A medieval manuscript illustration depicting a heated argument or conflict. On the left, a figure in a red robe and black cap points an accusatory finger towards a group of men. The group, dressed in various medieval tunics and hennins, reacts with surprise and aggression. One man in the center holds a wooden staff high, ready to strike. Another man on the right, wearing a crown-like headpiece, looks on with a stern expression. The background features a large, flowing banner with a red crescent and a castle tower on the far left. The entire scene is set against a backdrop of dense, handwritten text in a medieval script, which is partially obscured by the figures and the title.

EDITED BY BRIAN A. CATLOS & SHARON KINOSHITA

CAN WE TALK MEDITERRANEAN?

*Conversations on an Emerging Field in Medieval
and Early Modern Studies*

MEDITERRANEAN
PERSPECTIVES



Mediterranean Perspectives

Series editors

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University of Colorado Boulder
Boulder, CO, USA

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As a region whose history of connectivity can be documented over at least two and a half millennia, the Mediterranean has in recent years become the focus of innovative scholarship in a number of disciplines. In shifting focus away from histories of the origins and developments of phenomena predefined by national or religious borders, Mediterranean Studies opens vistas onto histories of contact, circulation and exchange in all their complexity while encouraging the reconceptualization of inter- and intra-disciplinary scholarship, making it one of the most exciting and dynamic fields in the humanities. *Mediterranean Perspectives* interprets the Mediterranean in the widest sense: the sea and the lands around it, as well as the European, Asian and African hinterlands connected to it by networks of culture, trade, politics, and religion. This series publishes monographs and edited collections that explore these new fields, from the span of Late Antiquity through Early Modernity to the contemporary.

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Brian A. Catlos · Sharon Kinoshita
Editors

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and Early Modern Studies

palgrave
macmillan

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To our “Club Med” friends and colleagues...

PREFACE

THALATTA! THALATTA! TOWARDS THE SEA

The development of Mediterranean studies as a field or a framework for inquiry is usually traced back to Fernand Braudel and his monumental 1949 study, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (translated into English as *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* in 1972), a book that was pioneering both as a work of environmental history and for its analysis of the Mediterranean as a region. Ironically, Braudel's work did not kick off a flurry of Mediterranean-oriented projects; rather, it served as the catalyst for the development of Atlantic Studies—a field (particularly given its initial focus on the North Atlantic) that resonated with the political situation of post-war Europe and North America and reflected the northwestern European orientation that dominated the academy at that time. In the intervening decades, though there were certainly historians who focused on the Mediterranean as a region, it was mostly as shorthand for the world of Greco-Roman antiquity. An important exception to this was Shlomo Goitein, whose work with the documents of the Cairo Geniza led him to characterize the world of medieval Arabo-Jewish traders as “A Mediterranean Society” (the title of his multi-volume opus on the subject). Through the 1980s and 1990s, medieval historians became more comfortable using the Mediterranean as a regional frame, particularly in reference to economic relations, which were seen as binding a region otherwise imagined as cloven by the great cultural-religious divide between Islam and Christendom.¹ Simultaneously, anthropologists and a few

environmental historians were making a similar turn, while some scholars of culture were beginning to discern and investigate common trends and influences that seemed to unite the region.²

A watershed moment came in 2000 with the publication of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*—a dense, complex, uneven, and challenging book that built on the environmental history of Braudel and proposed a view of the Mediterranean as a coherent historical region from the time of the Neolithic through the Middle Ages. It was a work that seemed to ignore much that historians (particularly those of the Mediterranean) had considered important (such as culture, the state, and institutions, and indeed, historical narrative at all) in favor of sketching underlying relationships and characteristics that had endowed the region with historical consistency (if not unity) since nearly the era of the first human settlement. A short, waggish review of its findings might read, “A lot going on, but nothing happens.” Some readers took exception to this, while others were put off by the density of its prose and the weight of its scholarship. However, the book was important, and not only for the novelty of its arguments and methodology. As is often the case with revisionary or revolutionary works (at least those that become successful), it seemed to provide a means of explaining what scholars in multiple fields had begun to sense for some time: that the varied shores, hinterlands and islands of the Mediterranean were linked by powerful cultural, economic and social bonds, even in the face of (and, to modern scholars, often invisible behind) those confessional and political divisions that formally separated them. It especially spoke to the dissatisfaction of some scholars of Mediterranean lands toward the dominant scholarly meta-narratives that viewed the Middle Ages through the anachronistic prism of the nation and that presumed ethno-religious divisions to be both consistent and largely impenetrable. For these reasons and more, *The Corrupting Sea* both coincided with and, in turn, energized an explosion of scholarship (not to mention a proliferation of journals, projects, institutes, and seminars) that embraced “Mediterranean studies” as a new and enabling frame of reference.

This was certainly the case with the editors of the present volume—two scholars of the Middle Ages (Catlos in religious studies and history, Kinoshita in literature) who found that established paradigms simply could not explain the sorts of dynamics we were uncovering their work. For us, *The Corrupting Sea* offered a framework in which political developments or cultural phenomena that seem anomalous or exceptional when seen

through established categories like “Europe,” “the Islamic world,” national histories, and so on could suddenly make sense, even appearing normal (or normative) in Mediterranean terms. For scholars like us, the Mediterranean perspective has been liberating and productive, resonating not only with our own scholarship but with the less Eurocentric, increasingly sophisticated views of the world’s history and culture that themselves reflect, in part, the increasing diversity of our faculty and student bodies. And so, Mediterranean studies has blossomed in a flurry of enthusiasm that has animated scholars of art, history, religion, and literature.

But in academia, new paradigms for inquiry are no easy sell. Scholarship is conservative by nature. Beyond the investment some may have in reproducing the disciplines in which they were trained, there’s the simple inertia of existing institutional structures—departments and colleges, professional associations and conferences, specialized journals and other publication venues—all more or less wedded to a discourse of expertise that discourages experimentation or collaboration across disciplinary lines. So to some, “the Mediterranean” might seem an unruly and unpromising place. (Before the development of beach culture and institutionalized leisure in the nineteenth century, we should remember, the sea was generally seen as dangerous, irrational, unpredictable: a place where fortunes could be made but lives could be lost, a source of anxiety—hardly a welcoming place.) A frequent objection that “no one in the Middle Ages referred to themselves as Mediterranean” (disingenuous, given how few politically—or culturally-defined areas of study can lay claim to any sort of transhistorical existence) mistakes a topic in intellectual history—the history of conceptualizations of the Mediterranean—for the kinds of cross-regional, inter-ethnic or—confessional, multilingual, transcultural phenomena that the Mediterranean frame can help us to apprehend and analyze.

This is not to say that “the Mediterranean” can explain everything; it is clearly not the appropriate frame for every historical problem and scholars do not necessarily agree on what it means, what its extent and scope are, or how to put it to work as a unit of analysis. But this diversity of opinion is less a consequence of the desire to reify “the Mediterranean” than of the richness of the scholarship enabled by the Mediterranean frame. And so, the present volume poses the rhetorical question, “Can we talk Mediterranean?” both ironically (as if we required permission to challenge long-dominant paradigms), and sincerely (regarding the usefulness of this approach). The result is a candid and rather personal conversation in which five scholars from the humanities—one new to Mediterranean studies, one

a pioneer in the field, and three who have been using it for some time—share the way that it has informed their own work, along with their assessments of its strengths and limitations.

Social and economic historian and religious scholar Brian Catlos's "Why the Mediterranean?" suggests that the sea provides a framework, which—at the very least—is no less useful for analyzing the past than better-established regional frameworks. In "The Thalassal Optic," art historian Cecily Hilsdale shows how an appreciation for Mediterranean interconnectivity forces us to reassess our approach to centers of production and patronage in the Latin West, Byzantium, and the Islamic world that were clearly interdependent but which have previously been studied only in isolation. Literary and cultural scholar Sharon Kinoshita's "Negotiating the Corrupting Sea: Literature 'in' and 'of' the Medieval Mediterranean" outlines the potential of "the Mediterranean" both to generate new questions and insights about well-worn texts, and to bring different kinds of texts to our critical attention. "Desiderata for the Study of Early Modern Art of the Mediterranean" represents art historian Claire Farago's assessment of the Mediterranean turn and how it relates to other trans-regional, hybrid, and non-canonical approaches, including recent work in Latin American art. Finally, in "The Maritime, the Ecological, the Cultural—and the Fig Leaf: Prospects for Medieval Mediterranean Studies," medical historian and Mediterranean authority Peregrine Horden reconsiders the utility of the Mediterranean that he and Nicholas Purcell helped articulate. These essays are followed by "Beneath the Surface: Responses and Queries," a re-creation of the discussion among the authors and the audience at the symposium where these talks were presented. The volume concludes with "Reflections: Talking Mediterranean," comprising the five panelists' short responses to the others' papers and the conversation they sparked.

Our intention was not to produce a definitive or authoritative work on Mediterranean studies but rather to bring scholars from different humanities fields together in an open conversation about its uses and limitations. We, the editors, have embraced the Mediterranean as a frame of scholarly inquiry and, through experience, are convinced of its usefulness in revising, complicating, and enhancing the historical and cultural narrative of the pre-modern "West." Our hope is that this short volume will serve as an inspiration or starting point for other scholars interested in exploring the Mediterranean as means of enriching their own particular field of study.

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEMINAR AND THE MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVES SERIES

Can We Talk Mediterranean is the debut volume of the series, *Mediterranean Perspectives*, a collaboration between Palgrave Macmillan publishers and The Mediterranean Seminar. Founded by Catlos and Kinoshita in 2007, the Mediterranean Seminar (www.mediterraneanseminar.org) is an interdisciplinary forum for the development of teaching and research in the Mediterranean frame. It grew out of a Research Cluster established in 2003 under the aegis of the UC Santa Cruz Center for Cultural Studies. Since its inception the Seminar has organized panels at many professional conferences (including annual meetings of the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association, the American Academy of Religion, the Medieval Academy, the World Congress of Middle Eastern Studies, the Middle East Studies Association, and the International Medieval Congress); a 14-week Residential Research Group at the University of California's Humanities Research Institute; four National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes for University and College Professors (Barcelona 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2015); and a 5-year Multi-Campus Research Project Initiative funded by the University of California Office of the President (2010–2015), consisting of quarterly workshops and conferences at six UC campuses and partner institutions (the University of Colorado Boulder, San Francisco State University and Loyola Marymount). We have also partnered with other institutions and organizations across North America and Europe, including the Medworlds conferences, the University of Paris, and the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Barcelona). Since the conclusion of our funding from the University of California, our board members and associates have raised funds locally so that now our triannual workshop conferences are held at locations across North America. Over the last nine years, scholars from a range of disciplines and research interests have taken part in our programs; the roster of scholars associated with the Mediterranean Seminar has grown to over 1100 worldwide.

This same period has brought a proliferation of Mediterranean studies initiatives and publications around the world. We were delighted when, in 2012, Palgrave invited us to propose this series, and are proud to present this, our inaugural volume. Looking to the future, we believe that the Mediterranean will continue to develop as a field of inquiry, enabling analyses that help solve dilemmas unresolved by more traditional paradigms, a revisionist perspective in the best senses of the term: one which

encourages fresh and innovative research and teaching, firmly grounded in data, rigorous in nature, conscious both of the distorting nature of traditional meta-narratives and of our own particular subjectivities, and one that reflects and resonates with an ever more diverse academy, and the ever more diverse societies we serve.

Boulder, USA
Santa Cruz, USA

Brian A. Catlos
Sharon Kinoshita

NOTES

1. See, for example, works of Ashtor, Abulafia, Baeck, Branford, and Holt in Works Cited.
2. See, for example, works of Chiat, Davis, Jones, Kenny, and Malkin in Works Cited.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book grew out of an event organized at the University of Colorado by the CU Mediterranean Studies Group in conjunction with the Mediterranean Seminar (www.mediterraneanseminar.org). Held on April 6 and 7, 2012, “Can We Talk Mediterranean?” combined a mini-conference, “Mediterranean Studies at CU Boulder,” with the Spring 2012 workshop of University of California Mediterranean Studies Multi-Campus Research Project. The UC MRP, directed by Brian Catlos and Sharon Kinoshita, was funded for 5 years through a generous grant through the Multi-Campus Research Project Initiative of the University of California Office of the President, while in 2011–12 the CU Mediterranean Group was funded by an Innovative Seed Grant from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado. Administrative support was provided by the Institute for Humanities Research at UC Santa Cruz and by the Department of Religious Studies at CU Boulder. Further support at CU Boulder was provided by the Departments of History, Classics, English, French and Italian, and Spanish and Portuguese. The following (then) MA candidates at CU Boulder also assisted: Aaron Stamper (History and Religious Studies) and Maureen Kelly (Religious Studies), at the conference, and Dillon Webster (History and Religious Studies), with the bibliography of this volume. The editors are grateful to all of these individuals and agencies for their support and assistance.

CONTENTS

1 Why the Mediterranean?	1
Brian A. Catlos	
2 The Thalassal Optic	19
Cecily J. Hilsdale	
3 Negotiating the Corrupting Sea: Literature in and of the Medieval Mediterranean	33
Sharon Kinoshita	
4 Desiderata for the Study of Early Modern Art of the Mediterranean	49
Claire Farago	
5 The Maritime, the Ecological, the Cultural—and the Fig Leaf: Prospects for Medieval Mediterranean Studies	65
Peregrine Horden	
6 Beneath the Surface: Responses and Queries	81
The Panelists & Audience	
7 Reflections: Talking Mediterranean	103
Brian A. Catlos, Cecily J. Hilsdale, Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita	

Further Reading	125
References	135
Index	151

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Peregrine Horden is Professor of Medieval History at Royal Holloway, University of London, and an Extraordinary Research Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He is co-author, with Nicholas Purcell, of *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), and is at work on its sequel, *Liquid Continents*. He co-edited, with Sharon Kinoshita, *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), and has written many articles and chapters on Mediterranean Studies, including "Meshwork: Towards a Historical Ecology of Mediterranean Cities," "The Mediterranean and the New Thalassology," "Four Years of Corruption: A Response to the Critics," and "Mediterranean Excuses: Historical Writing on the Mediterranean since Braudel." He also has written extensively on the history of charity and medicine in England, the Latin West and Byzantium. His recent publications include *Hospitals and Healing from Antiquity to the Later Middle Ages* (Ashgate, 2008), and he is writing *The First Hospitals*, a world history of its subject. A long-time collaborator with the Mediterranean Seminar, he has served as faculty on two National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes for College and University Professors (2008 and 2010) organized by Catlos and Kinoshita.

The Panelists & Audience University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, USA

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	Elephant tamer textile fragment in the Dumbarton Oaks collection	22
Fig. 5.1	The Corrupting Sea	70
Fig. 5.2	Ritual Divergence and Expression of Domination	75
Fig. 7.1	Nok culture, terracotta figure	116
Fig. 7.2	Akhenaten	117
Fig. 7.3	Standing Buddha	120

Why the Mediterranean?

Brian A. Catlos

The last 10 years or so has seen an explosion in interest in the Mediterranean as a framework for historical enquiry—including in economic, social, cultural, literary, religious, art, anthropological and sociological studies (notably those focusing on issues of diaspora and migration)—and for analyzing modern policy, whether political, social, environmental or economic. This turn, or rather turns—because I think it is clear that each of these has been undertaken almost entirely independently, in distinct institutional contexts, with varying agendas and objectives—beg both explanation and evaluation. Posing questions framed in terms of the Mediterranean, instead of based on more familiar, accepted, ostensibly clearer, and presumably (at least by some) intuitive categories such as “Europe,” “Africa,” and the “Middle East,” “East” and “West,” “North” and “South,” “the Christian world” and “the Islamic world,” or “Christianity,” “Judaism” and “Islam,” is not only provocative, but seems to challenge the universality, and by extension, the validity, that these paradigms are held to embody. The Mediterranean may no longer be considered to be the “middle” in geographical terms, but it is certainly

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located at the middle of, or in between, each of these categorical binaries and ternaries.

The present meditation will focus on one of these Mediterraneans: the Mediterranean of pre-modern historical enquiry; that is to say, as it can be seen to be manifest as a coherent region in terms of economic, social, political and cultural development from late Antiquity to the Early Modern period, roughly the sixth century through the seventeenth century. Over the last decade this Mediterranean has emerged out of intellectual obscurity and is shaping up as part of the Humanities' avant-garde—an emerging interdisciplinary field that has inspired research projects, academic centers and programs, conferences and associations, journals and book series, and list-servers and fora dedicated to it in North America, Europe, and Asia. Various text book projects have been proposed or are in the works, grand syntheses for undergraduate and popular audiences are being produced, and the field is now enjoying the most fundamental vindication—it figures increasingly as a description for academic job searches, not only in history, but in religious studies, literature, and art history. This represents something of a coup for the pre-modern. Earlier there had been Mediterranean initiatives of these types, but in previous decades “Mediterranean” had served as a sort of code for “Late Antiquity”—perhaps writ within a broader and more comparative context, beyond the shadow of Roman and Hellenistic culture. The new Mediterranean, for its part, functions largely as code for the ambiguous and contested Christian–Muslim–Jewish Mediterranean of the long Middle Ages. The carefully contrived scrubbed-marble purity and rigidity of the monumental Greco-Roman Mediterranean has given way to the messy *métissage*, the ambiguities, duplicities and, perhaps, hybridities, of the ill-defined and shifting boundaries of a corrupted and corrupting, barbaric medieval sea.

No small credit for all of this is due to our fellow contributor and indefatigable collaborator, Peregrine Horden, whose *Corrupting Sea* (co-authored with Nicholas Purcell and published in 2000), reignited debate regarding the nature of the Mediterranean, pulled the by-then-comatose body of Braudel's work from the grips of the cold Atlantic (Studies), and proposed a controversial paradigm for understanding the Mediterranean as a region on environmental and human terms, from the bottom up. *The Corrupting Sea*, however, is as much a symptom as a cause of the new Mediterranean dis-ease that has infected the academy. The new Mediterranean Studies is emerging because this new Mediterranean appeals to a variety of constituencies for a number of

reasons. One may see it in the most suspicious light as a way of telescoping of Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Early Modernity, and of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic history, or of lumping together various national literatures and cultures—the sort of economizing that appeals to cynical university administrators in these times of shrinking budgets in research and higher education. But that alone is not enough to drive an intellectual movement.

The new Mediterranean is appealing to a range of scholars for a number of reasons. For some, it may represent a means of integrating Islamic history as protagonist in the history of “the West.” It may appeal to those whose own colonial histories are bound up in the region, such as Spain, France and Italy. It may be a reflection of a shift in interests and personal perspectives due to the changing demographics of our university faculties and student bodies, which are more diverse ethnically and religiously, both as groups and individuals, than was the case twenty or even ten years ago. It may be a turn towards “political correctness,” the much-decried (in some circles) movement that invites introspection and self-criticism in an effort to discern our own biases and discriminatory presumptions and remove them from our discourse. It may represent a reaction to Europe’s colonial past and a manifestation of its legacy—a subaltern movement, or (in the eyes of those less discomfited by the colonial tradition) a warped response (if not a conspiracy) on the part of those academics that identify emotionally with the purported victims of colonization.

Even all this, however, would not be sufficient to spark or sustain a scholarly shift in tide, such as we now see, towards these new scholarly shores. The enterprise is successful—and indeed, the wave is yet to crest—because it is a response to intellectual needs and to the shortcomings and inadequacies of the regional and cultural paradigms that until now have dominated the narrative of “Western” history in this period. Chief among these—and I am perhaps oversimplifying, but not, I feel, caricaturizing—are the implicit convictions that history is teleological and that we are on the path of Progress and, moreover, that that Progress is manifest in the destiny of “the West” (by which we refer to northern and western Europe, and its historical annex, the Anglo-American world), and that the fundamental personalities in this narrative are national cultures and religious cultures that developed as coherent, defined entities in the Middle Ages. This is clearly not the case. In the last decades, as historians and art and literary scholars have questioned their own presumptions regarding the nature of history, reassessed evidence, re-examined editions and

translations, pushed beyond the canon, explored the perspectives of groups that had been ignored or dismissed by traditional history (peasants, the sick, the poor, women, ethnic minorities, religious out-groups, and socio-cultural groups that did not coalesce into modern nation-states), analyzed hitherto neglected or undervalued documentary and material evidence, and deployed new methodologies, the weaknesses of the old approaches have become obvious. In other words, the new Mediterranean Studies has an empirical foundation; it is not merely an ideological or intellectual exercise.

In sum, the new Mediterranean Studies represents an effort—and the result of that effort—to understand the history of this region on its own terms, and to build our history moving forward through time, rather than working backwards to construct linear genealogies of what we consider to be of fundamental importance in the present. This is challenging and difficult to assimilate, both on an institutional level and for scholars on an individual level, because so much seems to be bound up in the validity of those presumptions that have shaped the discourse of humanities for the last two centuries, and that have built the careers and the legacies of so many of the scholars whom we consider to be the giants in our fields. Like any remedy, the medicine may not be without some bitterness, but in this case the bitterness may indeed be proof of both its efficacy and its necessity. Mediterranean Studies offers us the opportunity to reassess, to temper, and to nuance (although not necessarily reject) some of our most fundamental positions as scholars, and presents a perspective and set of methodologies that may be more suitable for answering a whole host of questions regarding the past. What I will turn to now is how I see this Mediterranean, and what it offers to the type of work I do and the types of questions I ask. This is a personal reflection.¹

WHAT WAS THE MEDITERRANEAN?

Sometimes the best way to define something that is by nature elusive and mutating is to consider what it is not. The Mediterranean is *not* merely the sea and the shores around it, whether one includes the continents to the depth of 10 km or 500. It is *not* that region in which the olive and/or the vine is cultivated, where the scratch plow is favored over the heavy plow, where men wear mustaches, and unmarried women must remain virgins and widows cannot remarry, or where women are sequestered and deprived of rights and autonomy. It is *not* the land of emotion, and of

honor and pride (as opposed, one presumes, to the cool and detached rationalistic pragmatism of the northern lands), nor does it comprise lands of fatalistic and lazy Southern Men, of leisure, of irrational violence, and of superstition... except, perhaps, in the imaginations of some northern Europeans.²

It *is*, however, the land of excellent and varied cuisine, and this strikes at the heart (if not the stomach) of what the Mediterranean means to me as a scholar. It was a zone of exchange and interaction among a diverse array of extremely diverse peoples—peoples who in the pre-modern period arrived in a more or less continuous fashion from the distant continental hinterlands of Asia, Africa and Europe, to the Mediterranean center, bringing with them ideas, technologies, cultural practices and food. The Mediterranean was the center not only because it was the point of geographical conjuncture of these three continents, but also because it became arguably the most populous, wealthy, and culturally dynamic region west of the Indus. It was a place people brought things to and took things away from.

Moreover, in the Middle Ages it was a zone that was not under the domination of any single political entity. The Mediterranean was a zone of conflict and competition between rival dynasties, empires and caliphates, trading republics, and dynasties, cliques, and clans (both regional and local) who embodied a huge range of ethnic orientations and religious interpretations. Mediterranean diversity and competition were not merely a consequence of the meeting of these diverse “peoples” (such as Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Christians, Muslims, and Jews), but were an internal characteristic of these groups as well. None was monolithic, none was coherent, and none was unified; each was fraught internally with divisions at least as intractable and as viscerally contested as the differences between these larger groups.

Indeed, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the region is the commonality of culture that can be observed here despite the region’s ethno-culturally fractured nature. The pre-modern Mediterranean was characterized by common (although not necessarily uniform) philosophical and scientific, and religious orientations, common folk beliefs and practices, and social mores. A good deal of this was due to the imprint of Perso-Hellenic thought and Abrahamic religion around areas near the sea and the hinterlands, together with a whole succession of earlier and later waves of cultural influence that swept over and settled into the region. This process was likely a consequence, as Horden and Purcell maintain, of the

physical environment of the Mediterranean—a highly fragmented array of distinct micro-regions, each of which offered certain potentials for production, and all of which had been linked since the Neolithic era by the movement of people.³ The incremental trade that developed organically in the Mediterranean as a consequence of its geography became the vector not only for the movement of people, but also for the transmission of culture, technology, and commodities. The Mediterranean became a zone of intense movement and communication, and of profound interdependence. People moved and settled, and over time, this became a zone in which the various “peoples” were living, not in localized enclaves but scattered throughout the region, living amongst each other. Together, these characteristics provided for the emergence of a broad but distinct Mediterranean culture—one that was rarely articulated as such by the people who participated in it, but which was recognized by those who travelled around the region, and transformed those who settled down here. This, in turn, acted as a vector for the adaptation of outside influences and a catalyst for cultural innovation.

However, the same Hellenic-Persian intellectual orientation and Abrahamic religious orientation that constituted such an important part of the framework of mutual intelligibility that made communication and acculturation possible also problematized it. With its emphasis on a single personified deity who pronounces a single legitimate Truth and Law that is transmitted to humankind by way of revelation and is then set down as Scripture, Abrahamic monotheism constructs identities that emphasize exclusivity and exclusion and sets enormous importance on the elaboration and maintenance of socio-cultural boundaries. This effect is exacerbated by a tendency among certain constituencies within these religions towards a rigid and dogmatic view of their own religious beliefs, and the de-legitimization of competing interpretations as a consequence. Moreover, the development and entrenchment of these doctrinal religio-cultural systems—which was intensified by the fact that it was precisely the dogmatizing parties within the societies that tended to become politically dominant—elicited a direct and contrary reaction to the loose commonalities of culture, both quotidian and sophisticated, in the Mediterranean.

In other words, Mediterranean society and culture were characterized by tensions. There were the tensions generated by the political and economic competition between discrete groups and collectives. But these were superficial. The profound tensions here were generated, on the one hand,

by the emergence of highly structured, dogmatic religious cultures, predicated on their own universality, committed to the denial of the validity of rival systems, and straining to distinguish their own beliefs and practices from those of competitors who were themselves fundamentally similar. On the other hand, they resulted from the double bind created by institutions, collectives, and individuals that strove to conceive of themselves on distinct and separate terms, but who in the course of their daily lives and practical existences were continually forced to engage productively and neutrally with collectives and individuals that belonged to rival religio-cultural affiliations, and with whom—they were forced to recognize—they shared much in common. Moreover, the nature of this practical interaction forced them to engage with one another in terms that ran directly contrary to the limitations prescribed by their respective ideological systems.

In other words, in the Mediterranean, the orthodox was forced to confront the organic. The ideal had to reconcile with the pragmatic. Plato met Aristotle. Yahweh confronted the gods and goddesses of Olympus and the city-states, and spirits of wood, stream, and stone. This can be seen in the way that language worked in medieval Mediterranean. On the one hand there were dozens of vernaculars in use in the region—vernaculars that were spoken by members of the various ethno-religious communities, and which were ideologically neutral. On the other hand, each major religious affiliation had a proprietary language—one that was associated either with Revelation or the liturgy, and which in some sense was regarded to hold a special relationship with. And yet, these languages—Latin, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew—were also used widely by members of religious out-groups, whether with the aim of understanding the culture of the other, or undermining it.

And this takes us back to food. One can observe what might be described as a common Mediterranean cuisine. One thinks, for example, of olives, goat cheese, lamb, almonds, fruits (including the tomato and zucchini—late, non-medieval importations) and honeyed desserts, and of particular modes of preparation such as boiling grains, frying in olive oil, particular cuts of meat, and so on—the sorts of things that seem to figure in some combination in nearly every national cuisine of the Mediterranean basin: the easy ethno-cultural accommodation of the “Mediterranean diet.” And yet, Mediterranean food preparation and consumption is also highly charged, even dogmatic, in terms of identity politics. Certain foods are absolutely off-limits for certain groups, others on certain days or times of year, others must be prepared in special, and elaborate ways, and some

are associated with particular rituals and festivals relating to specific religious cultures. In other words, Mediterranean cuisine can be seen as a manifestation of the unity or commonality that developed as a consequence of trade, migration and colonization in this fractured but interdependent environment, but also as a demonstration of the religious ideologies that endeavor to counter *métissage* and establish firm and clearly evident boundaries with the aim of maintaining separate and distinct group identities.⁴

WAS THE MEDITERRANEAN A “REGION”?

So, does this make the Mediterranean an appropriate region for the purposes of historical analysis? A rather intuitive way to approach this question might be to ask: Did people at the time think of it in these terms? And so, some have set out to search Mediterranean sources—chronicles, literature, and so on—for references to the Mediterranean and, more importantly, references to the Mediterranean as a unified conceptual space or to people describing themselves explicitly as “Mediterranean.” Another approach is to survey contemporary maps—to see how the Mediterranean is presented: Is it in the middle of the map? What is it called? Is it referred to as the “Middle Sea” or as “the White Sea,” “the Christian Sea,” or some other name? In the course of the many workshops and colloquia we have organized through The Mediterranean Seminar, both of these approaches have been proposed on numerous occasions.⁵ In either case, however, the inbuilt assumption is that if no such evidence is found—if these contemporary sources do not refer to “the Mediterranean” or to “Mediterranean people,” or if the sea is indicated as being within the orbit of one particular cultural, ethnic or imperial structure, rather than being itself “the center”—the case will have been demonstrated that the Mediterranean did *not* comprise a coherent “region” and therefore is not a suitable framework for historical and cultural analysis.

This approach, however, has several flaws.

First of all, it makes certain presumptions about these literary and cartographic sources. Why should the literature or the chronicles of the era frame their narratives in terms of a larger Mediterranean or position themselves as taking place within a Mediterranean space? For that matter, why should any artistic artifacts or representations present themselves explicitly as “Mediterranean”? With very few exceptions the literature and art of the time does not refer explicitly to “Europe,” “the Near East,” or

“Africa” either, and yet these are categories whose validity we rarely feel any need to question. Notions such as “Christendom” or the “dar al-Islam” do appear in literary sources, but they tend to be expressed only in certain contexts—the overwhelming bulk of the literature that takes place in Christendom or in the Islamic world does not make reference to these as regions, or present the narratives they recount as taking place in a regional frame of this sort. “Byzantium,” when it appears in contemporary sources as a coherent unit, is also limited to certain specific contexts (typically relating to the very specific institution of the Byzantine Empire), and a larger “Jewish world” (“Israel,” for contemporaries)—which we are prepared to accept as a category of analysis—is rarely mentioned explicitly, if at all, in contemporary sources either, and then only in specific genres and contexts. And, even when, on rare occasions, contemporary sources make references to categories such as “Europe,” or “Africa,” the meaning they held at the time is quite distinct from that they hold today.⁶

As for the maps, they too, were made to reflect particular ideological orientations and agendas. The Tau maps of the medieval Christendom placed Jerusalem at the center of the world—the way they presented the Mediterranean says no more about how the Mediterranean was thought of in real terms than these Tau maps indicate how the Garden of Eden (a “geographic” feature normally included on these maps) was thought of in real terms. Islamic maps are, generally, no more “accurate.”⁷ The rare exceptions, those maps like al-Idrisi’s world map, and later the *mappae mundi* (like those of the Cresques) that were meant to reflect the world in realistic, material sense, did feature the Mediterranean prominently, and in these maps it was clearly a center, if not of the world, then of intense human activity.⁸

One might object that it was simply not necessary for contemporary literature to explicitly acknowledge categories such as “Europe,” “Christendom,” “Africa,” or “the Islamic world” because they were obvious. Certainly, until the late Middle Ages, Europe did not appear as the center of “European” maps. But this is an argument that can be easily turned on its head. Perhaps the reason that the Mediterranean is not alluded to explicitly as a “center” or a region was because that too was simply too obvious to merit emphasis. But it may be that in many genres of literature and art—particularly those that were charged with religious ideology or turned on ethnic identity—explicitly acknowledging a Mediterranean that included Latin Christendom, Byzantium, Islamic and Jewish society would have been uncomfortable and inappropriate, as it

would run counter to the ethos and agenda of these works. Indeed, it is when we read between the lines, as it were, that the Mediterranean becomes glaringly evident, when we are presented with accounts and manifestations of exchanges, collaborations and interactions, desires, ambitions and empathies that cross ethno-religious lines—elements that are rarely highlighted in the sources, but which are nevertheless a constant feature in historical sources, literature, works of art and material artifacts.

But even if it were the case that there was, indeed, no contemporary sense of Mediterranean identity, and no contemporary sense of the Mediterranean, this would hardly constitute a “fatal flaw” in terms of the value of the Mediterranean as a category for modern scholars. In fact, in many ways the whole question can be dismissed as irrelevant. Much of our scholarship focuses on categories, ideas and concepts that were unknown or unrecognized by the people we study. Virtually all of medieval economic history is based on concepts that had no place in the pre-modern imagination—including principles as basic as inflation and theories of money. Social, cultural and art history are no different, not to mention recent specializations such as queer history. Homosexuality did not “exist” in the Middle Ages, only “sodomy”—and these are two distinct categories. One could also discount historical anthropology and the application of sociological methodologies to history. One could insist that we only speak of “French” culture and history only in terms of the *langue d’oïl*, and the inconstant and mutating territory that was under the control of the French king, and we could almost completely jettison “Italy” as a category (it being, like so much else that we hold to be universally valid, a nineteenth-century invention). As the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum*, one could claim that “Crusade studies” should be abolished, given that the concept of “Crusade” (as opposed to “pilgrimage”) apparently did not coalesce until the late thirteenth century (at any rate there was no *word* for it), by which time the Crusades were, for most intents and purposes, over (at least insofar as Jerusalem was an objective). So, indeed, it may be that “the Mediterranean” is a category invented by modern historians; however, this hardly discredits it.

A final objection that has been suggested is that the course of later history shows that “the Mediterranean” is an inadequate frame for understanding the course of historical and cultural development, because ultimately the nations, institutions, and cultural categories that define today’s world are not “Mediterranean”—particularly, the Anglo-American culture that has dominated the academy for the last half-century or more,

but also the north-west European national cultures: French, Benelux, and German, which have shaped the academy since the time of the Enlightenment. Indeed, far from imagining their origins as in any way Mediterranean, the proponents of the established teleology of “the West” have assumed the priority of the “nation,” and constructed their identities in opposition to the Mediterranean—or at least the messy, contested medieval Mediterranean, for they are all eager to establish a genealogy linked to the Greco-Roman one. This is the history of European historiography expressed, whether explicitly or implicitly, in the tradition that runs from Gibbon, through von Ranke and Weber, to Pirenne (and onwards to Lewis).⁹

However, history is not an exercise in genealogy but an untangling and understanding of the complexities human experience and the evolution of society and culture. And evolution is neither linear nor neat; it is characterized by false starts, dead ends, multiple mutations, and chance outcomes. Moreover, if in evolution the “fittest” survive, it is the fittest only in the most immediate and circumstantial sense, not the fittest in any inevitable, let alone moral sense. Those who would argue, then, against the historical validity of the pre-modern Mediterranean based on the validity of modern regional categories that do not resemble it are the intellectual cousins of those impassioned but unsophisticated layfolk who would deny the existence of human evolution based on the dubious (and utterly misplaced) contention that “My grandfather was no ape.” In any event, prioritizing the past in terms of what appears important today is a risky approach for historians; after all, who is to say that the categories that we are so invested in at the present time will not be rendered obsolete in the future.

But the strongest argument for regarding the pre-modern Mediterranean as a “region” or a unit of historical analysis is that there is so much historical evidence in favor of it. Leaving aside, for the moment, dogmatic ideology and formalized institutions, which by their nature emphasize distinctiveness, difference, and exclusivity, there clearly existed a broad spectrum of interaction among the various peoples of the Mediterranean that spoke to a common understanding of the world in which they lived, a common framework for moral, political and social action, and a common appreciation for how their experience in the world could be expressed through art, music and literature. This can be seen most readily in the continuous and multivalent currents of influence and acculturation, or adaptation and synthesis that characterized relations between

Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and Europeans, Asians, and Africans, from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Ages. This was the case not only in fields that might be regarded as ideologically neutral or of low-grade religio-cultural content, such as cuisine, music, and technology, but also in fields we tend to think of as more culturally specific, such as art and literature. Most impressively, however, this also took place in the realm of dogmatic ideology and formalized institutions. Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are “Mediterranean” not only by virtue of their common origins in the cult of the ancient Hebrews and in Greco-Persian thought, but because their modern incarnations emerged as a consequence of interaction and reciprocal influence among them which took place in the medieval Mediterranean. The theological controversies, for example, surrounding the tension between Platonism and Aristotelianism, mysticism versus legalism, not only played themselves out within each major religious group in the Mediterranean, but were fed by dialogues carried out (both indirectly and directly) between adherents of the various camps across religious lines.¹⁰ Indeed, this was this process of engagement and debate that was the crucible for modern Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In essence, one can see them as three distinct religions, or as three manifestations of a distinctly Mediterranean religious tradition. On the level of formal institutions, there was also a considerable amount of reciprocal influence, as Muslims and Christians moved into each other’s territories and appropriated or adapted each other’s administrative institutions, office, and coinage, and also on the highest and most abstract level, whether it was Christian kings presenting themselves as the legitimate rulers over Muslim subjects, or Muslim sultans presenting themselves as universal messianic figures and the successors of Christian rulers.¹¹ The Mediterranean is nothing less than the whole of this tremendous and durable sense of continuity and commonality (and commonality does not preclude opposition) shared by the peoples who inhabited the shores of the Mediterranean, and the people who ruled over them, for the millennium or so after the final implosion of the old Roman Empire in the sixth century.

WHY NOT THE MEDITERRANEAN?

Given all this it is clear that the Mediterranean is not only useful, but indispensable for understanding both the world as it functioned in the pre-modern era itself, and for understanding the development of the modern regions of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, that emerged out

of it and superseded it. Until the sixteenth century it was the Mediterranean that was the most dynamic center of historical development in the West, which shaped the nations that would coalesce around its periphery and in its hinterlands. Therefore, it is, one can argue, most appropriate to approach it as a fundamental category for understanding historical and cultural development in this era.

This is a difficult proposition for many scholars to accept. Our own experience, together with three hundred or so years of scholarly tradition, have inculcated us with the idea that cultures and societies are manifested by particular and clearly-defined nations, religions, and languages—and that ideally all three coincide in a single unit. Therefore, the Mediterranean of ill-defined vernaculars, shared languages, incipient national cultures, vague and conflicting senses of ethnicity, syncretism and religious acculturation, multiple layers of identity, and of common traditions that run across ideal divisions, seems irrational, improbable, and inutile. In order to appreciate the pre-modern Mediterranean on its own terms we have to suspend or at least temper our attachment to the categories and conceptions of history that we have been taught are fundamental. We must focus more on processes rather than “end results,” on relationships rather than forms, on networks rather than transmission, and on complex and multivalent processes of development rather than on linear genealogies. We must abandon notions of teleology, and particularly that most cherished metanarrative of the emergence of European West that represents the natural, inevitable, and moral conclusion of the process of human history. We must be prepared not only to entertain but to investigate what appear in historical hindsight to be “dead ends” but which were not perceived of as such at the time.

When we do this, Mediterranean Studies opens up whole new avenues of scholarly exploration, and new possibilities for understanding the coherence of a long and tremendously important historical environment which, otherwise, we have been tempted to imagine as exceptional, a parenthesis, and fundamentally incoherent and incomprehensible. Through the study of the Mediterranean on its own terms, groups whose histories have been marginalized in the established metanarratives, like the southern Italians and Armenians, Coptic Christians, Samaritan and Karaite Jews, Ibadis and Nusayris (Assassins), or even Catalans, are seen in a new light and take on a new importance—groups that have tended to be ignored or marginalized in the grand narratives of “Europe,” “Christendom,” “Judaism,” and “Islam” because they did not emerge either as modern nation states, or as

the dominant factions within a larger religious culture. Likewise, a whole range of literary, and artistic currents that do not fit neatly into the grand categories of the established metanarrative take on a new importance.

Developments that seem anomalous, exceptional, or inexplicable when viewed through the narrow lens of one religio-cultural tradition, can suddenly make sense when viewed from the perspective of a broader interconnected and interdependent Mediterranean. Seen in the light of the Mediterranean, historical features that seem trivial or incidental—the parasol of authority, the horseshoe arch, the motif of the falcon mounted on horseback, the tree of life, the significance of certain colors, types of cloth, folk-tales or literary conventions, turns of phrase or styles of devotion, the use of eunuchs, the place of slaves in the palace and household, the place of women in public and in government, and so on—take on a new significance when they are recognized to occur across the region among diverse and apparently distinct (if not opposed) religious, cultural and ethnic groups. To a large extent Mediterranean Studies is about dispensing with or at least recognizing our own assumptions and constructing alternate views of the nature of culture, society and politics on the basis of data that would otherwise be ignored.

The point, however, is not to construct an alternate teleology or imagine the Mediterranean as a category, a paradigm, or a region with the same air of exclusivity, uniformity, and rigidity with which those other well-established categories, “Europe,” “Africa,” “the Middle East,” and “Christianity,” “Islam,” and “Judaism,” are often regarded. Nor is it to establish a “Mediterranean,” the borders of which can be drawn in bold lines on a map. The Mediterranean was not a unit or a unity, but an area in which various types of relationships of interaction and interdependence are manifested with a particular intensity. It is an area in which certain tendencies, some distinct, some universal can be observed, in which certain particular processes had an important historical impact, where certain patterns tended to manifest themselves. Depending on the context or the question, the Mediterranean might be closely circumscribed by the sea, or might extend outwards deep into the continental hinterlands or into neighboring bodies of water (the Black Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean). What constitutes the Mediterranean therefore fluctuated not only over time, but also according to context. And not everything that was “Mediterranean” was always happening everywhere in the Mediterranean all the time—a dictum which holds true also for “Europe,” “the Islamic World,” and virtually every other broad cultural-geographic construct.

This does not make the Mediterranean any less of a historical reality than “Europe,” “Christendom,” “the Islamic world,” “Africa,” “the Near East,” or the “Jewish World.” For in fact, these units only *appear* to be more consistent, definite, or clearly defined than the Mediterranean I have just described. They, too, each represent the manifestation of certain tendencies, the intensity, breadth and scope of which vary with time or according to context. They were not uniform, internally consistent and coherent, or uncontested. Like the Mediterranean, they too were situational: the boundaries and characteristics of something like “Judaism” or “Europe” were no more exact, and just as dependent on, the context they are considered in or the question being asked. The changing nature of their definition and boundaries cannot be ignored, nor can their internal fragmentation and variety be denied. Whatever values or essence they may embody is no more substantial or eternal than that of the Mediterranean.

It is only the academy’s emphasis on these grand categories and the presumption that they represent fundamental and coherent units of historical analysis that makes us think otherwise. This presumption is based undoubtedly in part on the confident conviction that formal institutions and formally declared ideologies are what shapes human thought and experience; but these are categories that correspond most closely to formal institutions and formally declared ideologies, and so to argue for their primacy on that basis is circular. On the other hand, to take the Mediterranean as a point of departure, or to argue that it constituted a “region” or a “culture” in certain contexts, is not to deny the validity of those other categories or their value as historical paradigms or tools of analysis, merely their universality and exclusivity. The study of the Mediterranean does not discredit them, it enriches them.

So, rather than “Why the Mediterranean?”—“Why *not* the Mediterranean?” If after all of this, Mediterranean Studies still appears dangerous or subversive, that is hardly an argument against it. The provocative nature of this approach is precisely wherein lies its value. If we can agree that historical knowledge is enriched by a multiplicity of perspectives and approaches, and that the categories that appear most appropriate for analyzing certain questions (such as, for example, the development of formal religious and political institutions) are not necessarily the most appropriate categories for analyzing every other question, then it is clear Mediterranean Studies has a role to play in the historical humanities. The discomfort and defensiveness that it provokes on occasion is only further proof of its value and its necessity.

NOTES

1. The reflections here are based on experiences garnered over the last 8 years or so as a scholar consciously engaged with the “question of the Mediterranean,” and as the co-director of the UCSC Center for Mediterranean Studies, the University of California Mediterranean Studies Multi-Campus Research Project, The Mediterranean Seminar (www.mediterraneanseminar.org), and the CU Mediterranean Studies Group at the University of Colorado. In these capacities: organizing research projects, and workshops, colloquia and conference panels, and developing and presenting my own work on the Mediterranean, I have had the opportunity both to gauge the tremendous interest in this field, and the profound discomfort (and occasionally hostile reaction) it provokes in some scholars. It is based largely on conversations and on other unpublished material which, naturally, will go—for the most part—uncited. For the programs and workshops organized under the aegis of The Mediterranean Seminar, see www.mediterraneanseminar.org.
2. Michael Herzfeld is correct in his rejection of the misuses of the Mediterranean. As he rightly emphasizes, “the Mediterranean” works when it is used as a heuristic device, rather than a taxonomic category.
3. Horden and Purcell argue for the ultra-*longue durée* of Mediterranean trade in *The Corrupting Sea*. For confirmation, one need only observe the monumental Neolithic structures of Malta and Menorca— islands that could not have supported a population sufficient to produce such building projects on local resources.
4. See, for example, Freidenreich, *Foreigners and their Food*.
5. For details of The Mediterranean Seminar, see the Foreword in this book.
6. Whatever Latin Christians meant, when on those rare occasions they used the term “Europa,” it was not to the Europe of the nation states.
7. See Pinto’s work on Islamic maps of the Mediterranean, including, “Ways of Seeing,” and “Surat Bahr al-Rum.”
8. For facsimiles see Miller, *Weltkarte des Idrisi*, and Cresques, *Mapamundi*.
9. The current that runs through much of this historiography, from Gibbon’s anxieties regarding “circumsized scholars” to Lewis’s terrorists, is a shallowly-concealed Islamophobia (or Arabophobia); see Said’s contra-polemical, “The Clash of Ignorance.”
10. See, for example, the work of Burnett and Hames (in Works Cited), for inter-confessional intellectual and theological *translatio* and synthesis.
11. This can be observed through the policies of the Fatimid Caliphs of Egypt, through the posturing of Castile-León’s Alfonso VI (*al-Imbraṭūr dhū’l-*

Millatayn, “the Emperor of the Two Religions”), and on to Suleiman the Magnificent’s universal messianism. See, for example, Mackay and Benaboud, “Yet again, Alfonso VI,” and Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah.”

The Thalassal Optic

Cecily J. Hilsdale

For historians, the Mediterranean offers a frame for viewing cultural interconnections across ethnic, political, and confessional lines. While rooted in the historiography of the *Annales* school, the study of the Mediterranean has recently assumed a central position within the discipline of history, where the emphasis on the liquid continent and corrupting sea has even been described as the new thalassology.¹ Given that Mediterranean models have been less readily adopted within other disciplines, this chapter seeks to pursue the implications of the emergence and recent turn to the Mediterranean as an analytic frame from the art historical point of view. More precisely, it asks if and how the Mediterranean might serve as an explanatory model, heuristic tool, or even a critical term, for the diverse visual cultures of the medieval Mediterranean. Traditional disciplinary divisions relegate European, Islamic, and Byzantine visual traditions to separate fields, courses, and textbooks.² What are the merits and limits of approaching these distinct artistic traditions as a visual culture interconnected by the Mediterranean? If the Mediterranean offers a wider view of the diverse visual cultures of the medieval Mediterranean, what other problems are raised by this thalassal optic?

This chapter unfolds with a series of related themes and questions raised by the return to the Mediterranean in an attempt to see how certain

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interdisciplinary debates look from the art historical perspective. What follows, then, are some key issues raised by the new thalassology that resonate for contemporary art historical inquiry.

BLURRING BOUNDARIES: REGIONAL AND MEDITERRANEAN STYLES, TECHNIQUES, AND ICONOGRAPHIES

Thinking in Mediterranean terms fundamentally makes us better prepared to attend to those visual cultures that defy the traditional taxonomies in which the discipline of art history is rooted. That is to say, much of the art of the medieval Mediterranean falls into what we might think of as zones of engagement, and, as such, evokes regional as well as more widespread visual styles, techniques, and iconographies. Art history's taxonomic framework cannot account for the myriad "hybrid" cultures of the medieval Mediterranean. To approach the visual cultures of Sicily, Iberia, Cyprus, and the Levant from the perspective of singular fields, for example, is to miss their entire logic. Any art historian, regardless of training, will gesture toward the hybrid styles (and often iconographies and techniques) within these regions in acknowledgment of their context of Mediterranean cultural intermingling. But these blurred boundaries are often situated as exceptional, or at least peripheral, with regard to the more mainstream singular narrative of art historical development.

The longer historiography of Crusader art is instructive in this regard. What began as a Eurocentric and colonial search for French or English artistic traditions in the Holy Land at the expense of recognizing local visual vernaculars has resulted in a field today whose governing assumption is a recognition of Crusader art as embedded within the entangled agendas of the diverse communities of the Levant. No current art historian would fail to acknowledge this diversity in analyzing the visual arts associated with the Crusades in such centers as Acre or Jerusalem or throughout the countryside of the Levant. But precisely *how* scholars approach this issue remains a contentious point of methodology. Older approaches sought to establish the nationality and training of the artists, while scholars now see the varied arts of the Levant in direct relation to the colonial enterprise and to local communities across confessional and cultural lines.³ This turn to the local represents the dominant trend today in decided contradistinction to the earlier historiography that grew out of the modern colonial encounter.

Surely, this new emphasis relates to the rise of Mediterranean studies and the desire to understand more precisely macro and micro dialogues across cultures. What happens when we speak of Crusader art as a Mediterranean art? What happens to shifting regional borders, confessional allegiances, iconographic topoi, and stylistic trends? The art associated with crusaders in the Holy Land raises a host of Mediterranean issues. It enacts a dialogue between local technologies and traditions of both varied indigenous Christian and Muslim communities and more distant European centers. This same point could be made in a variety of artistic contexts that manifest radical cultural transformations in the aftermath of the crusades. One might think of the Gothic cathedrals of Famagusta in Cyprus, the Venetian-Byzantine architectural dialogues in Crete, and the architecture of the Frankish Morea.

To understand these varied visual cultures as Mediterranean, keeping in mind new thalassal scholarship, is to associate the objects of analysis—both monumental and minor (or “portable” arts, which will be discussed at greater length below)—as “connective” in some way, as the very adhesive tissue between microregions or local authorities and more distant powers and visual agendas. But the key methodological point to bear in mind here is that the visual arts cannot be read as evidence for the cultural relations—they are what constitute those very relations. Thus, while the arts of the Crusader Levant may exhibit diverse visual traditions, both local as well as European, they do not illustrate in any straightforward manner the relationships among local communities and crusaders. Far from being transparent markers of cultural identity, such visual cultures play a central role in constructing those very social relations.

IS THE NEW MEDITERRANEAN A COUNTERPART FOR THE GLOBAL? ARE WE REALLY TALKING ABOUT A NEW COSMOPOLITANISM?

In some sense, this recognition of connections across the Mediterranean echoes contemporary debates about the local and the global. In exploring some of the ways this gets mapped out in art historical terms, I want to turn briefly to the example of Byzantine silk, prized throughout the medieval Mediterranean.

Despite textual sources that adumbrate restrictions and prohibitions associated with silk production in Byzantium, it is often impossible to

differentiate between Byzantine silks and those produced in the rest of the Mediterranean. Surviving fragments of silk from the ninth and tenth centuries elude clear definition and categorization, and how we describe this phenomenon is revealing. As long ago as 1941, the silk fragment known as the “Elephant Tamer” in the Dumbarton Oaks collection was described as an “eminent example of the metropolitan style” (Fig. 1).⁴ This term is meant to suggest a kind of visual borrowing from Persia in Byzantium, with both traditions rooted in common Sassanian sources. Similarly, Byzantine silk experts repeatedly use the phrase “international style” to describe this same concept.⁵ Indeed, in any catalog of medieval silk it is far more common than not to find the place of production hesitantly hypothesized as “Byzantium?” or “Iranian?” or “Persian?” or “Islamic lands?” (each qualified with a question mark), where there is no textual inscription to differentiate.

Another way to think about this ambiguity is to situate it in relation to the modern discourse of cosmopolitanism, the contemporary critical term that often goes hand in hand with globalization. Amanda Anderson has revisited this much-maligned and also celebrated critical term, pointing out its all too often uncritical deployment in promotions of global perspectives



Fig. 2.1 Elephant tamer textile fragment in the Dumbarton Oaks collection

as “simply gestural or non-descriptive.” In Anderson’s genealogy of the concept, she reviews the underpinning of a “new cosmopolitanism,” one that is reconfigured conceptually against charges of elitism as well as, in the words of Bruce Robbins, “universalism in disguise.”⁶ In other words, while “cosmopolitanism” has been criticized as an aestheticization that neglects economic realities, the concept has been resuscitated by contemporary thinkers across a broad array of disciplines. Central to this revision is the understanding of various “rooted” cosmopolitanisms—a phrase coined by anthropologist James Clifford—in an attempt to avoid “the excessive localism of particularist cultural relativism, as well as the overly global vision of capitalism or technocratic monoculture.”⁷ His vision, in the words of Anderson, insists “on multiple cosmopolitanisms partly rooted in local cultures, partly positioned in global networks.”⁸ It is this renewed understanding of “rooted cosmopolitanisms,” described by Clifford and elaborated by Anderson, that resonates with the arts of the medieval Mediterranean. This notion of being rooted locally but in dialog with larger networks bears particular relevance for the study of silks, given their prestige and suitability for transport, and may serve as a working method for the visual arts of the Mediterranean more broadly.

A number of surviving medieval silk fragments may be localized to imperial Constantinople due to inscriptions referring to the rule of particular emperors. On one level these inscriptions allow us to situate the pieces firmly within the traditions of Byzantine sumptuary production: large-scale, luxury silks unavailable in western Europe, inscribed with rulers’ names, and dyed purple. At the same time they engage in dialogue with extra-Byzantine conventions. Indeed, the very feature that localizes the silks to Constantinople also gestures toward wider Mediterranean conventions of disseminating sovereignty visually. Both Byzantine and Islamic textile designs champion the reigning sovereign according to a similar logic: the ruler’s name is inscribed on silk and disseminated according to a strictly codified system of precedence (robes of honor or *tiraz*).⁹ This coincidence suggests a larger symbolic network of authority constructed through textile distribution. Moreover, most of the Byzantine silk fragments, such as the imperial lion silks, survived into the modern era in the shrines of western churches. They thus connect Byzantium with Islamic courts through a similar format and with western courts through the diplomatic networks in which they traveled.

Most of the surviving silks, however, do not preserve inscriptions and hence remain tantalizingly ambiguous. Some are probably Byzantine in

origin, but most others were surely produced in workshops beyond the political borders of the empire. In fact, we see similar iconographies of the hunt, of lions, of elephants across the Byzantine, Near Eastern, and also Central Asian (Sogdian) traditions. With this in mind, what makes new cosmopolitanism attractive as a conceptual category is its ability to see artistic traditions in dialogue with each other—again rooted locally but invoking more widespread traditions as well. Silk fragments mediate local traditions and decidedly nonlocal, more “global” networks. I see these networks as both practical, involving trade routes and technologies, as well as ideological, in that they invoke more universal topoi of strength and rule employed across political, linguistic, and confessional lines.

CONNECTIVITY, MOVEMENT, AND PORTABILITY

Circulation throughout the medieval Mediterranean is key to this understanding of silk. Often the movement of luxury art objects including silk entailed an erasure or revision of history as well as the creation of new narratives. Movement, thus, is fundamentally contingent and generative. In her study of eighth- and ninth-century cultural and material interchange, Leslie Brubaker focused on the disjunction between the original intention of the commission of art objects and their reception, translation, and (often) misunderstanding across the Mediterranean.¹⁰ One of her examples, in fact, is Byzantine silk, which acquired a decidedly sacral funerary character in the West regardless of its original function in the East (again, most fragments of silk were found in tombs of saints). Her point here is a cautionary one regarding the art historical emphasis on shared court cultures or common cultures of luxury. Textual sources—such as the Arabic compilation of ceremonial court exchanges known as *The Book of Gifts and Rarities* (*Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf*) or Byzantine diplomatic packing lists—evoke shared tastes for luxury items across confessional and political lines.¹¹ Such shared tastes or common desires, however, do not mean that the objects circulating throughout the varied Mediterranean courts indicate commonality in other respects. The concluding lines of Brubaker’s study are instructive in this regard: “However global the élite culture across the Mediterranean pretended to be—and often was—prestige objects that move end up by telling us about two sets of cultural representations, not just one.”¹² The difference between these two “sets of cultural representations” is essentially a difference of intention and reception, and scholars must be vigilant in distinguishing between the two.

The particular mode of an object's movement, I would further stress, should also be taken into consideration. Trade, theft, gift, and inheritance constitute related but distinct modalities of artistic circulation. Regarding the corpus of eastern silks found in western European sacred tombs, for example, even if we cannot reconstruct their definitive mode of transfer (exactly when and how they moved), it is safe to assume that they did not circulate through commerce. Although surely there was a commercial aspect to the diplomatic exchange of silk, large-scale Byzantine textiles, especially with imperial inscriptions, were not to be bought or sold—in theory at least. Their movement was instead a consequence of networks of gift exchange or prestation; and, accordingly, they were imbued with the burdens of reciprocity and hierarchy that anthropologists of gift exchange have elucidated.

The temporal dimension of an object's movement merits consideration as well. Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff have exposed the necessity of thinking through modes of exchange in terms of phases in a longer social life.¹³ Things, for example, are not commodities or gifts *per se* but at times enter into and out of a contingent phase of commodification or gift exchange. An object such as the celebrated Eleanor Vase, because of the inscription added by Abbot Suger at its consecration to St. Denis, brilliantly maps out the different arenas and modes of its exchange from the Reconquista frontiers of Christian–Muslim conflict to royal marriage, inheritance, dedication, and finally sacred consecration.¹⁴

The Eleanor Vase is exceptional in its enumeration of its previous owners and modes of exchange. More often than not, however, scholars are confronted with art objects of unclear modern and medieval provenance, as with the silks discussed above. Recourse is generally to label such decontextualized objects as “Mediterranean” when nothing more specific can be known with certainty. Eva Hoffman's work on portability is fundamental in this regard, and it resonates with new thalassal conceptions of connectivity.¹⁵ For Hoffman, the very fact of an object's portability is central to such “itinerant” works of art as the Pisa Griffin, the Innsbruck bowl, or the mantle of Roger II; works that have proved vexing in terms of disciplinary taxonomies. She shifts the discourse surrounding such enigmatic objects from issues of periodization (patron, date, style, development)—that is to say, an archaeology of origins—to questions of object agency. For Hoffman, the “dynamic potential” of portability allows for a reconceptualization of an object “as an active agent engaged in self-definition and in shaping the contours of culture.”¹⁶ What is most important about such objects is not

where, by, or for whom they were made originally, but how they were perceived over time as they moved. In other words, meaning is not stable and singular when one considers the shifting audiences of portable objects over time and across cultures.

Scholarship on the well-known corpus of thirteenth-century Ayyubid objects with Christian imagery elucidates the issues at stake well. The celebrated but idiosyncratic corpus includes metalwork, ranging from basin to candlestick to canteen, as well as a pair of glass beakers. This group is associated with eastern Mediterranean fluidity in that identifiably Christian iconography is cast in the visual language of Islamic art (medium, style, and language of inscriptions). Art historians have framed and reframed this extraordinary corpus of objects, teasing out new modes of understanding the perceived binarism of Christian–Muslim in different ways. The particular topographic references (*loca sancta*) have been highlighted, and the multicultural mercantile context has been explicated.¹⁷ But Hoffman emphasizes portability as equally fundamental to understanding this corpus. Taking the most enigmatic object of the group, the Freer canteen, as her focus, she traces a series of readings contingent upon particular local audiences over time. What may have originally indexed visual vocabularies shared among local Christian and Muslim communities was later understood to signify eastern authenticity and Crusader memory for later European viewers. In the former local Ayyubid context, the objects would not have been understood as fusing Christian and Muslim visual idioms. What seems to modern eyes an enigmatic combination of visual themes across confessional lines was part of the visual cultures densely woven into the fabric of the Ayyubid Levant. But as portable objects, such works were created for circulation far beyond this initial local context and thus played critical roles in the negotiation of Crusader identity, serving to authenticate the Holy Land experience and to memorialize the Crusader endeavor.¹⁸ Hoffman’s discourse on portability thus insists on temporal and geographic specificity and contingency. The flow of portable arts and their role in triangulating diverse communities are the very matter of “connectivity” throughout the medieval Mediterranean.

THE MICROECOLOGICAL AND THE MATERIAL

One especially productive aspect of the new thalassology in terms of art historical inquiry is its insistence on the microecological approach. The microecological level of interpretation emphasizes relations of flow between

raw materials, environments, technologies, and labor. Treating the arts of the medieval Mediterranean on the microecological level prompts art historians to give more attention to the labor and material realities of their objects of analysis. To study medieval ivory carving as a Mediterranean medium through the new thalassal framework, for example, would entail not only tracing the mercantile networks for ivory trade but also treating those networks as a meaningful component of the worked ivory. It would mean recognizing the medium of the art object within its broader Mediterranean context and interrogating the particularly Mediterranean ecologies of the objects of analysis. In shifting the material context from the background to the foreground of analysis, it would insist on the relevance of such material realities. In some sense this shift in emphasis echoes the *Corrupting Sea's* distinction between histories *of* versus histories *in* the Mediterranean.

The medium has always held a central role in art historical inquiry. But unlike the material hierarchies espoused by earlier generations of art historians—which distinguished between “major” and “minor” media and privileged the former over the latter—scholars today are attentive to the more nuanced material realities of the medium. An account of the ecologies of the Mediterranean provides the possibility for a reevaluation of the material hierarchies of the discipline.

Ivory and silk best illustrate the potential of this approach as they circulated throughout the Mediterranean in raw and worked form. As already mentioned, it is often impossible to identify precisely where many of the surviving silk fragments were manufactured. A microecological study of medieval silk would entail a recognition of the larger sericulture networks of raw materials and technologies in tandem with regional and pan-Mediterranean visual idioms and social codes of precedence. These different aspects of silk-related scholarship are generally kept separate (with historians treating the economic aspects of the silk industry, some art historians focusing on the technical aspects of production such as weaves, and others attending to iconographies and social histories). But despite modern scholarly divisions, the fact that many of the highest grades of silk are unattributed—and unattributable—speaks to the larger material dialogue in which they participate. Further underscoring this point are the many examples of silk purporting to originate elsewhere: we encounter Almería silk imitating Baghdadi designs, even feigning to be from there,¹⁹ and hear of the Genoese exporting to Ceuta “bagdelli hispanici,” which were presumably Italian imitations of “Spanish Baghdad silks” produced in Lucca.²⁰ Silk, in

many respects, is the Mediterranean medium par excellence and its portability and esteem throughout the Mediterranean underscore this point.

One can also compare the finest quality of ivory carving in such centers as Cordoba, Constantinople, and Paris—each traditionally relegated to separate art historical studies of Islamic, Byzantine, and French ivory carving, but all with common material sources in Africa serviced by complex “international” trade networks. A reading of the materiality of Mediterranean ivory carving would consider the distances and routes traveled by the medium itself and the intermediaries involved in its transfer and craft. Gothic ivories in Paris, according to this line of thinking, are indelibly marked by the Mediterranean trade routes and mercantile channels that brought the raw material to the Île-de-France for its transformation into statuettes of the Virgin and intricately carved diptychs. Along new trade routes in the thirteenth century, the Genoese steered cargoes loaded with luxury items such as elephant tusks alongside alum, which was of central importance for textile production, through the Straits of Gibraltar and the English Channel.²¹ To understand Parisian ivory carving of this period as “Mediterranean” is to recognize the “French Gothic” as constituted by material and labor from the interior of southeast Africa and also as intimately tied to a series of other material, artisanal, and trade networks.

CONCLUSIONS: THE SCALE OF THE THALASSAL OPTIC

The waves of new thalassology have begun to appear on the shores of medieval art history. While recent art historical studies do not articulate an explicit and sustained engagement with this new Mediterranean scholarship—at least not in the terms laid out by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell—a plethora of recent conferences, all published subsequently as collections of essays, have charted new art historical territory in a direction that is grounded in a more holistic approach to the Mediterranean.²² In closing, I want to return to the assessment of the Mediterranean as a paradigm for study of the premodern visual arts.

What is perhaps the most productive aspect of the recent critical turn to the Mediterranean for the field of art history is its timely challenge to anachronistic nationalistic labels and its potential for destabilizing essentialist categories. For example, through the new thalassal optic with its emphasis on microecologies, the decidedly “French” Gothic visual idiom starts to look more Mediterranean in its networks of material, technical, and trade filiations. In other words, its material context, which has

generally been treated as background, is brought into the foreground. Similarly, on the level of style, a deluxe manuscript such as the Winchester Psalter, for example, looks decided less “English” and more Mediterranean with the recognition that the same “hand” was at work at Santa María la Real de Sigüenza.

Because the research tools of art history have been developed in the service of disciplinary-specific taxonomies and teleologies, it is a challenge to put such tools to other purposes. In his 1988 survey of the field, Herbert Kessler concluded that despite individual studies the larger history of medieval art remained to be written; still today this observation holds true.²³ Against the disciplinary origins steeped in teleological and taxonomic interests, current scholars seem to be less invested in writing a larger narrative of medieval art history. The disciplinary tools of analysis—stylistic, technical, iconographic—remain constant but are increasingly being used for different interpretive ends. Rather than dividing, classifying, and charting artistic developments, current scholars are increasingly interested in tracing smaller shifts and movements, often involving cross-cultural contacts, and interrogating the more local or regional in relation to larger social structures and authorities. Rather than dividing the material into discrete classes, scholars are pushing on the boundaries of those very categories. Recent thalassal scholarship offers one, of many, possible heuristic models to test those traditionally defined limits.

For this art historian, the Mediterranean is best understood as a lens or an optic, one that helps define an optimal vantage point for scholarly inquiry. This optic requires proximity for the objects of study to crystallize into focus. While the older Mediterranean of Fernand Braudel is predicated on geological time and epochal unity, the new Mediterranean insists on particularity and contingency. The most productive aspect of this lens is that it asks us to keep in mind larger material and social networks and spaces of flow while insisting on the small scale and the particular.

Part of the newness of the new thalassology is the care it takes in steering clear of the charges of geographic determinism often levied at earlier *Annales* school studies of the Mediterranean. The connectedness of microregions (“connectivity”) is central to the arguments advanced by Horden and Purcell. They maintain that the level of interpretation should be at the level of the sight line: “Mutual visibility is at the heart of the navigational conception of the Mediterranean, and is therefore also a major characteristic of the way in which microregions interact across the water, along the multiple lines of communication that follow those of sight.”²⁴ The relevance of the

sight line resonates for the contemporary art historical embrace of visuality. In configuring the late antique the sacred landscape, Ann Marie Yasin has considered the presence and absence of sight lines to connect altars to martyria.²⁵ In her interpretation of the Lindaraja mirador of the Alhambra, sight lines were tied to the embodiment of authority in that the privileged Nasrid gaze, which for D. Fairchild Ruggles, is predicated on the conception of authoritative vision and surveillance.²⁶ Of course, neither of these approaches to visibility was what Horden and Purcell had in mind. For them, the relevance of the sight line or mutual visibility relates to the ideal scale of interaction. The sight line serves as a measure of distance and a measure of the level of interpretation. According to this line of thought, the Mediterranean is a lens that resolves into its clearest focus when the balance between the micro and macro is most finely calibrated.

As with all heuristic models, there are potential risks. The ideal balance is between the understanding of, even insistence on, the unity of the Mediterranean on the one hand and the necessity of acknowledging difference, diversity, and regionalism on the other. To skew the balance too far toward the “unity” pole runs the risk of assuming a “Mediterranean” aesthetic—an essentializing position that erases all sense of specificity. The arts associated with the trilingual court of Roger II in Sicily, for example, illustrate this potential risk, as the diverse visual idioms were key components of the self-styling of his rule (as the very title of Tronzo’s study of the Cappella Palatina implies: *The Cultures of His Kingdom*).²⁷ The Cappella Palatina’s Islamic, Byzantine, and northern European styles, techniques, and iconographies were meant to be understood as distinct in order to project the vast reach of Roger’s authority. They were not meant to fuse seamlessly into one, but to evoke the Mediterranean’s multiple visual cultures. This difference is key: all too often, it is implied that common court styles blur distinctions between cultures. But despite shared desires for pan-Mediterranean luxury items, the mobilization of particular visual traditions was more often than not in the service of power and difference, not commonality.²⁸ The risk in treating medieval visual cultures as “Mediterranean” is the potential elision of difference. This is what I see as the most significant pitfall of the Mediterranean turn from the point of view of art history. It is one that leads to a diluted and generic vision of cultural exchange. Cynthia Robinson is most vocal in her rejection of such “shared aesthetics” that invariably invoke the “courtly” in lieu of more specific referents.²⁹ The demand here is for specificity rather than vague shared cultural symbols and styles.

What works about the new thalassology for the discipline of art history ultimately resides in the insistence on difference and specificity. In the face of “common court cultures” models, the understanding of a Mediterranean interconnected by difference and particularity is especially appealing. It allows us to recognize the contingency of encounter, and a series of networks and allegiances that remain “fundamentally fractal”—to borrow Arjun Appadurai’s characterization of modern globalization.³⁰

In my final assessment, I see the new thalassology as breaking important new ground for the study of much of the visual and material culture of the medieval Mediterranean, but not necessarily for all of it. It provides an innovative lens for seeing objects and cultures as interconnected and thus should inform current approaches to cultural exchange. But cultural exchange is not the main point of all art produced in the medieval Mediterranean, and the relevance of such an optic for those other contexts remains unclear. While particular methodologies advanced in the *Corrupting Sea*—especially the attention to scale and microecologies—should be productive for most aspects of medieval art historical research, one should not be tempted to define a unified medieval Mediterranean art or architecture. One should not, in other words, essentialize the visual cultures of the medieval Mediterranean. The unity of the Mediterranean hinges on its diversity, and while the tensions between these two levels can be generative, this model must be understood as contingent and changing. To make full use of the new thalassal lens, art historians will need to shed taxonomic and teleological approaches and pose new questions.

NOTES

1. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* and “Four Years of Corruption.”
2. Nelson, “Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art” and “The Map of Art History.”
3. Contrast, for example, Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land*, to Hunt, “Art and Colonialism,” and, more recently, Georgopoulou, “Orientalism and Crusader Art” and “The Artistic World of the Crusaders and Oriental Christians.”
4. Peirce and Tyler, “Elephant-Tamer Silk, VIIIth Century,” 22.
5. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 3. She continues: “sometimes Islamic and Byzantine silks are hard to tell apart.”
6. Anderson, *The Way We Argue Now*, 72.
7. Cited in Anderson, *Ibid.*, 78.

8. Ibid. On various "rooted" cosmopolitanisms (such as that of Appiah), see Robbins, "Cosmopolitanism," 52. See also the recent collection of studies on *Cosmopolitanism and the Middle Ages* edited by Ganim and Legassie.
9. Gordon, ed., *Robes of Honor*.
10. Brubaker, "The Elephant and the Ark."
11. On the *Kitab al-Hadaya*, see Qaddumi, ed. and trans., *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, and Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," and Cutler, "Significant Gifts." The packing list I have in mind here has been published as Haldon, ed. and trans., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*.
12. Brubaker, "The Elephant and the Ark," 195.
13. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, and Kopytoff in Appadurai.
14. Hilsdale, "Gift."
15. Hoffman "Pathways to Portability," repr. Hoffman, ed., *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*.
16. Hoffman, "Pathways to Portability," 42.
17. Khoury, "Narratives of the Holy Land," and Georgopoulou, "Orientalism and Crusader Art."
18. Hoffman, "Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork."
19. Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction," 218.
20. Jacoby, *ibid.*, 217.
21. Guérin, "*Avorio d'Ogni ragione*."
22. These include Ousterhout and Ruggles, "Encounters with Islam;" Canepa, "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among Ancient and Early Medieval Visual Cultures;" Caskey, Cohen, and Safran, "Introduction: Surveying the Borders of Medieval Art"; and Walker and Grossman, "Introduction."
23. Kessler, "On the State of Medieval Art History," 187.
24. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 126.
25. Yasin, "Sight Lines of Sanctity at Late Antique Martyria."
26. Ruggles, "The Eye of Sovereignty."
27. Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom*. See also the recent collected essays, *Die Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, edited by Dittlbach.
28. Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift."
29. Robinson, "Towers, Birds and Divine Light," 31 and 35, n. 16. Her particular critique relates to the "Mudejar" and the *convivencia* model. Rosser-Owen, "Mediterraneanism," has also made this point.
30. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 46.

Negotiating the Corrupting Sea: Literature in and of the Medieval Mediterranean

Sharon Kinoshita

In my 2009 PMLA article “Medieval Mediterranean Literature,” I began by contrasting the success that the emerging field of “Mediterranean Studies” had accrued among historians to the marginal notice it had attracted from critics and historians of literature. Since then, the interest among historians and art historians has continued to grow apace; in the field of literature, meanwhile, we are still far (despite some improvements) from even glimpsing the potential of “the Mediterranean” either to generate new questions and insights about well-worn texts, or to bring new or different kinds of texts to our critical attention.¹ In our collaborative projects, I have come to think of Mediterranean Studies as something like a strategic regionalism—a heuristic category (riffing on Gayatri Spivak’s notion of “strategic essentialism”) that allows us to interrogate or displace otherwise settled or self-evident categories of analysis; or, as Peregrine Horden puts it in his contribution to this volume, Mediterranean scholarship is always, or should be, inherently, a kind of provocation: writing *against*—against other possible optics. As is often the case, however, it is easier to see the limitations of disciplines as currently constituted than it is to imagine what one might do instead.² This essay outlines some of the ways “the Mediterranean” has functioned as category in my own work and

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explores how it might be deployed to expand or inflect currently existing models of literary study. These perspectives (as I discuss in the PMLA article) are necessarily shaped by my training as a scholar of medieval French; in any case, given the constitutive breadth of the field, I offer these observations not prescriptively nor even less proscriptively, but prospectively, in the hope of inspiring others to rethink medieval literary phenomena in their Mediterranean contexts.

As a prelude to this discussion, I'd like to turn to the Old French romance *Cligés*—one of five Arthurian romances composed by Chrétien de Troyes in the second half of the twelfth century. In his prologue, Chrétien delivers what has become a textbook example of the twinned topoi of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, insisting on the historical migration of letters and empire from Greece to Rome to France: “Our books have taught us that Greece first had primacy in chivalry [*chevalerie*] and learning [*clergie*]. Then that primacy came to Rome and now has come to France.” A vision of the historical migration of political and intellectual hegemony combined, *translatio* anticipates later centuries’ emplotment of civilization as a linear transmission from Greece to Rome to the West. From this perspective, Chrétien’s evocation earlier in the prologue of his own translations of Ovid explicitly situates his work within that world-historical project—exemplifying the final stage in the inevitable westward march of culture.

A different story emerges, however, from tracking the Mediterranean place names scattered in apparently throwaway lines throughout the text: Antioch (l. 800); Almería, Morocco, and Tudela (ll. 6310–11); Caesarea, Toledo, and Candia (ll. 4726–27). In the twelfth century, Toledo, together with Tudela and Antioch, were (as we know from the work of scholars like Charles Burnett) great centers for the translation of philosophical and scientific literature from Arabic or Greek into Latin. In the same decade Chrétien was composing *Cligés*, the English scholar Daniel of Morley made an intellectual pilgrimage to Paris but, disappointed with the quality of the learning he found there, moved on to Toledo, where he immersed himself in the study of the *doctrina arabum*—to his full satisfaction and delight. For anyone truly interested in *translatio studii*, the transmission of learning ran not from Greece to Rome to France but from Greece, via places like Baghdad and Constantinople, to centers like Toledo, Tudela, and Antioch. To a knowing audience, in other words, the text’s casual but repeated Mediterranean references subtly contest or even slyly undercut the prologue’s triumphal vision of the march of civilization.

At the same time, the critical distinction Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell draw at the start of *The Corrupting Sea* between phenomena that are constitutively *of* the Mediterranean rather than those incidentally located *in* it is quite apt for Mediterranean literature as well. Thus, in the case of Old French, moving a text from Carduel or Cardigan to Constantinople or Cairo is, I propose, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for distinguishing a medieval “Mediterranean” romance from the “antique” or “Breton” kind. If the place names in *Cligés* gesture toward a “Mediterranean” discourse that disrupts the narrative of Western Civilization, the plot of this “Byzantine” romance (in which the half-Greek, half-Arthurian titular hero wins the bride and the imperial throne of his usurping uncle) remains more Tristanesque than Mediterranean. The same could be said of the late thirteenth-century romance *Floriant et Florete*, which—despite protagonists who are the son of the king of Sicily and the daughter of the emperor of Constantinople, respectively—remains at best tangentially “Mediterranean” (except, perhaps, in an oblique reflection on the Angevin conquest of Sicily and its aftermath).

LANGUAGES IN CONTACT

If Mediterranean Studies interrogates otherwise settled or self-evident categories of analysis, in literary studies, that category is language. In the US academy, students are trained and scholars are hired in departments of English, French, Spanish, and so on. Although administrative units like Romance languages or Near Eastern studies seem to promise the possibility of a wider circle of cross-linguistic exchange, such possibilities are not often realized, with the study of literature remaining largely language-bound. In the case of the Middle Ages, this has to do (as Karla Mallette, Michelle R. Warren, and others have shown) with the way literary canons were shaped by the exigencies of nineteenth-century nationalist ideologies. And though the recent broadening of English into “Anglophone” and French into “Francophone” studies has—together with the emergence of “postcolonial medievalism”—put new texts, authors, and issues on the critical agenda, the ideology of the nation-state, with its presumed unity and homogeneity of language, ethnicity, and religion, continues to cast a long shadow over the study of the literature of the Middle Ages. Over and above the privileging of epics like the *Poem of the Cid*, the *Song of Roland*, or the *Nibelungenlied* for their instantiation of allegedly “national” histories and values, our literary genealogies have been constructed of texts distinctive to

their linguistic traditions. The corollary is that corpuses like the *Seven Sages of Rome*, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, or *Kalila wa-Dimna*—translated and retranslated, circulating in an ever-expanding welter of languages—are dismissed as non-native, derivative, and external. Such a valuation, of course, flies in the face of the survival rates of medieval manuscripts, where versions of wisdom literature like the *Seven Sages* survive in the dozens, while the *Poem of the Cid* or the *Song of Roland* come down to us in a single exemplar.

Recontextualizing our objects of study in a Mediterranean frame brings into focus the medieval privileging of texts transmitted and adapted across languages and cultures—in particular, texts translated from Arabic (and/or via Greek) into Latin and the nascent European vernaculars. Such phenomena also fit well within the emerging field of translation studies (though consideration of the Middle Ages in general is strikingly absent from the field as currently configured); I would go so far as to say that translation is a—perhaps *the*—central problematic of medieval textuality, in ways we are only just beginning to explore. In the case of philosophical, scientific, and medical traditions, scholars like Charles Burnett have not only documented the transmission of specific texts but begun to explore their broader context: establishing a geography of translation, tracing the movements of specific translators through hubs like Toledo, Tudela, or Antioch; analyzing the variety of ways they position their work in relation to the texts (mostly Arabic) and authors they are translating; examining relationships among translators and between translators, students, and patrons.

For literary texts, on the other hand, pathways of transmission are typically harder to discern—obscured by gaps in the evidentiary chain or complicated by the sometimes substantial variation across manuscripts or manuscript traditions as well as the likelihood, in some cases, of periods of oral circulation and transmission. The tendency among modern critics to privilege certain genres at the expense of others (epic and romance, say, over fables or fabliaux, or works in classical, versus “middle” Arabic) risks further obscuring similarities that merit further investigation. Nevertheless, in thirteenth-century Iberia, the translation, by the future King Alfonso X, of the frame-tale collection *Kalila wa-Dimna* (1251) from Arabic into Castilian, followed, two years later, by his younger brother Fadrique’s translation of *Sendebat*, the eastern branch of the tale collection known elsewhere in Latin Europe as the *Seven Sages of Rome*, hints at the political as well as cultural capital associated with this alternative line of *translatio studii*.

A significant way Mediterranean Studies interrupts the hegemony of nation-based literary study is the recent attention to the coexistence and interaction of multiple linguistic traditions in a single geographical-cultural space. The model is provided by scholars of medieval Iberia; here, the notion of *convivencia*, however controversial or problematic, has enabled literary critics (María Rosa Menocal, Ross Brann, Luis Girón-Negrón, Michelle Hamilton, and many others) to bring to light, first, the literary culture in Arabic shared by Andalusian Muslims, Christians, and Jews; and second, the cross-influence of literary languages, themes and forms—a phenomenon that David Wacks has (following Itamar Even-Zohar) described as a literary polysystem.³ Among the other things the Iberian example has to teach us is the way a community's vernacular or literary language does not necessarily align with confessional identities.

A further complexity is the interplay of languages and writing systems, as in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew letters) or *aljamiado* (various Romance vernaculars recorded in Arabic script). And though Iberia provides by far the most sustained and best-documented example of a medieval Mediterranean polysystem, other multilingual, multiconfessional societies invite investigation as well. In *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250*, Karla Mallette reconfigures a literary history that (for example) extricates the work of the so-called *scuola siciliana* from its marginal role in traditional literary histories of Italian (as precursors to Dante) and inserts it in the multilingual traffic of that island, with its substantial Greek as well as Muslim and Jewish populations, under Norman and Hohenstaufen rule.⁴

So far, we have been approaching the literary history of the Mediterranean *synchronically*—as a series of snapshots that challenge the diachronic (and at least implicitly teleological) cast of literary histories of “national” languages as traditionally construed, focusing instead on the complexities of the shifting relations and interactions within and across multilingual, multiconfessional communities. In what follows, we turn to what we might (on analogy with the contemporary division of Old French texts into the three *matières* of France, Rome, and Britain) call a *matière méditerranéenne*: the literary representation of some of the features and dynamics that historians have seen as distinctively Mediterranean. Inspired by ideas and concepts, culled from Horden and Purcell and others, that I have found “good to think with,” the following bricolage suggests some of the ways to imagine the field of Mediterranean literature—all the while

emphasizing the shifting and performative, rather than taxonomic and constative, spirit of this endeavor.

CONNECTIVITIES

Like other maritime spaces but more intensely, the Mediterranean simultaneously divides and connects the lands adjacent to it. Where Fernand Braudel famously framed his study of the Mediterranean as a sea rimmed by mountains, Horden and Purcell, in *The Corrupting Sea*, relocate the region's geographical specificity in its "extreme topographical fragmentation," combined with "the connectivity provided by the sea itself." Places on the sea, they observe, are always "close," with far-flung coastlands often enjoying a "functional proximity" produced by "seaborne connectivity." No text better illustrates Mediterranean maritime connectivity than the "Hellenistic" romance *Callirhoe*, conventionally ascribed to an otherwise unknown author named Chariton. Dated to the first century of the Common Era, it allows us to pose, at the outset, the question of a literary *longue durée* that might echo the long-term rhythms of Mediterranean geography.

The story opens in Syracuse where, after some brief parental opposition, the beautiful Callirhoe, daughter of the great general Hermocrates, marries Chaereas, son of the city's second most powerful citizen. One day, in a fit of jealous rage, Chaereas accidentally knocks Callirhoe out and, to all appearances, kills her. No sooner is she magnificently buried than a band of pirates loots her tomb, steals her body, and puts out to sea. Arriving in Miletus, on the southwest coast of Asia Minor, they sell her to Dionysius, a leading figure in Persian-ruled Ionia. Though Dionysius falls madly in love with Callirhoe and wants to marry her, she resists until she discovers she is pregnant—finally consenting to marry him so that he will think the child is his own. Meanwhile, her beauty enflames all the men who see her (including two Persian satraps), triggering plots and counterplots that eventually land all the principles in Babylon—at the court of the Great King, who, too, promptly falls in love with her. A trial set to determine Callirhoe's fate is interrupted by news of the king of Egypt's revolt. In the subsequent war, Chaereas (who, in pursuing Callirhoe to Asia Minor, has likewise undergone a series of changes of fortune) becomes admiral of the rebels' fleet. Though the king of Egypt (general of the land forces) is killed, Chaereas captures the island where the women of the Persian court have been put for safekeeping. Joyfully reunited with Callirhoe, he sails back to

Syracuse in triumph, and then magnanimously dispatches the queen of Persia back to her husband, (re)establishing peace between them—everyone (presumably) living happily ever after.

Without lingering over its many fascinating details, I'd like to focus on what *Callirhoe* has to tell us about Mediterranean connectivity. First, as in much Mediterranean literature, though the sea is the site of danger, it is nevertheless regulated by certain predictability. The pirates who abduct Callirhoe head for Miletus on the Anatolian coast, intentionally bypassing small islands and cities along the way; only after offloading their cargo are they driven off course, in punishment for their actions. Furthermore, when Chaereas sets off in blind pursuit of his missing wife, a "favorable wind" drives his trireme along the same route as her abductors: crossing the sea in "the same number of days," he makes landfall in the same spot where the pirates had landed just ahead of him. To paraphrase one critic, "shipwreck, adverse winds, calms, and pirate raids were expectedly unexpected"—and essential to the Mediterranean worldview.

Most striking for our purposes is the affective response that this "functional proximity" engenders. When Callirhoe, already captive in Asia Minor, learns she is about to be taken inland to the court of the Great King, she is "distressed to travel so far from the Greek Sea, *for she thought of herself as being near Syracuse so long as she could look upon the harbors of Miletos*" (p. 68). Once on the road,

[she] coped well with the journey through Syria and Cilicia since she could hear Greek spoken and look upon the sea that led to Syracuse. However, when she reached the Euphrates River, beyond which lies a vast continent, the gateway into the bulk of the king's territory, then longing came over her for her country and family, as well as despair of ever going back. (p. 68)

Where the *Alexander Romance* articulates a land-based empire that begins in Egypt and Macedonia and sweeps eastward to India, *Callirhoe* is centered in the maritime world bracketed by Magna Graecia and coastal Anatolia. On the surface, references to "the Greek Sea" and to the comfort Callirhoe derives from hearing Greek spoken suggest that the community she is imagining is linguistically and ethnically defined. Yet this is not the whole story. Equally important, I suggest, is the sea itself—the familiarity of its coasts and harbors, so different from the riverine port on the Euphrates which serves as the gateway to the Great King's inland empire, whose vertiginous vastness reduces our heroine to panic and despair.

Like other literary texts set in the Mediterranean, *Callirhoe* often redirects our gaze from the great men of *histoire événementielle* (and the knights and nobles who dominate standard European epic and romance) to the middlemen—merchants and pirates—who are the agents of maritime connectivity. Here, pirates serve as the element of fortune (a kind of negative adjuvant, in Greimasian terms) that transforms the freeborn into slaves. It is no accident that piracy and slavery are intimately linked: the sea is the means by which captives taken in one place are transported quickly to another, far from the reach of family and friends, where no one will recognize them. As the pirate chief Theron tells his crew, nervous that they will be implicated in Callirhoe's abduction: "Once she's sold, let her accuse away—we won't be around! After all, we lead a life constantly on the move. Now let's sail..." (p. 17). An interesting variant of this motif occurs in the early thirteenth-century *chante-fable* *Aucassin et Nicolette*, in which Saracen raiders, who "come by sea," attack the castle of Torelore and "take it by force, taking away its riches along with captives, both male and female" (34: 4–6). Tellingly, instead of being separated as a result of their abduction, the protagonists are—in keeping with the systematic inversions of this parodic text—returned home in a reversal of fortune that leads to the text's happily-ever-after conclusion.

The line between commerce and piracy, however, is notoriously difficult to draw. Theron, "a cunning and evil character who sailed the seas as a criminal," first abducts Callirhoe by stationing his band of thieves aboard a ship in the harbor, "*disguised as regular sailors but organized as a pirate crew*" (p. 13). Yet in a sense piracy is, as Horden and Purcell put it, "simply another form of redistribution"—one that takes advantage of the connectivity between the "intensely fragmented microecologies" of the Mediterranean shore. Nor is it an exclusive calling: "one season's predator is [the] next season's entrepreneur" (pp. 156–158). An inverse example of this transition occurs in tale 2.4 of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where a merchant from the Amalfi coast turns to piracy to recoup his losses after an ill-conceived trading venture in Cyprus. In *Callirhoe*, Theron, "thinking more like a merchant than a pirate" (p. 18), makes his captive comfortable on board ship because he knows that safeguarding her beauty will preserve her value as a commodity. Once in Miletus, he poses as a merchant ignorant of local conditions but savvy in the larger ways of the mercantile Mediterranean, telling a potential buyer, "I'm currently based out of Italy, so I don't know anything about Ionia" but accounting for his presence in the countryside by explaining: "We steered clear of the city to avoid the

customs collectors” (pp. 19–20). Merchants, who come to trade, are simply the alter egos of pirates, who come to raid.

If the “core of Mediterranean history” is, as Horden and Purcell have written, “the control and harmonization of chaotic variability” (p. 175), then the same, *mutatis mutandis*, might be said about Mediterranean stories. In the *longue durée* of Mediterranean literary history, *Callirhoe*’s plot of the trials and tribulations of lovers separated by accident and adversity (which furnishes the core of Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin’s composite sketch of the quintessential Hellenistic novel of adventure) has a long afterlife. A case in point is the medieval romance *Floire et Blancheflor*. First attested in the mid-twelfth century in Old French, it soon traveled promiscuously across languages, from Old French to Italian, Spanish, Greek, Middle English, and even Old Norse, and found high literary exposition in Boccaccio’s *Filocolo*. *Floire* tells the story of two adolescent lovers—one a Spanish Saracen prince, the other a Christian slave.

Born the same day, they are both nearly identical and all but inseparable—reared together and learning the language of love from shared lessons poring over “pagan books.” Fearing that his son’s obsession with the Christian slave will interfere with a proper political marriage, Floire’s father fakes Blancheflor’s death (erecting a false tomb recalling the funerary monuments of the Old French romances of antiquity) while selling her to some passing merchants who carry her overseas. Wringing the truth from his parents, a distraught Floire, disguised as a merchant, tracks Blancheflor to far-off “Babylon” (or Cairo). On learning she is about to be made the emir’s wife, he sneaks into the harem. The two lovers are caught together and condemned to death, until, softened by the pleas of his vassal-kings and moved by the young people’s devotion to one another, the emir spares them and presides over their marriage. On learning that his father has died, Floire returns home with his bride, converting to Christianity for her sake. The two live happily ever after, becoming the maternal grandparents of Charlemagne.

Like *Callirhoe*, *Floire et Blancheflor* takes the Mediterranean as its stage, the geographical travels of its protagonists exemplifying the “seaborne connectivity” of Iberia and Egypt. Yet while the plot of the latter presents a recognizable variant of the former, the differences between them invite speculation on how to read these permutations against the background of the *longue durée*, as a reflection of historical shifts between antiquity and Middle Ages. There’s the geographical recalibration—the westward shift in the eastern tributary center of Babylon from Mesopotamia to Egypt. The

most striking change, however, is the introduction of religious difference—the coexistence of the three monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in various majoritarian-minoritarian combinations being one of the hallmarks of the medieval Mediterranean.

In *Floire et Blancheflor*, the protagonists, one a “Saracen” prince, and the other a Christian slave (in contrast to Chaereas and Callirhoe, who come from the same stratum of Syracusan society), are bound by a resemblance that uncannily evokes Richard Bulliet’s description of medieval Arabic and Latin traditions as “fraternal twins, “the twin progeny of Mediterranean antiquity,” “almost indistinguishable in childhood,” linked by “common roots” and a long “shared history” whose paths only later diverge, neither of which can adequately be understood without reference to the other (pp. vii, 10, 15). Secondly, there’s the increased emphasis on long-distance luxury commerce, with Blancheflor, exchanged for an inventory of fine silks and other luxuries, then sold again at the other end of the Mediterranean for seven times her weight in gold, becoming the fetishized commodity that Floire, in turn, pursues by assuming the guise of a merchant.

Like *Cligés* but more explicitly, *Floire* takes on the discourse of *translatio*. When Blancheflor is sold to the “merchants of Babylon,” one of the items for which she is exchanged is a nielloed gold goblet engraved with scenes from the Trojan War. These scenes, however, are narrated in *reverse* chronological order, beginning with the siege of Troy and ending with the judgment of Paris—conjuring the literary-historical world of the romances of antiquity but spooling it backwards, as if to question its historical inevitability. This reversal is mirrored in the travels of the goblet itself: brought by Aeneas from Troy to Lombardy and passed down to Julius Caesar, it successfully completes the first stage of *translatio*’s westward migration but then inexplicably falls into the hands of the Babylonian merchants, who reroute it from Latin Europe to Saracen Spain.

In *The Corrupting Sea*, Horden and Purcell distinguish between two geographical traditions—the abstract, learned one of the medieval European *mappae mundi* and the Arab geographers, and a pragmatic one, materialized in the *periplus* and the wind rose, based on navigational practice, in which “the space of the sea is conceived as a linear route defined by a sequence of harbours or natural features” (pp. 11–12). Borrowing this distinction to think through traditions of Mediterranean literature, if the *Aeneid* (with its medieval afterlife) represents the official vision of *translatio imperii*, in which trajectories are linear and based on

conquest, directed towards teleologies (whether national or divine), *Floire et Blancheflor* is the demonstration piece for a different, more “vernacular” Mediterranean. Tracing routes rather than roots, it transforms the Mediterranean from the space of *translatio* into a space of commerce and cross-confessional contact, where merchants were the middlemen who regularly negotiated linguistic, cultural, and confessional divides, serving as the glue insuring the connectivity of Mediterranean places on every level from the local to the trans-imperial.

As these and other literary examples frequently show, the Mediterranean is the space not (or not just) of the either/or, but of the both/and: *multiconfessionalism* and *multilingualism*, conversion and apostasy, disguise and passing of all kinds, the multifunctionality of the merchant and the pirate, the diplomat and the physician, the scholar and the vizier. Mediterranean actors cycle through different roles and identities—some, such as religion, unidirectional (at least in principle), others, such as slavery, inherently or at least potentially mutable.

MUTUAL INTELLIGIBILITY AND SHARED PRACTICES

Whether resulting from shared histories or produced by the functional proximity provided by connectivity (seaborne or otherwise), a key phenomenon of the medieval Mediterranean is what Brian Catlos has called the “mutual intelligibility” of practices shared across political, religious, ethnic, and linguistic lines.⁵ Beyond phenomena constitutively based on cross-cultural contact—diplomacy, say, or long-distance trade—literature offers us a glimpse of a range of practices, institutions, and values common (or at least legible) to populations on far-flung shores. Boccaccio’s *Decameron* is particularly rich in them—as in tale 10: 9, where a fictionalized Saladin, on a reconnaissance mission to Latin Europe disguised as a Cypriot merchant, forges a lifelong friendship with a gentleman of Pavia based on their mutual regard for guest-friendship and a shared passion for falconry. But representations of interactions based on mutual intelligibility abound in literary sources, becoming visible once we are attuned to them. A beautiful illustration occurs in Samuel Armistead’s brilliant analysis of a brief episode in the Catalan *Libre dels feyts* (c. 1244), an autobiographical memoir by the Aragonese king, Jaume I “the Conqueror.” In the midst of his military campaign against Muslim Valencia, a swallow builds her nest atop the king’s tent pole. Thereupon, he recounts, “I ordered that the tent not be removed until she and her children had gone, since she had come

under our protection [in our faith]." Modern readers invariably take this "delightful vignette" as revealing "an attractive note of personal intimacy and kingly compassion" on the part of a ruler better known for his campaigns of conquest. Armistead, however, juxtaposes it with the nearly identical tale told (in an Arabic text roughly contemporary with the *Llibre dels fets*) about the seventh-century Muslim conqueror of Egypt. When a dove laid her eggs atop his tent pole, the general declared: "She is inviolable in our proximity. Let the tent remain standing until she hatches her chicks and makes them fly away." Reframed within the medieval Iberian polysystem, this otherwise puzzling anecdote instantly becomes legible as a point of suture between cultures, where the Aragonese king locates himself in relation to "a whole system of values" revolving around "the sacredness of the client," rooted in earlier Arabo-Semitic traditions.

Mutual intelligibility, we should note, does not exclude violence—as in the opening scene of the *Song of Roland*, where Charlemagne negotiates with the "Saracen" king of Saragossa against the background of a culture of *parias* (the "protection money" eleventh-century Muslim kings paid to their Christian counterparts). Shared practices included activities like border raids and piracy, reflected in literary texts such as the *Poem of the Cid*, the Greek "border" epic *Digenis Akritas*, *Floire et Blancheflor* (where the titular heroine's pregnant mother is kidnapped in a raid on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela) and the *Destan of Umur Pacha*, a pre-Ottoman Turkish epic describing the exploits of a fourteenth-century emir. What the Mediterranean perspective provides is, first, a consciousness that the lines across which such aggressively acquisitive activities took place were determined by religion or ethnicity less often than we might expect (as in the *Cid*'s ongoing friendship and alliance with the "Moor" Abengalbón) and, second, ways of making sense of such phenomena, which through the lens of traditional nationalist historiographies are legible only as exceptions and anomalies.

LITERARY HISTORY AND *L'HISTOIRE ÉVÉNEMENTIELLE*

Mediterranean Studies was in some sense launched and fundamentally shaped by Fernand Braudel's seminal study which, though "located" in the sixteenth-century of Philip II, famously privileged the *longue durée* of geography and the cultures it shapes over the sharp turns and dramatic changes of *histoire événementielle*. In this section, I'd like, in a somewhat perverse thought experiment, to turn to the "history of events" largely

discarded by Braudel and by Horden and Purcell to see what it might contribute to the literary history of the Mediterranean. As a demonstration piece, let's consider the Sicilian Vespers of 1282, which I'll use as shorthand for the three and a half decades between the papally sponsored French conquest of Sicily in 1266 and the treaty of Caltabellota in 1302. The mid-thirteenth-century French incursion into the Mediterranean, which came to include Charles of Anjou's ongoing designs for the reconquest of Latin Constantinople (lost to the Byzantines in 1261), is one of those stories that largely fall between the cracks of national histories. Only recently has the interest in cultural contact—with attendant phenomena such as colonialism, hybridity, and transculturation—prompted a rethinking of the complexities of the cultural production it generated. In literature, the Mediterranean adventures of Charles of Anjou (younger brother of the saint-king, Louis IX of France) left their mark in the “dit” and the “chanson de Pouille” (Apulia) composed by the *trouvère* Rutebeuf to promote Charles's initial campaign of conquest. Subsequently, poets Adenet le Roi and Adam de la Halle accompanied their patrons, Guy of Flanders and Robert II of Artois, respectively, who came south on Louis's ill-fated crusade to Tunis (1270) and to stabilize the political situation in the Regno in the wake of the Sicilians' revolt against French rule in the Vespers (1282), followed by Charles' death in 1285; the effect of these expedition on these poets, and on the patronage circles they inhabited, has yet to be investigated.

Even more intriguing is the afterlife of the Vespers in Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth-century *Decameron*, where references to the conflict figure in no fewer than six of the hundred tales. Stories 6 and 7 of the tenth day directly juxtapose the two protagonists of the political upheaval of 1282—“Charles the Old” and “Peter of Aragon,” who became king of Sicily after the Angevin expulsion—in fanciful tales of their magnanimous behavior towards the beautiful daughters of their social inferiors. Elsewhere, the Vespers and their aftermath replace shipwrecks and pirate attacks as the form Fortune assumes to toss characters from prosperity to misery and back again. Furthermore, the names Gian (or Giovanni) di Procida and Ruggiero di Lauria—two of Peter of Aragon's most prominent supporters—haunt the tales as major or minor characters, repeatedly evoking the Vespers *en filigrane* in plots that otherwise have little to do with them. In fact, in many places the *Decameron*—with tales focused on mercantile activity, piracy, cross-confessional understanding and misunderstanding, disguise and the mutability of identities—is a virtual casebook

of Mediterranean themes, with the frame tale (itself a widespread Mediterranean form) serving as the means both of importing and of containing those phenomena.⁶

CONCLUSIONS

As my recourse to the notion of “strategic regionalism” suggests, I am not interested in drawing exclusionary lines around the Mediterranean, literary or otherwise, or in suggesting that its characteristics, including those outlined here, are unique to Mediterranean literature. Some may be, but that is for others to determine, particularly with the development of other emerging “thalassologies” like Indian Ocean studies. Neither is Mediterranean literature necessarily meant to replace existing disciplines, like Byzantine or French or Arabic or Italian literatures. Rather, the medieval Mediterranean is “good to think with” in ways that inflect our “home” disciplines, as well as potentially constituting a dynamic, ever-shifting field of its own.

For literary historians, the payoff of thinking Mediterranean is at least twofold. Primarily, it expands the limits of our textual world and provides us with a repertoire of different questions that bespeak the connectivity—the regularity and the (mis)fortune, the interlinkage of commerce, piracy, and the slave trade, the proximity of ports and the feeling of familiarity of coastal places—of the medieval Mediterranean, getting us (I would like to think) closer to the mentalities of the cultures and agents that produced the texts we read. A second payoff is interdisciplinary. For the study of Mediterranean literature—the literature *of* the Mediterranean, that is, and not simply *in* it—necessarily, I think, involves a certain engagement with history; it also, in ways that I have not had the time to go into but which the interface between this essay and Cecily Hilsdale’s makes clear, finds striking parallels in the history of Mediterranean art. Mediterranean Studies creates a space for dialogue among specialists from many fields, in which porous borders or interactions among peoples of different religions, ethnicities, and languages can serve not as the punch line but the point of departure.

NOTES

1. That said, two exciting projects currently underway promise to help “Mediterraneanize” our understanding of medieval literature. Though both remain based in western European literatures, both actively reshape our understanding of literature and textuality as modes of interaction, linked to the kinds of macro- and micro-connectivities typical of Mediterranean history. Significantly, both privilege the spatial over the diachronic. David Wallace’s Oxford University Press anthology, *Europe: A Literary History, 1348–1418*, “considers literary activity in transnational sequences of interconnected places,” organized into nine itineraries, five of which are squarely or partially Mediterranean: Avignon to Naples, Palermo to Tunis, Cairo to Constantinople, Mount Athos to Muscovy, and Venice to Prague.

The second is “Medieval Francophone Literary Culture Outside France,” a multiyear British Arts & Humanities Research Council project that sets out to analyze “how key literary texts travelled along two principal axes: a northern route that stretches from England across the Low Countries to Burgundy and the Rhineland” and, more relevantly for our purposes, “a southern route across the Alps to Northern Italy and out into the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas, to the Middle East. The project will establish a database of manuscripts of the key texts in order to ask questions about cultural and linguistic identity, about medieval textuality, and about the literary history of Europe.”

2. See Spivak, “Subaltern Studies.”
3. For example, Menocal, *The Arabic Role*; Brann, *The Compunctious Poet and Power in the Portrayal*; Girón-Negrón and Minervini, *Las coplas de Yosef*; Hamilton, *Representing Others*; Wacks, *Double Diaspora and Framing Iberia*; Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature.”
4. Gilles Grivaud similarly looks at the literary history of Lusignan Cyprus, another multiconfessional and multilingual Mediterranean site.
5. See his forthcoming book, *The Crucible of the West*.
6. Another Mediterranean “event” that may prove good to think with is Peter I of Cyprus’s attack on and short-lived conquest of Alexandria in 1365, the subject of *La Prise d’Alexandre* by the eminent fourteenth-century French poet Guillaume de Machaut (recently analyzed by Zrinka Stahuljak) and chronicler al-Nuwairi al-Iskandarani’s *Kitab al-Ilmam bi-l-a‘lam fima jarat bihi al-abkam wa-l-amur al-maqdiyya fi waq‘at al-Iskandariyya* or *Book of Gleanings Relating what Occurred in the Events of the Fall of Alexandria* (recently analyzed by David Wrisley).

Desiderata for the Study of Early Modern Art of the Mediterranean

Claire Farago

My engagement with Mediterranean studies grows out of longstanding interests in cultural interaction and its methodological implications for the field of art history that have focused on exchanges between Europe and the Americas. Preparing this paper has enabled me to glimpse when and how the two spheres of Atlantic and Mediterranean studies intersect, as they do both methodologically and historically. The political, historical, and ethical urgency of telling history differently, using different sources, rescuing obliterated pasts, exploring difference and heterogeneity within those sources, interrogating received categories, defining new questions for investigation, “Mediterraneanizing” the study of culture, as Sharon Kinoshita describes the possibilities opened up in her own field of French medieval literature, certainly infuses new life into both of these interdisciplinary areas, by whatever names we call them (Kinoshita, “Medieval Mediterranean Literature”).

This paper this chapter is based on was not one of the pre-circulated essays that formed the basis for the round-table, but was presented as part of the earlier session, “Mediterranean Studies at CU Boulder.”

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What's even more important in terms of its contribution to scholarship and pedagogy, and ultimately to the ways in which scholars contribute to society beyond the academy, is the shared initiative of resisting notions of fixed truths in favor of understanding "truth" as something to be negotiated, to be debated, something that remains relative and particular, rather than fixed and universal—a redemptive but also always a provisional project. Truth and its consequences, then, are tied to concrete situations and subject positions, including our own as part of the same historical continuum (with all its fractures, switchbacks, unexplored potentialities) as the subjects we study. The shift towards relativity and inclusion of new subject positions on level ground moves away from questions of fixed identity to a multi-faceted understanding of the dynamic processes of identity formation and articulates historical alternatives to monolithic ideas of culture.

Mediterranean studies offers Early Modern Europeanist art historians an opportunity to critique the very idea of an homogeneous national culture by attending to heterogeneities, ambivalences, over-determinations, and silences, although the experience of dealing with sources out of one's depth, training, and even peripheral expertise can be terrifying as much as exhilarating. We come to the new regional histories, thalassologically construed, with many different kinds of methodologies as well as different expertise. Making do, piecing things together as one inevitably does in a single-authored study, is one way to approach cross-cultural projects, especially those construed in terms of individual objects, such as texts, textiles, pictures, and so on; but another way is to work collaboratively to undertake projects of broad scope with the necessary depth. I will return to this fundamental point about how research is organized in my closing remarks.

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES IN ART HISTORY

I begin with a brief literature review, including a short overview on the ways in which Mediterranean studies came to the field of art history. The 2007 volume edited by Eva Hoffman, entitled *Remapping the Art of the Mediterranean: Late Antique and Medieval Art*, resonates strongly with what I regard as the most salient issues for the cross-cultural study of art and artifacts from my own, previous work on exchanges between Europe and the Americas. Among medievalists, as among Early Modernists,

longstanding sub-disciplinary specializations are one of the main obstacles to re-envisioning the field in terms of cultural interaction. Hoffman writes that she conceived her volume to promote an integrated study of art and culture in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean from the third to the thirteenth centuries which are routinely separated, spatially and temporally, by traditional subcategories within Medieval art such as Early Christian, Byzantine, Romanesque, and Islamic—a situation which results in the study of these periods, places, and peoples in isolation, and divides antique from medieval; East from West; Christian, Jewish and Muslim; and so on. These inherited categories that emphasize depth and specialization are founded on hierarchies of knowledge whose rationales are far from transparent or obvious.

Therefore, Hoffmann organized her anthology as a series of linked, conceptual categories rather than chronologically or by medium, culture, patronage, or any other traditional category. In her own words, this presents a strategy for remapping the art of the Mediterranean that opens up political, religious, and stylistic boundaries for sake of a more holistic understanding—a revisionist trend in scholarship whose beginnings she situates in the 1970s with the redeployment of the term Late Antique, initially coined by art historian Alois Riegl in the late nineteenth century to avoid disparaging references to the decay and fall of the Roman Empire. In its current understanding, “Late Antique” connotes a more expansive geographical and temporal category—it considers the Roman alongside the Sasanian Empire. Hoffman points to the growing interest among scholars such as Herbert Kessler and Robert Nelson for greater temporal as well as geographical fluidity; in particular, between Late Antique and Medieval art, in order to pursue questions beyond the standard ones of artistic medium, chronology, and geography—a taxonomy of categorization that spoke to early twentieth-century modern models. The transcultural frame of reference, introduced by Peter Brown (*World of Late Antiquity*), developed by Averil Cameron (*The Mediterranean World*), and others, brings art history into alignment with neighboring disciplines and further suggests that Islamic conquests of the seventh century did not represent a dramatic break from preexisting late antique culture.

In Hoffman’s volume, broad analytical categories of historical origin have been dealt with self-reflexively, re-shaped by historiographical awareness regarding the bias and veracity of inherited categories originating in European histories of art since the Early Modern period. She accepts the hypothesis that Horden and Purcell have recently advanced, that the

stability of the region is sustained by systems of local exchange, shared environmental, biological, and anthropological factors shaping and connecting the Mediterranean world to maintain a delicate balance between separation and connection. In this volume, major players from the tenth to twelfth century include the Republic of Venice, Norman Sicily, Fatimid Egypt and North Africa, al-Andalus (Islamic Spain), and Byzantium, each inhabited by a mix of populations of Jews, Muslims, and Christians who maintained networks of trading patterns exchanging goods, ideas, and texts at the nexus of three continents. The final section of Hoffman's anthology is especially interesting for me as an Early Modernist art historian because it focuses on visual and cultural exchange from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries to raise possibilities for broader interchanges among spheres in defining a shared culture. The individual chapters focus on three sites of cultural intersection: Islamic Spain, Norman Sicily, and the Republic of Venice to suggest that, most of all, portable objects in circulation imparted a "Mediterranean" feeling and look.

The Mediterranean network of artistic transfer and appropriation is complex, and anything but uniform. According to Gerhard Wolf, introducing a 2010 collection of essays that spans the medieval and Early Modern period, entitled *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange, and Artistic Transfer*, integrating the study of the Mediterranean means opening the "borders between Islamic, Western, Byzantine, and Jewish art histories, to suggest a dialogue about fundamental issues of the field and on Mediterranean arguments in general with other disciplines (p. 8)." Wolf speaks of the need to revise Purcell and Horden's concept of the Mediterranean because it does not consider issues of aesthetics or the cultural production and use of art and artifacts. By encouraging study of the migration of artifacts in terms of processes of reuse, reframing, and transformation, this volume collectively asks, what do changing, not necessarily compatible, cultural values attached to objects in different contexts, tell us about the heterogeneity of all value systems? (p. 7)

Despite similarities at the macro-level, the study of material cultural migrations is qualitatively different regarding the Mediterranean from the sudden cultural contact between Europe and the Americas and other colonial sites elsewhere because exchange, collision, miscommunication, appropriation, transformation, and all the rest took place over a much longer period of intensive contact. Regarding the Mediterranean as a unit of cross-cultural study, there are in fact no moments of initiation within

human memory as there are in the case of Europeans and indigenous American peoples making first contact. A different, topological kind of model—mapping is a most appropriate analogy—is required to understand the varied processes that the cross-cultural study of artifacts entails.

But how to organize research initiatives at the individual and trans-individual level? The arbitrariness (in the sense of assigned meaning) and dynamism of signifying processes associated with material culture emerges as a dominant theme in recent scholarship. To what do we owe these remarkable similarities? Many of the individual case studies from which our newly forming aggregate knowledge of art and all forms of material culture is emerging emphasize the ability of works of art and artifacts to change their meaning—the only stability is instability (to echo Horden and Purcell's characterization of the Mediterranean). Even when the issue of representation is not directly or simply the issue, the elective use of artifacts to signify, to create symbolic worlds, to manage people or provide shared frames of reference, is frequently the outcome of individual studies. The research raises complex issues of multiple agencies that cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between producer and consumer. Wolf and Hoffman both emphasize that our inherited boundaries and categories are more problematic in a transcultural perspective where a hidden hierarchy of cultures grounded in a European system of values tends to resurface if not actively resisted and made part of the subject of study. To play the skeptic, is the current emphasis on instability, arbitrariness, and relativity merely symptomatic, due to the backward swing of the pendulum, in direct reaction to the positivistic methodologies on which the discipline of art history, like many other human sciences established or professionalized in the nineteenth century, was charged with pinning meaning down? Or, has the time come to identify larger, shared research agendas beyond the current fascination with cultural migrations? And should we not also be asking even more fundamental questions about the horizons and motivations of our research agendas, individually and collectively?

EARLY MODERN MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES: AN EMERGING FIELD

Mediterranean studies approaches have only recently been brought to bear on the subfield of Early Modern art history, emerging on the crest of widespread interest in cultural interaction and critical historiography, and inspired and enriched by the research of medievalists and oceanic studies

elsewhere. Broad questions about shared research agendas arising from many different quarters have not yet been broached in this arena.

There are other, historical reasons for the lack of a broadly formulated question regarding the Mediterranean as a whole, such as the growing importance of Europe in relation to the Mediterranean, the escalating opposition between Greek and Latin Christianity (and within Latin Christianity), and between Christianity and Islam which played out simultaneously in the European as well as the Mediterranean political arena. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the first contact was made between Europeans and peoples of the Americas and beyond, which soon led to vast new trading networks connecting Asia and Europe across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, all conspiring to make the Mediterranean region even less self-contained, even as the quantity of goods manufactured there increased to supply demand. These and similar economic pressures from other regions contiguous with it made the Mediterranean itself into a more porous trading and communications network as it came into prolonged contact with the emerging global economy, and therefore less containable than it had been for the previous eons.

It is crucial to understand in this historical context of considering broad research initiatives, that the term Renaissance itself is partly a chauvinistic humanist metaphor, and partly an anachronistic concept developed by nineteenth-century historians like Jacob Burckhardt and Jules Michelet to whom we owe our schemes of periodization based on the art of western European urban centers. I won't rehearse those well known arguments and critiques here, but it is imperative to remember that interactions between Italian and Greek humanists after the Council of Ferrara in 1438 and the Council of Florence in 1439 brought learned Byzantines to Italy to mend the schism of the Church, and that subsequently with more refugee Greek scholars establishing permanent residency after the fall/conquest of Constantinople to/by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Humanist writers from Colucci Salutati to Pius II to George of Trebizond dehumanized the Turks as barbarians and construed all Islamic peoples into the same category, as Nancy Bisaha argues on the basis of extensive firsthand study of fifteenth-century humanist texts in a wide variety of genres, in her 2004 book entitled *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*: phobic, generalized reactions to Muslim culture and religion in western Europe were first promulgated by learned humanists in the service of Church and State.

The current wave of Mediterranean art historical studies paints quite a different picture from what I have been describing so far, partly by using different sources such as the accounts of individual travelers, including merchants, sailors, wandering aristocracy, diplomats, ambassadors, and even, occasionally, artists. This trend to look at a broad range of evidence, especially material evidence, to understand how complex attitudes and identities were formed and intersected in the Mediterranean is indebted to historian Lisa Jardine's *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (1996), a lively synthetic account with a strong narrative line aimed at a general intellectual audience. In the wake of Jardine's work, there have been several major scholarly studies in the form of exhibition catalogues examining the ways in which a wide array of portable objects circulated through the Mediterranean. The general argument is that, below the radar of increasingly oppositional attitudes at the state level, driven by fear of the Ottoman Empire's successful territorial ambitions in Europe and supported by the rhetoric of an ecclesiastic and secular network of humanist writers, is another, far more tolerant and well-integrated Mediterranean of the Early Modern period. The unstated and problematic assumption appears to be that it is best to override difference, that a harmonious whole is somehow better than an unintegrated diversity.

To give several examples of the current trend to locate a well-integrated Early Modern Mediterranean world, the Metropolitan Museum exhibition catalogue, *Venice and the Islamic World 828–1797*, emphasizes that trade was always of paramount importance: the identity of Venice as a world emporium was crucial to the [myth of the] city's self-definition—a great sleight of hand maintained by certain vested interests, although this is not discussed as such in the catalogue—and to the development of Venetian artistic language. Surely, such a narrative is framed by capitalistic assumptions, as religious issues and cultural and intellectual questions were also tremendously significant. Venetian navigation plays an important role in these studies, as it does in Horden and Purcell's account, except that the size of ships and the bulk of cargo, even the opulence of lifestyles on board, have increased in this later period. The diversity of the Turkophone peoples, speaking Turkic languages that were consolidated in the sixteenth century and using the Arabic alphabet, is stressed; another revision to the Orientalizing histories that began in the Early Modern era itself and was repeated through the nineteenth century and beyond. Meanwhile the unity of the Ottoman Empire is based on concrete data: the Ottoman sultan united nearly all the Arabic speaking Islamic nations, established

domination on the north coast of Africa, and monitored Spanish maritime traffic in the western Mediterranean. Undoing the monolithic construction of Islam as Europe's "Other" has resulted here and elsewhere in a new focus on the profusion and diversity of art/artifacts which are exhibited alongside paintings featuring exotic objects—such as a pilgrim's flask of free-blown, enameled, and gilded glass, a magnificently embellished portolan atlas showing signs of actual use, a barber's dish decorated with vegetal ornament in the manner of Turkish Iznikware (although the object has no equivalent in Islamic pottery), drawings by a student of Gentile Bellini of Mamluk dignitaries prepared for a printed costume book—to name just a few of the hundreds of items assembled for the enormously successful international loan exhibition. And there have been other similar attempts to rethink the category "art" from a more pluralistic perspective, such as the National Gallery of London's *Bellini and the East* exhibition of 2006 and Rosamond Mack's 2002 volume, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art 1300–1600*, also focused on portable objects.

Early Modern art history that engages Europeanists with Ottoman or Islamic culture has been trained on the simple circulation of objects more than on their philosophical or ideological contexts with their many implications and demands. The current effort to enlarge the archive by considering more kinds of objects and contextualizing them from the perspective of their originating cultures is very welcome, but it could result in just another London Crystal Palace, the sensational 1851 exhibition of manufactured goods from all over the world assembled in one place at one time as if all cultural productions were commensurable objects. Another difficulty emerges, of course, in dealing with objects that are the products of several traditions, or reused, appropriated, adapted, understood differently, and so on—these are fundamental problems of interpretation at the heart of the discipline of art history. This new evidence raises methodological and ultimately ethical issues for the critical practice of history.

Is it ever adequate to produce new information without questioning the old problematic categories that organize our archives? The question entails more than avoiding one pair of problematic terms or even the thinking that underlies them. Modern nation-state constructions are another kind of abstraction—in this case an anachronistic one—that limits our ability to understand the material that is the subject of study. The *Bellini and the East* exhibition was co-curated by Deborah Howard, who in 2000 published *Venice and the East: the Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture*, perhaps still the single most significant book-length

contribution to Early Modern Mediterranean studies by an Italianist art historian since the appearance of Jardine's book in 1996, set a new agenda for attending to the circulation of mobile artworks (broadly defined) in a trading network. One of Howard's very productive insights is in realizing that built forms can be transformed into portable objects, transported in the form of drawings, models, fragments, oral stories; a variety of written forms including poems, histories, chronicles, diaries, travel accounts; mental images, and representations on other mobile objects such as ceramics, textiles, carpets, paintings, and so on.

Howard's primary interest is in the mobility of visual forms, specifically the importation of Islamic architectural motifs, particularly ornamentation and imagery, into the Venetian urban environment. She describes her subject as an investigation of Venetian response to the "experience of oriental travel and its effect on the architecture of the city" (p. xi). Howard's investment is to understand the recurring resonances among visual forms (images, patterns, structures, textures, colors) for which there is no documentation other than the material evidence itself. What interests me in the present context is understanding what Howard is missing. Her rich body of evidence could be put to more effective use if she could consistently conceptualize the Mediterranean differently—as a topological network with nodes, or perhaps a rhizomatic configuration—and give more careful theoretical attention to the processes of adequation that fascinate her. Howard's comparative analysis of urban form (p. 9), where she compares Venice to the generic structure of an Islamic city is an exception to her understanding of active reception as imperfect or deviant because it does not attempt to reduce the material evidence to words or to a determinate reading. Rather, the comparison is topological and the relationships are functional. The characteristics she defines are sufficiently schematic to argue that Venice is merely "reminiscent" of its hypothetical Islamic counterparts.¹ This relationship of adequation rather than equation is potentially the most original contribution her study makes to current theoretical projects about cultural interaction in areas of intensive and prolonged contact.

OTHER RELATED TRENDS IN EARLY MODERN ART HISTORY

I would like to mention in passing, that studying exchanges between Latin and Greek Christian art on Italian soil has recently become one of the most productive lines of investigation among Italian Renaissance art historians.

It involves both the diffusion and mixing of visual styles and the distribution of objects, on the one hand, and the very different ontological expectations of Christian religious images in Greek and Latin liturgies, on the other. Not surprisingly, the historical cases investigated by Anthony Cutler, Alexander Nagel, Maria Evangelatou, and others turn out to be far more complex than previous expectations would have anticipated, cast for a long time as they were (at least among Europeanists) in terms of the reductive opposition expressed by Vasari (and Cennini before him) between Greek and Latin art, the latter conceived as a form of praise for Renaissance naturalism, the former blamed for lacking these qualities. This scholarship is significant for tackling issues at a fundamental epistemological level through the study of material culture. The work of Byzantinists and Islamicists working in the area of Early Modern Mediterranean Studies is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present literature review, but I note, also in passing, the important contributions of Annabel Wharton (*Selling Jerusalem*), Gülru Necipoğlu (*Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*), and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu (*Constantinople/Istanbul*), which are deeply engaged with critical theory and/or historiographical, political, and economic issues alongside extensive study of primary sources.

A CASE STUDY: HANS BELTING'S ARAB SCIENCE AND RENAISSANCE ART

Another newly emerging subject of study engages with the intersections of Judeo-Christian and Islamic worldviews as they played out in the production of art. The conundrum regarding the problems of establishing radically new interpretations at the grand scale raises issues fundamental to Mediterranean Studies since Braudel. I realize that I have been reading Horden and Purcell (*The Corrupting Sea*) from the skewed vantage point of an Early Modernist, when the Mediterranean region (another problematic nineteenth century construct Eurocentric in origin) rather inconveniently is no longer a semi-contained, uniquely-constituted place with porous boundaries and extending networks of trade and influence, though of course its ecological structure and the history of that ecology remained very much in existence. This circumstance in itself suggests the need to develop a more nuanced model for thinking about cultural production of the Mediterranean, before and after the arrival of Early Modernity (if it ever did arrive equally or all at once, as inevitably problematic period

designations suggest). My skewed interest is due to the way in which Horden and Purcell avoid the reliance of cultural studies on a deterministic model that defines art and artifacts as “representations” and then assumes that the world can be made legible through “reading” its cultural productions and assigning various mentalities to their makers. As an art historian, I find that the problem is not about history from above per se, rather it’s about finding another way to conceive explanatory models of cultural production more generally.

Is it possible to admit the messy topic of “worldview” into our “essentially contested” but hopefully constructive discussions of the Mediterranean as another way of characterizing the region besides environmentally? I am interested in studying long-distance interaction *beyond* the fact of goods and people circulating in a trading network. The material side of religion, of course, is art, broadly defined to include many different types of cultural production, textual, material, visual, oral, ritual, time-based, static, and so on. In fact, religion itself should be a contested term—it would be less of a specific historical and cultural imposition to say “belief system,” defining “belief” and “system” just as broadly as “art.” The point is to secure a more precise, less biased historical interpretation.

In his latest book, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science* (2011), Hans Belting, a prominent German art historian—originally trained as a Byzantinist, but active in a much broader arena concerning the nature and significance of art in general—examines the contribution of medieval Arabic treatises on formal optics to Italian Renaissance painting, specifically to linear perspective schemes that distinguish Florentine painting beginning around 1420. Belting’s study of Arab science and Renaissance art unfolds from his insight that the same theory of optics, that is, the same explanation for the action of light and the process of vision leading to cognition, hence understanding of the world, had two very different historical outcomes in their Islamic and European Renaissance contexts.² However, Belting makes assumptions of the kind my chapter has been critiquing all along that interfere with—or indeed, prevent him from realizing—his goals. He uses terms such as “East” and “West” as if they were ever-present natural entities; he collapses “Islam,” “Arab,” and “Arabic” into one interchangeable category on the basis of a brief caveat offered at the beginning of the book to the effect that the Arabic language was the *lingua franca* of Islam (the inimitable language of the Qur’an). His very reductive thesis is that the tenth-century philosopher Ibn al-Haytham never saw pictorial images and therefore drew no connections between internal images

and external pictorial representations in his treatise on optics (unless he read books, of course, or visited his Christian friends, if he had any). Whereas, when this treatise was translated into Latin and read two centuries later by certain Italian artists (who read an Italian translation), it had an entirely different effect that changed the course of Western painting.³

Belting has long argued that the modern, secular notion of art as the product of the artist's imagination replaced the former, Christian understanding of art that granted the same agency to the Divine. He thus imposes a simple, linear model of progressive change on what is actually a much more complex history; according to his reductive scheme, first there were religious images, then, there was secular art. But neither Arab science nor Renaissance art were thus freed of theological baggage. To the contrary, Arab theories of vision grounded in an Islamic understanding of divinity (or the world soul), were refitted by scholastic theologians to justify sacred images made by human art. The new discourse on art that developed in the fourteenth century and later, in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, claimed an increasingly independent role for the artist, but the Christian context in which all religious images functioned continued to inflect these discussions in specific ways. The perennial challenge was to establish the ontological status of the material work of art. We don't usually think of Western styles of "naturalism" as ideologically freighted by the ontological concerns of Christianity, but it was precisely on this basis that scientific naturalism was deemed to conform to human ways of knowing based on sense experience.

The *dangerous* innovation from a Christian ontological standpoint was in granting the artist's imagination an independent role, because the artist was then no longer simply a passive recipient of God's "offspring," by which God communicates its likeness in "multiplication of itself."⁴ This is the language of formal optics adapted by Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, writers like Dante, and extraordinary artists like Leonardo da Vinci, whose writings provide an unparalleled insight into the motivations of artists who developed scientific naturalistic styles of painting. The agency assigned to the artist could vary according to who was speaking to whom and to what purpose, but in its Christian formulation, the veracity of the sacred representation was crucial for it justified the use of images in religious worship altogether. Can a human work of art be "true"? In the humanist literature (as opposed to theological writings), the "artifice" of a work of art was discussed mostly in terms derived from literary theory. Ecclesiastical

writings, also indebted to ancient rhetorical theory, provide an epistemological entry into the issue of what was stake in sacred images made by artists. In his 1582 treatise, *On Sacred and Profane Images*, Archbishop Gabriele Paleotti (1522–1597), understood images as indexical signs arranged in a hierarchy when he connected but also distinguished sharply between “vestiges” which are “irrational and imperfect” traces like a footprint, and images produced by the art of “*disegno*.” Paleotti distinguished between such lofty figures from which “copies (*ritratti*) can be made” and the “irrational” footprint, on the basis of St. Augustine, who conceived of a continuum of images produced by art and nature as the resemblance between father and son. For both Augustine and Paleotti, the source of the material imprint is crucial: footprints and smoke are limited in their usefulness, while the abstract and incorporeal images used by theologians or the *fantasmi* and *concetti* that give painters the ability to paint, are a “gift of God and a sign of the loftiness of human nature.” Paleotti clearly understood that the sacredness of an image made by human art is due to its divine origin. Many other texts could be cited to support his argument that science is in the service of religion and not the other way around, as modern, secular accounts of art would have it.⁵

There is fundamental *tension* between a Christian theological theory of *images* and a rich rhetorical tradition for describing *artifice*. A lingering and unrecognized Christian ontology *haunts* the contemporary secular understanding of art as the expression of the artist’s imagination. Belting’s explanatory model doesn’t hold because he is trying to describe broad epistemological trends as they are manifest in material culture using an inferential model of direct contact between one thing and another—between an artist or a humanist or a theologian and a text written by another individual. As Braudel more circumspectly recognized, the individual is “imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape ...”

DESIDERATA FOR THE STUDY OF EARLY MODERN ART

The weakness of the *longue durée* model lies in its relative inability to account for sudden major shifts of the episteme (I am mixing metaphors here, taking a term from Foucault, who was also engaged with explaining historical discontinuity but put more theoretical muscle into explaining continuity—the difficult trick is to do both). The Early Modern era is indeed an excellent place to anchor a study with these methodological

ambitions such as the one Belting tried to conceive because it is during this time period that pronounced historical discontinuities appear, while continuities also persist. Defining “Early Modernity” in terms of the disjunction between art as sacred and art as secular eliminates from consideration exactly those aspects that most deserve an explanation, namely the tension between art and religion. My principal *desideratum* for the study of Early Modern art of the Mediterranean is to develop a methodology adequate to the task of investigating such broad issues. One of the problems with undertaking such an ambitious project has to do with the way research efforts are organized. In order to establish an adequately broad *and* deep expertise, a collaborative effort is almost certainly needed. Much of Belting’s reductive thinking is due to his assumption that art represents a people—what if, instead, his methodology were informed by the excellent theoretical and historical work ongoing elsewhere about the production of material culture in colonial societies—and other societies with heterogeneous populations? What if Belting’s project were re-envisioned as a collaborative effort and included attention to this kind of evidence? What if the subject of methodology were also part of the research team’s collective efforts to consider “art” not only as a commodity form but also as among the finest and most moving residues of what it means to live in this world?

By whatever name we call it, the shift wasn’t as sudden as Belting makes it out to be—and perhaps it is not even the most important challenge today, looking at the bigger picture of the Mediterranean then. What would be the consequences of attending to both the Arab and the Christian ontology of images? Belting really missed an opportunity by restricting his discussion of Arabic formal optics to linear perspective, because Ibn al-Haytham’s treatise, following a tradition of discussing the “errors of vision” that originates in the ancient texts of Euclid and Ptolemy and owes a great deal to Aristotle’s understanding of the senses and the process of sense discrimination and judgment, played an important role in western art and philosophy.

Why should we see a work of art as due to a sole agent? And what is authorship? Ibn al-Haytham was by no means the only writer on formal optics whose treatises were translated into Latin, enabling this theory of vision and light to be widely disseminated in their Latin form. Pecham, whose thirteenth-century treatise on perspective circulated in manuscript and was used directly by Leonardo da Vinci in a printed edition of 1486, relied more on earlier Arab writers such as al-Kindi (who was Christian) and on Euclid, while Witelo, another source for the Latin transmission of

Arabic formal optics, was closer to Ibn al-Haytham.⁶ Like Roger Bacon and other scholastics who “Latinized” the Arabo-Islamic literature, they stressed the relationship between internal mental images and external images. How can these developments be brought to bear on the arts?⁷

The Mediterranean was thoroughly dotted with trading posts where expatriate Venetians, Genoese, Neapolitans, and many other colonists lived without the support of their families because women were not permitted to accompany them. As a result, these merchants established a variety of unofficial liaisons with the local populations, often leaving little or no documentary trace in the archives. However, as Howard emphasizes in her study of Venetian architecture, many other material traces of cultural interaction survive, awaiting a methodology up to the task. By looking at the intersection of different cultural practices, stressing the complex intersections, multiple filters, and numerous transfers resulting in interpretation, we learn that nothing studied in the context of networks of commerce is a binary operation. It is from individual case studies of the complex mechanisms of cultural interaction that shared research agendas can arise.⁸

The tendency in cross-cultural studies is to identify a series of shared thematic subjects. However, if a coherent field of investigation is to emerge from these new forays, then even more fundamental issues need to be identified and collectively pursued, such as a shared critical concern with the ways that historians structure time, especially in comparative analyses, so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the nineteenth century by naively recreating a field of commensurable objects and events without acknowledging the politics of granting privilege to this or that perspective of comparative analysis. Visuality matters because it raises fundamental questions about such issues as the incommensurability of signifying practices; the short- and long-range effects of translating objects and places into virtual, circulating images; the intersections of consumerism and desire manifested in the visually, sensorily appealing material objects and images that circulated; the various kinds of resistance and accommodation to power dispersed across the network of hierarchically and locally organized, asymmetrical social relations. What if we focused on these problems and processes?

NOTES

1. By contrast, on p. 112, where she asks whether the older residential areas of Venice acquired their labyrinthine qualities deliberately from their eastern counterparts, she provides a psychological answer that can be neither verified nor refuted: merchants with travel experience preferred this intimacy and social coherence because they were familiar with it. Again, this is grounded in the assumption that outward forms are the direct manifestation of inward mentalities.
2. His insight owes a great deal to Gülru Necipoğlu's study cited above, as Belting acknowledges.
3. See Edgerton, "Comparative World." Thanks to Sharon Kinoshita for bringing this review to my attention.
4. Leonardo da Vinci, Codex Urbinas 1270, translation cited from Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone,'* n. 8, and pp. 305–306.
5. See further, Preziosi and Farago, *Art Is Not What You Think It Is*, where these arguments are fleshed out, but more research is needed.
6. For a reliable introduction, see Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*.
7. Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*, is one touchstone for contemporary discussions of how and whether to draw connections between works of art and systematic ideas of their time (p. vi); see especially Chap. 3, exploring what he calls (unfortunately, since the historical role of inference in religion and science is part of what requires explanation) "inferential criticism" as opposed to "causal" accounts of the artist's intentions. Another is Damisch's *Origins of Perspective*, which takes as its own touchstone Erwin Panofsky's well-known 1927 essay, "Perspective as Symbolic Form." Damisch argues that one cannot trace the evolution of a paradigm as if it were an object of historical enquiry, like an object. His book, for its part, must be considered paradigmatically, as a model for the practice of art history. The issues are beyond the scope of the present chapter, but see the excellent critical essays by Iversen, Review of Damisch, *Origins of Perspective*, 2005 and 1995.
8. See Cecily Hilsdale's contribution to the present volume.

The Maritime, the Ecological, the Cultural—and the Fig Leaf: Prospects for Medieval Mediterranean Studies

Peregrine Horden

Natalie Gittelson of *The New York Times Magazine* once asked Woody Allen in an interview how his analysis was going after 22 years. “It’s very slow,” he said.¹

There is one signal advantage in proceeding slowly with the study of Mediterranean history—it is well over 22 years since Nicholas Purcell and I conceived the project begun in *The Corrupting Sea* (CS hereafter).² The advantage is that you may survive to be privileged to witness a discipline’s classic three stages of growth, apogee, and perhaps even decadence. At the very least you may observe changes in scholarly fashion, to some extent from the inside, at ground level, but also, more tellingly, from the more detached aerial vantage point that the old stager can sometimes adopt. Features of current historical writing on the Mediterranean that seem natural and obvious now were virtually impossible to predict in the early 1990s, when drafting of CS began. That does not make them either inevitable or necessarily welcome. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on these developments, placing current scholarly dispositions in the context of

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an unapologetically personal overview of Mediterranean historiography during the last two decades or so, and suggesting some caveats about the likely future of medieval Mediterranean studies.³

THE END OF THE MEDITERRANEAN?

First, the personal history. One of the (in retrospect) less clairvoyant dicta in *CS* is its prediction of “the end of the Mediterranean” (p. 39). But that really was how it seemed in the early 1990s. The Mediterranean Action Plan of 1975 had produced no real academic impact and the political economists, sociologists, ecologists, and anthropologists whom Purcell and I had been reading since the late 1980s did not seem to think that “the Mediterranean” had any great future as a distinct field of study (pp. 19–21). The Barcelona Process of 1995 similarly had little intellectual effect. And perhaps we should not be surprised: think of former President Sarkozy’s “Union for the Mediterranean.” That union’s projected second meeting has been postponed indefinitely. Its co-president, one Hosni Mubarak, has had other things on his mind.

Back when *CS* was being drafted, indeed, all the relevant disciplines seemed to have ignored or turned away from “the Mediterranean” as a category. Historians were reading, or at least citing, Foucault. Microhistories were preferred to grand regional syntheses. In anthropology, “area studies” and “culture areas” had rightly fallen into disrepute, as products of a Cold War mentality. John Davis’s 1977 survey of “people of the Mediterranean,”⁴ based on field work in Libya as well as southern Italy and also on wide reading, had, for all its learning and its avoidance of easy generalization, given way to the “anti-Mediterraneanism” of Pina-Cabral and Herzfeld, for whom “the Mediterranean” was a category as crude, self-serving and politically odious as “the Orient” (*CS* pp. 486–487).⁵ Meanwhile, the linguistic/cultural “turn” militated against the materialism seen to be inherent in regional work of the kind we were pursuing. If one really wanted geographical history of the Mediterranean, none the less, then Braudel had surely said it all.

Thus to look again at the Mediterranean as a single, distinctive *space* for comparative history was more unusual in the early 1990s than it is now, over 22 years on.

SERIAL CULTIVATION

How the scene has changed. And how relatively quickly. Look at the proliferation of journal or periodical titles with the word “Mediterranean” in them. The first part of the story of this growth of “serial cultivation” has been told by Susan Alcock and Ian Morris.⁶ The growth in numbers began in the 1970s, but the real “take off” did not come until the 1990s. Today, searching in a major library catalogue for “Mediterranean” as a word in periodical titles will yield 130 or so entries—not all of them historical or scholarly of course, but part of a far wider phenomenon that has both reflected and stimulated the growth of academic interest: the Mediterraneanization, as we could call it, echoing Morris’s 2003 article, of titles of books, websites, and list serves, as well as journals.

Why this explosion of interest? The headings for a proper, wide-ranging historical answer—about historiography, and about the social sciences more widely—would include, but not stop at: globalization; “the clash of civilizations” debate; post-colonialism with its de-centring, its inversion of cores and peripheries; anti-nationalism and “anti-continentalism” in historiography and cultural studies; anti-essentialism about geographical areas generally; the growing vogue for cultural studies; that for comparative history; and that for its anti-nationalist (or trans-national, as it often styles itself) successor *histoire croisée*—which, however, *seems* itself not to have been applied to the Mediterranean. *The Entangled Sea* is a title surely ripe for the picking...

FIG LEAVES AND SAILORS

In all this exponential growth, what exactly has the Mediterranean become? I detect four ways in which the sea and its region are being pressed into service in historical scholarship. The first is as a *fig leaf*—for what is thought less romantic, more boring; what is much smaller than the Mediterranean and part of it in only a very limited and far from crucial way; what is “arid” in the sense of being remote, spatially, conceptually, from anything to do with the sea. The attractions of the Mediterranean fig leaf are easy to grasp. Ancient historians find it an appealing substitute for “Greece and Rome.” For medievalists and early modernists, this is the main theatre of conflict and coexistence between Christians and Muslims—the legacy of conflict thought to be all too obvious in 9/11 and its aftermath, the coexistence obviously resonant in an age of globalizing and

multiculturalism. For anthropologists, “Mediterranean” is preferable to “southern Europe,” which is still often what is really under discussion.

To pick out, unfairly, one example of such fig-leaf Mediterraneanizing: when you are gathering *Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science*, and your table of contents has such sub-headings as “Diachronic hermeneutics of Arabic texts,” how attractive it must be to relegate the “Studies” part to the subtitle and call your volume *Words, Texts, and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea*.⁷ The use of fig leaves is, I think, largely to blame for the current babble of “talking Mediterranean.” And I think it *is* babble, lacking conceptual depth, rather than a welcome addition to the polyphony.

If that is the Mediterranean, as an alluring fig leaf, then another descendent of the nineteenth-century “romantic Mediterranean” (of which Braudel was the last great exponent) is the *maritime* Mediterranean. “The Mediterranean” as a region may be only a figure within a set of discourses, touristic or academic. But the sea is there as an unbroken stretch of water, and people cross it, because of or in spite of wind, current, and coastline. It is that ensemble of Mediterranean-wide crossings, of people, and their technologies, goods, cultures, and ideas that makes Mediterranean history, across millennia. *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*⁸ is in one sense David Abulafia’s riposte to CS. No nonsense about environmental determinism: this puts human beings centre stage. It tells their stories in a continuous narrative, which starts at the very beginning and goes up to yesterday. No anxieties about the ecology of Mediterranean lands: the watery environment is all. Solved are the problems of regional definition (where does the Mediterranean stop? Is the Black Sea part of it? and so on). Everything that matters in truly Mediterranean history is, on this view, transmarine. All the political, economic and cultural history is seen in terms of long-distance maritime contact. Even fishermen do not qualify for proper discussion. They do not go right across the sea but set out from and return to base. It is wonderful to have this narrative, although Abulafia’s sequence of Mediterraneans ignores to some extent the interest of what happened in between them, and the periodization, for all the repackaging, is very familiar—just when we might hope that the unremitting focus of this hyper-maritimity would produce some new and surprising chronological distinctions. Because of that focus, and the

concomitant avoidance of grand generalization, it is immune to the charges of the anti-Mediterraneanists. But the immunity may have been achieved at some cost—a severe limitation of scope.

ECOLOGIES

To introduce the next type, number three, the Horden–Purcell *ecological* approach, against which Abulafia reacts, some geographical basics are in order. But to introduce them in turn, a quote from Lawrence Durrell—to which my attention was drawn by Cyprian Broodbank, at work on a “before Corruption” (as he styles it) monographic account of the “pre-historic” Mediterranean. Durrell: “The Mediterranean is an absurdly small sea; the length and greatness of its history makes us dream it larger than it is.”⁹ To pre-modern seafarers this was, of course, no paddling pool. It has been seen as fearfully dangerous precisely because it has so often been crossed—starting at least 130,000 years ago, if we are not being misled by Lower Palaeolithic stone stools found in large numbers on Crete, two hundred miles from the African mainland.¹⁰ None the less, the Mediterranean, the world’s largest inland sea, takes up less than 1% of the global marine space. Its hinterland wears its geological history “on its face”: a western remnant of the Tethys ocean, witness to the clash of plates (African and Eurasian) more than the clash of civilizations—the smoother-edged African plate made that way through being forced under the volcanic, mountainous, fractal, island-studded North. It is an area of extreme topographical fragmentation and diversity—to which only some parts of Southeast Asia may be fully comparable. Its climatic regime and its biodiversity are likewise replicated in few other parts of the globe, all of them on similar latitudes, and most notably in the much smaller area of the Californian coast and its channel islands.

Physically, then, the Mediterranean region (leaving aside for a moment the problem of delimiting the terrestrial environment) really is small, and probably unique. And it carries a great deal—a disproportionate amount—of historical baggage. Durrell was not so wrong.

The task is to preserve a sense of this unique environment in historical work without succumbing to even a weak version of environmental determinism. CS tried to do that by adopting something like a systems approach.

Now the ultra-executive summary of CS is:

$$\text{Mediterranean History} = \text{Fragmentation} + \text{Connectivity}$$

The slightly longer version Purcell and I have set out several times since CS so will reduce here to a diagram. It focuses, very obviously, on primary production, but builds out from that into what we hope is an overarching vision of how Mediterranean history has “worked.” (Fig. 5.1)

The dangers in such an approach are obvious: the abstraction almost inevitable with generalizing on such a scale both geographically and chronologically; smoothing out change over time or the impact of short-term catastrophes for the sake of comparing different periods; and above all, the appearance of ecological reductionism—although we hope to have avoided the reality of it.

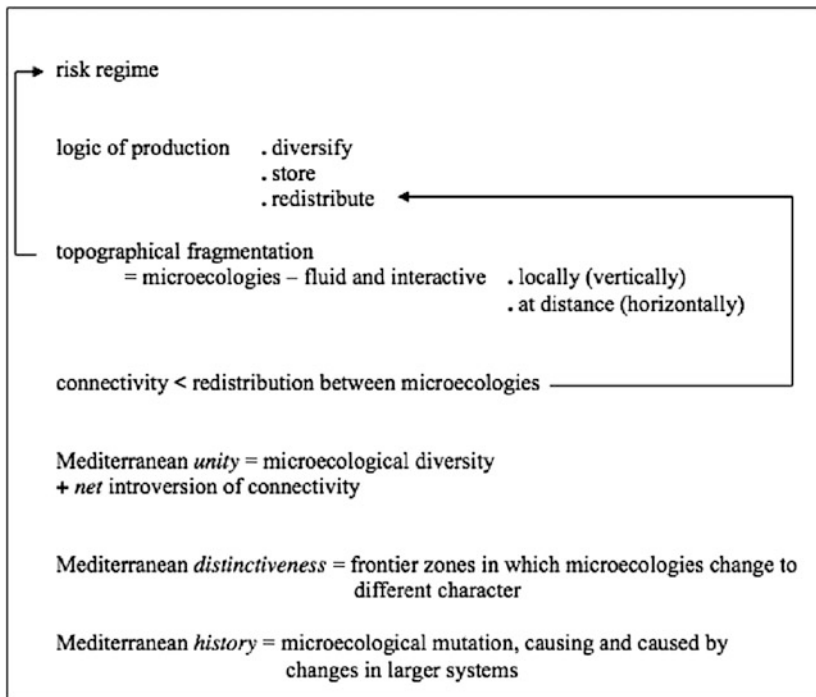


Fig. 5.1 The Corrupting Sea

But ... cultural, literary and art historians please note, this framework was never intended to explain *everything*. It was a way of integrating the maritime (both local and transmarine movements) into a bigger but not infinite regional picture. It was a way of circumventing the Herzfeldian critique of Mediterraneanism by getting away from supposed culture traits. The chapter on honour and shame, disliked by some historians, gratifyingly accepted by some anthropologists, was, like the preceding sections on productive intensification, technological change and religious geography, a test case: a circumspect attempt at a non-reductive cultural ecology, in which lines of agency and causation ran in many different directions. But there was no expectation that the ecological approach would be all-purpose. It is thus striking to see how “connectivity,” just one component of the ecological model so far as we were concerned, has taken off—in isolation—as a term of art, applied in a huge range of scholarly contexts (for many reasons, of course, not only CS, although CS is very often cited).

The simple and unsurprising message I would extract from this brief retrospect is: do not try to do too much, and certainly not everything, with a Mediterranean heuristic. Choose some subjects and reject others. Choose some periods and not others—*when* is the Mediterranean, when does it disappear as a worthwhile frame, as well as what is the Mediterranean? At the extreme, there was a “before corruption” in prehistory; has there been an “after” under “modernity”? (A topic for debate—of both the period and the concept.) Above all, compare. Compare across and around the Mediterranean—but also, always, beyond it, to show what is genuinely, peculiarly Mediterranean and what is not. Compare alternative geographical frameworks if only, presumably, to reject them on *this* occasion. A general proposition: Mediterranean scholarship is always, or should be, inherently, writing *against*—against other possible optics, or spatial frames. The need should always be felt to demonstrate, rather than assume, the superior “fit” of the Mediterranean one to the task at hand.

This is all far easier to state than to carry through systematically. CS treated the Mediterranean history from the inside looking out: the net introversion of the ensemble of microecologies. Its sequel (in progress—slowly, like Allen’s analysis) takes larger systems and sees if they change, and if so how, as they sweep across the Mediterranean. These systems are climate, settlement, demography, and disease, and finally global links with other big areas—some of them possible analogues to the Mediterranean, as real or virtual “middle seas.”¹¹ So we are testing supposed Mediterranean

frontiers, finding them under some chapter headings but not under others; and we are trying to see where and why the Mediterranean is a more appropriate geographical frame than the continental or religiously or culturally delimited alternatives, or newer configurations such as Spain–North Africa (as in the eponymous project SNAP), or the circum-Sahara, or Eurasia, or the Atlantic seaboard, or (why not?) everything on a single line of longitude à la Michael Palin, or even a resurrection of the classical (horizontal) *klima* à la Eliza Griswold.¹²

CULTURE AREAS

An awareness of alternatives, if only to reject them; a sceptical reflexivity about use of the Mediterranean label—these seem to me just as desirable in work on the fourth main strand that I see in current Mediterranean studies. This is the broadly “culturological,” which lies somewhere between the fig leaf and the maritime traditions. (I am aware that, for reasons of space, I am lumping together many different approaches. I look to other contributors to disentangle them, and to criticize my simplifications. What follows is intended merely as a focus for debate.)

Proponents of the Mediterranean as a “culture area”—in suitably post-modern form, with no implications of homogeneity—seem to me to flirt with “fig leafery.” In its less cautious manifestations, this approach relies on invoking the whole when really only some small part is meant. It flirts also with the hyper-maritime because it tends to emphasize movement (in this region, mostly by sea, for well-known reasons) over locality—connectivity over ecology, in Horden–Purcell terms. Put simply and crudely: it often likes to show its Mediterranean credentials by interpreting the “here” in terms of the “far far away” (as long as it is somewhere in or near the Mediterranean).

Let us take an example of the type of medieval society that comes to the fore under this dispensation of Mediterranean culturology. Multi-ethnic invaders have taken over the area in question but they have mingled with multi-ethnic locals. This is in some senses a frontier society; yet it is also at the crossroads of three “civilizations.” Its government is Christian yet does not necessarily toe the line of ecclesiastical authority. Religious minorities of various kinds are present, including even some “pagans.” They have migrated voluntarily to this area, not been forcibly repatriated. A governmental spokesman has even said they are welcome guests. There are no ghettos. In many cities Christians live with Jews on “Jewish Street.”

The minorities are not embraced to this extent out of economic necessity: none of them is irreplaceable. Rather they are valued as taxpayers and military recruits—more or less regardless of religion. Not all is bliss, however. To quote a modern authority: “Peaceful coexistence and enmity occurred together.” Popular animosity towards minorities counterbalanced governmental encouragement. Interfaith interaction could be violent as well as peaceful. The same authority, slightly modified: “The question, therefore, is not whether a country was tolerant or not to its non-Christian minorities during the Middle Ages. Instead we should ask what interconnected forms of acceptance and rejection existed regarding groups outside Christianity in each specific case.”¹³

The place is of course not Mediterranean at all (on any sensible definition). It is Hungary under the Árpád dynasty (c. 1000–1300) as magisterially described by Nora Berend.¹⁴ I bring it in here to stress again the indispensability of Mediterranean/non-Mediterranean comparison, but also because of the sensitivity of Berend’s response to the old tolerance–intolerance paradigmatic polarity. *Convivencia*, the Mediterranean solution—the prototype solution?—to that polarity was years ago declared to be a concept “on life support.”¹⁵ (I note however that it is being favoured by historians of Jewish communities in northern Europe, e.g. Elukin,¹⁶ just when it is being abandoned in its native habitat.) In its place we have, *inter alia*, Brian Catlos’s (as yet unpublished but much trialled) “convenience principle” in the treatment of Mediterranean religious subjects or minority groups.¹⁷ I salute it as a genuine attempt at a broad sociological model supported by examples from all over the Mediterranean.¹⁸

As for the “mixed” cultural products that are at last partially to be associated with some kind of interfaith *modus vivendi* (though of course with other kinds of setting as well): we have a number of metaphors still on offer. There is hybridity, creolization, Bhabha’s “third space,” White’s “middle ground”... and the (to me as an historian) distressing apogee of all this in the Mediterranean version of cultural studies—in which everything is a fluid, compromise formation (to add Freud to the mixture); everything is somehow intermediate.

I have held forth elsewhere, under the heading of “Mediterranean hybridity: a concept in search of evidence,”¹⁹ about weaknesses I find in some of the less thoughtful instances of this approach, as follows.

First, formulations of a third, intermediate term (middle, hybrid, etc.) tend to presuppose the relative homogeneity of the initial constituents. In a way this is the inversion of “clash of civilizations”: two “civilizations” come

together and produce something in between the two of them, through cultural fusion. But, surely, all cultures or products of them are mixed to some degree: one does not need to go post-modern to recognize that. *Purity Lost*, Steve Epstein writes, but when or where was purity gained?²⁰ So we need at least to move to a model of gradation (as, to be fair, does he)—again, with degrees on our scale calibrated always by comparison, not least extra-Mediterranean comparison. Also, with the cultural objects of our attention not over-interpreted: it seems to me that there is an “assumption of depth” that we need to guard against in “reading” the most culturally-composite products, as if every possible iconographic or textual reference were all equally relevant. This mistake happens—partly—because of ...

Second, an obsession with religion; first with inter-faith relations to the neglect of intra-faith tensions or conflicts; second with the religious elements in ideas, images, and texts to the neglect of other ways in which the same material could have been viewed at the time (once more, the problems raised by too fixed an approach, attuned to every possible meaning and therefore missing the shifting relations between what is foreground and what is background in any particular context). David Abulafia has made the obvious point (but one that had not previously occurred to me), in an unpublished lecture on the differing experiences of Spanish religious minorities, that a large part of what makes the difference between them is the nature and extent of everyday (as it were, domestic, weekday) piety. Brian Catlos has made a related contribution in his work on the convenience principle—even more important, it seems to me, than distilling the principle itself. From his monograph he takes a diagram of the extent of ritual content in transactions between religious minorities and majorities (see Fig. 5.2).

That diagram is described by Catlos, but to gloss it with an example of my own from “left field,” arising from recent reading in a different academic context, preparation for a paper in medicine at the thirteenth-century papal court: Many later medieval popes, from the Avignon period onwards, employed Jewish physicians. One could interpret this as a version of the Jew as royal slave, precarious flourishing in a state of utter dependence on the powerful. (See Anna Abulafia’s recent monographic overview.²²) Or—one could assume that both pontiff and physician took the view that medicine’s medicine, that the clinical encounter has low “ritual content,” and that what matters is which doctor is the most learned, regardless of his faith. People’s identities are always plural, as Amartya Sen

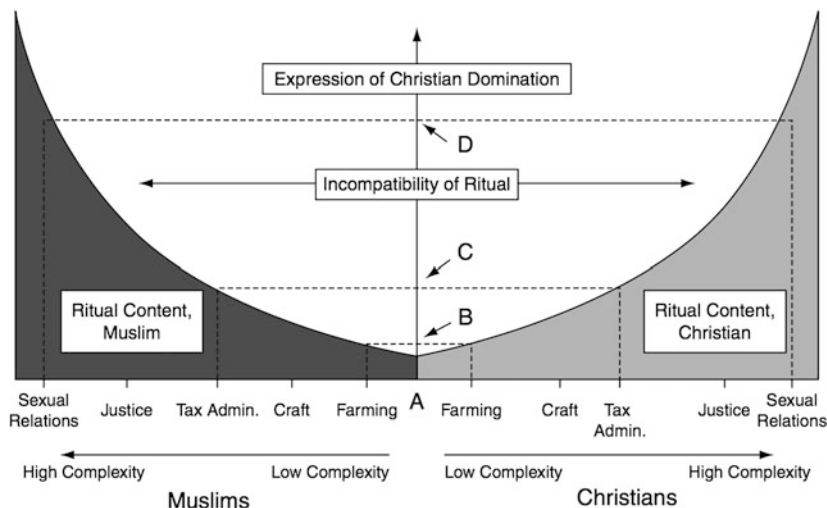


Fig. 5.2 Ritual Divergence and Expression of Domination²¹

insists in a book that I should like to see replacing the lucubrations of many of the theoretical gurus currently favoured in this scholarly world.²³ One chooses between these multiple identities, or is forced to choose by ideologues, according to context. But even popes could set aside the Jew's apparently singular identity. Perhaps historians have found it hard, as have political leaders and rabble-rousers (though for different reasons), to accept Sen's point. A further observation: this papal scene could have happened at Rome, Avignon, Viterbo, a range of Mediterranean papal palaces. But it is not a Mediterranean phenomenon. Bishops right across Europe did the same.

A third problem with the hybridity industry is geographical narrowness—Spain, Sicily, southern Italy: Eurocentric (or is discussion of dhimmitude the Islamic counterpart?), and preoccupied with Islamic “influences” on Christian cultures. Byzantium—a diverse, composite, multi-ethnic cultural world if ever there was one—usually merits only a walk-on part. Perhaps it is not “eastern” enough for the current wave of “occidentalism,” that guilt-laden inversion of Said’s “orientalism” in which light once again comes from the east. The Crusader states are similarly marginalized,²⁴ as are the Balkans.

The fourth problem—insufficient attention to gender. Another brief medical example: if you want to pursue the collaborations of and information transfer between different faiths, look at midwives.²⁵

WRITING AGAINST

This is all of necessity brief, abstract, one-sided and, thus, arguable. I trust it *will* be argued. And readings of cultural themes and objects, to repeat, can be undertaken using a Mediterranean optic without making any of the questionable assumptions about third spaces and so forth that I have been discussing. Still, one question must always be kept in view. What sort of Mediterranean is invoked by talk of a Mediterranean optic? And at what point, in space, does it, or should it, give way to something else? Is it a fig leaf? An excuse for geographical imprecision? An example, which I owe to Sharon Kinoshita: *Vis and Rāmin* by Fakhraddin Gorgani is a mid-eleventh-century verse romance, the first major Persian romance, though perhaps deriving its story from the Parthian period, and written in Isfahan for the Seljuk governor of the city. Its story—escort conveying princess to her future royal husband falls in love with her—has been seen by a number of scholars as the source of Bérout's *Tristan and Isolde*, and it is certainly closer—more comprehensively, and in greater detail—than any putative literary source in Celtic.²⁶ If that is so then the eastern Mediterranean, especially the Crusader states, would be the story's likely channel of transmission to the West. Is there anything to be gained by putting the matter under the heading of "Mediterranean literature"? Or should we rest content with a good old-fashioned piece of source hunting, which does not at all detract from our reading of Bérout within a Celtic and northern French context. I put it here as a case study in what I think lies *just beyond* the Mediterranean.

I am brought back to the question of the content of the Mediterranean of the culturological approach: clearly not a homogeneous area, probably not a hybrid one. Equally clearly it is a highly connected world in which texts, ideas, images and objects really do cruise with relative freedom over long distances, in the process changing themselves and those who somehow "receive" them. I will raise again here a question I raised earlier: is this too "horizontal" a view? Has the local, vertical dimension been played down? I am struck by how often the attractiveness of the Mediterranean optic is conveyed in negative terms. It breaks us out of narrow national traditions and monoglot reading. It helps us cross political and disciplinary

boundaries. It is attractive because of what it is not. Is a sense of place a possible casualty of this rhetoric of emancipation?

Granted Mediterranean study is always writing “against.” One is still entitled to ask: What are the positives? What is the payoff beyond disciplinary liberation? To turn for an instant to philosophy: Sarah Stroumsa discusses Maimonides magisterially²⁷ and wants to place him in a Mediterranean world, à la Goitein. What makes him Mediterranean? It turns out to be no more than the number of coastal countries in which he lived, his cosmopolitanism, and the influence on him of Islamic thought, even though his intellectual world stretched to India and the Yemen.

The prospect of some kind of Mediterranean cultural space remains enticing, for all its ambiguities, even if the reasons for embracing it are mainly negative. Mediterranean thinking and talking must always be argumentative—negative to some degree. “The Mediterranean” is perhaps the last “essentially contested concept” (as suggested at the close of CS). We must always be working against some grain or other. Different sub-disciplines, literary, historical, art historical, will approach their apogees and then even slide into decadence at different times and at different rates. Perhaps it is time for ecological historians to be put out to grass. (Or to choose some other identity from the available plurality.) The same will come to the maritime devotees and the culturologists. When you no longer have to argue fiercely for your position, as we are doing in this collection of essays, with ourselves as much as with others, it is high time to abandon it. Then only the fig leaves will remain.

NOTES

1. Natalie Gittleston, “The Maturing Woody Allen,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 22 August 1979 (accessed on-line at: <http://www.maryellenmark.com/text/magazines/new%20york%20times%20magazine/904Z-000-027.html>).
2. A project to be continued in collected essays on Mediterranean themes by the two authors, forthcoming as *The Boundless Sea*; and in a *Companion to Mediterranean History*, edited by Horden and Kinoshita; as well as in the successor volume to CS, provisionally entitled *Liquid Continents*.
3. While all my thinking about Mediterranean history has been deeply influenced by collaboration with Nicholas Purcell, and he has kindly commented on a draft of this chapter, he is hereby absolved of complicity in what follows.

4. Davis, *People*.
5. See Herzfeld, "Practical Mediterraneanism," and Pina-Cabral "The Mediterranean as a Category."
6. Alcock, "Alphabet Soup in the Mediterranean Basin"; Morris, "Mediterraneanization."
7. Endress et al. (eds.) *Words, Texts, and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy*.
8. Abulafia, *The Great Sea*.
9. Durrell, *Balthazar*; Broodbank, *Making of the Middle Sea*, which the author very kindly allowed me to read first in draft and later in proof.
10. Strasser et al., "Stone Age Seafaring in the Mediterranean: Evidence from the Plakias Region for Lower Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Habitation of Crete." Note the wariness of Broodbank, *Making of the Middle Sea*, 92 (compare 102–103 for seafaring Neanderthals).
11. Abulafia, "Mediterraneans," 64–93, and his global history of seafaring, in progress; *contra*, emphasizing the Mediterranean's cultural and material peculiarities, Horden and Purcell, "The Mediterranean and the New Thalassology."
12. Palin, *Pole to Pole*; Griswold, *The Tenth Parallel*, a fascinating ethnography of the supposed fault line between Islam and Christianity in Africa, showing how it is often really a competition for resources inflected or masked by religious polarity: much food for Mediterraneanist thought. [Eds.: SNAP, the Spain–North Africa Project was founded in July 2010 by a group of participants in "Cultural Hybridities: Christians, Muslims & Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean," a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for College and University Professors held in Barcelona and directed by Catlos and Kinoshita under the aegis of the Mediterranean Seminar.]
13. Compare MacEvitt's 'rough tolerance' in MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East*.
14. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*.
15. Soifer, "Beyond *convivencia*," 21.
16. Elukin, *Living Together: Living Apart*.
17. Editors' note: For Catlos's paradigm of *conveniencia* or "The Convenience Principle," see idem, "Contexto social y 'conveniencia' en la Corona de Aragón. Propuesta para un modelo de interacción entre grupos etno-religiosos minoritarios y mayoritarios," *Revista d'Història Medieval* 12 (2002): 220–235, *The Victors and the Vanquished*, pp. 404–408, as well as idem, *The Muslims of Latin Christendom, ca. 1050–1615*, Chap. 10, "Deeds," pp. 508–514, and "Postscript: *Convivencia*, intolerance... or 'questions badly put'?", pp. 515–535, esp. pp. 520–530.

18. “The Convenience Principle: Communal Interaction in the Multi-Confessional Medieval Mediterranean”, kindly shown to me by the author in draft.
19. Lecture at Michigan, filmed and uploaded to YouTube, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmIIqNr72Gg>, accessed 29 April 2013.
20. Epstein, *Purity Lost*; see p. 5, for the distinction between the generality of mixed formations and the “deeply mixed.”
21. Taken from Catlos, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom*. For explanation of diagram, see idem, 509–512.
22. Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations 1000–1300*.
23. Sen, *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, xiv.
24. MacEvitt’s work is an honourable and highly unusual exception.
25. Green, “Conversing with the Minority: Relations among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Women in the High Middle Ages.”
26. See the Introduction to the Penguin Classics edition, translated by Davis.
27. Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*, 6–10.

Beneath the Surface: Responses and Queries

The Panelists & Audience

THE COLLOQUIUM

The presentation of the papers at the University Club of the University of Colorado at Boulder on 7 April, 2012 was followed by a round-table style “question and answer” session featuring Brian Catlos (**BC**), Cecily Hilsdale (**CH**), Peregrine Horden (**PH**), and Sharon Kinoshita (**SK**), and moderated by Claire Farago (**CF**), with additional comments from the audience (**AU**). What follows is a record based on the transcription prepared by Maureen Kelly; editing has been kept to a minimum, and the colloquial tone has been retained in order to convey the spontaneity and extemporaneous nature of the conversation.

Q & A

CF: Welcome back everyone. Now that the papers have been presented and we’ve all had a break, our panelists are back here all together, and it’s our chance and yours, the audience, to all talk together. So, let me open the floor to questions and comments.

The Panelists & Audience (☒)
University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, USA

AU: Hello, this one is for Peregrine Horden. Let me say that the influence of *The Corrupting Sea* has obviously been tremendous; are the rumors of second volume true? And, if so, what is it going to look at?

PH: Yes, a volume two is indeed in the works, tentatively titled “Liquid Continents,” but that’s only a working title. We’re running a contest, and it’s still not too late to send in your entry. There will be a rollover of the prize money. One of things we need to deal with is culture. I can’t find a term to use of the cultural, and this is where I’m failing in very broad terms. I’ve thought elsewhere of hybridity. I call it a concept in search of evidence, and I have bits in this paper that attack the notion. Well, perhaps we are all doing that, but it still seems to me that under this heading of what I’m calling the cultural Mediterranean (which includes the art history, the architecture, the movement of images, the Mediterraneanization of the contexts, the texts, the literary texts, and everything that our other panelists are specializing in and are going to talk about), we’re still searching for a metaphor. Is it going to be hybridity, creolization, a middle, what’s it, White’s “Middle Ground”? Bhabha’s “third space”?—all saying the same kind of thing; all getting away, essentially, from national boundaries, ethnic boundaries, religious boundaries.¹ And I wonder whether, to how great an extent, these ideas are defined by what they are not. And not quite yet, because this is a material discipline defined by what they might become. And I’d like to ask them, what is *their* Mediterranean, really? Can there be a simpler formulation for this sort of approach, which doesn’t require Mediterranean? And there’s “test the alternative.” Always, always compare. Always measure your “Mediterranean” against another way of putting it.

I’m thinking of Sharon’s paper, where she mentioned the Persian romance *Vis and Rāmin*, which you may well not know (I didn’t until she told me about it).... But here is this Parthian-inspired Persian tale, the probable source of the Tristan and Isolde story. Princess taken across water to marry the prince. The king ... whatever... her captor, falls in love with her magic, uh, there’s this narrative in which she gives birth to two children, a boy and a girl, who are raised separately, and later meet... and so on. Now, I took that: Is that sourcing in Persian romance? Is that a Mediterranean reading or is it outside the Mediterranean? Where does the literary Mediterranean stop conceptually? Geographically? And my final point therefore is in all this culturalological turn, where we’re emphasizing migration motifs, the mixing of styles, the transcending of boundaries of various kinds, even though we’re not going for a *convivencia*-type theory in which everybody’s getting on and isn’t it lovely, or I think that’s the

subtext in some versions of this notion. Has there been a loss of a sense of space? I come back to the ecological version, which I hope was an attempt, however botched, to marry the vertical relations of the local environment with the horizontal relations of connectivity. And I wonder if we're in a phase—as Claire was saying in conversation earlier—where we're emphasizing the horizontal because we're breaking all these boundaries, we're moving out, we're Orientalizing our Mediterranean and so on and we're slightly missing in the process the local, the cultural equivalent of local, ecology. So that's the summary version. That's my deliberate provocation to the other panelists.

CF: Thank you very much, Peregrine, and now were going to move to Sharon. That's a good lead-into Sharon [laughing].

SK: Ok, my short answer to the question “Can we talk Mediterranean” is yes. In my own way of working, I prefer not to spend a lot of time talking about categories and arguing the merits of “Mediterranean” versus whatever it might be replacing, or displacing, or posing a provocation to. My own work, way back when, was very much influenced by postcolonial criticism. I remember the irritating moment when that venture got very, you know, navel-gazing. There was an article entitled something like “Is the post in Postcolonialism the post in Postmodernism?” (I'm probably getting it backwards). So, ok, I don't really care; for me, the payoff is: what do the category or the problematics—the repertoire of questions that come with any of these grandiose titles—what do they allow you to do? In my own thinking, in my approach to literature, I've cast “Mediterranean” as a “strategic regionalism.” This borrows from Gayatri Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism, which is to say: we don't believe in essentialisms anymore, but every once in a while, acting as if you did and treating a category as essentialist even though we know it's constructed can allow you to make certain kinds of points that maybe you couldn't make otherwise or that would be harder to make otherwise. For me, “Mediterranean” is just such a strategic regionalism and therefore (I think, kind of to Peregrine's dismay) I don't really worry about trying to define it, and I certainly don't mean it in any kind of exclusionary fashion. In fact, if pinned down and forced to talk about where the Mediterranean is, I would just borrow another phrase from Horden and Purcell, which is intensification and abatement. I see the Mediterranean as a kind of zone of historical interaction, as a culture that I would define by family resemblance (to borrow from Wittgenstein) rather than by any essential traits that you needed to check off a list. So, people ask things like, “What about the Black Sea? Is the

Black Sea Mediterranean?” and my answer would be, well, sometimes yes and sometimes no. It depends on the intensification or abatement of certain political movements, certain ideologically motivated cultural shifts, etc., rather than worry about boundary or field definitions. My own experience in having gone to graduate school at the moment of the big culture wars in literature has led me to consider the canon not as a list of books that one prescriptively should have read but as a way of reading. So in my own work on literature, I combine works that very well might appear on a canon of “X”—French Lit, Italian Lit, whatever—but I typically read them against the grain of whatever has been done in the disciplinary formation that calls itself French Lit or Italian Lit. So it’s a way of reading, and to the extent that the Mediterranean is for me a heuristic category, I think that if it ever, God forbid, becomes a set discipline, I probably won’t want to do it anymore.

So my dilemma as a literary historian has been that, while Mediterranean has had a lot of uptake, let’s say, among historians, it’s been quite noticeably less used among literary historians. My first intuition would be: I think that to do Mediterranean studies does involve an engagement with history, and that’s somewhere where most of my colleagues, quite frankly, aren’t prepared to go. Beyond that, because of the lesser uptake among literary historians, I’ve been trying to, along with working out examples of what Mediterranean studies has meant to me, I’ve been trying to conceptualize different ways in which one could do literature under the rubric “Mediterranean.” Let me just give you a few examples of the kinds of things that I’ve tried to do. And let me say that as far as the “fig leaf” is concerned, for me it might be the traditional disciplines, because for me the traditional disciplines hide a lot. They promise a lot but then they don’t let you get to the real core of things. So I think of “Mediterranean” as stripping away the fig leaf rather than imposing one.

All right: so in my strategic Mediterranean, I’ve described it as a way of interrupting or unsettling self-evident [gestures, crooking two fingers of each hand] categories of analysis. (Being a literary person, I not only use a lot of hyphens and backslashes, I use a lot of scare quotes.) So, interrupting “self-evident” categories of analysis: one of the most important narratives that the Mediterranean interrupts is the teleological narrative of Western civilization. Now, medieval French Lit is a good place to start for that because, in the prologue of the twelfth-century Arthurian romance *Cligès*, the narrator states that, well, “hegemony in both political and intellectual power began in Greece, moved to Rome, and now it’s come to France.” This,

then, is one *locus classicus* of the topoi of *translatio studii et imperii*, and people who would never dream of reading that particular Arthurian romance quote that prologue all the time. So here you have what is basically a statement of Western Civ as a historical movement over time: westward migration, from Greece to Rome to France. What I've done with that romance is just to notice the Mediterranean place names that are seeded throughout the text—never in enough of a critical mass that would make you think, oh, maybe I should stop, and not helped at all by the kinds of annotations that editors and translators tend to give to the mention of stray place names like Tudela, or Antioch, or Almería, or Candia. But if you go and Google twelfth-century definitions of those places, it turns out that they are major centers of, well, fill in the blank. To talk about translation: Tudela and Antioch are major centers of translation and, in fact, Western European scholars were going to these places in order to get Greek learning through Arabic translations, or directly from Greek translation. So what does that do? Knowing what was happening at those places whose names appear randomly scattered through that text undoes the narrative proposed in the prologue, which is so easy for modern critics and historians to glom onto and say, “Oh, you see there, there’s Western civilization anticipated.” So, so much for undoing self-evident categories of analysis.

Thematically, I've focused on *Floire et Blancheflor*, a romance featuring identical twins, I mean, identical lovers—one Christian, one Saracen; one a prince, one a slave. I've read that as an example of Richard Bullett's formulation “Islamo-Christian civilization,” scrambling up the genealogies, so that what looks to be oppositional and quintessentially “other” is in fact brought together, and we're made to think about sameness or common genealogies, rather than contrary ones. Thematics of the sea and connectivity also run through Hellenistic romance, like Chariton's *Callirhoe*, which I've just become interested in. Mediterranean events: the one I'm interested in for the moment is the Sicilian Vespers, which is underappreciated by people who are not specialists in immediately surrounding areas. But it has, I'm convinced, a great resonance in literatures of the following period.

Finally, there are questions of transmission and translation, as with *Vis and Rāmin*, which Peregrine alluded to. I also often use art objects as metaphors for the kinds of questions Mediterranean studies poses. Among my favorite art objects are the Fatimid Egyptian rock crystal ewers that get put in European handles—a few of which survive in treasuries in Europe.

Well, here is an “Islamic object” that’s often not recognized as such, one of those objects that wreaks havoc with museum classifications. Is it European? Is it Egyptian? And they’re often misrecognized. You know, there was a famous incident a couple years ago where an auction house was about to sell one for 200 pounds because they had no idea it was an eleventh-century Fatimid ewer. And that example of the European frame around a non-European object makes me think of the frame tale, which Karla Mallette has called a technology of transmission. So if you think of the ways that literary critics have looked at the traveling of motifs—*translatio*—all the way from India through Persia and Baghdad into the Arab Mediterranean and then to the European Mediterranean, I’d like to think of the frame as doing some work like the metal frames put on these Fatimid rock crystal vases...as a kind of *spolium*. But we’re still working on the vocabulary because, again, the traditional vocabularies are so ill-equipped to capture the kinds of relationships and cultural phenomena that were going on, at least in my period.

CF: Great, thank you Sharon, and very quickly, Cecily?

CH: Yes. I come to this question as an Art Historian, a Byzantine Art Historian. So much of my take on the Mediterranean is akin to Sharon’s: in particular, this idea of the Mediterranean as a frame. For me, the visual aspect is important and hence the title of my paper, “The Thalassal Optic,” encourages us to think about the Mediterranean as a lens through which things look different. Exactly how they look different is the question Peregrine is prompting us to think about more specifically—how exactly things look different by comparing them to something else, and that is a larger question I think we’ll all be talking about.

My charge was to think about how the Mediterranean works for my discipline. I was faced with entrenched disciplinary positions of periodization in art history, and a very strong teleological narrative. And as a Byzantinist, I was forced to reckon with how [Byzantine art] fits within the larger narrative of medieval art history: whether Byzantium is considered the end of Antiquity, or the beginning of the Middle Ages. I drew on recent institutional critiques from the 1990s that looked at textbooks, LC call numbers in libraries, and the census of dissertations in medieval art—all kinds of institutional apparatuses for the field of art history. In an excellent article Rob Nelson shows that art history has been unwilling to accept Byzantium as coeval with Western Europe. In many survey textbooks, for example, Byzantium is considered in the chapters on Antiquity, and then

the narrative loops back and starts with Medieval Art in the West. In other words, there's this real failure to appreciate that Gothic cathedrals were built at the same time as the Kariye Camii or various other monuments in Constantinople or in Greece. And this fundamental temporal disconnect—a spatial-temporal disconnect—is something that I've had to wrestle with, and it has prompted me to think about how the Mediterranean might offer different questions, a partial solution, or some way of approaching a more integrated relationship between Byzantium and the other cultures of the Mediterranean.

So my paper asked questions about this new thalassology, this new return to the Mediterranean very much inspired by *The Corrupting Sea* that resonate most for me as a medieval Art Historian. The first and most important one is that if we think about Medieval Art through this thalassal optic, certain visual forms that don't fit with any traditional periodizations make sense. The kinds of things I have in mind are actually quite obvious when you think about places like Norman Sicily. Trilingual court cultures [there] all of a sudden completely make sense even though they don't fit within Romanesque, Byzantine, and Islamic [traditions]—in fact because they draw on all those traditions for very particular and specific ideological ends. In other places such as Spain, dialogues between the Mozarabic and the Mudéjar have become much larger and more fertile battlegrounds in many ways, or the Levant the Crusades upping the level of connectivity in a profound way. So, for example, how do you deal with “Crusader art history,” which is actually quite a young discipline, as a field within art history beginning in the nineteenth century as a Eurocentric agenda of identifying European hands at work in the Levant? It's now a vibrant field, and no Art Historian today would ever tell a story like that, but instead would be invested in the local Christian communities and the diverse Islamic communities, understanding Islam not as a monolith but in fact looking at very particular places like Ayyubid Syria and asking what kinds of activities were going on in the *suyq*, what types of production patterns can we discern, and what types of mercantile evidence accounts for the production of some of the art in this area. One could also think of many kinds of waves of post-Crusade change in places like Venetian Crete; and I think that, to date, some of the work of Maria Georgopoulou represents important, methodologically groundbreaking work on the arts of Crete and the relationship between Venice and Crete. Also one could think of Cyprus: in places like Famagusta, where you have Gothic cathedrals that look like they

could be in the Île de France. So, again, these areas that don't make sense according to the categories and periods that the discipline of art history has inherited and perpetuates in its textbooks and courses all of a sudden make sense when viewed through the thalassal optic, and become central arenas for discussing more compelling questions.

So for me, that was the main contribution of thinking or rethinking the Mediterranean as a lens for Art Historical inquiry. This, of course—to be explicit—is basically a means of obviating nationalistic agendas: what does “France” mean, what does “Italy” mean in the Middle Ages? For me, that was a really important methodological turning point in thinking through these issues. Of course, in Peregrine's paper he asked questions of the literary and Art Historical people in particular. And the question that resonates with me is: how do you make it positive? We've explained what the Mediterranean helps us avoid, but this is a negative answer. And you're now prompting us to say, “Okay, now, what's the generative and positive thing?” I don't have the answer for that. But it is an important call for us to think about the Mediterranean not in terms of what it helps us avoid, but what it helps us actually do. So that's something to think about.

The “fig leaf,” in closing: I would say that for me the fig leaf is a lack of specificity. I think that with every positive there is a negative, and that negative is that if one is not being rigorous in one's historical interpretation there results the tendency to call things “Mediterranean” as a way of avoiding the specific historically grounded readings. So, if you don't really know what something is, you kind of say, “Oh, it's Mediterranean.” So that's the fig leaf, I think, for art history, at least. And that's the issue I'm trying very much to avoid.

CF: Ok, thank you very much and now I think, Brian will wrap up the discussion for us.

BC: Thank you; I'll try to be brief. Okay, my paper was called, “Why the Mediterranean?” but it probably should have been called “Why *not* the Mediterranean?” For a lot of people, apparently, the Mediterranean perspective is for some reason very provocative. People get excited about it either in a good way, because it seems like such a fantastic idea, or in a bad way, because it seems to be so threatening. The way I see the Mediterranean and Mediterranean studies, I think, avoids some of those pitfalls because I feel one doesn't need to see it as an “ideology.” It's a perspective. It reflects a mode of thinking, rather than a category, as it

were; and, as some of our previous speakers have pointed out, it presents an alternative to our established understandings of historical, economic, and cultural processes in the pre-modern world. It serves as an alternative to the established national models, religious models, and civilizational models, some of which are anachronistic, and some of which are not always appropriate in all circumstances. We can see this in Sharon's work, for example, when she points out that certain literary works make a lot more sense in a lot of ways when you interpret them from a Mediterranean perspective. And you can see better how ideas moved around this region from, as we like to say, culture to culture. This sort of dynamic makes sense in the medium of the Mediterranean, or as Cecily described it, as an "optic," and another possible perspective for understanding not only the reception, but also the production of works of art.

I came to the Mediterranean as a social and economic historian, and the way I came to it was that I noticed that there were similar patterns—strikingly similar patterns—in minority-majority relations as these were manifested across the Mediterranean, irrespective of these civilizational boundaries which some of us tend to assume determine the way these relations shape up. And it got me thinking,

Well, if everybody's acting the same, in spite of these grand cultural differences that they supposedly have, and in spite of great institutional differences, then there must be some reason. And maybe that reason is the Mediterranean environment.

So I was very happy when I came across *The Corrupting Sea*.

"What does the Mediterranean mean?" "Where does it stop?" These are the sort of questions people ask when you float the Mediterranean as an idea. And often, they try to sink it, based on the fact that there are no obvious answers to these questions. But of course, such boundaries and meanings are dependent on the question that one is asking. I mean, the Mediterranean is not a *thing*.

So, what are its characteristics? People tend to describe it vaguely—to the justifiable frustration of people like Peregrine—as embodying "connectivity," "variety," "hybridity," and so on. But, I prefer to think of it as a distinct response to a common set of circumstances. Rather than "hybridity," which I'm not sure about as a term, I prefer "distinct manifestations of common mores and beliefs." We see this in Celine's presentation, when she talked about the Genoese of Pera (in Istanbul)—how Pera

maintained its Genoese identity while insinuating itself in Ottoman life.² And this sort of approach, I think, gets more towards the heart of the Mediterranean. For me, the three basic characteristics of the Mediterranean are: common culture (which goes back to the Abrahamic religions, the common folkloric culture that arises out of the environment, and Hellenic-Persian intellectual-philosophical culture), “mutual intelligibility” (the ability of people to understand themselves across what we call cultural boundaries), and broad-spectrum, polyvalent transculturation.

Is this unique to the Mediterranean? Well, yes and no. I mean, in some ways it may be. Peregrine brings up Hungary in his paper, and he describes the environment—the ethno-religious environment of Hungary in the Middle Ages—which was very mixed. And he seems to say, “A-ha! This is not the Mediterranean, it’s Hungary! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!” [audience laughter]. But what does such an observation tell us about the Mediterranean? Well, as for the Mediterranean, the claim is not being made that everything in the Mediterranean is unique to the Mediterranean. But Hungary is very different from the Mediterranean. I would say that Hungary gives the appearance of being Mediterranean in the way that ethno-religious interactions worked on a certain level (on a social and political level) in that these resemble dynamics of the Mediterranean. But much of what’s most important in the Mediterranean is absolutely absent in Hungary. For example, if we look at the impact of the Muslim minority on the Christian majority there, we see there was no acculturation, no literary culture, no artistic production, no architectural production that left a lasting mark. And this was because it was not connected to, it was not part of, that Mediterranean world. So...

AU: Those are fighting words.

BC: I meant Mediterranean-type literary production, I don’t mean, obviously, literary production in general. Anyway...

CF: They didn’t like the Turks being there, right?

BC: Well, that was later. Peregrine is describing Árpád Hungary, right? Through the thirteenth century. Anyway. So, you know: think about what “makes” a region. Is it homogeneity? No. Is it uniformity? No. Is it uniqueness? No. We don’t assume that Europe is like that, or Christianity is like that, or the Islamic world is like that. So, why should we load these sorts of expectations on the Mediterranean? The problem is that the Mediterranean, unlike these other categories, does not tend to get explicitly enunciated in the sources, because it’s not tied to a specific institutional tradition, right? So it’s not “canonized” as it were, or

incorporated into the canon like these other perspectives are. And it doesn't live on in the same way that they do because it's not appropriated in the same way by later configurations, such as national identities and institutions. And on top of that, the Mediterranean is full of people doing naughty things they shouldn't do, according to criteria and espoused values of those other categories. And so, as Peregrine suggests, it needs to be covered up with a fig leaf.

So, back to the fig leaf. What do we cover up? You know, we cover up the *pudenda*, right? What we're "ashamed of." Which, for many of us, is the most interesting part of the anatomy. So, "the Mediterranean" is not meant necessarily as a replacement for the categories that we're uncomfortable with; rather, it is just another way of looking at things. It's not an invitation to replace one defective term or set of defective terms with another set of defective terms, but to think about things differently. Let me just draw two short analogies.

As you know, in science, in order to categorize plants and animals, we use a system of binomial nomenclature, right? You know, the whole kingdom-, phylum-, genus- thing, which was developed over that last few centuries. And it was based on the outward appearance of things. We constructed this whole taxonomy of biology based on the outward appearance of things. But now that we are doing analyses of the DNA of living organisms, we're finding that taxonomy just doesn't work, and that many organisms that *appear* to be related because they look the same are, in fact, absolutely unrelated. And many organisms that look profoundly different are actually extremely closely related.

But finally, to close, the thing about Mediterranean studies which for me is both challenging and engaging is that the Mediterranean presents tensions between the general and the specific, the non-institutionalized and the institutionalized, between identity and membership, that makes it a place of profound cultural, social, and political tension, but also of fertility. And I think that the one way you can get your head around this is to think of Mediterranean food, which is a category we're all prepared to accept, right?

[theatrical aside]

Yeah, we went to a Mediterranean place last night.

What was there?

Ah, there was, like, vine leaves, grapes, olives, right? That kind of stuff.

So there's a sense that there's a "Mediterranean food" culture that everyone around the Mediterranean participates in, more or less. But, Mediterranean food is also highly problematized and divided by identity, right? Because depending on who you are, and whom you identify with, you can't eat certain types of foods. Or you can only eat them on certain days. Eating them in front of someone else might mean something. Eating certain things might set you apart from certain people, or put you with them. So I think that "the Mediterranean" is like a lot of things, in that if we try too hard to nail it down, it's not going to work. And it works best when we think of it as just another way of approaching certain problems for which our established models do not serve us well.

CF: Great, thank you. And I'm going to depart from the text just a little bit by serving as discussant. Because if I just throw out questions, there are way too many questions. And this way I can just summarize a few things that struck me, and then allow all of you to chime in, too.

First of all, I was struck by the question of recursiveness and disciplinarity, and I wonder about the relationship between going back to the past to keep a discipline going and the pros and cons of everything in between, as regards a project that is specifically post-disciplinary in terms of our institutionalized structures. Because in the university system we are still hiring in different departments and we're still duplicating that disciplinary structure. And the recursiveness that I see going on in these papers, of going back to Braudel and even before, or as Peregrine was telling us, in response to my paper, to the nineteenth-century imperial notion of how the Mediterranean was useful, strikes me as one of the pre-post-disciplinary continuities worth paying critical attention to, so that we don't re-invent a wheel we don't need or want.

Secondly, there seems to be a new structuralism emerging—not just here, but I hear it in other conferences, too—that, now, in this post-Post-Deconstructive moment, we seem to be returning to ways of thinking systemically about large categories of things. So when we are looking at a huge region like the Mediterranean and trying to identify it as having a shared ethos, we are finding that systems analysis is serving a new and different purpose. And it has to be an open-ended systems analysis. So I would like that to be on the table, too.

Third, I think that the discussion in Mediterranean studies insofar as hybridity is concerned is way behind what it is going on elsewhere. And I come from this with my (also imperfect) knowledge of Latin American studies, in which hybridity is now being used as a tool to think outside of

racial models altogether. And what's really important for this, for the Mediterranean studies initiative, I think, is the enormous wealth of material that we have at our disposal for articulating what those processes are that you talk about as hybridity. So rather than saying, "hybridity is good," or "hybridity is bad," I think Latin American studies might do that as well. We might think about things like the invisible presence of different cultural elements, such as in the way indigenous construction practices contributed to a colonial church built in an Italian Renaissance style. (Of course, the word culture is problematic, and we should just get rid of that whole word.) The invisible presence of different peoples working together on cultural productions is sometimes a focus in Latin American studies right now. Not all forms of hybridity are visible. In the colonization of Latin America, there was sudden contact between previously unrelated cultures and meetings that led to a graduated series of relationships over a longer period of time, whereas in the Mediterranean you have a graduated series of long-term relationships and that defines everything: there was often no precise initial point of contact. In assessing a sudden meeting, there's a real tendency to look at what's visible and what's not visible being a result of the people being colonized. A lot of the new interest in the post-hybridity discussion is how the presence of culture or people may not be directly visible in objects, but still may be shaping things in terms of cultural production. And I think that's something that this revised model of hybridity will be very fruitful for, thinking about Mediterranean studies too.

And third, I hear several papers almost articulating the issue that we are too East-West oriented in our analyses, that Northern-Southern-ness has not come into play, and most of us are trained looking from the North to the South. So it's easier for us to look at developments in terms of East and West but we do so from a northern perspective. But I would like to see more intervention and interruption of this tendency by inviting more scholars from other places that have different traditions of training from ours to join our collaborative projects.

So my next point is a little bit of a repeat of how we should think of hybridity and what that deals with. Sharon mentioned family resemblance. That's something that is worth articulating. What are we specifically referring to in those processes when we talk about interrelatedness? I think accounting for "family resemblances" is a particularly rich subject for investigation in the Mediterranean because of this long-term interaction. And some of the most interesting work that's going on in Latin American studies now is not about interaction, of two cultures meeting, but repeated

reverberations that create very complex forms of interaction. Some of that scholarship is very exciting, and I think that because here we see a similar scenario of complex and repeated interactions over time, it can be for Mediterranean studies, too. And I completely agree with Sharon when she says that using the canon as a way of generating new readings allows everything to remain in flux, rather than just focusing on new objects that produce new commodified academic knowledge. That would be effectively to use the same old methodological stuff while merely changing the objects of study. And I have a problem with that myself, too.

I won't repeat all of the good things that have been identified by our panel here because they stand on their own. But I think the attention to the vocabulary we use, as well as to the teleological constructs that underlie a lot of things that we find ourselves working against, is actually a very positive thing. So I would take issue with Peregrine's charge that we focus on the negative, because the task of renaming is itself a positive form of knowledge production.

And finally, let me note, in the interest of comparative studies, that there's a much greater eagerness on the part of those scholars who find themselves on the margins of disciplinary practices to do the theorizing and rethinking of those hegemonic disciplinary structures than there is from people at the center. Working in what is probably one of the most reactionary and traditional strongholds of the center, I feel that reluctance all the time. I don't think my longstanding work in rethinking the Renaissance gets accepted at the center of my own discipline for that reason, so I'm especially happy to find a home here in Mediterranean studies. Very exciting things are going on.

SK: Lead and other people will follow.

CF: Now let me open it up to other people speaking because you've all been patient—it's harder to listen than it is to talk. So you've all been attentive listeners. Questions? Comments? Furthering anything that anyone has said? Time for lunch? [laughter]

AU: I have a question about hybridity. Three of you mentioned it; two of you with a kind of allergy to it. And you mentioned the studies in Latin America. It's interesting that the topic of a conference in Istanbul I'm planning to attend is hybridity. And, I was so fascinated by... the Turks are really taking up hybridity. So how is it? How would they see hybridity? In other words, that they would use it as a term now, to organize an international conference. Obviously, they like the term.

CF: Well, I think they're just working through the same issues, so you know—maybe, the thing that Peregrine was talking about now, of how we see Mediterranean studies everywhere, but it doesn't mean that everybody has worked through all the issues. So this may be a good magnet, for getting people to say, "Oh, this is going to be an innovative conference." But ultimately, I think one of the basic problems with the term "hybridity" is that it still assumes that there was a purity that led to it. So whether you use it in a racial sense (as it was originally coined), or in some other sense, the point of *not* using it is to go beyond that kind of structure: of purity, and *then* there was hybridity, and instead, to think through the language and the categories, to think differently about identity formation in the cultural sphere, or in the ecological sphere. Cecily, in her paper, had a really nice longer discussion that she didn't get to in her presentation today about how micro-regional studies that are very specific can build into bigger regional studies, and that this is one way to proceed to towards a method. I took a different tack, and asked about tackling really big issues that you can't just get to from the ground up. Could we allow larger epistemological issues of interrelatedness that do not depend on direct physical contact to enter into our discourse of hybridity? And now I'm going to shut up and let other people talk, too. [laughter]

BC: I think we can't forget also that any academic institutional developments always have political dimensions, both because of the perspectives of the people involved, and the agendas of the people involved, and where the money comes from—which often determines how you frame a project, or how you label it, although it may not even be what you do in the end as a scholar. But, you know, we need to get the money, even if only in order to get together here and talk for a couple hours. So, something like, perhaps, a Turkish scholarly approach to the Mediterranean and hybridity should be seen in the context of Turkey's exasperations as far as the European Union goes, and Turkey's wanting to participate in it. Or, someone who was less generous might see it as a resurfacing of Turkish irredentism, right? Back when Suleiman the Magnificent was presenting himself as a universal messiah to both the Muslims and Christians of the Mediterranean, that can be seen as a form of hybridity, too—but one that had an imperialistic agenda. Some people have criticized the Mediterranean studies movements of countries like France. Is it neocolonialism? Is it an extension of the same spirit that saw France embroiled in Algeria? To a certain extent, perhaps, it may be; and, you know, I think we have to be sensitive to that. But I don't think we need to necessarily overburden

ourselves with concern for the agendas of the people that are providing us with the money to do these things, as long as we don't allow ourselves to be purchased.

SK: I'm trying to move away from the use of hybridity in my own work except as a kind of way to galvanize other terms that are already in circulation, that are useful. I guess number one would be "transculturation" rather than "acculturation." But I think that for the Mediterranean objects and phenomena that I've been studying, both literary and art historical, some of the characteristics they share are that they are often composite and they are often some sort of compilation. And these are precisely ways of producing objects—textual objects, visual objects—that I think is widespread in the Mediterranean in many periods. But this is one of the things that have not been visible to scholars because of our existing intellectual categories. So for me, the frame of the Mediterranean serves to liberate us to think about those objects not just as being "failed" efforts at unity by peoples that don't have the knack, you know, for unity. And for me, the gorillas in the room were always Classicism and Humanism, which give our canons standards of regularity, consistency—all of this stuff that lingers in a lot of disciplines and prohibits us from seeing things that are there. For literature, the thing is that literary canons, as everyone knows, were constructed in the nineteenth century in the age of nationalism, so the things that got canonized were precisely those texts that were unique to that linguistic tradition: the *Song of Roland*, the *Cid*, whatever. But if you look at the manuscript circulation, the things that were most popular in the Middle Ages are the things that no one reads today, and these *were* Mediterranean. Those wisdom tale collections and the like, that circulate like mad... translations of stuff. But that doesn't "count" in the canonical view. You know, that's not "good" in the service of a national literature; therefore, it has been swept under the rug because it wasn't ideologically convenient for the authorities that determined what the study of literature ought to look like.

CH: I would just add that from the Art Historical perspective the words that we keep coming back to when trying and avoid hybridity are "syncretic" (syncretic arts are fruitfully studied, for example, in the context of Late Antique religion and art history by Jaś Elsner³), and then, for objects themselves: "accretive." So, these great rock crystal objects, like the "Eleanor Vase," to me seem very accretive...

CF: Let me jump in here, too, because "syncretic" and "assimilation" and "confluence" are a few of the terms that are coming out of

anthropology, where they have been roundly critiqued because they assume that “things” create a unity. And I think Sharon’s point is really good: we need—and also your point yesterday using collage (there’s a Chicano word, *rasquache*, which means “to make do with whatever is available”)—to create something that’s not a unified “something.” I think our theoretical work deserves to go in this direction, in order to create new vocabulary and a more sophisticated understanding and analysis of different kinds of objects that our studies can encompass when we get rid of purity as a category. It’s so hard to get away from “purity” and “unity.”

AU: I would just say that I don’t dispute Sharon’s term “strategic essentialism,” and I think it gets at that very problem we are trying to address when we “talk Mediterranean,” and at some level I probably have, like most of you, come to see in a negative light scholars’ blind faith in the meta-categories and disciplinary boundaries that have been established. And on some level, we—those of us in the room—would probably like to see ourselves as outsiders, looking into these nationalist or essentialist categories that provide scholars with easily definable boundaries. On some level, what *The Corrupting Sea* did was propose an alternative view that provided, for example, Cecily an optic for crossing these boundaries and crossing these essential categories. So as far as that’s true, your call, Peregrine, for some sort of firm definition for what Mediterranean is may be going to be a bad thing for people interested in this as a heuristic tool. It kind of needs to remain in flux. But, of course, I also understand your point. We need to prevent it from becoming this sort of free-floating signifier, or—worse than that still—just this sort of cliché for multiculturalism (which it still has become, in some instances). We do need to have some limits. What I heard you doing is returning to the idea of geographic boundedness... there’s this geographic quality about the Mediterranean that dictates social relations, and cultural production, and so forth, over time. Not that it says people will do thing “X” in this period, or something, but that the limitations and also the opportunities that “the Mediterranean” provides tend to create patterns, identifiable patterns of multiculturalism.

PH: Yes, thank you for that. I’d like to respond very quickly. I wouldn’t want to come across as determinist in my retaining as part of the mixture a sense of place, but I also take Brian’s point that the Mediterranean should be allowed the same creative license that “Europe” has long had. And the biggest fig leaf in the European historiographical tradition is that “Europe” means “northwestern Europe”. It does not mean eastern Europe and Russia. These are something different and other. It really means England,

France, Italy, and much less so Spain, doesn't it? So I entirely take that point. Why shouldn't the Mediterranean be free to play around in this way: it doesn't have to be absolute, it doesn't have to include everywhere, and so on. And I also—and perhaps I'm now arguing against myself, but I don't mind—pick up Sharon's point that this is a phase one works through. And I say in this paper that perhaps it's time for my era of ecological historians to be put out to grass. When I started working on the ecology of the Mediterranean, old anthropology was putting together a type of cultural area based on the evidence that the Maghreb had one whatever it was (form of marriage payment, say), and there was one in Syria, and there was one in southern Italy. And that was a "grand Mediterranean fact." And we have worked through all that, and we've come back to a different sort of "Mediterranean fact" with cuisine and so on. And, perhaps, it is important that the Mediterranean should be always "against," that is to say, a way of working against categories. And once it becomes too comfortable, once we no longer have to debate it in this way, then we should stop and move on to something else; I'm with Sharon there as well.

AU: I'm walking in now, so I'm just responding, as the director of the museum, to the little that I've heard presented to our directors and chairs regarding Mediterranean studies, and not directly to your papers. But there's a Korean artist on exhibit in our Korean exhibition and she's done another work that is titled "The Anti-Mediterranean." It's J.B., the cherry blossoms piece, and she does performative video work, and she constructs this room out of blue and white objects from everyday life. And the fantasy of the new middle and upper middle class of Korea to vacation and it works with all these things. It takes the blue stripes off of her blue and white striped shirt, anyhow. I bring this up because what I have heard in the presentation to the directors and chairs (not your own papers, forgive me), it's still very leaning towards one side of the Mediterranean. Even though there's this embrace of the Ottoman Empire, the question is "Where do these cultures travel? Where do they extend?" Not only in the past, but also in the present. So for example, Islamic architects that laid out cities in China. You know, I'm just raising this in a, meant to be in a constructive way, but I still see it as some kind of European studies that is trying to bring in the Ottoman Empire and Islam and some sort of multilayered influences predominantly on Europe. And so that's just the...

CF: Let me respond only to part of that rather than bite right into the thing about Eurocentrism because of what I've heard Noel [Lenski] say now and Peregrine say before, to combine with what you're saying.⁴

I think it would be very fruitful to work on the idea of gradations. So rather than get rid of the Mediterranean, to work more on theorizing the gradations of relatedness as we move in and out of the global contact. If we work on what happens when people are completely not in contact, and when people are more in contact, then we don't have to divide things into binomial categories—which is maybe part of what you're objecting to, too. Of something being imagined as either an intensive contact zone or else not. Yes, let's look at how those processes work and how they differ according to circumstance. The Mediterranean as a conceptual category is really, first, a rich area for thinking about the geographical region as such, and then a rich area for going beyond the physical region itself. Especially, as you know, at certain times, like the Early Modern era, when the Ottoman Empire advanced into central Europe.

SK: I want to add something about the positive work that “Mediterranean” can do in this regard. For example, my department is considering advertising its next pre- and early modern position in Mediterranean literature. So what would that do? You have to work comparatively in my department, and normally if you had, say, a medieval position, it would be Latin and Italian, or Spanish and French, or something like that. But having a “Mediterranean” position allows you to have a combination like Spanish and Arabic or Hebrew, and it allows precisely the kind of broadening of the scope which I don't at all conceive of as “Europe plus.” That is exactly what I'm trying to get away from. And, okay, in an article of mine I quoted a postcolonial critic who said, “Where the foot of the compass rests is inexorably the center.” He was referring to those who do postcolonial work in which they critique English colonialism, but England remains the center, and then there's “this”—the other stuff in other places. This guy meant it as a critique. My view is that you can't escape that subjectivity. I mean, we all have our disciplinary training, and you're going to start from there. But the question is, how wide do you circle the compass, and how seriously do you take that? As far as reading outside your zone of expertise yourself, and in entering into dialogue with people who are experts in those other fields, and encouraging your students—you know, in forming the next generation of scholars—to take seriously the idea that they can move the foot of their compass elsewhere so that Britain or France will be the outer edge, by moving the foot to some other place that has been less exhaustively studied. So I see it as a process, and I see it as, “We can do certain things at this moment, and the best thing we can do at this moment is that which will enable something different to be done at the next moment.”

BC: I would actually answer that even less defensively, because, I think, in a sense, it's already happening, I mean, if we look at the way that Islamic studies and Jewish studies and the study of the eastern Mediterranean is changing as a consequence of the Mediterranean perspective. Much of the exciting work that's being done in Jewish studies now is being done on the Karaites, a group that was completely off the map previously, and which has come out very much as either a consequence of, or in harmony with, as it were, with Mediterranean perspective. And now, Islamic historians are also tempering the monolithic vision of the Islamic world, particularly in the Western Mediterranean, which was seen as uniformly Sunni, uniformly Maliki, and they are now seeing that there are fruitful connections to be made by comparing it as much to the Iberian peninsula as to Ifriqiya, and to Islamic heartlands farther to the East. It has opened up new spaces for work on ethno-religious entities such as Armenia, which has been all but completely ignored historiographically as practiced traditionally. So, I would suggest that to the extent you might be tempted to perceive Mediterranean studies as the latest iteration of Eurocentrism, this might be a consequence of the exposure you've had to Mediterranean studies thus far, and how it's been presented to you, rather than what actual possibilities the field holds, and what is actually being done now.

AU: I think that's great and I agree with all that. My point is, for example, the Korean language is actually Turkic [eds: actually, Altaic]. And the Chinese culture is this big swath through the middle. So exactly where are you drawing your edges? It's great, I would agree that you're already adding so much, so if this conversation is anything, it's to push it further.

CF: Peregrine would like to respond.

PH: Could I just ask one question of Brian? This exciting scholarship, which I don't deny, what language is it being written in? Or languages?

BC: Predominantly English [eds: as well as French, Catalan, Castilian, Italian, and Hebrew].

PH: I rest my case. [laughter]

BC: Well yes and no. I mean...

PH: In other words, where is the scholarship on this being written by Arabic writing or Persian or ...

CF: Translation's everywhere.

BC: Well, you know, first of all I can't really comment on it absolutely negatively because I'm really not up on what's happening as far as the discipline of history as practiced in the Arabic and Persian worlds, but...

PH: Nor am I. But isn't this an absence in our...

[multiple voices]

CF: Brian's got the floor for a second.

BC: I think we're being unfair here, because I think that... I mean, why should we presume that in other cultural milieus the same type of academic or scholarly endeavors would necessarily be considered valid? To a certain extent, the whole university system reflects our particular cultural priorities. And to say that they're not valid unless other people that are coming from different traditions have developed similar priorities... I would flip that around and I would say: you guys are being Eurocentric [laughter] by expecting them to do that.

CH: Can I add an Art Historical angle on this? Institutionally it's true, I don't know the numbers, but in the last 10 years most medieval art history jobs have gone to someone rooted in the eastern Mediterranean. Not all of them, but the days in which medieval art history meant only Gothic cathedrals are very, very much over. And thinking about the East Asian context as an analog, for the last 4 years I've been on East Asian search committees at different universities where the job descriptions were written for someone who could do something like Dunhuang caves, but scholarly interest always privileged someone who could do something like the Silk Road or a comparative project such as Buddhism across cultures. So that isn't necessarily about the Mediterranean but about the interest in comparative research. That's definitely on the forefront of what's happening art historically.

CF: In the medieval period, yes, but not always in the Renaissance... So there's a lot further to go, but right now, as our time us up, we must adjourn. Thanks to our panelists and the audience. [Applause]

NOTES

1. See White, *The Middle Ground*; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 53–56.
2. In the morning session Céline Dauverd (History, CU Boulder) presented a paper titled, "Cultivating differences: The Genoese Office of the Sea in the Constantinople of Sultan Mehmed II, 1453–1481."
3. See Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 211–225.
4. In the morning session Noel Lenski (Classics, CU Boulder, now at Yale University) presented a paper titled, "Slave Raiding and Slave Trading among Pre-Islamic Arabs."

Reflections: Talking Mediterranean

Mediterranean Babble or Disciplinary Babel? Do We Need a *Lingua Franca* and Mediterranean Studies?

*Brian A. Catlos, Cecily J. Hilsdale, Peregrine Horden
and Sharon Kinoshita*

If nothing else, the conversations that took place at, and subsequent to the colloquium held at the University of Colorado at Boulder in May 2012 are further confirmation that it is indeed possible to “talk Mediterranean,” and even—and this is, perhaps, the real measure of a field’s success—to “argue Mediterranean,” both within and across disciplines, regional specializations, and “civilizational” perspectives. *Convivencia* can evidently be a reality, if not among Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle Ages, then certainly among scholars of different disciplines today. However,

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experience shows that such conversations can be fraught, and indeed, one can detect at times a certain resistance—even a deliberate or reactionary one—to engaging with new perspectives, such as those that arise out of Mediterranean Studies.

Why should this be the case?

In some ways disciplines are analogous to cultures, and the discourses they generate resemble languages. That is to say, they evolve as means of expressing impressions of reality that arise out of particular circumstances and environments and are rooted in perspectives associated with these conditions, perpetuated by established practices, institutions, and traditions of training, and are shaped by the influence of power structures and relationships. They are also subject to one of the paradoxes of language in that as they become more precise and more effective at communicating increasingly subtle and nuanced ideas, and as they develop a repertoire of increasingly specialized expressions and concepts, their capacity as media for out-group communication is reduced to an increasingly narrower constituency of fellow speakers. Languages facilitate communication, but also limit it.

Moreover, as is the case with languages, the adherents and practitioners of disciplines and their discourses tend to become personally invested in them—intellectually, emotionally, and even financially. As a result, and in the manner that nationalists, whether scholarly or popular, imagine their own particular language and culture on terms of “purity,” eternity, and inherent superiority, academics can easily succumb such “native allegiances” and, thereby, to the temptation to conceive of their discipline on these same terms. Notwithstanding the tyranny arising out of the misuse of grammars, languages are not and have never been pure forms; they are constantly evolving and borrowing, structures are contingent and vocabulary is tentative, with multiple meanings that shift over time. Dictionaries are descriptive, rather than proscriptive—it is scholars who insist, contrary to evidence and experience, that both languages and disciplines exist as idealized Forms.

And indeed, both language and scholarly disciplines *must* change, both because it is in their nature as cumulative processes, and because their constituencies broaden and evolve. This is quite clear in the case of history, which in the first centuries of the modern academy was largely limited to studies of great “Dead White Men” and the national cultures they were imagined to represent and epitomize. Hence, fields such as peasant studies, women’s and gender studies, Jewish studies, and cultural studies emerged in the late twentieth century—perspectives, which due to their focus or approach would have been considered absurd or inconsequential previously. Such

developments are not merely internal to the discipline, but represent the evolving community of scholars and students, who themselves are no longer limited to “wealthy white men.” Not surprisingly many of the scholars who push forward these new perspectives were drawn from the constituent populations that they represented but who had been either formally or informally excluded from or marginalized within the academy: “peasants” (that is, the working class), women, and Jews, for example. Each of these new fields has emerged in the face of contention and resistance, but each has come to be accepted and has enriched both our scholarly traditions and our institutions. As we transition to Biddick’s “age of the *mestizo*,” this process continues.¹ One can see it in the way that the best graduate students are trained today: comparatively, inter-disciplinarily, and blending linguistic and cultural specializations that previously would have been slotted into separate compartments of the curio cabinet of pre-Post-Modern Occidental academia.

As an intellectual or historiographical paradigm, category, or construct, “the Mediterranean” has a tremendous potential to open up new and otherwise inaccessible avenues of inquiry and comparison—crossing, as it does, “civilizational,” “national,” and disciplinary divisions. It can serve as antidote to Orientalism, and as a positive, constructive critique to Eurocentrism. Moreover, it lends itself well to avoiding the abuse that other paradigms are subject to. Because of the variegated nature of its subject matter it does not invite itself easily to the development of narrow and exclusionary perspectives, to the construction of a single, dominating master-narrative, or even to teleological notions of Progress or Manifest Destiny. It compels us to be Aristotelian rather than Platonic.² But for our part, as scholars, we must make a deliberate effort not to fall into the old traps of discipline and discourse, in which we mistake the terms we use for the phenomenon we are trying to describe, of substituting a new grammar and vocabulary of Mediterranean studies, which may be no less restrictive than that of the disciplines that our work may be seen to critique. In sum, our aim should not be to create a new language of inquiry to replace our old ones, but rather to allow the emergence of a pidgin, or perhaps a *lingua franca*, that facilitates communication among disciplines by borrowing freely from among them. Such a development would serve, at the least, to temper the presumptions and biases inherent in our preferred methodologies, by admitting the validity of others.

Nor should Mediterranean studies be imagined as intending to supersede frameworks such as “European studies,” “Islamic studies,” “Byzantine

studies,” and “Classics,” or of those rooted in “national” cultures and institutions. These remain valuable and coherent intellectual categories and methodological perspectives that we can use alongside Mediterranean Studies (or, if one prefers, that Mediterranean Studies can be used alongside of). In the end, the starting point is arbitrary. Scholarship is not a zero-sum-game of competing methodologies; certain frameworks are better suited to exploring certain problems, but each—when deployed critically—ultimately enriches our understanding of the complex and interrelated human phenomena that are the subject of our inquiry. Just as learning a new language does not entail losing one’s native tongue, “talking Mediterranean” does not mean abandoning our original training, and just like learning a new language, learning to “talk Mediterranean” enriches our own experience and knowledge of the world around us.

HOW TO THINK MEDITERRANEAN

Sharon Kinoshita

“Can We Talk Mediterranean?” Since it’s what we have been doing here, the answer must be “yes.” The question is, how can we keep that conversation going? This forum has provided a useful, and perhaps necessary, meta-reflection on the state of an emerging field, but however salutary the questions we have raised here, we cannot allow them to pose obstacles to further thinking. If our chapters focused primarily on our home disciplines, the Round Table and Q&A pointed more in the direction how we might talk across disciplines—how to make good on the interdisciplinary promise of Mediterranean Studies, such that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. To do this, I’d like to return to two persistently recurring issues—boundaries and terminology—before adding a few more speculative comments.

Mediterranean Space

Let’s start with Peregrine’s “deliberate provocation” to our attempts to construct a cultural Mediterranean: that “emphasizing migration motifs, the mixing of styles, the transcending of boundaries of various kinds” amounts to “a loss of a sense of space.” My mention of the Middle Persian romance *Vis and Rāmin* prompts him to ask where the literary Mediterranean stops conceptually, and he wonders if attention to “horizontal” (by which I take

him to mean the spatial or synchronic) relations of connectivity don't lead to a neglect or dismissal of the "cultural equivalent of local ecology."

Beyond my previous response on the elasticity and variation-over-time of my literary Mediterranean, I am inspired by those cultural critics who have remapped our conception of globalization through a focus on the "global/local"—a necessarily stereoscopic vision of the ways the two are intertwined in the present historical moment.³ *Mutatis mutandis*, this models a way of putting Horden and Purcell's key structural components of "fragmentation and connectivity" to work. I would argue that, by showing what national historiographies marginalize as exceptional or idiosyncratic to be part of a larger regional pattern, the Mediterranean frame in fact *enhances* our understanding of local dynamics, in some cases allowing us *better* to see what distinguishes one place from another within a regional, Mediterranean system. Of course, there's the question of scale. It's interesting that Peregrine should pose the challenge of the *local* because in recent meta-reflections on Mediterranean Studies and the thalassological turn, commentators seem more keen on situating their oceanic spaces, or the thalassological project more generally, in relationship to *world* history. Perhaps this depends on sub-disciplines. If dealing with climate or ecology, then "the world" makes sense as a unit of analysis. Perhaps it also depends on periodization; for medievalists, the global context of the Mediterranean, while certainly operative in connections to Asia, the Indian Ocean, and so on, for obvious reasons less compelling than for specialists in the early modern—at least when it comes to doing connected, as opposed to comparative, history.

Terminology.

On the question of hybridity, Claire's introduction of the Latin American case is particularly illuminating: there you have a clear-cut moment of "first contact" between peoples of different cultures—each, to be sure, with its own complex histories and internal dynamics, but coming together and finding accommodation with each other within an astonishingly short period. Mediterranean history, in contrast, by and large lacks such primal scenes. Here we are in the space of ongoing (continuous or periodic) contact, cultures and societies that are always-already criss-crossed. One period's hybrid is the next period's classic, forged in the crucible of time and ideology. To turn the tables, we could say that the frequency of the word "hybridity" in recent critical discourse simply signals how much the "intervention" represented by Mediterranean Studies is needed. I myself tend

to use terms like “cross-cultural” or “cross-confessional” (or “composite,” in the case of objects like the Eleanor vase or Roger II’s Cappella Palatina); in one sense, this does not solve the problem, since these words, too, posit the pre-existence of separate “cultures” and “confessions.” Nevertheless, they seem not to throw up as many red flags as does “hybridity”: could this be because of the latter’s pseudo-biological origins? Again, as with the question of boundaries, some flexibility is called for. I would surely welcome it if someone came up with a word that did the appropriate work without the unwanted associations. In the meantime, though, it’s important not to let objections to terminology distract us from the larger project, which for me is to demonstrate the *payoff* of taking the Mediterranean, rather than the nation, the religion, or the globe, as a category of analysis. Until we devise better, this may involve ugly expedients like the dreaded “scare quotes,” or (even worse!) the footnote or parenthetical explanation that this does not mean to suggest that “Christianity,” “Islam,” and so forth, are by any means singular or homogeneous phenomena.

Another factor here is the importance of historical specificity: languages, cultures, styles, practices are never static; the focus on the *medieval* Mediterranean is not meant to imply an undifferentiated block of time—the Middle Ages—any more than it is meant to imply an undifferentiated block of geographical space. This means that any particular phenomenon will signify different things not only in different places but in different historical moments. I can think of no better illustration than the language we are now speaking. English, of course, is produced from a situation of conquest: the imposition of a Francophone ruling elite on an Anglo-Saxon-speaking subject population. In 1100 or even 1200, no one could have foreseen its future as a “national” language; in 1400, no one would have suspected the hegemony of “global” English at the turn of the twenty-first century. What emerges in post-Conquest England as a “hybrid” language with multiple local and regional variations, in our post-modern, post-national moment become a deterritorialized lingua franca.

Throughout these discussions, I think Cecily and I have been very much on the same page. Perhaps this is because, however much our respective fields may be interested in tracking larger movements, styles or themes, the reading/interpretation of *specific* objects—the material artefact, the literary text—remains fundamental. So her “thalassal optic” is a means of focusing attention on “visual forms that don’t fit with any traditional periodizations”—of *remembering*—putting back together an object (like the Cappella Palatina) that has been *dis*membered by the disciplinary cuts

through which our objects of study (“Byzantine” art) have been constituted. And once you remember the Cappella Palatina (say) as a composite object, what is wonderful (in the etymological sense of provoking amazement) is the incommensurability of the categories through which it has until recently been understood: Romanesque, Gothic, Byzantine, Islamic—two stylistic and faux-periodizing labels for Latin Europe, an empire, and a religion. The Mediterranean is indeed “a lens through which things look different.”

Pedagogy.

While all our discussions so far have been focused on Mediterranean Studies as a field of research, I want to end by raising the question of how to teach the Mediterranean. The rapid growth—explosion, really—of interesting, imaginative, and innovative work, much of it done by people in this room and in our extended audience in the past decade, is beginning to amount to a kind of critical mass. It’s a good moment to synthesize some of this scholarship, not to create a fixed field definition (certainly not!) but to identify a few nodal points around which to gather, develop, question, or contest the most salient features of the scholarship to date. This is what Peregrine and I have tried to do in our Blackwell *Companion to Mediterranean History* (2014), but what I have in mind are works that would transfer more easily to the undergraduate classroom, to serve as a basic resource of a Mediterranean pedagogy. So here I’m very much looking forward to the textbook Brian is co-authoring with Tom Burman and Mark Meyerson. In art history, there’s *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean*, Eva R. Hoffman’s wonderful anthology of secondary articles, but again, to my mind, it would be very useful to have a text that would take Mediterranean-based topics, say, or historical moments as frames within which to present objects maybe not typically considered side-by-side (as we sometimes see in the more creative special exhibitions and catalogues). In literature courses, a crucial limiting factor is the availability of texts (in English translation, that is) for classroom use. While at times every other publisher seems interested in a new translation of the *Cid* or the *Roland* (which of course may be read in “Mediterranean” ways), texts not at the core of national literary canons are much harder to come by. When they exist at all, it is often in expensive hardcover editions with an introduction and annotations geared more toward philological than historical and cultural concerns. Given my visceral antipathy to anthologies, what I would like to see are paperbacks bringing together perhaps three or

four thematically-related texts not readily available elsewhere, with Mediterranean-attuned introductions, annotations, maps, bibliographies, and so on. Such a volume or volumes could form the heart of a course either in literature, or—ideally—take its place in a fully interdisciplinary syllabus on the Mediterranean. These are the kinds of things I'd like to invite us to think about together. Now that university education, and the humanities in particular, are so severely embattled, it's crucial to imagine new and pedagogically-centered ways to talk Mediterranean.

Generative Difference

Cecily Hilsdale

In this response, I want to elaborate briefly on two points to emerge from the Round Table discussion that were prompted by questions from Peregrine. The first relates to the generative aspect of Mediterranean Studies. Rather than thinking about the turn to the Mediterranean in negative terms—by asking what intellectual baggage it helps us avoid—what are the more positive or generative aspects of the turn to the Mediterranean as an organizing principle or heuristic term? The second point concerns the art historical fig leaf of Mediterranean Studies, which I see as a lack of specificity and an elision of difference in the service of shared aesthetics.

The Generative Mediterranean

A common thread evoked by all our meditations on the Mediterranean concerns modern historiography and the nationalist agendas in which each of our respective disciplines are entangled. We are all in agreement that Mediterranean Studies offers an alternative to historical teleologies culminating in the West and organized around nationalist agendas. Brian elaborates how the hindsight of modernity privileges historical categories of the nation state, and Sharon demonstrates how such nationalist agendas likewise govern literary and linguistic categories. Her analysis of how literary works have become canonized strikes a particularly strong chord with me: she points out that *El Cid* and the *Song of Roland* come down to us in single manuscripts as opposed to the other more messy Mediterranean tales such as the *Seven Sages* that are known from diverse and robust recensions and multiple translations, thus testifying to a much wider readership. This

distinction clarifies Brian's question about differentiating between "our" Mediterranean and "their" Mediterranean. Whereas *El Cid* and *Roland's* Charlemagne constitute the Mediterranean epic tales of "our" literary canon, in the Middle Ages other tales had much wider currency—they were cited directly and indirectly, translated both literally and metaphorically, and I would add as an art historian, even illuminated.⁴ In distinguishing between the medieval and modern Mediterranean, all our contributions highlight the historiography of our own disciplines, and concur that Mediterranean Studies offers one avenue for breaking with disciplinary constraints rooted in nationalist agendas.

In our art historical contributions, Claire and I both stress that the taxonomic framework of our discipline works in the service of teleological development—this is the historiographical baggage of our field. Traditionally works of art that do not fit within the discipline's taxonomy are excluded from the canon so as not to skew the clear, though profoundly artificial, teleological narrative of art historical development. Works of art and architecture that do not serve as markers of the progressive development of medieval art are seen as exceptional or anomalous—and this is a point that Sharon has made as well with regard to literature. On one level Mediterranean Studies offers a most potent challenge to this problem in that it includes those aspects of visual culture that fail to fit neatly within our discipline's strict taxonomies. Those Mediterranean traditions deemed exceptional and hence peripheral to the canonic narrative of medieval art historical development find themselves at the center of a discourse driven by Mediterranean Studies, which offers intelligibility to what "traditional nationalist historiographies" have excluded.

All our papers and Round Table comments agree that one of the principal merits of Mediterranean Studies is its potential to obviate modern nationalist agendas inherent in each of our disciplines. We all privilege this aspect of the Mediterranean Studies—its ability to challenge entrenched disciplinary paradigms. But Peregrine voiced concerns about how our embrace of the Mediterranean came across mostly as an avoidance mechanism. He asked us to think about how Mediterranean Studies can be generative, what it can add to the dialogue rather than what it obviates. The dismantling of nationalist agendas is important, but what then? Our contributions collectively point to some productive avenues of Medieval Studies. Sharon puts forward a compelling *bricolage* of how to imagine a Mediterranean literature free from taxonomic constraints; Claire's chapter makes a forceful call for collaborative research in the spirit of breaking

down disciplinary divisions; and Brian emphasizes the Mediterranean as key in its embrace of heterogeneity. In addition, I advocate using the Mediterranean as a heuristic tool or thalassal optic that brings into clearer focus those works of art and architecture marginalized by the discipline and, further, to assess how more canonically accepted works look different in light of the Mediterranean. My contribution thus suggests an embrace of visual heterogeneity and also a new way of looking or mode of analysis informed by the methodologies of Mediterranean Studies. This Mediterranean vantage point, I believe, constitutes one of the more generative aspects of Mediterranean studies for art history.

The rubric for the thalassal optic takes its cue from *The Corrupting Sea* as succinctly encapsulated in shorthand in Peregrine's contribution by the formula "Mediterranean history = fragmentation + connectivity." Approaching the diverse visual cultures of the medieval Mediterranean from the thalassal point of view has enabled me to see collectively a series of overlapping circles—linguistic, cultural, confessional, commercial and political. They all converge in the Mediterranean but, as Brian points out, they also stem from the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean is this not merely a theater or arena of contact and convergence but rather it is the source, the dynamic energy, and the result of such sustained connectivity. This is an especially important point with respect to art historical methodologies. In my vision of the thalassal optic, the various visual cultures of the medieval Mediterranean must not be read as representations (and certainly not "reflections") of the kind of corrupting messiness of the Mediterranean—they are not straightforward maps of the "fragmentation + connectivity" equation outlined in *The Corrupting Sea*. Instead, they should be seen both as the products and, even more so, as the very matter of that equation. At stake is the fundamental point that the potency of works of medieval art and architecture—even those that seem most quintessentially "Mediterranean"—lies not in their ability to provide an illustration for *The Corrupting Sea* model. Instead they are the sources and products of Mediterranean cultural intermingling and are governed by particular historically specific agendas; sometimes, they celebrate shared cosmopolitan tastes meant to suggest cultural affinities, and in other instances they become emblems of dominion and sovereignty.

The Mediterranean's Art Historical Fig Leaf: Difference

If the basis for reading medieval visual culture through the thalassal optic is to give analytic weight to questions of fragmentation and connectivity, then one is able to see more clearly the larger networks within which the works of art are entangled. This optic thus embraces not only heterogeneity in terms of its central objects of analysis but it also affords a more heterogeneous disciplinary vision that takes into consideration the relevant cultural, linguistic, institutional, confessional, and commercial connections. As alluded to in the closing of my Round Table comments and in the conclusion of my contribution, I see a potential risk of Mediterranean Studies as a lack of interpretive and critical specificity. I see this as the art historical fig leaf of Mediterranean Studies: the tendency to use “Mediterranean” as a catch-all term to cover a diverse range of material without necessarily offering any kind of depth or specificity in its all-encompassing embrace. My chapter referred to silks of indeterminate origin (those that have been variously identified as Byzantine, Persian, and so on). Is it any more productive to call them “Mediterranean”? Such a designation does little to clarify their character; it is merely an acknowledgement of ambiguity.

More importantly, the Mediterranean can often construct a vision of artificial concord that conceals a reality of difference. Especially in the aftermath of 9/11, art history witnessed an increased interest in cross-cultural (or rather cross-confessional) encounter.⁵ Rich medieval texts such as the *Book of Gifts and Rarities* have been mined to show that a common language of luxury united cultures across political and confessional lines.⁶ The text indeed shows an appreciation for luxury arts common to the Sultan of Cairo, the Emperor of Byzantium and the Queen of the Franks. But this common Mediterranean taste for the good life (“shared aesthetics” or “common languages of luxury” or “courtly cultures”) overshadows the fundamental fact of hierarchy and difference all too often elided by art historians. Often shared Mediterranean aesthetics conceal tensions rather than reveal pacifism. Such a Mediterranean privileges connectivity (commonality) over fragmentation (difference). The spirit of the thalassal optic, however, is to recognize the dynamic relationship between the two.

Arguing the Mediterranean: A Response to the Panel Discussion

Claire Farago

Peregrine Horden has made the point, reverberating in the statements of all the panelists, that however we discuss the Mediterranean, we must always be argumentative, working against the grain of conventional wisdom,

perhaps even and especially about the Mediterranean itself, resurrected as it has been from the oblivion of nineteenth-century imperialistic models. Since our panel discussion, I've undertaken a new theory/pedagogy project for introducing students to the history of art based on the model of the Mediterranean as a trading network. This teaching experience forms the basis of my response to our panel discussion 11 months ago, which launched my classroom experiment. As I wrote the lectures it became clear that a spatialized "global" approach must avoid treating distinct trading networks as if they were discreet, bounded entities like those which conventionally and for the most part anachronistically structure the study of art history, a discipline invented in the nineteenth-century to meet the perceived needs of modern nation states to educate its newly minted citizens in a fantasy of their shared autochthonous origins.

In the context of our panel discussion, it follows that, if it is to endure, Mediterranean Studies also needs to conceptualize its domain as part of larger interrelated networks conceived on a global scale. First and foremost on my mind has been the matter of porosity. When was the Mediterranean ever a self-contained unit? Will attention to distinctive commonalities undermine Mediterranean Studies conceived as a non-essentializing, post/trans/disciplinary field of inquiry? What about "family resemblances" or gradations of interrelatedness both in and beyond the Mediterranean? Entangling history by reimagining lines of transmission that go in multiple directions, reading canonical works against the grain and bringing to the fore important cultural artifacts marginalized in our inherited nineteenth-century categories, led me to considerations of scale: at what scale are we talking Mediterranean? How do we conceive of the interrelationship of macro-and micro-approaches to Mediterranean studies? Could we imagine our shared investment in the Mediterranean project *fractally*? How do the different scales at which Mediterranean-ness operates interconnect?

To further my own thinking about these three interrelated concerns (porosity, family resemblance, and scale) alongside my abiding interest in the history of the category "art"—an eighteenth-century, western European invention—I've been trying to imagine the post-disciplinary future by overhauling the introductory art history course widely taught as a chronological survey of canonical monuments. In today's globalized art industry, it is hardly fair to think that Europe still owns the category "art," but the fact that the category has this history continues to be tremendously important. So, rather than simply asserting that all societies produce art (an

idea that also has a western European history), as some contemporary approaches to global or world art history do unself-reflexively, I prefer to think *through* this history and its still ongoing effects. Opening up the study of “art” by taking the history of the category and its effects (especially its extra-European, colonial effects) into account, means that just about any artifact or performative practice is potential course material.

Organizing world culture studies topographically into distinct regional trading networks initially aggravated the problems of conceiving of the world as a mosaic of discreet entities, but fortunately the spatio-temporal structure also pointed to a solution: land routes connect the maritime networks. So the course narrative has focused on cultural exchange within and also between more and less tightly organized maritime regions of various scales. Here I would like to offer a few strategic examples derived from my lectures to argue why we need to think beyond the Mediterranean if Mediterranean Studies is to have a long shelf-life:

1. There has been discussion about the relative lack of studies dealing the southern rim of the Mediterranean, for example the Maghreb region of north Africa. Indeed, there are historical issues of asymmetry to consider: the richly fractal coastlines of the north versus the relatively smooth littoral regions of the southern perimeter of the Mediterranean. Even before the historical appearance of Islam, and until the present-day passage of pilgrims to Mecca, east–west trade routes existed in northern Africa such as the very ancient routes linking the Niger River overland to the Nile.⁷ East–west water and land routes might someday explain the sudden, radical changes in representation that characterize the reign of Akhenaten in Old Kingdom Egypt, as linked with artistic forms from an ancestral branch of the Nok culture that first appeared around 1000 BCE in what is now northern Nigeria and Mali (Figs. 7.1, 7.2).

Similarly, the network of land routes linking port cities at the edges of the Sahara Desert and further south, are discounted when the Mediterranean region is considered primarily in terms of its littoral regions alone. The “coherency” argument for the Mediterranean as a waterway might suffer by taking these tributary networks of trade into account, but the historical reality is that water meets land differently in different parts of the actual Mediterranean Sea and its conjoined land masses.



Fig. 7.1 Nok culture, terracotta figure⁸



Fig. 7.2 Akhenaten⁹

2. The ways that the Mediterranean is unified by Abrahamic religion often does not take into account that the regions three major monotheisms are not uniformly centered in the Mediterranean. Two of Islam's three sacred centers, Mecca and Medina, are on the Arabian peninsula and the Hajj journey required of all able-bodied Muslims has drawn pilgrims as far away at the Strait of Malacca and beyond since the seventh and eighth centuries, when Muslim merchants began to control trade in that pivotal region of the Indian Ocean trading network. So, in fairness the centers of Islam beyond the region demand consideration of how the Mediterranean is conjoined to its neighboring land masses and trading networks, especially those to the East—even given that identities are plural and differences are localized through the practice of daily life. A similar case should be made for the relationship of peoples living or originating in the North Sea maritime network who have traded with the Mediterranean at least since the early eighth century.¹⁰

Development of the *cloisonné* technique that distinguishes the Sutton Hoo purse lid and other burial objects in the British Isles as prized national treasures in conventional art historical narratives organized by period, “style,” and national culture probably resulted from contact between Nordic and Byzantine traders in the Mediterranean Basin.¹¹

A similar case can be made for the spread of *cloisonné* technique from Egypt to China. A decentered concept of “family resemblances” or gradations of interrelationship can be very useful for understanding the complex processes that bind these broader, waxing and waning networks of cultural exchange to a more porous concept of the Mediterranean region.

3. The network of cultural exchange looks even more porous when we ask after the export and import of its goods and ideas. To focus again on exchanges to the east, conflicts with Chinese expansion to central Asia beginning in the first century BCE interrupted existing commerce in the complexly ramified trading network known (since the nineteenth century) as the Silk Road, so that merchants moved south, creating the maritime routes of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. The Roman government expanded its shipping into the Indian Ocean but when Alexander the Great withdrew from the Indian subcontinent in 326 BCE, trade increased again across the west Asian subcontinent, creating among other things the phenomenon of

monumental Gandharan sculpture (Fig. 7.3), a Greco-Buddhist style that, like the Persian or Parthian sources for the *Tristan and Isolde* story in the case of medieval French literature as Sharon Kinoshita has observed, is marginalized in the monolithic cultural models that art history fashioned in the nineteenth century.

The question of whether Gandharan sculptures (and many other products of the Silk Road network) are Mediterranean or not is a taxonomic conundrum—and perhaps not the most interesting question to ask. But if we ask instead what the Mediterranean enables us to do as historians, studying that which mixed with Mediterranean culture is just as important as focusing on what was produced within the Mediterranean.

I could cite many other examples, but I hope that these few strategic cases, conjectural though they are, can suggest how the *idea* of the Mediterranean could be useful in the long run by developing an extra-Mediterranean model. Attending to various conditions of complexity and in-betweenness enables us to think out of the binomial box of inclusion/exclusion. One way to picture such an account of intra-regional connectivity is to think about the network model of the Mediterranean as a “net of Indra” where the pearls sewn into each intersection of netting material reflect others in the vicinity. The significance or agency assigned to any thing/concept/place/person/entity is always open to reinterpretation but location always matters: the conceptualization of the Mediterranean as an open-ended matrix also avoids problems associated with conceiving of the Mediterranean as a fluid and dynamic place without regional differences.

Swimming Against the Current

Peregrine Horden

Let me state first what an education it has been to learn from my fellow panelists about the “Mediterranean turn” in art history and cultural and literary studies: how rich and subtle in its use of terms such as connectivity and ecology, it evidently is in the very best of current scholarly production.



Fig. 7.3 Standing Buddha

Secondly, it has been heartening to find that this “turn” is in the “avant-garde” of the humanities—indeed that it might be “dangerous” and “subversive” (Brian’s words). The emphasis on abandoning the old stylistic monolithic labels—whether “national” or religio-cultural—in favor of a “thalassal optic” (Cecily) or a “strategic regionalism” (Sharon) seems to me a fruitful way of sidestepping the old debates—about what is hybrid, fluid, or heterogeneous in some way in the Mediterranean (all of these terms presuppose clear boundaries to be crossed or erased when no such boundaries existed anywhere in the first place). In less skilful (or more ideologically partisan) hands this Mediterranean turn can become a new Orientalism, in which “the Orient”, instead of being another monolith, passive before European condescension, becomes, almost to compensate, the source of all that is good in European culture. (As if it were news how much medieval European learning owed to the translation of key Arabic texts.) But this danger is avoided in the excellent scholarship that Sharon, Claire, and Cecily represent in their own work and embrace in their references. I also note with great interest what Claire tells us about the continuing usefulness of the term “hybridity” in Latin American studies. Is that something to do with the binary of European/indigenous that is most obvious, no doubt superficially so, in Latin America, by contrast with the greater ethno-religious mix that the new Mediterranean studies have to find ways of capturing?

What I take from Brian’s paper and his contributions to the discussion, thirdly, is above all a sense of the liberating excitement that the Mediterranean paradigm offers in its rupture with (too) long-established nationalist and ethno-religious categories and agendas. I warm also to the suggestion that the term “Mediterranean” should be allowed the same creative ad hoc imprecision that “Europe” or “the Middle East”, “Christendom” or “Islam,” have enjoyed for centuries. (Sharon says much the same thing in her reference to intensification and abatement: phases when the Mediterranean is the term to use, and phases when one backs away from it.) Now, Purcell and I have always maintained that “the Mediterranean” is a useful category and a framework for wide-ranging comparison in some contexts—and not in others. Yet critics often seem to have become quite unnecessarily defensive, even angry, when faced with the implied invitation to get Mediterranean, as if it were about to take them down a one-way intellectual passage in which there was no turning back. Like “European”, as Brian says, “Mediterranean” could be an

ideologically-lite, low-key alternative to established perspectives. We should not worry too much.

And yet, as emerges elsewhere in the transcript, politics are inescapable: for us as scholars the politics of research grants, academic hiring policies, disciplinary labels. At the moment, and increasingly, politics of that kind favor the Mediterranean optic. We might worry about getting too comfortable and should perhaps start thinking ahead to what needs to come next. This is not only (not mainly) because the funding will at some point be directed elsewhere, but (to repeat, and close with, my earlier point) because “the Mediterranean” is a category that is most productive when it is in some way working *against*.

NOTES

1. See Biddick, “Bede’s Blush.”
2. See Taleb’s discussions of “Platonicity” in *The Black Swan*.
3. I’m thinking of the volume co-edited by my UC Santa Cruz colleague Rob Wilson, together with Wimal Dissanayake, *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), as well as Jim Clifford’s work on diasporas, for example in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
4. On an illuminated fourteenth century Byzantine copy of Barlaam and Ioasaph, Paris Gr. 1128, see Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 61–62 (cat. no. 31). The Byzantine Alexander Romance was also translated into 11 languages—on the spectacular illuminated copy in Venice, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies Codex 5, see *ibid.*, 62–63 (cat. no. 32).
5. The 2004 issue of *Gesta* is dedicated to papers presented at a conference organized in the wake of 9/11. See Ousterhout and Ruggles, “Encounters with Islam.”
6. See Qaddumi, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, and Grabar, “The Shared Culture of Objects.”
7. Map of Africa. Image in the public domain. Accessed April 20, 2015, at: <https://shakara.wordpress.com/2007/11/30/fun-with-maps-trade-and-roads/africa-trade/>.
8. Nok culture, Nigeria, terracotta, 15 inches high, c. 500 bce–c. 500 ce. Paris, Louvre Museum. Image in the public domain, courtesy of Marie-Len Nyugen, Accessed April 20, 2015, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nok_culture#/media/File:Nok_sculpture_Louvre_70-1998-11-1.jpg.

9. Akhenaten, New Kingdom, Egypt, c. 1353–1336 bce. Cairo, Museum of Antiquities. Photo Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.
10. Map showing the major Varangian (Viking) trade routes. Volga trade routes in red. Trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks in purple. Other trade routes of the eighth to eleventh centuries in orange. Accessed April 20, 2015, at: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/dd/Varangian_routes.png.
11. Purse cover from Sutton Hoo ship burial, sixth to seventh century CE, from Suffolk, England, gold and garnet cloisonné. London, British Museum. Accessed April 20, 2015, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purse_cover_from_Sutton_Hoo_burial#/media/File:Sutton.Hoo.PurseLid.RobRoy.jpg. Compare Bucket handle in shape of person sitting with crossed legs, from the Oseberg ship burial, cloisonné, eighth to ninth century. Bigdøy, Norway, Viking Ship Museum. Accessed April 20, 2015, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oseberg_Ship#/media/File:Buckle_from_Oseberg_Vikingship_Buddha.JPG.

FURTHER READING

The Mediterranean in History

A comprehensive and detailed review of the historiography of the pre-modern Mediterranean can be found in Part One, “‘Frogs Round a Pond’: Ideas of the Mediterranean,” in Horden and Purcell’s, *The Corrupting Sea*, the seminal work of the “New Mediterranean Studies,” which would remain a standard reference work based on the thoroughness and sweep of its bibliography alone. It is a dense work, and as a consequence of its originality and daring, the two authors are faced with the task of qualifying and defending (at times to the exhaustion of the reader, and not always entirely convincingly) virtually every contention they make. However, it is quite revolutionary, and those readers who have the resolve to work thorough it will be rewarded not only in terms of the material knowledge they will have gained, but also by having been exposed to a fresh way of approaching both the Mediterranean and history. *The Corrupting Sea* itself is built on the foundations of Braudel’s work, especially *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Other seminal works include Pirenne’s *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, and Goitein’s *A Mediterranean Society*. Pirenne’s thesis is gripping and provocative but clearly outmoded, and should only be considered alongside critiques, such as Havinghurst’s *The Pirenne Thesis*, and Hodges’ and Whitehouse’s *Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe*.

The publication of *The Corrupting Sea* coincided with, and helped to provoke a renewed interest in, the pre-modern Mediterranean as a paradigm. Harris’s volume, *Rethinking the Mediterranean*—which includes Horden and Purcell’s essay, “Four Years of Corruption: A Response to the

Critics,” and Herzfeld’s “Practical Mediterraneanism” is an example. Abulafia’s suggestive introduction essay to the volume *Medieval Frontiers*, “Seven Types of Ambiguity, c.1100–c.1500,” and his essay “Mediterraneans” look at Mediterranean-type patterns around the pre-modern world, whereas his “Mediterranean History as Global History,” places the Mediterranean in an even broader frame, as does Wink’s “From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.” In the last decade or so, the question of when the Mediterranean “began” and “ended” has turned what had begun as a novel perspective on the long Middle Ages, into something quite a bit longer; at one end, for example, there is Tabak’s *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870*, and at the other, works like Malkin’s *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity*. Other scholars have approached the Mediterranean from anthropological and environmental perspectives see for example, Abdellatif et al., *Construire La Méditerranée*; Albera, Blok and Bromberger’s *L’Anthropologie de la Méditerranée*; Driessen’s “The Connecting Sea”; Hauschild et al., “Syncretism in the Mediterranean”; Hughes’s *The Mediterranean: An Environmental History*; Wainwright’s and Thomes’s *Environmental Issues in the Mediterranean*; and Wansbrough, *Lingua Franca in the Mediterranean*.

Bridging the modern and pre-modern Mediterraneans has been somewhat more challenging, due to the conceptual, political, intellectual and technological transformations that gradually brought about the demise of the *ancien régime* of the West between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, several narrative histories of the Mediterranean have appeared in recent years, including Abulafia’s *The Great Sea* Branford’s *Mediterranean: Portrait of a Sea*, and Norwich’s *The Middle Sea*, each of which present the sea as protagonist in a narrative that begins in prehistory and comes up to the present.

As Mediterranean studies is very much an *avant-garde* endeavor, one that is still very much in the process of self-realization, much of the most interesting work is being in the context of the research projects, centers and programs that have been established over the last decade or so. Some of these that stand out include the Mediterranean Seminar (based at the University of California and co-directed by Catlos and Kinoshita), the Mediterranean Studies Association, the Society for the Medieval Mediterranean, the Center for Mediterranean Studies at Exeter UK, the Mediterranean Initiative at the University of Michigan, the “Le monde méditerranéen médiéval” program at the Université de Paris I, the Maison

Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme at Aix-en-Provence, the Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo of Italy's CNRI, and the modern-oriented Middle East & Mediterranean Studies Research Group at King's College, London, and Ruhr-Universität's Zentrum für Mittelmeerstudien. The work generated by these projects and the scholars associated with them appears in journals such as *al-Masaq*, *Medieval Encounters*, the International *Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies*, the *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, *Mediterranean Studies*, and series, including Brill's "The Medieval Mediterranean," Palgrave-Macmillan's "The New Middle Ages" and "Mediterranean Perspectives," and the University of Pennsylvania Press's "Medieval and Renaissance Studies."

Why the Mediterranean?

The new Mediterranean studies constitutes one dimension of the movement to (in Chakrabarti's words) "provincialize Europe," and to question the categories and chronologies that have emerged out of the post-Enlightenment northwest European academy and that have exercised, until recently, an all but unshaken hegemony over our notions of Past and Progress. Works such as Geary's *The Myth of Nations*, Goody's *The Theft of History*, Bulliet's *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony*, and Davis and Altschul's *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World* make excellent starting points.

Studies on minority-majority and inter-communal relations have been framed, for the most part, on sectarian or regional terms, but many speak either explicitly or implicitly to a Mediterranean framework. For minorities, see, for example, Catlos, *The Muslims of Latin Christendom*; MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East*; Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*; Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence* (and other works); Parsamean-Tatoyean, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World*; and Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*. Studies with a comparative focus include Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens*; Green, "Conversing with the Minority"; the work of Hoyland, Jehel, "Jews and Muslims in Medieval Genoa"; Lassner, *Jews, Christians, and the Abode of Islam*; Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*; Meyuhas Ginio, *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World After 1492*; Sharf, *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium*; Simonsohn, *A Common Justice*; and Yuval's *Two Nations in Your Womb*.

Examples of studies that investigate the nature of ethno-religious identity and interaction in a Mediterranean frame include Astren, "Goitein, Medieval Jews", and the "New Mediterranean Studies"; Catlos, "Accursed, Superior Men"; García-Arenal, "Religious Dissent and Minorities"; Goitien, *A Mediterranean Society*; Martin, "Identity and Religion in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean"; and Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?* Much of the theorization of communal relations and its historiography has been done by historians of Spain; see, for example, Catlos, "Contexto social"; Glick and Pi-Sunyer, "Acculturation"; Russell, "The Nessus-Shirt"; Soifer, "Beyond Convivencia"; and Wolf, "Convivencia in Medieval Spain."

For the development of politics through a Mediterranean lens see, for example, Barkey, *Empire of Difference*; Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate*; Greene, *A Shared World*; Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids*; and Abulafia, *A Mediterranean Emporium*. For Mediterranean networks see, for example, Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*; Coulon and Valérian, *Chemins d'Outre-Mer*; and Alberti and Sabatini, *Exchange Networks and Local Transformations*. Other works, such as Lev's *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean World*, tackle sociopolitical phenomena in a broader regional frame. Cultural, technological, intellectual, and religious exchange and innovation among the various ethno-religious groups of the Mediterranean is the subject of studies by Burnett, such as "Antioch as a Link," and "The Second Revelation"; Glick's works, including, *Islamic and Christian Spain* and "Sharing Science"; Hames's work, including *Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder*; Vernet's studies on the scientific culture of the Islamic Ebro region; and Vryonis's *The Medical Unity of the Mediterranean World*. Recent years have seen a number of volumes of collected essays, conference proceedings, and journal special editions centered on the Mediterranean; an excellent example being, Watkins and Reyerson, *Mediterranean Identities*.

THE MEDITERRANEAN IN MEDIEVAL ART HISTORY

Modern disciplinary divisions among European, Islamic, and Byzantine artistic traditions stand in sharp contrast to medieval realities where cultures flowed and clashed according to their own logic. Rather than dividing, classifying, and charting artistic developments, current scholars are increasingly interested in tracing smaller shifts, movements, and networks,

often involving cross-cultural contacts, and interrogating the more local or regional in relation to larger social structures and authorities. A good entry point into this literature is Eva Hoffman's *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (2007), a collection of seminal essays arranged thematically and prefaced by a concise introduction. This compilation joins a series of conference proceedings published subsequently and edited by Robert Ousterhout and Ruggles in *Gesta* (2004), Matthew Canepa in *Ars Orientalis* (2008), Jill Caskey, Adam Cohen, and Linda Safran in *Medieval Encounters* (2011), and Alicia Walker and Heather Grossman in *Medieval Encounters* (2012). In addition, recent cross-disciplinary approaches to Mediterranean studies are represented by *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (2014), edited by Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita, which includes a number of essays on language and culture, including two dedicated to visual and material culture of the Mediterranean.

Much of the scholarship dealing with Mediterranean visual culture is associated with regions or zones of engagement where the arts are indebted to multiple visual traditions and informed by cross-cultural, and often cross-confessional, contact. The arts of southern Italy, Iberia, Cyprus and the Levant have generated a substantial body of scholarship that acknowledges and wrestles with that engagement. In this regard, William Tronzo's 1997 study of the Cappella Palatina, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, inaugurated a conversation about the employment of such diverse visual languages, a conversation that continues today. The arts of medieval Spain have generated particularly compelling Mediterranean questions as well as a fraught historiography. It was within this context that the contested term *convivencia* was first proposed and then quickly dismantled as a descriptor for relations among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. It is also within this context that scholars have produced some of the most innovative work on cultural exchange. See the essays edited by Cynthia Robinson and Leyla Rouhi, *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile* (2005); and the interdisciplinary collaborative study by Jerrilynn Dodds, Maria Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture* (2008).

The mobility associated with portable art objects plays a crucial role in recent Mediterranean art historical studies as well. Eva Hoffman's foundational article, "Pathways of Portability" (2001), laid the foundation for much of this work, and most of her subsequent studies should be

considered standard reading on the subject. Related to issues of movement are questions of pre-modern globalization and modes of cultural exchange such as gift giving, on which see the concise introductions by Alicia Walker, “Globalization,” and Cecily Hilsdale, “Gift”—both published in *Studies in Iconography* (2012)—as well as the more substantial studies by Walker, *The Emperor and the World* (2012) and Hilsdale *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* (2014), as well as the many individual essays by Anthony Cutler, many of which are published together in *Image Making in Byzantium, Sasanian Persia, and the Early Muslim World* (2009). The most penetrating discussion of these issues is found in Finbarr Barry Flood’s *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter* (2009).

NEGOTIATING THE CORRUPTING SEA

For overviews of how “Mediterranean Literature” might be conceived, see Sharon Kinoshita’s PMLA article “Medieval Mediterranean Literature” and her chapter, “Literature,” in Horden and Kinoshita’s *Companion*. Cooke, Göknar, and Parker’s anthology *Mediterranean Passages* offers a large range of short excerpts of texts from antiquity to the present, arranged both chronologically and thematically.

The analysis of Mediterranean elements in the literary culture of specific places is the most developed in the case of medieval Spain. An indispensable starting point is Dodds, Menocal and Balbale’s 2008 interdisciplinary volume *The Arts of Intimacy*, both for its chapter on “Adab” and especially for its extensive bibliographical essay on “Languages and Literatures.” Suzanne Akbari and Karla Mallette’s co-edited volume *A Sea of Languages*, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the publication of María Rosa Menocal’s *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, attests to the importance Menocal’s work has had on Iberian literary studies and on Mediterranean studies more generally. Interactions among the literary-linguistic cultures of the medieval Iberian “polysystem” (a concept developed by Itamar Even-Zohar) have been theorized and explored with reference to different genres, texts, and thematics in Wacks’ *Framing Iberia*; Hamilton’s *Representing Others*; Robinson’s *In Praise of Song and Medieval Andalusian Courtly Culture*; and Alfonso’s *Islamic Culture through Jewish Eyes*. Edited volumes by Aronson-Friedman and Kaplan (*Marginal Voices*) and Hamilton and Silleras-Fernández (*In and Out of the*

Mediterranean) show us continuities and ruptures between the Middle Ages and Early Modernity. Wacks' *Double Diaspora in Sephardic Literature* remind us that displacements of peoples are accompanied by the displacement and dissemination of literary cultures as well, while Fuchs' *Exotic Nation* explores what becomes of the cultures left behind.

Literary polysystems around the medieval Mediterranean have been explored by Karla Mallette in *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250: A Literary History* and Gilles Grivaud for Cyprus. Medieval French interest in the Byzantine Empire is explored in Rima Devereaux's *Constantinople and the West in Medieval French Literature* and Megan Moore's *Exchanges in Exoticism*, and in Mediterranean cultures more generally in Sharon Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*. Teresa Shawcross examines the complex political and cultural histories informing the Greek recensions of the *Chronicle of Morea*. For the late Middle Ages, David Wallace's innovative volume *Europe: A Literary History* features 82 place-based essays organized into nine "itineraries," among which are "Avignon to Naples," "Palermo to Tunis," and "Cairo to Constantinople."

For the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mediterranean-themed studies (in addition to the work on Iberia mentioned above) collect around the experiences of iconic figures such as Leo Africanus (Zhiri, Davis) and Miguel de Cervantes (Garcés). The "Northern Invasion" of the Mediterranean finds literary expression in the "Barbary Captivity Narratives" from early modern England (Vitkus and Matar). Also relevant is the work of early modern Orientalists (Duprat and Picherot), such as the Lebanese Maronite Abraham Ecchellensis (Heyberger).

If historians are divided on the relevance of the Mediterranean in the age of modernity, literary and cultural historians have found it good to think with—in different ways from different parts of the sea. For critics of Italian literature, music, and film, "the Mediterranean" is a vehicle for addressing issues of immigration, integration, and exclusion in our current post-national, late capitalist conjuncture, as in Iain Chambers's *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*, and Parati's *Mediterranean Crossroads*, an anthology of short texts (here translated into English) by recent immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America and refugees from the former Yugoslavia, writing in Italian on the experience of migration. For Francophone studies, on the other hand, the Mediterranean is a strategic frame evoked by both writers and critics, drawing in part on "long-standing cultural points of imbrication between the Maghreb and the larger Mediterranean," to move "beyond

the colonial and postcolonial bind where France is the dominant point of reference" (Esposito) to bring out the historical interplay between languages, ethnicities, religions, and cultures (Talbayev). Mediterranean the-matics such as translation and multilingualism also inform recent analyses of the constructions of "national" literatures in places like Egypt (Tageldin) and Israel/Palestine (Levy), or the deconstruction of such concepts as national literatures and mother tongues in places like Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey (Yashin).

DESIDERATA FOR THE STUDY OF EARLY MODERN ART OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Since this chapter is a literature review, the reader is referred to the main text for discussion of studies cited in the bibliography. Publications in the interdisciplinary field of early modern studies continue to grow. The following bibliography does not reflect works published since the book went to press. Among the most interesting new trends are comparative studies between the Mediterranean and the global trading network crisscrossing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. See, for example, the following studies by historians, with further bibliography: Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy*; and Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*.

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE FIG LEAF

The evolution of Mediterranean studies over the last three decades or so can be gauged from Susan Alcock, "Alphabet Soup," and Ian Morris, "Mediterraneanization," but also, bringing the historiography more up to date, from Horden and Kinoshita, *A Companion to Mediterranean History*. Especially pertinent to my discussion of culturological conceptions of the Mediterranean is the contribution to that volume by Steven Epstein on "Hybridity."

My own approach since *The Corrupting Sea* will be shown in essays, Peregrine Horden co-authored with Nicholas Purcell, gathered in *The Boundless Sea: Writing Mediterranean History*, forthcoming. The large-scale comparative approach to the Mediterranean can be seen in Miller (ed.), *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, and in my own preliminary studies to the successor volume to *The Corrupting Sea*,

comparing continents rather than oceans, in “Situations both Alike?” and “Mediterranean Connectivity: A Comparative Approach.”

For prehistory, Cyprian Broodbank’s *The Making of the Middle Sea* is now essential: in its scope, verve and detail it supersedes all the larger works it cites. But it is also a model of how the Mediterranean history of *any* period might be written.

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INDEX

A

Abrahamic religion, [5](#), [90](#), [118](#)
Abulafia, David, [68](#), [69](#), [74](#)
Africa, [1](#), [5](#), [9](#), [12](#), [14](#), [15](#), [28](#), [52](#), [56](#),
[59](#), [72](#), [115](#)
Al-Idrisi, [9](#)
Anglo-Saxon, [108](#)
Aristotle, [7](#), [62](#)
Art, as a historical term, [21](#)
Artifice, [60](#), [61](#)
Atlantic, the, [2](#), [49](#), [54](#), [72](#)
Aucassin et Nicolette, [40](#)
Ayyubid Syria, [87](#)

B

Barcelona Process, [66](#)
Bhabha, Homi, [73](#), [82](#)
Biddick, Kathleen, [105](#)
Boccaccio, Giovanni, [40](#), [41](#), [43](#), [45](#)
Braudel, Fernand, [2](#), [29](#), [33](#), [38](#), [44](#), [45](#),
[58](#), [61](#), [66](#), [68](#), [92](#)
Broodbank, Cyprian, [69](#)
Byzantine art, [86](#)
Byzantium, [9](#), [21](#), [23](#), [52](#), [75](#), [86](#), [87](#),
[113](#)

C

Callirhoe, [38](#), [42](#), [85](#)

Cappella Palatina, [30](#), [108](#), [109](#)
Catlos, Brian, [43](#), [73](#), [74](#), [81](#), [103](#)
Charlemagne, [41](#), [44](#), [111](#)
Charles of Anjou, [45](#)
Chrétien de Troyes, [34](#)
Cligés, [34](#), [35](#), [42](#)
Convivencia, [37](#), [73](#), [82](#), [103](#)
Corrupting Sea, The, [2](#), [19](#), [27](#), [31](#), [35](#),
[38](#), [42](#), [58](#), [65](#), [70](#), [82](#), [87](#), [89](#), [97](#),
[112](#)
Cresques, [9](#)

D

Daniel of Morley, [34](#)
Decameron, [40](#), [43](#), [45](#)

E

Early Modernity, [3](#), [58](#), [62](#)
East/west, [1](#), [51](#), [54](#), [59](#), [93](#), [115](#)
El Cid, [110](#)
England, [97](#), [99](#), [108](#)
English, [20](#), [28](#), [29](#), [34](#), [35](#), [41](#), [99](#),
[100](#), [108](#), [109](#)
Europe, [1–3](#), [5](#), [9](#), [12](#), [14](#), [15](#), [42](#), [49](#),
[52](#), [54](#), [56](#), [68](#), [75](#), [86](#), [90](#), [97](#), [99](#),
[109](#), [114](#), [121](#)
European Union, [95](#)

F

Floire et Blancheflor, 41, 44, 85

G

Gandharan sculptures, 119

Garden of Eden, 9

Geniza, vii

Goitein, Shlomo, 81

Greek Christianity, 54, 57, 58

H

Herzfeld, Michael, 66

Hungary, 73, 90

Hybridity, 45, 73, 82, 89, 92, 96, 107

I

Islamic art, 26

J

Jewish world, 9, 15

K

Kalila wa-Dimna, 36

Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa 'l-Tuḥaf, 113

L

Late Antique, 30, 50, 51, 96, 109

Latin American art, 92, 93, 107, 121

Latin Christianity, 54

Lingua franca, 59, 105, 108

M

Manifest Destiny, 105

Maps, 8, 9, 25, 110, 112

Mecca, 115, 118

Medieval, 2, 7, 9, 11, 19, 20, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 36, 37, 42, 49, 66, 74, 86, 101, 108, 111, 113

Mediterranean

advantages of as framework, 1

as a category of analysis, 108

as strategic regionalism, 33, 83

cultures of, 19, 20, 31, 87, 112

Greco-Roman, 2, 11

historiography of, 19

meaning of romantic, 68

Mediterraneanism, 66, 71

Merchants, 40, 43, 55, 63, 118

Middle East, 1, 12, 14, 121

Middle Ground, 73, 82

Mutual intelligibility, 6, 33, 43, 44, 90

N

Naturalism, 58, 60

Neolithic, 6

O

Optics, 33, 59, 60, 62, 63, 71

Ottoman Empire, 55, 98, 99

P

Pera, 89

Persian romance, 76, 82, 106

Perso-Hellenic thought, 5

Pirates, 38, 41

Pirenne, 11

Plato, 7

Political Correctness, 1, 3

Polysystem (literary), 37, 44

Postcolonialism, 83

Postmodernism, 83

Progress, 3, 71, 105

Purcell, Nicholas, 2, 28, 35

R

Renaissance, 54, 55, 57, 60, 93, 94, 101
 Roger II of Sicily, 30

S

Seven Sages, 36, 110
 Sicilian Vespers, 33, 45, 85
 Sicily, 20, 35, 37, 45, 52, 75, 87
 Song of Roland, 35, 36, 44, 96, 110
 Southern Man (in text as Southern Men), 5
 Spivak, Gayatri, 33, 83
 Suleiman the Magnificent, 95

T

Tau maps, 9
 Thalassology, 19, 20, 26, 28, 29, 31, 87

Theories of vision, 60

Third space, 73, 76, 82

Trading networks, 54, 114, 115, 118

Translation, 4, 24, 33, 34, 36, 60, 85, 96, 100, 109, 110, 121

Translatio studii, 34, 36

Translatio studii et imperii, 85

V

Venice, 52, 55, 57, 87

Vis and Rāmin, 82, 85, 106

W

Worldview, 39, 58, 59

Y

Yahweh, 7