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Authors

Fogu, Claudio
Re, Lucia

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Italy in the Mediterranean Today: A New Critical Topography

Claudio Fogu and Lucia Re

Our decision to devote the first thematic issue of *California Italian Studies* to “Italy in the Mediterranean” is due chiefly to the rise over the past two decades, on an international scale, of a scholarly and critical discourse around the Mediterranean and Mediterranean-ness. This discourse appeared to us to provide a perfect context for attracting the kind of interdisciplinary, comparative, and theoretically sophisticated work our journal is designed to elicit from the many fields in which Italian Studies are to be found. In addition, this topic offered a number of specific intellectual and conceptual challenges for us and for our contributors stemming from the unique position of Italy, Italians, and Italian-ness in regard to the Mediterranean, its history, and its contemporary relevance for Italian politics and life. The ancient Romans were the first to give geopolitical unity to – and to claim as *theirs*, i.e. *Mare Nostrum* – a body of water that previously had been only given local names by each of its coastal communities. More than two millennia later, in the decades before, during, and after the national unification of Italy, the memory of this *Mare Nostrum* came to play a key role in the formation of modern Italian culture, the national-racial identity of Italians, and Italy’s foreign policy. Since then, the Italians, as a people, and Italian Studies, as a field of inquiry, have contended with a legacy of appropriation. More recently, the confrontation with this legacy has also been affected by forces external to the development of an Italian Mediterranean imaginary. Two factors have combined to make Italians see the Mediterranean as ever less of a *Mare Nostrum*: the European process of economic-political unification, on the one hand, and the growing use of the Mediterranean by migrants and refugees from the Balkans and Africa into Europe via the Italian island of Lampedusa and the coastal regions of Sicily and Puglia, on the other. At the same time, post-Cold War globalization has created a much more fertile ground for supplementary forms of belonging like Mediterranean-ness, which counteract narrow versions of identity linked to nation, religion, and class. Italy, Italian culture, and the Italians themselves have consequently been invested by, and become invested in, a complex process of self-identification with Mediterranean-ness. This process calls for critical rethinking of both the Mediterranean imaginary, which is in dire need of intellectual decolonization, and the equivalence established between Italian-ness and Mediterranean-ness in the global market of ideas.

We thought that this paradoxical predicament of contemporary Italian culture would make for a uniquely stimulating, interdisciplinary opportunity for Italian Studies as a whole. Our forecast was proven right by the extraordinary number of submissions we received, the range of contributing disciplines (from art history, literary criticism, and film studies, to international relations, sociology, and geography), and the quality of the articles that we accepted for publication. This success, however, has also called for a certain editorial strategy. The essays and texts included in this issue, which were all peer-reviewed in accordance with the journal’s charter, have been grouped and distributed into six sections: 1) *A Critical Map of Italy in the Mediterranean: Defining the Terms*; 2) *Italy in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*; 3) *Italy in the Modern and Contemporary Mediterranean*; 4) *Italian Cinema about and across the Mediterranean*; 5) *Imagining the Mediterranean I: Texts and Translations*; and 6) *Imagining the Mediterranean 2: Survey Articles and Work in Progress*. As the section titles make clear,

these sub-divisions respond to a set of interconnected criteria. First, we have categorized and sorted the essays according to their respective genres (i.e. research article, interview, critical essay, work in progress, etc.). Second, we have distributed the research articles in two period-related sections (medieval-early modern, and modern-contemporary), with one thematic section on cinema, given the high number of contributions from this field. Our hope is that this arrangement will not only enable readers to identify swiftly individual essays in their own fields of interest, but also to assess how different areas of Italian Studies address the question of the Mediterranean.

A Critical Map of Italy in the Mediterranean: Defining the Terms

The essays in our first section, *A Critical Map of Italy in the Mediterranean: Defining the Terms*, include contributions by key protagonists in the international critical debate on Mediterranean-ness (Franco Cassano, Iain Chambers, Alessandro Dal Lago, Nicola Labanca, Toni Maraini, Predrag Matvejević), the philosopher Francesca Saffioti (author of the recent *Geofilosofia del mare: tra oceano e Mediterraneo*), and authoritative commentators (Anna Botta, Roberto Dainotto, and John Marino). The critical tone of this section is set immediately by Toni Maraini's question: is Italy, still, a Mediterranean country? Maraini, whose contribution to Mediterranean thought and "reflection" over the years has been creative as well as critical, contrasts the long-standing perception of Italian Mediterranean-ness with the current media climate dominated by a focus on "cultural conflicts" and a "culture of fear" that obfuscate the real problems of the nation, perverting the original idea of *mediterraneità*. For Anna Botta, the "new thalassology" created by the de-territorializing movement of globalization has instead opened up a critical space for interrogations of Mediterranean-ness and Mediterranean Studies. Her piece examines in particular the works of Roberto Dainotto, Iain Chambers, and Predrag Matvejević.

All three of these authors are also present in our issue with contributions of their own. We are particularly grateful to Predrag Matvejević, who has permitted us to publish an advance version of his current project on the diffusion of bread and bread culture in the Mediterranean. In his essay on Vincenzo Cuoco, who has increasingly emerged as a crucial thinker in the tradition of Machiavelli and Vico, Dainotto shows that the Neapolitan philosopher's work is riddled with Mediterranean anxiety. In contrast to Cassano and other Mediterranean thinkers, Cuoco does not envision the great sea as a potentially enriching, fluid conduit of civilization through the flow of navigation, commerce, and cultural exchange. On the contrary, in its search for reassuring origins and historical foundations for the *civiltà italica*, Cuoco's mountainous, "vertical" thought seeks to build its arguments on the solidity of land and agriculture. Lastly, Iain Chambers presents in his essay an elaboration of the key points he has raised in his recently published *Mediterranean Crossings*. His Mediterranean view of modern Italy aims to free Italian Studies from a worn-out historicism, opening up the field to a "more unsettled" and "fluid cartography." Along critical-revisionist lines parallel to Chambers' is Alessandro Dal Lago's indictment of Italian responses to the colonial past on both right and left sides of the cultural-political spectrum. In contrast to the myth of the "bravo italiano," Dal Lago stresses the fact that Italians turned colonialist when European colonialism was in decline, and racist when the rest of Europe had placed its racial thinking under close scrutiny. He then argues that, as a consequence of the prolonged Italian reluctance to come to terms with the colonial past, the principal attitudes towards Mediterranean migrants in Italian discourse, politics, and society still oscillate between

criminalization by the right and a bland form of (multi)culturalism offered by the left, both oblivious to the profound oppression and “invisibility” of the “other” in Italian society.

Completing this first section, which is devoted to re-thinking Italy from a theoretically and epistemologically Mediterranean perspective, are an interview with Franco Cassano and an essay by Francesca Saffioti on the ramifications of Cassano’s thought. In the interview (available in a video-recording made and edited by Claudio Fogu, and accompanied by a complete written transcription in Italian), Cassano elaborates on the legacy and contemporary relevance of his path-breaking *Il pensiero meridiano* fourteen years after its original publication (1996). Saffioti’s article complements the interview by probing the theoretical ramifications of “southern thought,” which she presents as a re-definition of identity in Mediterranean terms, namely as plural and hospitable. The last two articles in this section examine instead two aspects of the relationship between Italian history and the Mediterranean: John Marino discusses the legacy of Braudel’s *La Méditerranée* in Italian historiography, while Nicola Labanca, on the basis of his long engagement with the history of Italian colonialism, takes up the question of why and how the colonial past, which is so crucial to the understanding of the complexities and the contradictions of Italy’s Mediterranean identity, has been until recently largely repressed in Italian collective memory. Although a conversation may be said to occur between the authors and articles presented in this section, our hope is that readers may appreciate this first section especially in relation to the rest of the issue. The ensemble of articles presented here is meant to function as an ideal topography of the critical territory traversed by the following sections, and the many fields of Italian Studies that have turned their attention to the “Mediterranean question.”

Italy in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean

The second section of our Mediterranean issue is devoted to Italy in the medieval and early modern periods. It opens with Veronica Della Dora’s study of how the cartographic figure of Italy’s position emerged in early modern maps, together with Monique O’Connell’s review article tracing major trends in recent scholarly works that focus on Italy and the Mediterranean in the Renaissance. Della Dora’s main concern is the rediscovery of Ptolemaic maps in the Renaissance and the challenges subsequently made to them. The first way in which the cartographic figure of Italy emerged is as an organic component of the Mediterranean basin as a whole. The second way is as a spatial element created out of a dense interaction of areas and flows together forming part of the Mediterranean world. In either case, the Mediterranean Sea provides the geographical context for defining the “nature” of Italy as expressed cartographically, but it does so in ways that are mutually exclusive. Indeed, Della Dora suggests that the two modes of mapping lead to two very different historiographies of Italy and the Mediterranean. Mapping is not simply a mode of representing space, but also involves ways of thinking about how that space is constituted materially, functionally, and symbolically.

In her assessment of recent books that have engaged with the major themes of the “Mediterranean encounter” (merchant culture and commercial transactions, crusades, pilgrimages, and shared or overlapping sacred geographies), O’Connell detects a pattern of integration of the high culture of the Italian Middle Ages and of the Renaissance into a larger, dynamic history of reciprocal cultural exchange between East and West. Such an integrative and dynamic tendency in fact finds confirmation in Diane Ghirardo’s study of the pathways that exotic foods and goods destined for the noble courts of Renaissance Italy took across the Mediterranean, and in Maria Alberti’s account of the spectacles, fictional battles, performances

and festivals staged by the Medici in Florence in 1589. These spectacles were projections and reflections of the Medici's ongoing interaction with the Ottoman Empire, as well as of real-life naval warfare against the Turkish corsairs.

Roberta Morosini's reading of women who cross the Mediterranean, as represented in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and other medieval Italian and French narratives, demonstrates that when examined through the lens of women's history and feminist studies, the early modern Mediterranean may appear more like a place of immobility and repetition than a locus of dynamic exchange, productive conflict, and metamorphosis. Morosini, a devoted scholar of the Mediterranean whose work includes the co-edited volume *Mediterranoesis: voci dal Medioevo e dal Rinascimento Mediterraneo* also shows that there are exceptions to this "rule." When women are among women in a foreign land, for example, they learn the new language and become productive subjects; when they are among men, they remain objects to be circulated. The other way for women to make themselves into cross-cultural subjects is, ironically, to disguise themselves as men. Karen Frank's comparative historical study of women's financial autonomy in medieval Jewish communities in Egypt, Spain, and central Italy indicates that, paradoxically, it is precisely when the ideals of Mediterranean *convivencia* weaken or dissolve that women are likely to experience a larger degree of autonomy and dynamic changes in gender roles. Focusing on the status of Jewish converts in the Mediterranean, and working at the intersection of religious, legal and cultural history, Nadia Zeldes demonstrates that, far from being environments of multicultural togetherness and productive multicultural exchange, Italy and the Mediterranean were frequently sites of suspicion, exclusion and discrimination.

In the final essay of this section, Jon Snyder dwells on themes of piracy and slavery in three still little-known comedies by the Italian playwright, poet, actor and *capocomico* Giovan Battista Andreini (1576-1654) that stand on the fluid Mediterranean border between the early modern and the modern. Separating yet also connecting families, peoples, cultures, and empires, the Mediterranean in these plays becomes a stage upon which distance and difference are affirmed or overcome through dialogue.

Italy in the Modern and Contemporary Mediterranean

As observed in the review article devoted to Mediterranean theory and Mediterraneism in contemporary Italian thought (Fogu's "From *Mare Nostrum* to *Mare Aliorum*"), which opens the third section of our thematic issue, Italian-based thinkers, intellectuals, scholars (including but not limited to Salvatore Bono, Massimo Cacciari, Iain Chambers, Franco Cassano, Predrag Matvejević, Francesca Saffioti and Stefano Trinchese) and research groups have been making key contributions to the contemporary international conversation about the idea of "the Mediterranean." These contributions are well worth pondering, because they continue to open up new ways of thinking and mapping the shifting cultural and symbolic position of "Italy" within that imaginary, yet also painfully and violently real, space that is the modern and contemporary Mediterranean. This substantial body of "Italian" theoretical and critical research also helps to disclose and highlight certain limitations and Eurocentric blind spots in the works, for example, of post-Braudelian Mediterranean theorists and historians such as Horden and Purcell, among others.

The fourteen multidisciplinary critical essays that comprise this section of the journal range from insightful and innovative reassessments of Orientalism's relationship to the invention of modernity or of the role of Orientalist scholarship in 19th and early 20th-century Italian cultural

history (De Donno and Mallette), to provocative revisitations of the Mediterranean imaginary in canonical authors such as d'Annunzio (Caburlotto) and Verdi (Guarracino). The reception of Verdi's *Aida* across the Mediterranean reveals a process of osmosis between European and Egyptian cultural productions, and the opera turns out to look rather different from this perspective than from the one envisioned by Edward Said in his well-known study. D'Annunzio's forcefully colonialist Mediterranean rhetoric, which made him a proverbial prophet of Fascist imperialism, is read by Caburlotto otherwise, as a largely utopian and merely literary project of self-aggrandizement and personal myth-making. The essay by Lucia Re, "Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle over Libya, 1890-1913," on the other hand, carefully documents the role played by d'Annunzio and other canonical and non-canonical writers (Pascoli, Corradini, Marinetti, Aleramo, Deledda, Negri) in the creation of a unified Italian racial and colonialist consciousness that eventually succeeded, during the Libyan war, in expunging both the woman question and the Southern question, however briefly and ambiguously.

Ara Merjian's intertextual reading of de Chirico's metaphysical paintings of the immediate post-World War I period suggests that although these haunting works appear steeped in an Orientalist myth of Mediterranean antiquity and seem structured around Mediterranean environmental and visual commonplaces, they are in fact inspired by de Chirico's close and profoundly solitary exploration of Friedrich Nietzsche's writings. The disruption of images of a stripped-down Mediterranean antiquity by factories and trains, or uncanny mannequins recalling the prosthetic limbs and masks of the Great War, make it impossible to distill any particular national tradition, collective cultural agenda or ideological application from these paintings. No such obscurity, however, permeates the "Mediterranean" work of Fascist-era architect Florestano Di Fausto. Yet, as Sean Anderson shows in his pioneering essay ("The Line and the Light"), Di Fausto's projects and buildings from 1923 until 1940 in North Africa and the Aegean demonstrate an eclectic dialogue with the complex architectural forms present in Italy's colonies in Libya and in the Dodecanese Islands. Di Fausto's work testifies to a complex negotiation of ancient and "modern," as well as the engagement of Italian architectural modernism with *arabesques* in the reworking of colonial architecture and urbanism. The Mediterranean is understood here not so much as a space of resistance but as a "filter" through which architects like Di Fausto generated a new Italian architecture, relatively unencumbered by the more restrictive tendencies found on the peninsula.

The essays by Rebecca Hopkins, Hala Halim, and Rawdah Zaouchi-Razgallah bring to our attention non-canonical authors in colonial and postcolonial Mediterranean settings: the novelist Augusta Perricone Viola in Fascist Libya (Hopkins), the Alexandrian Syro-Lebanese "Levantine" writer, musician and artist Bernard de Zogheb in Egypt (Hala Halim) and, in Tunisia, Fadhila Chebbi, a contemporary poet envisioned in a comparative, ideal and compassionate dialogue across the sea with Sicilian novelist Silvana Grasso (Zaouchi-Razgallah). The librettos composed by De Zogheb for his own parodic, camp and "queer" operettas (written in a hybridized Italian that occasionally enmeshes French, English, Greek, and Arabic) are discussed here for the first time, with the addition of delightful recordings of De Zogheb's singing. These essays constitute original contributions to the burgeoning field of Italo-Mediterranean colonial and postcolonial studies (in both English and Italian) about literature and other forms of aesthetic production that transcend national and geographical borders between

“Europe” and the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean basin.¹ In contrast to the cosmopolitan commonality of Mediterranean women writers, which Zaouchi-Razgallah explores between the Tunisian poet Chebbi and the Sicilian novelist Grasso, the exacting essay “The Tunisia Paradox” by Italian diaspora and migration historian Mark Choate reveals the complex nationalistic colonial struggle between France and Italy over Tunisia. Choate probes the political origins of the enduring myth according to which, due to the presence in Tunisia of a considerable Italian immigrant population (mostly from Sicily), Italian imperial motives were somehow more legitimate and more “sincere.”

In her experimental study of two village communities near Naples and of their “mobile landscapes” interwoven with the Mediterranean, Lidia Curti looks at the history of diasporic southern migration in a different way. The study is based on a unique group project involving several artists and “eco-architects” as well as scholars and local residents. Combining anthropology with architectural, philosophical, ecological and aesthetic reflection, she highlights both the devastation of traditional local economies, environments and urban centers, and the creative, positive relation between the diaspora, collective and individual memory, and aesthetic production.

The final two essays in this section examine pressing contemporary issues related to the environmental and ecological role of Italy in the Mediterranean Sea: fishing (Katherine Emery) and waste disposal (Alessandro Mengozzi). In the context of the global debate about bluefin tuna conservation, Emery offers an integrated case study of a Sardinian *tonnara*, taking into account the interweaving of historical, scientific, and cultural factors in order to bring to light a key paradox undermining the goal of marine preservation. Italian coastal resources are prized for their beauty as well as economic and international recreational uses, yet Italian cultural traditions, such as the desire for fresh fish and the continuity of ancient fishing communities, as well as the demands of tourist and real-estate industries, are rapidly destroying the marine ecosystems. Mengozzi demonstrates just how much, despite its particularities, Italy is part of a much larger problem of “waste disposal,” both around the Mediterranean and on a global scale. Despite the European Union’s controls, the author shows, “waste wars” continue. The division between North and South (a recurrent theme throughout our Mediterranean theme issue) is often explained by environmental scholars in terms of a “Mediterranean syndrome,” but Mengozzi challenges the view of southern European countries as environmentally irresponsible. Differences among countries do exist – the Camorra’s trafficking in refuse is a case in point – yet the political situation is complex and requires an integrated *global* view.

Italian Cinema about and across the Mediterranean

Because Italian cinema has been at the forefront of the recent globalization of Mediterraneanness, an entire section of our Mediterranean issue is dedicated to *Italian Cinema about and across the Mediterranean*. The series of Oscar-winning Italian films in the 1990s, from *Nuovo cinema paradiso* (1988), to *Mediterraneo* (1991), *Il postino* (1994), and *La vita è bella* (1997), spells Italy as “M-e-d-i-t-e-r-r-a-n-e-i-t-à.” This thematic continuity is an unequivocal sign of a

¹ See for example the volumes *Venature mediterranee. Dialogo con scrittori di oggi*, ed. Costanza Ferrini (Messina: Mesogea, 1999), *Il Mediterraneo, Una rete interletteraria*, ed. Dionýz Ďurišin and Armando Gnisci (Rome: Bulzoni, 2000), and *Mediterranean Crossroads. Migration Literature in Italy*, ed. Graziella Parati (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999). See also the essay by Sandra Ponzanesi, “Mediterranean Routes: Migration Literature in Italy in a Postcolonial Perspective,” *Arena Romanistica. Journal of Romance Studies* 5 (2009): 330-345.

dramatic evolution in the traditional association of ‘Made in Italy’ with ideas of style and distinction. In the globalized market of postindustrial images, Italy stands for a Mediterraneanness *prêt à porter* principally projected by, and available through, the experience of Italian cinema. The authors included in this section respond to this new cultural moment by applying Mediterranean lenses of critical interpretation to less celebrated films, and they do so in order to probe the internal consistency, and highlight the contradictions, of a Mediterranean imaginary that has surfaced recurrently in Italian cinema, even before it became the object of glamorized global acclaim. Timothy Campbell’s article on Sergio Leone’s “Mediterranean Westerns” brings out the critical potential of these interpretative lenses by re-reading an entire genre, the *spaghetti* Western, according to the powerful metaphor of the “corrupting sea.” Functioning as a kind of poetic unconscious in Leone’s anti-monumental Westerns, the Mediterranean emerges as an uncanny and depoliticized setting for the violence and destruction accompanying the dénouement of each of his films. With Gaetana Marrone we encounter instead an older set of Mediterranean lenses, namely those provided by the eighteenth-century Grand Tour. Her “cinematic grand tour of Sicily” gives us an illustration of the intertextual and century-old context in which cinematic representations of Mediterranean life must be seen. Her essay examines island-films such as Antonioni’s *L’avventura* and Nanni Moretti’s *Caro diario* in light of literary classics from Goethe’s *Italian Journey* to Tomasi di Lampedusa’s *Il Gattopardo*.

In a similarly intertextual vein, Gian Maria Annovi explores the peculiar Mediterranean geography emerging from Pasolini’s writings and Mediterranean films (especially *Uccellacci e uccellini*, *Edipo re* and *Medea*). For Annovi, Pasolini’s Mediterranean represents a laboratory in which an original critique of capitalism fosters a form of postcolonial thought. Along with Pasolini, two other masters of Italian political cinema, Francesco Rosi and Gillo Pontecorvo, are featured in essays by Monica Facchini and Michael O’Riley. Facchini refers to the fundamental ethnographic work of Ernesto De Martino on southern and Mediterranean rituals in order to analyze the representation of the women’s lament in Rosi’s *Salvatore Giuliano* as an expression of the subaltern. O’Riley’s article presents a compelling reading of the Pentagon’s contemporary use of Pontecorvo’s *La battaglia di Algeri* as a controversial and highly unstable pedagogical tool for understanding the conflict in Iraq.

The issue of race, raised by O’Riley in his analysis of the discourse centered around the US Department of Defense’s use of *La battaglia*, becomes central to the explorations of cinematic representations of Mediterranean immigration by Giovanna Falaschini Lerner and Aine O’Healy. Both authors cover, in part, the same cinematic territory of “immigrant cinema” (recently explored in different ways by scholars such as Graziella Parati and Enrica Capussotti),² ranging from Gianni Amelio’s *Lamerica* (1994) to Vittorio De Seta’s *Lettere dal Sahara* (2004) and Mohsen Melliti’s *Io, l’altro* (2007). But even as O’Healy focuses on their resonance with patterns of prejudice inherited from traditional representations of southern Italians, Falaschini Lerner reads them in light of work by contemporary Mediterranean theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Franco Cassano. The latter’s “pensiero meridiano” constitutes the magnifying glass through which the last author in this section, Eusebio Ciccotti, reads the urban landscape represented in the recent cinema of Matteo Garrone, Alessandro Piva, Franco Capuano, Sergio Rubini and other contemporary Italian directors. Through a comparative analysis of the symbolic *topoi* of streets, walls, earth, and sea, Ciccotti illuminates these authors’ search for a

² Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy. The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), and Enrica Capussotti, “Moveable Identities: Migration, Subjectivity and Cinema in Contemporary Italy,” *Modern Italy* 14, 1 (February 2009): 55-68.

Mediterranean-ness open *to* the other, and to mediation and negotiation *with* the other.

Imagining the Mediterranean

The two final sections are devoted to different, open and fluid ways to approach, encode, study and imagine Italian history and culture in and of the Mediterranean today. In the first of these two sections, we present three remarkable short creative-critical works. The first is a newly-discovered Baroque madrigal from Malta for tenor, bass and harpsichord, introduced here by musicologist Matteo Sansone (with a recording by Jonathan Hiller), which may inspire further scholarly and creative interpretations of this still largely unexplored tradition of Mediterranean madrigalian duets. The second is a poetic memoir-reportage about El Alamein by writer and essayist Laura Barile, who is the author of, among other works, *Il resto manca: storie mediterranee* (2003). The interweaving of the critical with the creative is a distinguishing trait of Italo-Mediterranean writers such as Toni Maraini and Vincenzo Consolo.³ Less plagued than Consolo by the nostalgic angst of a modern or postmodern Odysseus, Barile weaves an ironic, yet compassionate, intertextual path around the historical incongruities, reciprocal misunderstandings and tragic legacy of violence that mark the geographical and historical memory of El Alamein for an Italian traveling to Egypt today. The poetic narrative “Watery Graves” (in Elise Magistro’s elegant English translation), written by sociologist, philosopher and novelist Alessandro Dal Lago in the style of an impassioned baroque sermon, was inspired by the death of a group of young Senegalese who left Dakar or a nearby port on Christmas Eve in 2005, hoping to reach the Spanish Canary Islands. After drifting thousands of miles off course, the boat eventually ran aground off the Caribbean island of Barbados. We believe that this invective against the blindness of the wealthy and “developed” Western world that allows thousands of would-be immigrants to die in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the African deserts, while simultaneously claiming to safeguard the “European Fortress,” is destined to become a classic in its own right.

Part Two of “Imagining the Mediterranean” comprises three fascinating critical notes (and advance versions of important work in progress). Theodore Cachey writes about the Italian “Book of Islands,” an early form of cartographic book combining maps and narrative that was developed in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In “The Mediterranean Comes to Ellis Island,” Nelson Moe shares his research on how the “Mediterranean” and the “South” played an important role in the way the Italian immigrant population (the largest in the United States at that time) was imagined, represented, and administered between 1890 and 1915. Mustafa Abdalla A. Kashiem’s contribution offers a preliminary, optimistic assessment of the role that the Italian-Libyan Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation, signed on August 30, 2008, will play in the international relations between the two countries. Two important survey articles conclude this section and our Mediterranean theme issue. Flavia Laviosa, co-editor with Laura Mulvey of the volume entitled *Visions of Struggle in Women’s Filmmaking in the Mediterranean* (2010), provides an overview of three filmmakers from the quintessentially Mediterranean frontier region of Apulia in southern Italy, including Edoardo Winspeare and two still virtually unknown directors, Nico Cirasola and Carmine Fornari, whose work has treated in particular the relationship between Italy and Albania. Finally, art historian and curator Martina Corgnati traces

³ Some of Consolo’s texts have recently been translated into English. See *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean. Essays by Vincenzo Consolo*, ed. Norma Bouchard and Massimo Lollini (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

the outlines of a cultural phenomenon that is still largely unmapped and that her own pioneering exhibitions and catalogues are beginning to bring to light: the evolution of the artistic relationship between Italy and the Arab world that began in the 19th century.⁴ She focuses especially on the Mediterranean Mashrek (Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt). It was in this area in fact that Arab painters of noteworthy talent and originality emerged, and who in turn trained a later generation of artists. Corgnati's study, which will hopefully inspire the work of other researchers and scholars in a highly promising area of Mediterranean cultural exchange, concludes with a reflection on the complexity of the present artistic situation, which is characterized by an unprecedented richness and diversity of styles and a "mixed," updated artistic culture in constant evolution and transformation.

⁴ See, among others, *Artisti arabi tra Italia e Mediterraneo* (Milan: Skira, 2008), catalogue of the exhibition curated by Martina Corgnati, with the collaboration of Toni Maraini, at the Maison des Arts in Tunis in 2008 (and subsequently in Algiers, Rabat and other locations, as well as in Rome in 2009 in a slightly different version).