

TEMA BROJA /
THE THEME OF THE ISSUE
Mediterranean Literary Studies /
Književne studije Mediterana

Editorial

INTRODUCTION: MEDITERRANEAN LITERARY STUDIES

Despite Fernand Braudel's much-quoted statement that, for the historian, the character of the Mediterranean "is complex, awkward, and unique. It cannot be contained within our measurements and classifications" (Braudel 17), the sea has often been read in terms of interconnection and similarity. John Watkins, in an issue of *Mediterranean Studies* from 2014, discusses a shift in the field from acting as a "mediator" between scholarly work from the Cold War and that of Global studies in the 1990s, to a focus on globalization, with newer studies having an "emphasis on the region as a whole rather than on the histories of individual states within the region" (Watkins 88). A more recent example of the trend of connection can be found in the introduction to Angela Biancofiore and Clément Barniaudy's 2022 collection *Re-storying Mediterranean Worlds*, which asks the reader to frame the following essays by thinking "of Mediterranean worlds as interconnected worlds" (Biancofiore and Barninaudy 1, emphasis in original).

Yet the essays in this special section, while still taking globalization seriously, also focus on the differences that are essential to the Mediterranean Sea. This reflects the "complex of seas" that are "piled one above the other" in Braudel's quote, which stresses a gathering of otherness, not only on a representation of connectedness. In this sense, the essays are closer to what the late Inoslav Bešker wrote on the subject in his *Mediterranean in Literature*, in which the real differences of the various people belonging to the Mediterranean region and its isolated parts are only seen as coherent when represented within the imagination of others (Bešker 92). The following essays have a similar approach in determining various literary strategies for how to represent separation and connection together, which is an important strategy for keeping in mind the Mediterranean as a complex system rather than a flattening whole.

In alphabetical order of the first authors, Gianna Brahović foregrounds separation in the way that she uses the fields of animal and Anthropocene studies to think about two very diverse texts, Renato Baretic's *The Eighth Commissioner* (2003) and Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2007). By looking at these books through the lens of the Anthropocene, each is connected to the physical world in which they take place. Yet by also focusing on animal studies, Brahović emphasizes the unknowability of different worlds, arguing that "the bond formed with nonhuman animals, and by proxy, nature, is in both novels told from the point of view of an observer powerless to form it themselves." This reading of both bond and separation together is a key way in which Mediterranean studies can be framed.

Katarina Dalmatin, in her essay on the authors Enzo Bettiza and Grytzko Mascioni, uses the concepts of Nino Raspudić's *Adriatic semi-Orientalism* and Maria Todorova's *Balkanism* in order to formulate a complex reading of Mediterranean identity. The reason for the use of both authors is that Bettiza is seen to provide an insider's endogenous perspective, while Mascioni represents an exogenous view. For Dalmatin, both perspectives must be taken together in order to develop an intertextual dialogue that highlights variation within a study of similarities.

Bettiza's work is also taken up in the essay by Ivana Dizdar and Josip Miletić, although it is read together with the classic *The Chronicle of Our Little Place* (1971) by Miljenko Smoje. The focus of this essay is on two literary techniques which are used to represent opposite elements at the same time: grotesque presentations and irony as a polyphonic figure of discourse. Readings of these two techniques in the work of Bettiza and Smoje create a particular formulation of the Mediterranean spirit as "a mixture of opposites" which shelters difference within togetherness.

I am especially pleased at the inclusion of Haithm Zinhom's essay on Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* (1956-57), since one of my aims as Director of the Studia Mediterranea center at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split is to expand an Adriatic- or European-centered view of Mediterranean Studies. Using Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of intertextuality, in which "the functional text is a hybrid entity, not a single whole; it is a composite amalgamation of a variety of formulae" (Bakhtin 76), Zinhom argues that Mahfouz's trilogy incorporates elements of the Quran, local folklore, and popular culture in order to question patriarchal Egyptian society. The way the novels feature intertextu-

ality highlights the strengths of the different texts being referenced, rather than merely melting them together into a whole.

Similarly, a reading of similarity and separation is found in Antonela Marić's essay on two popular figures in contemporary Italian crime fiction: Imma Tata-ranni and Lolita Lobosco. On the one hand, the concept of topophilia is used in order to delineate the strong sense of belonging to a place that is found in these texts. Yet at the same time, it is in the author's reading of space, through the lens of Gaston Bachelard, that representations of difference arise, since conflicts between profit and nature proliferate in the books, reflecting the tension between individual and external representations that Bešker and the other essays in this section have emphasized.

In short, as Braudel has said, "The Mediterranean is not even a *single* sea, it is a complex of seas; and these seas are broken up by islands, interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by intricate coastlines" (Braudel 17). It is just this broken, complex, interrupted landscape that the various essays collected here begin to address.¹

Brian WILLEMS, guest editor

Director of the *Studia Mediterranea*

Center Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Split

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Texas UP, 1981.
- Bešker, Inoslav. *Mediteran u književnosti*. Profil, 2021.
- Biancofiore, Angela, and Clément Barniaudy. "Introduction: Thinking Interconnected Worlds." *Re-storying Mediterranean Worlds: New Narratives from Italian Cultures to Global Citizenship*, edited by Angela Biancofiore and Clément Barniaudy, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, pp. 16.

¹ Most of these essays were first presented at the September 2023 conference *A Cross-Cultural Mediterranean*, held at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, and organized by the Studia Mediterranea center, along with assistance from the Center for Cross-Cultural and Korean Studies. I would like to thank the participants of the conference, the administration of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Split, and the editors and reviewers of *Anafora*, especially Tihomir Živić, for all their support and assistance.

Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volume 1*. Translated by Siân Reynolds. Fontana / Collins, 1975.

Watkins, John. "The New Mediterranean Studies: An Institutional and Intellectual Challenge." *Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2014, pp. 88–92.