019, then make a bid for government itself. It is right now collaborating with *Nidaa*, supporting many of its proposals tabled to the Assembly, backing a raft of policies and the promulgation of laws that do not necessarily sit well with some of its own vaunted credos. But *Ennahda* is as yet desisting from presenting itself as a major actor in the political arena, and its efforts are currently more focused, in fact, on re-building its public image as a more democratic-centrist outfit. Its members are coaching themselves, getting an insider experience of government, learning the ropes, getting to know the emerging mechanisms of democratic governance and how they function and their effects and impacts on public opinion. In other words, *Ennahda* is preparing to be the real governing party in Tunisia in a few years' time. It is on the inside of the administrative machinery, and learning fast. Of course, few in Tunisia have any illusions as to what *Ennahda*'s business is – that of promulgating a politicized Islam. But with Beji Essebsi currently seen as doing badly, and his erstwhile majority that seems increasingly weak, the Islamist bloc is slowly but steadily regaining a sense of presence both within the Assembly and across numerous governorates, as well as consolidating its traditional electoral strongholds[6].

In other words, *Ennahda* is striving to show its potential constituencies that its leaders and functionaries have learnt from what happened two years ago when they couldn't govern after a political deadlock — one that resulted, among other issues, from the

[6] I wish to thank poet Moëz Majed for the invaluable perspectives presented in this paragraph, and which he kindly shared with me.

assassination of left-wing activists and politicians such as socialist activist Mohamed Brahmi, and Chokri Belaïd. The convoluted case of the investigation itself into the latter's killing is indeed a perfect metaphor for the general feeling that grips Tunisia today: in Moëz Majed's words, «People are waiting but they don't know what, exactly, they are waiting for». To sum up, therefore: both Tunisia's representative-parliamentary setup as well as its prospects of new and unshackled party formations are currently beholden to a situation wherein «The young activists who participated in and led the revolution suddenly find themselves battling to define a new political role and to carve new spaces of intervention». They refrain from joining formal political parties and have to work around old political models that they despise, using street politics and civil society organizations as their institutional settings. As Aditya Nigam points out, after the protests and revolutions, Tunisian society is «living in an interregnum when the old forms of politics have become moribund and obsolete but new ones have not yet emerged […] Something, clearly, is waiting to be articulated in this relentless refusal of the political» (Honwana 2013, 195).

The question of "change within change"

This "psychopolitical" gulf, to use Isaac Prilleltensky's term, that has opened up in the wake of 2011, with the inherent difficulties it presents in a community's calibration of a basic consensus, across fractures and old wounds that currently interpellate the collaborative will of various ideological factions within Tunisia's *Majlis*, is currently afflicting not only Tunisia but indeed, and in variegated and context-specific ways, the entire post-2011 southern Mediterranean littoral, from Syria to Egypt to Libya to the Maghribi states. In a sense, the southern Mediterranean today represents a burgeoning, Balibarian intimation of a "history at large" – not "at large" in a generic sense, but in the literal meaning of historic opportunities initiated by the Jasmine uprisings, and offered up across the littoral in 2011, that currently remain fugitive, just as their national imaginaries have been rendered nomadic. «Politics», Balibar has written, «is not the mere changing of conditions, as though it were possible to isolate them and abstract from them so as to obtain purchase on them, but it is change within change, or the *differentiation of change*, which means that the meaning of history is established only in the present» (Balibar 2002, 12).

For Balibar, an effective meaning to a post-revolutionary politics obtains from differentiated social relations – from an indispensable strengthening, that is, of the social contract itself – as a direct consequence of radical change within those underlying conditions that would have *a priori* inhibited or compromised the possibility of social liberation. This question is pertinent today across the North African littoral, and especially so in Tunisia, where the current, seemingly «endless refusal of the

political» diagnosed by Nigam bears directly onto the question of establishing a more honed and specified meaningfulness to the recent rejection of despotic rule. Political disparticipation today, and especially so by the same age cohort that spearheaded 2011, signals an ongoing awaital for the right conditions under which a "differentiation" of the change brought about by the Jasmine uprising would entail rethinking and reconceiving the very nexus that binds the electorate to its representative institutions, and vice-versa. While Tunisia's citizens of diverse persuasions today retain the emancipatory ethos, they are sending signs of impatience with its custodians themselves – a ruling cohort increasingly perceived to be window-dressing and lip-servicing the country's newly-minted constitution.

As Storm, as well as Honwana, have indicated in their respective analyses of the country's recent dynamics of party-formation and political participation, no political party has yet truly emerged that is formed by politicians who have not previously been part of other political parties, or coalitions, or have not served under Bourguiba or ben Ali, or have in any way set up a party that is, to use Nouri Gana's words, «policy-seeking» rather than «office-seeking» (Gana 2013, 26; Honwana 2013, 158, 192-202; Storm 2013, 270-78). Most political parties, Storm argues, are as yet without a clear governing or at least policy program and have tenuous links with civil society and their constituencies at best, and their concern is still largely with the parliamentary distribution of power, «who governs and who will govern» (Storm 2013, 271) and who retains the prerogative of popular legitimacy.

These and other divisions in Tunisia today are serving to enfeeble Balibar's principle of reciprocity both horizontally, across the country's deepening social trenches and class-economic disparities, as well as vertically, weakening the present lawmakers' mandate to uphold the dialectical relation with a reformist past that their constituents entrusted them with. Moreover, in lodging themselves deep within a convalescing national imaginary, the attacks at the Bardo and at Sousse have sought to exploit the delicate nature of citizen subjectivity in Tunisia – one that currently, to use Jacques Rancière's notion of a "dissensual" politics, evinces «a being that is at once the agent of [political] action and the matter upon which that action is exercised» (Rancière 2010, 29). «If there is anything "proper" to politics», Rancière observes, «it consists entirely in this relationship, which is not a relationship between subjects, but between two contradictory terms that define a subject. Politics disappears the moment this knot between a subject and a relation is undone» (Rancière 2010, 28-9). Understood in Rancière's terms, *dissensual politics* spawns a subject characterized through the intersection of both actorship and receptivity, political agency and/as assimilation. It is this elemental, dissensual relation that Tunisia's detractors are trying to dismantle, but by this very same virtue, one can begin to perceive the merits that make this political relation so amenable to assault.

Of reciprocity and dissensus

But what, one would be justified in asking, could a dissensual relation conceivably look like in a country like Tunisia today, one in which the disillusionment with the promise of a revived secular nationalism is fast sinking in, and the recourse to a certain «theologico-political» consciousness – to appropriate Denis Guénoun's term to our context – is regaining a slow but steady presence (Guénoun 2013, 29)? How can political subjectivity in Tunisia move to a rethinking of the relation between dissensus and reciprocity, such that new political forces can organize and mobilize, including party-formation at and from grassroots, *shabab* and civil-society levels? Sadiki himself, writing just two years before the Jasmine uprising, shed an important light on this question when he opined that «[t]he fault-line in Tunisia [today] happens at the expense of potentially viable political identities […] which cannot be mediated only through democratic rule» (Sadiki 2008, 123). This trajectory might very well suggest that a re-assertion of the (Rancièrean) irreducibility of contradictory terms (the auto-definition of his political subject), one that can therefore perform both within and counter-to the democratic setup, might well be a way towards effecting the (Balibarian) differentiation within change that a "routinised" democratic consensus now requires as a matter of delivering on the aspirations of the "Tunisian exception".

It is very significant, in this regard, that in his maiden address as new party leader of *Nidaa Tounes*, Beji Caïd Essebsi offered up, as Honwana notes, «a speech astutely punctuated by *suras* [verses] from the Quran, insisting that "there was no clergy in Islam" and that "the Muslim Tunisian people do not need a government that behaves as a religious guardian or delivers sermons"» (Honwana 2013, 157). The very subtext of Essebsi's speech back then suggested, as a matter of achieving a hitherto elusive consensus, a preparedness to fold into the ethos adopted by Bourguiba when the latter formulated the Personal Status Code, described by historian Kenneth Perkins as «the most innovative legal reform in the Muslim world since the abolition of the sharia in Turkey in the 1920s» (Perkins 2014, 140). As Perkins notes, Bourguiba «took pains […] to portray himself not as sweeping aside Islam, as had [Turkey's] Atatürk, but rather as reinterpreting it through [a practice known in Tunisia as] *ijtihad*, or independent reasoning. […]» (Perkins 2014, 140). Essebsi, like Bourguiba before him, was in fact trying to harness one of the most important reformist moves advanced by Tahar ben Achour, the activist and academic who spoke of an Arabo-Muslim identity for Tunisia, one that approaches and reads the sacred texts through the practice of *ijtihad or* «independent reasoning» (Perkins 2014, 140) itself: what he envisioned as an *intentionaliste,* or a more responsibly subjective and self-critically charged*,* as opposed to a conventionally *rigoriste* reading of Islamic doctrine and the Qur'an (Majed 2015). Ben Achour's championing of an autonomous interpretation of the Qur'an as a matter of subjective individual responsibility was nothing short of a revolutionary step which

Bourguiba himself embraced as a basic blueprint for the post-independence reforms he implemented, albeit to his own political ends.

But post-revolutionary Tunisia would require a very different approach that must consist of a marked "differentiation", a pronounced parting with the *bourguibiste* brand of reformism. In the first place, an adequate re-implementation of *ijtihad* and its orbiting legacies, indeed the legitimacy itself required to bring about such a scenario, now belongs not to the veteran political bourgeoisie, some of them survivors from Bourguiba's own ranks. The generational cohort that spearheaded the Jasmine uprisings across Tunisia – and the southern Mediterranean – following Bouazizi's founding act will need to revert to a form of destourian thought, a *pensée destourienne* as opposed to a *politique destourienne*, that can evacuate itself from and operate outside the strategic circuit of Bourguiba's, and to an extent ben Ali's, utilitarian and populist appropriations of the paradigm. Many Tunisians continue to be receptive today to *ijtihad* and its intentionalist mobilization of ethico-political intellect as a means of retaining an Arabo-Muslim identification: one that would allow for the cherished ethos of reading the political world, social morality, normative issues and questions of governance through both subjectively and collectively interpretive and critical approaches towards democratizing social thought and Islamic morality itself.

A significant key to restoring moral authority to power in Tunisia today, therefore, might be nestling within the dialectical nature of *ijtihad* itself – and with the political memory it carries as an important marker of Arabo-Muslim identification. Its reformist approach entails the grafting of individual liberty and equity onto the religious, onto its ethical demands and its moral standing. But on the other hand, *ijtihad* recognizes the importance of religious demands, not as fearsome or overbearing dogmas but as responsible means of taking individual liberty to task. This "check-and-balance" dynamic can restore a much-needed political ethic and can possibly entice sectors of an ever-growing disparticipant electoral tier into action. Indeed, a Tunisian definition of "liberal democracy" in future may very well end up rallying and consolidating around this dialectic. Perceived as an integral part of a broader politics of post-destourian thought, *ijtihad* can hold forth a more realistic roadmap to a post-2011 social thought in Tunisia than any generic notion of "secularism" itself – which is barely spoken of in the country even as it features constantly among the quick-fix terminology employed in international coverage of Tunisia.

As political factions in Tunisia today contend over who appears to own the *bourguibiste* legacy best, one will need to consider the issue of party-formation itself as a question not of flaunting destourian politics as some new middle-class superstructure, but of starting to suggest a destourian thought as a survey map for political organizing at base rather than superstructural levels. Tunisia today continues

to have a vocal cohort of civil society organizations and social movements of varying capabilities that, in Honwana's words, now «seem to be fighting to return power to the political arena, as young protesters question established credos and organise themselves differently, acting with transparency on consensus-based decision making and establishing horizontal and more equitable relationships within their movements» (Honwana 2013, 197). New political nuclei need to be encouraged to grow from among «the young Tunisians who were instrumental in […] overthrowing ben Ali [as well as] the people of the interior and the most disadvantaged regions of the country», creating at the very least, as Honwana notes, a believable opposition that strives to resolve the economic disparities that continue to cripple today those «marginalised by the former regime» (Honwana 2013, 159).

What I have been calling "destourian thought" in reformist-philosophical terms will need to be translated into a post-destourian effort that will see civil society groups institute new fora at community-organization level, with a view to reopening dialogue both with the country's institutions of governance and with the country's legacy of social and economic reformism. This will entail curbing the vitiated power-mongering initiated under Bourguiba and institutionalized by ben Ali. These new social forces are entirely possible: only last October [2015], the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, a united front of four civil society initiatives and groups including two syndicates, the UGTT and its rival UTICA, were awarded the Nobel Price for Peace (Borger 2015).

On the streets of Bejà, at Nebel, in La Marsa, in the old bookshops of Lafayette, at la Goulette, people say it's a tough shot, but possible. The sobs I heard echoing across the Bardo Museum's *Salle de Carthage* a year ago were not some prophecy of desolation, but the cry of a country intent on getting back on its feet in the dignified halls of a post-revolutionary national consciousness. As my friend Moëz Majed – perhaps Tunisia's finest living poet – would put it, this country, like many other violated human conglomerations across the Mediterranean, no tyranny has ever lasted long enough to engulf it. It is the master that will eventually sink or disintegrate within its waters, become like it, marry its children. Like the waves chopping beneath Charles the Fifth's now-silent fortress at La Goulette, the tyrant will come, and the tyrant will go. The Tunisian name for La Goulette, in an almost identical rendition to my native (and pluri-colonised) Maltese, is *Halq el-Wad* (The Valley's Mouth). It is not only the aggressor's landing spot. It is also the historic chasm that engulfs him[7].

[7] It bears noting that post-2011 scholarship in and about Tunisia is vast and impossible to do justice to in this space. Critical analyses include Hatem M'rad's *Le Déficit Democratique sous Bourguiba et Ben Ali*, Mustafa Kraiem's *la Revolution Kidnappée*, Salah Kasmi's *Tunisie. L'Islam locale face à l'Islam importé,* Samir Amghar's *Le Salafisme d'Aujourd'hui, t*he interviews with Abdelmajid Charfi in *Révolution, Modernité, Islam,* Rejeb Haji's *De la Révolution,* and Pierre Puchot's *La Révolution Confisquée.*

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PARTE II: VISIONI, NARRAZIONI, SCONFINAMENTI/

PART II: VISIONS, NARRATIVES, TRESPASSINGS

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"Dividuous waves of Greece:" Hellenism between Empire and Revolution

Simos Zeniou

Abstract

This article proposes a reading of P. B. Shelley's lyrical drama *Hellas* as a critical encounter with early nineteenth century philhellenic discourse. This reading challenges, therefore, the still prevalent understanding of Shelley as an archetypal idealizing philhellenist. By reading *Hellas* in the context of Shelley's manifold engagements with classical and modern Greece and by examining the subversive deployment of the "westering" theme in the lyrical parts of the work, I argue: 1) that Shelley draws attention to the appropriation of Hellenism by hegemonic political and cultural discourses of the period and to its entanglement with imperial politics; 2) that the chorus's gradual recognition of the historical situatedness of its discourse simultaneously resists its wholesale subsumption under Eurocentric universalism and retains a utopian, future-oriented Hellenism as a guide for radical politics.

Keywords

P.B. Shelley - Romantic Hellenism - Greek War of Independence - Westering - Universalism

I

When Percy Bysshe Shelley chooses Aeschylus's *Persae* as the model and intertextual referent for his lyrical drama *Hellas* (1821), he is opting for a text that has exerted considerable influence on the formation of a distinct European identity over and against the Asiatic other[1]. Critics and scholars have long acknowledged Aeschylus's representation of the consequences of hubris at Xerxes's court, accompanied by the cultural and literary topoi of despotism, luxury, and excess, as one of the earliest instances of the polarization between Greek and barbarian and as foundational for the development of European orientalism (Said 1978, 55-57; Hall 1991, 56-100). Furthermore, Shelley selects a text that was particularly important for the emergence of modern Greek national consciousness. Gonda Van Steen has traced its circulation in

[1] I am grateful to Professors James Engell, John Hamilton, Panagiotis Roilos, and Andrew Warren for detailed feedback and valuable comments on early and late forms of this article. Discussions with Valentinos Kontoyiannis, Adam Stern, and Juan Torbidoni were immensely helpful for the shaping of my

Greek radical circles during the early 19th century – including its recital and performance in secret meetings – and has made a compelling argument for its role as a «charter myth» in the shaping of modern Greek national ideology (Van Steen 2010, 67-108).

This marked discursive background and context, combined with the philhellenic rhetoric that characterizes *Hellas*[2], has often been used for classifying Shelley among romantic radical-liberals whose politics were defined and structured by an essentializing distinction from the oriental other. Shelley's idealized conception of classical Greece is thus read as part and parcel of broader networks of reception and appropriation of Hellenism by the dominant political, cultural and aesthetic discourses in an era of emerging imperialism[3]. By assumedly equating Greek liberty and its modern revival with European political modernity, Shelley's radicalism is seen ultimately in theoretical accord with a British foreign policy that, following George Canning's appointment as Foreign Secretary in 1822, favored the creation of an independent Greek state under British influence in order to promote its interests in the eastern Mediterranean and to thwart Russian advances in the region[4].

In this article, I question this enlisting of Shelley, through the mediation of his Hellenism, under the banner of liberal imperialism. I demonstrate instead, by focusing on *Hellas*, that Shelley puts forward a critical understanding of philhellenism – understood here both as a late 18th-early19th century scholarly, aesthetic, and political movement that affirms the centrality of classical Greece for European modernity *and* as the support for the Greek War of independence (1821-1829)[5] – that recognizes its potential discursive implication in imperial politics. The dynamic relationship between Hellenism – in its cultural, political, aesthetic, educational but also scholarly dimensions – and imperial and colonizing policies, has been the focus of significant scholarly attention in the past decades[6]. My attempt here follows Phiroze Vasunia's suggestion that Hellenism was also the ground for the articulation of an anti-imperial politics of modernity during the 19th century (Vasunia 2010, 289). More specifically, by reading Shelley against the background of British philhellenism in the

argument.

[2] *Hellas*, according to Richard Holmes's seminal biography of Shelley, «contains the classic English statement of Philhellenism» (Holmes 2003, 678). Maria Schoina notes that Shelley's early critical reception in Greece emphasized his philhellenism and paid particular attention to *Hellas* (Schoina 2008, 258-67).

[3] For such readings of Shelley, and British romantic orientalism in general, see Leask 1992, Makdisi 1998, and Makdisi 2009. Recent works, such as Warren 2014, offer more nuanced readings that emphasize Shelley's critique of Eurocentric orientalism.

[4] Jerome McGann argues that the «typical philhellenist illusions» that mark the "Prologue" to *Hellas* «were open to political exploitation by Europe's imperialist powers» (McGann 1983, 125). See Cunningham 1993, 188-275, for a detailed account of the vacillations of British foreign policy during the period.

[5] See Espagne and Pécout 2005, 5.

[6] For discussions focusing on the British context, see Stray 1998, Bradley 2010, and Hagerman 2013.

early 19th century – a period in which the eastern Mediterranean was a location for both radical revolutionary movements and western imperial expansionism – and by considering the appropriation of the "westering trope" in the lyrical parts of the poem, I argue that *Hellas* becomes a central site where Hellenism's constitutive role in political modernity is tested and contested. Without sidestepping the undeniable ambivalence that marks Shelley's Hellenism, I highlight its critical outlook towards European imperial history and its resistance to hegemonic uses of the ancient and classical past.

II

From the 17th century onwards, travel literature on Greece played a crucial role in the shaping of philhellenic ideology and sentiment as a criterion that could be applied in order to estimate the participation of modern Greeks in political and social modernity. Often taking the form of reflections and observations on the "manners" of modern Greeks, this corpus of texts is a veritable archive of testimonies that blend classical education and ethnographic fascination in their effort to detect remnants of the glorious past in modern customs, behavior, and modes of social organization. The diagnosis is – more often than not – bleak: the moral character of the Greeks was almost invariably «considered despicable and they were represented as vicious, completely devoid of any decency or virtue, and absolutely ignorant and superstitious […] servile and obsequious, vain, perfidious and cunning, invidious and intriguing, insincere, deceitful and avaricious» (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 91-2)[7].

This trope of moral health or degradation acquires however a particular political inflection in the period following the French Revolution. The purported survival of the ancient Greek character in their modern descendants solidifies the latter's claim that they form a distinct nation that can and must organize itself, with international support, into an independent, Western-type political society. The ideological potential of Hellenism was evident, for instance, in the 1797 annexation of the Ionian Islands to the First French Republic as part of Napoleonic expansionism. This annexation was accompanied by the deployment of a classicizing rhetoric in addresses to the Greek population of the islands as well as by the commissioning of ethnographical missions in the Mediterranean East by the Directory. Such efforts found their counterpart in Greek radical thought in the pre-revolutionary period. Adamantios Korais, for example, the central figure of the late Greek Enlightenment, draws explicit links between the presumed republican character of the French Revolution and the civilizing mission of French expansionism in these regions. In his *Σάλπισμα Πολεμιστήριον* [*War Blare*]

[7] See also the discussion in Spencer 1954, 146-70.

(Korais 1801) the occupation of Egypt by the French troops does not belong to the same order as the Ottoman conquest of the country. Unlike the tyranny exerted by the latter on the «blissful land of the Ptolemies», the French conquest serves historical and cultural progress, falling upon the land «as dew from the sky, bringing to the Egyptians lights and freedom» (Korais 1801, 11-2, my translation)[8].

This shift in French policy and perceptions did not go unnoticed in British political and cultural circles. Reviews in influential journals not only refute the ethnographical accuracy of accounts that support the continuity between ancient and modern Greeks, but they comment perceptively on the political use and abuse of Hellenism, whether in its revived or in its surviving variety[9]. Soon though, in light of the changing character of British foreign policy in the region in the years of the Greek Revolution, British thinkers and politicians themselves adopt Hellenism as a potent ideological and political tool in order to justify direct or indirect intervention in support of the fighting Greeks and to bring the future Greek state under British modernizing influence.

Thomas Erskine's case is telling: a liberal politician and a lawyer – who had defended, among other radicals, Thomas Paine following the charges brought against the latter with the publication of the second part of *Rights of Man* –, Erskine was a fervent advocate of the Greek cause. His widely circulated *A letter to the Earl of Liverpool* (1822) offers one of the clearest exposition of the links between the liberal understanding of Empire, its civilizing mission, and Hellenism. His call in favor of the Greeks follows the distinction he draws between the liberal British political spirit from that of the countries that formed the Holy Alliance. For Erskine, British support is part of the "duty" that follows from Britain's distinct political character: «[W]e shall never directly nor indirectly discountenance that liberal and free spirit which created, illustrated, and vindicated our own revolution […] The world […] is on its march with rapid steps to higher destinies, and I hope that our country, as the original example and pattern of freedom, will always be found, as heretofore, at the head of the column» (Erskine 1823, 8-9). The spirit of classical culture and republican ethos that Erskine perceived in modern Greeks permits him to place them in the sphere of Britain's influence[10].

[8] Translation my own. For a detailed discussion of Korais' political views as a synthesis of republican and liberal ideas see Kitromilides 2013, 260-90.

[9] See for example the anonymous review of Charles Sigisbert Sonnini's Travels in Greece and Turkey, undertaken by order of Louis XVI. and with the authority of the Ottoman Court (1801), published in The Edinburgh Review (January, 1823).

[10] This is not to say, of course, that within philhellenic circles *all* claims to liberal and radical modernity were mediated by classical antiquity. The documentary record of the London Philhellenic Committee – a site where Whig liberalism, Benthamite utilitarianism, and radical nonconformism coalesce – reveals no particular resource to ancient Greece other than as a way to gain the support of public opinion. See Rosen 1992 on the involvement of Bentham and his disciples with the Greek cause. Tzourmana 2015

Such concerns play out in Shelley's engagement with different aspects of philhellenism. A few years before the composition of *Hellas*, he had made his venture into global geopolitics in his treatise *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1819-20). In Shelley's speculations on the post-Ottoman future of the Eastern Mediterranean, modern Greeks are not distinguished from their rulers. He imagines instead a settlement of these lands by groups arriving from civilized and liberal countries, more suited to the surroundings once inhabited by the ancient Greeks (Shelley 1954, 239). However, by the time he comes to write the "Preface" to *Hellas*, Shelley seems to no longer hold these views. His understanding of the modern Greeks is more dynamic and, at times, ambivalent. Greeks are presented as *on the way* to civilization, with European learning and culture serving as the mediating factor between past glory and present revival: «[T]he flower of their Youth, returning to their Country from the universities of Italy, Germany and France have communicated to their fellow citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source» (Shelley 2002, 431-2). Anticipating, however, counter-objections that would see the Greeks tainted by centuries of Ottoman rule, Shelley readily admits that the inherited gifts may in fact lie dormant: «If in many instances he is degraded, by moral and political slavery to the practise of the basest vices it engenders, and that below the level of ordinary degradation; let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution, may be expected to cease so soon as that relation is resolved» (Shelley 2002, 431)[11].

How can we comprehend Shelley's oscillation in his description of the modern Greeks and the apparent lack of a unified position on their relation to their ancestors? A useful starting point would be the consideration of the common ground between Shelley's radicalism and the liberal justification of imperialism as a civilizing mission. Liberal ideology, whether of the radical or the moderate variety, cannot but undermine its own premises and assumptions when it attempts theoretically to justify the imperial universalization of its principles. Homi Bhabha's foundational concept of mimicry is pertinent here. The liberal subject, in order to give grounds for the very existence of the civilizing project, necessarily resorts to the representation of colonial subjects as *potentially* civilizable; always on the way

provides a highly informative account of the political and ideological character of the different groups that participated in the London Philhellenic Committee. See also Karakatsouli 2016 for a discussion, from a transnational perspective, of the early stages of the philhellenic movement as part of a Mediterranean-wide "liberal international;" especially pp. 145-92 for the British context. The conservative support of the Christian Greeks against the Muslim Turks also played an important role; it is not uncommon to see both the classical and the Christian strain blending together in philhellenic texts of the period.

[11] See Roessel (2002, 22-4) for the popular view among philhellenes that political liberation would lead to moral regeneration.

to civilization but not quite there[12]. While the colonialized other – or, in the case of Greece whose political situation does not permit territorial occupation, the other that must be civilized – can potentially be the same as the European liberal, he must of necessity remain different. Otherwise, the *raison d'être* for a colonial administration or a civilizing project would simply collapse. At the same time, the very existence of this mimetic other, reveals to the liberal subject his own discourse as yet another form of domination, no matter how different from more overtly exploitative modes of imperialism and colonization. In Bhabha's own words, «[c]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence.* In order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference», even though that difference cannot be explicitly acknowledged (Bhabha 1984, 129). The case of modern Greeks presents an especially convoluted interweaving of these mimetic patterns. By virtue of their laying claim to a direct or indirect lineage to classical antiquity, the purported source of European civilization, the anxiety of the liberal subject about the potentially dominating and oppressive dimension of its Hellenocentric and modernizing discourse can be assuaged to some degree. This repressed anxiety returns though in the form of an intensified doubt whether modern Greeks will indeed prove to be similar to their forefathers.

However – and this is where Shelley's case begins to resist its wholesale subsumption under this theoretical model – the argumentative line of the "Preface" to *Hellas* does not offer itself quite so unproblematically to such an analysis of the relationship between Europe and modern Greece. The linearity of the model is resisted by a subtle parallel destabilization of Europe's claim to the tradition of ancient Greece. This might sound paradoxical since Shelley is considered to have offered the most memorable statement of European philhellenism by claiming that:

> We are all Greeks – our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece. But for Greece, Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might have still been savages, and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess (Shelley 2002, 431).

[12] For a discussion of Bhabha's concept of mimicry in relation to Shelley, see Leask 1992, 70-85. Insightful discussions in relation to the philhellenic context can be found in Gourgouris 1996, 123-7, and Roilos 2003, *passim*, and Karakatsouli 2016, 290-8.

Christopher Hagerman has identified this passage by Shelley as an exemplary modern case of the dominant "imperial trope" within classical discourse. This trope places Greece and Rome at the beginning of European history: «Greece played the part of originator, particularly with respect to literature, philosophy, arts, architecture, free political institutions, and civil society. Rome's main contribution to world history lay in absorbing Greek civilization, spreading it, and passing it down to posterity» (Hagerman 2013, 39). We can complicate and challenge such readings by considering the convoluted manner in which Shelley represents the relation between modern Europe and classical Greece. The particular phrasing and syntax of the transmission of culture from Greece to Rome undermine any notion of an unproblematic mediation between Greece and contemporary Europe[13]. While the reader should acknowledge the orientalist tropes that structure Shelley's discourse in this passage («stagnant and miserable state of social institution» in the Orient), she should also detect Shelley's subtly articulated critique of the oppression and violence that characterizes imperialist civilizing projects. Without Greece, Rome's imperial project – with its central position in British imperialist discourse – would have been one of simple territorial expansion and domination. In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, the transition from Greece to Rome is much bleaker. Shelley summarily describes the Roman Empire as «that vast and successful scheme for the enslaving [of] the most civilized portion of mankind» (Shelley 1954, 230).

The troubling link that is Rome in the transmission of Greek culture should also problematize any reading that would have Shelley arguing for a cultural and political spirit common to both ancient Greeks and modern Europeans. Alongside the emphatic statement about the rootedness of contemporary culture and institutions in Greece, the "Preface" articulates a persistent criticism of the contemporary situation of English and European politics. Shelley expresses the hope that the Greek Revolution would be part of a revolutionary upheaval that would shake the age: «This is the age of the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and everyone of those ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers, called Sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy […] Of this holy alliance all the despots of the earth are virtual members» (Shelley 2002, 432).

If it appears that modern Greece destabilizes the connection between ancient Greece and Europe, things are further complicated if we take into account other texts by Shelley that concern classical Greece. In general, Shelley is critical of what he considers an unreflective identification with ancient Greece. In the brief essay *A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love* (1818) he identifies two prevalent ways through which classical antiquity is approached. He claims that both

[13] For a detailed account of the reception of Rome in Shelley's work see Sachs 2010, 146-78.

are inadequate and unsuitable for his own argument. First, he rejects a humanist approach that would render the Greeks into another version of our own modernity. Such an approach not only reduces the distance between the ancients and the moderns, it also contains a self-congratulatory outlook by the latter. The second approach that leaves him unsatisfied is the more historicizing and anthropological representations that lack critical perspective. In *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), Shelley puts forward such a critical reading of Homer. While acknowledging the grandeur of his characters and the noble sentiments they could inspire in the audience of the era, Shelley proposes treating what is unsettling in the epic heroes as «a temporary dress». While necessary to the poet of each period, the imperfections do not negate the poetic archetype: «Nor let it be objected, that these characters are remote from moral perfection, and that they can by no means be considered as edifying patterns for general imitation. Every epoch under names more or less specious has deified its peculiar errors; Revenge is the naked Idol of the worship of a semi-barbarous age» (Shelley 2002, 516). Shelley supports the historicizing understanding of Greece, without reducing it to a position of absolute historical alterity.

It should be clear by now that a unifying synthesis of Shelley's positions on Greece, classical and modern, is not a simple task. The circumstances and time of each of his engagements with this issue differ significantly, and only a too facile approach would reduce into monolithic reading attitudes that span a number of years and are manifested in texts that vary radically from each other in generic make-up and pragmatic orientation. Precisely by keeping this complexity in mind I argue that Shelley, far from being the archetypal philhellenist that he is sometimes taken to be, displays instead a critical approach regarding the various dimensions – cultural, political, and aesthetic – of the relationship between classical Greece and radical thought and praxis. This critique cuts both ways. On the one hand, it enjoins contemporary radicalism to criticize any element that belongs not only to political pre-modernity but also to that part of the classical heritage that is tied with modern imperialist history and its political projects. On the other, the Hellenic ideal of artistic creativity and free political institutions enables the critique of contemporary society. This critical model inserts an element of negativity in both terms: Greece not quite as it was and Europe as is yet to be. Thus, it resists the chiasmic identification that holds the Greek to be European and the European to follow from the Greek.

III

Shelley's awareness of the genealogical complexity and ideological force of Hellenism offers a vantage point for a reading of *Hellas* as a critical engagement with philhellenic discourse. A full consideration of the formal and narrative interplay between the dialogic scenes (containing Mahmud's philosophical discussions with the Jewish sage Ahasuerus, his encounter with the ghost of Mahomet, and his intellectual and moral

reform) and the choral parts (sung by the chorus of the Greek captive women) of the poem lies beyond the spatial limitations of this article. My analysis will focus instead on the lyrical component of the drama and, more specifically, on those parts that describe Freedom's return to its birth-place following its course at various stages of world history. The deployment of this "westering trope" is particularly pertinent to my analysis, since the allegorical representation of the progress of abstract entities—for example, Freedom, Poetry, Wisdom—from the East to the West is often used to affirm Europe's inheritance of the mantle of civilization and progress[14].

The lyric dimension of the work, in general, is crucial. Shelley states in the "Preface" that the undecided nature of the ongoing war demands formal experimentation. The lack of immediate information forces him to rely on "newspaper erudition", while the uncertain outcome of the war, unlike the Aeschylean tragedy that was written after the defeat of the Persian forces, necessitates the use of lyrical discourse:

> The subject in its present state, is insusceptible of being treated otherwise than lyrically […] I have, therefore, contented myself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity which falls upon the unfinished scene such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilization and social improvement (Shelley 2002, 430).

These comments, and especially Shelley's desire to ensure the modern and civilized nature of the Greek struggle, suggest on a cursory reading that the lyric mode is employed for the purposes of an aesthetic ideology and in order to provide imaginative resolution to potentially troubling historical questions[15]. My reading of the "westering song" aims instead to show that the chorus, through an encounter with the historical reality of political oppression and violence, undergoes a process that is best characterized as a critical examination of one's own assumptions, and not as an idealizing displacement of history. Insofar as these assumptions are closely linked to the order of the Hellenic, the presumed fountainhead of European civilization and politics – both in their revolutionary and imperial aspirations – I contend that Shelley puts forward a more vigilant approach to philhellenic discourse than often assumed.

The greater part of the first choral movement consists of a song about the return of Freedom to Greece after its course through various stages of European history. In the

[14] For illuminating discussions of the westering trope along these lines see Hartman 1970 and Kramer 2005. For an analysis of this trope in Shelley's "Ode to Liberty" see Goslee 1994.

[15] For a general discussion of romantic-aesthetic ideology see McGann 1983. For readings of *Hellas'* lyrical parts along these line of interpretation see, among others, Wasserman 1971, Mcgann 1982, Wallace 1997, and Stock 2010. More recent readings have uncovered tensions and complications in the choral discourse; see Cheeke 1996, Douka-Kabitoglou 1996, and Van Kooy 2009.

earlier *Ode to Liberty* (1820), Athens was the first historical site of Freedom due to the harmonic interweaving of artistic creativity and political freedom. In *Hellas*, Athens is absent from the initial genealogy of freedom. The song, following the cosmological birth of Freedom into time, begins instead with the Persian wars:

> Freedom's splendour burst and shone.
> Thermopylae and Marathon
> Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
> The springing Fire…
> (l. 53-56)

The chorus's discourse, saluting the arrival of Freedom, employs a marked image from the corpus of Aeschylean tragedy. In the opening scene of *Agamemnon*, the first play of the *Oresteia* trilogy, the watchman in Mycenae receives news of the Greek victory in Troy by way of «the agreed beacon-signal, the gleam of fire bringing from Troy the word and news of its capture» (l. 8-10). Shelley thus combines in a single image both epic and tragedy; that is, the exploits of the Greeks at Troy and their violent aftermath – the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the rage of Achilles, and parenticide. Towards the end of the drama, we will see the reappearance of the world of epic and tragedy. There, the chorus will ask that one should «write no more the tale of Troy» and «not mix with Laian rage the joy which dawns upon the free» (l. 1078, 1080-1). By then, the captive women will have come to recognize the elements of violence that inhabit their discourse. At this stage though, unaware of such implications, they celebrate the assumed return of Freedom at its ancestral home.

The next stage of the westering of Freedom/Liberty, common to *Hellas* and the "Ode to Liberty", is the Roman world. In the "Ode", republican Liberty is presented through an apprehensive figural language that draws awareness to irrational and uncontrollable elements in an idealizing of freedom that is connected with martial virtue:

> Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest
> Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmean Maenad,
> She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest [Athens]
> From that Elysian food was yet unweaned;
> And many a deed of terrible uprightness
> By thy sweet love was sanctified
> (l. 91-96)

The rest of the stanzas devoted to Rome, and more specifically its imperial period demonstrate the gradual disappearance of Liberty from the scene:

> But when tears stained thy robe of vestal whiteness,
> And gold prophaned thy Capitolian throne
> Thou didst desert, with spirit-winged lightness
> The senate of the tyrants: they sunk prone
> Slaves of one tyrant: Palatinus sighed
> Faint echoes of Ionian song; that tone
> Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown
> (l. 102-105)

In *Hellas*, though, the first – harsh but admirable – stage of the Roman Republic is omitted. In the choral song, only the imperial period appears as a locus of Freedom, and the critical perspective is decidedly less conspicuous. The stage is set at Philippi, the location of the decisive win of the forces of the Second Triumvirate against Brutus and Gaius Cassius that paved the way for the seizing of power by Octavian. A reading of these lines influenced by the more direct critique in the "Ode" could perhaps detect an implicit critique in the representation of Freedom «half-alighted», as if already in the process of departing from the scene:

> The winged Glory
> on Philippi half-alighted,
> Like an eagle on a promontory
> Its unwearied wings could fan
> The quenchless ashes of Milan
> (l. 56-60)

Imperial Rome not only succeeds Greece in this genealogy, but is crucially celebrated for spreading the ideal of Freedom until the period of the Italian communes. From there, in succinct phrasing that suggests the revival of the glorious past, Freedom appears at different historical sites: Florence, Albion, Switzerland, and in more recent times, America, Germany and Spain. With the exception of the French Revolution, the modern course of Freedom is presented as a repetition of the ancient example. Her final reappearance in Greece celebrates the revolution with a phrasing that combines once more the emancipatory aim with darker and – as of yet – unacknowledged premonitions:

> Beneath the safety of her wings
> Her renovated nurslings prey,
> And in the naked lightnings

Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes
(l. 86-89)

The syntax of the last two lines partakes in the unfolding of the double discourse traced so far in this reading. If we choose to consider the transition between lines 88 and 89 as an enjambment – in this case, the adverbial clause would run past the end of the line: «And in the naked lightnings of truth» –, our reading of it would conform to the optimism displayed throughout the choral part. Following Freedom's return to Greece a new era is ushered in. The followers of Freedom gain direct and unmediated access to truth, which subsequently leads to purification of their *hitherto* dazzled eyes. If we opt, however, for the alternative reading by avoiding to read the enjambment – the adverbial clause ending where the line ends: «And in the naked lightnings» – the meaning would be reversed. In this case the immediate contact with the powerful sublimity of Freedom would *now* dazzle their eyes and it would purge them of truth. The syntax permits no clear-cut choice and the two options appear equally valid. The prosody of these lines seems to support the second reading. The preceding iambic trimeter becomes in line 89 a tetrameter, further hinting at its formal difference and its potential syntactical autonomy from the previous three lines. We are dealing therefore with an unresolved ambiguity that problematizes the assumptions that support the very notion of the "westering" of Freedom. On the one hand we have a choral movement marked by an apparent enthusiasm for the return of Liberty that includes, but does not acknowledge, the violent appearance of Freedom both in revolutionary and imperial history. On the other hand, the reader can unpack the sinister implications that lie dormant in the imagery and poetic syntax of the poem in order to detect elements of alterity within the chorus's song.

The third choral movement follows the irruption of vengeful violence on the scene of revolution and it points towards a modification of the chorus's position. Here, we see for the first time a clear shift in the chorus's unreflective stance. Up until this point the chorus was removed from the action. Now, the captive Greek women express the desire to go to the scene of the naval fights in order to scold slavery and herald the coming victory. Embedded within the address to slavery, we find once again the topos of the return of Liberty/Freedom. The reappearance of this theme is different from its previous instantiations. Now, and in much clearer terms than before, classical Athens is distinguished from the empires that followed it:

Let there be light! said Liberty,
And like sunrise from the sea,
Athens arose! -
[…]

Where Thermae and Asopus swallowed
Persia, as the sand does foam.
Deluge upon deluge followed,-
Discord, Macedon and Rome:
And lastly Thou [slavery]!
(l. 682-84, 688-92)

After its contact with violence the chorus posits classical Greece as an atemporal ideal, and it relinquishes the positing of Western history as a single unity. However, this separation from the presumed historical perversions of Greece is still not successful, since Athens retains its symbolic power as idealized fountainhead of European civilization:

Her citizens, imperial spirits,
Rule the present from the past,
On all this world of men inherits
Their seal is set-
(l. 700-703)

The chorus has not yet assumed a fully critical position towards the Hellenic ideal. The lyrical imagination is at this moment unable to conceive of the new beginning as something other than the repetition of the past, even if that past is distinct and idealized. The dead-end to which this type of imagination leads is indicated even more strongly if we take into account the contradictory elements contained in the description of the ideal Athens by the chorus. While denouncing the Macedonian and Roman empires, the chorus still presents the citizens of Greece as «imperial spirits», whose presence is felt throughout history.

The final choral part, following the announcement of the Greek defeat, begins precisely with such critical distancing from all historical sites that risk repeating the same: «Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become / The wonder, or the terror or the tomb / Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair» (l. 993-995). A basic assumption of philhellenic discourse, namely the historical analogy between the Hellenic past and Western civilization, is thus criticized. At the same time, the Hellenic ideal undergoes self-examination. The last song celebrates the rebirth of Greece. This rebirth is presented as a repetition with a difference – and not as a repetition of its past self – that points towards a utopian conception of Hellenism. This is a «brighter Hellas», a «new Peneus», «a loftier Argo», «[a]nother Orpheus», and a «new Ulysses». What is crucial to note is that this idealized Hellenism does not result from the negation of history. It is, instead, made possible only through the chorus's realization of the historical, political, and ideological entanglements of its own philhellenic

rhetoric. It is through this realization that the chorus is now able to *critically* repeat the allusion encountered in the first choral part («Thermopylae and Marathon / Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted») and to explicitly identify components of the Hellenic ideal that perpetuate violence, revenge and guilt:

> O, write no more the tale of Troy
> If earth Death's scroll must be!
> Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
> Which dawns upon the free
> (l. 1078-81)

IV

In his recent *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* Immanuel Wallerstein puts forward a series of penetrating reflections on the situation of universalist politics today. The theoretical inconsistency and the destructive historical record of European universalism – whose discursive repertoire includes Greco-Roman antiquity (Wallerstein 2006, 33) – should not lead us to adopt a particularism that would reproduce the binary logic of its opponent, serving thus the existing world-system. Beyond the dilemma of eurocentrism and occidentalism, Wallerstein calls for the exploration of «the conditions of possibility» for a «universal universalism» (even though he leaves unspecified the precise content of this universalism) (Wallerstein 2006, 71-84). First among these conditions is the historicization of our intellectual analysis. This task would not aim at the relativization of our discourse but would instead throw in sharp relief the links that tie it to the present historical situation.

It would not be, I believe, far-fetched to consider Shelley's critical engagement with Hellenism as a potential forerunner to this endeavor. Such a genealogical enlisting would not come without reservations regarding his use of Hellenism as a topos that regulates participation in modernity. As it has been demonstrated, the deployment of Hellenism as an instrument for political and cultural hegemony was common enough in the liberal and imperial discourses of the period. However, this acknowledgement should not forbid us from appreciating the significantly more complex stance Shelley adopted in *Hellas*, his major philhellenic work. The intricate lineages between classical Greece, contemporary Europe, and modern Greece in the "Preface" of this work, as well as the marked deployment of the westering topos show a sharp awareness of the potential ideological uses of philhellenic discourse for hegemonic purposes. Shelley, like Wallerstein, does not delineate the content of his «universal universalism». His critical and poetical practice in *Hellas* possesses critical, not speculative, force. By questioning philhellenism's foundational assumptions and by undermining its established literary topoi, Shelley identifies stratifications within the Hellenism, and

highlights the necessity for recognizing the implication of our radical discourses with the contemporary situation precisely in order to resist, critique, and – potentially – overcome it.

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Othering the Mediterranean in E. M. Forster's Italian Novels: A Levinasian Perspective

Aneta Lipska

Abstract

In order to put the current challenges faced by the Mediterranean into perspective, this article discusses the cultural aspects of the othering of Italy by the English at the turn of the 19th century. This issue is illustrated by Edward Morgan Forster's Italian novels – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908) – and the analysis is supported by Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of alterity, with glances at Edward Said's and Homi K. Bhabha's approaches to the problem of otherness. The interpersonal relation between Levinasian *same* and *other* has been transposed here to international relations. It is demonstrated that the characters of Forster's novels represent the challenging endeavors of the English at handling the "strangeness" of Italy. The consequences of this encounter point to the need for more human relations between nations, in which they would go beyond political borders and offer their neighbours welcome and hospitality.

Keywords

E. M. Forster - Italian Novels - Levinas - Othering - Anglo-Italian Relations

The current challenges faced by Italy, as part of the Mediterranean, to define herself against the alterity of other nations can be fruitfully contextualised by pointing to the reversal of her position in Europe since the nineteenth century. In order to put the present sensitive matters into perspective, this article aims to discuss the cultural aspects of the othering of Italy by the English in the past. The contemporary challenge of defining her stand towards African and Middle Eastern refugees and its moral implications are in fact reminiscent of the attitude of the English towards the Italians, and the Mediterranean in general, in the nineteenth and well into the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The texts that will serve to exemplify this phenomenon are two novels by the English writer Edward Morgan Forster – *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

(1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908)[1], which will be read here against Emmanuel Levinas's[2] philosophy of alterity, with glances at some cultural approaches to the problem.

Emmanuel Levinas's philosophical thought is preoccupied with the nature of the relation of the *same* with the *other*. The *same* (or the self) refers to the subject and its thoughts, while the *other* is its exteriority, that is, everything and everyone «outside, above and beyond the powers of the subject» (Davis 2013, 40). For Levinas this interpersonal relationship should be based on a mutual desire of *the face-to-face encounter* (Davis 2013, 45). This concept serves him in expressing the quality of this encounter, which is not yet an exposure to another person, but rather an awareness of their presence and a readiness to adopt a welcoming attitude towards them. The term *face* is an ambiguous one, since Levinas defines it as something that cannot be simply seen, because to see the *face* would mean reducing it to the scope of our knowledge. The *face*, then, is not the object of perception but rather an «epiphany» or «revelation», the *infinity* which cannot be devoid of its otherness (Davis 2013, 46)[3].

The identity of the *same* is constituted by its relation to the *other*, which is not an easy one since, as Levinas writes, «Nothing is more foreign to me than the other; nothing is more intimate to me than myself» (Levinas 1994, 85). To defy its alterity, the *same* attempts to confine the *other* within the limits of its knowledge. In order to manifest his opposition to such an ontological reasoning and instead advocate an ethical stance on alterity, Levinas adopts two other terms, that of the *saying* and the *said* (Levinas 1981). The *saying* stands for an encounter of the *same* with the *other*, whereas the *said* stands for statements and assertions taken for granted. In Levinas's words, «To say is to approach a neighbour [...]. This is not exhausted in "ascriptions of meaning" [...] which are inscribed, as tales in the Said [...]. Saying is communication, to be sure, but as a condition for all communication, as exposure» (Levinas 1981, 48). The concept of the *saying* enables Levinas to express what he finds to be the most important aspect of the face-to-face encounter – that of the responsibility for the other, since «saying is responsible for others» (Levinas 1981, 48). In other words, the identity of the self is constituted by its obligation to the Other.

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[1] E. M. Forster's journey to Italy in 1901 set him going as a novelist, as then, as he expressed it, "the creative element had been freed" (quoted after Stallybrass 1976b, 8). Italy became the setting of his earliest short stories as well as two first novels – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908). Forster's Italian travel also initiated his preoccupation with the English reaction to otherness, a theme that culminated in A Passage to India (1924).

[2] In order to avoid confusion, in what follows the surname of the philosopher will be spelled without an accent, since this is the practice of all the critics referred to herein.

[3] This conviction constitutes the essence of Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* (1961), in which context *totality* stands for the ontological attempt of the same to locate the Other in the domain of its understanding, while *infinity* demonstrates the impossibility of the self to perceive the Other.

This interpersonal relation between Levinasian *same* and *other* has been translated into international relations, since it has been recognised that the idea has a potential of bringing a new – ethical – dimension to the domain of politics (Denboer 2010, 60). Levinas rejects ontology as the self's exploitation of such preconceived ideas as reason, spirit or history in order to suppress alterity. It has been argued that this idea corresponds to the practices of ontological politics in which «political actors utilize the institutions of the state apparatus to totalise the Other» (Eubanks and Gauthier 2005, 25). This totalisation serves the purpose of differentiating the self from the Other and thus creating and strengthening the self's identity. In practice, a given nation categorises other nations considering the features of their representatives as definite and characteristic of them all. Levinas opposes such a standpoint and in turn calls for an ethical politics, that is, for the realisation that the identity of a nation is conditional on its acceptance of the Other's incomprehensibility as well as its capability to play host to other nations.

Levinas considers Europe as playing a particular role in his vision of ethical politics, given the fact that this continent is an exceptionally diverse entity whose identity has been an effect of cultural exchanges and tensions between nations as well as of the influences of global culture. Europe's religious and historical heritage demands that it is governed by the ethical and pledges it not only to make difference a constituent of its own continental unity but also to take responsibility for other continents (Drabinski 2011, 4-5). Nevertheless, the fact that, just like interpersonal relations, European international relations have been shaped by ontological assumptions renders the vision of ethical politics a considerable challenge.

In some respects Levinas's philosophy of alterity coincides with contemporary cultural theories. For the purpose of this article it will suffice to mention Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha. Edward Said, considering the relationship between the West and the East, describes the opposition between peoples in terms of imaginative territories, which are either "ours" or "theirs":

> A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call "the land of the barbarians." In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions. […] It is enough for "us" to set up these boundaries in our own minds; "they" become "they" accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from "ours." (Said 2003, 54)

The identity of the self may thus be defined only against its alterity. If the Other is all that is beyond the boundaries of the homeland, the self is exclusively within these

boundaries. Boundaries guarantee a safe distance, which enable the self to take a stance on its Other and create particular visions of it, against which it will define its identity. These visions, as Homi K. Bhabha in turn claims, originate either from admiration or fear:

> The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it. (Bhabha 2004, 107)

Thus, borders are the sources of contrasting visions and misconceptions which clash whenever someone ventures to cross them, be they travellers, colonists, migrants or refugees. These theoretical deliberations appear to be certainly applicable to the discussions of the phenomena taking place in Europe in the colonial period as well as in the present day.

The interrelation between the political and ethical consequences of the encounter with the Other may be well exemplified by E. M. Forster's fiction. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View* are the author's early novels, in which he developed an interest in the relations between the English and other nations. Among the other novels that continued in the same vein is *A Passage to India* (1924), owing to which the writer has become entangled in colonial and post-colonial discourses. Even though today E.M. Forster is considered «the great debunker of imperial pomposity» (Morey 2007, 255-6), he still counts among those Edward Said termed as «Orientalists», that is, Europeans producing texts on the colonised parts of the world, which were dominated by binary oppositions between «west and east, self and Other, us and them», and which, as a consequence, have constituted a dominant discourse on the non-west in opposition to the west (Morey 2007, 255-6). Drawing on Said, Peter Morey points out:

> As outsiders to the cultures they describe, Orientalists offer an act of representation that always focuses on certain already acknowledged attributes of their subjects. In short, they give edited and subjective "highlights" of those characteristics deemed recognisable and "authentic". Such representation is never neutral. (Morey 2007, 255)

Nevertheless, as Morey indicates, this time referring to Homi K. Bhabha's thought, these representations of the binary opposition between the coloniser and the colonised aiming at the former's self-definition are continuously disrupted by the unexplainable forces of various nature symbolised by the Forsterian Marabar Caves (Morey 2007, 259). For this reason, Forster's characters are marked by their failure at

cross-cultural communication. His Italian novels already foreshadow these tendencies, even though they are concerned with cultural rather than political imperialism.

The English-Italian intercourse in the nineteenth century was marked by the former's attempt at self-definition. Given their country's insular position, the English defined their national identity by opposition to the continent. The Italians were one of the main nations that served them as a reference point, due to the popularisation of the Grand Tour in the previous century. The notion of Englishness at the time was constructed by either exclusion or identification with the conceptions of Italianess (McAllister 2007, 2).

Given their country's unceasing engagement in imperial expansion, the English's imagining of Italy had the hallmarks of their missionary attitude towards their colonies. Even though England had no political control over Italy, the fact that hordes of English tourists had flooded the peninsula ever since the opening of the continent in 1815 (Buzard 1993, 19) created a kind of economic dependency. Moreover, given Italy's unstable political situation, it was patronised by the British government, set by its citizens as an example to follow. What is more, at the time the English would consider themselves as legitimate descendants of the Romans (Pemble 1988, 64). Therefore, they not only cherished Italian culture and art but also assumed the role of protectors of the Roman heritage, which frequently took the form of purchasing and appropriating valuable artworks and artefacts. Thus, the image of England as a political, economic and imperial power mingled with the vision of Italy as a backward, indolent and politically inadequate yet picturesque and artistically-inclined nation.

Furthermore, the concept of nation, which was understood by the English as the extension of home with the very same moral backbone, would be incongruous with their image of Italy. The Victorian need to strengthen the standards of personal morality evolved in reaction to the moral frivolity of the previous age, the conviction of which was formed partly by the English going on their seemingly educational Grand Tours to Italy. This is why Victorians would particularly value their English hearth and home, in which a particular role was played by a woman, who was expected to be a proper lady. In other words, the English lady was supposed to be decorous, devoted to her husband and family, and above all domestic. Although the English did travel as much as before, their journeys to the South were considered as potentially threatening to their ideals. In particular, given the feminine ideal, at the time it was considered unbecoming for women to travel that far and particularly to travel without a male escort to the Mediterranean, since it was assumed that their propriety would be endangered by southerners, whom they tended to comprehend on the basis of a number of contradictory stereotypes. They considered them «as the Noble Savages and the Wild Men […] effeminate yet potent seducers, dirty peasants yet sophisticated

artists, simple and childlike yet cunning and manipulative, morally bankrupt yet primarily innocent» (McAllister 2007, 2).

The English framed the Italians within the bunch of these characteristics, which were as much appealing as threatening, so that it would be easier to create mechanisms of self-protection against them. An example of such mechanisms was the popular handbooks used by British tourists in the continent, particularly those by John Murray and Karl Baedeker. As James Buzard observes, the handbooks created particular visions of European countries and nations; they «assembled a "tourist's Europe" between the covers of their volumes», in which manner they «encouraged acts of imaginary appropriation» (Buzard 1993, 77). These small red-jacketed books «accompanied the tourist (...) directing gazes and prompting responses» (Buzard 1993, 75). It was particularly English women travelling to the South unaccompanied by male guardians who were advised to follow the guidance offered by the handbooks (Buzard 1993, 148-9). The handbooks would not only educate female travellers on tourist attractions and works of art but also provide information on security and sanitation as well as advising against too intimate contacts with the local men (Buzard 1993, 148-50). In a way, then, the guidebooks served the purpose of shielding the tourists once they had crossed geographical boundaries between the familiar and the foreign.

Thus understood concepts of identity, nation and home, as well as the character of Italian-English relationships, have been captured by the literature of the period. Rachel Hollander considers the English novel of the long nineteenth century (that is until 1914) as particularly preoccupied with the encounter of the self with the Other (Hollander 2013, 1), and thus having the potential of «narrative hospitality», which manifests itself when, she claims, «characters and authors open themselves to that which is other and suggest the value of recognizing rather than overcoming the limits of knowledge» (Hollander 2013, 3). E.M. Forster's Italian novels represent this notion well.

Even though the Italian novels are set in the Edwardian period, that is, between 1901-1910, they to a great extent draw on the previous century. The vision of the world and of Italy that emerges from the novels is permeated with the British colonial ideology and shaped by the Baedeker handbooks. The protagonists of the two novels are English tourists to Italy who endeavour to handle its otherness. They appear to be far from consistent in their attitude towards Italians and Italy, which always appears to them a mixture of «[b]eauty, evil, charm, vulgarity, mystery» (Forster 1976b, 104). The longer they stay in the country, the more involved they are in the life of its inhabitants. Thus, the relation between England and Italy is not only of a national but also of a personal nature; in other words, the notions of the domestic and the national interweave. Therefore, it may well be claimed that the misalliance in personal relations

as portrayed in Forster's Italian novels reflects the English-Italian incongruity throughout the long nineteenth century.

A Room with a View is a novel about a desire for a view of a true life that is to be found in Italy. The novel opens with a scene in the Pension Bertolini in Florence. English travellers Miss Bartlett and Lucy Honeychurch are disappointed since, despite having been promised south-facing rooms with a view over the Arno River, they are given north-facing rooms looking into a courtyard. They finally do have a view thanks to two other guests, Mr Emerson and his son George, who offer to switch rooms. Rooms with views reappear in the novel, always juxtaposing two worlds – that of Surrey in England and Florence in Italy. The former is always associated with the darkness of the room, the latter with the light of the view. Darkness stands for the "muddle" of English social standards, English hypocrisy and prejudice against Italy. The light expresses a desire for beauty and truth, a real experience of life and the exposure to otherness. The characters of the novel are classified into «those who forget views and those who remember them» (Forster 1990, 156).

When in Florence, Lucy, being one of those «who remember the views», has a chance to defy English conventionality, superficiality and snobbishness, but she seems unable to do so. This is clearly manifested when she sets out to go sightseeing at the Church of Santa Croce equipped with her Baedeker's handbook, but suddenly has it taken away from her by Miss Lavish. At first, without her manual she does not know what she is supposed to think about the place:

> Of course, it contained frescoes by Giotto […] But who was to tell her which they were? She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin. (Forster 1990, 18)

Without her little red book Lucy appears as if incapable of appreciating the foreign country unfolding before her eyes. It is of interest that this unfavourable attitude may be observed also in Forster's *Sentimental Essays*. When entering the Pantheon for the first time, Forster writes, «I at once sat down […] and began to read about the building» (Forster 2008, 161). Only after doing his reading for half an hour does he dare to enthuse about the building: «So supreme was the triumph of architecture that we forgot we were beneath a roof» (Heath 2008, 162). This unquestioning reliance on guidebooks creating a particular vision of the country visited and the refusal to make their own judgments was still typical of English tourists in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Without her Baedeker, Lucy appears deprived not only of guidance but also of a shield against all the perils awaiting her in the unfamiliar place. In fact, she will have to realise that, as Miss Lavish explains, «[o]ne doesn't come to Italy for niceness [...] one comes for life» (Forster 1990, 15). She experiences this very soon when she witnesses the murder of an Italian man who, before dying, «bent towards Lucy with a look of interest, as if he had an important message for her» (Forster 1990, 40). This face-to-face encounter with the Other could have proved enlightening to her if she had not rejected it. But such atrocity is not what she came to Italy for. Thus, she belittles the incident, being more preoccupied with her lost photographs than with the dead man. She is angry that by fainting she might have uncovered her true self. She fears that by facing the man she might have entered into a spiritual dialogue with him: «Again the thought occurred to her, "Oh, what have I done?" – the thought that she, as well as the dying man, had crossed some spiritual boundary» (Forster 1990, 41-42). In Levinasian terms, dialogue with alterity is accomplished only in this «risky uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, in the breaking up of inwardness and the abandonment of all shelter, in exposure to traumas, in vulnerability» (Levinas 1981, 48). This is the lesson that Lucy could not learn from her Baedeker.

Lucy faces the what appears to her as the *real* Italy for the second time when she encounters George Emerson who, with his spontaneity and passion, becomes for her the embodiment of Italy. He is not typically English and seems to have acquired Italian ways, and thus at first Lucy has mixed feelings about him. Just like his father, he «is not tactful; yet», she realises «there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time – beautiful […]» (Forster 1990, 9). The moment he kisses her for the first time is enlightening, as it gives her a view of the beauty of life:

> From her feet the ground sloped sharply into view, and violets ran down in rivulets and streams and cataracts. […] But never again were they in such profusion; this terrace was the well-head, the primal source whence beauty gushed out to water the earth. Standing at its brink, like a swimmer who prepares, was the good man […] George had turned at the sound of her arrival. For a moment he contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven. He saw radiant joy in her face, he saw the flowers beat against her dress in blue waves. The bushes above them closed. He stepped quickly forward and kissed her. (Forster 1990, 67)

But the incident is also unexpected, unexplainable and definitely inexcusable from the perspective of Lucy's English propriety. As Andrew Gibson argues, Levinas's conviction is that

> the Other whom I encounter is always radically in excess of what my ego, cognitive powers, consciousness, intuitions would make of him or her. The Other always and definitely overflows the frame in which [the self] would seek to enclose the Other. (Gibson 1999, 25)

The Other has escaped the frames of Lucy's imagination, and this revelation appears too much for her. In an attempt to protect herself against vulnerability, she accuses George of being unrefined, thus taking a typical English stance on the Italians.[4]

The fact that Lucy and George do finally get married and appear to be happy starting their new life in Italy does not really mean that Lucy is willing to receive it as it is. She may have accepted George with his Italian ways, but she has never truly exposed herself to Italy. Even now when she returns to Italy she still acts like a typical English tourist – she stays in the Bertolini Pension which, with its exclusively English guests, actually «might be London» (Forster 1990, 1). Lucy remains a stranger rather than a guest welcomed into the home.

A more determined attempt at a face-to-face encounter between England and Italy is portrayed in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Lilia Herriton, the main protagonist, leaves behind the family of her late husband, as well as her daughter, and travels to Italy accompanied only by another female, Caroline Abbott. Just like Adela Quested in *A Passage to India*, who wishes to «see the *real* India» (Forster 1976a, 25), Lilia dreams about the *real* Italy where she would be freed of the never-ending rigidity of English social conventions. When she falls in love with Gino, an Italian man, she hopes for an authentic relationship. However, this English-Italian romance is already doomed to failure since, unlike in *A Room with a View*, the protagonists of this novel do not wish to accept nor incorporate *anything* of what is unlike themselves. Mutual understanding between individuals is not possible because of the disparity of their cultural origin.

Typically, the English in the novel, before they encounter Italy, create a vision of the country based on what has already been written about it. It is well exemplified by the scene in which Mrs Herriton, Lilia's mother-in-law, discovers that she is staying in the Tuscan hill town Monteriano. She instinctively looks the place up in nineteenth-century classic texts on Italy, and finally finds the entry in the Baedeker (Buzard 1993, 311). Yet, having crossed the borders of the country, the characters soon realise the inaccuracy of the vision and, as a consequence, are overwhelmed by fear of all that is Italian; they find it, in Said's words, «the land of barbarians» (Said 2003, 54). On his arrival in Italy, Philip feels uncomfortable if not endangered – he has crossed the boundary of the territory which is "theirs":

[4] Lucy's reaction is analogous to that of Adela's charge against Dr. Aziz in *A Passage to India*. In consequence, both Lucy and Adela leave the "hostile" country and return to England.

> He was in the enemy's country, and everything – the hot sun, the cold air behind the heat, the endless rows of olive-trees, regular yet mysterious – seemed hostile to the placid atmosphere of Sawston in which his thoughts took birth. (Forster 1976b, 34)

In a manner similar to Said, Levinas recognises this fear that the self has of the strangeness of the Other. As Peperzak puts it,

> [t]he encounter with the human other is not the union of an act by which two potential beings identify with one another in the transparency of a perception or a concept but rather a shock [...] The other "shows itself" in a different manner; his/her way of "being" is other. (Peperzak 1993, 62-3)

The characters of the novel are overtly shocked by Italy's strangeness, and again their national prejudice is transposed to their personal relations with Italians. There is a potential of "narrative hospitality" in the novel, which the characters fail to realise. On the one hand, it is Italy that is to play host to a stranger, that is Lilia. On the other hand, it is the English, the Herritons, who need to allow a stranger into their family. Nevertheless, the family of Lilia's late husband find the prospective marriage a misalliance «bringing discredit on the family» (Forster 1976b, 23). Thus, Mrs Herriton sends Philip to Monteriano so that he can prevent this ill-fated relationship:

> The man may be a duke or he may be an organ-grinder. That is not the point. If Lilia marries him she insults the memory of Charles, she insults Irma, she insults us. Therefore I forbid her, and if she disobeys we have done with her for ever. (Forster 1976b, 31)

Even though Mrs Herriton claims that neither «a duke» nor «an organ-grinder» would do, the difference in social status does matter, since Lilia belongs to the aristocracy while Gino is merely the son of a dentist. The prospect of being related to Gino is intolerable to Philip. He cannot face him even when sitting with him at the table:

> […] Philip had seen that face before in Italy a hundred times – seen it and loved it, for it was not merely beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil. But he did not want to see it opposite him at dinner. It was not the face of a gentleman. (Forster 1976b, 41)

He uses this argument to discourage Lilia from marrying Gino: «It is not possible that you, a lady, accustomed to ladies and gentlemen, will tolerate a man whose position is – well, not equal to the son of the servants' dentist in Coronation Place» (Forster 1976b, 43). He also warns Gino against marrying a rich woman:

> I have come to prevent you marrying Mrs. Herriton, because I see you will both be unhappy together. She is English, you are Italian; she is accustomed to one thing, you to another. And – pardon me if I say it--she is rich and you are poor. (Forster 1976b, 46)

Yet, Philip's efforts are of no avail, since Lilia and Gino are already married. Though they seem to be in love, the difference between them prevents them from being truly happy:

> She was so much older than he was, and so much richer, that he regarded her as a superior being who answered to other laws. He was not wholly surprised, for strange rumours were always blowing over the Alps of lands where men and women had the same amusements and interests. […] Now that he knew her better, he was inevitably losing his awe. (Forster 1976b, 54)

In Levinas's terms, it may be said that the encounter between Lilia and Gino comes to them as a shock, and the only way for the self to cope with this shock is confining the Other within the limits of the familiar, within the *said*. Thus, Gino is marked by Lilia's English vision of a passionate, charming yet unrefined Italian, whereas Gino expects her to act like an obedient Italian wife. «I do not see why an English wife should be treated differently», he says, «this is Italy» (Forster 1976b, 59). However, she would never sacrifice her Englishness, just as he would never change his Italian ways:

> It would have been well if he had been as strict over his own behaviour as he was over hers. But the incongruity never occurred to him for a moment. His morality was that of the average Latin, and as he was suddenly placed in the position of a gentleman, he did not see why he should not behave as such. Of course, had Lilia been different – had she asserted herself and got a grip on his character – he might possibly – though not probably – have been made a better husband as well as a better man, and at all events he could have adopted the attitude of the Englishman […] But had Lilia been different she might not have married him. (Forster 1976b, 63)

Their marriage is in fact a struggle between «the social ideals of North and South» (Forster 1976b, 63). In Philip's words: «He's a bounder, but he's not an English bounder. He's mysterious and terrible. He's got a country behind him that's upset people from the beginning of the world» (Forster 1976b, 88). There is no chance for reconciliation between them. Thus, their love ends tragically – Lilia dies in childbirth and her English relatives try to take the baby away to England but it is killed in an accident. This personal tragedy may be considered in broader, national, terms as England's inability to overcome her prejudices and Italy's failure at unconditional hospitality.

It is not only Lilia and Gino who fail but also Philip. A typical English Italophile, he, too, has in his mind an ideal vision of Italy – a Baedeker Italy. He also idealised Italians confining them within his own value system – within the *said*. After all, it was him who urged Lilia to go to Italy and to «[l]ove and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land» (Forster 1976b, 19). When finally exposed to this foreign country, he cannot accept it as it is and hence becomes disillusioned:

> Italy, the land of beauty, was ruined for him. She had no power to change men and things who dwelt in her. She, too, could produce avarice, brutality, stupidity – and, what was worse, vulgarity. It was on her soil and through her influence that a silly woman had married a cad. He hated Gino, the betrayer of his life's ideal, and now that the sordid tragedy had come, it filled him with pangs, not of sympathy, but of final disillusion. (Forster 1976b, 71)

No longer does Philip romanticise Italy; on the contrary, he is more than sceptical of Italy's hospitality, resenting her for bearing violence and vulgarity. In fact, Italy is here represented as an unwelcoming and hostile land on whose soil the English – the title's «Angels» – fear to tread. On the other hand, England appears here incapable of resigning from her imperial inclinations. After all, Philip, just like Ronny in *A Passage to India*, considers himself an «emissary of civilization» who went to the «land of barbarians» to «continue his mission» (Forster 1976b, 130-1).

E.M. Forster's Italian novels are by no means optimistic and leave no doubt about the consequences of the English-Italian encounter. His characters never experience Italy outside of their preconceived ideas; they are mere tourists just as the author himself in one of his lectures admitted to have been while there:

> The tourist may be intelligent, warm-hearted and alert […], but he has to go back every evening to his hotel or pension and he can know very little of the class structure of the country he is visiting, or of its economic problems. My limitations

> were grave. Fortunately I was unaware of them and plunged ahead. (Forster 1976b, 8)

Forster, too, had no knowledge of Italian society and thus appears to have enclosed it within his English values, such as class structure or economic position. Unalarmed by his ignorance, he "plunged ahead" and wrote a novel based on a story he overheard in his hotel from other English guests: «I overheard an English lady talking to another English lady about a third English lady who had married an Italian far beneath her socially and also much younger, and how most unfortunate it was» (quoted after Stallybrass 1976, 8). Notwithstanding the fact, it can be claimed that the writer calls for a change in the moral attitude of the English towards Italy as its Other.

In the nineteenth century Italy served for the English as the point of reference against which they could define their own superiority, prosperity and morality, for which purpose they would patronise, appropriate and sympathise with her. As has been exemplified, Forster's characters, accordingly, either attempt to adapt Italy to suit their needs of either identification and moral salvation, like in *A Room with a View*, or exclusion and superiority, like in *Where Angels Fear to Tread.* Even though in the novels there are moments of face-to-face encounter that bring the English and Italians closer to reconciliation, in neither of them are they successful. Therefore, Forster's characters are by no means paragons of Levinasian hospitality – they claim to have comprehended their Other while clearly disengaging from them and claiming their superiority. And Italy, in turn, has always defended itself against such confining frames. The problem here is not then, in Gibson's words, «a disenchantment of a world that fails to correspond to the subject's expectations, but a disenchantment of the self that seeks to contain the world within its perspective» (Gibson 1999, 25).

Written at the beginning of the twentieth century, E. M. Forster's Italian novels are permeated with an English imperial ideology of the previous age, yet already betraying a modern admission of the impossibility of confining the world within the limits of one's knowledge and thus pointing to an alternative mode of international relations. The novels' uneasiness about the English-Italian relationship appears to have heralded the present-day moral malady of international politics, that is, the conflict between the irresistible need to appropriate other nations and the call for the recognition of their incomprehensibility and the acceptance of an unconditional responsibility to them. The consequences of the English-Italian encounter point to the need for more human relations between nations in which they would be able to go beyond political borders and offer their neighbours welcome, hospitality and refuge. Italy, whose position in the international arena has changed considerably since the nineteenth century, has now been given a chance to rise to this challenge, hopefully learning the lesson of history.

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Coproducing Nostalgia across the Mediterranean: Visions of the Jewish-Muslim Past in French-Tunisian Cinema

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Abstract

In the wake of the Tunisian Revolution that in turn launched the Arab Spring popular uprisings, the previous support of Jews of Tunisian origin living in France for the Ben Ali dictatorship prompted a new level of engagement with Tunisian politics. This article examines the collaboration between Jewish and Muslim writers and filmmakers that created a series of nostalgic films depicting the country's "exceptional" cosmopolitan past. Analyzing Nouri Bouzid's *Homme de cendres* (1986), Férid Boughedir's *Un été à la Goulette* (1996) and *Villa Jasmin* (2007), and Lucie Cariès's *Bon baisers de la Goulette* (2007), these films critique the contemporary discourse depicting Jews and Muslims as eternal enemies. Shifting the burden of conflict away from indigenous Tunisians, they show French colonialism and/or the Israeli-Arab wars as exogenous factors that undermined the inherent harmony of a shared Mediterranean past. Regardless of the veracity of these narratives, the article questions the limits and constraints of such nostalgic discourse to address present Jewish-Muslim dynamics in France and beyond.

Keywords

Diaspora - Tunisia - Nostalgia - Mediterranean Jews - Cinema

The eruption of mass protests in Tunisia in December 2010 toppled the twenty-three-year regime of authoritarian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and launched the Arab Spring revolutions across the region. While the whole of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean were caught in the wave emanating from Tunisia, which had been seen as an island of stability in a turbulent Arab world, the images of revolution also profoundly touched Tunisia's Jewish diaspora living in France and Israel. In the wake of the revolution, there was a striking shift in France in particular, with some of the most prominent diasporans, including comedian Michel Boujenah, journalist and producer Serge Moati, and writer and radio host Colette Fellous, traveling to Tunisia to publicly

express their support for it and also to document, and in certain sense, "translate" it for French audiences (Fellous, Meddeb, Wolinksi 2012; Moati 2011, 2013)[1]. This sudden taking of sides in contemporary Tunisian politics also included public apologies from Boujenah and Moati along with professions of ignorance about the reach of Ben Ali's kleptocratic dictatorship, as well as the rampant violence he and his wife's family exercised to remain in power, from the late 1980s onward. All this took place in a broader French context of embarrassment, as many from the political and intellectual classes had supported Ben Ali as a rampart against Islamic extremism, overlooking his regime's brutality and corruption.

Tunisian Jewish writers' stance toward the revolution represented a new turn, since during the Ben Ali years they had produced a considerable amount of nostalgic literary and visual representations about the period before independence from France in 1956. Indeed, many had the celebrated the golden days that preceded decolonization, written with the implicit blessing of the regime, which sought to show Tunisia as a tolerant, liberal country in regard to its minorities. This restorative Jewish-Muslim nostalgia is a way of looking at the past that «seeks to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps» (Boym 2001 41). This collaborative effort allowed Tunisian Muslims and Jews to celebrate their lost childhoods and adolescences while avoiding criticism of the dictatorship that fostered and instrumentalized this nostalgia.

To address the tensions underlying the nostalgic project of representation of intercommunal relations that portray Tunisia as an exemplary and exceptionally Mediterranean society, I will examine a trio of interrelated co-productions which exemplify the triangulation at work in multipolar memories of the Jewish presence in Tunisia. Férid Boughedir's *Summer in La Goulette* (1995) offer portraits of Tunisia before and after departure, while only indirectly addressing the question of why Jews left. Their central focus is to mourn, celebrate, and pay tribute of the Jewish imprint on the country's history. More recently, Boughedir's collaboration with Serge Moati on the telefilm *Villa Jasmin* (2007) and Lucie Cariès's documentary *Bons baisers de la Goulette* (2007) examine the question from the opposite direction, that is Jews of Tunisian origins remembering and returning to their ancestral homeland.

[1] Fellous devoted two episodes of her radio series "Carnet Nomade" on France Culture to interviewing artists, activists, and writers about the country's transformation, entitled "Journal d'un printemps solidaire" in 2011. She also contributed to a photobook, *Dégage! Une révolution* (2012). Moati wrote a chronicle of the revolution and scathing critique of President Ben Ali and his wife Leïla Trabelsi, *Dernières nouvelles de Tunis* (2011). In 2013, Moati directed a documentary *Artistes de Tunisie*, illustrating the role of art in the movement that overthrew Ben Ali as well as in shaping the democratic transition. Michel Boujenah (Barraud 2011) made repeated emotional TV appearances and trips to show his support for the Revolution. All three figures had regularly visited and stayed in Tunisia during the preceding period, without any expressing any public criticism of the regime.

The films I analyze all feature a mixed lineup in crucial positions of screenwriter, director, and producer, main actors and actresses, constituting a French-Jewish-Tunisian coproduction. Sharing personnel, tropes, and plotlines, these films embody the nostalgia that continues to function on all sides of the Mediterranean, a yearning for a certain cosmopolitan past in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived peacefully side by side. Tunisia constitutes a special case because of its own "exceptional" discourse, deftly employed by its political class to define the country for Western governments and publics, and because of the close collaboration of the Jewish diaspora in France.

From Tunisia to France: The Making of a Diaspora

First let us situate the origins of the Jews of Tunisia in the modern period, a particular community within the broader array of Jews in the Arab and Islamic world. In effect, there were two different Jewish communities in Ottoman Tunisia, the *twansa*, or the autochthonous Jews, who could trace their roots back in Tunisia for several centuries, and the *grana*, those who had emigrated from Spain and Portugal to Livorno after expulsion and maintained a European self-image and affinity with Italian language and culture. Though the *grana* constituted a tiny fraction of the Jewish population, they succeeded in parleying their connections to transnational Sephardic trading networks and European status to occupy prominent positions in Tunisian commerce (Tsur 1996).

Beyond the split between Tunisia's Arabized Jews, «Jews who were culturally and/or linguistically Arab yet who did not self-define primarily as Arab» (Behar 2009, 747), and those who identified as Portuguese or Livornese, Jews were also divided among those who manage to adapt to increasing European influence, culminating in the colonization of Tunisia in 1881, and those who remained closely embedded in previous social patterns, where Jews had a secondary legal status defined by Islamic tradition and law. During this radical transformation, the winners in the Jewish community were above all those who obtained a Western-style education and mastered speaking and writing European languages, especially French and Italian, and were thus able to better adapt to the French takeover (Walters 2011).

Legal status also divided the Jews of Tunisia into multiple categories, a product of France leaving the Bey of Tunis as official ruler of the country, in order to avoid the resistance produced by direct colonization in Algeria. This however lead to "divided sovereignty" and attendant jurisdictional tangles that would bedevil the Protectorate throughout its existence (Lewis 2013). As opposed to Algeria, where all Jews had French citizenship as of 1870, only 25% of Tunisia's Jews would ever obtain this status. For this Frenchified bourgeois sector of the population, when independence came in

1956, even if they wished to remain in Tunisia, they were identified with the former colonizer and suffered accordingly.

Jewish Exile in the Post-Colonial Mediterranean

Tunisian Jews born in the final decades of French rule share a great deal with their coreligionists across Maghreb and the Middle East. To varying extents, certain sectors of these Arabized Jewish populations benefited from the European disruption of traditional social and economic hierarchies, which opened up new opportunities for Jews, who could translate between Europe and the Muslim Mediterranean. Yet this dependence on European powers meant that Jewish communities typically remained at arms length from nationalist movements and were sometimes perceived as colonial collaborators. In the turbulent years that followed World War II, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the fallout from the Suez Crisis of 1956, many Egyptian Jews with family in Israel were harassed or imprisoned and those holding French and British nationality were expelled (Laskier 1995). The devastating Algerian War, in which most Jews attempted to maintain an "impossible neutrality", despite ever-increasing violence from the FLN and OAS, and calls to choose sides (Stora 2004). Colette Fellous, born in 1950, poetically underscores this point in her memories of growing up in a new Tunisian nation, when the two external poles of the Tunisia Jewish community's identity, Europe and Israel, were identified as the enemy of the Arab world. «We were not informed about anything; we were barely discovering the name of the country where we lived. This land [Israel] that burns over there and is at war, we know it even less» (Fellous 2005, 78-9). The confusion a young Jewish girl felt about the identities ascribed to her was shared by many of her middle and upper class coreligionists, who were used to the in-between status they occupied during the colonial period.

> Jewish elites did not need, as did Arab elites, to construct and propose to the country a Tunisian national identity, but rather to affirm a communal identity in partnership with the different communities present in Tunisia, and with the guarantee that a secular and Republican France offered. (Hagège and Zarca 2004)

In the dominant Tunisian nationalist narrative on the other hand, the first decade of independence marks the country's glory days, as the colonized finally shook off the colonial mantle and instituted progressive reforms in education and women's rights, leading to Tunisia's reputation as a positive "exception" to the backwardness of Africa and the Arab world, promoted by President Habib Bourguiba himself as a national mythology (Allagui 2004; Bessis 2004).

For Tunisian Jews in France, Bourguiba's pro-Western stance facilitated a maintenance of contact with their homeland, which remained a destination many would visit in the

summer, both as heritage tourists as well as pilgrims, visiting sites of religious significance, such as the Ghriba synagogue in Djerba. Tunisia's reputation as a unique mediator between between "West and East" continues today as it is often touted as a "model" for the Arab Mediterranean, the only country to have made a successful democratic transition after the Arab Spring. Tunisian President Béji Caïd Essebsi continues to mobilize tropes of his country's exceptional moderation and modernity in asking for support from Europe and the US (Beau and Lagarde 2014; Essebsi 2015).

Triangular Co-Productions: Defining the Franco-Tunisian-Jewish Film

In this article, I will argue that Francophone Tunisian Jewish and Muslim filmmakers deal with these contradictions by a kind of nostalgic co-production that goes beyond mere technical collaboration to encompass a veritable representational pact based on triangulation. By this notion of the triangle, we see that «Jews and Muslims related to one another through their respective relationships to the French state and society and to definitions of French and imperial belonging […] the reverse was also true: Jews and Muslims often appraised their relationship to France through their relations with each other» (Katz 2015, 3). In the post-colonial context, many Jews and Muslims from Tunisia publicly agree to tell a version of history that puts primarily responsibility for the breakdown of centuries-long coexistence onto external forces. Rather, Jews and Muslims looking back *together* cast their grievances onto French colonialism or on the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. These external "push" factors are held responsible for Jewish migrations, disrupting prior Jewish-Arab relations, which were idealized and celebrated in the Ben Ali era.

In other settings however, especially now that the Tunisian Revolution helped create a relatively free field of expression online, some Tunisian Muslims fault Jews for having sided with France during the colonial period, not participating in the nationalist movement in significant numbers, and abandoning Tunisia to live in an Israeli state that systematically oppresses Palestinians, or having abandoned their homeland for the former colonial power, France. Equally, the vast body of first-person literature written by Tunisian Jews in French includes hundreds of texts, fiction and non-fiction, that offer remarkably nuanced reflections of reasons for departure. Many texts describe Tunisian Jews' sense of alienation in the violently anti-Zionist climate of the 1950s and 1960s, and their inability to adapt to the new state's vision of citizenship. Moreover, many openly state that they had no desire to see Arabic become Tunisia's official language and Islam its official religion, and generally felt that Western and specifically French modernity were the only viable models for nation-building (Tartakowksy 2013).

This nostalgic Mediterranean cinema movement has not been limited to Tunisia, but rather forms part of a movement of rediscovering lost Jewish and European minorities in the Arab-Muslim world. This phenomenon is not new in Egypt, the birthplace of Arab cinema, where a robust tradition of films from the 1930s to the 1950s represented characters of various ethno-religious communities and playfully highlighted the fluidity of their identity (Starr 2011). Nadia Kamel's documentary *Salata Baladi* (2007) sought to reconstruct the multi-confessional "house salad" that was Egypt before the Suez Crisis. In the wake of the Arab spring, a controversial miniseries dramatizing the old Jewish quarter of Cairo, *Haret al-Yahud* (2013), also emphasized Jews' rootedness in Egyptian urban space and society. However, these nostalgic portrayals often to fail to highlight to the radical racist violence that privileged non-Muslims over the indigenous masses, leading to a "grieving" tone that glorifies colonial populations with the erasure of the Egyptian working-class, who are not seen as "cosmopolitan" (Hanley 2008, Massad 2008).

In the Maghrebi context, Karin Albou's *Le chant des mariées* (2008) directly addressed the historical divisions between Jews and Muslims in Tunisia with the story of two girls coming of age during Nazi occupation of 1942-1943. Her film along with Ismaël Ferroukhi's *Les hommes libres* (2011), depicting Algerian Muslims and Jews in occupied Paris, underscored how Jews' adoption of French culture separated them from their Arab neighbors and friends and how the trauma of the brief Nazi occupation of Tunisia momentarily united them as victims of European powers. Closer to the narratives of decolonization addressed by the films we will look at in Tunisia, a series of films by Moroccan Muslim filmmakers reexamine the Jewish departure and are critical of the Moroccan government's collusion with the Zionist project of encouraging Jewish migration. These films sympathetically dramatize the plight of Jews after independence such as Hassan Benjelloun's *Où vas-tu Moshé?* (2007) and Mohamed Ismail's *Adieu mères* (2007), which show Jews reluctantly leaving their friends and neighbors in the face of fear created by Zionist and nationalist agitation. Kamel Hachkar's documentary *Tinghir-Jerusalem: Echoes from the mellah* (2013) retracing Jewish migrants from the testimonies of their neighbors to Israel. They redefine the Maghreb and Middle East as Jewish homelands that were illegitimately supplanted by Israel. Finally, in accordance with the discourse of current regimes, the films revalorize the intermediary position the Jews in the Arab Mediterranean, between colonizer and colonized, «represent[ing] loyal and protected subjects whose devotion to their country withstands the ruptures of postcolonial migration» (Kosansky and Boum 2012, 433).

The pull of multiple state projects and national identities (whether Tunisian, French, or Israeli) emerges in nostalgic cultural production as each community finds subtle ways of asserting its right to tell the story from its perspective even as it must recognize the need for the other. On a practical level, Jews need Muslims in the Maghreb to scout

locations, obtain permission from local governments to shoot, to serve as crew, and to appear in the films as themselves. The progressive Tunisian Muslim filmmaker, on the other hand, needs Tunisian Jews living in France, Canada and elsewhere to help raise funds for shooting, to serve as actors, and to circulate the films at Jewish film festivals.

While the hope has been that films showing coexistence in the past might combat the logic of civilizational clash so prevalent from the 1990s up to today, the problematic triangular structure of the nostalgic co-production means that the recuperation of the past does not address the root causes of the wounds of colonization and decolonization. Regardless of directorial intentions, the "third", whether France or Israel-Palestine often remains just out of the field of vision, literally and metaphorically. The French and Israeli presence stands as a kind of force that shifts attention from memory to history (and vice-versa), and consequently serves a screen onto which Jews and Muslims project past traumas and present disputes. Jews and Muslims are constantly drawn to relate to each other through the French language, both in its spoken and cinematic forms, and more broadly under the sign of French cultural modernity, a legacy of France's longstanding efforts for hegemony in the Mediterranean[2]. Meanwhile, Israel continues to claim to politically and spiritually represent them often and constitutes a liability for Jews wishing to return to visit Tunisia. Thus we might say that Jews and Muslims of Tunisian origins who wish to represent their shared past can only do so through France or the Middle East.

Images of Departure: It's Always Summer in La Goulette

If many recent productions such as *Tinghir-Jerusalem* highlight Maghrebi communities missing their Jewish neighbors, *Summer in La Goulette* nostalgically recalls glory days of Tunisian cosmopolitanism through the story of three families, one Jewish, one Muslim, and one Sicilian in the small port near Tunis. The film features a vibrant world where communities mix and mingle, particularly through exchanges of food, festivals, and shared sociability. While the idyll is strained by the girls in each family flirting with boys of other confessions, demonstrating that boundaries still did exist, the veritable culprit is the outbreak of war in the Middle East. The anti-Jewish riots of June 1967 are never shown in the film, leaving an important rift in Jewish-Muslim coexistence unexplored.

The film was a popular choice for international film festivals (including Jewish film festivals) in the late 1990s and continues to be seen as an excellent pedagogical document of Tunisia's cosmopolitan past, in a recent textbook on Francophone

[2] Most recently incarnated by Nicolas Sarkozy's proposal of a *Union pour la Méditerranée*. (Daguzan 2009) and by renewed French military action in Mali and Syria under François Hollande.

Cinema (Boudraa and Accilien 2014) and by scholars of Maghrebi history (Clancy-Smith), yet it also provoked lukewarm responses from many critics who considered it a didactic rose-colored nostalgia trip. How then do we address this paradox in which "good sentiments make for 'bad' cinema" (Brozgal 2013)?

I argue that most critics have overlooked a critical dimension of the film and its project to resurrect not so much the cosmopolitanism of the past, though this is certainly a main objective, but rather to pay homage to the "co-produced" history of Tunisian cinema and identity. Boughedir did just this after a special screening in 1994 of Serge Moati's autobiographical film *Les jasmins de la véranda: un retour à la maison natale* (1979) and Nouri Bouzid's *Homme de cendres* (1986) (Boughedir 1994) The filmmaker's remarks clarify the impulse for writing the script of *Summer in La Goulette* with Bouzid and bringing it to the screen. From the outset, Boughedir's use of cinema as a prism for the past is clear, describing himself as «an orphan of this pluralist Tunisia», (Boughedir 1994, 139), echoing Moati's focus on the literal and symbolic children of decolonization.

The filmmaker evokes his former classmates of all ethno-religious groups that attended the premier educational institution of the Protectorate, the Lycée Carnot, and puts them alongside the pioneers of Tunisian cinema such as Jewish innovator Albert Samama Chikly, who directed the first Tunisian feature in 1922. Chikly's daughter, Haydée, is considered the first professional Tunisian actress, having starred in Rex Ingram's *The Arab* (1924). She is one of the many figures from the past to appear in *Summer in La Goulette*. Boughedir deliberately co-produces the Tunisian past to attempt to reestablish links he believes have been severed because of the excesses of nationalism, «which rejects anything that is not strictly and orthodoxly national according to narrow criteria of belonging to the nation» (Boughedir 1994, 140, 142). Refusing the equation of Jews with Zionists often made by journalists and politicians across the region, Boughedir strives to "stich back together these scraps of memory". He takes the films screened exemplary of what can be achieved *only* in Tunisia and is particularly trenchant in his criticism of the Egyptian film industry, which he faults for its poor quality and hostility toward Jews (Boughedir 1994, 143). Thus he reinforces Tunisia's uniqueness by externalizing responsibility.

Summer in La Goulette fully embraces a Tunisian cinematic exception, bringing a veritable panoply of figures into the production, the two most prominent being Michel Boujenah and Claudia Cardinale. Boujenah not only plays the comic role of TSF, a homeless man who wanders the beaches with his wireless radio, listening for news and music from Radio Cairo and Radio Beirut, but also sings the French-language song *La Goulette*, that accompanies the opening credits and praises the place where "Jews, Muslims, and Christians, everyone lives in happiness". In securing Boujenah's

participation, the film thus offers highly visible paratextual Jewish presence for diasporic spectators.

Boughedir does not simply include celebrities in this portrayal of the communities that made La Goulette synonymous with the diversity of the Mediterranean world itself, he also carefully incorporates some of the icons of communal memory, including the itinerant nut vendors, "Oui-oui" and "Je suis là", know by their proprietary calls for hawking their wares. The sellers of roasted nuts often appear in Tunisian Jewish memoirs about the late colonial period. Last but not least, Bougehdir brings in some of the Muslim actors and actresses that contributed mightily to the New Tunisian Cinema, including Mustapha Adouani and Fatma Ben Saïdane. Another actress in the film, Hélène Catzaras, is of Greek Tunisian origins and continues to direct the Espace Culturel Grec in Tunis. Having reevaluated the extensive and premeditated casting and construction of *Summer in La Goulette* we can better understand Boughedir's project, not so much to gain the sympathy of Western audiences by trashing Arab nationalism, but rather to re-animate the memory of all Tunisia's communities, Muslim, Jewish, Sicilian, Greek (but not the French!), and the fractious and fragile utopia he believes they shared. He does this through engaging members of the various communities in a co-production of their imagined past.

Images of Return: Smelling the Jasmine

While *Summer in La Goulette* ultimately implicates the Middle East conflict as the primary force in ending centuries of Jewish-Muslim coexistence in Tunisia, the telefilm *Villa Jasmin* (2007) moves away from Israeli-Arab conflict to offer a striking revision of France's role in the dissolution of intercommunal relations in North Africa. Adapted by Boughedir from Serge Moati's two-part autobiography *Villa Jasmin* (2003) and *Du côté des vivants* (2006), the telefilm reconstructs the journalist parents' relationship and experiences during the Popular Front years and the Second World War. Moati's father, also named Serge, was a well-known journalist with the Socialist Party and early supporter of Tunisian independence from France. Yet he remained deeply attached to a vision of France as the land of Revolution and the Rights of Man.

The film begins on a ferry taking Serge (Clément Sibony) and Jeanne (Judith Davis), his non-Jewish French wife, across the Mediterranean from Marseille to Tunis. We see the ferry in the beautiful turquoise waters of the bay of Tunis as the camera pans across the coastline, before fixing on the iconic Bou Kournine mountain that stands like a sentinel over Tunis. Boughedir cuts back to the boat where we see Serge with eyes closed, breathing deeply, exclaiming: "Ah, the jasmine. Do you smell the jasmine?". Immediately, we are thrust into Serge's nostalgic quest through the olfactory reconnection with "his" country. A male Tunisian passenger standing behind the

couple takes note of this feat: "You smell the jasmine all the way from here? You're good!" Serge begins to turn back and explain that he is not the average tourist, "in fact, I was born here", but Jeanne manages to interrupt him first. "You're not going to tell your life's story to everybody!". The French woman thus cuts short a possible encounter between a Jew and Muslim who share a common homeland.

From the opening of the film, we see a shifting triangle, with Tunisian Muslims representing both past and present, France in the form of Jeanne and her baby representing the future, and Serge, like many Tunisian Jews in search of his childhood, caught in between. As soon he and Jeanne get off the boat, they assume the position of European tourists, getting decorated with jasmine garlands as they touch land by eager vendors. The "natural" relation to the country, Serge's smelling the jasmine, is undermined by the tourist's relation, buying jasmine for his foreign wife. Here the Tunisian Jew's complex relation to the country gives way to a less complicated identity of foreign tourist, one that the Ben Ali regime worked hard to attract in the 1990s and 2000s (Hazbun 2008, 37-76).

Throughout the film, Serge depends on Tunisian Muslims, not Jews, not to show him the traces of his family's past. First, he visits the Borgel cemetery, divided into multiple sections, one for Christians, one for Livornese Jews, and for Tunisian Jews. A young boy approaches him, proposing to lead him to his parents' tomb. Though dubious about the boy's knowledge, Serge gives him his family name "Boccara" and follows him. The boy leads Serge toward what seems to be the Catholic section, despite Serge having told him that he is Jewish. Finally, the boy stops and leans up against another tomb. Serge, exasperated with what seems to be a wild goose chase, gives up on the boy: "You don't know anything, do you? Go on, it's not a big deal". He gives the boy some money, only to realize in shock that he is standing in front of his parents' tomb. Upon touching it, the camera cuts to the first of many flashbacks that will highlight the Jewish presence hidden under the surface of contemporary Tunisia.

After seeing the tomb, he goes in search of the family's home, the titular "Villa Jasmin". Black and white photos in hand, he approaches an old cobbler, working on the street, hoping he can give him directions. The man responds that he's only lived in Tunis since 1957, the year Moati's parents died and he and his sister left for France. The *rue Courbet*, where the family lived, has now become, significantly, *rue Palestine*. Hence the city has changed in its population, with Tunisians from the countryside moving to the capital, and in the changes in street names, from names that reflect France's cultural hegemony, to names that reflect Tunisia's post-independence reorientation toward the Arab world.

The man's partner leads him to the house, which has now been taken over by a business making electric cables. All of sudden, Serge has a vision of his mother calling

to him from the balcony, telling him to come inside to see his father. When his mother goes back inside the house, Bougehdir cuts to the young cobbler who also enjoins him to come inside and look around. A clearly upset Serge refuses as politely as he can: "I'd rather stay outside." This moment expresses his desire to remain in his fleeting memories of the past, as opposed to being confronted with the present. "Outside" in this case is just as much of a temporal marker as it is spatial; Serge is only willing to experience present-day Tunisia through the lens of his childhood memories.

The hotel restaurant offers another space for Serge and Jeanne to joust over the precise nature of his search for identity. Serge takes a bit of a pasta dish, finding it lacking in *harissa*, the fiery Tunisian chili paste that often serves metonymically to describe the full-flavored nature of life in Tunisia in many diasporic Jews' nostalgic accounts of their past[3]. By comparing the flavors of the sun-drenched Mediterranean shores to the cold, grey climate of Paris and bland French food, they symbolically affirm the past over the present, and the lost homeland over the country of adoption. In this case, Serge accuses the dish of being adulterated for tourists' weak palettes. Jeanne responds that they are tourists in a hotel for tourists, which provokes a burst of anger from Serge: "But I'm not a tourist, I like to have my mouth on fire, it's my country, I remember everything, every street corner, I am at home here". Though the camera has shown that Serge is completely lost, in a literal and metaphorical sense in Tunisia, his claims through taste to a profound sense of belonging express a real crisis that cannot be solved without triangulation, the continual intervention of an "other".

Visiting a dilapidated theater where a Muslim caretaker shows the couple in, the film flashes back to the moment when Serge's parents first met. At the end of this flashback, Serge wakes up in bed, shaken by a terrible nightmare of being alone in a courtyard, feeling responsible for his parents' death. He tells Jeanne: "I have no memories of when I was young, Jeanne. No one told me anything or else I erased everything". When Jeanne protests that he constantly reminisces about his childhood in their daily life in France, he describes his previous declarations as a mixture of "vague memories and things I've dreamt up". His edifice of restorative nostalgia gradually crumbles against that which cannot be recuperated from the past.

Toward the end of the film, Jeanne pointedly asks Serge why he doesn't speak any Arabic. Serge's poetic response avoids admitting that he grew up more French than Tunisian. "I don't know, it's like a music that comes back from far away". Fed up with his fruitless search for traces, Jeanne attacks him for being insensitive to her fragile

[3] Harissa even became the symbol of the Tunisian Jewish community online, www.harissa.com, a place for members of the community to post stories, photos, anecdotes, recipes, and to reconnect with lost friends and loved ones, split up by migration. By choosing a local commodity, Jews emphasize their rootedness.

condition and the well-being of their child, a symbol of the French future. "What you're looking for doesn't exist anymore. Aside from one or two old people who maybe vaguely knew your father, you won't find anything, it's been too long. You chase after ghosts all day long, you don't even see the state I'm in". Serge's dogged persistence in search of the past allows the viewer to recover part of the unique Jewish contribution to Tunisian history, the debates about Tunisia's relation to France that marked the 1940s and 1950s, the role of progressive Jews in the struggle for autonomy and independence. On the personal level however, the quest for the past comes at the expense of the present (Jeanne) and future (their French baby).

Serge's final stop on his quest takes him to his childhood nanny Rachel, played by one of the most well known faces of the "New Tunisian Cinema" of the Ben Ali years, Fatma Ben Saïdane. Serge arrives in a run-down apartment building, whose beautiful Arabesque arches and tiles remain visible. He asks a woman if Rachel stills lives there and she immediately recognizes him, explaining that Rachel often speaks of him and has long waited for his visit. He goes up to the old woman's apartment and she breaks down in tears. Finally, someone recognizes Serge, reconnecting him to his childhood memories and his homeland. Rachel gives him a locket from his Tsia, his paternal grandmother, an aristocratic Sephardic Jewish woman who despite constantly reminiscing about the grandeurs of Italy, was born in Tunisia and never left it. Rachel's gift also comes with a blessing for his future child, implicitly recognizing that the Tunisian chapter of the family's life is over.

Meanwhile, Serge takes the locket to Jeanne and they sit down in the gardens of the Villa Jasmin overlooking the sea. He gives her the locket upon which are inscribed words in Italian that he only half understands. Jeanne, on the other hand, knows they come from the *Divine Comedy*, "L'amore che move il sole e altre stelle" [The Love which moves the sun and the other stars]. Serge places the locket around her neck. The camera cuts to the final scene with the couple once again on the bridge of the ferry, this time taking them "home" across the Mediterranean to France. The final words, significantly, are spoken by Jeanne: "it's a message from your parents to us". The couple takes the place of Serge's parents thanks to this iconic quote from European literary history that also connects with his family's Italian identity. Here the past is comfortably exorcised and the circle is complete as the boat disappears into the horizon, heading north.

Coproducing Memory in a Mediterranean Market

During the filming of *Villa Jasmin* another member of the Moati family, Lucie Cariès, daughter of Nine Moati, Serge's older sister and writer, made her own pilgrimage to Tunisia. Cariès's documentary *Bon baisers de la Goulette* (2007) offers a real-life

dialogue through portraits of Tunisian Jews returning "home". Serge Moati produced the film through his company and it incorporates footage from the making of *Villa Jasmin*, offering it as proof of the Tunisian exception that features so prominently in nostalgic discourse: "the story of a Jewish family brought to the screen by a Muslim in an Arab country, a singular collaboration, faithful to the tradition of the Tunisian mosaic". On a more practical level, Cariès's film also functions as a cast and crew reunion for the decades-long relation between Jews and Muslims in the Franco-Tunisian film sector.

The documentary goes a great deal further in analyzing the endogenous causes of Jewish-Muslim conflict than the previous works discussed here, demonstrating that Jews were well aware of traditional anti-Jewish sentiment in Islamic tradition and of their fragile status as "protected" minority (*dhimma*) before colonization. Some of her Jewish informants even recognize the great error of having devalued and ignored the Arabic language and Tunisian geography and history during the colonial period. Others point out that many Muslims were envious of Jewish prominence in the liberal professions and the economy as a whole after independence and felt this diminutive minority was overrepresented. Yet after interviewing renowned scholars and members of the community such as historians Lucette Valensi and Sonia Fellous who stress the structural ambivalence of the Jewish condition in Muslim majority Tunisia, Cariès ultimately reverts to triangulation, intimating that the ongoing Middle East crisis is all that stands in the way.

The film's message, hopeful on the surface, but shadowed by the present, is best conveyed in the final scenes in which one of Cariès's main informants, Ruth Hassan, takes the film crew through the market in La Goulette. Hassan has been shown to be a fierce lover of both her Tunisian and Jewish origins, taking her daughter to see the family's old apartment and nostalgically evoking her childhood on the shores of the Mediterranean. As she searches for the ripest apricots, speaking a mixture of dialectal Arabic and French, clearly friendly with the local merchants, the presence of the cameras provokes an unexpected spectacle.

Hassan first attempts to explain the film crew, but the oldest of the merchants quickly takes over, telling Lucie Cariès in broken French, "Tunisia is very happy for you. You are welcome here. My President very happy for you, he loves you!". The repeated mention of Ben Ali and his equivalency with Tunisia itself is significant, demonstrating the extent to which the population understood the regime's mobilization of the Tunisian exception toward the outside world. Interestingly, Ruth Hassan interrupts to ask a rather pointed question that gets to the heart of post-colonial triangulation: "He loves whom? The French or the Jews?", to which the man responds evasively: "My President loves everyone". Hassan attempts to force the man into a specific affirmation, "[h]e

loves the Jews?". The old man finally responds, "and you too!" and squeezes her cheeks, which provokes laughter all around and defuses the tension.

The presence of the camera crew functions as a "third" in this situation, where Jews' desire to affirm their place post-colonial Tunisian nation leads to a rare occurrence of public discord. A younger man approaches the swelling crowd around the camera crew, eager to establish his connection to the film project, and talks about his grandmother who used to work as the masseuse at the *hammam* in the neighborhood. After Hassan fondly remembers her and jokes about her breasts hanging down to her waist, the young man tells the camera, "[t]hat, that's pure Tunisian… that's concentrate!". Yet this moment of communion quickly leads to thornier areas of the past, as the young man explains to Cariès and the crew that La Goulette used to be full of Maltese, Italians, and Jews, fellow Mediterraneans who lived in harmony with indigenous Tunisian Muslims. While Hassan cuts in to mention that she still comes back on a regular basis, the director asks him if this harmony between communities still exists today. After having momentarily partaken in the film's nostalgic voyage into the past, he simply responds: "No, because them, they left". Hassan's response is to move things away from the contentious past to the present, insisting that she is at home in Tunisia now, and only slightly mitigating this false note. This simple assessment of an unexplained Jewish departure, a repeated theme in Muslim Mediterranean memories, cuts against the grain of the film's narrative, and begs the question of why nearly all Jews left. The conversation is conveniently drowned out by a *derbouka* player and a dancer, which draws the crew and onlookers in, and provokes ululations from Ruth Hassan. Though it is difficult to assess whether this display is deliberately staged to attract the film crew, it seems significant that, as at so many moments of the Ben Ali years, the spectacle of a shared Jewish-Muslim culture papers over the conditions of coexistence, namely silence about exile and avoiding recriminations about past injustices.

After Ben Ali: A Future for Judeo-Tunisian Nostalgia?

After having seen how Jews of Tunisian origin construct their homeland imaginary in diaspora through triangular collaborations, it seems appropriate to return to the striking response to the fall of the Ben Ali regime that made these productions possible in the first place. Serge Moati, whose public image has been shaped by his autobiographical work about growing up in the last years of French rule in Tunisia, expressed enthusiastic support for the Tunisian Revolution. Yet he was also quick to admit that he and others had failed to speak up against Ben Ali. He first published his enthusiastic observations on the aftermath of the revolution in *Dernières nouvelles de Tunis* (2011).

However, rumors had spread in the Tunisian press that President Ben Ali himself had given Moati a summer home in the chic coastal suburb of La Marsa, near the journalist's birth home, the "Villa Jasmin" that functions as synecdoche for the Tunisian (Jewish) dream. In multiple interviews, Moati admitted to being solicited to help reorganize Tunisian national television after Ben Ali's rise to power in 1987, but also insisted that he offered his services voluntarily without accepting remuneration (Dedet 2011). Most significantly, Moati justified his cozy relations with the regime through a kind of Tunisian Jewish "duty to memory" that required passing over the abuses of the regime in silence in order to maintain a continuous Jewish presence:

> I blame myself […] I was the host of a TV show *Ripostes* for 10 years, and not once did I speak about Tunisia. I'll tell you why. I wanted to go back. I didn't want to be harassed upon arriving at the airport, and I'm one of the last representatives of the Jewish community of Tunisia. For me that's important. My parents are buried there. There are 1,200 Jews in Tunisia, there were 600,000 [sic]. I wanted to be there so that there would still be Moatis there (Moati 2011)

So while Moati recognized his failure to speak up effectively, his self-justification in terms of the need for access in order to maintain the idealized notion of a Jewish connection to a Tunisian homeland. His wild exaggeration of the size of population, which only reached about 100.000 at its apogee, reveals the hyperbolic importance of the past. Despite Moati's insistence – «I cannot be far from Tunisia when something important is happening there; it's my country» (Moati 2011) – his patriotism does mean that he considers returning permanently.

Franco-Judeo-Tunisian co-productions thus offer a unique form of nostalgia, one that obsessively returns to the recent colonial and post-colonial past, which it in turn constantly reinvents and displaces. The films critique the decline of Tunisia's cosmopolitanism, the departure of Europeans and Jews in the 1950s and 1960s, yet find it difficult to explain where the responsibility for these traumatic transformations lies. These narratives triangulate, allowing Jews and Muslims to relate through the omnipresent realities of France and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They thus express the substance of the Tunisian exception, the idea that "despite the departures, despite the tensions, despite history, Jews and Muslims can again live side by side" (Cariès 2007).

However, the triangular condition of Tunisia's Jews and the Tunisian Jewish diaspora itself does not seem to be improving as the Mediterranean constitutes an ever deadlier barrier between Europe and its margins. Thus the question remains, how does the focus on the utopian possibility of reconstructing a cosmopolitan Tunisia steer our attention away from those places where Jews of Maghrebi and Middle Eastern origins and Muslims are already living side by side, in Paris, in Montreal, in Jerusalem and

elsewhere? How does focusing on the diversity of the past obscure the structural inequalities that led to anti-colonial conflict and persist today in the Mediterranean basin, for the profit of some and to the detriment of many others? Will focusing on coexistence then and there be able to transform relations in a region in crisis, here and now?

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I porti del Mediterraneo: mondi sociali e spazi di frontiera

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Abstract

The Mediterranean is a place crossed by many stories and life experiences. In this regard, this study proposes the analysis of port cities as social spaces marked by the constant flow of people, objects, ideas and meanings. The continuous contact with specific issues such as immigration, safety and security of travelers, economic development and identity crisis of sea communities makes port cities a kind of social laboratory where is possible analyze theories, methodologies and reflections on the contemporary Mediterranean. Maritime cities share the same fate as their ports, and are still able to communicate the voices, the memories and the knowledge of the Mediterranean to stimulate and increase the thoughts and socio-political theories of this great arena of discussion and meeting.

Keywords

Maritime Ethnography - Port Cities - Mediterranean Space - Social Theory - Anthropology

Pensare l'area Mediterranea oggi significa senza dubbio riflettere su un grande campo di studi e ricerche costituito da analisi sociali, da indagini storiche, da politiche e da proposte di inclusione e cooperazione tra contesti culturali differenti. Significa inoltre rivolgersi alla nostra storia: una storia contraddistinta da splendori e decadimenti, da asservimenti e conquiste, da devozione religiosa e da spirito marittimo, da idee e progetti che, con forza e dedizione, hanno dato forma alla società nella quale viviamo oggi. Il Mediterraneo è un insieme di vie marittime e terrestri collegate tra di loro: è un'area contraddistinta dal flusso e dal movimento di viaggiatori, merci, idee e significati; «uno spazio-movimento» (Braudel 1987, 51) che si manifesta nel viaggio, nell'incontro con l'alterità più estrema e nello scontro ideologico e politico. Più specificatamente, il Mediterraneo è:

> una immensa, profonda, stratificata rete di aree culturali. Mare pescosissimo. Smisurato giacimento di sedimenti storici, sovrapposti, mischiati, confusi, dispersi, nascosti, obliati. Il Mediterraneo è uno spazio emergente […]. Centrale per la politica, la cultura e la comprensione della storia dell'Europa (Giovannini 2005, 9).

Questa definizione di Giovannini rende chiara l'importanza dell'area mediterranea all'interno delle politiche europee: zona di confine affacciata su tre continenti, abitata da una moltitudine di individui differenti per cultura, politica e culti religiosi, il Mediterraneo si manifesta come un contenitore che riflette al suo interno tensioni e fondamentalismi.

È necessario prendere in esame quest'area come un campo di lavoro nel quale favorire un comune interesse solidale fondato sulla conoscenza della diversità e sul rispetto dell'identità. Questo obiettivo è delineabile nella costruzione di una "rete tra i territori", segnata dai valori materiali e immateriali che rappresentano il patrimonio di saperi e conoscenze tanto dell'area Nord quanto dell'area Sud del Mediterraneo:

> Il grande progetto unificante è costruire reti infrastrutturali immateriali che producano una coesione territoriale per rendere fruibile tutto il territorio mediterraneo senza depauperare i tessuti urbani e ambientali, ampliandone la conoscenza e favorendo, quindi, l'attrattività anche di tutte le zone di difficile fruibilità, ottenendo anche risultati nella tutela e nella valutazione della sostenibilità dei territori per le azioni di valorizzazione (Gambardella 2005, 17).

Dunque, si tratta di ripensare al ruolo delle comunità marittime, legate a doppio filo da tradizioni, costumi e valori che hanno tramandato di generazione in generazione, «facendo della vita di mare e in mare un vero e proprio stile di vita» (Meglio 2012, 15). Sulle sponde del Mar Mediterraneo, questo insieme di comunità è reso unito dall'elemento di comunione riconosciuto (il mare) e dalla presenza di uno stesso ambiente fisico che produce determinate dinamiche relazionali.

A questo proposito, ritengo importante riflettere sulla natura delle città portuali e dei loro porti, sulla loro storia e sulla loro evoluzione. In quanto nodi infrastrutturali che mettono in connessione merci e persone, i porti non devono essere analizzati soltanto nella loro natura economica, come zone di spedizione e trasporto: osservare il Mediterraneo dal punto di vista di un porto significa scrutarlo nella sua natura di spazio percorribile, territorio di interscambio non solo merceologico, ma anche culturale e sociale.

L'esame dei porti mediterranei ci permette dunque di cogliere la libertà, la suggestione e i valori che il contesto marittimo è ancora in grado di restituire. I porti sono spazi di frontiera, in cui ogni giorno si incrociano pescatori, viaggiatori, marittimi: sono i luoghi dello scambio economico sono spazi di sviluppo sociale in grado di produrre valori e saperi condivisi; sono i punti di raccordo tra la terra e il

mare, mare che meglio di ogni altra immagine sintetizza l'equilibrio particolare dei diversi ambienti e delle diverse culture mediterranee; sono la rappresentazione di una "speranza" o di un "sogno europeo" per le migliaia di migranti che attraversano da costa a costa i continenti che si affacciano sul mare.

È proprio questa consapevolezza di trovarci di fronte ad un contesto denso di emozioni e fragilità a guidarci nella comprensione della natura degli ambienti portuali. Un'indagine sui porti può offrire al dibattito sul Mediterraneo un campo di riflessioni aperto alle problematiche sociali, economiche e politiche circa il rapporto tra i ventuno paesi che il mare abbraccia. Ritengo questo un punto di partenza necessario per ogni discorso su di esso; d'altronde, come sostiene Pedrag Matvejevic nel suo *Breviario mediterraneo*, chi non ha annusato una stiva di bordo, le botti non lavate dentro una cantina, l'olio di oliva inacidito, il catrame dei cantieri, il pesce crudo andato a male, come fa a parlare di Mediterraneo (Matvejevic 1991)?

I porti del bacino Mediterraneo come porte d'accesso a mondi sociali e globali

Ogni porto possiede una personale storia, una specifica collocazione geografica, una serie di determinati servizi e una diversa relazione con il territorio e la comunità locale. Ogni porto, però, possiede un carattere univoco che lo rende simile a tutti gli altri.

I contesti portuali, infatti, sono dei veri e propri "microcosmi", mondi a parte dove si costituiscono e si intrecciano relazioni sociali tra individui provenienti da contesti culturali differenti, e dove sono presenti pub, ristoranti, negozi, tabaccherie, che offrono servizi e ristoro ai pescatori, ai lavoratori portuali, ai marinai, ai passeggeri in transito; insomma, all'intera comunità marittima. Non deve dunque sorprendere che gli ambienti portuali siano stati ritenuti per anni delle vere e proprie *sailortowns*, lontane dai ritmi e dai doveri della società terrestre e caratterizzate per la «vita, confusione, colori, movimento che si intrecciano in un contesto ristretto e famigliare» (Cipolla 1997, 2163).

Oggi, questo ambiente marittimo è stato investito dai profondi cambiamenti causati dal fenomeno della globalizzazione, dallo sviluppo tecnologico ed economico dei mezzi di trasporto, dai nuovi assetti geopolitici. Di questo contesto globale risente molto il Mediterraneo, mitica "culla della civiltà" e della navigazione; mare che stimola l'immaginazione e lo spirito degli uomini; ponte liquido che ha spinto i popoli che lo abitano a intraprendere il viaggio e l'esplorazione, attratti da quella sua peculiare immagine di «limite, una barriera

che si estende fino all'orizzonte, come un'immensità ossessiva, onnipresente, meravigliosa, enigmatica» (Braudel 1987, 31).

Difatti, con l'avvento del trasporto su larga scala, il Mediterraneo è diventato più piccolo, restringendosi ogni giorno di più, assumendo quasi la dimensione di un lago che svela tutte le sue forme e i suoi spazi. Ciò nonostante, esso ha incrementato la sua importanza per ciò che concerne lo sviluppo di strategie politiche e istituzionali inerenti ai divari socio-economici tra la sponda Nord e la sponda Sud del bacino. Nello scenario politico contemporaneo, il Mediterraneo:

> appare oggi una regione segnata dalle contraddizioni: un'area economica integrata al suo interno, come i dati sull'interscambio, gli investimenti diretti esteri e la logistica mostrano in maniera evidente, ma con tutte le criticità di uno spazio disomogeneo, all'interno del quale entrano in contatto paesi che mantengono profondi divari economici, diversi indicatori di sviluppo umano, processi di democratizzazione *in fieri* e conflitti mai sopiti che alimentano un perenne stato d'instabilità politica (Ferragina 2015, 8).

L'area mediterranea è una zona di intenso dibattito e riflessione nello scenario geopolitico contemporaneo; uno spazio pubblico in grado di svelare limiti e criticità delle azioni politiche e istituzionali su un territorio frammentario e incoerente che alle immagini concilianti delle coste, del mare e degli splendidi paesaggi contrappone le immagini dei barconi carichi di migranti e dei morti che galleggiano sulla riva del mare e si adagiano sulla spiaggia.

Questo essere una "frontiera permeabile" rende la zona euro-mediterranea una sfida per le politiche europee e globali, ma anche una grande opportunità. Anche in questo periodo storico caratterizzato dall'incertezza e dal cambiamento economico e sociale, il Mediterraneo continua a rappresentare una "terra di mezzo" in cui si intrecciano numerose storie ed esperienze di vita; questo suo situarsi costantemente tra categorie come "noi" e "loro, "qui" e "altrove", sviluppo e sottosviluppo, progresso e arretratezza, consente alle ricerche e agli studi contemporanei di istituire quella che possiamo definire un'Antropologia dell'Alterità, ovvero una branca disciplinare che indaga lo spazio urbano dove emergono nuove forme di relazione tra le comunità; dove si costruiscono novelle ibridazioni culturali; dove è possibile sperimentare e attuare proposte politiche che puntino al rispetto della diversità e all'inclusione sociale.

Lo spazio mediterraneo è un laboratorio naturale di indagine sociale, in grado di offrire prospettive e visioni circa i processi di integrazione economica, sociale e politica. Per questo motivo i porti costituiscono il referente principale della nostra indagine, in quanto essi rappresentano luoghi e spazi urbani ove si riflettono le

discontinuità, le differenze e le connessioni di un Mediterraneo che si manifesta nel medesimo istante come "storico" e "contemporaneo".

Le aree portuali sono dei *non luoghi* (Augé 1992), spazi sociali dove scorrono individui, oggetti, idee e significati, nel cui anonimato è possibile accedere solo fornendo una prova della propria identità. Sono zone di lavoro, caratterizzate dal flusso e dal movimento, in cui è possibile osservare ancora pratiche e gesti legati ad un Mediterraneo passato, lontano nello spazio e nel tempo:

> Assecondando lo sviluppo economico e sociale delle varie città (un esempio su tutte le Repubbliche marinare), [il porto] è stato il luogo naturale di mediazione tra esse e il mare, ed ha sempre rappresentato una risorsa cui attingere per far fronte alle esigenze di mobilità dei cittadini e delle industrie (Meglio 2012, 21-2).

Un'etnografia urbana dei porti deve tenere conto soprattutto di ciò che non si vede, di ciò che resta nascosto, preservato da chi è estraneo a questo ambiente: camminare in un porto diventa un'esperienza piena, in cui bisogna stare attenti a cogliere ogni particolare di un luogo che si manifesta non soltanto come zona di approdo o ancoraggio, ma come palcoscenico della vita quotidiana.

In sostanza, significa udire i vociferi dei pescatori che partono o rientrano dalla giornata di pesca, e godere di ogni aspetto legato alla loro gestualità e al loro linguaggio; significa vedere l'impatto contemporaneo del turismo crocieristico, in cui i turisti, soggiogati da quei "mondi galleggianti" che sono le crociere, si affannano nel cercare di vedere quante più cose nel più breve tempo possibile; significa osservare lo stretto controllo relativo al trasporto delle merci e alla mobilità dei passeggeri; significa cogliere la fatica di un camionista che attende di salire con il suo camion su un traghetto; significa condividere la speranza e la paura dei richiedenti asilo che arrivano come clandestini; significa uscirne e rientrare a casa con un grande e sconfinato senso di solitudine. Questa sensazione emerge dal fatto che i porti sono spazi al "confine": chi vive il confine sperimenta il sentimento della solitudine e della libertà. Il confine si afferma allora come l'esperienza stessa del viaggio.

Dimenticare le sensazioni e le rappresentazioni che i porti trasmettono all'interno del dibattito sul Mediterraneo «rappresenta forse oggi una delle ragioni della [sua] marginalizzazione dalle grandi strategie culturali e politiche delle potenze occidentali» (Minca 2004, 3).

Per questo motivo proseguiamo la nostra analisi illustrando le fasi dello sviluppo portuale secondo lo schema delineato da Brian Hoyle al fine di presentare il

nostro *case study*: il porto di Bari. Se, come sostiene Matvejevic: «la natura del porto dipende dal modo in cui il mare gli sta dentro: l'Atlantico o il Pacifico sono i mari delle distanze, il Mediterraneo è il mare della vicinanza, l'Adriatico è il mare dell'intimità» (Matvejevic 1991, 26), lo scalo pugliese ci consente di analizzare uno spazio di mobilità e comunicazione che si ritrova a mediare questi due mari distinti nel carattere, ovvero tra una dimensione "dell'intimità" e una dimensione "della vicinanza".

Tra economia, geografia e società: le fasi di sviluppo dei porti

I porti sono nodi strutturali di interscambio in grado di attivare la rete di relazioni tra gli attori sociali e le loro produzioni culturali, costituendosi di fatto come spazi urbani che trovano il loro senso nel concetto di connessione. È importante prestare attenzione a quest'ultimo termine, poiché sottolinea in modo chiaro la funzione degli ambienti portuali all'interno del contesto territoriale, ovvero come aree che stimolano lo sviluppo urbano, il progresso economico e la formazione di nuovi e inediti contesti socio-culturali: «The history of port is, in great measure, the history of civilisation» (Morgan e Bird 1958, 150).

Le zone portuali hanno sempre avuto un peso fondamentale nello sviluppo delle società: infatti, attraverso il mare i differenti popoli mediterranei hanno dato vita ad una "comunità culturale" che possiede una memoria unitaria del passato (Pistarino 1983), inclusa una serie di valori legati alla storia, al paesaggio, all'architettura, al turismo e al mito; questo insieme di valori permette la comprensione del carattere universale inerente all'immagine e l'idea dei porti mediterranei.

Gli approdi delle città affacciate sul Mediterraneo offrono dunque agli occhi dello studioso uno specchio della realtà marittima e dei suoi cambiamenti a livello sociale ed economico. Tali processi di trasformazione sono stati indagati da Brian Hoyle, che ha delineato sei fasi di sviluppo nella relazione tra il porto e la città.

Stage	Symbol ○City ●Port	Period	Characteristics
I .Primitive port/city		Ancient/medieval to 19th century	Close spatial and functional association between city an port.
II.Expanding port/city		19th-early 20th century	Rapid commercial/industrial growth forces port to develop beyond city confines, with linear quays and break-bulk industries.
III.Modern industrial port/city		mid-20th century	Industrial growth (especially oil refining) and introduction of containers/ro-ro require separation/space.
IV.Retreat from the waterfront		1960s-1980s	Changes in maritime technology induce growth of separate maritime industrial development areas.
V.Redevelopment of waterfront		1970s-1990s	Large-scale modern port consumes large areas of land/water space: urban renewal of original core.
VI.Renewal of port/city links		1980s-2000+	Globalization and intermodalism transform port roles; port·city associations renewed: urban redevelopment enhances port·city intergration.

Fig. 1- Schema che illustra le fasi dello sviluppo del rapporto tra città e porti delineati da Hoyle (2000, 405).

Come illustrato nello schema sopra, la prima fase identificata dallo studioso britannico fa riferimento al periodo che va dal Medioevo al XIX secolo: difatti, fino alle metà del 1800, i grandi scali portuali erano centri di importazione ed esportazione su larga scala di beni e manufatti. I porti erano parte integrante del tessuto cittadino, vicini alle stesse fabbriche di produzione di beni e materiali. Ciò è reso chiaro dal fatto che i porti, soprattutto quelli naturali, erano inseriti all'interno dei sistemi di difesa:

> non tutti i porti antichi avevano un ruolo economico, essi infatti potevano essere adibiti esclusivamente a scopi militari con esigenze tecniche e strategiche diverse dai porti commerciali (Beltrame 2012, 251).

Nella seconda fase si registra la crescita industriale e l'espansione delle città portuali: la navigazione a vapore consente il calcolo degli orari di partenza e arrivo; nuove

banchine vengono costruite e dotate di nuove strutture meccaniche per l'imbarco e lo scarico delle merci (le gru); l'area urbana viene in generale riorganizzata. Tutto ciò porta a un cambiamento decisivo: la connessione tra porto, lavoro e quotidianità si dissolve gradualmente con l'avanzare dell'industrializzazione.

Il periodo tra le due guerre mondiali sottolinea lo sviluppo della terza fase della moderna industria portuale: le industrie marittime estendono le loro attività commerciali grazie al rafforzamento dei mezzi di imbarco e sbarco delle merci; si sviluppa inoltre un processo di "musealizzazione" dei porti, legato a un sentimento nostalgico e romantico della navigazione in mare, a cui contribuiscono la produzione letteraria e cinematografica.

Nella quarta fase, il progresso tecnologico della navigazione rende necessaria la formazione di nuove aree industriali separate dal contesto urbano della città: è una fase che segna il declino di molti scali portuali, che fanno i conti con la deindustrializzazione delle aree attorno al porto: «Many ports have lost their significance not only as places of transshipment and trade, but also as locations for seaport industries» (Schubert 2008, 30).

La quinta fase è invece caratterizzata dalla riqualificazione degli spazi portuali, in particolare è evidente la creazione di due aree che contraddistinguono la realtà portuale: una zona privata, caratterizzata dal lavoro e dall'organizzazione delle partenze e dell'arrivo delle navi, e una zona pubblica, in relazione con la comunità e il tessuto urbano. Con questo asseto strutturale si passa poi alla sesta e ultima fase, ovvero quella del nuovo ciclo di trasformazione del sistema portuale che, di fronte al processo della globalizzazione e alle problematiche inerenti alla navigazione nel mare, integra la visione globale con prospettive locali e regionali, in modo da costruire reti di partecipazione che diano nuova vitalità e senso alla realtà dei porti.

Ho illustrato nel dettaglio queste sei fasi perché mostrano una sintesi delle trasformazioni e dello sviluppo delle piattaforme logistiche dei trasporti avvenute negli ultimi due secoli. È uno schema che accomuna il percorso storico di molte città portuali presenti nel Mediterraneo.

Ci accingiamo adesso a prendere in esame il caso del Porto di Bari: è un porto giovane, costruito oltre un secolo fa, cresciuto assieme alla città; che ha vissuto, e vive, la grande emergenza dei migranti provenienti dalla Grecia e dalle regioni balcaniche; per questo motivo in grado di contribuire al dibattito contemporaneo sulle politiche da intraprendere nel Mediterraneo in quanto spazio progettuale di valorizzazione territoriale e integrazione culturale.

Il porto di Bari: città mediterranea e metafora di culture

La posizione geografica di Bari rende il suo porto uno degli snodi di traffico più importanti a livello euro-mediterraneo: esso è una grande area di traffici e di relazioni politiche e culturali, proiettata verso Oriente ma con una mano tesa verso l'Occidente. Ciò è testimoniato dai numeri relativi al transito delle navi e al traffico dei passeggeri e delle merci, come è possibile osservare dal grafico sottostante inerente l'anno 2015.

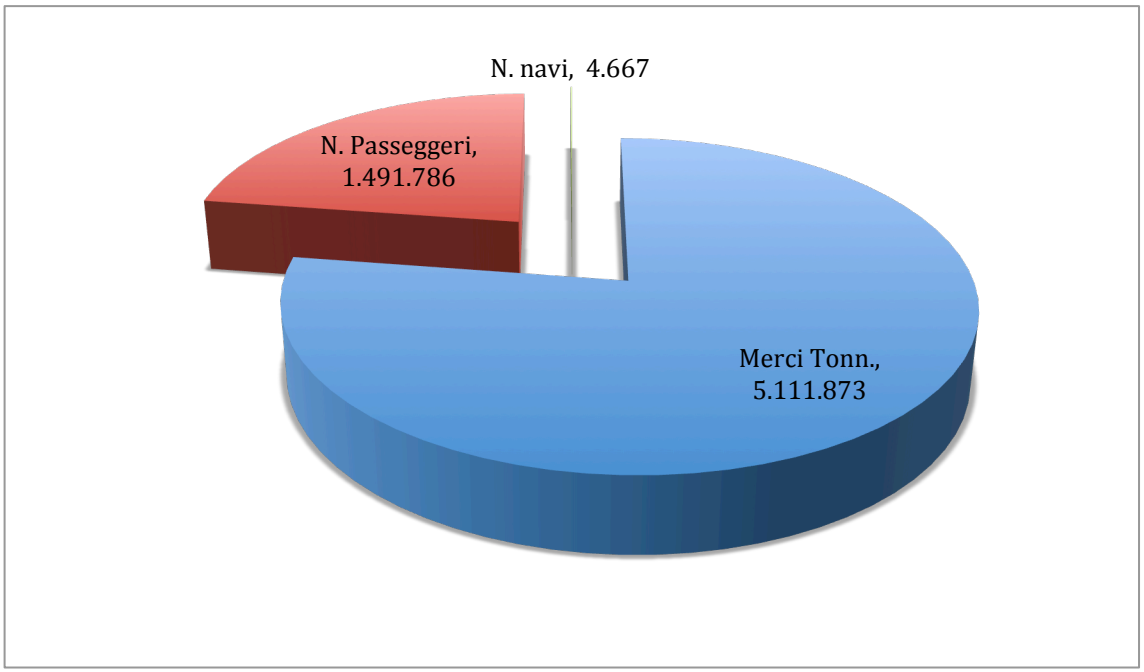

Fig. 2: Suddivisone per tipologia dei traffici del porto di Bari e numero di navi approdate, anno 2015 (fonte dati: Avvisatore Marittimo del Levante).

Un'attenta analisi del contesto portuale consente di prendere coscienza delle azioni, delle strategie e degli interventi da adottare all'interno del comparto del traffico marittimo (scalo di merci e passeggeri) e del sistema logistico delle infrastrutture.

Ciò che ha colto il mio interesse nell'indagine condotta nel territorio barese è lo stretto legame tra la comunità locale e il mare; tale legame rappresenta un elemento essenziale nel paesaggio storico della città. Dal mare la popolazione ha attinto sostentamento, ha sviluppato saperi, ha intrapreso nuove rotte, ha costruito nuovi legami; dal mare è giunto San Nicola di Myra, che dona la sua benedizione agli uomini che intraprendono il lavoro in mare, e che col Santo hanno un rapporto simbolico molto forte:

> Per fronteggiare la precarietà e attingere sicurezza anche il rapporto con il santo, scelto a proprio protettore, esprime l'esigenza di controllare ed esorcizzare il rischio reale riportandolo nella sfera del simbolico […] Come nella realtà il mare può

> togliere vita e mezzi di sostentamento ma può anche garantire la conservazione e la riproduzione del gruppo sociale, così nel simbolismo religioso il mare diventa l'elemento attraverso cui una comunità marittima può acquisire il proprio patrono (Ranisio 1990, 85).

Le comunità di mare si manifestano quindi in luoghi dove il tempo sembra essersi fermato, dove si respira l'odore e si odono i suoni di un mondo che sembra lontano dalla complessità della modernità. Per chi vive affacciato sul mare, appartenere a una comunità non significa soltanto vivere all'interno di un ambiente fisico: infatti, ogni borgo, ogni strada e ogni casa possiede una storia, una propria biografia, che trasmette le memorie dell'intera comunità, consentendo ad essa di sopravvivere non solo nello spazio ma anche nel tempo. L'identità "barese" si manifesta nella simbiosi con i propri compagni, nel dibattito pubblico della città vecchia, nel lavaggio delle reti da pesca, nella celebrazione di San Nicola, il santo venuto dal mare. Lo sguardo e l'attenzione del ricercatore deve rivolgersi al mare come luogo di identità, di vita quotidiana, di condivisione di usi e costumi propri di una comunità (Cipolla 1997).

Fig. 3: Veduta del faro di Bari dal porto. Le cancellate mostrano l'attuale chiusura, reale e simbolica, del porto alla sua città.

È all'interno di questi ambienti sociali che si costruiscono i mondi personali dei singoli individui che vi abitano, mondi che creano legami perpetui con i grandi sistemi organizzati. Il mondo sociale della gente di mare si confronta con le trasformazioni globali che coinvolgono le macroaree sociali della zona mediterranea: infatti, dal mare giungono i migranti da diversi paesi africani, nonché siriani, afgani, iracheni, che assieme al loro carico di disperazione portano le loro personali potenzialità di integrazione, partecipazione e sostegno alla comunità locale.

Fig. 4: Pescatori dediti alla quotidiana pulizia delle lenze.

Questo suo carattere marittimo, legato all'idea del mare come "casa", come luogo familiare ove il marinaio «conosce il mare antistante al suo porto come il contadino conosce il territorio del suo villaggio» (Braudel 1987, 34), rende Bari una città realmente mediterranea.

Il suo porto si è affermato non solo come un nodo fondamentale nelle relazioni tra il Levante e l'entroterra europeo, ma soprattutto come uno spazio sociale connesso alla memoria e al vissuto quotidiano della popolazione; questo perché il suo sguardo è rivolto verso lo spazio aperto, fino all'orizzonte dove immagina e intravede altre terre, altre lingue, altre civiltà.

Fig. 5: Rete da pesca messa ad asciugare su una banchina del porto di Bari.

Tra navi ancorate, traghetti in partenza, pescherecci che attraccano, è possibile percepire lo stretto legame che connota la città di Bari e il suo porto rendendolo protagonista nello scenario europeo: il privilegio dello sguardo verso il Sole, verso l'inizio del giorno e delle attività.

Fig. 6: Barche in ormeggio; è possibile notare le due realtà che convivono nel porto: i lavoratori portuali (pilotina e rimorchiatori) e i pescatori (pescherecci).

Il mare traccia confini fluidi, mossi, solcabili, e siccome la nozione di confine fa parte dell'essenza del viaggio, il porto si realizza come luogo costituito nel medesimo istante dal distacco e dall'accoglienza, soglia che divide il dentro e il fuori, rifugio, ieri come oggi, dalle tempeste dell'esistenza.

Esso però è anche una struttura strategica per lo sviluppo che, alla luce delle attuali tensioni politiche tra la sponda Nord e la sponda Sud del Mediterraneo, si presta ad assumere una nuova identità. Questa nuova identità è da ricercare in una differente immagine del contesto portuale, rappresentata dall'idea di cerniera che lega il Mediterraneo Orientale all'Europa continentale; un nodo di lunghe reti di relazioni che lo collegano al Mediterraneo e alla penisola balcanica.

Il porto di Bari si manifesta, dunque, come luogo di arrivo e partenza: ambiente di cooperazione tra modelli di lavoro differenti, spazio critico di riflessione circa l'operosità del sistema portuale e i modi con cui esso risponde alle sfide imposte dal mercato globale. Un nodo intermodale che media tra una serie di rotte aperte alla vastità del Mediterraneo, alle porte dell'alterità più estrema e del commercio su grande distanza e delle rotte che mettono in connessione l'Adriatico, mare con cui lo scalo barese ha da anni sviluppato collegamenti verso la Croazia, il Montenegro, l'Albania e la Grecia.

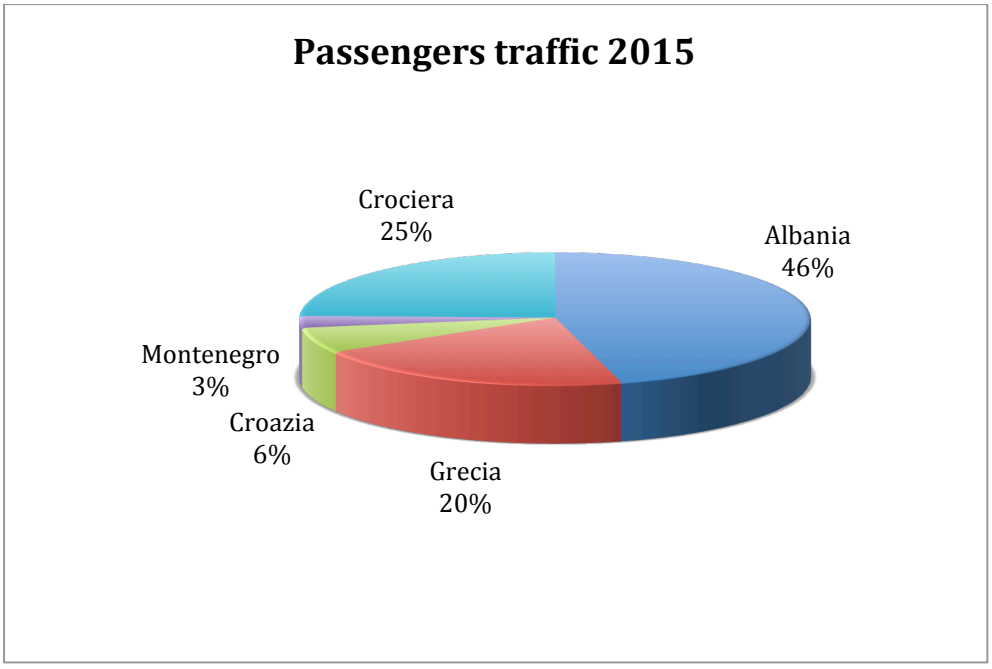

Fig. 7: Traffico passeggeri del porto di Bari suddiviso per tratta; anno 2015 (fonte dati: Avvisatore Marittimo del Levante).

In sostanza, si tratta di una industria laboriosa composta da enti, istituzioni, operatori portuali, che rappresenta certamente un mondo sociale in cui la singolarità emerge nel lavoro e nell'impegno plurale della sua realtà; quindi, un corridoio di merci, uomini e idee da progettare attraverso iniziative di comunità, che possano promuovere il porto di Bari e gli altri porti del bacino mediterraneo «as sites of strangers and diasporas in which catch-up modernisation processes meet (ethnic) minorities in "backward" milieus» (Schubert 2008, 43).

Occorre costruire pianificazioni "dal basso", che tengano conto del legame nevralgico tra la città e il suo porto, in modo da valorizzare un contesto culturale che possa organizzare un sistema logistico e intermodale capace di ridurre le distanze fisiche e culturali tra persone e tra popoli. Uno spazio "euro-mediterraneo" che vive della partecipazione dei cittadini e della loro coesione.

Fig. 8: Nave passeggeri diretta in Albania pronta alle operazioni di imbarco.

Conclusione

Dalle analisi appena svolte emerge un'immagine del Mediterraneo come un insieme di vie di trasporto e comunicazione che hanno bisogno di elaborare un programma condiviso, al fine di promuovere sicurezza e sviluppo. Questa considerazione nasce dalla constatazione che i contesti portuali, nonostante la

presenza di problematiche unilaterali quali il flusso continuo di merci, persone e materiali, l'attività di pesca e la promozione di servizi legati al turismo, hanno interfacce che si manifestano in modo differente.

Tali fenomeni devono essere affrontati mediante processi di cooperazione e co-evoluzione, vale a dire mediante processi di miglioramento in funzione di un'integrazione del processo di migrazione in una politica attiva di sviluppo partecipata e condivisa.

La Commissione Europea, a tale proposito, ha pubblicato nel 2002 un documento in cui, nella sezione dedicata alla tematica migrazione-sviluppo, ha sottolineato la necessità di utilizzare un diverso punto di vista, di passare dal concetto di «più sviluppo, meno immigrazione» all'idea di "miglior migrazione per un maggior sviluppo" (*Commision of European Communities* 2002).

La migrazione nell'area mediterranea pone infatti nuove problematiche nei paesi dell'Unione Europea: i flussi migratori degli ultimi anni non sono solo di tipo economico, legati alla mobilità turistica o lavorativa, ma hanno assunto la dimensione di una vera e propria fuga di persone alla ricerca di un rifugio e di una prospettiva di vita accettabile.

In questa prospettiva, i porti possono essere delineati come delle "porte di accesso" dell'area euro-mediterranea, nelle quali coltivare opportunità di conoscenza culturale tra le società presenti nel Mediterraneo e la proposta di una politica sociale che si interessi non solo all'integrazione "dell'Altro", ma anche al riconoscimento della sua differenza culturale. Cogliere le potenzialità di una simile prospettiva comporta, per gli studiosi, un maggior approfondimento delle sfide che tali realtà pongono sia in rifermento ai paesi dell'Unione Europea che agli stati mediorientali e africani coinvolti nelle vicende politiche-sociali di questa area; si tratta, in sostanza, di costruire una «poetica dello spazio» (Bachelard 1957) per il quale il Mediterraneo cessa di essere un luogo fisico e diviene un luogo dell'anima.

Le aree portuali rappresentano il terreno di un continuo cambiamento, organismi vivi nel quale il "mare di casa" si configura come una zona politica in cui comprendere che le frontiere e le barriere sono presenti solo nella mente dell'uomo; essi sono terreno fertile per il dibattito e l'incontro tra soggetti culturalmente differenti, e restano a disposizione di invenzioni politiche, di fusioni artistiche, di utopie e nostalgie e di buone disposizioni.

I porti rappresentano una risorsa simbolica per un futuro in cui coniugare l'idea della crescita economica alle relazioni delle società che si affacciano sul *Mare Nostrum*. Un Mediterraneo che raccoglie la sua polvere e che ripensa ai suoi confini per un giorno apparire come portatore di aggregazioni identitarie.

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Mediterranei italiani.

Il Mediterraneo nelle scritture di viaggio dell'Italia preunitaria

Elisabetta Serafini

Abstract

In the Mediterranean of the Nineteenth century the Italian peninsula seems to have played a marginal role, in which the political fragmentation did not help.

Starting from the unification, the numerous studies that tried to rebuild the Italian presence beyond national borders have emphasized that the Italians who crossed the ancient seawater in those sixty years were mostly exiles, escaping conservative persecution. In these cases not only men travelled, but also ideas. But those studies also tried to build Italy's Mediterranean history – of which the "excellent" nineteenth-century migrations had been key steps – with the aim of legitimizing the Italian presence in the *mare nostrum*.

Looking at the Peninsula's Mediterranean perspective, this essay wants to investigate – through travel writings – in what terms that space was experienced by the travellers before the unification.

Keywords

Mediterranean - Orientalism - XIX Century - Travelogue - Cultural Studies

Una delle più suggestive narrazioni ottocentesche dell'odeporica europea – o meglio, proprie dell'Europa più proiettata verso la *modernità* – inserisce il bacino mediterraneo in una dimensione onirica, sospesa tra un passato glorioso e un inquietante immobilismo, nel pieno rispetto del paradigma orientalista (Said 2006, 11-4). Fedele a questa immagine, nel 1864, Francis Power Cobbe, ad esempio, pubblicava le sue impressioni di viaggio in Europa meridionale, Nord Africa e Vicino Oriente con il significativo e paradigmatico titolo *The Cities of the Past* (Cobbe 1864). Il testo, che ripercorre il tour mediterraneo effettuato qualche anno prima, con efficace strategia narrativa costruisce un gioco di contrapposizioni tra statico Oriente e *magnifiche e progressive sorti* europee.

In quell'area, che agli occhi di molti sembrava aver perduto nel corso dei secoli l'antica centralità, la penisola italiana pareva a sua volta ricoprire un ruolo marginale, alla luce

anche della frammentazione politica. Se nell'Ottocento si poteva ancora ritenere vero che «*le trident de Neptune est le sceptre du monde*», come sosteneva nel XVIII secolo il poeta francese Antoine-Marin Lemierre in uno dei suoi pochi celebri versi (Lemierre 1755, 404), questo di certo non apparteneva al nascituro stato italiano.

Tuttavia, nonostante rappresentasse per molti viaggiatori una sorta di varco temporale affascinante e respingente, il Mediterraneo era, nel XIX secolo, tutt'altro che immobile e si confermava come spazio di intersezione globale – si pensi soltanto alle due guerre barbaresche combattute tra Stati Uniti e reggenze di Algeri, Tripoli e Tunisi a inizio secolo (Boot 2002; Oren 2007). Così come non può dirsi imprescindibile il connubio tra stagnazione economica e immobilismo, frequentemente evocato in riferimento alla situazione italiana.

La *storia* della presenza italiana nel Mediterraneo si cominciò a ricostruire e "costruire" negli anni a ridosso dell'unificazione nazionale, in forma di narrazione prosopografica spesso pregna di ideologia e finalismo teleologico, a supporto della legittimità delle ambizioni italiane e delle prime esperienze coloniali. Estendendo lo sguardo al XX secolo, pubblicazioni sugli "italiani d'Oriente" videro la luce in tre diversi momenti salienti del percorso coloniale – in quello dei primi insediamenti, nel periodo liberale e nella fase imperiale fascista – per celebrare la presenza italiana oltremare, raccontandone l'antica nascita e gli effetti benefici.

Le prime "esplorazioni" coloniali, organizzate in collaborazione con la Società Geografica Italiana*,* cercavano di favorire non solo la penetrazione nel Corno d'Africa, avviata con una spedizione nella Dancalia e nei suoi porti tra anni Sessanta e Settanta del XIX secolo, ma tentavano anche percorsi alternativi nelle regioni del Nord Africa in cui risiedevano da tempo comunità di italiani – la Tunisia – oppure in territori che Francia e Gran Bretagna non erano ancora riuscite ad assicurarsi – come il Marocco (Natili 2010, 7-12). Inoltre, tra gli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta, si stabilivano alleanze su un nuovo fronte, quello della Persia dei Qajar: l'esigenza dell'edificazione di uno stabile rapporto tra Regno di Sardegna prima – e Italia poi – e Impero persiano si intrecciava strettamente ad urgenze di carattere economico, dettate da una pericolosa infezione che coinvolse le sementi per bachi da seta nell'Europa occidentale, per la quale si era costretti a rivolgersi ad Est (Fiorani Piacentini 1969).

Oltre al sostegno alle prime spedizioni, la Società Geografica Italiana, a due anni dalla sua fondazione, attraverso le parole del socio Gaetano Branca pubblicava nel suo bollettino una rassegna dei celebri esploratori e viaggiatori italiani del XIX secolo (Branca 1869). Amat di San Filippo dichiara:

> può affermarsi che i viaggiatori ovunque e in ogni tempo furono l'avanguardia dell'incivilimento fra le genti selvagge o semibarbare; essi costituirono un anello di

> comunicazione fra le nazioni civili e lontane e prepararono sovente il terreno per stringere fra esse vincoli commerciali e politici (Amat di San Filippo 1885, VI).

Se dette opere di censimento sono primariamente utili, anche se impiegabili cautamente, per una mappatura della presenza italiana nel Mediterraneo e nel Vicino Oriente del XIX secolo, divengono oltre a ciò strumenti importanti per comprendere quale fosse la percezione di quello spazio e in che modo si proiettasse in esso la nazione appena nata. Luigi Antonio Balboni, sostenuto da Federico Bonola Bey, segretario generale della Società geografica khediviale e da Giuseppe Zanardelli, dedicò all'Italia e alle 'colonie' italiane nel 1906 tre volumi su *Gl'italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana del Secolo XIX* (Balboni 1906). Con una persuasiva retorica della presenza benefica degli italiani in Egitto, con la sua opera tentava di smentire l'idea che lì gli stranieri fossero tutti parassiti: gli italiani, «quei valorosi, nel lavoro faticoso e difficile della ricostruzione del paese che li ospitava, pensavano prepararsi alla ricostruzione della Patria» (Balboni 1906, Vol. I, 9). Negli stessi anni Angiolo Mori, tenente commissario della Regia Marina Italiana, censiva la presenza italiana a Costantinopoli per

> rilevare come l'elemento italiano abbia saputo nobilmente affermarsi e meritare la lode della patria lontana, a richiamare più vigile l'attenzione dell'Italia su codesti mercati, che l'opera assidua e tenace della colonia ha schiusi sicuri ai nostri prodotti, […] (Mori 1906, XI).

A distanza di un trentennio, in un volume frutto del concorso indetto nel 1929 dal Fascio di Alessandria, lo storico Angelo Sammarco ha voluto studiare il rapporto tra Egitto e Italia a partire dal XIX secolo (secolo in cui in cui il grande Muhammad 'Alî, "sovrano geniale", aprì il paese agli europei) per valorizzare il contributo degli italiani al risveglio dell'Egitto moderno, favorendone l'integrazione nella civiltà europea:

> La storia delle due Nazioni è densa di legami politici, culturali ed economici che il passato ha stretto e che l'avvenire non può che rinsaldare perché Italia ed Egitto, affacciate sul Mediterraneo, sono ambedue collegate dal mare comune, sede di una millenaria ed inestinguibile civiltà, ed ambedue interessate e decise a sviluppare attraverso questo mare i loro rapporti e i loro traffici (Sammarco 1937, XII).

Spogliati di tale retorica questi studi aiutano a ricostruire come, fuori dalle arterie economiche principali, privi di stabili reti diplomatiche e di collegamenti efficienti – si segnala come tra Ancona e Zara, che distavano soltanto sette ore, a metà del secolo mancava ancora un regolare servizio settimanale di navigazione a vapore (Masi 1936, 51) –

gli Stati della Penisola continuavano ad avere relazioni sia con i Paesi del Nord Africa che con il nucleo dell'Impero ottomano.

In questo quadro, la più nutrita e composita emigrazione fu quella diretta verso l'Egitto, già a partire dalla partecipazione di meridionali (non meglio specificati), piemontesi e toscani alla campagna di Napoleone Bonaparte, ma anche a causa della vera e propria febbre egittologica (Moscati 1964, 5). Guardando ai flussi migratori ottocenteschi mediterranei in senso più globale, gli studi precedentemente citati, accanto ad una ricostruzione delle singole biografie, propongono letture diacroniche di lungo periodo della proiezione italiana nel *mare nostrum*. Intorno alle già stabili comunità italofone mediterranee, nel XIX secolo sarebbe stata poi l'emigrazione politica a fornire i più cospicui implementi: un'emigrazione d'*élite* dunque, quella che si poneva all'acme di una gloriosa storia e avrebbe costituito la base delle imminenti espansioni coloniali.

Balboni e Sammarco, in continuità con alcune posizioni del secolo precedente – di cui si darà conto più avanti – oltre a celebrare la presenza italiana in terra musulmana come benefica e disinteressata – poiché proiettata verso la costruzione della propria nazione, grata alla terra che la ospitava e priva di interessi coloniali –, la inserivano in un'opera civilizzatrice attiva da secoli:

> La storia degli Italiani che concorsero non solo alla civilizzazione dell'Egitto […], ma a quella del mondo intiero, sia pure presa nello stretto senso di *viaggiatori,* si fa cominciare verso la metà del secolo XIII° […]. Ciò però è sommamente erroneo, […] dovrebbe collocarsi, […] dal X° secolo al più tardi, quando cioè, le Repubbliche italiane cominciarono ad acquistare importanza sul mare (Sammarco 1937, XI).

Quei 'valorosi' furono costretti ad espatriare verso il Mediterraneo orientale come occidentale, se si considera anche il numero di uomini (e le poche donne) diretti verso la Tunisia e l'Algeria – in quest'ultimo caso attraverso la Francia – soprattutto a partire dall'occupazione del 1830 (Michel 1935, 1941, 1949). I vari studi convergono sull'opinione che tra il 1800 e il 1815 si spostarono prevalentemente elementi meridionali sfuggiti alla reazione borbonica del 1799, mentre la crisi del sistema napoleonico vi convogliò un'ondata di varie nazionalità.

Comunque, sino agli anni Venti a muoversi furono ancora poche persone in fuga, mentre molteplici furono le "richieste di asilo" orientali negli anni Trenta ma soprattutto dopo le capitolazioni di Roma e Venezia del 1849, maggiormente differenziate anche per composizione sociale. Queste emorragie umane, che dunque due secoli fa si caratterizzavano in senso inverso rispetto agli odierni flussi, trovavano il loro impiego prevalentemente in campo tecnico e militare, ad esempio, nel processo di ricerca di una stabilità istituzionale e di un maggiore accentramento per l'esercito

(Piemontese 2008), testimoniando un'emigrazione italiana composta da lavoratori estremamente qualificati (Stasolla 2006).

Accanto a questa mobilità forzata e dettata da motivi politici, non si dimenticano celebri esperienze che hanno altresì contribuito notevolmente a "portare" – nel senso proprio e figurativo del termine – "l'Oriente" in Italia, come la spedizione archeologica di Ippolito Rosellini in Egitto, con finanziamento franco-toscano, o quella romana, comandata dal capitano di marina Alessandro Cialdi e diretta allo scopo di caricare gli alabastri per la decorazione dell'interno della basilica ostiense.

A guardare bene i dettagli biografici di meno noti espatriati verso le terre della mezzaluna, si constata però il fatto che i proscritti e i fuggiaschi per motivi politici furono comunque una minoranza rispetto ad un più vasto ed eterogeneo gruppo di residenti, anche temporanei. Se per la situazione del Maghreb, gli studi di Ersilio Michel connotano le migrazioni come esulato, per quanto riguarda l'Egitto si dispone di maggiori e minuziose indagini, che consentono una mappatura più ampia.

Per il primo cinquantennio del XIX secolo Balboni riporta circa 117 nominativi (tra cui anche qualche nome femminile), esclusi i partecipanti alla spedizione francese del 1798. Sebbene sia difficile riconoscere uno specifico ruolo nel Paese per ognuno di essi – poiché nella maggior parte dei casi attività diplomatiche, commerciali, collezionismo e magari curiosità scientifico-archeologica si sovrapponevano –, cercando di individuarne il principale campo di azione, i 117 censiti risultavano così impiegati: il 20% erano medici o farmacisti, il 20% impiegati a servizio a vario titolo presso Muhammad 'Alî, un altro 20% in attività commerciali, bancarie o di altro tipo, il 21% in viaggi archeologici o missioni di esplorazione, il 10% erano uomini di chiesa, prevalentemente missionari, il 6% diplomatici e soltanto il 3% si trovavano in Egitto per intraprendere viaggi di consumo culturale (Balboni 1906, v. I).

Tra le 117 biografie riportate per l'Egitto nella prima metà dell'Ottocento, soltanto in una decina di casi si fa cenno all'esulato e al coinvolgimento a vari livelli (in prima linea o di sostegno economico attraverso raccolte di fondi) nelle vicende che portarono all'unificazione. Di altri dieci casi si parla per il decennio 1850-1860 (Balboni 1906, v. II). La connotazione risorgimentale del viaggio mediterraneo per gli italiani sembrerebbe dunque essere una narrazione strumentale alla costruzione di un paradigma coloniale precipuo, edificato sull'opera di 'valorosi' uomini.

Inoltre, la scarsa percentuale di viaggiatori intesi in senso proprio spiega forse perché nei vari Stati italiani vide la luce un numero di pubblicazioni di testi odeporici piuttosto esiguo rispetto alla consistente mole di opere pubblicate nello stesso periodo in Inghilterra e Francia, nate nella maggior parte dei casi in circostanze di breve soggiorno nei paesi orientali e di forme di viaggio proto-turistico. Si fa riferimento, infatti, ad un arco cronologico in cui il viaggiare non era più connesso soltanto alla diplomazia –

sebbene essa si avviasse verso un momento di maggiore stabilità –, alla mercatura e ai pellegrinaggi. Già tra la fine del Cinquecento e l'inizio del Seicento era comparso un nuovo tipo di viaggiatore, quello che si spostava al fine di conoscere. Durante il XIX secolo il numero dei curiosi e delle curiose andava accrescendosi e diversificandosi, a causa della rivoluzione dei trasporti, in manifesta coincidenza col periodo in cui l'Italia, sebbene con destini diversi per i vari stati, non poteva più considerarsi centro di propulsione economica verso Oriente; piuttosto pativa il predominio geo-politico di più influenti poteri europei.

Certamente gli Stati italiani – sino al 1861 – non avevano ancora a disposizione una rete stabile di diplomatici e funzionari residenti nelle capitali. Ma, come si legge negli stessi racconti di viaggio, anche altre erano le motivazioni che tenevano gli abitanti della Penisola lontani dalle rotte globali. Felice Caronni, lombardo, rapito dai corsari barbareschi di ritorno da un viaggio a Milano e Palermo nel 1804, ricorda non solo quali fossero i pericoli che insediavano quella parte di Mediterraneo prospiciente l'Italia, ma illustra anche uno dei motivi per cui un abitante della Penisola, nell'Ottocento, avesse più difficoltà a muoversi rispetto ad altri europei. Significativamente, il primo paragrafo del testo in questione viene dedicato da Caronni alle *Avvertenze e càutele da usarsi per riguardo ai passaporti dai viaggiatori di mare, specialmente in caso d'imbarco* (Caronni 1805-1806, v. I, 5-10). Passando da Milano a Roma, da Roma a Napoli, da Napoli a Palermo, il viaggiatore fu costretto ad esibire ogni volta il passaporto del paese da cui proveniva e, questione che gli risultò fatale, a consegnarlo ogni volta che ne richiedeva uno nuovo alle autorità. Passando per la Polizia Cisalpina a Milano, cardinali e ambasciatori francesi, si ritrovò infine con un passaporto che, non attestando precisamente la sua provenienza, non lo tutelò dalla pirateria barbaresca:

> il mio passaporto cisalpino venne a trasformarsi in un passaporto poco meno che napolitano; e che per tale riguardato dalle tre reggenze africane, Tripoli, Tunesi e Algeri, avrebbe anzi che a tutela deposto a danno mio (Ivi, 7).

Filippo Pananti, il toscano che qualche anno più tardi subì la stessa sorte di Caronni, raccontando gli antecedenti del suo rapimento, riportò il fatto che a Palermo, lui e i suoi compagni, vennero dotati di fogli buoni «da involtarci un soldo di cacio» (Pananti 1830, 27).

Nell'interessante introduzione al suo *Viaggio in Egitto*, Emilio Dandolo, uno dei protagonisti delle Cinque Giornate di Milano, parlando dello sviluppo dei viaggi in seguito ai migliori trasporti, riportava della presenza massiccia di inglesi, facilitata dall'espansione capillare della Compagnia delle Indie, ma anche di una predisposizione alla pigrizia degli italiani, i quali, a suo parere «tendono a viaggiare nei luoghi comodi».

Anche per questo, a suo avviso, videro la luce poche pubblicazioni sull'Oriente (Dandolo 1854, 9-12).

Resta da capire, attraverso le peculiarità peninsulari del viaggio mediterraneo e orientale fin qui messe in evidenza, quali rappresentazioni si producessero di quei contesti; in che modo si differenziassero ad esempio dall'immaginario dei letterati francesi che a partire da Chateaubriand hanno percorso le coste dei tre continenti, o da quello dei funzionari inglesi in cerca della loro via per l'India.

Certamente il fatto che, come si diceva nell'introduzione, l'emigrazione della prima metà del secolo non fosse supportata da un programma coloniale, non la scioglie completamente dal giogo orientalista – inteso in senso saidiano – pur non volendo racchiudere in un pensiero univoco l'idea italiana di *Oriente* e *Mediterraneo*.

Al volgere del XVIII secolo, Giovanni Battista Casti, in viaggio col bailo Giuliani verso Costantinopoli, scriveva della sua esperienza utilizzando un coacervo di stereotipi sull'Oriente che nel corso dei secoli andavano sempre più cristallizzandosi. Il fascino orientale restava tale soltanto se l'esperienza di quello era superficiale e non prolungata. La residenza in Oriente faceva infatti sì che se ne scoprissero le brutture – gli incendi, le donne segregate («Dite pure alle nostre belle che sian contente delle costumanze europee», Casti 1822, 12), la peste – e si polverizzasse l'immaginario esotico che gli apparteneva, per lasciare lo spazio ad una triste realtà fatta di dispotismo e di incapacità di gestire il patrimonio culturale classico.

Le immagini mediterranee che giungono dalla letteratura di viaggio del XIX secolo sono assai composite e restituiscono rappresentazioni che conformano il contesto geo-politico talvolta come frontiera, talaltra come barriera. La maggior parte dei viaggiatori-scrittori (solo per sparuti casi si può declinare l'epiteto al femminile) – in linea con le tendenze migratorie cui si è precedentemente fatto cenno – proveniva dagli Stati del centro-nord della penisola, con una netta maggioranza di partenze dal Lombardo-Veneto e, a seguire, da Liguria, Toscana e Stato pontificio. Altrettanto in linea con i grandi flussi, ma favoriti anche da una stabile comunità residente e spinti dai forti interessi culturali, molti itinerari ebbero come meta Egitto e Nubia.

Tuttavia, se l'Ottocento si apre per l'odeporica francese con il romantico *Itinéraire* di Chateaubriand (Chateaubriand 1811; Brilli 2009), le prime relazioni peninsulari pubblicate nel sessantennio qui preso in esame sono relative a perigliosi e forzati viaggi sulle coste di Barberia[1].

[1] Con il nome Barberia si era soliti intendere la regione che nel mondo arabo si indica con il nome di al-Maghrib (luogo del tramonto), cioè a dire la zona dell'Africa settentrionale compresa tra Egitto ed Oceano Atlantico e comprendente Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algeria e Marocco. Abitata da popolazioni in maggioranza di stirpe berbera, la regione geografica indicata col nome di Barberia si identificava con quelli che venivano designati, fin dall'inizio dell'età moderna, come Stati barbareschi.

L'indebolimento politico della frontiera settentrionale – perché di confine e barriera si può alternativamente parlare facendo riferimento al Mediterraneo (Pedani 2002) – dell'antico mare, che aveva raggiunto il suo picco con la perdita di Malta da parte dei Cavalieri durante la campagna francese condotta da Napoleone Bonaparte, aveva fatto sì che la pirateria dei cosiddetti stati barbareschi si espandesse in modo abbastanza incontrollato a cavallo tra i secoli XVIII e XIX (Mattone 1998, 5-10; Romeo 2000). La stessa Europa meridionale e la penisola italiana stessa costituiscono un'area liminare in cui le frontiere non sono solo quelle tra Stati. Rappresentazioni coeve, ad esempio, ne definiscono alcune zone come Africa d'Italia (Varese, 1830).

"La barbarie" avanzava dunque da sud, mentre un altro versante dell'Impero ottomano era interessato da riforme che sembravano avvicinarlo sempre più all'Europa. Si fa ovviamente riferimento alle *tanzimat* di Mahmud II, anticipate dalle riforme introdotte in Egitto da Muhammad 'Alî. L'area mediterranea si configurava quindi ad est come permeabile frontiera attraversata da elementi di "civiltà", a partire dalla riconquistata Grecia, ad ovest come desiderato confine tra mondo "civilizzato e non".

Il ruolo cedevole sul crinale di quel confine non era però sempre stato tale. Il percorso a ritroso al fine di costruire narrativamente la genealogia della presenza italiana nel Mediterraneo serviva, nelle parole del già citato Pananti, allo scopo di sostenere utopici progetti di riappropriazione di aree già possedute. Riandando indietro nei secoli ben oltre le esperienze dei crociati, consacrate al recupero dei luoghi santi alla dominazione cristiana, si associava la pirateria barbaresca a quella fronteggiata dal Senato romano ai tempi di Quinto Cecilio Metello. Parole che riecheggiano e vengono recuperate a distanza di circa un secolo a sostenere il programma coloniale: i veneziani erano stati «gli inglesi del Medioevo» e, nel presente, occorreva restituire all'Italia quello spazio, seppur minimo, che aveva posseduto. Percorso che, se da un lato aveva l'obiettivo di valorizzare l'operato esulare, dall'altro conduceva inesorabilmente verso la dequalificazione dell'Oriente e dell'orientale: «Il suo popolo non ha tempo, mezzi, istruzione per ricercare da sé» (Balboni 1906, v. I, 14-5).

Per quello che riguardava il versante occidentale dunque, si avvertiva forte la necessità non solo di contrastare un pericolo che insidiava i mari, ma anche di estendere "la civiltà" europea alla fascia nord-africana, recuperando ora al "progresso", ora alla cristianità quelle terre che le erano appartenute nei secoli addietro. Fino al compimento dell'Unità nazionale, tali vagheggiati propositi di iniziative nei confronti delle reggenze nordafricane, vennero elaborati prevedendone una composizione europea a guida inglese. Pananti parla di una guerra di legittima difesa, mentre Paolo Della Cella, prima al servizio del pascià di Tripoli Yusuf Qaramanli, poi della Marina Sarda, auspica la fondazione di una vera e propria colonia europea nella fertile

Cirenaica, specificando «Io riguardo […] la loro [dei popoli] conservazione nelle attuali loro abitudini, come essenzialmente legata alla prosperità della nuova colonia» (Della Cella 1819, 121-2). Si può agevolmente comprendere come, a un secolo di distanza, il testo di Della Cella venne impiegato dalla propaganda coloniale fascista.

Una maggiore tranquillità su questo versante si raggiunse nel momento dell'invasione francese, come notava, a giustificare la necessità dell'intervento, l'abate Giacinto Amati viaggiando in Algeria negli anni Quaranta del secolo (Amati 1845). Come si è anticipato, le acque erano molto più chete volgendosi al fianco orientale. Quella parte di Impero ottomano che andava gradualmente guadagnando la sua autonomia da esso, ed accrescendo la dipendenza economica dall'Europa sembrava, oltre che interessare per la sua storia ante-musulmana, riflettere e ripercorrere strade battute dall'Europa verso la sua "modernizzazione". Non a caso, alle coeve vicende egiziane ci si riferiva attingendo all'immaginario europeo: si è detto come Muhammad 'Alî fosse ritenuto modernizzatore, talvolta alla stregua di Napoleone.

Quei primi cinquant'anni del secolo in cui l'Egitto sembrava recuperare una nuova vita, di cui – si è visto – gli italiani erano partecipi, facevano sì che il suo Islam apparisse diversamente conformato da quello radicale del Maghreb e più tollerante nei confronti delle altre religioni (copta, ebraica e cristiana; Brocchi 1841, 27). Coloro che andavano facendo l'Italia, e che trovavano nella sua frammentazione politica uno dei limiti alle possibilità di raggiungere l'indipendenza e l'unificazione, ritenevano però che anche in Egitto le riforme non avrebbero potuto funzionare e ne preconizzavano il fallimento, non solo perché ispirate dalla volontà di un despota senza alcuna corrispondenza nella volontà della nazione, ma ancor di più a causa dell'inesistenza di una nazione in senso etnico: oltre agli europei, turchi, copti, arabi, minoranze varie contribuivano alla disgregazione della collettività. Comunque agli occhi dei viaggiatori, il rinnovamento che si stava tentando in Oriente – attestato nell'azione "civilizzatrice" di Muhammad 'Alî prima, di suo figlio Ibrahim poi, e nelle altre spinte centrifughe alla periferia dell'Impero Ottomano – passava necessariamente per la via europea. L'attenzione orientale per le vicende riformiste e rivoluzionarie in atto nel Vecchio Continente si manifestava agli occhi di Giovanni Battista Brocchi – geologo al servizio del Pascià –, sia a livello centrale che periferico, nell'interesse particolare che si riservava alle costituzioni liberali. Le autorità promuovevano il sapere europeo nei centri di cultura, conservando nelle biblioteche, come quella di Bulaq:

> libri di legislazione e di letteratura, fra i quali il poema di Dante, e sono rimasto non poco sorpreso di trovarvi le opere di Voltaire, di Rousseau, e de' Romanzi francesi. Vi si conserva parimente una versione francese della Bibbia stampata in foglio, ma ciò che sembrerà molto strano si è, che havvi una copiosa serie delle Costituzioni politiche de' Governi Europei, che niuno si attenderebbe d' incontrare

> nella pubblica biblioteca di un paese governato dispoticamente (Brocchi 1841, 159-1).

Così «la mania delle Costituzioni comincia a manifestarsi anche nel Bell'Oriente» (Brocchi 1841, 185), come accade nel caso della presunta costituzione fatta circolare in Libano dall'arcivescovo Estefan, con la quale si pensava di suscitare una rivoluzione «e preparare gli spiriti con vociferazioni ch'era cosa vergognosa a che gli abitanti del Libano obbedissero ad un despota Turco, che gli opprimeva con eccessive contribuzioni» (Brocchi 1841, 186).

Se per gli italiani esuli nelle terre del Sultano o dello Scià era inevitabile mettere a confronto il potere imperiale, nelle sue varie configurazioni orientali, col potere illecitamente esercitato sulla terra natìa dalla corona asburgica, allo stesso tempo i sovrani musulmani, come una volta avevano fatto con gli ebrei in fuga dall'Europa, nel XIX secolo ospitavano i fuggiaschi rivoluzionari occidentali, con la speranza – si è visto – di averne in cambio vantaggi nell'acquisizione delle loro professionalità e competenze. Generalmente la riconoscenza di questi ultimi si fa sentire nelle narrazioni, nel momento in cui essi distinguono tra esercizi diversi del potere, ad esempio tra russo e ottomano, ribaltando i luoghi comuni sul dispotismo orientale, poiché il popolo turco «accolse amorevolmente i profughi del *dispotismo* di tutte le parti d'Europa» (De Bianchi 1865, XII). Talvolta, anche per gli italiani (piemontesi in questo caso), più importanti del viaggio erano le opportunità che l'Oriente offriva: le indicazioni sui territori contesi tra Turchia e Russia, che probabilmente sarebbero stati interessati da nuovi scontri, erano finalizzate a sostenere le vantaggiose relazioni commerciali che il Regno di Sardegna stava stringendo con la Persia, per giungere alla quale era assolutamente necessario conoscere il Kurdistan (De Bianchi 1865, XIII-XV).

Chiaramente molto di più si prestavano ad un confronto con la situazione italiana le vicissitudini di quelle popolazioni oppresse dal dispotismo turco e da sempre irretite in un contesto politico-statale che inibiva l'espressione dei tratti nazionali, oppure ne esaltava la fierezza, com'era stato nella guerra di liberazione greca. Non solo nelle parole, ma nei fatti, a volte l'accoglienza concessa agli inquieti patrioti italiani nell'Impero ottomano diede vita ad un fattivo impegno nei moti di liberazione delle popolazioni dominate dalla Porta[2]. Fu così nel caso emblematico di Gennaro Simini,

[2] Nel corso dell'Ottocento, il nazionalismo divenne valido supporto al tradizionale insurrezionalismo dei popoli balcanici i quali, per motivi di ordine etnico e religioso, divennero un determinante elemento di crisi all'Interno dell'Impero ottomano. Si sollevarono contro l'Impero ottomano la Moldavia e la Valacchia (1821) e i Greci (1821-1827) mentre nella fascia nord-africana si perdeva l'Algeria (1830) e il controllo sull'Egitto. Ciò che nel corso dei secoli si perpetuava nei Paesi dell'area balcanica era una lotta costante - ora esplicitata attraverso le armi, ora sommersa - e quella lotta coinvolse anche la vecchia Europa (Biagini 1998, 27-36).

mazziniano partecipe dei moti che nel 1848 si propagarono nel Salento contro i Borbone. Simini raggiunse l'Albania, prima Durazzo, poi Scutari, passando per Corfù. Tornò in Italia dopo l'unificazione, desideroso di respirare il clima del paese per l'unità del quale aveva lottato, ma riteneva non conclusa la sua esperienza albanese, soprattutto perché riteneva importante che anche lì si propagassero gli stessi princìpi libertari (Simini 2011).

Tornando alle riforme nell'Impero, esse non avevano però prodotto i risultati sperati e questo appariva chiaro agli occhi dei viaggiatori. Così scriveva Emilio Dandolo negli anni Cinquanta:

> Non ci fermeremo a descrivere le antichità di Alessandria, abbastanza conosciute per mille relazioni di viaggiatori. Ciò che, purtroppo, diverrà presto altresì cosa vecchia e dimenticata sono le riforme, gli abbellimenti, le fortificazioni, sì attivamente avviate da Mehemet-Alì, le quali promettevano di rendere Alessandria una fra le più ragguardevoli piazze del Mediterraneo […]. Scuole militari, mediche e civili, chiuse o in decadenza, pubblici istituti lasciati al l'oblio, grandiose opere idrauliche, indispensabili all'ordinamento dell'agricoltura, abbandonate o fiaccamente proseguite, esercito debole e disanimato, marina distrutta; amministrazioni sconvolte, il più ignobile favoritismo, preposto a merito ed a servigi antichi, prepotente fanatismo, ignoranza e confusione invadenti, ecco l'aspetto che presenta oggi l'Egitto, dopo i pochi anni di governo d'Abbas-Pascià (Dandolo 1854, 60).

Questo momento corrispondeva con una crisi sempre più tangibile dell'Impero ottomano e con il profilarsi dell'unificazione nazionale, già da tempo associata – sul piano ideale – ad una dimensione sovranazionale. Se nelle parole di alcuni la presenza italiana nel Mediterraneo si sarebbe manifestata attraverso un irraggiamento di cristianesimo e civiltà (Amati 1845, 474), in prospettiva politica furono spesso i pensatori più progressisti a immaginare l'espansione da ovest a est, sebbene di forme di governo più rappresentative. Questo era l'auspicio di Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi:

> Noi salutiamo la Repubblica come il grado supremo al quale possano arrivare la potenza e la dignità italiane. Noi esultiamo nel presagio che un giorno le flotte francesi e italiane moveranno a ricondurre la libertà e la scienza a tutta la Grecia, e allo Egitto; ed è ragione, conciossiachè dallo Egitto prima, e poi dalla Grecia apprendemmo negli andati tempi i rudimenti della civiltà, e della libertà; e seguiremo in questo la legge della umanità che vuole rendiamo altrui quanto ci fu dato. Il commercio delle Indie riprenderà la via del Mediterraneo; e questo mare già lieto di altri traffici presenterà come una fiera, ove i popoli del mondo accorreranno a prendere la parte del bene che ad ognuno abbisogna (Guerrazzi, 1862, 110).

Tali progetti riformisti sovranazionali andavano oltre le differenze di genere, le quali solo in taluni casi e per alcuni aspetti hanno determinato una rappresentazione divergente di Oriente e di cui io stessa mi sono occupata in altra sede (Ricaldone, 2000; Serafini 2016). Nelle parole di Cristina di Belgiojoso, una delle poche viaggiatrici orientali provenienti dalla Penisola, i due panorami – religioso e politico – convergevano in un'ipotesi di riforma che non poteva non riguardare la famiglia e la condizione femminile (questa sì, ascrivibile come cifra di genere). Accogliendo una visione teleologica del progresso delle società secondo la quale la distanza dell'Europa rispetto al resto del mondo va facendosi sempre più netta, l'unica *réforme*, «mot odieux pour l'ordinaire aux membres des théocraties» (Trivulzio di Belgiojoso 1858, 233) che può portare ad un avanzamento della teocrazia turca è quella religiosa: «Une réforme politique ne sera jamais agréée par un peuple si profondément croyant, si elle n'est appuyée sur une réforme religieuse» (Trivulzio di Belgiojoso 1858, 234). Ancora una volta l'analisi si basava su una dicotomia che vedeva su un versante la Chiesa d'Occidente con la sua storia, le sue riforme – che Cristina di Belgiojoso aveva narrato nella sua *formation du dogme catholique* (Trivulzio di Belgiojoso 1842) – sull'altro l'immobile mondo orientale con le sue forme cristallizzate di religiosità che permeava ogni aspetto della vita sociale, in primo luogo l'istituzione familiare.

Se nei primi cinquant'anni dell'Ottocento nelle relazioni di viaggio compariva un Mediterraneo diviso in due e diversamente conformato – del quale il Maghreb, a Ovest, rappresentava quella frontiera di civilizzazione che si desiderava in espansione verso sud e l'Est rivelava una maggiore permeabilità culturale – a partire dalla metà del secolo, sotto il peso sempre più ponderoso dell'idea nazionale e della consapevolezza del fallimento di riforme autonomamente gestite in Oriente, si indicava l'Europa come sola via d'uscita:

> Qu'ils renversent et foulent aux pieds la fatale barrière qui sépare l'Orient de la civilisation, qu'ils enseignent à leur peuple à se tourner vers l'Occident lorsqu'il dit ses prières, car c'est de ce côté que le soleil se lève et se lèvera désormais (Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, 1858, 235).

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Lampedusa: scritture oltre la cenere

Silvana Carotenuto

Abstract

The paper reads some creative renderings of the migratory events taking place in the contemporary Mediterranean: *Les Clandestines* by Youssouf Amin Elalamy (2000), *Trilogia del Naufragio* by Lina Prosa (2013), with a reference to the video-installation *Asmat–Nomi* by Dagmawi Yimer (2015). Its main concern is the question of testimony, assuming the critical stand that writing participates to the witnessing of the tragic destinies of migration today by proving its own engagement in poetry and evocation. Narration, theatre and visuality become the loci of a personal and collective involvement that opens up spaces for the elaboration of human suffering and mourning, and together, for the respect of alterity that promises the advent of a different future. "Difference" comes on the stage of the article's writing through the Derridean deconstruction of the holocaust and its ashes.

Keywords

Migration - Writing - Theatre - Testimony - Condivision

Senza l'olocausto, il movimento dialettico e la storia dell'essere
non avrebbero mai potuto aprirsi,
inserirsi nell'anello del loro anniversario,
annullarsi dando origine alla corsa solare
da Oriente vero Occidente
(Jacques Derrida)

Un olocausto acquatico non lascia cenere dietro di sé: la materia dei corpi non si espone al fuoco, non brucia, si dissolve nell'acqua, sparisce tra le alghe dei fondi marini. Se l'origine dell'umanità è nel brule-tout*, la sua fine – la fine del popolo migrante, di tutto il popolo – giace oggi nell'impossibilità del fuoco, niente fiamme o calore; diversamente, il legno delle barche, il freddo atroce, la gravità, l'anima rivolta verso le coste rocciose, i resti. Eppure, se l'origine nel fuoco ha prodotto la sua 'religione dei fiori' (Hegel, Leopardi, Genet) dove la cenere ha tracciato l'arsa terra germinandola, così la morte acquatica iscrive la sua scrittura, oltre la cenere, intorno ai corpi partiti, dentro la scena degli*

impossibili approdi e delle atroci deportazioni, nel ricordo dei nomi sommersi. L'articolo legge alcune scritture sull'olocausto della diaspora contemporanea nel Mediterraneo, ponendo l'attenzione sulla materialità creativa che le loro grafie sperimentano oltre la cenere – che resta a illuminare, per un istante folle, la passione della testimonianza. Esposti alla partenza voluta o obbligata, all'arrivo negato, all'orrore della dimenticanza, queste opere – narrative, teatrali – spazializzano e celebrano l'esperienza (l'attraversamento del pericolo – dei migranti, di chi scrive, di chi legge e di chi guarda) relativa al viaggio, al non-arrivo, all'esistenza in transito. Immaginazione, canto, gestualità – saranno le tracce di una nuova scrittura, sospinta oltre la cenere, pur sempre dentro l'olocausto? Sapranno esse farsi 'incensare' – "(ciò che resta, senza restare, dell'olocausto, del brucia-tutto, dell'incendio: l'incenso*)"* (Derrida 1984, 15)[1] – *dalla cenere di un nuovo Mediterraneo ospitale? Non è compito della scrittura presentata di rispondere; solo l'à-venir della storia potrà dare il suo responso responsabile.*

Segreto, indirizzo, e celebrazione

No, non sono io, è qualcun altro che soffre.
Io non potrei essere così, ma ciò che è accaduto
neri drappi lo coprano,
e portino via le lanterne...
Notte
(Anna Achmatova)

Alcune scritture contemporanee segnano, in modi diversi ma dialogando tra di esse, la riflessione creativa sull'olocausto, la tragedia, la "macchia della storia", direbbe Primo Levi, della diaspora nel Mediterraneo d'oggi: *I Migranti* di Yousssouf Amin Elalamy (Elalamy 2015) e la *Trilogia del Naufragio* di Lina Prosa (Prosa 2013)[2]. Il "collage" di trentuno aforismi poetici di Elalamy è stato premiato con il Grand Atlas Prize nel 2001, e con Le plaisir de lire. Premio Mediterraneo nel 2010. La "carta poetica" delle tre opere che formano l'opera di Prosa, "Lampedusa Beach", "Lampedusa Snow" e "Lampedusa Way", è stata presentata alla Comédie-Francaise nel 2011 su selezione del Bureau des Lecteurs, quindi prodotta dalla Maison de Molière allo Studio-Théatre nel 2012, e programmata, nella sua interezza, alla stagione della Comédie-Francaise nel 2013.

[1] Vedi, sull'argomento, Moroncini 2015.

[2] Le due opere sembrano condividere ciò che, nel testo di Prosa, è chiamato «il patrimonio del naufragio»: esistono risonanze, oggetti che vengono evocati in ripetizione, immagini comuni. Si pensi all'immagine dell'"ala spezzata:" «[…] un pò più avanti,/c'era là,/ piegato su se stesso,/ il corpo di una donna straordinariamente bella,/il braccio destro sepolto nella sabbia,/come un'ala/spezzata" (Elalamy 2015, 43); «Distendo dolorosamente il corpo/ come un'unica ala spezzata» (Prosa 2013, 68).

Cosa contraddistingue queste opere che, nella differenza dei loro gesti – un testo letterario, una trilogia drammaturgica – riescono a darsi al pubblico, che le legge, le "plebiscita" e le invoca, quali testimonianze creative delle vicende terribili dell'annegamento, del naufragio e della deportazione, della scomparsa dei migranti nell'acque una volta ospitali del Mediterraneo? Esse si offrono alla lettura, all'ascolto, e al cuore, consapevoli della difficoltà di essere rispettose, giuste, capaci di capire e sentire il lascito che le vittime evocate, inscenate e celebrate, affidano alla memoria delle loro esistenze passate e, insieme, al futuro di un'azione individuale e collettiva che ne fermi l'olocausto. La consapevolezza si fa motore della scrittura; nella messa in discussione di ogni certezza, il travaglio dei testi qui presentati incide sulla pagina, sulla scena, innanzitutto, una paradossalità e un'aporia: «Ogni naufragio è unico, è uguale solo a stesso», dice un testimone in "Lampedusa Way" (Prosa 2013, 103); allo stesso tempo, l'autrice annunzia che «il naufragio è la metafora della condizione dell'uomo contemporaneo» (Prosa 2013, 10). Come può la scrittura, per sua natura ripetitiva, iterabile, e metonimica (che conduce, cioè, il nome "aldilà" del nome; e, qui, sarà una questione di "sopra-nomi" e dell'azione di "nominar-si")[3], rispettare l'unicità e la singolarità della morte dell'altro? La questione è complessa, e può essere seguita in articolazione teorica in testi oramai classici[4]. In questo intervento, vorremmo solo proporre alcune tracce del compito (arte/*tekhnè*) che si assume la creatività contemporanea quando mostra il *double bind* che la regge, fragile, paradossale, aporetica, in risposta e in responsabilità all'appello dell'altro: bisogna scrivere per portare testimonianza, portando, nella finitudine come (s)ragione del suo sorgere e del suo essere, testimonianza alla scrittura.

Esistenza, poesia, linguaggio, relazione con l'altro e con gli altri; scrivendo-si, i testi qui letti, vanno al cuore della ferita, precipitando nell'abisso e rimontando sulle intense

[3] A conferma della centralità dei 'nomi', si vorrebbe ricordare la video-istallazione di Dagmawi Yimer *Asmat–Nomi* (Yimer 2015) che, prodotta da Archivio delle Memorie Migranti, e promossa dal Comitato 3 ottobre, Amnesty International e Emmaus Italia, è così presentata dall'autore: «Nomi senza corpi. In un attimo, in un solo giorno, il 3 ottobre 2013, tanti giovani che si chiamavano Selam "pace", oppure Tesfaye "speranza mia", ci hanno lasciato. Diamo i nomi ai nostri figli perché vogliamo fare conoscere al mondo i nostri desideri, sogni, fedi, il rispetto che portiamo a qualcuno o a qualcosa. Gli diamo nomi carichi di significati, così come hanno fatto i nostri genitori con noi. Per anni questi nomi, con il loro carico di carne e ossa, sono andati lontano dal luogo della loro nascita, via dalla loro casa, componendo un testo scritto, un testo arrivato fino ai confini dell'Occidente. Sono nomi che hanno sfidato frontiere e leggi umane, nomi che disturbano, che interrogano i governanti africani ed europei. Se sapremo capire perché e quando questi nomi sono caduti lontano dal loro significato, forse sapremo far arrivare ai nostri figli un testo infinito, che arrivi ai loro figli, nipoti e bisnipoti. Malgrado i corpi che li contenevano siano scomparsi, quei nomi rimangono nell'aria perché sono stati pronunciati, e continuano a vivere anche lontano dal proprio confine umano. Noi non li sentiamo perché viviamo sommersi nel caos di milioni di parole avvelenate. Ma quelle sillabe vivono perché sono registrate nel cosmo. Le immagini del film danno spazio a questi nomi senza corpi. Nomi carichi di significato, anche se il loro senso è difficile da cogliere per intero. Siamo costretti a contarli tutti, a nominarli uno per uno, affinché ci si renda conto di quanti nomi sono stati separati dal corpo, in un solo giorno, nel Mediterraneo." (https://vimeo.com/114849871). A possibile interpretazione della questione, ci ispira qui Derrida 1997.

[4] Vedi, tra tutti, il testo dedicato all'analisi dell'impossibilità della testimonianza: Felman and Laub 1992. Nella scrittura che segue, centrali sono Derrida 1984, 1992; e Lacoue-Labarthe, 1986.

vette del dolore. A volte, essi segnano l'evento mortale con date – «quella volta, proprio quella volta»; altre volte, rivendicano la singolarità biografica di chi si è perso nel tragitto fatale[5]. Confrontata dalla catastrofe, dal naufragio, dalla deportazione, la scrittura vuole portare testimonianza, facendolo con le "parole", con gli accorgimenti – "sintesi", "sostanza", "messa in scena", "voce" – della lingua. La sua espressione assorbe così l'evento olocaustico, offrendosi e dichiarandosi come lingua tagliata, sintesi imposta, sostanza in rovina, *acting* idiomatico, voce sofferta. In ogni caso, essa *resta* – come la cenere, la traccia, la marca – col suo "passo" (*pas*, negazione e movimento) e col suo "luogo senza luogo:" il corpo senza corpo, il fondo insondabile del mare, la cima ghiacciata della montagna, l'isola di Lampedusa. Vis-à-vis con l'orrore, la scrittura pensa allora al lutto, alla malinconia, al travaglio riuscito o meno della perdita dell'altro. Il pensiero è il cammino della sua singolarità assoluta, la firma diversamente inscritta: nella pagina, sulla scena, oltre il lutto, sorge la *deliverance* segreta ed enigmatica, la costruzione im-possibile di una 'auto-bio-etero-grafia' – firmata, cioè, nell'incontro d'amore con la specie (bio) e con la comunità (etero) – che si apre, in singolarità assoluta e in ripetizione trasformante, all'appello e alla chiamata della sopravvivenza[6].

Dal segreto, tramite il canto, alla testimonianza; dalla differenza, tramite la condivisione e la giustizia, alla testimonianza; è una questione di "sopra"-nomi che "sopra"-vivono perché hanno già e sempre l'altro dentro di sé, dell'azione del "nominar-si" che si completa con l'altro, che cerca giustizia insieme agli altri, e che, in conclusione, assume la "clandestinità" tra di sé, celebrando l'altro in se stesso. La poesia regna su tutto; è il canto che risponde, che è imparato a memoria (*by heart*), che si relaziona, dialoga, echeggia, fa ballare, evoca e celebra… Potrebbe l'arte portare altra testimonianza? Nella narrazione, sulle scene, la testimonianza poetica si confronta con il limite, la frontiera, la barriera – «(un bordo non è mai naturale)», dice il filosofo (Derrida 1992, 409) – offrendo la propria *tekhnè* ospitale a controfirmare la lunga lista «aperta a tutti quelli e quelle che cercheranno un giorno o l'altro di scriversi sopra il loro nome. E ancora per molto tempo. Fino a quando ci sarà un qui e un altrove. E il mare tra i due. Fino a che si sarà laggiù. Dall'altro lato del mare» (Elalamy 2015, 104).

[5] In *I Migranti*, la "data" è «quella domenica 22 aprile» (Elalamy 2015, 18); «Domenica 22 aprile, al largo di Bendir» (Elalamy 2015, 48) (il testo si conclude con l'indicazione di un'"ora" fatale: «[…] *ventidue giorni e sei ore e trentasette minuti più tardi doveva imbarcarsi su una barca in legno a destinazione morte*. Perché *trentasette* e non trentotto minuti più tardi? Perché è l'ora esatta in cui deve annegare nel libro: Non annegare nelle parole in tutte queste pagine», 104). Per la *Trilogia*, dopo "La dedica" a "Lampedusa Snow", segue: «La realtà. La fonte: la cronaca: Un migrante africano, sbarcato a Lampedusa, viene portato in una baita di montagna…» (Prosa 2013, 44); in *Asmat-Nomi* (Yimer 2015), l'evento diviene la sigla dell'orrore, il "3 ottobre 2013," la data della morte di 366 immigrati e 20 dispersi presunti, a poche miglia dal porto Lampedusa, una delle più gravi catastrofi marittime nel Mediterraneo dall'inizio del XXI secolo.

[6] Nel contesto contemporaneo, in relazione alle guerre globali, la pensatrice che ha aperto la questione del rispetto del "nome" delle vittime, è Judith Butler – vedi, in italiano, Butler 2013).

Sopra-nomi

La mia risata vola alta
Più in alto dei cappelli cardinalizi
E della speranza.
I miei seni sorridono quando brilla il sole
Malgrado i miei abiti malgrado mio marito
Felice nell'essere così sporca
Perché gli avvoltoi mi amano
E anche Dio.
(Joyce Mansour)

I Migranti (Elalamy 2015) è un opera narrativa composta di trent'uno aforismi che costruiscono le vicende di un villaggio che una mattina trova sulla spiaggia i corpi dei "clandestini" annegati nel viaggio verso l'Europa. Molte sono le voci che narrano l'evento, ogni frammento legandosi all'altro per costruirne una visione corale: è la storia del villaggio, degli alibi degli scafisti, delle donne, degli uomini partiti per mare e ritornati senza vita. Ci sono echi di cronaca di un fatto accaduto; un fotografo spagnolo descrive le immagini che ha ripreso dei corpi inermi. In realtà, il testo insiste, col corsivo, sull'indirizzo ai suoi lettori: «*Siamo in un libro e non nella vita e non al cinema; vi prego, di conseguenza, di accontentarvi delle parole*» (Elalamy 2015, 35). Le parole iniziano a circo-scrivere l'evento dentro un'ambientazione apparentemente naturale: un albero appare all'inizio a raccogliere i pensieri più intimi; "l'albero della libertà" cresce in Europa, distante soltanto una ventina di chilometri, laggiù, oltre la nebbia; intorno al grande albero, che ogni primavera dà fiori color malva, si compie il rituale di uno degli uomini del villaggio quando scopre i corpi riportati sulla spiaggia dal mare quella domenica del 22 aprile.

Il mare è innocente; non lo è invece il "fuoco" all'origine del viaggio, come confessa Luafi alla madre: «… a volte, lo sai, devi saperlo, come dire, sì, mi brucio per vedere se esito, metto le mani sul fuoco, e per esser sicuro di esistere ancora e sai, insomma, esisto ancora abbastanza per partire» (Elalamy 2015, 33, 38). Luafi è partito con altri undici uomini, e con una donna che porta segretamente una creatura in grembo. Iniziata come una favola – «C'era una volta, una di quelle volte…» (Elalamy 2015, 9) – la scrittura si confronta con la catastrofe senza appello: «Sono tutti annegati e tuo figlio con loro» (Elalamy 2015, 29). Le parole sono "brucianti" come il sogno che ha ucciso, annegandolo, Luafi, e, allo stesso tempo, "taglienti," ad in/formare la scrittura stessa: l'evento, tagliato, rotto, fratturato, della ferita incisa dai corpi sulla sabbia scottante. La madre non vuole credere alle voci; i suoi passi, piccoli, lenti, lentissimi, vogliono ritardare

l'instante in cui vedrà «Luafi senza Luafi»[7]. Nel tragitto verso l'orrore, ricordando le parole del figlio, la madre sente di non averne compreso il senso; il passo si fa ancora più lento; la donna si ferma, si china, forse prega. Il racconto è giunto al cuore del dolore; tra le grida tutt'intorno, come una ribellione contro Fenice, sulla pagina risuona l'incredibile, l'inaspettato, l'incomprensibile:

> Là. Improvvisamente. In quel momento. Senza avvertire. Là. Senza che ce lo aspetti. Là. Là. In mezzo a questi pianti, a quelle grida, quelle lacrime, quel dolore, che avrebbe potuto immaginarlo? Là nel bel mezzo di tutto ciò, una risata, sì, esatto, una risata… solo una risata che scoppia davvero…" (Elalamy 2015, 37-8).

Il suono squarcia la pagina, e, là, proprio là, nel taglio terribile, inabissa – oltre ogni dialettica – il lavoro del lutto, la malinconia, il senso e la durata.[8] La scrittura vorrebbe lenire la pena, la pietà, lo strazio della risata scandalosa, ma il suono si sottrae alla domanda:

> … è tutta un'altra cosa. Dove è andato a finire il dolore? Dove si sono nascoste le lacrime? … Solo un altro modo di piangere? Né più bello né più vero, più doloroso di sicuro…Come se lei potesse davvero ridere della morte di suo figlio, aprire la bocca e farla volare in scoppi, in scoppi di risa affilati per tagliare il silenzio e i pianti e le grida

[7] Le parole di cui il libro prega (invoca e indirizza) di accontentarsi, iscrivono il passo (*pas*, negazione e movimento) della scrittura, incidendosi sulla pagina – forse a segnare un suo cammino imprevedibile? All'inizio, è un attento seguito di passi:

Prima un passo,
poi un altro,
poi un altro ancora,
lentamente, piano, fino alla fine e oltre (Elalamy 2015, 13).

Quindi, i passi inscrivono un desiderio impossibile:

… a
passi
piccoli
così
per ritardare l'istante… (Elalamy 2015, 30).

La lentezza dei movimenti non può arrestare l'evento; l'olocausto è avvenuto, e la scrittura conduce inesorabilmente alla "catastrofe" del ritorno sulla terra.

[8] Sulla forza della "risata" si potrebbero indicare varie direzioni di analisi. Qui si vuole ricordare che, per J. Derrida, nella sua analisi di Joyce e di Bataille, e nell'eco di Omero, Rabelais e tanti altri, la risata – così, innanzitutto, vicina all'angoscia (cfr. Derrida 1971) – "resta" a provocare la domanda, senza permettere nessuna totalizzazione del suo senso: «Pourquoi rire? … Reste peut-etre à penser le rire comme reste, précisément. Qu'est-ce que ca veut dire, le rire? Qu'est que ca veur rire?» (Derrida, 1985, 28). Per una sintesi della filosofia derridaiana sull'affermazione e la "risata", si veda Parvulescu 2010.

> degli altri, con i denti in mezzo a tutto questo e la lingua morsa fino a farla sanguinare: Qualcuno potrebbe farlo? Qualcuno potrebbe dirci quanto tempo durerà ancora questa risata? Si potrebbe fermare, un giorno? Se solo potesse riprendersi ora, se solo potesse smettere di ridere e fare come se nulla fosse, forse le si potrebbe chiederle, sì, forse le si potrebbe chiedere che cosa la faccia sentire così, e forse le si potrebbe anche chiedere che cosa la faccia ridere così (Elalamy 2015, 39).

Nello iato tra "là", con l'accento grave, e "la" donna-madre-nutrice-cora, in bilico tra l'occhio e l'orecchio, la marca del "resto" è inafferrabile, come la cenere, come la traccia. Essa non dice, pur non restando nel silenzio; echeggia soltanto, perdendosi nel senza-tempo. Il frammento che segue risponde, attratto dal suono, con la dichiarazione d'amore scritta dalla bellissima giovane partita senza confessare la creatura che porta in grembo. Shama rappresenta un altro mistero, come a voler portare il primo enigma oltre l'abisso, in un taglio di scrittura più ancora intenso: colei che non fa ombra sui muri e che non lascia orme o tracce sulla sabbia, come la cenere in dissipazione[9]; colei che non può essere detta da alcuna parola, perché «se esistesse sarebbe così delicata e leggera, così leggera e così morbida, *così morbida* che ti si scioglierebbe in bocca prima di aver il tempo di pronunciarla» (Elalamy 2015, 45)[10]; la donna emette un canto: «Non grido, non urlo, non piange neanche. Canta» (Elalamy 2015, 50). La risata e il canto; la morte, il dolore, e la poesia? Di fronte allo scandalo, il testo, ancora una volta, dichiara di non conoscere e non comprendere, riuscendo solo a svolgere l'effetto e l'affetto del suono: «Incredibile. Da non capirci nulla… Da non capirci nulla. Senza abbassare mai la voce. Fino a diventare insopportabile. Una sofferenza per gli altri, un dolore che ti afferra lì e non ti lascia più" (Elalamy 2015, 51). La voce, desiderosa di cullare, per l'ultima volta, a lungo, lentamente, la creatura che vive dentro di sé, è il cardine, la meridiana, «il miracolo, la benedizione», come la "tavola" di legno su cui la donna si sorregge, con forza im-possibile, per lanciare il suo canto tenero (*cendre/tendre*)[11].

[9] Il canto di Shama è "giusto," se vero è che «La cenere è giusta; per il fatto di non aver traccia, essa traccia appunto più di un'altra traccia e alla pari dell'altra» (Derrida, 1984*,* 31).

[10] Per la "parola inesistente" ne *I migranti* (Elalamy 2015) che diventerà "parola chiave" in "Lampedusa Way" (Prosa 2013, 93), nel legame testuale con la questione della "resistenza" all'interpretazione, che "pur dà a pensare," J. Derrida parla di «l'ultima guerra, tutte le guerre, l'attività clandestina, le linee di demarcazione, la discriminazione, i passaporti e le passwords» (cfr. Derrida 1992).

[11] L'assonanza, in francese, tra *cendre* e *tendre*, intraducibile in italiano, conclude la riflessione derridaiana in *Ciò che resta del fuoco* (Derrida 1984, 47). Vorremmo notare che la "tavola di legno" ne *I migranti* diviene la "tavola umana" a cui "guardare con rispetto" in "Lampedusa Beach" (Prosa 2013, 27; 28). La ripetizione differenziale può ricordare non soltanto le "tavole della legge" ma anche l'impossibilità di sapere "quale sostanza si sia lì consumata," nel legno che ha prodotto la "cenere," il resto. Il filosofo si/ci domanda, in parentesi, «(lo sapete quanti tipi di cenere distinguono i naturalisti? E di quale 'legno' certe ceneri talvolta schiudono un desiderio?)» (Derrida 1984, 15).

Tra le maglie del suono, allora, si ascoltano tessersi (con fili sfilacciati, interrotti, confusi, sparsi) le parole degli uomini che scendono, insieme al canto, «nel ventre del mare» (Elalamy 2015, 53). Sono parole ora; diventeranno pesci domani? Saranno pescati dall'arte della storia? Nel racconto, il bisogno testimoniale è il desiderio della memoria futura nella in-certezza della parola-a-venire, se e quando, da qualche parte, i marinai troveranno il canto della donna e le parole degli uomini: «Racconteranno tutto questo viaggio, senza averlo mai fatto… Parleranno di questi uomini senza averli neanche incontrati. Per non dimenticarli. Tesseranno una storia, lacrime nella voce, con le parole che avranno pescato" (Elalamy 2015, 56). Ciò, forse, avverrà nel futuro; in realtà, il "marinaio" Elalamy vuole firmare, in presenza e in ripetizione, la testimonianza nel "qui e ora" della sua scrittura[12]. L'enigma, il canto, la cura si destinano, così, con l'inchiostro del destino, alla sopra-vivenza – *sur-vie* o *living on* – dei "sopra-nomi" degli uomini bruciati dal fuoco del sogno, tagliati dalla vita e dalla morte, esistenti al di là, oltre il nome, la parola, la ferita, perché, per una volta, «ogni volta unica, la fine del mondo» (Derrida 2005),[13] (ricordati) nell'estasi delle loro esistenze (Lacoue-Labarte 1999)[14]. E il "mare innocente" è sempre e già stato là, ad accoglierne le opere: Momo, il Grasso, parte per mare avvertendo la vergogna compassionevole per coloro che hanno fame; Abdu, o Mezzanotte, vede nel mare l'inchiostro con cui scrivere infiniti libri (Elalamy 2015, 50); Zueri, il Muto, conosce il silenzio del mare; Mulai, il Cantastorie, può inventare mille storie da una singola parola, il mare e le onde; Jaafar, o Hollihud, disegna parole sulla sua casa di lamiera; Ridwan, Testa-al-contrario, ascolta la musica del mare; Salah beve il mare, per essere infine bevuto dal mare; Slim, il Disgraziato, ha una "macchia di sangue" che può essere lavata solo dal mare; Abid, il Corridore, corre verso il mare per comprendere che il mare è il limite della sua corsa; Annar, il Cameriere, un giorno parte, senza ragione, senza preavviso, così, «Laggiù, verso il mare» (Elalamy 2015, 85). Restano, nell'insicurezza auto-affetta della scrittura, le "stelle" di Sharaf, detto N'joum, a sperare che, tra gli (dis)astri tanti e infiniti, alla lista lunga del libro, non ci saranno altri, molti altri, «a scrivere sopra il proprio nome» (Elalamy 2015, 104).

[12] Può la testimonianza essere un monumento, ad esempio, una piramide? *I Migranti*, possibilmente, potrebbe star pensando a *Pyramis* – che è anche «un dolce di miele e di farina. Veniva offerto come ricompensa per una notte bianca a colui che aveva vegliato» (Derrida 1984, 17) – quando in-frammenta la notizia della catastrofe con la preparazione delle "crepes:" «"Sono fatte col miele, non con lo zucchero…" Glielo disse così, semplicemente. Come si direbbe "Le crepes sono bruciate." E Mina, che si leccava le dita corse verso la piazza grande, sciolse il velo rosso, liberò i capelli e si mise a girare su se stessa. Si sarebbe detto che danzasse…» (Elalamy 2015, 26-27).

[13] *Ogni volta unica, la fine del mondo* è un "libro d'addio," dedicato alla morte dell'amico, degli amici, nella ripetizione della fine «del solo mondo esistente, ogni volta. Singolarmente. Irreversibilmente. Per l'altro e stranamente anche per chi per il momento sopravvive e ne fa l'impossibile esperienza» (Derrida 2005, 11).

[14] Vedi, in specifico, la sezione dedicata a "Ecstacy".

Auto-bio-etero-nominar-si

Non accade in acqua.
Non accade nel ghiaccio.
Anche se l'acqua più vicina è infuriata
E il ghiaccio più lontano è spezzato al centro.
Allora dove?
Dove scompare il corpo che naufraga?
(Lina Prosa)

L'acqua in cui cade un'altra donna, nel viaggio clandestino verso l'Italia, è anch'essa senza colpa: «Il mare è innocente» (Prosa 2013, 19). Non lo sono invece gli scafisti che esigono il prezzo del passaggio sul suo giovane corpo, un corpo-a corpo, provocando lo squilibrio della "vecchia culla" che potrebbe alloggiare "non più di due gemelli" ma che invece trasporta 700 esseri. La violenza dissacra la fede nel viaggio di Shauba, e della zia Mahama che la aiuta nei preparativi del viaggio, donandole degli occhiali da sole per proteggersi dal sole bruciante, e per fissare la linea dell'orizzonte sempre con chiara direzione. La violenza squilibra, ancor più, la linea della scrittura che, in "Lampedusa Beach", si piega su stessa, scendendo verso l'abisso: «*l'infernale discesa*», il «naufragio… totale» (Prosa 2013, 18; 17). La giovane Shauba sprofonda «sempre più giù... ma lentamente… talmente lentamente» (Prosa 2013, 16); in verità, il passo della scrittura non può capitalizzare sulla lentezza, decidendo, diversamente, di offrire la "sintesi" impostale. Caduta nell'acqua, la ragazza intravede Lampedusa, chiara, un puntino azzurro, un alone giallo, una palmetta; non c'è tempo, però, per dilungarsi: «L'anticamera della morte impone una sintesi» (Prosa 2013, 21). Tra la morte e la vita, in balia di «qualcosa che non mi fa né vivere né morire… l'acqua non mi uccide completamente…» (Prosa 2013, 21), nel tra che non è né/né, la sintesi (arte/*tekhnè*) della scrittura segue l'ultima linea disegnata col sangue mestruale, incidendosi, in ripetizione, nella voce del dolore: «Sto male… Sto male… Sto male… Sto male… Sto male… Sto male… Sto male perché muoio» (Prosa 2013, 30)[15]. L'estremo limite della morte si confonde nella sorgenza della vita, e, là, Shauba dà nascita a se stessa, "completandosi:"

[15] La "sincope" del sangue mestruale fa sorgere, in "Lampedusa Beach", il "poema di cenere" della migrazione: «Come mai il naufragio e la prolungata sincope non/fermano il tempo,/lo spazio, il corpo, la storia,/il ricordo, la violenza, la storia,/il ricordo, la morale, gli elementi,/il viaggio, la morale, l'economia,/la ragion di Stato, lo sfruttamento, il mostro,/il barcone, la luna, il vento,/la bonaccia, la diarrea, il pesce,/l'umidità, la bronchite, la cartolina,/la missione, lo scoglio, l'illegalità/l'emigrazione…» (Prosa 2013, 37); in "Lampedusa Snow", nel suo canto, sarà in gioco «il non senso straziato dall'imprevisto, la voragine internazionale,/la fame, la differenza/l'inferiorità/ il cielo senza gli astri, è così che cresce/il commercio degli altri…/sfoghi malefici di emigrazione,/la molestia di chi non conta nulla,/la rapina sui corpi poveri" (Prosa 2013, 49-50).

> Mi auto lavo.
> Sento di esser materna con me stessa.
> Sostituisco mia madre.
> Mi autoeleggo regina…
> Mi completo con l'acqua dopo aver inghiottito fuoco,
> terra, aria,
> in quel paese d'Affrica (Prosa 2013, 31).

È un meccanismo quasi-automatico, la linea della vita s'innesta sull'abisso della morte, facendo sorgere il fantasma, che già inquieta il ricordo. Lo spirito acquatico canta: la canzone "Li pisci spada" di Domenico Modugno, imparata a memoria (*by heart*) rubandone il segreto, da donna, ai marinai gelosi del giradischi; l'*envoi*, la lettera, l'appello che Shauba *canta* al Capo dello Stato Italiano (Prosa 2013, 33-34) e al Capo di Stato dell'Affrica (Prosa 2013, 34-6). Chi firma queste invocazioni? La specie "vivente"[16] – se l'incontro con altro da sé, già sempre in sé, avviene sotto il segno di una relazione d'amore, un'altra "tavola" della scrittura dell'autos, questa volta a condivider-si con la "sarda:"

> … amore improvviso per uno scambio di specie?
> Io la bacio. Ricambio.
> Questo scambio di specie è il mio momento migliore.
> E' lo snodo cruciale… E' il saluto.
> Ci baciamo con passione.
> Provo a decifrare il piacere.
> Non mi interessa se la sarda ha un sesso.
> Tutto è legato alla fine, alla mia fine
> Alla immediata coscienza che è tutto lì,
> tra me e la sarda (Prosa 2013, 39).[17]

Singolarità, solitudine, e desiderio dell'altro: assorbita l'acqua, la chimica del corpo si trasforma – unica e singolare nella propria "completezza", Shauba è se stessa e anche altra. Dal fondo del mare, in punto di morte, la dichiarazione della differenza è "dettata", emigrando, all'assunzione dell'altro:

[16] Per la riflessione sull'animale come "vivente," vedi Derrida e Ferraris, 1997, 32; inoltre, Mallet 1999, 9. Per una riflessione sul rapporto tra la "cenere" e l'"animalità," vedi Wolfe 2014.
[17] Per l'interessante e esaustiva trattazione, vedi Pelgreffi 2013.

Signor Tenente della caserma di Lampedusa Beach
…
Io chiedo asilo politico…
… io chiedo un luogo che garantisca la mia diversità di
pensiero
…
Scriva… scriva…
le suggerisco io la formula:
Io…
testimone mi è Shauba, in punto di morte,
chiedo asilo politico…
in quanto mi dichiaro profugo per pensarla
diversamente…(Prosa 2013, 39-41)

Il "testimone" chiede all'altro di condividere l'appello, di firmarlo, di portarlo altrove, e così, forse, di salvarlo – proprio come il pescespada tirato in barca dal pescatore che lo ha creduto un naufrago…

Non c'è vergogna tra me e la neve. Non c'è odio
(Lina Prosa)

Issare per salvare, deportare per abbandonare: è ciò che impara Mohamed, il fratello di Shauba, l'ingegnere elettronico – che mette in movimento la "sostanza" della materia, gli elettroni – per lui, «Questo è il momento più bello», (Prosa 2013, 47) – quando sfugge al naufragio, è salvato a Lampedusa, curato dai "medici lunari dell'Impero", e, quindi, attraversando la lunghezza intera d'Italia, viene de-portato in una valle in nord Italia. Qui, l'unico "punto corretto" è che «Nevica sulle Alpi Orobiche» (Prosa 2013, 45), ponendo la sostanza in rovina, trasformando il cuore, facendo finire la certezza. L'uomo è arrivato là, forse guidato dall'inchiostro del destino del suo nome?

C'era una volta Mohamed, attenzione all'acca
in questo nome l'acca è un soffio
all'incontrario verso il centro della terra,
uno spasimo.
Se hai un nome con lo spasimo
Il tuo destino è segnato (Prosa 2013, 55).[18]

[18] P. Lacoue-Labarte spiega che «la poesia è lo spasmo o sincope del linguaggio», il rapporto con l'incondizionato, ricordando che Holderlin chiamava la cesura «la parola pura» (Lacou-Labarthe 1999).

È un sogno che arriva di notte; certo, Mohamed ha fatto di tutto per sconfiggere lo spasimo del suo nome. Durante il viaggio per mare, avendo imparato a nuotare, egli non ha lasciato accadere la morte: «Io non posso morire. Io non posso annegare. Il primo successo è non morire» (Prosa 2013, 49). Nel freddo insopportabile, quando trova nella giacca ricevuta in beneficenza (mai una forma di amicizia, solo la lotta tra un'associazione caritatevole e un'altra!) un biglietto d'amore firmato da un suicida bianco, egli rivendica la propria determinazione a vivere, la «pazienza di una cenere» (Derrida 1984, 9). La punteggiatura dell'esperienza della de-portazione è, però, serratissima: l'abbandono, l'inattività, il cibo cattivo, il silenzio, il freddo, la disperazione. L'uomo cerca di riscaldare il corpo intimo di un giovane africano, troppo giovane per portare il peso del ghiaccio; ascolta, forse, l'alpino – da cui ha imparato il canto di "O bella ciao", e che è l'unico con cui ha scambiato parola – che gli consiglia di cambiare valle, di andare "altrove." Mohamed parte ancora una volta – non è una fuga ma l'"azione" (Prosa 2013, 65). Trascinandosi strenuamente verso la cima della valle, i suoi passi s'incidono lenti e pesanti nella neve. Non è come sulla barca dove tutti devono muoversi insieme, la "forza di legge" che impone l'assoluto co-ordinamento tra i tanti; ora lui è "autonomo," costruendosi in "completezza," là, nella ricerca della giustizia e dell'Oriente, nel «rapporto con l'incondizionato» (Derrida – Ferraris, 1997, 17):

> Canto e avanzo.
> Cerco giustizia.
> …
> Mi muovo da solo.
> Faccio tutto da solo.
> Cado, mi alzo, mi sposto.
> Tutto dipende da me.
> Vado su.
> Salgo…
> Cerco l'Oriente (Prosa 2013, 66-68)

E' questa la definizione di una soggettività compatta e assertiva? L'"auto-bio-*etero*-grafia" di Mohamed, in verità, non si esenta dall'incontro con l'altro, dentro di sé – se non altro perché la morte sopravviene a entrambi – nello scambio di calore col camoscio ferito:

> L'abbraccio. E' caldo….
> Ritiro il braccio che stringe il camoscio.
> La mano è sporca di sangue. Il camoscio è inerte.
> Ora il camoscio è meno caldo.

> Or il camoscio è quasi freddo.
> Il camoscio è statalmente freddo.
> L'impero è freddo (Prosa 2013, 70)

L'impero è ghiacciato e l'uomo vacilla; compiendo un ultimo sforzo, egli parla a se stesso, facendo risuonare la parola – «la parola resiste più a lungo dell'uomo» (Prosa 2013, 79). Potrebbe essa indirizzarsi all'improbabile evenienza d'ospitalità del Signor Capovalle, se mai questi dicesse «restate… restate…restate» ai vivi; in verità, raggiunta la cima, "là", resta soltanto la chiamata del suo nome: «Mohamed! Mohamed! Mi faccio campagna» (Prosa 2013, 71). Esorbitante rispetto alla ragione, senza aspettativa, come una sorpresa, al limite tra la realtà che finisce e l'inizio dell'irrealtà, *sul bordo dell'altra valle*, inaspettato e straordinario, il ritorno del nome, il "nominar-si", produce l'eco dell'appartenenza ad una intera comunità:

> Il mio nome mi torna all'orecchio
> Come l'eco di un popolo
> Quanta gente! (Prosa 2013, 71).

Il corpo di Mohamed è ritrovato, ma la lettura dei suoi "resti" è sbagliata: i soccorritori pensano che la lettera scritta dal suicida bianco e ritrovata nella giacca caritatevole, sia a sua firma. L'esperienza di paziente resistenza alla morte in onore della vita non verrà ricordata. Restano però delle tracce di sangue: saranno esse a condurre gli zii africani – Mahama, che, col "balinitico" accento, pronuncia con consonanti accentuate l'Afffrica, con tre o cinque f, e i Cappitttalisti, la cui bontà, la donna ripete, determina la sopravvivenza della sua gente, e Saif, il vecchio saggio, dolce e affidabile, il cui eccesso di linguaggio conia il termine "Bianconi" – nella ricerca a seguito dei corpi dispersi di Shauba e Mohamed? I vecchi sono stati i testimoni, se non gli artefici, della partenza dei due giovani; ora, condotti dai passi dell'ultimo atto della *Trilogia*, sono a "La'mpedusa", l'isola paziente, bella, che, col suo desiderio, indica la via – perché «se c'è desiderio c'è la via» (Prosa 2013, 81).

Incontratisi a Lampedusa per la prima volta, il loro riconoscimento è suggellato da uno strano rituale: Mohama vuole vedere, mostrandogli la sua, la pancia di Saif: «[…] fammi vedere la tua pancia. Io ti farò vedere la mia… *Saif si scopre tutta la pancia, piena di croste e cicatrici*» (Prosa 2013, 76-7). Il taglio, la linea, il punto, il meridiano, la punteggiatura della scrittura convergono tutti sull'orlo della ferita che nessuno potrà cancellare o guarire – forse, soltanto con-dividere? Cosa potranno condividere, allora, i segni inferti sul corpo, più singolari e unici che mai? Ancora una volta, ora più di prima, forse perché approdata all'aperto, la scrittura conduce la scena: delle cartoline, che hanno pre-scritto l'impossibile destinazione del viaggio dei giovani migranti, mostrano,

nell'improbabile traduzione, l'immagine che ha dato inizio al loro cammino: esse rappresentano Roma, la terra dell'albero di Pi/No, una volta chiamato Pi/Si, che, dopo il diluvio universale, è stato capace di dire "no" al vento che voleva strapparne la punta. Dopo il diluvio universale, bisogna resistere al soffio che porta via; ancor più, bisogna resistere all'espropriazione del ricordo di chi è portato via. Nell'attesa delle notizie del Cappittalista, i due vecchi mettono in scena (dentro la scena, una *mise en ebyme*) la scena in cui fermano il Capitalista ogniqualvolta vorrà entrare nella scena del ricordo. Scelgono una password:

> Affffffrica!…
> Affffffrica- Affffffrichissima!...
> Affffffrica delle Affffffricheeeee… (Prosa 2013, 94)

La "password" servirà a fermare chiunque voglia "mettere le mani sopra" al ricordo. Forse perché soltanto delle "mani di cenere" potranno lavorare il lutto, di fronte al dolore, nell'impegno alla testimonianza? Saif riflette: «L'Africa ha le mani nere. Mani che non dormono. Mani di cenere. Dal primo fuoco. Dalla prima fiamma… come queste mie mani» (Prosa 2013, 90). Sono, in verità, le sue mani a scrivere la lettera che, dettata da Mahama, è destinata all'Ambasciatore: «Io detto e tu scrivi» (Prosa 2013, 99). La missiva è intensa, commovente: «muove anche le pietre» (Prosa 2013, 99-101); eppure, il suo *envoi* può, sempre e già, mancare la destinazione. La lettera dettata e scritta da Mahama e Saif si perde, travolta dall'ultimo atto di "Lampedusa Way"; la nave che li ha portati a Lampedusa giusto per il tempo della loro ricerca, parte. I due la lasciano andare, sopraffatti dall'evento che viene:

> Siamo clandestini!
> Qua la mano, Saif, siamo clandestini! (Prosa 2013, 102)

L'assunzione del nome dell'altro è firmata con una stretta di mani, ed inviata, sulle note di "My Way" di Frank Sinatra, al primo con-tatto con-diviso di un ballo conclusivo, il tratto della scrittura testimoniale che si apre infine all'*à-venir*:

> *Ballano sulle note della canzone.*
> *Buio lento su Saif e Mahama* (Prosa 2013, 104)

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Mixed Identity (*artist's statement*)

Victoria Team

I am a medical anthropologist and a women's health researcher. Currently, I am working in the School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. I was trained as a medical doctor and further as a doctor of public health. My publications focus on cultural issues in disability, caregiving, body image, reproductive screening, breastfeeding, and mothering. Pot painting is my hobby. However, I am a mother of five, four of whom are still living with me, and I have a difficult time keeping up with my day to day household and professional activities. I frequently carry the image of my future artwork in my mind for years.
My artwork, *Mixed identity* vase*,* was a self-reflection of my mixed background. Sewn together the Greek key and the Ukrainian cross-stitch parts of the heart represent mixed Greek-Ukrainian identity. Bleeding represents painful experiences related to the attempts to get closer to and to be accepted by either of these communities. The questions of ethnic identity were bothering me since childhood. My father was Pontic Greek; my mother is Ukrainian. I cannot say that both sides of my family and both communities were against me; however, I was accepted partially. Later, at school, I thought whether partial acceptance by both communities equals full acceptance. The community labels that were attached to me reflected the sense of my otherness. In Ukraine, I was frequently called Greek Bastard, including by my family members from Ukrainian side. In Greek diasporic community, I am known as Russian Bitch. As part of self-reflection, I use my artwork as a tool for questioning the construct of identity, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 1) did:

> If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere. If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for…?

I have painted this vase specifically for the book on marginalised groups within Greek diaspora, a diaspora within the diaspora. Unfortunately, this book was rejected by the reviewers; and one of the reviewers has found this topic ridiculous. The reviewer's comment and the editor's decision indicated that ethnic nationalism is still the dominant politics in diasporic communities. However, as Anagnostou (2015, 20) has pointed out, there are tensions between other groups within the diaspora, so called

counterpublics, and general public; and the 'counterpublics openly reject ethnic triumphalism.' This diasporic politics of nationalism-based ethnic triumphalism reflects current politics of othering both in the Mediterranean and of the Mediterranean (Chalaniova 2014, Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016). The population movements in the region are increasing; they are related to boat migration via the Mediterranean routes and influx of refugees from Africa and the Middle East (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012, Traublinger 2014, Lendaro 2016). Individual Mediterranean countries are unable to address national and transnational identity issues; and the ethno-nationalist and neo-fascist movements are rising (Gattinara, Froio et al. 2013, Sotiris 2015). The Mediterranean crisis indicates that many people are experiencing their identity crises (Dalakoglou 2013, Lendaro 2016), the construct of identity is increasingly open, and people's hearts are bleeding…

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Nota sulla copertina del n. 5 (1/2016) di *Politics. Rivista di Studi Politici*

La copertina è stata elaborata partendo da una foto gentilmente inviata da Victoria Team (Australia), in cui è ritratta una sua opera intitolata *Mixed Identity*: vaso di argilla rossa dipinto con una pittura a olio di lino. Il vaso è stato dipinto in stile greco antico da Victoria Team.
Dimensioni del vaso: altezza 16.5cm, diametro massimo 10cm.
Fotografato con Nikon D100 60 mm lente +16. Processata con Nikon Capture Editor. Ritagliato e convertito a CMYK in Photoshop C56. Immagine di Robert Lean.

Artwork title and description

Mixed identity. 2012. Linseed-based oil paint on red-coloured clay urn. Vase painted in an Ancient Greek style by Victoria Team. Dimensions: height 16.5cm, maximum diameter 10cm. Photographed on Nikon D100 60 mm lens +16. Processed in Nikon Capture Editor. Cropped and converted to CMYK in Photoshop C56. Image by Robert Lean.