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FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the third issue of *I.S. Med. Interdisciplinary Studies on the Mediterranean* which continues to focus on the complexities of the region and the exciting areas of inquiry which range from the humanities and arts to the social sciences, women's and gender studies. It has been a very productive year for scholars in the discipline and for our networking. Several new publications, scholarly presentations, awards, and research projects have facilitated discussions that were otherwise neglected, unfinished, or still nebulous. We are grateful for the passionate and ongoing work of our colleagues and the support of international publishers with dedicated series on the Mediterranean and its cultures.

This current issue opens with a delightful interview with Jessica Marglin about her intriguing award-winning *Shamama Case* (Princeton UP, 2022) to then provide attentive interpretations to two mediatic works, Sayed Kashua's sitcom *Arab Labor* and Burhan Qurbani's *Berlin Alexanderplatz.* The volume offers analyses of literary works like poems dedicated to the *Serenissima* and travelogues of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and includes the fascinating studies of women mystics, of the case of a Jewish merchant colony of Marseille, and of the Mediterranean diet, concluding with two book reviews on Mediterranean arts.

While we pursue ongoing exploration of the Mediterranean through the attentive written analyses of our authors, we continue to organize annual symposia, held in different pertinent sites. We are looking forward to being in Palermo to listen to a diverse and stimulating array of presentations, embracing the variegated culinary specialties and customs, and revitalizing connections while looking ahead to our fifth Mediterranean Studies Symposium in 2025, in another inspiring international location. In the meantime, feel free to contact the authors directly: their emails are provided in the contributors' section of each issue.

Many thanks for your continued interest!

INTERVIEW WITH JESSICA M. MARGLIN

Jessica M. Marglin is Ruth Ziegler Chair in Jewish Studies and Professor of Religion, Law and History at USC Dornsife. She received her PhD from the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. She has previously held fellowships at Princeton University, Yeshiva University, the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, and the Institut d'Études Avancées in Paris. Her research interests include Jews and Muslims in modern North Africa and the Mediterranean; legal history; Non-Muslims in the Islamic world; Mediterranean Studies. Her first book, *Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco,* which won the 2016 Baron Book prize as well as the 2017-2018 National Jewish Book Award in Sephardic Culture*,* was published by Yale University Press in 2016; her latest book, *The Shamama Case: Contesting Citizenship across the Modern Mediterranean* was published by Princeton University Press in 2022 and is here discussed with the author.

Q. Tell us a little bit about the latest book you wrote, *The Shamama Case*. Who are you trying to reach with this book? And what are you trying to communicate?

A.This book is a microhistory of a legal case surrounding the estate of Nissim Shamama, a Jew from Tunis who died in Italy in 1873. I got interested in the subject because it offered a way of doing legal history across the Mediterranean – a case that involved Italian courts and Tunisian officials, as well as Jewish law and Islamic law. So, my audience is definitely scholars of the Mediterranean – in addition to historians of Jews, North Africa and the Middle East, and law more broadly. My main goal is to convince readers that debates about citizenship were not bounded by political or even regional borders.

In looking at a case that took place across the Mediterranean, I hope to move away from frameworks that see modern citizenship as a European

invention that was exported to the rest of the world. Instead, I seek to recover Tunisian understandings of belonging that emerge in the course of the Shamama case, which were of course in dialogue with legal categories emerging in Italy at the time. Ultimately, I argue that the discourses of belonging were co-constructed across the imagined boundary dividing Europe from the Middle East and North Africa.

Q. We are always fascinated with legal cases, but we are mostly intrigued by the multicultural world Nissim Shamama represents: a Jew from Tunisia, who lived in France and in Italy where unfortunately he died, in his late 60s. He died as an Italian citizen. What does this mean to Nissim, to his case, to his family, to us readers? Is there a straightforward citizenship as he was born somewhere else and lived everywhere? What does citizenship mean to you, after having researched and written this book?

A. Nissim Shamama's trajectory definitely has something to teach us about what is often called multiculturalism. Perhaps the most obvious one is that the term "multiculturalism" itself – or close cognates like cosmopolitanism or pluralism – often assumes certain reified boundaries among different groups that did not necessarily exist. The Jewish community of Tunisia is usually described as being divided between Livornese Jews (Grana) and indigenous, Tunisian Jews (Twansa). Yet while Nissim Shamama lived in Tunisia as a member of the Twansa community, he successfully claimed to be of Livornese descent once in Europe. Categories like "French" and "Italian" were similarly flexible: many of those with French nationality in Tunisia were in fact Jews or Muslims from Algeria who registered with the French consulates and benefited from extraterritorial privileges. And large numbers of Grana Jews managed to get first Tuscan, and later Italian nationality – even if their families had lived in Tunisia for generations.

A second, related point is that the Shamama lawsuit demonstrates that citizenship was rarely singular or even binary (you are a citizen of Italy or you are not). Rather, like other forms of identity, state membership was often multiple and layered – even in an era that rejected dual nationality. This is why I introduce the term "legal belonging," which emphasizes that state membership existed along a spectrum and that multiple forms of membership could coexist: one could be a subject of the Bey of Tunis but a protégé of France. Or, like Nissim, one could live as both a Tunisian national and an Italian citizen.

Q. We had the pleasure of interviewing Dr Sarah Abrevaya Stein as well, author of another book on citizenship, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardic Jews, and the Ottoman 20th century*. How is her book connected to yours? How is "her" idea of citizenship connected or not to yours?

A. Sarah's book *Extraterritorial Dreams* was hugely helpful for my thinking in *The Shamama Case* and in my work more broadly. In her introduction, she rejects the idea of citizenship as binary – which helped me articulate the idea of legal belonging as a spectrum. While she focuses on how Ottoman Jews claimed different forms of extraterritorial status, she nonetheless follows people who cross borders. And her chapter on Silas Aaron Hardoon, whose death also occasioned a long legal battle over nationality, demonstrated that the Shamama case was not an isolated incident but instead belonged to a pattern by which death triggered fierce disputes over belonging.

Q. Let us talk about another difficult term to define, Mediterranean. What is to you the Mediterranean?

A. This is the million-dollar question! I do not believe in a single definition of the Mediterranean. Rather, for me, the Mediterranean is good to think with – a framework that allows me to move away from the regional and civilizational boundaries that tend to organize academic thinking. I do not contend that the Shamama lawsuit tells us anything about the essential nature of the Mediterranean; rather, I use the Mediterranean as a way to connect the historiographies of Europe and North Africa.

Q. Do you think that all Mediterranean peoples have similar case to Shamama's as our DNAs and belongings are indeed multicultural?

A. I don't dare to comment on the question of DNA as I'm certainly not qualified to discuss these matters! But I will say that the intense connections across the Mediterranean are nothing new; happily, there is more and more attention among historians to the ties linking Italy and Tunisia – for instance the work of M'hamed Oualdi for the nineteenth century and Guillaume Calafat for the early modern period. In that sense, people have been criss-crossing the Mediterranean for centuries. Mostly, however, I think we need to break down the presumption that there is an essential difference between the "Orient" and the "Occident." In Mediterraneanist terms, I suppose I'm closer to Braudel than to Pirenne, even if I wouldn't exactly call myself a Braudelian.

Q. What is your next project?

A. My next book is actually even more Mediterranean in nature. I'm working on a history of extraterritoriality across the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century. Extraterritoriality was a legal status given not only to Europeans in the Middle East and North Africa, but to many locals who were colonial subjects of European empires, obtained consular protection, or naturalized abroad. One of the main goals of this book is to write a connective history of law that brings together European, Middle Eastern, and North African legal systems and explores the ways in which they were connected.

Q. Any last word of wisdom?

A. I would encourage young scholars to think more about legal history: so many people feel intimidated by the field and presume that you need a law degree to do it. But the socio-legal approach is really more about people, institutions, and politics than about legal doctrine. And there are so many rich legal sources that remain under-exploited. My hope is that my work inspires new generations of scholars to write new histories of law in the Mediterranean.

ARTICLES

BEING ARAB, PALESTINIAN, ISRAELI, AND JEW?
Sayed Kashua's 'Arab Labor' and the Challenge to Coexist in Israel

Andrea Pizzinato*

Abstract

In 2007, the first season of the sitcom 'Arab Labor' (in Hebrew: *'Avodah 'Aravit*) was screened on primetime Israeli television. Most of the actors playing in the series are Palestinian, dialogues are mostly in Arabic, and the series is the first Israeli-Palestinian sitcom to bring the perspective of Palestinians in Israel to the general Israeli public. Its creator, Sayed Kashua, is a well-known Palestinian writer and journalist who was born and long lived in Israel, before moving to the United States. All of the above has represented a change in the place of Palestinian citizens within Israeli television, ensuring them renewed visibility among the Israeli-Jewish public. This contribution focuses on the first season of Arab Labor and conceptualizes it as a creative-subversive play that underscores the liminal condition of Palestinians in Israel, divided as they are between their social, cultural and national Arab-Palestinian heritage and their Israeli citizenship. By exploring some main characters, episodes, and cross-cut themes, it highlights the innovative power of Kashua's representation of the entangled Arab-Palestinian identity in Israel. Through irony and sarcasm, Kashua lowers the tones of the political debate and stages stereotypical representations that Jews have of Arabs and vice versa, highlighting the inconsistency of these clichés and ridiculing them. The paper argues that Kashua's creative resistance discourse (Goren 2014) on Arab-Palestinian citizens strives to spotlight the illusory character of exclusivist, supposedly pure imposed ethnonational identities, which ever fail to account for the complex entanglement of factors that contribute to shape hyphenated, fragmented identities, such as that of Palestinians in Israel. In order to present this argument, the article (1) sketches a historical background of Israel's Palestinian history until the early 2000s and of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel; (2) it discusses relevant characters, episodes and cross-cut themes of the sitcom; (3) finally, it contextualizes Arab Labor into the wider artistic profile of Sayed Kashua.

Keywords: Palestinian citizens of Israel, identity politics, ethnonationalism, Israel, Palestinian identity.

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> "Who am I? What am I? Am I Arab? Am I Israeli? Do they want me to stay? Do they want to throw me out? Where do I belong?"
>
> "I am sure I am an Arab, but all I know is here [in Israel, *Ed*]".
> (Amjad – Episode 7, *Loyalty*, Arab Labor, 1st season)

In 2007, the first season of the sitcom 'Arab Labor' was screened on Israeli television. For the first time, an Israeli-Palestinian series focusing on the life of Palestinian citizens of Israel was aired on a national TV for the general Israeli public.[1] Arab Labor's cast is mainly composed by Palestinian-in-Israel actors, Arabic is the main spoken language, and the series is created by Sayed Kashua (Hebraized name of Sayyid Qashū'a), a well-known Palestinian writer and journalist born in Israel. All of the above represented a change in the place of Palestinian citizens within Israeli television, ensuring them new visibility in the Israeli-Jewish public, and, to some extent, in the Israel public discourse. Most importantly, Arab Labor – reflecting its creator's prevalent trait – makes extensive use of irony and sarcasm as powerful tools to demystify the harshest, most exclusivist attitudes expressed in the Zionist and in the Palestinian narratives, envisioning a new way to look at Arab-Jewish coexistence in Israel. Spectators, mostly Jews, are led into the daily life of the 'Aliyan family, and follow its interactions with Palestinians and Jews, introducing them to the paradoxes that characterize Palestinian existence in the Jewish state. The focus of attention in the series is the turbulent life of Amjad 'Aliyan, a 35-year-old journalist who works for an Israeli leftist newspaper, which recalls exactly Kashua's experience as a columnist for Haaretz. Even more so, Amjad, as much as Kashua, is trapped in an identity crisis. He wants to get rid of his 'Arabness' and fit into Jewish society, particularly in the Ashkenazi élite whose habits and lifestyle he admires.

This article focuses on the first season of Arab Labor and conceptualizes it as a creative-subversive play that underscores the liminality of Palestinians in Israel. By exploring some main characters, episodes, and cross-cut themes, it underlines the innovative power of Kashua's representation of what mainstream Jewish public opinion labels 'Israeli Arabs', complexifying this already multifaceted identity. Throughout the series, some paradoxical situations highlight the contradictions that

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1 Adiel Mendelson-Maoz and Liat Steir-Livny, "Hybridity in Israeli Television – 'Arab Labour', the First Arab-Israeli Sitcom," *Misgerot Media* 6 (2011): 37-38 [Hebrew].

Palestinian citizens experience in Israel, divided as they are between their social, cultural and national Arab-Palestinian heritage and their Israeli citizenship. Furthermore, the paper aims to contextualize Arab Labor within the broader artistic-journalistic work of Sayed Kashua, a true literary personality in Israel. But first, in order to appreciate the contingency and power of Kashua's satire, I will sketch out a historical background of Israel's Palestinians until the early 2000s and of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel.

Palestinians in Israel: backdrop of a difficult cohabitation

After the 1948 war for Palestine, around 150,000 Palestinians remained in their homeland, many of them being internally displaced. Since the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948, non-Jewish communities were formally granted citizenship, including full equality of social and political rights, regardless of their religion, 'race', and sex[2]. The Declaration of Independence ensured them freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture, and invited Arab citizens of the newborn country "to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions."[3] Nevertheless, a military administration (*mimshal tzvai*) governed Arab citizens from 1948 to 1966, severely restricting their freedom of movement, expression, social and economic life. The security apparatus was thought to best control the lives of what was (and to some extent, still is) perceived as a potential 'fifth column' of the state, internal enemies that could subvert its foundations from within.

After the end of the military rule (1966), Palestinians could acquire civil freedom, and started to integrate into Jewish society more effectively. At the same time, Israel's territorial expansion that followed the 1967 war enabled Israel's Palestinians to travel in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, increasing their connectedness to Palestinian identity and national heritage. However, simultaneously, Israel's Palestinian citizens realized their distinctiveness from the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, as they enjoyed better socio-economic status (in terms of education, healthcare, social welfare) and wider, though not complete, civil and political

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2 "Declaration of Independence," *The Knesset*, https://m.knesset.gov.il/en/about/pages/declaration.aspx (last consulted: 5 January 2022).

3 *Ibid.*

rights. In fact, in theory, Israeli Palestinians have enjoyed a formal status of citizens in the Jewish state since its very foundation. Nevertheless, even after the end of the military rule, they have suffered from incomplete citizenship rights, due to persisting discrimination in key sectors such as access to state budgets, allocations, education, labor market and housing[4]. Furthermore, they have lacked substantial representation in parliamentary politics, partly due to an increasingly Jewish connotation of state institutions. This contributed to fuel the perception of a marginalized, second-class minority in Israel's Palestinian community. Moreover, they were perceived as 'brothers apart', too 'Israelized', and suspected to collaborate with the Israeli enemy by Palestinians in the Territories and in the Arab world[5]. Thus, paradoxically, "the very contingent of Palestinians that managed to remain *in situ* in the homeland found itself physically disconnected and morally excommunicated from the center of gravity of national crystallization."[6]

This tormented condition of double marginality was nothing but reinforced throughout the Oslo peace process, which contributed to make Palestinian citizens of Israel feel like a 'trapped minority.'[7] The Oslo reconciliation process further aggravated the isolation of Palestinians within the Green Line and increased their exclusion from the Palestinian community that lived across the border. According to the agreements' logic, it was assumed that Palestinian claims of nationality would have been fulfilled by the creation of a Palestinian Authority (and state) in the West Bank and Gaza, but no resolution was deliberated for Israel's own Palestinian national minority. According to Palestinian scholar and former politician 'Azmi Bishara, the Oslo accords brought about a 'Kurdization' of the Palestinian national question, since they confined the issue of Palestinian nationhood uniquely to OPT Palestinians, whereas Palestinians in Israel or in other nation-states had to be considered minorities of those same respective countries.[8]

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4 "Discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel," *Adalah*, https://www.adalah.org/en/tag/index/517 (last consulted: 11 January 2022).

5 Maha Nassar, *Brothers Apart. Palestinian Citizens of Israel and the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 3-4.

6 Dan Rabinowitz, "The Palestinian Citizens of Israel. The Concept of Trapped Minority and the Discourse of Transnationalism in Anthropology," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 1 (2001): 74.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Abigail Fraser and Avi Shabat, "Between Nationalism and Liberalism: The Political Thought of Azmi Bishara," in *The Israeli Palestinians. An Arab Minority in the Jewish State*, ed. Alexander Bligh (London/Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), 17.

The violent confrontations that took place in early October 2000 between the Israeli police and Palestinian demonstrators in northern Israel marked a further turning point in Jewish-Arab relations within the Jewish State. Protests arose among Israel's Palestinian population at the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada (2000-2005) and ended with thirteen Palestinian citizens killed by police shooting[9]. During the October events, Israel's Palestinian citizens expressed their solidarity with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories but also denounced their second-class condition as Israel's citizens, demanding substantial improvement in their civil-political status.

Israeli police life fire on Palestinian protesters exacerbated the perception of marginalization in this community.[10] This was fueled by a public discourse in the Hebrew media describing the 'Arab sector' (*migzar 'aravi*) as disloyal and subversive. An official commission of inquiry, the Or Commission, was appointed by the government to shed light on the events' dynamics and mass mobilization of the 'Arab sector.'[11] To some extent, the commission's official report, published in 2003, recognized the causes of Palestinian discontent in Israel and institutionally addressed them for the first time in Israeli statehood.[12] However, the failure to prosecute the officers deemed responsible for the killing of unarmed citizens increased the perception of a different, unequal treatment in Israel's own Palestinian community.

From this yet concise historical background, a quite troubled image of cohabitation between Arab-Palestinians and Jews in Israel emerges. In fact, according to a significative number of Israeli and Palestinian scholars, Israeli society has grown increasingly more divided along ethnonational lines over the years.[13] This conceptual framework has taken the name of

9 Shourideh Molavi, *Stateless Citizenship: The Palestinian-Arab Citizens of Israel* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 67-68.

10 Ilan Pappe, *The Forgotten Palestinians. A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2011), 237.

11 Theodor Or and Elie Rekhess, "State Commission of Inquiry into the Events of October 2000: A Retrospective," *Israel Studies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 23-53; Yoav Peled, "Restoring Ethnic Democracy: The Or Commission and Palestinian Citizenship in Israel," *Citizenship Studies* 9, no. 1 (2005): 89-105.

12 Or and Rekhess, "State Commission," 24-29.

13 Sammy Smooha, "Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2003-2009" (Haifa: The Jewish-Arab Center, University of Haifa, 2010): 7. The following are some of the scholars, both Israeli and Palestinian, representative of this approach, as cited in Smooha, "Index" (*endnote 3*): Elie Rekhess, "The Evolvement of an Arab-Palestinian National Minority in Israel," *Israel Studies* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2007):

'mutual alienation theory'. It holds that Jewish media, mainstream governmental discourse and public opinion perceive Arabs as an increasingly radicalized minority, which has undergone Palestinization and Islamization since the late 1960s. Alongside that, Palestinians believe that Jewish public and establishment are becoming more uncompromising and exclusionary, due to an assertive rise of ultra-nationalist and religious rightwing parties.[14]

However, in its 'Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel (2003-2009)', Israeli sociologist Sammi Smooha proposes an alternative, concurring framework to conceptualize inter-community relations from 1976 to 2008. He argues that, in the long run, a mutual rapprochement has taken place between Jews and Palestinians, preventing mutual confrontation and violence[15]. This thesis is not as simplistic, or naïve, as it might sound, for it acknowledges the discriminations that Palestinians suffer from at various levels within Israel. Smooha contends that:

> Israelization makes Arabs bilingual and bicultural and adds the Hebrew language and Hebrew culture to their repertoire. Israeli Arabs […] are increasingly binding their fate and future with Israel and conceiving of Israel as their home country. They take Jews as their reference group and wish to achieve the same standards, services, and treatment. They abide by democratic rules for effecting change in Israeli society and avoid violence. Israelization renders Arabs impatient with discrimination and exclusion and drives them to lead a serious fight for change.[16]

The seemingly contradictory condition embodied in Israel's Palestinians constitutes the hallmark of their uniqueness, suspended as they are between their Arab-Palestinian heritage and Israeli citizenship, which requires them to speak fluent Hebrew and manage Jewish culture. This conflicted identity is experienced by Palestinian citizens in a variety of original, ever-changing ways, and never without tension. For that matter, Palestinian novelists, poets and filmmakers have contributed to portray and unravel the multifaceted expressions of Palestinian identity in Israel[17]. Among these authors,

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1-28; Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker, *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Oren Yiftachel and As'ad Ghanem, "Understanding 'Ethnocratic' Regimes: The Politics of Seizing Contested Territories," *Political Geography* 23, no. 6 (August 2004): 647-76.

14 Smooha, "Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2003-2009," 8.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Op. cit.*, 8-9.

17 For an overview of Palestinian fiction and poetry in Israel, see: Makhoul, Manar H. *Palestinian Citizens in Israel: A History Through Fiction, 1948-2010*. Edinburgh,

Sayed Kashua's early 2000s work emblematically provides an original, thought-provoking insight into the (self)-representation of Palestinian citizens' condition in Israel, as well as into their daily identity struggle and their relationship with Jewish fellow citizens. Henceforth, his most popular TV production will be the core-subject of the following discussion.

Challenging the rules of the game: the sitcom 'Arab Labor'

Arab Labor is a comedy drama series aired on Israeli primetime TV (Channel 2, Keshet) for four seasons, with more than forty episodes in total. It is the first Israeli TV series created by a Palestinian citizen, namely Sayed Kashua, which offers insights into Palestinian citizens' issues and hardships in Israel. Its first season was broadcast in 2007, and subsequent seasons appeared in 2008, 2012 and 2013. For the purpose of this discussion, I will specifically focus on the first season, namely on its nine episodes plus the final one,[18] aired on Israel's Independence Day.

The series' title itself prefigures the sarcastic and irreverent character of the whole sitcom. *'Avodah 'Aravit* in Hebrew is a colloquial, pejorative expression that denotes unreliable and substandard work, presumably carried out by Arabs; this slang idiom additionally mocks the slogan of Zionist pioneers in twentieth-century Yishuv, who encouraged new *'olim* and Jewish landlords to replace Arab workers with Jewish labor (*'avodah 'ivrit*), embracing a productive role in the taming of their (new) land.[19]

Arab Labor is unprecedented for many different reasons. As noted above, it is the first Israeli television space that focused on, and gave voice to, Palestinian citizens. Theretofore, they were absent or underrepresented in Israeli television, and, when represented, they were too often associated with negative stereotypes[20]. Furthermore, dialogues in the series are mainly in Arabic (with Hebrew subtitles), and the cast is primarily composed by Palestinian actors. This is groundbreaking, insofar as many Palestinian

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Edinburgh University Press, 2020; Agsous, Sadia. *Derrière l'hébreu, l'arabe. Le roman palestinien en hébreu (1966-2017)*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022.

18 The Car, The Sheep, Kindergarten, Kidnapping, Passover, Reserve Duty, Loyalty, Crime on the Border, Meeting the Parents; Independence Day.

19 Shiri Goren, "Arab Labor, Jewish Humor: Memory, Identity, and Creative Resistance on Israeli Prime-Time Television," *Jewish Social Studies* 25, no. 2 (2020): 110; Judit Druks, "Passing as… in Arab Labor by Sayed Kashua on Israeli TV," *Third Text* 34, no. 2 (2020): 313.

20 Steir-Livny and Mendelson-Maoz, "From the Margins to Prime Time," 81.

characters used to be played by Mizrahi Jews in Israeli television, as much as Jewish actors played Arab characters in Israeli cinema until the 1980s.[21] Moreover, the reception of the series in the Israeli Jewish public was greatly beyond expectations.[22]

The series portrays the everyday life of a secular middle-class Palestinian family in Israel, the ‘Aliyan, and revolves around the life of Amjad (played by Norman Issa), a 35-year-old journalist who makes every surrealistic attempt possible in order to pass as a Jew. He is married to Bushra (Clara Khoury), a Palestinian woman and social worker by profession, who makes fun of the tragicomic situations in which her husband is continuously entangled. Contrary to Amjad, she is proud of her Arab-Palestinian identity, but she can also be quite flexible, as her perfect Hebrew and her ‘Western outfit’ makes her easily fit into Jewish society. Amjad and Bushra are parents of a young daughter, Maya (Fatma Yihye), and, in the first season’s last episode, Bushra gives birth to their first male child, whose name is at the center of a dispute between them and Amjad’s parents. Abu-Amjad (Salim Dau), the protagonist’s father, is a retired former employee of the Ministry of Education, who places his economic interests before any ideological conjecture; he is very harsh to his son, particularly to his non-Arab-like behavior (e.g., he wears seatbelt while driving!), and he is sometimes ready to cheat on him, if necessity requires it or if he can speculate on his son’s troubles. Umm-Amjad (Salwa Nakra), Amjad’s mother, embodies the calm and caring housewife who is at peace with her traditional Palestinian identity; throughout the series, she represents a voice of sanity and good-sense opinion, counterbalancing her husband’s instability.

The vicissitudes of the ‘Aliyan family intertwine with other external characters. Meir (Mariano Idelmann) is a Jewish photographer and Amjad’s colleague at the local newspaper. He accompanies Amjad in his integration into Jewish society in a comic way. He is the caricatural figure of an average Israeli: direct, impulsive, and with stereotypes about Arabs. Nevertheless, he is ready to partially put them aside when he falls in love with Amal (Mira ‘Awad), a Palestinian attorney who graduated from Boston and who now works for a civil rights organization in Israel. She is entirely devoted to her Palestinianness, both in her job, defending Palestinian legal rights in court, and in her private life, where she denounces every form of discrimination she experiences as a Palestinian. The relationship between

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21 Ella Shohat, “The Return of the Repressed: The Palestinian Wave in Recent Israeli Cinema,” in *Israeli Cinema. East/West and the Politics of Representation*, ed. Ella Shohat (IB Tauris: London, 2010), 225.

22 Goren, “Arab Labor, Jewish Humor,” 111.

Meir and Amal is animated by constant squabbles and misunderstandings, as they are repeatedly confronted with the respective misrepresentations attributed to their own collectives. At the same time, they form a mixed couple, a rare occurrence in Israeli society.

According to Marcelle Kosman, *'Avodah 'Aravit* has some nation-building potential that operates at two levels[23]. On the one hand, the series makes Palestinians visible in mainstream Israeli television, pulling them out of a halo of negative stereotypes and their repeated association with criminality, violence or terrorism on TV news. On the other, the sitcom makes the visibility of Palestinians normative.[24] Thus, in Arab Labor Palestinian citizens overcome their marginalization from Israeli TV, while Israeli-Jewish viewers are confronted with the representation of their Arab fellow citizens, but also with their troubled existence in a state that disowns their history and identity claims.

Not less importantly, starting from the early 2000s, some TV dramas in Israel have started to portray the life of Israeli family.[25] Examples of this trend were *Meorav Yerushalmi* ("Jerusalem Mix"), broadcast in 2003, which gives insights into the life of an Orthodox Jewish family; the series *Srugim* ("Crocheted"), aired 2008-2012, which revolves around the daily routine of religious Zionists, the title referring to the knitted skullcap (*kippah srugah*) that traditional religious Jews use to wear. "A Touch Away" (*Merhaq Negi'ah*), aired in 2006, deals with a Russian immigrant who falls in love with a Haredi girl from Bnei Brak, an ultra-Orthodox municipality near Tel Aviv. Now, all of these TV series represented symbolic spaces where Israeli identity was negotiated and contended.[26] Thus, to some extent, Arab Labor fills the vacancy left in Israel's primetime TV by representing the daily life of an Arab-Palestinian family. Although the focus on the nuclear family has recently become less frequent in sitcoms, in *'Avodah 'Aravit* it serves precisely to normalize the image of Palestinian citizens in Israeli society, by portraying the everyday routine of a common Arab-Muslim family away from terrorism and violence.[27]

Furthermore, by choosing the genre of sitcom, Kashua lowers the tones of the political discussion and, through his well-known sarcastic attitude,

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23 Marcelle Kosman, "Comic Relief: The Ethical Intervention of 'Avodah 'Aravit (Arab Labor) in Political Discourses of Israel–Palestine," *Comedy Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 20.

24 *Ibid*.

25 Goren, "Arab Labor, Jewish Humor," 111.

26 Miri Talmon, "A Touch Away from Cultural Others: Negotiating Israeli Jewish Identity on Television," *Shofar 31*, no. 2 (2013): 55.

27 Kosman, "Comic Relief," 24.

he leads his viewers through stereotypical representations that Jews have of Arabs and vice versa. The paradoxical situations that the series' characters repeatedly come across serve to highlight the inconsistency of these stereotypes, ridiculing them. In doing so, the sitcom envisions a radically different kind of discourse, insofar as it displays on screen the conflicts arising from Arab-Jewish cohabitation in Israel through humor and frivolity.[28] Ultimately, representing the daily vicissitudes of mostly Arab characters, with their shortcomings, contradictions, and hilarious relations with fellow Jews, should supposedly bring Arab-Palestinian narrative(s) closer to the Israeli Jewish audience, against a widespread media discourse that portrays Arabs as internal enemies. Through the apparently subdued tones of comedy, Kashua intends to offer a sharp critique of the dominant security-centered discourse on Palestinians in Israel, by prospecting the very possibility of cohabitation or, at least, reciprocal acceptance. Therein, Arab Labor constitutes but a tiny step in the 'normalization' of the contested (or ignored) presence of Palestinians in Israeli public sphere.

Amjad's quest for (Jewish-Israeli) identity

The undisputed protagonist of the series, and Kashua's main focus of attention, is Amjad 'Aliyan. He is a Palestinian citizen who works as a journalist for an Israeli newspaper, exactly as Sayed Kashua, his creator, did. Above all, Amjad strives to lead a normal life. However, his pursuit of normality always leads him to grotesque situations.

Every morning, Amjad is asked by Israeli police to provide his identity card when crossing the checkpoint by car. This happens despite his attempts to conceal his Arab identity: he wears 'Western' clothes, he listens to the IDF radio station, and of course avoids speaking Arabic. In order not to arouse suspicion, he also instructs his daughter to please the policeman by politely saying in Hebrew *boqer tov, adoni*, "Good morning, Sir", whereas she eventually greets him in a mocking tone, in Arabic – *sabah al-khayr, ya bulis* ("Good morning, policeman"). He later asks his Jewish colleague Me'ir why he cannot pass as a Jew and eventually discovers that it is because only Arabs drive Subarus. Then, his new Rover, a perfect Jewish-style car, allows him to avoid police control at the checkpoint, assuring him a warm waving from the policeman.

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28 Kosman, "Comic Relief," 20.

The protagonist's desire of assimilation is also well reflected in the third episode (*The Kindergarten*), when he looks for a kindergarten that can accommodate his daughter. Amjad desires a better education for Maya than the one provided by his parents Abu- and Umm-Amjad at home. Amjad's quest for a kindergarten suitable for Maya in Jerusalem becomes a sarcastic exploration of the diverse and fragmented education system in Israel, but also a hard confrontation with the segregationist reality of Jewish schools (and society) for Palestinians.

At first, in order to avoid any confrontation with the Jewish school system, Maya is enrolled in a Muslim kindergarten, where, in his father's view, repetition of the Qur'an is supposed to train her mnemonic skills. But after he realizes that Maya has started to think and behave in an ultraconservative manner, he moves her to *Gan Ha-Shalom*, the 'Kindergarten of Peace'. The parents' meeting with the director Sigalit reveals the anti-Arab attitude of this secular school which, at least from its evocative name, is supposed to be open-minded and inclusive. Sigalit is initially deceived by the assonance of the surname 'Aliyan with the much more Jewish-sounding surname Elian, so at first she thinks she has to do with a Jewish family. But, as soon as she realizes her misunderstanding, she makes everything in order to prevent Amjad and Bushra from enrolling their daughter in her school. The director underlines that *Gan Ha-Shalom* puts a lot of emphasis on Jewish tradition and Israeli national identity in its educational mission, by teaching stories about Biblical prophets (Abraham, Isaac, Moses) and by encouraging loyalty to state symbols. Amjad reassures Sigalit in that all of the Jewish prophets are also recognized in the Muslim tradition, and in that the 'Aliyan family is most loyal to the state of Israel and its national symbols. Even when the director states that children there play at killing Arabs, Amjad minimizes it by replying they are still young, and they have to get used to coexistence since early childhood. Contrary to Amjad's optimism about Arab-Jewish cohabitation, Sigalit's speech reveals Kashua's critique of Israeli-Zionist secular leftists, who present themselves as tireless supporters of peace and cohabitation, yet they believe in it only "to a certain extent."

After this and the third vain attempt with an anthroposophical-inspired school, Amjad and his wife end up at a Jewish liberal reform kindergarten. Its director reassures Maya's parents in that she will not be the only girl different from the others, because in their school there is also a disabled girl. This tragicomic response spotlights the perceived and embodied distance between Arabs and Jews in Israel, and, despite attempts made by Palestinians to integrate into the system, it reveals its ultimate inaccessibility, the impossibility to overcome racial, ethnonational boundaries. Even Amjad's

last attempt at a bilingual kindergarten turns out to be a failure, revealing Kashua's dubious attitude towards mixed schools. There, teachers speak both Hebrew and Arabic, both holidays are celebrated, and both national narratives are respected. Nonetheless, this alleged exaltation of coexistence ultimately takes on caricatural tones, as when the two teachers speak in unison, alternating between Arabic and Hebrew in an unnatural, unplausible way.[29] Ultimately, Amjad's unsuccessful adventures through various kindergartens suggest the hyper-fragmentation and incommunicability of a school system that is designed to divide rather than unite the diverse 'tribes of Israel', as noted in a famous speech by former Israeli President Reuven Rivlin.[30] As per Rivlin's allocution, the 'tribe' of Arab citizens is not really part of the game. Thus, the creation of a new Israeli identity and order should supposedly overcome societal (and school system) fragmentation that exist between secular, Orthodox and national-religious Jewish communities as well as between Jews and Arabs.[31]

However, as evident throughout the series, Amjad tries hard to fit into Jewish society, looking like a real assimilated Arab. In this regard, he perfectly embodies what much of the Israeli establishment refers to as 'good Arab' ('*aravi tov*)[32]. Since early statehood, Israeli government and security forces have fostered collaboration with members of the Arab community, coopting some of them through privileges in return for security assistance[33]. In the TV series, Amjad as well is hired by the Shin Bet and invited to cooperate with Jewish security agencies, providing information on 'strange movements' within his neighborhood. After all, marshalling 'good Arabs', docile and submissive loyal citizens, has long been a strategy for governmental bodies meant to normalize the presence of Palestinian-Arabs within the state and, ultimately, to better control a sector considered to be potentially subversive. However, the Shin Bet eventually gets tired of the useless information provided by Amjad, who is definitely not perceived as a danger, nor helpful, for Israeli security, so their infructuous collaboration

29 Kashua further addressed some of these issues in his latest TV comedy series "Madrasa" (2023), located in a bilingual high school in Jerusalem.

30 Reuven Rivlin, President of the state of Israel at the 15th Annual Herzliya Conference. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmRDrH5VcNY (last consulted: 10 January 2022).

31 *Ibid.*

32 Amal Jamal, "Manufacturing 'Quiet Arabs' in Israel: Ethnicity, Media Frames and Soft Power," *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 2 (2013): 245-264.

33 See: Hillel, Cohen. *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948-1967*. Berkley, California: University of California Press, 2010.

rapidly comes to an end. As such, this episode reveals Kashua's critique of the suspicion and surveillance discourse imposed on Israel's Arab citizens. Amjad's harmlessness and inoffensiveness serve to expose the paradoxes of the security-focused approach that shapes much of the relationship between Israel's establishment and its own Palestinian community.

Jewish society lifestyle, and particularly the habits of the Ashkenazi élite, keeps exerting a great fascination on Amjad. This is well evidenced in the fifth episode of the series (*Passover*), when Amjad and his family are invited by some Ashkenazi Jewish friends to the Seder dinner, the Jewish festival *par excellence*. Wearing kippah, singing traditional religious songs and eating traditional Jewish food makes Amjad feel truly part of the other's community, however temporary and illusory this sensation is. To reciprocate his Jewish guests for this embracing experience, he will invite them to a surrealistic traditional Palestinian dinner, enacted with the help of his parents, as to show that Palestinians as well have strong traditional habits and festivals to celebrate, some sort of 'Muslim Passover'. As it would appear from this scene, Amjad is portrayed as suffering from an inferiority complex towards the Jewish culture he wants to adopt for himself and his family at all costs.

For that matter, Amjad's hopeful struggle to integrate into Jewish society and his willingness to look like a Jew resembles much that of his creator and the protagonists of his novels. Sayed Kashua has made his convoluted search for identity the distinctive feature of his artistic production. Born in 1975 in Tira, a village in the Triangle, central Israel, as early as a teenager he was admitted to a prestigious Israeli-Jewish boarding school in Jerusalem. Not unlike the protagonist of his autobiographical debut novel, *Dancing Arabs* (2002), he made every possible effort in order to assimilate into Jewish-Israeli society. Starting from an accurate, little-Arabic-sounding Hebrew pronunciation, the nameless antihero of the novel tries to get rid of his Arab background, starting to look like Israeli in order not to be rejected by his peers. He thus changes his clothes, his eating habits, his lifestyle, and slides between different schools, languages and cultures.

> I look more Israeli than the average Israeli. I'm always pleased when Jews tell me this. "You don't look like an Arab at all," they say. Some people claim it's a racist thing to say, but I've always taken it as a compliment, a sign of success. That's what I've always wanted to be, after all: a Jew. I've worked hard at it, and I've finally pulled it off.[34]

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34 Sayed Kashua, *Dancing Arabs*, transl. Miriam Shlesinger (New York: Grove Press, 2002), 140 (*ebook*).

Similarly, throughout Arab Labor, Amjad undergoes not only Israelization but also 'Jewification', or Judaization,[35] especially if his exposure to Jewish culture at work is considered. Undoubtedly, passing as a Jew allows the sitcom's protagonist to get by more easily in daily life complications. However, as suggested by Judit Druks, the deeper reason why Amjad identifies with Western habits and values could lie in its disavowal of his Arab background, conceived as an indistinct amalgam of impulses, irrationality, and backwardness.[36] In this regard, this attitude would recall a Bordieuan embodiment of longstanding Western stereotypes about Arabs that are well evidenced in Edward Sa'id's masterpiece, *Orientalism*[37]. To a certain extent, this is depicted in the ninth episode of the first season (*Meeting the Parents*), when Amjad takes his wife to their wedding anniversary's dinner at a luxury restaurant in Jerusalem, where most of the Jewish *bon ton* élite goes. Unexpectedly, Amjad's parents show up at the restaurant, invited by their Arab friend who works there as a waiter. To Amjad's chagrin, his parents will be able to turn a quiet, high-bourgeoise eating environment into a party-like setting, animated by Arab dances and screaming chants. The protagonist feels ashamed by this little drama scene and sits on the sidelines with an arm over his head, as if to cover himself from such a trivial, embarrassing play. Although Amjad strives to escape from his Arab heritage, he is continuously haunted by it.

Palestinians in Israel: which kind of (co)existence?

Palestinian citizens of Israel experience a multifaceted sense of identity and belonging, due to the interaction of the Arab, Palestinian and Israeli components, the combination of which each individual embodies in a peculiar and always different fashion. Throughout his work, Sayed Kashua adds to this already complex frame a new component, namely the Jewish identity[38]. More precisely, as per Batya Shimoni, in Kashua's artistic pro-

35 Steir-Livny, Mendelson-Maoz, "From the Margins to Prime Time," 85.
36 Druks, "Passing as…," 317.
37 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).
38 In the series, while Amjad's never-satisfied tension towards *Israeli* identity is reflected in his desire to always appear as a loyal, 'integrated' citizen, the protagonist's relationship with *Jewish* identity is evident in his admiration of Jewish traditions and customs (e.g., in the Passover episode), which he would seem to consider better, more refined, than Arab-Palestinian ones.

duction the Jewish-Arab identity emerges as a mirror image to that of the Arab-Jew (i.e., the Mizrahi, Sephardic Jew).[39]

Starting from the 1950s, Arabic-speaking Jews who lived in North African and Middle Eastern countries emigrated to Israel, where they were forced to get rid of their Arab cultural heritage and to turn into Hebrew-speakers. As this Arab/Arabic component was thought to pose a threat to the very Jewish-Zionist configuration of Israeli statehood, the 'Mizrahi' identity was constructed by state authorities, in an attempt to erase every trace of Arabness and to integrate former 'Arab-Jews' in Israeli society. Nevertheless, the third generation of Mizrahi activists, particularly Mizrahi writers, started to reappropriate the category of Arab-Jew, mainly for political, confrontational purposes. This was meant to oppose the Ashkenazi hegemony that characterized Israel's identity and public domain since early statehood.[40] In a similar fashion, Sayed Kashua appropriates and promotes an identity, the Jewish-Arab, which is perceived to be hostile to the Jewish-Zionist establishment. Just as the Mizrahi identity was created to counterbalance the Arab component in Jewish communities coming from the Middle East, so the 'Arab-Israeli' identity served to annihilate the Palestinian self-identification of non-Jewish citizens who remained within Israel's borders after 1948.[41] In this regard, Arab Labor and other literary works by Kashua strive to untangle the spectrum of identities perceived, embodied and represented by Israel's Palestinian citizens, by playing with the 'Arab-Israeli' or 'Arab-citizen' imprisoning label, repeatedly imposed on non-Jewish citizens. Yet, it must be noted, Kashua insists on using – in the series and elsewhere – the term 'Arab' or 'Israeli Arab', rather than 'Palestinian citizen' or 'Israeli Palestinian,'[42] though fully aware of the implications that this choice carries on, and of Palestinian criticism to which he is exposed thereby.

The aim of the creator is to bring back the experience of Arab citizens into Israel's collective imagination,[43] refusing every ethnonationalist, exclusivist narrative that conceives them as disloyal citizens, or non-citizens precisely because Palestinians (belonging to another nation-state), or a demographic threat that undermines Israel's very foundations. Even more so, Kashua appropriates this labeling insofar as, in his viewpoint, it better dis-

39 Batya Shimony, "Shaping Israeli-Arab Identity in Hebrew Words – The Case of Sayed Kashua," *Israel Studies* 18, no. 1 (2013): 150.

40 *Op. cit.,* 151-152.

41 *Op. cit.,* 152.

42 Gil Hochberg, "To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab: Sayed Kashua and the Prospect of Minority Speech-Acts," *Comparative Literature* 62, no. 1 (2010): 78.

43 *Ibid*.

plays the complexities associated with this identity.[44] Thus, while pointing to the limits and hardships inherent in such hyphenated condition, his work unveils the paradoxical (and imprisoning) effects of the Arab-Israeli label and, through irony, finds a way to overcome it.

In the previous section, I offered evidence of Amjad's attitude to pass as a Jew, drawing from numerous episodes of Arab Labor's first season. It might be argued that this desire to disguise and conceal one's own original identity reflects asymmetrical relations between dominant and subordinate subjects. The protagonist, being part of the minority, feels inferior and therefore aspires to belong to the colonizer's collective,[45] enjoying the same privileges, habits and lifestyle – as evident in the aforementioned episodes of *Passover* and *Meeting the Parents*. Passing as a Jew, thus, gives Amjad further opportunities and the possibility of social ascent in a society that otherwise would reject him. Nevertheless, as suggested by Gil Hochberg, this desire to fit in, which cannot be light-heartedly judged, does not manifest Kashua's complex of inferiority towards the Jews.[46] On the contrary, this attitude "captures but also mobilizes the convoluted psychological impact of a society dominated by ethno-racial inequality."[47] In this context, passing represents a coping mechanism, a psychological reaction to unequal treatment and disadvantaged conditions.[48] Thus, rather than a mere emulative process, passing can be ultimately conceived as a subversive, transgressive and creative act, that shakes cultural misrepresentations and the boundaries imposed by reciprocal ethnonational narratives. Through satire, Kashua plays with the caricatures of Arabs and Jews, and by ridiculing them, he transcends their immobility and acquires a more genuine space for critique and social denounce.

In Arab Labor's eighth episode (*Crime on the Border*), Bushra is pregnant and visits her gynecologist with Amjad. The doctor notices that there is something wrong with her fetus, but he can't really explain why, claiming that it is *gvuli*, 'borderline'. After further medical examination, Bushra returns to the gynecologist, but nothing has changed in the conditions of her unborn child. "It is borderline", the doctor repeats. Later on, under the advice of an acquaintance, Amjad tries to fix the situation by slightly moving the bed where he and his wife sleep, as it is located right above

44 Hochberg, "To Be or Not to Be," 78.
45 Druks, "Passing as…," 313.
46 Hochberg, "To Be or Not to Be," 85.
47 *Ibid*.
48 Druks, "Passing as…," 322.

the border (*gvul*), the Green Line that splits Jerusalem into two. Once the bed is straightened and moved from its condition of liminality, the fetus's health conditions immediately improve.

The paradoxical episode of the borderline fetus constitutes a sharp allusion to the liminal, somehow impossible, condition of being Arab-Palestinian within the state of Israel. Even more so, in the seventh episode (*Loyalty*), Amjad is assailed by an identity crisis, after he makes an interview to an Israeli supporter of yet another plan of partition ("We are here, they are there") between Arabs and Jews, that envisions population transfers of Arabs into a new Palestinian state. "Who needs those Arabs?", such rhetorical question posed by the plan proponent resonates in Amjad's mind, who is compelled to go to a psychologist to alleviate his delusions. "Who am I? What am I? Am I Arab? Am I Israeli? Do they want me to stay? Do they want to throw me out? Where do I belong?"– he incessantly wonders and asks his therapist, but he cannot find peace, nor answer. "I am sure I am an Arab, but all I know is here: *Bank haPoalim*, the *Meuchedet*. I grew up on *Shmil the Cat.*"[49]

Right in the middle of two incandescent and mutually exclusive nationalist narratives, Palestinian citizens occupy an interlayered position, that between Israeli citizenship and Palestinian nationalism, sometimes described as schizophrenic because presumably impossible. But this is precisely where Kashua's point (and power) lies. His purpose is to lay bare the constructed character of ethnonational identities, by spotlighting their very paradoxicality. Imposed as they are by respective nationalist discourses, identities such as Palestinian and Israeli are fictitious and instrumental, the clearest evidence of that being the apparent contradiction embodied in Israel's own Palestinian citizens. In Arab Labor, through a set of surreal, tragicomic sketches, Kashua strives to spotlight the inconsistency of exclusivist ways of imposing one's own *Weltanschauung* in a land where Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinian, are inextricably bound to live together. In his interview upon the release of the first season, Kashua claimed that Arab Labor intends to "make viewers break away from their national identity and see how ugly, complex, repulsive is when things like nationality and religion have to come into friendship, relationship and love."[50]

Nonetheless, which kind of coexistence between Jews and Arabs is envisioned by Sayed Kashua, if any? The author is surely quite skeptical about the potential of the so-called 'Stand-Tall Generation' (in Hebrew: *ha-dor*

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49 *Bank HaPoalim*, the *Meuchedet* health plan and the kid show *Shmil the Cat* are all common, popular reference for Israeli citizens.

50 Interview with Sayed Kashua, in *Arab Labor*. DVD. Directed by Roni Ninio and Yaakov Goldwasser. Keshet Broadcasting Ltd and Dori Media Paran Ltd, 2007.

*ha-zaquf;*Arabic: *jil muntasib al-qama*), a term coined by Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker[51] to describe the new ethos of young Palestinians in Israel, as being quite different from that of previous generations.In Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz's theorization, the first generation is termed the 'Generation of Survivors' and includes Palestinians who survived the Nakba and were forcibly integrated into Israel as citizens; they generally had non-confrontational attitudes towards the state, still affected as they were by the trauma of lost and dispossession. A second generation, named the 'Worn-Out Generation', started to challenge its parents' political quiescence in the 1970s and committed to political struggle, in order to obtain individual, civil equality, as per Israel's Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, they were little successful in discarding Jewish hegemony, remaining excluded from the gravity center of state power. For this reason, they are deemed to be 'worn-out', exhausted, as, in Arab Labor, Amjad's parents are.

By contrast, members of the Stand-Tall Generation are Palestinians who were born in Israel in the last quarter of the previous century, who grew up in the midst of violence detonated with the Second Intifada and the October 2000 events, and who energetically advocate for Israel to be a state 'for all of its citizens', in an attempt to discard its very Jewish characterization.

> Disillusioned with the prospect of ever becoming equal citizens in Israel, members of the Stand-Tall Generation are no longer interested in being marginal hangers-on of the Zionist project. They tend to see citizenship as a collective entitlement, not just a personal affair. They seek deep historic justice and meaningful incorporation into a transformed Israel.[52]

In short, Stand-Tall Palestinians are aware of frustrations connected to the impossibility of becoming equal citizens and they recognize discrimination wherever it lurks. They are hyper-politicized, and committed to a continuous struggle against state institutions, against Jewish hegemony, and in the defense of their civil and political rights, of gender equality and much more.[53]

In *'Avodah 'Aravit*, Amal represents the stereotypical Stand-Tall Palestinian. She is a young feminist lawyer who obtained her degree in human

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51 Khawla Abu Baker and Dan Rabinowitz, *Coffin on Our Shoulders. The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (Berkley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

52 *Op. cit.*, 3.

53 Yair Adiel, "On Language and the Possibility of Change. Sayed Kashua and the 'Stand-Tall Generation'," *Interventions* 16, no. 3 (2014): 367.

rights in Boston, and who works for the Association of Civil Rights, in support of Palestinians discriminated by Israeli legal system. Her stand-tall attitude is well expressed when she is invited at Meir's place for the Passover eve dinner. Meir fell in love with Amal, and wants to impress her with a truly Palestinian, '*asli* dinner, that he had previously prepared with Umm-Amjad's help. He then serves tabbouleh, vine leaves, maqlooba, tahini, a set of delights that Amal immediately detects as the 'embodiment of Orientalism'. Amal gets upset at Meir, as – she argues – the very fact of being Arab does not condemn her to eat just Middle Eastern cuisine, rather than steak, schnitzel or purée. She again repeats that the dinner veritably recalls what Edward Sa'id had theorized in his *Orientalism*. Meir, unaware of stereotypes and discrimination that he, as an Israeli-Jew, unconsciously perpetuates, asks her: "What, a cookbook?". Meir's naïve attitude acts here as Kashua's profound critique of the Stand-Tall hyper-critical stance, one that can ruin romantic, intimate situations in the name of some political dogmatism. In the 'Oriental' dinner scene, not only Meir as a bearer of incorporated stereotypes on Arabs, but also Amal, the ever-in-struggle Palestinian, turn out to be caricaturized and ridiculed.

Furthermore, Amal fully represents a Stand-Tall attitude insofar as her Arabic pronunciation is controlled, accurate and not mixed with Hebrew. This is quite evident in the way she pronounces the Arabic name of food served at the Passover dinner, and in her readiness to correct Meir's markedly Israeli pronunciation of *thina*, *taboula*, *labaneh*, *maqluba*. The authentic Arabic pronunciation, which does not intend to be 'contaminated' by Hebrew calques, is thus supposed to be a source of empowerment and distinction for Arab citizens who feel more 'Palestinized' and want to mark their distance from Israelis.

Nevertheless, as much as several colloquial (and vulgar) expressions in Hebrew are word loans from Arabic, Palestinian citizens of Israel speak colloquial Arabic filled with a great number of Hebrew words. Due to their adoption of the Hebrew word for 'OK, alright', in place of its Arabic equivalent, Palestinians of Israel are sometimes referred to by OPT Palestinians as *be-seder* Palestinians. In fact, Hebrew code-switching is a largely widespread phenomenon among Palestinian citizens of Israel, which has led sociolinguist Nancy Hawker to coin the term 'Arabrew' as a new language variety of Arabic.[54] Nevertheless, according to Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker, Palestinians who adopt this Arabic variant replete with Hebrew denote a

54 Nancy Hawker, "The Mirage of 'Arabrew': Ideologies for Understanding Arabic-Hebrew Contact," *Language in Society* 47, no. 2 (2018): 219-244.

yet non-advanced Stand-Tall consciousness, which often mirrors a scarce interest in Palestinian history or identity.[55] Moreover, such attitude usually shows greater proximity to Israeli-Zionist narrative. This subgroup of young Arab generation in Israel would thus know, in the scholars' words, only 'fragmented histories', and their only expectation is to get by.[56]

As suggested, in Arab Labor Kashua seems to mock the too purist stand-tall attitude even at a linguistic level. With the exception of Amal, all of the Palestinian characters, although proud of their Palestinian identity, are comfortable in switching from Arabic to Hebrew, or, to some extent, they speak Arabic with consistent Hebrew terminological influence. By the way, it must be observed that the series' protagonists, much like Sayed Kashua, are expression of a middle-class family, which realistically implies the possibility of better education, most likely in Hebrew-speaking institutions. However, as noted by Yair Adiel, Kashua's production seems to suggest that hope coming from the young generation does not consist in tracing borders between languages or identities, between 'Israeliness' and 'Palestinianness', but rather, hope lies in "those who mix languages, who are confused by language, who mix reality and fiction, fantasize, hallucinate, fear capture, and are captured by fears."[57]

In the episode that seals the first season of the sitcom, *Independence Day*, a glimpse of possible cohabitation, however troubled, appears. Bushra is about to give birth to her baby, but his still uncertain name is a major source of worries for the 'Aliyans. Abu-Amjad (whose real name is Isma'il) wants to call the baby Isma'il, an evocative Arabic name that reflects Muslim predilection for Prophet Ismael (instead of his 'rival' brother Isaac), through whom Abraham's offspring comes according to the Muslim tradition. However, Amjad prefers a more 'neutral' name for his son, namely Adam, less nationalistically charged. But such conjectures become more complicated as soon as both men hear that a million-shekel prize will be given, by a rich Russian donor, to the first baby born in Israel (*be-Yisrael*, in Hebrew) on Independence Day. Amjad and his father make pressure in order for the baby to be delivered before that of another Jewish-Israeli couple at the hospital: they will succeed thanks to Umm-Amjad's midwife abilities. However, once the donor realizes that the first baby born is Arab, he reconsiders what he had previously said, by stating that there has been a linguistic misunderstanding, and the prize will ultimately go to the

55 Adiel, "On Language and the Possibility of Change," 369.
56 *Ibid.*
57 *Op. cit.,* 376.

first child born *as* Israel (*ke-Yisrael*) – thus, a baby whose name is Israel. Leaving aside Kashua's mockery of FSU immigrants, their poor Hebrew mastery and their ultra-nationalistic, anti-Arab attitude, this retraction provokes a heated discussion in the 'Aliyan family, with Amjad and his father still determined to win the prize; meanwhile, the Jewish couple's son is given birth and his parents are resolved to call him Israel. Eventually, the dispute has an apparently comical, all-conciliating end: the prize is equally divided between the two families, the Jews call their son Israel, whereas Bushra and Amjad call theirs Isma'il. However, this, in a nutshell, embodies Kashua's sarcasm towards Israeli society. Formally, the prize for the newborn is equally divided between Jews and Arabs, namely, out of metaphor, Jewish and Palestinian citizens enjoy the same, on-the-paper rights in the country. However, the 'Aliyan family experienced discrimination in the prize allocation and, even as a winner, has less resonance on the media than their fellow Jewish family.

Through his artistic and journalist production, Sayed Kashua has long represented for Israeli (and, to a lesser extent, for Palestinian) public opinion an example of how Arab-Palestinians can integrate and live in Israel, questioning stereotypes on Arabs that are well-rooted in the Jewish public opinion. He has also long appeared as a supporter of Arab-Jewish coexistence, a living proof that this is somehow possible. Nevertheless, this seemingly optimistic attitude of his has never been constantly clear-cut in his work. Some hesitations appeared already in his early novels. In *Dancing Arabs* (2002) and *Let It Be Morning* (2004), the Arab main characters eventually realize their eventual distance, and marginalization, from the society they had put every effort in order to integrate into. In one of his satirical columns for Haaretz, in 2011 he wrote:

> I lied to my children when I taught them that everyone is equal; I lied when I said there are no differences between Muslims, Jews, and Christians. I cheated them when I surrounded them with protective hothouses of mixed kindergartens and pleasant neighborhoods.[58]

Eventually, in 2014, Kashua took the no return decision: he left Israel once for all, and moved to the United States with his family, intended to give a better future to his children. He explained his decision to his Israeli *Haaretz* readers in a column, that was published in concomitance with the murder of a kidnapped Palestinian child in Jerusalem.

58 Sayed Kashua, *Native. Dispatches from an Israeli-Palestinian Life*, trans. Ralph Mandel (New York: Grove Press, 2016), 276.

> I was silent, knowing that my attempt at living together with others in this country was over. That the lie I'd told my children about a future in which Arabs and Jews share the country equally was over. I wanted to say to my wife that this is really the end, it's finished. That I'd lost my small war, that everything people had told me since I was a teenager was coming true before my eyes. That all those who told me that there is a difference between blood and blood, between one person and another person, were right. […]
>
> It was my first day at a Jerusalem boarding school, where only Hebrew was spoken. My father drove me there from Tira, and a moment before parting from me, at the entrance to the school, he said, "Remember that for them you will always, but always, be an Arab, understand?"[59]

Kashua's father's warning had become more and more pressing, his words turned out to be true. One of the strongest supporters of Arab-Jewish coexistence, who had long rowed against his Jewish and Arab detractors, eventually gave up.

Conclusion: resisting through humor

In this article, Sayed Kashua's production, and especially the sitcom Arab Labor, was presented as a creative resistance discourse that aims to counterbalance stereotypical representations of Israel's Palestinian citizens, first and foremost by creating a Palestinian-centered space on primetime Israeli television. To a great extent, the sharp instrument of satire allowed the author to have *carte blanche* while staging caricatural features of both Arabs and Jews, by lowering down the tones of the political debate. Through paradoxical situations that border on absurdity, the everyday vicissitudes of Amjad stand to represent the liminality of Palestinians who live in Israel, but also embody their struggle for visibility, recognition and equality. Furthermore, Amjad's ever-failing attempts to assimilate into Jewish-Israeli society mirror Kashua's personal search for his own place and identity, and the uneasy realization that this identity is hyphenated, hybrid, fragmented, sometimes shattered. As argued above, the diverse characterization of Arab Labor's protagonists, however stereotyped it seems, aims to ultimately deconstruct every *a priori* representation imposed on Palestinians in Israel, particularly by Israeli Jewish society, as it used to do, for instance, with the 'good Arab' la-

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59 Sayed Kashua, "Why Sayed Kashua Is Leaving Jerusalem and Never Coming Back," *Haaretz*, July 4, 2014, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-for-sayed-kashua-co-existence-has-failed-1.5254338 (last consulted: 11 January 2022).

beling. Even more so, Kashua's creative discourse on Arab-Palestinian citizens spotlights the ephemeral, illusory character of supposedly pure, exclusivist national identities, which ever fail to account for the complex entanglement of individual, social, political factors that contribute to define what a 'Palestinian citizen', or an 'Israeli-Arab', or whatever, is. Kashua's work, notably the sitcom Arab Labor, constitutes an invitation – after much pain – to coexist in peace, accepting one's own shortcomings and limitations, making fun of each other, mocking reciprocal collective representations. A challenge that has proven to be too hard even for the author himself, who eventually gave up. But not before trying to shake, with a little irony and sarcasm, the conscience of his fellow citizens, through his artistic attempt to resist, in order to coexist.

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MONTENEGRO AS A STATE GOVERNED BY THE RULE OF LAW: VALTAZAR BOGIŠIĆ'S CHARACTER AND CONTRIBUTIONS IN ITALIAN TRAVEL ACCOUNTS AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

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Abstract

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a significant number of Italian travellers were drawn to the Principality of Montenegro, primarily motivated by their curiosity about the homeland of their future queen, Jelena Petrović Njegoš, who wed Prince Victor Emmanuel III of Savoy in October 1896. The majority of these travellers, predominantly journalists, meticulously documented their experiences through travel narratives that were initially published as newspaper articles and subsequently compiled into books. These authors notably emphasized Montenegro's legal developments, accomplished within a mere two decades following its international recognition as an independent nation. They attributed this remarkable progress to Valtazar Bogišić (1834-1908), a jurist, legal scholar, and ethnographer who came from the Konavle region near Dubrovnik.[1] Bogišić, a Slavophile with a comprehensive education acquired at various European universities, also held the position of Minister of Justice in Montenegro. The primary aim of this case study is to analyze how various Italian authors portrayed Minister Bogišić to their readers across the Adriatic, elucidating the information they presented regarding the legal code he had crafted for Montenegro. Additionally, we delve into the significance of this legal code, which was subsequently translated into several foreign languages. In addition to presenting Valtazar Bogišić and his work, Italian authors also constructed an image of Montenegro as a state governed by the rule of law. They achieved this portrayal by referring to the Montenegrin rulers who, through the enactment of the first Montenegrin legal codes, orchestrated a profound transformation within Montenegrin society. From their perspective, Montenegro, which was originally rooted in customary law within a tribal framework, underwent a transition into a principality governed by a comprehensive system of written laws. This transformation is primarily exemplified by Bishop Petar I Petrović Njegoš and Prince Danilo Petrović Njegoš, whose

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1 In Southern Slavic lexicography, history, and literature, Valtazar Bogišić is also referenced by the names "Baltazar" and "Baldo".

pioneering endeavours in legal codification captured the attention of several Italian authors. The overarching objective of this paper is to discern the purpose behind the production of such an image of Montenegro, which became prominent in the Italian travel writing tradition in the late 19th century, and to seek to identify the factors that influenced the formation of this representation.

Keywords: Montenegro, Italy, travel writing, Valtazar Bogišić

The image of Montenegro in Italian travel literature changed depending on the timing of the traveller's visit, the circumstances in which their writings were produced, the literature they relied on, and the goals that the authors sought to achieve by offering a specific image of the nation. Thus, until almost the end of the 19th century, Montenegro was depicted to Italians as a land of untamed warriors who obeyed only customary law and their ruler, with their sense of life revolving around the struggle against external enemies, primarily the Turks.[2] However, the rapprochement of Montenegro and Italy through the dynastic marriage of Savoy-Petrović in 1896 was crucial in shaping a rather different image of the small Balkan principality and its people.

Following the official announcement of the engagement of the royal couple, the Italian Crown Prince Victor Emmanuel and the Montenegrin Princess Jelena Petrović Njegoš, in August 1896, there was a significant surge in Italian media, coverage aimed at providing their readers with information about the future queen's homeland, Montenegro. Initially, this mainly consisted of data drawn from the existing literature. However, once journalists from prominent Italian newspapers arrived in the Montenegrin capital, Cetinje, the Italian readership began to receive more up-to-date information.

The first journalist to arrive in Cetinje seeking out that information was Adolfo Rossi, a reporter for the Milan-based newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. He was followed by Vico Mantegazza, reporting for the Florentine newspaper *Nazione*, Mario Borsa, a correspondent for the Milanese

2 See: Olivera Popović, "Crna Gora u italijanskom putopisnom časopisu Giro del Mondo", Vujović, Novica (ed.), *Cetinjski filološki dani III,* (Cetinje – Lawrence: Fakultet za crnogorski jezik i književnost – University of Kansas; and University of Kansas Libraries, 2023), 419-442; Olivera Popović, "Ratni dopisi iz Crne Gore Evgenija Popovića", *Cetinjski filološki dani II* (Cetinje: FCJK, 2021), 389-401; Olivera Popović, "Un parlamentare italiano nel Montenegro ai tempi della Grande crisi d'Oriente (1875-1877)", *Aevum* 90, no. 3 (2016), 671-679.

newspaper *Perseveranza*, Silvio Ghelli, who contributed to several Italian newspapers, Edoardo Scarfoglio and Eugenio Rubichi, sent by the *Roman Tribune*, Armando Perotti, who wrote for the *Corriere delle Puglie* in Bari, and Luigi Jauch, a correspondent for the *Corriere Meridionale* in Brindisi. Some of them, such as Adolfo Rosi, Vico Mantegazza, and Mario Borsa, compiled their reports into books, managing to publish them shortly before or immediately after the royal wedding ceremony in October 1896.[3]

Over the next few years, individuals from various professional backgrounds in Italy visited Montenegro and published their impressions both in periodicals and in the form of books. In some cases, the dynastic union also served as an incentive for authors who had previously visited this country to collect together their experiences and share their observations with their readers. Such was the case with the book by the journalist and writer Giuseppe Marcotti, who had spent time in Montenegro a decade before the royal wedding.[4]

The journalists who visited Montenegro in 1896 exerted a significant influence by changing the discourse about the country, directing attention towards those elements that made it unique and admirable in the eyes of Italian readers. They placed particular emphasis on the progress achieved since the Berlin Congress of 1878 when Montenegro gained international recognition of its independence from the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the visible construction boom and advancements in culture and education, the Italian authors also highlighted various developments in the regulation of legal affairs within the state.

One particularly significant event in the evolution of Montenegro's legal system, singled out by several Italian authors, was the adoption of the General Property Code, written by the distinguished Dalmatian professor and legal scholar Valtazar Bogišić (1834-1908).[5] A polyglot and a member of numerous scientific societies and academies, Bogišić was originally from Cavtat, and came to Montenegro in 1873 at the invitation of Prince Nikola, with the specific task of drafting a civil code. Since Bogišić had

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3 Adolfo Rossi, *Un'escursione nel Montenegro* (Milano: Carlo Aliprandi editore, 1896); Vico Mantegazza, *Al Montenegro: un paese senza parlamento: note ed impressioni (agosto-settembre 1896)* (Firenze: Successori Le Monnier, 1896); Mario Borsa, *Dal Montenegro: lettere* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1896).

4 Giuseppe Marcotti. *Il Montenegro e le sue donne: il matrimonio del Principe Ereditario d'Italia* (Milano: Treves, 1896).

5 For Bogišić's biography see: Branko Pavićević, "Vječito aktuelni Bogišić", in Valtazar Bogišić, *Izabrana djela*, I (Podgorica – Beograd: CID – Službeni list SCG, 2004), V-XXII; Surja Pupovci, *Valtazar Bogišić: život i djelo* (Podgorica: CID, 2004).

not been specifically concerned with the theoretical, methodological, and practical problems of codification prior to this mission, he had to find a way to carry it out. He worked on it, with intermittent breaks, for more than fifteen years, utilizing an extensive survey system, including observations and recording the findings of both Montenegrin regular courts and the Senate.[6] The Montenegrin Prince himself participated in the work by reading and correcting some answers to his questionnaires, which covered around 2000 questions; he also approved Bogišić's presence at all the meetings of the Montenegrin Senate.[7] Finally, the General Property Code came into force in 1888.[8] It stands as one of the most significant collections of legal provisions among the South Slavs regulating property rights. Due to the originality of its solutions, which represent a synthesis of customary law and modern legal principles, Bogišić's code had a profound impact on legal theory, practice, and legislation both within and outside of Montenegro.[9]

Bogišić was considered a follower of the historical school of law, which places great importance on the unique national character of the law, considering it the primary expression of a people and their national consciousness.[10] In his own words:

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6 Miloš Luković, "Valtazar Bogišić and the General Property Code for the Principality of Montenegro: Domestic and Foreign Associates", *Balcanica* XXXIX (2008), 179-181.

7 Branko Pavićević, "Vječito aktuelni Bogišić", XVIII. For the contribution of eminent experts in civil law from Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Paris, as well as members of the State Codification Commissions in Berlin and Budapest see: Miloš Luković, "Valtazar Bogišić and the General Property Code for the Principality of Montenegro".

8 An Italian-language commentary on this code was published shortly after its promulgation: Giacomo Chiudina, "Il nuovo Codice del Montenegro pubblicato dal Dr Bogisic", *Mattino*, October 14, 1888. After the Savoy-Petrović wedding, Professor of Roman Law Antonio Zocco Rosa wrote several articles and booklets in which he compared the Montenegrin civil code with Roman law. Valtazar Bogišić's code was translated into five languages, including Italian in 1900. Cf. Jelena Danilović, "Predgovor", in Valtazar Bogišić, *Izabrana dela i Opšti imovinski zakonik za Crnu Goru* (Beograd: Službeni list SFRJ, 1986), 7-40; Vesna Kilibarda, *Bibliografija o Crnoj Gori na italijanskom jeziku (1532-1941)*, *Crnogorska bibliografija* (Cetinje: Centralna narodna biblioteka republike Crne Gore „Đurđe Crnojević", 1993).

9 Tomica Nikčević, „Opšti imovinski zakonik u istoriji kodifikacije prava u Crnoj Gori", in Valtazar Bogišić, *Opšti imovinski zakonik za Knjaževinu Crnu Goru* (Cetinje: OOUR Izdavačka djelatnost, 1980), 9, 11, 15-16.

10 Petar Bujas, "Baltazar Bogišić između tradicije i modernizacije", in *Baltazar Bogišić i njegovo doba u intelektualnohistorijskoj perspektivi*, eds. Drago Roksandić and

> The people do not consult legal scholars for the law they create, just as they do not consult philologists for the language they speak. Therefore, in addition to legislation and legal science, customary law must be explored, not only the ancient but also the current, as it contains many remnants of old and ancient institutions.[11]

Bogišić explained his ideas and goals in a conversation with the then Montenegrin ruler, Prince Nikola I:

> I endeavoured to explain to His Highness, above all, how we needed to proceed in such a way that the code, although dressed in a scientific and European form, would not disrupt the national tradition and would not create legal dualism, as has often occurred in Western countries. Instead, through this code, and by means of it, the law would develop also in the future in a natural, organic way and in full harmony with the customs, beliefs, and needs of the people, in order to assimilate the new laws, which needed to be introduced, with the existing ones and to make them easily understandable with the available means, making every aspect comprehensible not only to judges (who in Montenegro are not legal experts) but also to the common people. Only in this way would the laws naturally become a part of behaviour, without any coercive measures, and in this manner, people who come to Cetinje in the future for legal matters would do so as like-minded individuals, as it had been in the past, which, in my opinion, is especially important in changing circumstances, particularly in recent times.[12]

In 1893, Bogišić assumed the role of Minister of Justice of Montenegro, a position he held until 1899. The character and achievements of Valtazar Bogišić were portrayed in several travel writings by Italian authors, featuring elements of his biography along with anecdotes from Bogišić's travels or interviews with him. He was generally described as a tall, strong, and pleasant man.[13] An unusual portrait of this renowned jurist and legal scholar can be found in Silvio Ghelli's work. This author published his book on Montenegro in 1906, most likely drawing on notes from his first visit to Montenegro in 1896, as Bogišić had left Montenegro in 1899.[14] In Ghelli's

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Branimir Janković (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2012), 49.

11 Surja Pupovci, *Valtazar Bogišić: život i djelo*, 319.

12 "Izvještaj Valtazara Bogišića ministru posvjete Rusije Dimitriju Andrejeviču Tolstoju o radu na Zakoniku u toku 1879. godine, 4/16 oktobar 1879", in Valtazar Bogišić, *Izabrana djela*, I (Podgorica – Beograd: CID – Službeni list SCG, 2004), 268. All translation in this article are mine.

13 Vico Mantegazza, *Al Montenegro*, 213; Mario Borsa, *Dal Montenegro*, 117.

14 Silvio Ghelli, *Nel paese della nostra regina* (Roma: Società Editrice Laziale, 1906).

book, the then-Minister of Justice of Montenegro is described as a very obese man, sweating profusely, who dips his hands into crates of grapes at the market while haggling with the vendors over the price.[15]

Ghelli describes Bogišić's appearance as reminiscent of the contemporary Italian senator Gaspare Finali (1829-1914), believing that two qualities that adorned him could be recognized in his physiognomy: intelligence and loyalty. Ghelli also highlighted Bogišić's eccentricity, pointing out that despite his extensive education and various attractive offers from abroad, he lived as a philosopher in Cetinje, paying little attention to his appearance or the conditions offered by the modest hotel in the small Montenegrin capital. The Italian author also notes Bogišić's scholarly achievements, his knowledge of foreign languages, and his broad culture, including his ability to recite entire cantos from Dante's *Divine Comedy* by heart. Ghelli believed that a conversation with him represented "an instructive course in the history of Slavic legislation", which is "of great interest to us Westerners because it differs so much from our customs and traditions."[16]

Emphasizing that Bogišić had received numerous accolades for the General Property Code and that very little was known about this legal achievement in Italy, Ghelli included an extensive interview with the distinguished legal scholar in his book. This interview provides readers with insights into both the living and working conditions of Valtazar Bogišić in Cetinje, as well as his thoughts on the organization of legal affairs in Montenegro. Simultaneously, the published interview highlights significant differences between Montenegrin and Italian society, fulfilling the basic requirement of travel literature, which is to portray the *otherness* or uniqueness of a visited country:

> Two candles burned on the modest table where Dr. Bogisich studied and, at the proper hours, enjoyed his frugal meal, relishing the blond and golden grapes from Crmnica that he had bought that morning at the bazaar. Piles of papers scattered here and there, a collection of legal codes, a stack of letters, two portraits, and cases containing various knightly cords cluttered the table's surface. […]
>
> – "But from what I've been told, Your Excellency has, so to speak, codified the customs of the various Montenegrin tribes…"
>
> – "Exactly. Now, you cannot imagine the difficulties I faced to ensure, in the compilation of the Code, that I didn't infringe upon the customs by which the country has been governed since ancient times. The greatest difficulty in codification is knowing what shouldn't be codified. You see, I have the civil codes of

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15 Ibid. 34.

16 Ibid. 36.

> the entire world in my library, and I could very well have turned my 'Property Code' into a book saturated with legal doctrine without bothering to study the customs and traditions of the people to whom, in the end, we wanted to give a written law. But since even the two most elaborate codes – the Napoleonic and the Austrian – didn't serve as a guide for my work, I turned to codification following the English system. At that time, I made use of the ethnographic material collected during my travels among the Slavs, extracting everything that was most suitable for my purposes. The jurists of Europe were very kind in their criticism, and on the day of the Code's promulgation, I had the first place at the French Academy." [17]

In Ghelli's interview, Bogišić reveals that he closely followed the discussions about his legal code in contemporary newspapers.[18] He addressed the assessment of Italian lawyer Maio d'Amelio, who wrote about this compilation of legal norms in the *Rassegna napoletana*, referring to Bogišić as a socialist.[19] The scholar from Dalmatia dismissed this characterization and attributed it to a superficial analysis of the General Property Code, specifically in the section dealing with family law. This is because the family was defined there as an institution for the first time, and the fruits of the labour of its members belong to the family, not to the individual. Bogišić compares this type of organization to a republic, clarifying that the authority of the head of the household is not a burden for the family, as he is considered first among equals, and the family can remove him from this role if the members are dissatisfied with his management and assign this function to another member of the family.

From Bogišić's interview, we also gain insights into the changes that the General Property Code introduced into Montenegrin society in comparison to the previous customary law, particularly regarding the roles of women and men. Bogišić explains the motivations behind these changes:

> According to ancient customs, only women had the right to possess a *peculio* – to work for their exclusive benefit; however, I also allow it for men, because it is not fair that a male cannot dispose of a single coin without the family's consent. Unmarried girls and married women had the freedom to dispose of what they accumulated, which was exclusively the product of their labour. Another injustice! To rectify this advantage that women had over other

17 Ibid, 40.

18 Bogišić alone collected 226 news, critical reviews, and studies about the Montenegrin Code. Cf. Jelena Danilović, "Predgovor", 17.

19 See: Vincenzo Clemente, "D'Amelio, Mariano", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 1986, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/mariano-d-amelio_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

> family members, I, in agreement with the ruler, have stipulated that property transmitted by inheritance or donation constitutes a *peculio* for the man without the need for community consent, as work is irrelevant in this case.[20]

It can be inferred that the previous customary law in the patriarchal society of Montenegro afforded women greater freedoms and rights compared to the new legal code. The new code not only granted men rights they did not previously have, but also introduced some changes that were detrimental to the position of women:

> It was indeed necessary to curb the freedom that married women, in particular, enjoyed. I then decided to grant the husband the right to give or withhold consent to his wife's disposal of her private *peculio*. However, I tempered this legal provision by giving women the right to appeal to the judges when the husband denied them permission to dispose of their property or when, due to absence, he could not grant it. From this, it can be seen how, from a legal perspective, women can replace the husband *ex-jure* and enter into contracts that bind the entire family.[21]

From this interview, the Italian reading audience also gained information about the issues that Montenegrin society had faced in the recent past, before the General Property Code came into effect, and which Bogišić sought to address through the new legal provisions. This primarily concerned norms that prevented family over-indebtedness in cases of irresponsible behaviour on the part of one of its members, particularly young men who went abroad for their education. Bogišić noted that he resolved this issue with Article 700 of his Code, which stated: "What you have done for your own caprice, you will pay for it with your own; if you have done it for honour, in defence of the family, the family will pay, within reasonable limits."[22] Bogišić explained that the codifiers' intention was primarily to consider the reason for the debt's occurrence. As a result, debts arising from the desire to assist an ill family member or those from which the family benefited should be borne by the entire family, while those incurred without the family's approval should be the sole responsibility of the debtor. Based on these specific characteristics, Bogišić believed that Montenegrin families should not be labelled as patriarchal, but rather as cooperative or communal.

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20 Silvio Ghelli, *Nel paese della nostra regina*, 41.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid. 42.

In Ghelli's book, Bogišić's explanations regarding the norms that regulated the right of pre-emption are also provided. This right meant that anyone who wanted to sell their land had to offer it first to relatives and members of their clan, and not to unknown potential buyers. This practice was aimed at preventing powerful neighbouring states, or those interested in Montenegro for geopolitical reasons, such as Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, or Russia, from gaining control over the principality through economic dominance.

Regarding contractual rights, among the agreements provided for in the General Property Code, Ghelli chose to introduce the readers to those that were characteristic of the agrarian relations in Montenegro at that time. These agreements included "sprega" (an oral agreement between multiple households or individuals to mutually assist each other in agricultural work throughout the year), "supona" (a contractual arrangement among multiple households to hire a common shepherd for their livestock), and "moba" (voluntary assistance in agricultural work, where the recipient of the aid was not legally obliged to pay in any way, although there was a moral obligation to reciprocate the assistance).

In addition to Ghelli, Vico Mantegazza and Mario Borsa also lauded Bogišić's ability to draft a legal code that connected the tradition of customary law with contemporary legal science. From this compilation of legal provisions, which Borsa called the "first and most illustrious monument" of Montenegro's "young civilization",[23] both Mantegazza and Adolfo Rossi included in their books several legal maxims, or Bogišić's translations of sayings taken from Roman jurists, formulated as popular proverbs, which helped him make the concept of justice understandable even to the least educated Montenegrins.[24] This emphasized not only Bogišić's legal activities but also his philological efforts aimed at eliminating the language barrier that would inevitably arise if only a legal register were used in a country that had just taken its initial steps toward expanding secondary education.[25] Such a language barrier would probably have had an adverse impact on the dissemination of norms from this legal code and their acceptance by the people.

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23 Mario Borsa, *Dal Montenegro: lettere*, 115.

24 Vico Mantegazza, *Al Montenegro,* 215-216; Adolfo Rossi, *Un'escursione nel Montenegro*, 72-73.

25 When it comes to education in Montenegro, after the first primary schools were opened in the 1830s, in 1869, the Montenegrin Seminary and the Girls' Institute of Maria Alexandrovna were established. Cf. Ivan Tepavčević, "Pogledi Valtazara Bogišića na Crnu Goru i crnogorsko društvo (krvna osveta – između tradicije i modernog društva)", *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* 28, no. 3 (2018): 501.

Regarding the challenges of philological shaping of the General Property Code, the writer Simo Matavulj, who was commissioned by Prince Nikola to assist Bogišić in this endeavour, wrote:

> Indeed, I suffered! If only the fortune teller had told me that I would be among the first to whom this Code would be explained (and, in a way, taught), that this Code would give me quite a headache in the midst of a Cetinje summer, and that I would curse it wholeheartedly – indeed, I would not have given her a single penny!
>
> Mr. Baldo (as everyone in Dubrovnik calls him), in addition to other assistants, chose Beara and me; the old man as a knowledgeable and wise person by nature, and me as a language expert. At least, that was his conviction. And then, the hard days began. Every godly day, for several hours, I listened to paragraphs about inheritance, division, sale, purchase, and God only knows what else falls under property rights and wrongs. Imagine my temperament and my usual mental nourishment and such harsh matters! And this in the midst of the dog days when I longed for the sea! But Mr. Baldo rightly says, "You must understand the matter well to express it well!" So I struggled and suffered to understand it, and when it finally got into my head, I would have gladly handed it over to the devil. [26]

\Giuseppe Marcotti dedicated a separate chapter of his book to Bogišić's Code, quoting in full the decree by Prince Nikola by which this legal act was proclaimed. Besides the language that is comprehensible to the widest array of society in which the Code was written, Marcotti also notices that the codifier imparts some friendly advice, quoting Article 1014: "Even when you are right, do not flog a dead horse."[27] In contrast to Mantegazza and Borsa, who focus on the civilizational progress achieved by adopting Bogišić's Code, Marcotti emphasizes certain negative developments that this extensive compendium of legal norms with over 1000 articles announced, risking it becoming a "Pandora's box".[28] This author primarily refers to the inevitable appearance of lawyers necessary for interpreting such a comprehensive code, which would undermine the practice of direct communication between the Prince and his subjects. Marcotti believed that Montenegro would evolve from a society of "warrior people" into a society of "voting people" due to the adoption of complex legislation, which would eventually lead to constitutional and parliamentary changes.[29] In this way, the Italian author revealed his conservative views regarding the state

26 Simo Matavulj, *Bilješke jednog pisca* (Cetinje, Obod, 1975), 254-255.
27 Giuseppe Marcotti, *Il Montenegro e le sue donne*, 227.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid. 228.

and legal organization of Montenegro, favouring the romantic glorification of a life in harmony with nature, far from the dangers of civilization, that corrupts the human spirit and consumes our physical strength. The Italian press also wrote about Bogišić's Code, pointing out the fairness of certain provisions and proposing them as examples to follow. [30]

The reason for the appearance of multiple articles about Valtazar Bogišić was also his visit to Rome in early October 1896, alongside the head of the Montenegrin government, Božo Petrović, to sign a marriage agreement between the Montenegrin and Italian dynasties. Therefore, their description, taken from Mantegazza's book, appeared in newspapers such as *Indipendente*,[31] *Fanfulla*,[32] *Gazzetta di Venezia*,[33] *Corriere delle Puglie*,[34] and *Italia Centrale*.[35] In the years that followed, the Italian scientific community showed interest in Bogišić's Code, and Professor Antonio Zocco-Rosa published a series of articles and books on this topic.[36]

Interest in legal developments in Montenegro was not limited to Valtazar Bogišić's Code alone. Italian authors made an effort to acquaint their readers with the previous steps towards establishing Montenegro as a legal state. Silvio Ghelli recalled the early successes in this regard, achieved in 1796 by the Montenegrin Prince-Bishop Petar I (who ruled from 1784 to 1830) when he promulgated the "Stega", the first written Montenegrin law, representing a form of codification of various elements of Montene-

30 "Ancora del Montenegro", *Corriere della Sera*, August 11-12, 1896; "L'originale codice penale del Montenegro", *Corriere delle Puglie*, October 27, 1896.

31 "Il ministro Bogisich", *Indipendente*, October 10,1896.

32 "Per le nozze auguste", *Fanfulla*, October 8, 1896.

33 "Bozo Petrovich Niegoch e Baldassare Bogisich", *Gazzetta di Venezia*, October 9, 1896.

34 "I due ministri del Montenegro a Roma", *Corriere delle Puglie*, October 9, 1896.

35 "Gli ospiti montenegrini", *L'Italia Centrale*, October 9-10, 1896.

36 A. Zocco-Rosa, *Il codice civile dei beni del Montenegro ed il diritto romano, con speciale riguardo al titolo del Digesto de diversis regulis juris* (Catania: Istituto di storia del diritto romano, 1897); A. Zocco-Rosa, Il codice civile dei beni del Montenegro ed il diritto romano, in *Rivista scientifica del diritto* 1 (1897), 50-62; A. Zocco-Rosa, *La nuova edizione del codice generale dei beni del Montenegro* (Roma, 1898); Zocco-Rosa, *La nuova edizione del codice generale dei beni del Montenegro* (Torino: F.lli Bocca, 1898); A. Zocco-Rosa, *La nuova edizione del Codice civile montenegrino ed il diritto romano; la gestione di affari (Art. 587-594)* (Catania, 1899); A. Zocco-Rosa, "La seconda edizione del Godice Generale dei beni del Montenegro e il Diritto Romano", in *Annuario dell'Istituto di Storia del Diritto Romano* 7 (1899-1900), 58-63. Cf. Gábor Hamza „Bemerkungen zur Privatrechtsentwicklung in Montenegro", in *Spomenica Valtazara Bogišića o stogodišnjici njegove smrti 24. aprila 2008. godine*, I, ed. Luka Breneselović (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2011), 326.

grin customary law.[37] According to Ghelli, Petar I's legal initiatives led to a significant reduction in murders, banditry, and robbery in Montenegro, to the extent that, as this author notes, by the late 19th century, a day when someone was tried in Cetinje for robbery was considered a rare event.[38] Vico Mantegazza and Giuseppe Marcotti also highlighted the legislative work of Petar I.[39] Acknowledging the significant civilizational progress Montenegro had achieved during his rule, Mantegazza referred to this Montenegrin ruler as the founder of modern Montenegro, comparing him to the Russian tsar.[40]

Italian authors also discussed some legal changes in Montenegro in their travel writings that occurred during the rule of Danilo I Petrović-Njegoš, who reigned as the Prince of Montenegro from 1852 to 1860. Danilo I separated secular from spiritual authority, in contrast to his predecessors who held both roles as Montenegrin bishops and rulers. His legal code, consisting of 95 articles, was promulgated in 1855 and regulated issues related to human and citizen rights, the position and rights of the prince, the position and rights of courts, citizens' duties in protecting the state, and numerous other aspects of Montenegro's social, political, and economic life. This legal code marked the foundation of Montenegro as a legal state.[41]

Silvio Ghelli, however, pointed out certain negative elements in Danilo's legislative reforms. He believed that the strictness of Danilo's legal code led some of the prominent families of old Montenegro to emigrate, and in some cases, even to convert to Islam.[42] The content and innovations introduced by Danilo I's 1855 legal code were analysed in more detail by Giuseppe Marcotti, with the aim of highlighting the specifics of Montenegrin social organization. He paid particular attention to the norms related to family law (sanctions for kidnapping a girl and forcing marriage, divorce, and permissible murder in cases of adultery), the protection of individuals and property (prohibition of self-harm in grief, prohibition of excessive extravagance during the family patron saint's feast by shortening the number of days of celebration, or the permissible killing of a thief caught in the act), tax obligations, the equality of citizens before the law, the position of judges, and

37 Cfr. Danilo Radojević, "Epoha Svetog Petra I Njegoša", *Matica* 55, (jesen 2013), 522.
38 Silvio Ghelli, *Nel paese della nostra regina*, 46.
39 Giuseppe Marcotti, *Il Montenegro e le sue donne*, 175; Vico Mantegazza, *Al Montenegro*, 144.
40 Vico Mantegazza, *Al Montenegro*, 144-145.
41 Cf. Branko Pavićević, *Danilo I Petrović-Njegoš, Knjaz crnogorski i brdski, 1851 – 1860* (Podgorica: CID, 2007), 235-238.
42 Silvio Ghelli, *Nel paese della nostra regina*, 47.

the protection of fugitive newcomers.[43] Based on the legal solutions formulated, and the fact that this legal code consisted of fewer than 100 articles, Marcotti considered it "close to natural laws", "paternal", and "liberal".[44] The significance of Danilo's legal code was also emphasized by other Italian visitors and scholars, such as Guido Cora and Antonio Baldacci, especially in terms of eradicating harmful customs like blood feuds.[45]

It can be concluded that in the travelogues written by Italian authors who visited Montenegro in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, significant attention was dedicated to the persona and work of Valtazar Bogišić. Writing about his General Property Code served multiple purposes. On the one hand, the authors paid attention to the legal solutions that pointed out the differences between Montenegrin and Italian societies, enriching the "cultural catalogue" they offered to their readers and piquing their curiosity. [46] They also considered Bogišić's legal code to be a model to follow in terms of using simple and understandable language in legal texts.

On the other hand, highlighting Bogišić's success in his codification effort emphasized the significant progress that Montenegro had made in transforming from a society governed by customary law to one governed by complex written norms. Although some authors expressed conservative views about Montenegro's need to emulate other European states in this regard, most of them believed that Bogišić's legal code respected Montenegro's folk traditions and was built upon the achievements of customary law, incorporated into modern legal science.

In their efforts to affirm Montenegro's image as a lawful state, the authors also delved into its legal history, spanning from the era of Petar I Petrović-Njegoš's governance to the end of the 19th century. This image of Montenegro constituted a key element in the discourse of progress, which came to prominence in the context of the Savoy-Petrović wedding. The purpose of this travel paradigm was to encourage Italians to view the homeland of their future queen favourably, despite its status as a small, Orthodox, South Slavic country with little geopolitical influence.

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43 Giuseppe Marcotti, *Il Montenegro e le sue donne*, 40-41, 85, 199-200; 246-247.

44 Ibid. 85-86.

45 Guido Cora, *Nel Montenegro* (Roma: Forzani, 1901), 17; Antonio Baldacci, *Crnagora: memorie di un bottanico* (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1897), 58.

46 Dean Duda defines a "cultural catalogue" as a comprehensive representation of the everyday rhythm of a specific environment and the habits of its people, along with information from local history and a description of artistic heritage, which the travel writer creates and directs towards his home environment. Cf. Dean Duda, *Priča i putovanje*: *hrvatski romantičarski putopis kao pripovjedni* žanr (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1998), 12, 122.

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WOMEN MYSTICS, COUNTER-REFORMATION CATHOLICISM, AND CROSS-CULTURAL POLLINATION.
The Mystical Model in the Mediterranean and Beyond

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Abstract

Despite longstanding scholarly interest, or perhaps because of it, women mystics remain trapped between the psychological interpretations of modern academia and the idealized portrayals of Church authorities, making them figures that are still largely unknown and misunderstood. Moving beyond the limitations of psychological and theological interpretations that reduced these women's experiences, this article will compare and contrast the lives of several mystics living at the turn of the modern era. It will argue that their ability to challenge societal norms and create spaces for female community relied on their meticulous adherence to a specific behavioral pattern known as the 'mystical model,' consisting of conversion, foundation, and teaching. The careful execution of these steps across diverse cultures and geographies not only validated their deeply personal religious experiences but also granted social legitimacy to the public expressions of their spirituality. Born and developed around the wider Mediterranean, as classically defined by Braudel, the mystical model came to transcend the borders of the *Mare Nostrum* with the missionary effort that accompanied the colonial expansion characteristic of the European Age of Discovery. Aided by the printing press and in the context of the assertive and militant Catholicism emerging in the wake of the Council of Trent, missionaries, in their quest to physically expand the horizons of the Roman Church, were instrumental in diffusing the privatized, individualist religious spirit irradiating from early modern Europe. Consequently, female religious vocations started to emerge in societies where women's role in religion – and in public life – had been largely marginal. This phenomenon also contributed to the formation of new frames of reference, new archetypal categories, awarding these women with social sanction for their recently acquired religious self-awareness, as this article will prove. Examining the extra-Mediterranean expansion of the mystical model will underscore that the missionary effort cannot be exclusively understood in a one-directional sense. Instead, it must be seen as a pluri-directional phenomenon, a process of cross-cultural pollination that transformed both catechist and catechumen, simultaneously broadening their respective systems of collective representations.

Keywords: Women, Mystics, Missionaries, Catholicism, Archetypes.

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Writing in 1982, José María Román attempted to craft a psychological portrait of Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), whose personality he described as lying beyond the pale of "normalcy" (Román 1984 [1982], 89). Her mystical experiences, he went on, should be understood as psychosomatic expressions of her perturbed mental state and manifestations of the latent *child* lingering in her personality (Román 1984 [1982], 83-84, 90). Although such a pathologizing perspective had been classically criticized by Américo Castro (1972, 78), who charged against the decontextualized translation of contemporary ideas and categories to premodern societies, truth is that the academia has tended to confine mystics – and, very specifically, mystic *women* – to the realms of anecdote, mental sickness, or sexual dissatisfaction.[1]

In recent decades, however, a paradigm shift has endeavored to release mystic and devout women from the hagiographical and psychiatric prisons where they were traditionally confined to approach their lives and experiences in the framework of their specific cultural and historical *milieux*. As Carolyne W. Bynum (1987) expressed in her groundbreaking *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, where she analyzed the relation between food and piety in the European Lower Middle Ages, all mystical and ascetical practices should be understood within their own cultural context. In her own words, "the practices and symbols of any culture are so embedded in that culture as to be inseparable from it" (Bynum 1987, 299). Thus, applying modern psychological diagnosis to premodern phenomena not only veers on clinical inexactitude, but also – and more gravely – limits our understanding of those phenomena and the lives of the women experiencing them.

1 Michel de Certau famously linked the pathologizing of mysticism to two simultaneous phenomena taking place in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe: secularization and the discovery of the cultural 'other', which resulted in a feeling of "uneasiness" (Certeau 1992, 13). Such a feeling could only be overcome, Certeau explained, through reliance on a scientific positivism divorced from "the actual sociocultural conditions of the mystical experience" (1992, 15), which led the way to the confinement of mystical phenomena within the narrow walls of psychopathology. The best example of such a viewpoint is provided by no other than Freud himself, for whom religion itself was a "shared neurosis" (Riesman 1954, 29) and mysticism but a private, individualistic, expression of that neurosis. More recently, T.M. Luhrmann (2011, 71-85), while acknowledging the role of the socio-cultural environment in the development of the mystical phenomenon, hinted rather strongly at the influence of mental disorders – in particular schizophrenia – in shaping the outward expressions of mysticism.

Treading on Webb Keane's footsteps (2003, 222-248), this article rejects the purported universality of contemporary Western psychological categories to recenter women mystics as active agents within their corresponding societies. In fact, as will be argued below, participating in the outward manifestations of a certain *mystical/devotional* model allowed Mediterranean women to transcend the "stringent limitations imposed by tradition and social convention" in order to pursue their individual "impulses and desires" (González Fernández 2016, 91). For women like Teresa of Ávila or Thérèse of Lisieux in Europe, or Hindiyya al-'Ujaymi and Rafqa al-Rayyis in the Middle East, turning their bodies into spaces for the manifestation of the Divine served them to legitimize their will to be independent and to defy social mores. This was particularly significant in the face of increasing constraints on female spirituality following the Council of Trent (Zarri 2000, 22-25) – and before.[2] Therefore, the mystical/devotional model emerges as a tool enabling the recognition of female mystical and/or devotional expressions within the archetypal patterns ingrained in the collective unconscious of their societies. Indeed, the failure to align the experiences of some of the women discussed herein with pre-existing models of public female devotion in their socio-cultural contexts hindered their pursuit of spiritual graces.

Highlighting the experiences of non-European mystic and devout women, including the Chinese Candida Xu, and the Lebanese Hindiyya al-'Ujaymi, this article also aims to decenter the study of mysticism beyond its traditional Mediterranean context. It contends that the elements integrating the *mystical model* are not exclusive of the Islamo-Christian civilization as classically defined by Richard Bulliet.[3] Instead, they are found

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2 While the literature has given particular emphasis to the growing restrictions on individual piety emerging after the Council of Trent, truth is that the Papacy's misgivings *vis-à-vis* independent spiritual endeavors can be traced back, at least, to the fourteenth century. The promulgation of the *Cum inter nonnullos* bull by Pope John XXII in 1323, which condemned the radical viewpoints of the 'Spiritual' Franciscans, and the misgivings aroused by the activities of *beguines* and *beghards* (Gałuszka & Kras 2023; Osten-Sacken 2014, 99-116) all bear witness to the increasing rigor of a Church – and a continent – undergoing a troubled period in their histories. Furthermore, the administrative solidity that the Church achieved during her 'Babylonian Captivity' at Avignon (Rollo-Koster 2015) allowed the Holy See to police doctrine and praxis with unprecedented effectiveness.

3 For Bulliet, the term 'Islamo-Christian civilization' refers to the existence of a single civilizational framework uniting the Christians of Western Europe, "not all

worldwide – in places as distant as southern India or the colonial Americas – albeit influenced by a process of Catholic-Mediterranean intellectual cross-pollination. Rather than viewing the non-Western *other* merely as a passive subject of European imperial action, this article aligns with the perspectives of Bernard Heyberger (2004), Marcello Carmagnani (2021), and Manel Ollé (2022). Following them, it advocates for an interactive view of these cross-cultural encounters, where both sides act effectively, transforming one another and synthesizing their respective traditions into a common cultural product.

The missionary experience should not, in this sense, be read exclusively in a one-directional sense, but rather understood as a cross-directional phenomenon where both the missionary and the catechumen are transformed by their mutual contact (Amsler et al. 2020, 1-12; Clark 2011, 33-51; Dempsey 2001). Indeed, as Octavio Paz (2022, 317) underlined, in reference to his native Mexico, an "invisible thread" connected the pre-Columbian world and the new Hispanic order built after 1521. Just as the Aztects incorporated the new tools, both physical and symbolic, that the Spaniards brought with them in their advance through Mesoamerica, so were the *Castilan* – as the Nahuas referred to the invaders – decisively transformed by their contact with the New World (Gruzinski 2018, 194-200). Thus, as Ollé (2022) has convincingly proven, the early modern era stands out as a period of fertile – if ambivalent – cross-cultural pollination and co-colonization, as further underlined by the popularity of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Sacred Heart. While the former, a Spanish Marial figure, came to syncretize pre-Christian beliefs in a largely successful attempt to incorporate the indigenous population of Mesoamerica into the new European religion (Paz 2022, 97-99, 155); the latter, which grew to become one of the most prominent pictorial representations of Counter-Reformation Catholicism, may have emerged from heart-related Nahua symbolism (Kehoe 1979, 763-771) long before the preaching of François de Sales and the mystic

Christians everywhere," and the Muslims of the Middle East and North Africa, "not all Muslims everywhere." Bulliet argued that Latin Christendom and Middle Eastern Islam "experienced common challenges in parallel time frames [but] reacted to these challenges in different ways," which opened the door to a clearly divergent evolution in a period extending from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Afterwards, he argued, Christendom and Islam "followed trajectories that differed markedly, […] yet the ways in which they played their roles as rivals," he went on, "still reflected their sibling character and their functioning within a common system" (Bulliet 2004, 10, 15-16).

Marguerite-Marie Alacoque. In this sense, the early modern era appears as a phase in human history where the Foucaultian *heterotopies*, understood as sites of “spatial and institutional difference” (Vidler *et al.* 2014, 69) were the rule, rather than the exception, thus allowing for the widening of the societal unconscious or, even, for the emergence of a timid – yet rapidly expanding – ‘mundialized’ unconscious (Gruzinski 2018, 15-20).

In order to achieve its goals, this article begins with a brief approach to the lives and experiences of Teresa of Ávila, Hindiyya al-‘Ujaymi, and Candida Xu. Taking inspiration from Marguerite Yourcenar’s words (1962, 7-33), these concise biographical sketches aspire to transcend the mere presentation of facts to provide a glimpse into the psychology of an era that stood at the intersection between the encapsulated world of the Middle Ages and the globalized realities of modernity. The second section of this paper builds upon the human materials furnished in the first part, approaching the theoretical construction of the mystical/devotional model (conversion-foundation-teaching) with special emphasis on the interaction between private experience and social perception. The conclusion of this article underscores how mystical and devout women managed to insert themselves into socially readable archetypal categories providing them with legitimacy to transcend societal expectations of female behavior.

1. *Women Mystics: A Biographical Approach*

1.1. *Teresa of Ávila*

The first woman ever to become a *doctor of the Church*, Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in the Castilian city of Ávila to a middle-class family whose pretensions of nobility had been explicitly acknowledged by the High Court of Valladolid. This recognition, which took place despite their Jewish ancestry, reveals that, by the time of Teresa’s birth, her family had achieved the coveted status of *cristianos viejos* (‘old Christians’[4]) in

4 In accordance with the ‘blood purity statutes’ (*estatutos de limpieza de sangre*), which had excluded persons of Jewish or Moorish descent from positions in the state and ecclesiastical administrations, the religious orders, and the universities, the *cristianos viejos* were those whose genealogy was ‘untained’ by suspicion of heterodox or infidel intermingling. Issued as early as the mid-fifteenth century, the *estatutos* became increasingly important in the sixteenth and, in some cases,

public perception (Pérez 2007, 27). By then, however, the family's fortunes were on the decline (Bouyer 2022, 82-83) and Teresa received a comparatively poor education, being more interested in chivalric romances than in spiritual literature, as she herself recognized (*Vida* 2.1[5]). A rebellious and somewhat mundane adolescent (*Vida* 2.2), her father, "worried about her daughter's honor" (Bastida 2006, 98), forced her against her will (*Vida* 3.1) to join the Santa María de Gracia convent, where she remained for eighteen months until a sickness led to her abandoning the cloister.

It was, precisely, during her convalescence that Teresa finally decided to enter religious life, joining the Encarnación convent, despite her father's opposition (*Vida* 3.7). Although her religious vocation was fostered by the devotional literature that her uncle provided (*Vida* 3.4-5; Bouyer 2022, 82), it seems that her entrance in religion was not too enthusiastic (*Vida* 3.6) and it has been hinted that she took it as a way to escape marriage (Pérez 2007; Slade 1995). Although, at the time, the Encarnación convent followed a relaxed version of the Carmelite Rule, Teresa was seemingly unable to adapt to her cloistered existence and, once again, fell gravely ill in 1539.

After recovering from her sickness, Teresa initiated the protracted process that would conclude in her 'conversion', which was accelerated after reading, in 1554, the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine (*Vida* 9.7-9.8). The following year, Teresa decided to consecrate herself entirely to God and, simultaneously, started experiencing mystical episodes. "Contrary to popular opinion" (González Fernández 2016, 83), such occurrences were purely intellectual, rather than physical, phenomena resulting from a committed effort at praying and reading, as Teresa herself acknowledged (*Exclamaciones* 14.2). She was not, therefore, "a figure besotted by an excessively fertile imagination" (González Fernández 2016, 83), but rather a 'no-nonsense' woman who challenged the authenticity of her own mystical experiences (Ruano 1955, 228) and was generally wary of flamboyant spiritual displays (*Moradas* 4.3.13).

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survived well into the nineteenth. These norms have been widely considered as a populist reaction against the growing prominence of *converso* families in early modern Spain. Vid. Poole (1999, 359-389) and Hering Torres (2011, 29-62).

5 Following a well-established precedent in Teresian studies, the works authored by the Ávilan saint will be quoted by their name. Reference to the specific editions used in this article can be found in the bibliography.

The intense personal transformation engendered by Teresa's conversion also serves to explain her "extraordinary missionary activity" (Bouyer 2022, 83). In the twenty years preceding her death, Teresa not only established seventeen new convents all through Castile, but also – and perhaps more importantly – promoted a reform of the Carmelite Order that restored the purity of its original rule and shied away from the relaxation that had become common at the beginning of the early modern era (Bastida 2006). Facing opposition from both civilian and ecclesiastical authorities, Teresa, endowed with an iron will and an army of powerful friends, managed to vanquish all resistances, expanding her reform in Spain and beyond. After passing away on October 4, 1582, the Carmelite reformer was canonized in 1622 alongside the prominent Jesuits Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier. This, in a certain way, reflected the long-standing collaboration between the Ávilan reformer and the Society of Jesus.

1.2. *Candida Xu*

Arguably "the most influential Chinese woman of the seventeenth century" (King 1998, 49), Candida Xu could hardly be considered a mystic. However, analyzing her life experiences will serve to highlight how Christian women, across apparently unsurmountable cultural boundaries, asserted their independence and the validity of their individual spiritual experiences by adapting, reinterpreting, and refining religious discourses and practices. Whereas Candida was by no means the only Christian woman that played a significant role during the two centuries of the Jesuit China Mission, she is doubtless the best known, in large part due to the publication of her biography, *Histoire d'une dame chrétienne de la Chine*, by her confessor, the Jesuit Philippe Couplet, in 1688. The work, which was primarily conceived as a propaganda tool to promote interest in the China Mission in Europe (King 1998, 49-50), does, however, provide us with a rare glimpse into the otherwise hidden existence of élite Chinese women in the late imperial era, when the revival of Confucian mores discernible since, at least, the Southern Song dynasty, confined them to the privacy of their own homes (Touboul-Bouyeure 1989, 953-971).

Candida Xu was born in Shanghai into a peculiar family. Her grandfather, the scholar Paul Xi Guangqi (1562-1633), had been one of the first Chinese *literati* to convert to Catholicism. Indeed, he was thereafter reputed, together with Li Zhizao (1565-1630) and Yang Tingyun (1557-1627), as one of the *three pillars* of Chinese Catholicism (Shi 2014, 199). Un-

surprisingly, the young Candida and her siblings[6] were raised in a pious household, where they were not only instructed in "devout and zealous" religious practices, but also in the typical Confucian virtues of "hard work, frugality, righteousness, and sincerity" (King 1998, 52-53). After losing her mother at fourteen, Candida was married off to a certain Xu Yuandu, whose family had converted to Catholicism but subsequently lapsed from the faith (Couplet 1688, 12). For Candida and her sisters, the experience of marriage to non-Christian husbands turned out to be a rather traumatic episode (Amsler 2018, 117), which they bore by maintaining their sororal ties via an abundant correspondence. In these letters, they not only provided emotional support to each other, but also ensured their steadfastness in the faith through the sharing of religious experiences ("holy dreams and visions" (Amsler 2018, 125)).

After the death of her husband, who passed away in 1653, and counting on the praise wherewith chaste widows were showered in late imperial China (Liang, Wang, and Yamauchi 2020, 1-21; Carlitz 1997, 612-640; Leung 1993, 2-3, 5-6), *Madame* Xu[7] could finally devote herself entirely "to serving God and to spreading the gospel in China" (Couplet 1668, 14). Throughout the remaining third of her life, Madame Xu, conceiving of herself "as a missionary" (Amsler 2018, 148), supported the foreign preachers financially and promoted the erection of church buildings both in her native Songjiang and across China (Tiedemann 2008, 503) with the ultimate goal of building "a Chinese Church […] ideally embrac[ing] all people living under the aegis of the emperor" (Amsler 2018, 148). To sustain her charitable works, Madame Xu, whose exalted family origins as part of the *literati* class should not be automatically equated to pecuniary wealth, engaged with considerable success in the long-established textile industry of the Yangzi River region, becoming rich in her own right (Couplet 1688, 27-28).

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6 The Xu household was quite numerous. Candida had five brothers (Michael Xu Erjue, Ignatius Xu Erjue, Matthew Xu Erdou, Thomas Xu Ermo, and Luke Xu Erlu) and three sisters (Felicitas, Monica, and Martine). Vid. Shi (2014, 201-202).

7 Traditionally, Chinese married women have been referred to by the honorific *tàitai*, which has been rendered in English, variably, as 'madam,' 'madame,' or 'ma'am.' Consequently, Candida Xu will be occasionally referred to as 'Madame Xu' throughout this text. For more contemporary uses of this style of address in English, vid. Jung Chang (2019) and Jonathan Fenby (2003), who addressed Soong Mayling as 'Madame Chiang' and Soong Qingling as 'Madame Sun'. Similarly, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday (2006) referred to Jiang Qing as 'Madame Mao.'

1.3. *Anna Hindiyya al-‘Ujaymi*

As her name suggests (*hindiyya* means, literally, ‘the Indian’), Hindiyya al-‘Ujaymi was born in 1720 to a rich merchant family belonging to Aleppo’s prominent Christian bourgeoisie.[8] At the time of her birth, Aleppo was undergoing a period of economic and demographic expansion (Heyberger 2001; Khater 2008) that came accompanied by the spiritual awakening of the city’s various Christian communities (Khater 2008). These communities had precisely been the main beneficiaries of the economic bonanza due to their links, as translators and intermediaries, to European merchants.

The spiritual renewal in Aleppo was largely the byproduct of the arrival of Latin missionaries,[9] determined both to convert the ‘separate’ Christians to Catholic orthodoxy and to purge the ‘abuses’ allegedly incurred by the Oriental Catholic communities (Rouhana, 1986). The missionaries started to promote “a series of new religious practices alien to Oriental tradition, which they presented employing the ‘modern’ language emerging after the Council of Trent” (González Fernández 2016, 9-10). With the Society of Jesus as the standard-bearer of these transformations, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed the emergence of religious fraternities that, with their emphasis on personal perfection (Heyberger 1996) and their revalorization of laypeople against the priest-centered and ritualistic character of the local churches (Heyberger 2014), attracted a youth “aspiring to assert their individuality” (González Fernández 2016, 85).

It was in this context that Hindiyya was born and raised. Her family, belonging to Aleppo’s small Maronite community,[10] participated fully in the

8 One of the major trading crossroads of Greater Syria, Aleppo hosted a large Christian population, including members of all major Middle Eastern churches: Melkites, ‘Jacobite’ and Maronite Syriacs, Armenians, and even a small ‘Nestorian’ community. Until the eighteenth century, when a wave of conversion to Catholicism took place, all these groups but the Maronites were, in the eyes of the Roman Church, “schismatics and/or heretics possessing their own hierarchies” (Heyberger 1988, 462).

9 In the Middle East, the followers of the Roman rite of the Catholic Church are referred to as *Latin* to distinguish them from other Catholic churches and communities.

10 Established between the fourth and eighth centuries of our era, the Maronite Church, belonging to the Western Syriac liturgical tradition and linked to Rome since, at least, the time of the Crusades, is the largest Oriental Catholic community in the Middle East. With the exception of a small community still residing

city's spiritual renewal (Heyberger 2001) and was, moreover, able to access the new religious iconography imported from Rome and Paris (Khater 2005, 10). Reflecting the *dolorist* and intimist approach to religion that was emerging in Tridentine Europe (Pasture 2012, 11), these religious stamps came to play a vital role in Hindiyya's mysticism. It was, precisely, by contemplating one of these imported representations that Hindiyya started experiencing mystical episodes in early childhood (Heyberger 2001; Makhlouf 2001). Throughout her infancy and youth, Hindiyya consecrated herself to prayer and ascesis, experiencing increasingly intense visionary experiences. However, the decidedly 'erotic' character of her visions, which included the "spiritual sensation of [Christ's] sacred body" and the kissing of his divinized – and naked – body (Hatem 1997, 453-455),[11] became a matter of profound concern for the young mystic, who was zealous in the preservation of her chastity. Nonetheless, she was reassured by her Jesuit confessors (Dib 2001), who aspired to "use her saintly reputation" (González Fernández 2016, 10) to establish a feminine congregation bringing together young women from all Oriental Christian communities.

Following a well-established paradigm (Cattaneo 2012, 16, 20-22; Mahfouz 1985, 42, 54-55), Hindiyya was instructed by a "figure" (Hatem 1997) to establish a congregation dedicated to the Sacred Heart (Heyberger 2001). After a complex period, during which she contended with her erstwhile protectors – the Jesuits – Hindiyya achieved her goal in 1750, when her first convent was inaugurated in the Lebanese mountain village of Bkirki. Thenceforward, and until her order's definitive dissolution in 1780, Hindiyya stood at the very heart of the trilateral conflict of interests opposing the Holy See, the Maronite Church, and the feudal lords of the Lebanese Mountain (González Fernández 2020, 19-22). Thus, for

in Aleppo, the bulk of the Maronites live in the Lebanese Mountain, where they build the region's only Christian compact minority. Ever since the nineteenth century, prominent sections of the community left their ancestral homeland and emigrated overseas, mainly to the Americas. At present, the Maronite communities in Brazil or Argentina vastly outnumber the Maronites living in the Middle East. For further information, vid. Hage (2021), González Fernández (2020), Truzzi (1995).

11 Jad Hatem (1997, 455) underlines how, beyond uncontextualized psychoanalytical perspectives, the eroticism of Hindiyya's mysticism was rooted in a venerable Judeo-Christian tradition that expressed the love of man for God through spousal metaphors. The *Song of Songs* and the mystical poetry of Saint John of the Cross appear as the most prominent examples of this tradition and it is likely that Hindiyya, given her social context and family wealth, may have had access to, at least, the first of these works.

the traditionalists within the Maronite Church, the young religious and her order became a sort of proto-nationalist symbols (Heyberger 2001; Khater 2005; Matar 2005; Makhlouf 2001; Makhlouf 1990-1991). Paradoxically, Hindiyya's order, devoted to such a Western devotion as the Sacred Heart and heavily influenced by Latin spirituality (Makhlouf 1993), "became a powerful symbol of the autonomy of the Oriental Catholic churches *vis-à-vis* the homogenizing pretensions of the Holy See" (González Fernández 2016, 12).

In the context of the jurisdictional battle embroiling Hindiyya's order since its establishment, a series of apostolic visits ended up discovering what Bernard Heyberger (2001, XII) described as "hell in the convent." Following those reports, it not only appeared that Hindiyya had fallen into grave doctrinal errors,[12] but, worse still, that she and her main collaborator, Sister Catherine, had systematically exerted physical and psychological violence on the other nuns (Makhlouf 2010, 16-17). Unsurprisingly, the Holy See ordered the congregation's dissolution in 1780. Abandoned by her thitherto friends and supporters (Hayek 1965, 526-527), Hindiyya spent the remaining two decades of her life as an ostracized figure, living a quasi-nomadic life, the unwanted guest of convent after convent. Furthermore,

> Hindiyya's disgrace also represented the defeat of the traditionalist party in the fight for the soul of the [Maronite] Church, definitely confirmed with the ascent, in 1796, of […] the maximum representative of the Tridentine party, Joseph Tiyan, to the patriarchal throne. (González Fernández 2016, 87).

2. *The Mystical/Devotional Model*

The parallelism between the lives of the figures examined hereinabove are striking. All of them were middle-class women, educated in devout environments, and whose societies were undergoing profound sociopolitical transformations. While their experiences were certainly anchored in arche-

12 Hindiyya went as far as to claim a personal and immediate – even physical – union with Jesus Christ, which provided her with knowledge of "all sciences" and authority over "all men, including the Pope and the cardinals" (Heyberger, 2001, 228, 177). Although claims of unity with Christ are not rare among women mystics (e.g. Saint Rosa of Lima, (Sánchez-Concha 2017, 57-58)), by the time when Hindiyya affirmed her own unitive experience, the new Tridentine rationalism had become far too embedded in the curia for professional theologians to accept her mysticism as valid.

typal categories present in the collective unconscious of their respective societies, as explored – albeit in different terms – by Louis Bouyer (2022), the truth is that they also embodied the individualistic self-perceptions that started to emerge in the early modern era. The relation between bourgeois economics and religious individualization, as classically observed by Max Weber (1964, vol. I, 368; vol. II, 893), finds in the early modern devout or mystic woman its paroxysm, insofar as their social status allowed them to "transcend societal norms" (Khater 2008, 432) and to carve appropriate niches for the expression of their newly found religious individuality.

In this sense, the possession of divine graces – whether physical, like those experienced by Hindiyya, or intellectual, like those of Saint Teresa – or the performance of culturally-rooted, socially-readable acts of virtuous behavior – as Candida Xu did by embracing chaste widowhood – appear not so much as ends in themselves, but rather as means to reach the earthly or spiritual goals pursued by the individual. Thus, the performative element in the behavior of the mystic or *dévote* appears, simultaneously, as *essential* in endowing the woman experiencing such phenomena with social sanction to pursue her individual objectives; and *non-essential* in the construction of the individual's own spiritual journey, where the more colorful elements of the mystical experience often play second fiddle to other religious practices. Beyond the examples explored in this article, this dual nature of the mystical/devotional performance is almost universal in the historical record. From fasting and asceticism in the cases of Saint Catherine of Siena (Scott 1992, 34-46) and, more recently, Theresa Neumann; to sickness and physical suffering in the experiences of Thérèse of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity (Bouyer 2022, 111-144), or Rafqa al-Rayyis; or societal isolation, as pursued by Julian of Norwich or Jacqueline and Agnès Arnaud, these practices did not define the personal religious experience of the mystic/*dévote*, but did provide her with the social legitimacy to pursue her individual spiritual calling.

Therefore, it can be argued, together with Anne Llewellyn Barstow (1985, 30), that the mystical and devotional practices adopted by late medieval and early modern women were "both an integrative and an activating force in [their] lives […], enabling them to forge a new [and socially endorsed] awareness of themselves as individuals […]." Indeed, as Barstow herself underlined in her study of Joan of Arc, the pursuit of such spiritual graces allowed women – both religious and lay – to enter the political realm and/or undertake religious teaching (1985, 31-42). However, what Barstow

failed to observe – in large measure due to the concentration of her study on a comparatively early medieval frame – was how the experience of previous mystic and devout women served to carve a common model whereupon, local adaptations notwithstanding, new generations could construct their claims to divine graces. The three concatenated elements that define this *mystical* or *devotional model* (conversion, foundation, and teaching) became universally familiar to middle-class women in the early modern era thanks to the expansion of the new *print Catholicism* that accompanied the counter-reforming efforts of the Council of Trent (Pérez 2007, 283-290; Soergel 2000; Walsham 2000, 72-123). The abundance of narrative and pictorial representations of a devotional nature that accompanied the invention of the printing press not only served to promote the renewed spirituality emerging in Counter-Reformation Europe – and beyond[13] – but also provided new generations of religious women with easily accessible examples upon which they could construct their own approaches to religion. With the support of these materials, rendered easily accessible by the printing press, they constructed their understanding of the corporeal and psychological manifestations of such religiosity.[14]

13 Although studies on the Catholic print culture are comparatively few and far between – particularly when compared to the many publications analyzing the connection between the printing press and the diffusion of Protestantism – it is possible to find such analyses in the work of Wilhelm Ribhegge (2000, 173-192) or Richard A. Crofts (1985, 369-381). Beyond Europe, the close connection between the printing press and the diffusion of Tridentine Catholicism has been studied, *inter alios*, by Bernardo E. Brown and Claire Thi Liên Tran (2020, 197-216), Johannes Laures (1957, 163-165), or Liam Brockey (2002).

14 Teresa of Ávila's religiosity was modeled on the example of Catherine of Siena and the Northern European mysticism of Hadewijch and Ruysbroeck (Bouyer 2022, 78-79), which she accessed in her uncle's library, while Teresa herself served as an inspiration for Hindiyya. Candida Xu and her coeval women of the *literati* class, for their part, were equally influenced by the life examples of female saints, whose experiences, often at odds with core Confucian principles (Menegon 2004, 202, 204-205), were accessible to them in various publications – most notably, Alfonso Vagnone's 1629 *Biographies of the Saints of the Holy Teaching of the Lord of Heaven* (Rui Shang 2017). Beyond our study subjects, the Dominican Mission of Fujian employed the Peruvian saint Rosa of Lima – herself influenced by the omnipresent Catherine of Siena – as an example to encourage the emergence of female vocations to consecrated virginity (Menegon 2004, 217-218). In fact, these consecrated virgins, whose religious calling had initially been a matter of scandal in their Confucian milieu (Tiedemann 2008, 501-520; Menegon 2004, 221-230), played a leading role in ensuring the survival of Chinese Catholicism during the long century of proscription that followed the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (Hsia 2008, 208-224).

2.1. *Conversion*

It has already been mentioned how *conversion* is the first of the three steps in the *mystical/devotional model*. Following the example of Saint Augustine, who renounced his mundane existence to consecrate himself to God (*Confessiones* VII.9.13-VII.21.27),[15] the devout and the mystic abandon the comfort of their previous lives to embrace the rigors of asceticism and prayer. However, conversion should not be merely understood as the abandonment of a worldly existence for a life of spiritual edification, but more properly construed as an acquisition of self-awareness, as Daniella Kostroum (2011, 26) elucidated in her study of the Port-Royal nuns.[16] Conversion implies, therefore, the conscious assumption on the part of the individuals going through it of their "existing inner resources and capacities for self-transformation, which allows them actively to develop the individual conscience" (Keane 1997, 684). Thus, the convert not only accepts a certain religious truth but, through the act of supreme individuality embodied by such an acceptance, becomes the agent of a major transformation in her inner self. Even more importantly, conversion does not merely stop at the transfiguration of the subject's *heart of hearts* but becomes a powerful tool to transform the society where she lives. In this sense, conversion cannot be simply understood as the realization of an individual's own subjectivity and internal capacities, but as an essential antecedent to social transformation.

Thus understood, conversion can also be distinguished in the lives of those mystic and devout women whose existence was always characterized by asceticism, mortification, and devotion. For these women, there is also a conversion process that compels them to transcend the limitations of their previous existence and to undertake the *ad extram* fulfillment of their own subjectivity. Hence, Catherine of Siena abandoned her life as a Dominican tertiary to undertake an intense political and religious aposto-

15 Augustine's conversion was itself a complex process that involved an initial intellectual conviction (the 'volitional conversion' he talks about in *Confessiones* VIII.7.17) followed by a posterior boundless commitment to his new faith resulting from a mystical experience (*Confessiones* VIII.12.29). Vid. Dobell (2009), Magnavacca (2005, 238-239).

16 More than a century earlier, William James had defined conversion as "the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self, hitherto divided, consciously wrong, inferior or unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities" (Cit. in Ullman 1989, 191).

late that led the way to her becoming a mediator in the conflicts afflicting the Italy of her time (Scott 1992). Similarly, Julian of Norwich embraced a life of intense asceticism as a recluse in a modest cell next to Saint Julian's church (Watkins 1983). Among the case studies examined in this article, and unlike the evident Teresian conversion moment, which she puts in an explicit parallelism with Saint Augustine's, the examples of Hindiyya and Candida Xu illustrate how even those women whose lives never deviated from the path of socio-religious correctness, experience a moment, a specific vital juncture, after which the realization of their internal convictions becomes independent from social, moral, or hierarchical constraints. The establishment of a religious order, in the case of the former, and the attainment of widowhood, in the case of the latter, operated, precisely, as the key episodes where the major internal transformations engendered by the mystic or *dévote*'s newly acquired self-awareness (Iyadurai 2014, 191-192; Halama & Lačná 2011, 757-768; Paloutzian *et al.* 1999, 1,047-1,079) transcended their inner selves and become public expressions demanding – and commanding – public respect. Thus, in all the cases examined here, a given episode – be it a vision, a dream, or any other profoundly felt religious or vital experience – serves as the catalyst for the public execution of the mystic or *dévote*'s personal will. With conversion, religious experiences and spiritual enrichment turn out to be means to justify female agency, more than ends in themselves.

2.2. *Foundation*

The foundational effort that mystic and devout women so often undertake appears as a logical consequence of the conversion process that stands as the starting point in their religious calling. Once the mystic/*dévote* has undergone the profound transformation caused by her conversion, she requires either to create new social structures or to thoroughly modify the existing ones to have them adapted to her extremely personal worldview. Traditional religious congregations, as seen in the cases of both Teresa and Hindiyya, or conventional family life, as exemplified by Madame Xu, could no longer fulfill the transcendental aspirations of these women. In their quest to express the fullness of their self-discovered subjectivity, they opted for the profound transformation of existing congregations – as happened with Teresa – or for the abandonment of these communities to establish new ones – as was the case for Hindiyya. In other cases, like that of the already-mentioned Lebanese nun Rafqa al-Rayyis, the mystic may also

abandon a religious order to join another community whose charisma fits in better with her own *Weltanschauung*.[17]

The foundational emphasis discernible in most Middle Eastern mystic and devout women is particularly revealing of the importance of this step in the *mystical model*. Given the comparatively more restricted lives that they were expected to lead and the "practical absence of single women and female religious vocations" in their sociocultural context (Heyberger 2001, 34), it was only through the establishment of new religious congregations that women like Hindiyya and her contemporaries – such as the Melkite *'abida* Maria Qari[18] – could find spaces of freedom to express their newly acquired sense of spiritual individuality.

In the world of the Chinese scholarly gentry where Candida Xu spent her entire life, the foundational effort was not constructed around the establishment of religious orders as much as the physical buildup of a Chinese Catholic infrastructure. In fact, during the three decades of her widowhood, Madame Xu endowed more than thirty churches throughout her country.

17 Born in the Lebanese mountain village of Himlaya in 1832, Rafqa al-Rayyis joined the Mariamette Order in 1854. As member of an active congregation devoted to teaching, the young nun was dispatched to various hamlets all over Mount Lebanon. However, the 1860-1861 sectarian conflict and the crisis her congregation went through in the aftermath of that episode led Rafqa to abandon it in 1871. Her decision to leave the order was further reinforced by a mystical dream where three men (a soldier, a bearded man, and an elderly figure), which she later identified as Saint George, Saint Simeon, and Saint Anthony the Great, commanded her to join Lebanese Order. The new congregation, characterized by its austere lifestyle and the severity of its ascetism, was a better fit for Rafqa's personality, given her well-known refusal to take part in the "affairs of the world" (Mahfouz 1985, 52). After pronouncing her solemn vows in 1873, Rafqa spent the remainder of her life as a *Baladite* nun in the monasteries of Mar Sima'an al-Qarn and Saint Joseph, where she suffered the physical ailments that built her reputation as a saint (Cattaneo 2012; Verdeil 2006, 247-264).

18 An Alepine and a member of the city's Christian bourgeoisie, like Hindiyya, but a member of the Melkite or 'Greek-Catholic' community, Maria Qari, together with nine other women, was the first daughter of Aleppo that sought to establish a convent modeled on European patterns. Commonly known as *'abidat* (meaning 'servants'), these women refused to abide by the authority of their particular Church and to follow its monastic rules and pledged exclusive allegiance to the Western missionaries. As Maria herself expressed in a letter to the Melkite Bishop Athnasius Dahhan: "I will only adopt the Augustinian Rule […]. I will not become a nun under any other circumstances, for God has called me to be free from all that binds my spirit […]" (Khater 2008, 421).

As her confessor and biographer, Father Couplet, did not fail to point out: "there is no chapel, oratory, mission, or congregation that does not bear the mark of her generosity" (Couplet 1688, 125). Within her role as one of the foundresses of Chinese Catholicism, Madame Xu also extended her support to one of the first groups of Chinese consecrated virgins, whom she sheltered in her household (King 1998, 64). In doing so, she followed on the footsteps of other upper-class Christian women, like Agnes Yang – herself daughter of another of the *Three Pillars* – who had already established three 'convents' for virgins and chaste widows in Nanjing and Hangzhou (Amsler 2018, 128).

For its part, the foundational effort in the West was primarily directed toward the thorough transformation of already existing religious orders than the creation of new ones. Mother Angélique Arnauld serves as a clear example, illustrating how the personal transformation resulting from conversion necessarily implies a profound *bouleversement* of the clerical structures to which the convert belongs. The transition of Port-Royal from being the family convent of the Arnaulds to becoming an institution adhering strictly to the minutest subtleties of the Benedictine rule could not have taken place without the previous conversion of its abbess (Barbiche 2016, 75-76; Kostroum 2011). Teresa of Ávila herself provides the best example of the foundational consequences of conversion. Not so much because she established seventeen new convents, but rather because of the profound impact that her individuality had on the Carmelite Order. Therefore, Teresa's relevance as a foundress does not rely on her impressive conventual catalogue, but upon the revitalized religious and living model that her foundations put forward. In fact, as Carole Slade (1995) convincingly argued, the radical observance of the Carmelite rule of strict enclosure, poverty, solitude, and prayer which Teresa enshrined among her *Discalced Carmelites* transformed her convents into paradoxical vehicles for feminine self-determination.

The foundational effort, in its multiform expression, reveals how these *converted* women, armed with a new and powerful sense of their own subjectivity, carved new spaces of sociability where their individual religious experience could be freely expressed. In this sense, the *foundations* they undertook should be considered as the *ad extram* expression of the deep spiritual transformation that they suffered in their inner selves due to their previous *conversion*.

2.3. *Teaching*

The First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, and more specifically its chapter 14.33-35, has traditionally been regarded as the quintessential formulation of the so-called *Pauline Interdiction*, which prohibited women from studying and teaching theology. However, as will be proven hereinbelow, one of the most common characteristics among mystic and devout women was their propensity for teaching, which they justified by appealing to a varied set of subterfuges.

Saint Teresa's role as a theologian is well-known. Some of her works have been qualified as true treatises of mystical theology (Slade 1995), wherein she put forward her perception of God as an internal search within the human soul. Facing the prohibition of female teaching, Teresa reacted by deliberately using *plain* language and eschewing the technicalities characterizing the lingo of professional theologians (Serrano Pérez 2011, 625-645; Ricard 1982, 467-475). In a feature common to other women mystics, Teresa did not shy away from appealing to a "discourse of submission and weakness," a tactic that, according to Patricia Bastida (2006, 115), served as a "self-defense against the possible enmities generated by her peculiar position in society." In doing so, Teresa followed the example of some of her predecessors, such as Hadewijch, whose complex Trinitarian theology was built upon a deliberate emphasis on the *feminine* virtue of love (Bouyer 2022, 21-41), but also served as a model to be followed subsequent generations. Thus, Mother Angélique Arnauld of Port-Royal, who had read Teresa's autobiography, made use of the *science of saints* and a rhetorical discourse of meekness as strategies to validate both her teaching activities and her resistance to power.[19]

While references to female teaching in the Middle East are scarcer, it is well known that Hindiyya wrote a dozen of books (Hayek 1965, 525-636), where she intended to "explain the great mysteries of Catholic theology" (Heyberger 2001, 145). In her case, the author justified her venture into the theological realm by appealing to her own mystical experiences for, she claimed, her works had been dictated to her directly by God (Heyberger 2001). Beyond her justifications, the most relevant feature of Hindiyya's

19 Following Saint-Cyran, Daniella Kostroum (2011, 12) defined the *science of the saints* in the following terms: "[…] the opposite of scholasticism. […] the science of saints involved receiving wisdom in ways that were "above [human] nature [and] seemingly in contradiction with reason."

works is the fact that they were written in Arabic, "language of the people and the women" (Heyberger 2001, 148), rather than in Syriac, the language commonly employed by the – male – Maronite religious hierarchy. Her choice of the common language reveals, moreover, a willingness to familiarize Middle Eastern Christian women with the new religious concepts and ideas arising from the Counter-Reformation spirit brought by the Latin missionaries to the Levant ever since the seventeenth century. Thus, Hindiyya's works should be integrated within the religious renaissance that characterized the Christian Orient of her times.

Finally, in the case of Candida Xu, the teaching activity emerges as particularly prominent. Given the physical separation between religious women and their – exclusively male – religious mediators imposed by Confucian principles (a phenomenon which complicated the administration of certain sacraments, as studied by Pei-Yi Wu (1979, 5-38)), women were compelled to take on a leading role in the domestic congregations that dominated Chinese Catholicism in the late Ming and early Qing eras. Relying on an abundance of printed devotional materials (Standaert 2012, 73-124; Menegon 2004, 208-209), women like Madame Xu taught the precepts of the Church and instructed the members of their household in devotional practice, bringing others to Christianity, as both Gail King (1998, 62) and Nadine Amsler (2018, 119, 121) did not fail to point out. In doing so, Madame Xu and her coevals not only contributed to expand the boundaries of Chinese Christianity but also, and perhaps more importantly, challenged the predominant narrative around Confucian patrilineality, highlighting the crucial role of women – and female networks – in the transmission of the faith (Amsler 2018, 122; Menegon 2004, 211, 224, 227).

If conversion represents the initial stage in the individual transformation of the mystic or devout woman, and foundation serves as the external consequence of this profound internal metamorphosis, teaching and writing naturally follow as the third logical step in this chain of phenomena. Once the mystic/*dévote* has attained her foundational goals, thus establishing a proper environment for the development of her religious individuality, teaching becomes the essential tool in the transmission of the charisma that inspired her. It is only through the diffusion of their deepest motives and ideas that these self-aware women could justify their activity while, simultaneously, promoting the renewed model they embodied. In doing so, they employed a wide array of rhetorical devices and subterfuges to weather the limitations that, under Biblical prescription, limited any female approach to theology.

3. *Final Remarks*

Throughout the early modern era, Christian women living across vastly diverging sociocultural contexts made their presence felt in the public arena through the assertion of mystical graces and/or manifestly devout lifestyles. Their experiences were, however, dismissed by the positivist scientificism dominating the academia well into the twentieth century. The physical phenomena sustained by these women as well as the apparently extreme forms of piety in which some of them engaged were relegated to the fields of mental sickness, sexual deviancy, and psychological imbalance, as criticized, *inter alios*, by Grace Jantzen (1997, 385-402). With the *cultural turn* of the 1970s and 1980s, a new appreciation for women mystics started to emerge. Yet, this perspective also fell into a reductionist trap by portraying them as revolutionaries, feminists, and women beyond their time (Herráiz García 2015, 51-68; Jantzen 1994, 186-206) – a reading that has become increasingly dominant in publications aimed at the general public (Martín Merchán 2020; Vilariño 2015; Flotats 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that both perspectives fail at properly contextualizing mystic and devout women in their specific sociocultural milieux.

This article has sought to transcend the reductionism of those perspectives by placing mystic and devout women as participants in a historical context that was witnessing the, admittedly, non-lineal and protracted (Parker 2007, 1-12) emergence of the individual – her concerns, preferences, and preoccupations – as the dominant unit of experience (González Fernández 2016, 96). Thus, if Teresa of Ávila, Catherine of Sienna, or Angélique Arnauld expressed their newly acquired self-awareness through spiritual phenomena and ascetical practices it was because, in their respective societies, such manifestations of individuality were readily identified as expressions of 'saintly' behavior. The social readability of their mystical experiences endowed these women with the latitude to transgress certain social norms and contradict solidly anchored behavioral codes. In parallel, the Chinese women of Candida Xu's era were also living in a world where the assertion of individualism was rapidly becoming a dominant element in the psychological fabric of society, as noted by Pei-Yi Wu (1979, 21-22, 25-26, 37-38). While Madame Xu and the women of her generation remained firmly attached to the Confucian values associated with their social class, they laid out the foundations of a new Chinese female Catholicism. In the decades to come, this movement gave rise to more forceful – and

socially subversive – expressions of female self-awareness, exemplified in the case of Petronila Chen and the other sworn virgins of Fujian (Menegon 2004, 221-225).

Devout and mystic women do not, therefore, challenge the existing socio-cultural hegemony in the sense classically defined by Althusser (1995, 284), but rather operate within its framework. Indeed, as mentioned above, they appealed to practices anchored in the Jungian collective unconscious to assert their own individuality (Greenwood 1990, 488-489). With their ecstasies and visions, like in the case of Saint Teresa; their physical ailments, so common among nineteenth-century mystic figures (from Rafqa al-Rayyis to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux or Elizabeth of the Trinity); or their embodiment of social virtues, as Candida Xu did through her conforming to the model of chaste widowhood, these women were able to carve spaces of autonomous self-expression by appealing, despite their different cultural contexts, to archetypes profoundly planted in their respective milieux (Wallach 1992, 133). This also explains why Hindiyya's aspirations to mystical glory failed or why the consecrated virgins of Madame Xu's era had to seek refuge in the households of prominent widows. The new spirituality that these women represented, indebted to European models, had not yet penetrated the collective reservoir of socially readable behaviors in either the Lebanese Mountain or Late Ming China. Their behaviors remained alien to the catalog of representations available in their specific chronological and cultural setting. In contrast, less than a century afterward, a new generation of mystic and devout women in Lebanon and China were able to affirm their religious individuality successfully. This posterior success was possible because the behavioral patterns they exhibited – the public presentation of their selves in Goffman's classical definition (1956) – could be read by societies whose mental frames of reference had been expanded through contact with the sociocultural *other*.

This archetypal transformation could only take place in the context of the new, assertive, militant Catholicism emerging after the Council of Trent. In this sense, the missionary efforts that congregations like the Jesuits, the Franciscans, or the Dominicans undertook, not only in the Levant and East Asia, as explored in this paper, but also in the colonial Americas and throughout the new worlds opened to European exploration after the fifteenth century (Sánchez Méndez 2010, 3-25; Armas Asín 2009; Županov 2005) was aided by a deliberate use of the printing press to diffuse the Counter-Reformation devotional charisma. Droves of comparatively ac-

cessible images (e.g., the pervasive Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Hann 2014, S185-S186)) and books entered middle-class households across the world and contributed to promote the intimist, privatized, individualist religious spirit irradiating from early modern Europe. Consequently, female vocations started to emerge in societies where women's role in religion – and public life – had traditionally been marginal at best, while also contributing to the formation of new frames of reference that granted these women social sanction for their newly acquired religious self-awareness.

Thus, the mystical/devotional model, as analyzed in this article, provided women throughout the broader Catholic world with valid examples to legitimize the public expression of their religious individuality. The diffusion of a common model of sainthood through the biographies of saints, pious images, and other devotional materials that circulated widely in the immediate Counter-Reformation period not only provided them with readily available models to follow, but more importantly, also prepared their own societies to accept their public vocations. Therefore, mystical/devotional model operated at a double personal and societal level, transforming the internal heart of hearts of the mystic or *dévote*, while simultaneously reshaping their societies. By following the promptings of their intimate conscience, these women were certainly able to carve new spaces of female freedom and construct new approaches to Catholic doctrine and practice. However, their ability to do so was contingent upon the consolidation of socially readable archetypes at the intersection between cross-cultural contact and print capitalism.

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CROSS-CULTURAL NETWORKS AND EXCHANGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN PORT CITIES DURING THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD: THE CASE OF A JEWISH MERCHANT COLONY IN MARSEILLE

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Abstract

This article outlines the commercial engagements of Sephardic networks in Marseille's Mediterranean trade during the second half of the seventeenth century. More than a century and a half after the expulsion of Jews from this city, the new mercantilist policies of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, minister of finance to Louis XIV, finally enabled Jewish merchants to enjoy trading, settlement, and naturalization privileges. While local policies geared toward foreigners and state-sponsored privileges were often inconsistent, Jewish merchants managed to exploit periods of "limited toleration," leveraging Marseille's monopoly in trans-Mediterranean trade to transcend boundaries of faith and economic limitations. In recent decades, scholarship in diaspora and network studies has transformed our understanding of networks beyond the confines of co-religionists, family, and kin by focusing on interfaith and cross-cultural connections. Despite this, the port city of Marseille, its merchant community, and commercial networks have frequently been overlooked in favor of studies centered around France's Atlantic ports. This case study directs attention to Marseille as a hub of the Sephardi trading diaspora and elucidates how merchants used both formal structures and informal networks, such as communal networks of trade and personal connections, to enhance France's Mediterranean reach and their influence in an era of global maritime expansion.

Keywords: Marseille, Jewish networks, cross-cultural trading, Sephardic diaspora, Mediterranean encounters.

Introduction

In March 1669, the royal "Édit Pour La Franchissement du Port à Marseille" declared Marseille a "Free Port," eliminating import fees, with a particular emphasis on cargo from Ottoman-controlled port cities. The

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intention was to attract "capable" foreign merchants, including Jews, to settle and trade through Marseille's port and to stimulate sea-borne trade for Marseillais and other French merchants. The prospect of settlement, naturalization, and trading opportunities enticed skilled Jewish merchants to establish themselves in Marseille or engage in trade through the *Vieux Port*, drawing participants from across the Mediterranean. Marseillais and Jewish merchants transported goods from the Levant without duties, used newly built facilities for inspection and safety, and facilitated the exchange of merchandise, thereby expanding Marseille's local industries. The "free port" policies positioned Marseille as a hub for diplomatic relations and commercial exchange, fostering interfaith relations between Marseillais and Jewish merchants, more specifically, Sephardic Jews.

This study underscores Marseille as a focal point of the Sephardi trading diaspora, illustrating how merchants leveraged both formal structures and informal networks, including communal trade networks and personal connections. This strategic approach expanded France's Mediterranean reach and bolstered the influence of these merchants during an era of global maritime expansion. The study explores Jewish networks as a crucial dimension of Marseille's success as a Mediterranean port city, showcasing the intersection of religion, commercial relations, and political change that contributed to Marseille's status as a thriving early modern port city, facilitated by state-sponsored privileges and regional economic incentives recognizing the diversity of Jewish mercantile networks across the Mediterranean.[2]

Archival Sources

By examining notarial records containing shipping manifests, loading policies, and official regulations and decrees, the study argues that these documents reveal how the pre-existing mercantile connections and

2 While recent works touch upon the Jewish community of Marseille, their history exists within the larger studies of commerce in France or Italy, with no comprehensive analysis of the city in this context. See Junko Thérèse Takeda, *Between Crown and Commerce: Marseille and the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 2011; Jeff Horn, *Economic Development in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2015; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2009; Olivier Raveux, "Fashion and Consumption of Painted and Printed Calicoes in the Mediterranean During the Later Seventeenth Century: The Case of Chintz Quilts and Banyans in Marseilles," *Textile History* 45 (2014): 49-67.

trans-sea trading experience of Sephardic Jews enabled them to overcome boundaries of faith and economic limitations, establishing prosperous businesses in Marseille. The examination of the Sephardic trading houses of Joseph Vais Villareal and Abraham Attias serves as a compelling example, portraying Marseille as a crucial Mediterranean gateway for Jewish merchants. The case of Villareal and Attias is notable, as it provides historians access to information about Jewish trading companies through grievances filed at the Chamber of Commerce regarding their business and personal conduct. Three notarial registries form the foundation for mapping mercantile relations, illuminating the diversity of Jewish networks in Marseille and across the Mediterranean.[3] While several scholars have referred to Villareal and Attias in their work as the first Jewish merchants to establish a trading firm and a community in Marseille, to my knowledge, very few have used these notarial records to explore the Jewish community of Marseille. French-speaking scholars, namely Jonas Weyl, Adolphe Crémieux, and Jean-Baptiste Xambo, are among the select number who brought attention to the seventeenth-century Jewish community.[4] Early modern French history scholars have yet to use these records

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3 Jean Baptiste Audimard, « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, Fonds Notaire Mortel-Reisson, 393 E 93, Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (AdBdR), Marseille. The last two notebooks of this large manuscript contain a report on the maritime insurance of Villareal and Attias' trading company; Pierre Maillet, « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 13-83, Fonds Notaire Flaugier, Recueils d'actes, 394 E 29, Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (AdBdR), Marseille; « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, ff. 319-332, t 1729, Provence, Archives des Affaires Étrangères, France, published in Crémieux, Adolphe, «Un établissement juif à Marseille au XVIIe siècle.» *Revue des études juives* 55, no. 109 (1908): 99-145.

4 In 1888, Jonas Weyl wrote "La résidence des Juifs à Marseille," a short article offering a brief history of Jews supported by primary sources. Weyl's work aimed to bring awareness to some important documents stored in the Chamber of Commerce archives, which shed light on this community when few were aware of such records. In the early twentieth century, Adolphe Crémieux was likely the first scholar to use the details of Villareal's business records from the files stored in the *Archives des Affaires Étrangères* in Paris, a similar version of which is preserved in *Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône* in Marseille. Crémieux, one of the pioneers of research on the life of Jews in Marseille during the Middle Ages and Early modern, published several works that also contained unpublished primary records about this case. In 1908, Crémieux wrote an article about Villaréal's case focusing on the Chamber's antagonistic attitude toward Jews but without concentrating on mercantile relations, see Adolphe Crémieux, "Un Établissement Juif à Marseille Au XVIIe Siècle." *Revue Des Études de Juives* 55, no. 109 (1908): 119-45.

effectively or explore Marseille within the parameters of diaspora, Sephardic history, or network studies. Upon examination of these records, one could argue that the inclusion of Jewish merchants in Marseille's official documentation affirms their indispensable role, not merely as instruments of state policies, but as pivotal socio-economic contributors to Mediterranean commerce, operating successful trade networks. The notarial records serve as a crucial tool for mapping out mercantile relations, delineating the scope of both informal and formal commercial ties that linked Marseille to other significant Mediterranean cities. This contextualization places Marseille and the merchants within the broader framework of networks involving commerce, collaboration, partnerships, and various other socio-economic connections.

The Formation of a Jewish Colony in Marseille. Jewish Community Prior to the Édit of 1669

A look at Jewish life in Marseille indicates that they were ancient settlers and legal "citizens" of the city. They lived among their Christian neighbours, participated in the city's civic life, and assumed various economic roles. The first documented evidence of a Jewish community was recorded by Gregory of Tours in 591. By the high Middle Ages, Jews made up around ten percent of the city's population with diverse economic roles, such as scholars, physicians, apothecaries, weapon makers, coral workers, porters, tax collectors, investors, money lenders, spice merchants, merchants and trade brokers for Christian trading houses.[5] The municipal records show they had the distinc-

5 Gregory of Tours, *The History of Franks,* Volume II, trans. O.M.Dalton (Oxford: the Claredon Press, 1927), 179. Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela: Text, Bibliography and Translation*, Vol I. Trans, A. Asher (London: Asher and Compagnie, 1840), 35-36 or 6.1 and 6.2 original text. The Spanish and Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela visited Marseille in 1165. By the high Middle Ages, the population of the city was around 30,000 residents, including 2000 Jewish households. For a detailed discussion and earlier history of Jews in Marseille see Armand Lunel, David Jessula and Samuel Rosenberg, "The Jews of the South France," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 89 (2018) 1-157; Adolphe Crémieux, « Les juifs de Marseille au Moyen Âge, » *Revue des Études Juives*, 46 (1903); 1-47, 247-268; Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Juliette Sibon, "La Communité Juives Dans La Cite: La Juiverie De La Ville Basse," in *Les Horizons D'une Ville Portuaire*, ed. Thierry Pécout (Adverbum, 2009), 111-114.

tion of *civis massilie* or "citizens" under the charters of 1219 and 1257.[6] Still there were some limitations to their social conduct and cultural practices compared to the Christian citizens. Therefore, periodic local religious antagonism often resulted in the implementation of several official regulations aimed at protecting the Jewish residents.[7] By the second half of the fifteenth century, the growing antisemitic sentiments across Western Europe slowly threatened the protected status of Marseillais Jews as the city came under the rule of the French Crown, leading to their expulsion in 1501.[8] However, surviving records, such as notarial registries published by Louis Blancard and examined by historians such as Julie Mell and John Pryor enable us to understand several elements of the history of Jews in the city prior to 1669.[9]

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6 Lunel, Jessula and Rosenberg, "the Jews of the South France," 43-45, 48. See also articles of the Peace Treaty of 1257 in George Bernard Depping, *Les Juifs dans Le Moyen Âge: Essai Historique Sur Leur État Civil, Commercial Et Littéraire* (Wouters, 1844), 324. Julie Mell, *The Myth of the Medieval Jewish Moneylender*. Vol. II (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 119; Crémieux, « Les Juifs de Marseille Au Moyen Age, » 4. The first of such protections was in 1219, signed between the Bishop of Marseille and the municipality. This agreement considered Jews as citizens, or *civis massilie* and therefore offered them protection under the law from harassment and abuse. In 1257, the residents of Marseille and the Duke of Anjou (Charles Anjou most likely) signed a second charter to re-instate Jews' status and protection as citizens with several statutes that included private and public laws which concerned the rights of Jews as citizens. These citizenship rights must not be viewed through a modern lens, as even Christian Marseillais were not equal in political and social liberties in their community.

7 Throughout the early modern period, the Counts of Province protected Jews from local antagonism on various capacities with regulations issued in 1306, 1320, 1322, 1387, 1389, 1400, 1422, and 1463. For more details see Lunel, Jessula and Rosenberg, "The Jews of the South France," 43-45, 48; Crémieux, « Les Juifs de Marseille Au Moyen Age, » 8, 18, 37; Raymond Collier, *Histoire Du Commerce de Marseille : De 1480 à 1515*. Vol. III (Paris: Plon, 1951); Gottard Deutsch and S. Kahn, "Marseille," article on the unedited full-text of 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, Accessed 25 April 2021 http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10438-marseilles; Haim F. Ghiuzel, *The Jewish Community of Marseilles*, Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot. https://www.bh.org.il/jewish-community-marseilles/.

8 See Nadia Zeldes, "Legal Status of Jewish Converts to Christianity in Southern Italy and Provence," *California Italian Studies* 1, no.1 (2010): 2. In Spain and Portugal violent attacks against Jews had led to the Pogrom of 1391 and around the same time, in 1394, France expelled all Jews from its kingdom. See also William Chester Jordan, "The Jewish Cemeteries of France after the Expulsion of 1306," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History*, ed. David Engle, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Elliot R. Wolfson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 227-230.

9 Mell, *The Myth of the Medieval Jewish Moneylender*; John Pryor, "Historical Introduction," in *Business Contracts of Medieval Provence: Selected Notulae from the*

First, Jews had a long history of trade in Marseille and across the Mediterranean, even before the early modern period. Second, they performed diverse activities, often associating with Christians, which were not exclusive to moneylending. Third, these associations speak to interfaith commercial relations that remained integral to Marseille's commercial history despite legal and religious barriers. Fourth, scholars have paid little attention to Jews in Marseille despite their ancient history and socio-economic importance. The Jews who arrived in Marseille after 1669 were foreigners and lacked recognition as Marseillais Jews or citizens. However, unlike earlier settlers, they had reputable status as sea traders and prosperous networks that provided them with trade, settlement, and naturalization opportunities. The case of Villareal and Attias' business ventures in Marseille enables us to see how competition between European powers for Mediterranean resources and the commercial ambitions of the Marseillais and Sephardic Jews alike, shaped attitudes towards the newly settled community, which necessitated a period of "untested toleration" in this port city.

The Édit of 1669 and the Sephardi Settlers

The case of Villareal and Attias begins with the *Édit* of 1669, which enabled Jewish merchants to settle and trade without prejudice in Marseille.[10] In 1670, several Sephardic merchants arrived in Marseille to take advantage of these favourable state policies. At least officially, these families seemed to find some assurance in the protection provided by the French Crown. Notable among them were the families of Josef Nunnes Vais de Villareal, Abraham (Abram) Attias, Jacob Samuel Avidor, Jacob Hebran, Manuel Nunes (Nunnes), and Franco Dalmeda (Delmeyda).[11] In many

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Cartulary of Giraud Amalric of Marseilles, 1248, 52-88 (Toronto: PIMS, 1981).

10 « Édit pour le franchissement du port à Marseille, » 1669, Série HH 452 (Franchise du Port 1669 – 1788), Archives Municipales de la ville de Marseille (AM), Marseille. This *Édit* was part of Jean Baptiste Colbert's mercantilist policies which aimed to expand France's Mediterranean trade through Marseille's port. The *Édit* designated Marseille a free of duty port for goods transported on French ships. Furthermore, foreign merchants such as Jews and Armenians could gain naturalized status through marriage or property aquisition or conducting business. For more details see Takeda, *Between Crown and Commerce,* 2011.

11 « Mémoires et Documents, » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332. Abraham's name is sometimes spelled Atias or Athias. Attias and Villareal were brothers in law to each other as well as associates. Some records exist in both of their names, others as separate individuals or the company ; « Réponse des seigneurs échevins et députes du commerce de Marseille au mémoire de Joseph Vais Villeréal Juif de

ways, Villareal and Attias were the "ideal" type of merchants Jean Baptiste Colbert, minister of finance to Louis XIV, had in mind to help boost France's trans-sea trade: they possessed maritime trade experience, a solid reputation as trustworthy merchants, knowledge of principal trade markets, and diverse commercial networks. It was perhaps for these qualifications that on 16 June 1670, Louis XIV signed a *lettre patente* to allow them safe passage to Marseille and advised the authorities in Provence to "let them [foreign merchants], safely and freely pass through all the places and places of their powers and jurisdiction, without suffering, that they may not be given any impediment both incoming and returning…"[12] This order was a significant change from previous policies within which Jews entered the city with restrictions for trading purposes only with no possibility of settlement.[13]

Despite some pushback from Marseille's Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber), citing these early restrictions against Jews, the merchants received their permission, and sometime between June 16 and June 22, Villareal and Attias, along with several others and their families, arrived at the *Vieux Port*.[14] A notarial registry recorded by Pierre Maillet indicates that the two merchants operated a trading firm in Livorno, and potentially in Tunis, establishing networks that extended along the coasts of Barbary, the Levant, Italian cities, and various northern European ports. Their expertise encompassed the acquisition of diverse goods, including but not limited to various fabrics and spices. Among their traded commodities were leathers, muslin, cotton, wool, silk, clover, saffron, almonds, and more.[15] They brokered trades and transported goods on behalf of other Jewish merchants as well as Italians, French, and Levantines.[16] Like other foreigners, Villareal and Attias were attracted to Marseille due to the advantageous trading fees, the possibility of naturalization, and a chance to expand their trading net-

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Livourne présente á monseigneur le marquis Seignelay tendant à voir permission de revenir en France, » 1679-1683, Ms. Français 18979, fol. 146, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris en Crémieux, « Un établissement Juif à Marseille au xvii. »

12 « Mémoires et Documents, » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 304-305 ; « Pièces justificatives, III : lettre de cachet du roi, » 16 juin 1670, Archives des Affaires Étrangères, France, published in Crémieux, « Un établissement juif à Marseille au XVIIe siècle, »: 99-145.

13 « Édit pour le franchissement du port à Marseille, » 1669, Série HH 452.

14 « Réponse des seigneurs échevins et députes du commerce de Marseille au mémoire de Joseph Vais Villeréal Juif, » 1679 – 1683, fol. 146.

15 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 13-83, AdBdR ; « Mémoires et Documents, » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332, AdBDR.

16 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR.

works through Marseille's port, an opportunity Jews had failed to achieve since the expulsion of 1501.

Josef Vais de Villareal and Abram Attias: A Brief Background

Trading diasporas in the early modern period achieved notable success due to their extensive connections across multiple regions and the crucial element of "trust" within the community of commercial actors they relied upon for conducting business. This emphasis on trust was not exclusive to Jewish networks but extended to other diasporas, including Armenians, Arabs, Greeks, Chinese, and Indians. Despite variations in the structural aspects of these networks, the common thread was the centrality of "trust" and reputation, stemming from their diaspora communities.[17] As opportunities rose and trade networks expanded, merchants relied on "trust" outside regional and communal boundaries. Therefore, before discussing networks, we first need to understand the formative nature of the time spent by Villareal and Attias in Livorno, where they established thriving commercial firms, trading networks, and high social status as notable community members.

The two merchants belonged to some of the oldest and most respected merchant families of the Livornais Sephardim. This legal status as part of the community leaders came with a beneficial prospect of maintaining strong communal ties and trade networks across various regions as most of their family and acquaintances were notable merchants. At the end of the fifteenth century, when Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, Villareal and Attias families, like many other Jews, moved to several regions before settling in Livorno, where they received privileges of safe conduct, settlement, and trading through the articles of *Livornina* issued by the Dukes of Tuscany.[18] In his study of the Portuguese Jews in Livorno, Leonel Lévy suggests that the family line of Attias and Villareal had many relations and connections in Amsterdam, Venice, London, Bordeaux,

17 See Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers* and paper presented by Sushil Chaudhury, 2002; "Trading Networks in a Traditional Diaspora: Armenians in India 1600-1800," *XIIIth International Economic History Congress, Buenos Aires*, July 26, 2002. https://eablanchette.com/_supportdocs/armenians%20in%20Bengal.pdf.

18 Through the constitution of *Livornina*, the Dukes of Tuscany granted significant religious freedom to attract Sephardi migrants to the city who became instrumental in the city's international trade. See Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Tunis, and Livorno.[19] It appears that Abraham Attias pursued a legal career in Spain after studying for a period in Salamanca and that he is the father of Abram Attias, who relocated to Marseille in 1670. Abram Attias, in turn, had a son named Josef Attias, born in 1672, who later went on to become both a doctor and a rabbi.[20] His other son, Jacob de Abram Attias, succeeded Josef as an administrator of the *Mohar ha-Retulot* confraternity. Their cousin Jacob de Moise was born in 1675, possibly in Marseille.[21] We know that at least two children were born in Marseille within the families of Villareal and Attias as per a memo addressed to the Secretary of State, Marquis de Seignelay, indicating that the Jewish merchants "… brought the rabbi of the synagogue of Avignon, who circumcised two male children…," one of which was Villareal's son and another Attias' nephew.[22] It is uncertain to what extent the relationships suggested by the aldermen and deputies in the Chamber were accurate. However, one can infer that these events highlight aspects of Sephardic everyday social life in Marseille. Such occasions provided opportunities for the community to come together, celebrating events like births and religious ceremonies.

Trade contracts suggest that they also maintained close connections with the Sephardic community of Livorno and those who lived in the Ottoman port cities. For example, the Livornais Jewish merchants enjoyed a prestigious status in places like Tunis under the protection of the Duke of Tuscany and French Consuls.[23] The work of Guillaume Calafat on minorities shows that Livornais Jews could gain the status of *dhimmi* in Tunis and had a legal right to trade and settlement.[24] Jacob Attias, for instance, lived in Tunis around 1615 to conduct business while his family

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19 Lionel Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise: Livourne, Amsterdam, Tunis, 1591-1951* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 234. Some Jews lived much earlier in 1553 in Northern Italy.

20 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 305-312.

21 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 141. The confraternity was responsible for providing dowry and other necessities for "deserving young girls."

22 Mémoire, "Mémoire a Monseigneur le Marquis de Seignelay Ministre et Secrétaire d'État," 1683, Archives Antérieures A 1801, Sèrie G, Article no. 5, ACCIM, Marseille.

23 In addition to *Livornina*, in the Ottoman port cities Livornais Jews were protected by the French consuls as per the terms of the capitulations signed between the French Crown and the Ottoman Sultans.

24 Guillaume Calafat, « Topographies de « minorités », *Liame* [En ligne], 24 | 2012, mis en ligne le 10 juillet 2013, consulté le 10 décembre 2023. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/liame/271; Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 234-235. Jews as *dhimmis* had protected status to practice their faith freely in the Muslim occupied territories.

lived in Livorno. It is unclear if he is the same Jacob as Attias' son, but we know from Levy that Jacob had a brother-in-law named Jacob Levi, who handled some of his commercial affairs, especially with the Andalusian Moors of Tunis.[25] The descendants of Moisé Attias, who had close relations with Josef Attias, existed in Tunis as late as the 1840s.[26] The Sephardic merchants of Livorno maintained a flourishing community in Tunis, serving as a key market bridging the two cities and Marseille. These connections underscore the regional influence and extent of the Attias family in the Ottoman port cities.

Villareal and Attias likely retained a favourable social status among the Sephardic Jews in Marseille as notables and trusted community leaders once they migrated. In one deliberation, the *échivens* (aldermen) and deputies of commerce referred to Villareal as the leader, accusing him of building a synagogue in his house where several religious ceremonies occurred over the years. Marseillais locals suggested they saw Jews "assemble every Saturday in the house of the said Villareal and in another house in Saint Jean," which most likely was the house of Abram Attias.[27] Villareal's response to the allegations implies that he did not deny practicing Judaism or his status in the community. Instead, he blamed the Chamber and others of violating his rights to safe conduct according to the *Édit*'s privileges and the protection promised by the Crown.[28] Whether Villareal was a leader in the community, we cannot confirm, but the celebration of religious ceremonies in his house, such as the *fete des Trumpettes* on the 7th of September, *Grand-Jeune* on the 16th and the 22nd of the month *fete des Cabanes* suggests he was a noteworthy member of the community. [29] We know that like the Attias family, the Vais or Nunes-Vais line of families were notables of Amsterdam and eventually acquired a socially high standing in Livorno.[30] Vais de Villareal's family existed in Livorno and Tunis until the nineteenth century as merchants, rabbis, and stockbrokers. At the time of his arrival in Marseille, Villareal was about thirty-four years of age, and Abram Attias was married to

25 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 305-312.
26 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 234.
27 « Réponse des seigneurs échevins et députes du commerce de Marseille, » 1679 – 1683, AdBdR.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 See Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*. Their names appear on archives of Amsterdam as Vaes, Vaz or Vas.

his sister, Garcia.[31] Villareal quickly established their import and export business with Attias, which facilitated trade mostly but not exclusively between Marseille, Livorno, Tunis, Smyrna, and Alexandria.

The Villareal and Attias families were members of the *massari* or lay oligarchy in Livorno, further establishing our merchants' status as important figures in Marseille and Livorno.[32] The *massari* or *parnasim* system of self-government was hereditary, with roots in the Roman system of governance.[33] In 1593, the Constitution of *Livornina* introduced the institution of the *massari* in the Jewish community, which had administrative and legislative autonomy to regulate their community affairs according to Hebrew laws that the Tuscan government recognized. The *massari* chose their members through secret ballots annually that comprised five *massari*. They had jurisdiction over civil, commercial, and minor criminal matters without interference from the state authorities, with a special judge who settled cases between Christians and Jews.[34] The court functioned according to Jewish law and customs but was not necessarily obliged to follow rabbinical recommendations. By 1614, the *massari* had the power to naturalize Jews as Tuscan subjects, select which members to admit into the community, and award protection under Tuscan law through a procedure called *ballottazione*. Community members enjoyed "diplomatic and consular" protection from the Dukes of Tuscany and its "allies." In exchange for these privileges, the Tuscan government required Jews to have permanent residence in Livorno. It is important to state that the Sephardic community held these official positions at least until 1698 by preventing non-Iberian Jews from gaining access to the role. Only notable Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent could become members of the *massari,* preventing those of Levantine and Italian origin from joining them even if they were wealthy.[35] Eventually, in 1698, Abram Attias, one of the nobles and *massari*, proposed the democratization and opening of the office to

31 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 32, 140, 305-312. Lévy suggests that it is unlikely that there will be a second Josef given that there were only fifty people in the community in Marseille at this point. As early as 1645, the Vais were among the five families who received official control of the tobacco business.

32 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 234, 235, 309.

33 Ivi, 23.

34 Guillaume Calafat, "L'Indice de la Franchise: Politique Économique, Concurrence des Ports Francs et Condition des Juifs en Méditerranée à Époque Moderne," *Revue historique* 2, no. 686 (2018): 280; Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 77.

35 Moises Orfali, "Reforming and Conforming: A History of the Jews of Livorno, 1693-1707," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 7, no. 2 (1992): 214. Most cases

other Jews. Despite these proposed changes, the hereditary aspect of the position persisted.[36]

Abram Attias played a significant role in Livorno, serving as a *massaro* ten times, and his son Jacob became a *massaro* in 1738. On the list of names of 1693 for the election of *massari* by the board of sixty, the name of Abram Attias appears as one leader who was part of the selection committee. The Vais family appears after 1682 with Villareal's name in the minute books of the Jewish community judicial records between 1693-1707 preserved in Livorno Jewish Community Archives (*Archivio della Communità Israelitica di Livorno*).[37] The appearance of Villareal and Attias in these records attests to the importance of their prestigious status in Livorno, a significant social standing that they retained in Marseille. It is no surprise that from the beginning, the case of these two merchants attracted the attention of the authorities and Marseillais merchants even though they were not the only foreign merchants who arrived hoping for permanent settlement and expanding their businesses.[38]

Villareal, Attias and their associates eventually settled in the district of *Le Panier* in the modern-day 2nd Aggrandizement.[39] A testimony by a notary, Pierre Maillet, suggests that Villareal resided in the house of a Marseillais noble, where he also kept his business records. Villareal and Attias likely operated their firm from the same place, a practice not uncommon for the time. They were proactive in setting up an import and export business, promptly engaging Marseillais notaries to draft trade contracts. A particular registry reveals four entries for contracts in June 1670, aligning with the timeframe of their arrival. These contracts involved shipments between

that came forward were commercial disputes, so they primarily settled with civil, municipal, and maritime laws.

36 *Ballottazione* was a secret vote through which Jewish leaders admitted foreign Jews to the *nazione ebrea* of Livorno; Orfali, "Reforming and Conforming," 214-215; Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 234.

37 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 234; Orfali, "Reforming and Conforming," 209, 214.

38 Crémieux, « Un établissement Juif à Marseille au xvii, » 127. Armenians were another group of merchants who formed a small colony in Marseille. See Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean.*

39 Jean-Baptiste Xambo, « Citoyenneté et commerce. L'affaire Villareal ou la fabrique controversée du mercantilisme marseillais (1669-1682), » *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome-Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* [Online], 127-1 | 2015, Online since 30 June 2015, connection on 02 October 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/mefrim/2147 ; DOI : 10.4000/mefrim.2147.

Livorno, Cyprus, and Algiers.[40] Merchants who landed with Villareal and Attias in Marseille, such as Avidor, Hebran, Nunnes, and Dalmeyda, were likely close business associates. In a *memoir* and documents concerning captains who arranged shipments on behalf of Villareal and his company, they frequently appear as partners.[41] On numerous occasions, Dalmeyda and Avidor created contracts even without Villareal or Attias and transported goods from Alexandria in saffron, curcuma, wool, and other fabrics. In other instances, partnerships existed with either Villareal or Attias. For instance, Nunnes, Attias, and Dalmeyda, on 16 August 1678, transported one case of coral and one case of *senne*.[42] Attias and Nunnes requested several shipments from Livorno and Alexandria in muslin, wool, leathers, ostrich feathers, and madder.[43] While the affiliation of the merchants with a specific firm or trading house is not clear, we know that at least one of them, Franco Delmeyda, had his own company because he later filed for bankruptcy.[44]

The Jewish merchant community, though not large in number, had sufficient members to establish a small merchant colony near the port area. This colony included essential facilities such as a school, a synagogue, and shops. Unfortunately, few physical traces of this once-vibrant community remain today.[45] Determining the precise number of merchants is challenging due to limited sources, but certain documents provide estimates suggesting that around ten Jewish families or approximately fifty individuals arrived during this period. Notable merchants from this influx included Joseph Campos, Emanuel Rodrigues, Abraham Nunnes, and the individuals mentioned earlier.[46] French historian Charles Carrière estimated that at the end of the seventeenth century, there were around 250 to 275 *négo-*

40 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-3, AdBdR.

41 « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332. The manuscript contains testimonies by captains and patrons of Marseillais ships agreeing to signing contracts with Villareal and Attias for shipments arranged for their company and associates as published by Crémieux, « Un établissement Juif à Marseille au xvii ».

42 « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332. Used for medicinal, aesthetic, and religious purposes.

43 « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332.

44 « Premier mémoire, » G1 Résidence des Juif à Marseille, ACCIM, Marseille cited in Crémieux, « Un établissement Juif à Marseille au xvii, » 127. The Chamber of Commerce used his case as an excuse to show how Jews were unsuitable in opening their businesses in Marseille.

45 « Mémoire à Monseigneur le Marquis de Seignelay Ministre et Secrétaire d'état (environ 1687 – concernant Joseph Vais Villeréal), » fols. 393-398, 408. Série G5 (Affaires religieuses – Juif à Marseille et à Aix), ACCIM, Marseille.

46 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 307 ; Xambo, « Citoyenneté et Commerce," see note 22 ; Crémieux, « Un établissement Juif à Marseille au xvii, » 127.

ciants[47] or merchants in Marseille. It is unlikely that Carriére considered Jewish merchants in his assessment. If we accept this number as accurate for merchants in Marseille, it is reasonable to assume that Jewish merchants engaged in sea trade were likely a smaller fraction of this total. The specialization in sea trade within the broader merchant community could have contributed to a more modest representation of Jewish merchants in this specific sector. However, the volume of business conducted by Villareal and Attias as well as their associates considering the small population is astonishing, adding up to over 861 loads in cargo between 1670 and 1679.[48] In 1671, Colbert wrote that "it is a great advantage for us…that the merchants have abandoned Leghorn [Livorno] and that Armenians have brought silk to Marseille."[49] The Crown's mercantilist goals depended on the cooperation and collaboration of merchants who had wide trade networks and extensive experience in Mediterranean markets.

Commercial Undertakings of Sephardic Merchants in Marseille

Sephardi merchants conducted business across several port cities in the Mediterranean, signed *commendae* with other Jews as associates, arranged for shipments as brokers, and hired the services of Marseillais captains and brokers to transport the most necessary goods for French and Livornais markets. Villareal's contracts involved over thirty cities around the coast of Barbary, the Levant, the Greek Islands, the Spanish Peninsula, and Italian cities, with Marseille, Livorno, Alexandria, Smyrna, Algiers, and Tunis as some of the principal points of entry.[50] In recent years, it has become clearer that networks did not rely solely on trust within the structure of family, kin, or coreligionists.[51] While family, kin and kith were essential in the organization

47 In the seventeenth century the term referred to Marseille's elite merchants or honourable merchants who took part in trans-sea trade, particularly in the Ottoman port cities as wholesalers. This designation differentiated them from the local merchants.

48 See Charles Carriére, *Négociants marseillais au XVIIe siècle. Contribution à l'étude de économies maritimes,* 1 vol (Provence: Institut historique de Provence, 1973), 259-260 cited in Xambo, «Citoyenneté et Commerce," see note 22.

49 Takeda, *Between Crown and Commerce*, 99.

50 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR. There is variation on the names in the registries. In some cases, Nunes appears as Nunnes, and Dalmeyda is recorded as Delmedo and Delmydo, used interchangeably.

51 See Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, for a discussion on the networks of Livornais Sephardic Jews.

of Sephardi networks, economic relations required one to cross intergroup dynamics.[52] Merchants were interested in accumulating wealth; thus, they sought various associations to maximize profit and expand their business geographically. In this capacity, they forged business relations outside their faith, social status, or social linkage. An analysis of Sephardi's networks allows us to observe Marseille's commercial reach and the extent of the city's engagement in cross-cultural networks facilitated by formal institutions and informal relationships of Jewish and Marseillais *commerçants*.

Local Networks – The Role of French Censaux in the Sephardi Contracts

Without the added support of personal correspondence, the contracts, shipping manifests, and loading policies that have survived for early modern merchants can help us make some conclusions about the commercial ties Jews crafted in Marseille. They reveal the complexity of these relations, the diversity of Mediterranean trade, the link between individual merchants, and the multiplicity of goods, characters, and spaces of interaction. The three registries primarily document shipments arranged by Villareal and his company, serving as associates or brokers on behalf of other Jewish merchants. This underscores their central role in facilitating trade and acting as intermediaries within the Jewish merchant community in Marseille. However, notary records permit us to observe other associations outside the boundaries of the Jewish community, such as hiring Christian notaries to prepare contracts, French *censaux*[53] to broker trades on their behalf and ship patrons to arrange cargo transportation.

In Villareal and Attias' account book, French *censaux* appear regularly and were instrumental in arranging shipments or possibly mediating the exchange of goods between buyers and sellers; in this case Villareal, his associates, and those who supplied the merchandise. A *censal* was a broker who took a percentage of the value of the goods to ensure or guarantee the exchange of goods from one port to another. They performed a similar function that Jews played for many merchants in the Ottoman territories, sometimes also referred to as "courtiers" in the Levant. Like their counterparts, Villareal and his associates mediated between merchants and traders, facilitating the buying, and selling of merchandise, as well as engaging in various other mercantile negotiations. Edham Eldem suggests that in the

52 Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 213.

53 The term *censal* has its origin in the Levantine borrowed from the Arabic word *simsar* or *dellal* for a broker or middleman.

Ottoman port cities, the function of a broker or *censal* was necessary for any trade to occur. Each broker or *censal* in Mediterranean markets took a brokerage fee paid by each party involved in buying and selling of goods in question.[54] Eldem explains:

> […] all goods sold by the weight by the [French] nation of Constantinople has always paid the inner and outer brokerage fee; that is to say that the French who sell goods pay this fee to the brokers who perform the sale, while the Turks and Jews who buy these goods pay it to the brokers or *censaux* who perform the purchase. These fees are called inner in one case and outer in the other.[55]

By the mid-seventeenth century in France, the terms broker, courtier, or *censal* were applied to individuals who served as intermediaries between merchants, *négociants*, bankers, and others in need of mediation in commerce. These individuals played a pivotal role in facilitating transactions and negotiations within the commercial landscape of the time. From Audimard's registry, based on the names of the *censaux*, we can assume they were French and most likely from Marseille. There is no indication whether they were in Marseille, or if they arranged for goods exchanged in the corresponding ports. If we consider Eldem's definition, we can hypothesize that Villareal and Attias paid the Marseilles *censaux* a fee to facilitate the exchange of goods that arrived or departed from port cities across the Mediterranean. The registry in question focuses on ships, captains, and merchant accounts for whom the notary drew the contract as per Villareal and Attias' request. The only two figures available to us are the ensured amount for the shipment and the percentage paid to each *censal* for guaranteeing the cargo. The contracts reveal frequent commercial interactions between the Jewish merchants and the Marseillais *censaux* in the span of ten years. For example, on 19 December 1678, Villareal arranged a shipment for the accounts of Moyze Israel Medina, Izaac Rodrigues, and Simon la Coutte for 1500 livres. The shipment left Tunis and arrived in Livorno on *le Mercure*. From the 1500 livres, Granetto, as a *censal,* brokered this deal at 5 percent commission, amounting to 75 livres.[56] In 1671, the same *censal* ensured seven trips through Livorno, Alger, Alexandria, Marseille, and La Salles ports.[57]

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54 Edhem Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 221-224.

55 Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul*, 223; see also *Dictionnaire universel de la géographie commerçante* https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k97350212).

56 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fol. 75, AdBdR.

57 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 2-3, AdBdR.

The consistent employment of several *censaux* by Villareal and Attias suggests a mutual trust between them and the Marseillais *censaux*. This collaboration points to a strong and reliable working relationship between the parties involved, highlighting the trust and confidence that had been established over time. Between 1670 and 1679, Audimond, Berenguier, Besson, Dodun Greffier, Fabri Yadis, Gauthier, Gouffré, and Rosset appear more frequently than others. Berenguier was involved in around 34 shipments in total and charged his highest commission at 18% for a trip from Livorno to Lisbon for the account of Abraham Boccara. On 14 August 1673, Gouffré charged only 6% for a 6000-livre contract for a trip between Marseille and Tripoli, but Ponsoie charged 12% for the same insured amount and distance on 7 March 1678.[58] Of course, the reason for the fluctuation of commission is unknown to us. Sometimes, two or three *censaux* split the commissions. In one instance, Gouffré took three percent on 3300 livres and four percent on 2400 livres; both trips were in January 1672 on the same ship, *Saint Spirit,* by Jacques Olivier at the request of François Martin.[59] In 1674, Charles Rosset and Dodun Greffier divided commission on two shipments for the accounts of Gabriel Rivero Enriques and another for Izaac Alcalay and Abraham de Benjamin. The first traveled between Livorno, Marseille, and Lisbon, and the second between Tunis and Marseille.[60]

The period from 1674 to 1676 marked one of the busiest phases for Villareal and Attias, during which they collaborated primarily with two or three *censaux*. This concentration of work with a limited number of intermediaries suggests a focused and efficient approach to their commercial activities during these years. In 1674, they signed contracts with Dodun Greffier more than others, who were involved in over 65 shipments. His highest commission percentage was 12 percent, with only one shared with Charles Rosset, another *censal*. He made 2500 livre in commissions paid by Villareal and Attias hiring various ship captains, including Bonniface, Jean Quison, Jean Wilson from England, and Marc Allegre from Livorno. If we calculate the year 1674 alone, Villareal and his company paid 107 350 livres in premiums for shipments, of which French *censaux* made approximately 6000 livres in broker commissions.[61] Now, not all commissions paid may exist in this specific book. Pierre Maillet's registry suggests the contracts they assessed included three books obtained from Villareal's

58 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 10, 68, AdBdR.
59 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fol. 4, AdBdR.
60 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 20-21, AdBdR.
61 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 15-84, AdBdR.

house with seven hundred and seventeen loading policies. However, the supplementary details Cremieux published from the same records come only from one of the books. If we compare the three registries, there are discrepancies because of missing shipment details or even contracts that appear in one registry but not in the next. For example, in January 1674, one book recorded ten shipments; in the second book for the same period, there were eighteen trips. In 1671, there were fifty-six trips, while another register records only thirteen.[62] Furthermore, we have missing data for any trade contracts signed between 1679 and 1683. Because the court case came into full effect by 1679, there was likely no assessment of his books after this date, especially since Villareal left Marseille by 1683. What is noteworthy is the relationship between the Jewish merchants and the Marseillais in the contracts. Audimard's registry shows 53,065 livres paid in commission in the ten years Villareal conducted trade in Marseille, a significant contribution to the city's local commerce.[63]

Relations with Ship Patrons and Captains

Jewish merchants maintained close business connections with non-Jewish counterparts in Marseille and other locations, as evidenced by the shipping contracts that Villareal and his company engaged in to facilitate the transportation of cargo. The *Édit* of 1669 allowed foreign merchants to use French ships to transport goods in and out of Marseille with favorable exemptions from port duties and tariffs whether they dealt directly with the captains or through connections like intermediaries. In Audimard's registry, between Jun 1670 and Dec 1679, Villareal and his company contracted to arrange for over 861 loads on ships belonging mostly to Marseillais captains. A significant number of shipments occurred in 1674 with 128 trips some lasting up to six months.[64]

French captains and patrons handled the bulk of the shipments; however, they also used the services of the English, Italian, Genoese, and Levantine ships. An entry for 26 June 1670 shows that Villareal's firm received a contract from their Jewish associates in Livorno, requesting shipments between Algiers and Livorno for the account of Moyze Isaac Naas and Gabriel de Faro, who gave a commission to Villareal and his firm. The goods

62 See both registers for comparison of data: Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 13-83, AdBdR ; Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR.

63 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fol. 87v, AdBdR.

64 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 15 – 87, AdBdR.

involved were silk, and they used a Livornais ship under the command of Marc Allegré.[65] Several Venetian captains also appear on shipments: Barthellemi Toni, Mathieu Franchaisquo, Jean Stefano, and Jean Ora Bouche. The vessel of *Sainte Marie,* under the command of Jean Stefano, for instance, traveled between Venice and Tripoli in January 1677 for the account of Aaron Volterra of Venice and Abraham Nessi and Saloman Nessi of Livorno. The same ship embarked on another voyage on 31 March 1677 for the account of Jacob Franco of Venice.[66] On other occasions, on 15 February 1673, they contracted the ship *l'Agar*, operated by the Venetian patron Barthellemi Toni, to transport goods between Venice, Alexandria, and another port in Egypt for the account of Dalmeyda and Jacob Franco Dalmeyda.[67] English captains such as Boniface Giffor (Giffore) and Henri Jarde also appear on records, who brought goods like leathers from Tunis for the account of Villareal and Franco Dalmeyda. In 1675, another Boniface, also English, brought Mondragon tobacco, tobacco walnut, pearl, and cream of tartar for Daniel Lombroso from Tunis on the ship of *la Soumission,* while on the same day, he brought yarn of Luton for Michel Calvo and Gabriel Valenzi.[68]

In 1679, almost one hundred captains and patrons, mostly Marseillais, testified that Villareal and Attias frequently made use of French ships traveling to several regions across the Mediterranean.[69] For example, the captain of a *tartane* and a *barque*, named Teissiere, made twelve trips to Livorno between 1673 and 1679 for the account of Villareal, Attias, and Franco Dalmeyda. The bulk of the shipments were muslin, cotton, *escamite*,[70] and two cases of wine from Livorno. Andre Teissiere (sometimes recorded as Teissiero) appears in another account book, taking several trips between Marseille, Livorno, Tripoli, and Lisbon. He is possibly the same person who transported goods for the accounts of Gabriel Nessi and Saloman Nessi between Livorno and Tripoli and another between Marseille and Livorno for the accounts of Saloman de Medina.[71]

65 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fol. 1, AdBdR.
66 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 20-21, 23, AdBdR.
67 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fol. 8, AdBdR.
68 « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332.
69 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 20-21, AdBdR. Cremieux, "Un Établissement Juif à Marseille Au XVIIe Siècle," 99.
70 Most likely, *escamite* or *demites*, which were fabrics from a region of Turkey called *Menemen*, a district of Izmir or Smyrna.
71 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 9-86, 13-83 et 1-83, AdBdR ; « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332.

Villareal and his company hired Jean Carle and Pierre Carle, on numerous occasions, operating several ships, including *Saint Anne, Jesus Maria Saint Anne, Saint Spirit, Saint Nicholas*, and *Saint Josef*. They traveled mostly to Livorno but also to Genoa and Tripoli. On 9 December 1678, Pierre Carle imported from Tripoli 4 bales of *senne* and 220 pieces of animal skin for the account of Attias and Nunnes, 56 bales of *senne* and six bales of wool for Franco Dalmeda and Avidor, and for Villarreal and Attias, six bales of *senne*, three sacks of powder, and two bales of wool.[72] Between Jun 1671 and May 1675, Captain Jean Carle loaded around 23 cargos as requested by Villareal and Attias for their Jewish contacts. Several merchants, such as Albuquerque Altouné, Isaac Gomez Silvera, Jacbo Nunez, Jacob Mercades, Jacob Fortado, Judah Nunes, and others, received the transported goods. For example, Altouné received 20 cases of paraffine, Jacob and Abram Mercado bought a bale of silk, and Judah Nunes and Ishac Lopos Matos acquired six cases of stave wood.[73]

We cannot be sure about the extent to which they had direct contact with the shipowners or under what circumstance they hired the services of the *censaux*, but these associations still give us a sense of the extensive networks that linked Villareal and Attias with numerous other Marseillais traders. They used over 170 ships, engaged with over 350 patrons and captains, and hired more than 20 *censaux* based on the records I obtained.[74] These associations show the diversity of Villareal's business, the success of his establishment in Marseille, and the extensive trade he arranged between Marseille and Livorno for his contacts. From the 686 entries of Audimard's registry, there is evidence of 92 trips between Marseille and Livorno. In the list of manifests declared by captains, 143 shipments arrived from Livorno by French captains and patrons.[75] One potential explanation is that Livorno emerged as a key hub for the redistribution of goods across Mediterranean Europe, connecting Italian cities, northern Europe, and the Ottoman Empire. This development occurred concurrently with Marseille's gradual ascent to dominance, a shift that unfolded during the mid-seventeenth to

72 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR ; « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332.

73 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR; « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332.

74 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR; ; « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332; Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie » 1679, fols. 13-83, AdBdR.

75 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR.

the eighteenth centuries.[76] Villareal and his company traded over a hundred types of goods, exported French products, and brought foreign ones to the city. From Livorno, they brought spices, leather, woolen, and cotton fabrics. They imported from the Levant balls of goat wool, silk, tanned hides, and spices; from the coast of Barbary, they brought leathers, gum Arabic, wax, sponges, and coral.[77] On 30 April 1676 alone, Villareal and Attias shipped 200 pieces of *indianne,* handkerchiefs and other fabrics. In September of the same year, they transported 100 textile pieces from Marseille to Livorno, including robes and painted fabrics.[78] According to Maillet's registry, out of 861 loads, Villareal and his company transported 7,126 bales of assorted goods, 7,707 pieces of leather, and 427 loads of wheat.[79] Villareal claimed that his company conducted 856,400 livres in business when he moved to Marseille.[80] Maillet's registry has over 680 contracts between 1670 and 1679 and in Audimard's registry, just between 1670 and 1679 alone, there are over 459 contracts. In the register of contracts in the archives of Paris published by Crémieux, there are 250 contracts listed, which might be the entries from one book.[81] Therefore, we might conclude that the number of contracts may not represent the entirety of his business; however, the three manuscripts shed light on the relationships Villareal and Attias forged by using state privileges and their expansive network ties across the Mediterranean.

Sephardi Communal Networks Across the Mediterranean

Up to this point, we have focused on examining local networks and interfaith relations between Jewish and non-Jewish merchants in Marseille. However, it is important to recognize that the success of these merchants and their impact on the local economy in Marseille was also contingent on

76 Trivellato, the Familiarity of Strangers, 107.
77 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 13-83, AdBdR.
78 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 36-42, AdBdR. See also Raveux, "Fashion and Consumption of Painted and Printed Calicoes," 59.
79 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 36-42, AdBdR.
80 "Certificat délivré," December 21, 1679, Fonds f314, Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, cited in Crémieux*, «* Un établissement Juif à Marseille au xvii, » 122.
81 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR ; « Mémoires et Documents. » 23 Janvier 1680, fols. 319-332.

their establishment of networks with Sephardic merchants in Livorno. The communal networks they maintained played an indirect yet instrumental role in the frequent activities of Villarreal's firm in Marseille. These networks not only contributed to the acquisition of services but also played a significant role in sustaining the business flow within the city's Mediterranean trade. It is unlikely that Villareal and other Sephardi merchants who resided in Marseille completely relocated their residency and business firms from Livorno, especially since many of them moved back after 1683 and they were also required to keep a residence in Livorno. A significant number of shipments occurred between Livorno and Marseille, as well as between Livorno and various cities in the Mediterranean. According to Maillet's registry, approximately 395 trips were recorded on these routes. The Pennas (Penha) family, who frequently hired Villareal's firm, were among the notable merchants of Livorno. Abram Penha and later his son Aron Penha, for example, were part of the Group of Fifteen merchants active in the community's public life. In 1683, Abram Attias suggested one of the family members, Abraham de Haim Penha, become part of the 30 deputies.[82] In Villareal's records, Aron Penna and Emanule Nunnes Penna signed several agreements. In January 1672 for instance, Aron Penna ordered one bale of fabrics containing several pieces of Cordillera pattern fabric and five pieces of *cadis*. The order was under the name of Aron Penna and his company, which was loaded on the ship of *Saint Jean Baptist* under the command of Jean Jauvas and arrived in Livorno.[83] On 27 May 1671, Francois Martin ensured a shipment on behalf of Villareal for Emanule Nunnes Penna between Livorno and La Salles.[84]

Most of Villareal and Attias's associates were transients and did not live in Marseille for business. Villareal brokered trade for over 250 merchants, some of whom had trading houses in Livorno and Ottoman cities, such as the Ergas, Nessi, and Lomboros. The most common names that appear frequently are Anthoine de Lemos, Daniel Lombroso, Jacob de Mera, Louis de Lemos, Shlomo de Medina, Abraham Nessi, and Jacob de Soria. For instance, in 1676, Villareal signed eighteen agreements for shipments requested by Izaac de Soria. Izaac partnered with Jacob de Soria, Gabriel and Ludegio de Leon, and David de Leon in these contracts. Twelve were trips between Livorno and Alexandria.[85] In a second registry, Izaac and Jacob

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82 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 280-281.

83 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fol. 9, AdBdR.

84 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fol. 3, AdBdR.

85 Audimard « Recueil d'actes notaire (1678-1679), » 1679, fols. 11, 7, 4, 8, 9, 12, AdBdR.

de Soria appear in four contracts in October 1672 and loaded cargo on four ships heading for Livorno.[86] We know from Levy that Jacob de Soria died in 1689, and his family, like Villareal and Attias, were some of the prestigious members of the community.[87] Isaac de Soria, who had arrived in Livorno in the early seventeenth century, lived in a large room within the house of a Christian in *Via Genovese*. In 1645, Jacob de Soria and Mordochay de Soria were part of the community, notably taking the role of a *massaro*. By 1678, their family was wealthy and prestigious enough to run a Talmudic school. De Sorias also had a trading house with Ditta Juda Pinhero and Abram de Soria in Smyrna in 1670. In 1688, Abram replaced his father Mordochay as *Massaro* and as a member of *the Twelve* and Jacob de Soria was replaced by his nephew David. De Soria's family appears on the list of the aristocrats of early seventeenth-century Livorno.[88]

Another notable connection was with the de Medina or Medinas, who had family ties in Venice, Amsterdam, Tunis, Aleppo, Bayonne, Bordeaux, and Tunis and were one of the oldest noble Jewish merchants in Livorno by the seventeenth century. David, Rafael, Samuel, and Selomoh of the de Medina family were on the list of Livorno's community leaders. For example, Selomo de Medina, together with Jacob Ergas, another notable family, Mosé Attias, Aron dei Rio, and Manuel de Mora, were involved in the re-establishing of the confraternity of *Moher ha-Betulot.*[89] in 1687, which the community created in 1654.[90] In Villareal's accounts, we can pinpoint over thirty shipments or agreements for the Medina family between two notary registries within four years. For example, in 1671, Selomo de Medina received three shipments of *draps* (sheets/cloth): two bales containing thirteen pieces in the ship of *Saint Joseph* by Martin Vellin, two bales in *Saint Jacques* containing twelve pieces and one bale containing eight pieces in *Saint Jean Baptiste* with Jean Jauvas as Captain in charge.[91]

86 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 15-16, AdBdR.

87 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 299 (see also note 81).

88 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 263, 299, 321.

89 The confraternity provided clothing and shoes for the poor and, in particular, students and teachers at Talmud Torah school. Due to lack of organization and structures, the organization almost closed but in 1687, Jacob Ergas, Mosè Attias, Aron dei Rio, Selomo de Medina and Manuel de Mora restored the organization. The names of these prestigious merchants appear in Villareal's business books (see Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 46, 255 for more details on this organization).

90 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 46, 266-269.

91 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 9-86, 13-83 et 1-83, AdBdR.

With Abram de Medina, on 16 May 1674, Selomo received four bales containing 679 pieces of mittens of Smyrna. On the 21st of the same month, he received another shipment on *Saint Jacques*, consisting of one bale of ardasse silk from Smyrna.[92] The shipments of the Medina family were mostly textiles with some spices.

The members of the Medina family in Livorno, similar to the Attias, were also affiliated with the *massari*. Gabriel de Medina and Mosé held the title of *massaro* three times, and in 1686, Raphael de Medina succeeded his father Gabriel as *massaro*. Additionally, they operated trading houses in various cities, including the firm of Mosé Israel de Medina. This firm was notably listed among the most active merchants in the community records of Livorno in 1678. During that year, Mosé Israel de Medina oversaw the unloading of goods from approximately fourteen ships for his business.[93] Israel de Medina, who had a trading house in Livorno and Simon la Coutte, ordered several shipments between Livorno, Tunis, Marseille, and Alger. In another shipment, he partnered with La Coute and Izaac Rodrigues.[94] Izaac Israel might be the same person who received a shipment of tobacco in Tunis on 27 March 1675 in four cases.[95] Between March 1674 and March 1678, Moise (Moyze) Israel de Medina had fourteen contracts with Villareal and Attias, goods exchanged between Livorno and Tunis, with some involving Marseille and Alger.[96] Other members of the Medina family who had networks in Tunis were Abram de Jacob, Abram Isaac, Aron de Moise, Isaac Israel Jacob Israel, and Moise Israel.[97] Jacob Israel Rodriguez, if identified as the same person, requested a shipment comprising sixteen boxes of Clairac tobacco, with a total weight of 952 pounds, in March 1676.[98] On March 27, 1675, Henry Jarde, captain of the ship “le Mercure,” transported sixty cases of Mondragon tobacco to Tunis on behalf of Jacob Israel and Isaac Abram de Medina. An additional eighty boxes of Mondragon tobacco, weighing 15,587 pounds, and forty-seven bales of Clairac tobac-

92 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 9-86, 13-83 et 1-83, AdBdR.
93 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise,* 266-269. The name of Gabriel also appears in Villareal and Attias’ book.
94 Audimard «Recueil d’actes notaire (1678-1679),» 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR.
95 Maillet «Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie,» 1679, fols. 9-86, 13-83 et 1-83, AdBdR.
96 Audimard «Recueil d’actes notaire (1678-1679),» 1679, fols. 1-88, AdBdR.
97 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 266-269.
98 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 9-86, 13-83 et 1-83, AdBdR.

co, amounting to 9702 pounds, were carried by Guilheaume Audimare, the patron of Notre Dame du Rozaire, to the same merchants. It is noteworthy that this second cargo, consisting of Rodriquez's tobacco, shared the same date and ship as the previous tobacco shipment.[99] Among the notable families, the name de Medina is consistently found in records from Livorno, Tunis, and Amsterdam until the late eighteenth century.[100] The distinguished status of Villareal and Attias in Livorno enabled them to associate with some prestigious merchants. These connections were vital in the flow of their business between Marseille, Livorno, and several Ottoman ports.

Conclusion

The mid-seventeenth century witnessed significant economic growth in various Western European port cities. This era saw a surge in demand for foreign merchants, leading to substantial changes in city structures, infrastructure, and administration to accommodate increased movement of people, goods, and money. Sephardi Jews played a crucial role in connecting the East and the West during the seventeenth century, by gradually integrating into Christian port cities. Despite established networks and a communal trust system, Jewish merchants relied on support from local players, trading privileges, and state protection. In Marseille, they effectively utilized formal structures, such as state-sponsored privileges, and informal mercantile networks for trade, liberties that were uncommon for Jewish merchants during the Middle Ages.

In 1683, local religious antagonism and commercial jealously resulted in the expulsion of several Jewish families from Marseille, however, the case of Villareal, though not unique within the Sephardic network, stands out as exceptional for Marseille due to surviving archival records. These records offer a rare glimpse into a prosperous era for Jewish merchants in Marseille, evident in the thriving colony, successful businesses, and active networks sustaining trade with other Mediterranean cities. The success of Sephardi Jewish merchants underscores the importance of alliances with local commercial entities and leveraging state-sponsored privileges, enabling them to navigate cross-cultural trade dynamics. This contributed to

99 Maillet « Polices de chargement de Villareal & Compagnie, » 1679, fols. 9-86, 13-83 et 1-83, AdBdR.

100 Lévy, *La Nation Juive Portugaise*, 325, 416.

Marseille's economic vitality and reinforced its role as a crucial hub in the broader Mediterranean trade network. The surviving archival records provide valuable insights into Sephardi merchant activities and their lasting impact on Marseille's economic landscape in the seventeenth century.

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GERMANY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN CROSSINGS: SUPPRESSING PAST TRAUMAS AND REVISITING PRESENT ONES IN BURHAN QURBANI'S *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ*

Kristina Štefanić Brown*

Abstract

In the most recent cinematic adaptation of Alfred Döblin's literary masterpiece *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Burhan Qurbani (2020) reimagines the figure of Franz Biberkopf as Francis, an African refugee who, after almost drowning at sea during his perilous voyage to Europe, is shown trying to rebuild his life in modern-day Berlin. While Döblin's novel focuses predominantly on issues of class, Qurbani's rendition centers on racial inequalities and Otherness. Upon his arrival in Germany, Francis does everything in his power "to be good" and succeed in the modern metropolis, yet he is set up to fail at every step. Francis's failure is largely due to the suppressed trauma of losing a loved one at sea and to the symbiotic relationship that forms between him and Reinhold, a German criminal who uses and abuses Francis for his own libidinal investment. It is a relationship of peculiar dependency that also embodies Germany's dependency on migrants and evokes Germany's colonial past. By analyzing the effect that trauma has on the protagonist, this essay aims to show that while Germany may be geographically distant from the Mediterranean (and often disassociates its own politics from the migrant crisis in the region), it is nevertheless affected by and tangentially involved in the tragedy that continuously unfolds in the region. By alluding to the contemporary politics of disassociation, the film emblematically portrays and underscores the notion that the Mediterranean has been a focal point of development for cultures since the antiquity and to this day remains a palimpsest marked by the incessant movement of people reaching and shaping destinations far beyond the countries touched by Mare Nostrum.

Keywords: German cinema, trauma, migration, racism, the Mediterranean crisis

Long before Burhan Qurbani, a young German filmmaker set out to give his own cinematic spin to *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf* (Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf) (1929), the famous literary masterpiece by Alfred Döblin, two other German film-

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makers had already attempted to recreate Döblin's novel on screen: Phil Jutzi with his *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1931) and the enfant terrible of the New German Cinema, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, with his 14-part series *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980). While Jutzi's version did not garner praise from its contemporary critics or later audiences, Fassbinder's version is still a well-known and critically acclaimed adaptation of the famous text. Interestingly, although Qurbani was familiar with the latter version, he primarily drew from the novel. In a blog published by the Goethe-Institut, Qurbani is quoted as saying that the project "began as an exciting thought experiment, a game with the idea of reinterpreting and updating the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Alfred Döblin, that I loved and hated and still love and hate."[1]

By the time Qurbani's version came out, Germany had already been dealing with a refugee crisis for a few years. However, the impetus for recreating Franz Biberkopf, a German petty criminal and laborer as a Black refugee from Guinea-Bissau, who crosses the Mediterranean to come to Berlin, took on a wider meaning, which Qurbani discovered throughout the process. As he explains,

> it soon became clear that I wasn't just interested in a story about refugees in Berlin, but that I could tell something about the structures of racism. An imbalance of power. The undercurrent of oppression. With the choice of a black protagonist and his white antagonist, Reinhold, my story of Berlin Alexanderplatz changed to a postcolonial allegory.[2]

Consequently, in this paper, I analyze how Qurbani's cinematic text comments on contemporary German politics and society and on Germany's ambivalent attitudes toward the Mediterranean, or, more precisely, toward the people who cross it in order to come to Germany, i.e., Southern Others[3]. To support this reading, I will first give a brief overview of the events and processes that have shaped such attitudes in recent decades, and that form a backdrop against which Qurbani's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* must be analyzed.

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1 Jutta Brendemühl, "Burhan Qurbani on Berlin Alexanderplatz Then & Now," Goethe-Institut, September 27, 2021, https://blog.goethe.de/arthousefilm/archives/1007-Burhan-Qurbani-on-Berlin-Alexanderplatz-then-now.html.

2 Ibid.

3 The term Other has been widely adopted in scholarship on postcolonialism and cultural studies to designate individuals or entire groups that are perceived and constructed as alien, foreign, and exotic within the imaginary of a dominant culture. In this case specifically, the term pertains to those who, from the point of view of German dominant culture, are not recognized as German based on their origin, heritage, and/or ethnicity.

It is no secret or exaggeration to say that, throughout history, the Germans have had a long-standing conflicting relationship with the peoples from the South and their lands, one that is overwrought by complexities which I cannot address in their entirety with this essay.[4] Recent discourse and scholarship on the multidirectional and multifaceted influences between Germans and the Mediterranean are too vast to include here, but it can safely be said that in German cultural imaginary the Mediterranean is always constructed as the Other.[5] And while historical writing offers plenty of evidence of German hostility toward the Mediterranean, German art (particularly German literary tradition) underscores the sentiments that fall on the other end of the spectrum and date all the way back to premodern times.[6] This infatuation has continued well into modernity, for there is a large body of literary texts that center around traveling to and daydreaming of the far regions in the South (e.g., Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Italian Journey* or Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* to name a few).

Beginning with the postwar period, the Mediterranean has also held an important place in German imaginary as a warm, sunny destination for mass tourism, but also as the place of origin of thousands of "guest workers" who migrated to Germany first as part of the of 1950s recruitment agreement between Germany and Italy, and then through additional agreements with other Mediterranean countries (e.g., Spain, Greece, Turkey, Portugal, Yugoslavia, etc.) – an arrangement that Randall Halle refers to as "the contractual importation of foreign laborers."[7] Most recently, however, the Mediterranean has occupied a contested position in the German

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4 From their famous victory against the Romans in Teutoburg Forest to the numerous subsequent invasions of the Roman Empire, the rule of Sicily, crusades, or attempts at colonizing Africa in the more recent past, there is an abundance of evidence of German interaction with their Southern counterparts in the form of wars, invasions, and also in the form of admiration, envy, and even cultural and economic exchange (e.g., commerce and diplomacy). For an in-depth study of the significance of the Mediterranean for various peoples and cultures throughout history, see David Abulafia's *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean.*

5 For an overview of recent discourse formation surrounding the term "Mediterranismus", see Tomislav Zelić's "Mediteranizam – kulturni imaginarij Sredozemlja" *Filozofska istraživanja*, 41, no.2/162: 229-245.

6 Falk Quenstedt, "Mediterrane Perspektiven. Die deutschsprachige Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit im Kontext maritimer Transkulturalität" in *Das Mittelmeer und die deutsche Literatur der Vormoderne*, ed. Falk Quenstedt, (Berlin/Boston: de Greyter, 2023): 3-41.

7 Randall Halle, "Inhabitant, Exhabitant, Cohabitant: Filming Migrants and the Borders of Europe" in *German Film after Germany*, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008): 137.

public domain as one of the main migration routes for many who arrived in Germany in pursuit of safety and better living conditions. Germany and the Germans, of course, are not the only country and nation impacted by the Mediterranean since the beginning of time; nor has this impact ever been a linear, one-sided process. In his attempt to define Europe, Étienne Balibar succinctly describes the complexities and multifaceted interconnectedness of the region that persist to this day:

> not only are all countries, populations and civilizations on either side of the Mediterranean intertwined in a single dramatic history since time immemorial; not only are the dominant 'western' monotheisms (including Islam) sharing and struggling for the symbolic hegemony in the whole region, with locally dominant and dominated positions; not only are the current borders and distributions of ethnic groups on either side the result of even recent colonial and postcolonial settlements, but the societies themselves are today increasingly entangled into one another, both culturally and economically, even in the midst of bloody conflicts.[8]

The fact that Germany's geographical borders are not directly touched by the Mediterranean, does not mean that this country is in any way isolated from the political, cultural, and economic entanglement that revolves around the region. On the contrary, the Mediterranean remains central to Germany's current politics, culture, and economy.[9]

Of particular interest for this paper, however, is Germany's current, unresolved entanglement with the Mediterranean and its peoples, or, most importantly, the people who cross it. This entanglement, which only came into focus in the numerous public debates after the so-called "migrant crisis" of 2015, underscores the highly problematic (albeit not new or surprising) structures of racism and neocolonialism at work that not only remain uncontested but are often also unnamed (and denied) throughout Europe. In her writing on the construction of Otherness, Fatima El-Tayeb asserts that Germany – just like the rest of Continental Europe – has viewed itself as a colorblind society that acknowledges certain types of inequalities but fails to confront or even label them as racist.[10] El-Tayeb further explains that Germans have refused to separate themselves from the idea of German

8 Étienne Balibar, "Europe at the Limits," *Interventions*, 18, no. 2 (2016): 167

9 "Euro-mediterrane Partnerschaft," *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, May 21, 2005, https://www.bpb.de/themen/afrika/dossier-afrika/59080/euro-mediterrane-partnerschaft/.

10 Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft.* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016): 7-20.

identity as white and Christian, the consequence of which is the continuous racialization and exclusion, i.e., Othering of all those who do not (and will never be able to) conform to that idea. Since neither Germany nor the rest of Europe attempted to confront its colonial past in any significant way[11] – a phenomenon that Nicholas de Genova calls "an astounding postcolonial historical amnesia"[12] – the migrant crisis of 2015 was perceived as a surprising and unexpected occurrence, as if Germany and Europe had played no part in causing it.

Consequently, when former Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed more than one million refugees from the Middle East in 2015, her decision was perceived as a symbol of an atonement of sorts for Germany's problematic National Socialist (albeit not colonial) past, but also as a political move that has polarized (and in certain parts even radicalized) German society.[13] As a result of this polarization, upon their arrival to Germany, many refugees did not find the safe haven that they were searching for; instead they were once again perceived as a threat to German society and so-called European (i.e., white and Christian) values, just like Turkish "guest workers" have been viewed as a threat since the 1960s and have continuously been Othered (i.e., racialized, marginalized, excluded, etc.) to this day. Here I do not wish to suggest in any way that the sudden presence of refugees is to be regarded as a cause of the surge in xenophobic violence, for as El-Tayeb explains, it is often forgotten that everyday racism exists and would continue to exist even if there were no "foreigners" in Germany, considering that it is a problem that is created from within society and not brought in by the arrival of migrants.[14] And while Merkel's gesture had been intended as part of "Willkommenskultur" or "welcoming culture" through which Germany tried to rebrand itself as a country with positive attitudes toward migrants,[15] it did not come without restrictions or an economic agenda. In a recently published article on immigration trends in Germany, Preetha Mitra argues

11 Ivi, 24-5.

12 Nicholas De Genova, "The "Migrant Crisis" as Racial Crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41, no. 10 (2018): 1769.

13 See Akira Igarashi's study on recent surge of ethnic violence against refugees, "Hate Begets Hate: Anti-refugee Violence Increases Anti-refugee Attitudes in Germany," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no.11 (2021): 1915.

14 Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft.* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016): 14.

15 Katrin Bennhold, "As Germany Takes In Refugees, It Also Rehabilitates Its Image," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/world/europe/as-germany-takes-in-refugees-it-also-rehabilitates-its-image.html?_r=1

that Angela Merkel's "approach to managing immigration and diversity has been guided by pragmatism."[16] Germany's unceasing need for skilled and unskilled workers served to justify Merkel's stance toward migration. In her article on migration and refugee governance in the Mediterranean, Sarah Wolff asserts that "[w]hile Germany has opened its door to refugees in September 2015, it has announced the reinstatement of border controls."[17] She further explains that

> [t]he Mediterranean "crisis" has revealed the incoherencies of Mediterranean transregional governance, which remains underdeveloped and maladjusted to the current international protection needs of refugees as well as of migrants. Over the past 15 years, Mediterranean migration and refugee governance has been mostly EU-driven and risk-averse, with the prioritization of the fight against irregular migration and the externalization of border controls.[18]

Under the 16-year leadership of Angela Merkel (2005-2021), Germany indeed played a pivotal role in Mediterranean transregional governance, often calling for distribution of responsibility among the EU countries when it came to welcoming migrants. According to Asli Ilgit and Audie Klotz, "Germany has been the country arguably most responsible for pushing a common approach."[19] The question that one must ask, however, is whether Germany's push for a common approach and its reluctance to prioritize the safety of migrants should be interpreted as a way of evading a full responsibility for all those who, almost by default, prefer staying in Germany as opposed to other EU countries.

The most recent trends show that Germany remains committed to a rather uncompromising approach to immigration; in the autumn of 2023, the current Chancellor Olaf Scholz agreed to tighten Germany's policies claiming that "too many are coming" and staying in Germany.[20] On another

16 Preetha Mitra, "Germany in Transition? An Appraisal of Immigration Trends and Identity Debates in the Context of the 2015-2016 Refugee Crisis" *International Studies* 59, no. 2 (2022): 171.

17 Sarah Wolff, "Migration and Refugee Governance in the Mediterranean: Europe and International Organisations at a Crossroads," *Istituto Affari Internazionali* (2015): 167, accessed October 16, 2023. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09850.13

18 Ivi, 168.

19 Asli Ilgit and Audie Klotz, "Refugee rights or refugees as threats? Germany's new Asylum Policy" *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 3 (2018): 614.

20 Kirsten Grieshaber, "Chancellor Olaf Scholz and State Governors Agree on New Measures to Curb Migration to Germany," AP News, November 7, 2023,

occasion, he said that "[w]e must finally deport on a large scale those who have no right to stay in Germany."[21] The obvious unasked question here is: Who are those who have no right to stay in Germany? This discourse seems to apply predominantly to migrants arriving to Germany by the Mediterranean route, while the same policymakers remain untroubled by the arrival of numerous refugees from other parts of Europe (e.g., from the Ukraine), all of which raises the question of whether race plays a role in policy-making. To whom exactly is Scholz referring when he claims that Germans "must deport more and faster"?[22] It appears that those, who, according to Scholz, have no right to stay in Germany, seem to be by and large people of color crossing the Mediterranean.

Here I must once again return to El-Tayeb's claim that Germany's problematic attitude toward non-Germans (particularly those of color) – an aspect often only explored within the context of the scholarship on Third Reich (a regime whose atrocities are mistakenly regarded as an exception and not a reflection or consequence of persisting racist tendencies within Europe)[23] – must be considered in light of the German (and European) collective reluctance to acknowledge colonialism and its long-lasting effects on Germany.[24] It is in this light that we might look at the visit of the current German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier to Tanzania in November 2023, during which he asked for forgiveness for atrocities committed by German colonialists. Despite its late execution, this symbolic gesture may have indicated that Germany was finally willing to confront that painful part of its past. Yet just a few days later, a visit to Nigeria by Scholz revealed a different type of agenda, namely that of taking advantage of Nigerian resources under the umbrella of potential economic and migration partnerships. Again, Germany finds itself in the position of needing or, more accurately, seeking to benefit from the region(s) in the South. Scholz and Steinmeier's statements are in clear contradiction with Scholz's previous assertion that Germans need to deport "more and faster"; or else, one could argue that they re-

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https://apnews.com/article/migration-germany-asylum-agreement-government-scholz-67a042040f87aedf881de56b1b6a5fb8.

21 "Scholz Says That Germany Needs to Expand Deportations of Rejected Asylum-Seekers." AP News, October 20, 2023. https://apnews.com/article/germany-migration-scholz-deportations-opposition-b4ae3bfe5c24ae6aa0019d66adeeed6f.

22 Ibid.

23 Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft.* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016): 167.

24 Ivi, 24-5.

veal the exploitative nature and agenda (or, more accurately, problematic neocolonial pretenses) underlying the recent diplomatic missions. Here we should also consider the immense economic impact that the Mediterranean and Africa have had on Germany in recent decades (but perhaps less so the other way around), as evidenced, for instance, in the fact that Germany is considered one of Africa's largest trading partners,[25] which had in part been facilitated by the Barcelona Process and Germany's ensuing involvement in Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as EUROMED).

The statements by Scholz and Steinmeier certainly bring to the fore how Germany's official stance toward migration has never been motivated by a concern for the safety of migrants, but instead has sought to keep them at bay, at the outskirts of Europe, far from Germany. The Mediterranean is supposed to remain the border that keeps the migrants on the outside, preventing them from reaching their preferred final destination, i.e., Germany. Should the migrants make their way to Germany, they will be instrumentalized, exploited, criminalized, and then deported. Or, as De Genova argues in his article on migrant "illegality", "[i]n spite of their apparent figuration as strictly politico-legal subjects, however, all migrants like all human life, generally are finally apprehensible from the standpoint of capital as always-already at least potentially the embodiment of labour-power, the commodifiable human capacity for labour."[26] Herein, I will argue that Qurbani's film recreates Germany's complex, ambiguous relationship toward migrants as well as the conditions in which those who cross the Mediterranean find themselves after arriving to Germany, by projecting them onto the problematic relationship between the protagonist and the antagonist.

The film that, just like the novel, bears the name of one of the most famous landmarks in Berlin, surprisingly does not begin in Berlin, but opens with an event that takes place in the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean. Coincidentally, Walter Benjamin's review of Döblin's novel – a critique that Qurbani is familiar with – also opens with the philosopher's reflections on the ocean and its parallels to the novel: "You can embark on a voyage and then, when you are far out, you can cruise with no land in sight, nothing but sea and sky. This is what the novelist

25 Auswärtiges Amt, *Deutschland und Afrika: Konzept der Bundesregierung*, (Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt, 2011), 7. https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/12804/1a1f8991061fc0ea10663e8df344075d/deutschland-und-afrika-konzept-der-bundesregierung-data.pdf

26 Nicholas De Genova, Spectacles of Migrant 'Illegality': The Scene of Exclusion, the Obscene of Inclusion," *Ethics and Racial Studies*, 36, no. 7. (2013): 1184.

does."[27] This is also what Qurbani does at the beginning of his adaptation; the very first scene is a shot of darkness accompanied by the sound of labored breathing, followed by a dialogue between the protagonist Francis (Welket Bunqué) and his lover Ida. Then the sound of turbulent water takes over, introducing an upside-down shot of the sea, with Francis and Ida treading water, struggling to stay on the surface, their figures reflecting the light of a red emergency flare. Ida pulls Francis under, and after a while, only Francis reemerges. This is a scene of drowning, emblematic of a common occurrence in the region for the last two decades, and synonymous with what De Genova calls "the unsightly accumulation of dead black and brown bodies awash on the halcyon shores of the Mediterranean Sea."[28]

The film *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is divided in five parts, which in its form evokes the typical segmentation of Greek tragedies, in another obvious connection to the Mediterranean as the birthplace of classical tragedy. Consequently, the Mediterranean is portrayed as the place of origin of Francis's tragedy as well. It will signify the painful locus of Francis's nightmares, drug-induced trips, and agonizing memories, for he will be haunted by the flashbacks of drowning at sea throughout the film, indicating a suppressed trauma that with each consecutive flashback reveals a little bit more about the event in which Francis reached Germany. Francis's suppression of his trauma will be paralleled to him pushing Ida away, further down into the depths of the sea. However, the suppressed trauma, just like objects pushed under that water surface, keep resurfacing in Francis's mind: Ida will keep returning to his thoughts and dreams, signaling the trauma that refuses to go away. Through these emblematic fragments, the film also allows the audience to piece together Francis's trajectory from Africa to Europe.

Right at the beginning of the film, a flashback transposes Francis back to Africa, with crosscutting shots of Ida dancing, along with a shot of a sacrificial ox before slaughter – a sequence that keeps resurfacing and points to a tragic loss of life that will haunt Francis and follow him all the way to Berlin. In what follows, Francis is being captured by the camera from bird's eye view exiting the sea and collapsing on a sandy beach where he makes a vow to God, promising to become good, "a new man,

27 Walter Benjamin, "The Crisis of the Novel" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), 299.

28 Nicholas De Genova, "The "Migrant Crisis" as Racial Crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41, no. 10 (2018): 1765.

a decent man."[29] Francis's vow is conveyed to the audience with a voiceover narration by Mieze (Jella Haase), at this point only an omniscient narrator who becomes Francis's lover later in the film and the mother of his child. Mieze announces that this is the story of *her* Francis, who "washed up on the shores of a new life," and "survived, dripping with the sins of the past." According to Mieze's narration, Francis will come to Berlin, where he will stumble and fall three times, and Berlin will be the place that will eventually break him. The camera then shows Francis working a job at an underground construction site in the vicinity of the Alexanderplatz, surrounded by other workers and heavy machinery – reminiscent of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* – indicating the beginning of the exploitation and mistreatment that will break Francis and symbolizes the continuation of colonial ties between Berlin and Africa via the Mediterranean.

Francis is subsequently shown at the migrant shelter: as he is showering, there are intercutting fragments of an underwater struggle showing him and Ida fighting for life beneath the water's surface; simultaneously, the sound of showering water is paired with Francis's heavy breathing signaling a panic attack induced by the presence of water. Then the water from the shower turns into blood dripping from Francis's body. Consequently, the camera shows Francis snapping out of the panic-induced episode and he leaves the common bathroom joining Ottu (Richard Fouofié Djimeli), a fellow migrant and co-worker. They pass an African woman smoking in the hallway who gives them a suspicious stare. As they stand waiting in front of an elevator, another African woman is seen exiting the elevator, holding hands with a white man. This scene serves as an allusion to the problem of the trafficking and subjugation of Black female bodies by white German men, for in another scene shown toward the end of the film, it will become clear that the migrant shelter is a place where German men go to have sex with migrant women. Subsequently, there is a sound of a man whistling "Oh My Darling, Clementine." This song – that narrates the story of a man losing his loved one to drowning – will be sung or whistled throughout the film, as a powerful and ominous leitmotif, i.e., a soundtrack to Francis's downfall and symbol of his past trauma. Ottu tries to stop Francis from entering the elevator, where we see a white man smoking in the corner. As Francis ignores Ottu's ominous "Don't!" and confidently enters

29 This and all subsequent quotes from the film are taken directly from the subtitles. On a few occasions, I transcribe the text in the original language, followed by my own translation.

the elevator, the camera reveals the source of the whistling tune. This is the moment when Francis has his first encounter with his nemesis, Reinhold (Albrecht Schuch) and unknowingly enters into the toxic relationship that will ruin him.

Reinhold is a nefarious character, a drug dealer who visits the migrant shelter in order to recruit hopeless men into his criminal enterprise. He is blond and blue-eyed, slender in stature and with a posture that is in a continuous twist; even in his appearance, he is the complete opposite of the tall, strong, and proud-looking Francis. While Francis's voice is deep and his speech measured and thoughtful, Reinhold's high-pitched voice, characterized by a perpetual whisper seems to hide a speech impediment (even in Döblin's novel, Reinhold appears as "der Stotterer" [the stutterer]) and is marked by his continuous code-switching between German, English, and French, to which he adds phrases in Latin. His outward appearance seems to mimic his diabolic personality, all of which him make him reminiscent of a Babylonian creature. Upon laying eyes on Francis, Reinhold already reveals his predatory instinct: "You are new here." Ottu, apparently already familiar with Reinhold, tries to stop this interaction by saying: "Leave him alone. This one isn't for you." In a shot-reverse shot sequence, Reinhold, however, continues his prodding with guesses about Francis's provenance by naming African countries that were part of the former German colonial enterprise: "Angola? Mozambique?" Francis stops him by revealing his homeland: "Bissau." Upon hearing this, Reinhold offers an offensive phrase in Francis's native tongue that leaves Francis at first confused but then smiling at the inaccuracy of Reinhold's statement. Ottu's fear and concern are soon proven legitimate, as Reinhold almost immediately starts to lay claim on Francis. Accordingly, behind Reinhold's initial curiosity about Francis and their growing co-dependency, a devious plan unfolds, for it soon becomes clear that Reinhold seeks to appropriate and utilize Francis for his own agenda: handling his women, preparing meals for his drug dealers, and assisting him in burglaries. In a sense, from the very beginning of their relationship, Reinhold sets out to colonize Francis first by offering him a job (that Francis initially refuses because he wants to be good), and then slowly by luring him deeper into his criminal activities. It eventually becomes impossible for Francis to succeed in Berlin, primarily due to his past trauma and to Reinhold's actions that lead to the mutilation of Francis's body and ultimately to the death of Mieze and his incarceration.

Their connection – at times loaded with homoeroticism that is not unlike the relationship depicted in Döblin's novel – resembles a Faustian agreement in which Reinhold seduces Francis with the promise of a new, more

prosperous life, but the audience knows from Mieze's ominous narration that Francis is the one who will lose in the end. Just like Mephistopheles, Reinhold has two sides: one that is friendly and helpful toward Francis and the other that wishes him harm. On the one hand, Reinhold repeatedly refers to Francis as "my brother," but on the other, he berates him by calling him "my gorilla" or "my faithful ox," just as their boss, Pums (Joachim Kròl), does. In several scenes throughout the film, white men in position of power resort to the same terminology. The language they use not only reveals a blatant racism, it also evokes Germany's past and present colonial aspirations. Herein, I argue that Qurbani projects onto the figure of Reinhold, the current attitudes of the host country, namely Germany – a country that is plagued and crippled by its past but also needs to find a new source of strength. For the last two decades, Germany has been seen seemingly acting in the best interests of immigrants, all the while exploiting them before they can be discarded, i.e., deported. Francis, conversely, stands for the unwelcome visitor, Southern Other, whose only purpose in the eye of the host seems to be to complete Germany's dirty work.

In his writing on the intersections between migration and racism in Europe, Balibar points out the major contradiction that characterizes immigration processes: "[t]he modern state […] opens the door to 'clandestine' circulation of the foreign labour force, and at the same time represses it."[30] This is best exemplified by another scene set at the construction site in Berlin, where it becomes evident that Francis is a part of a crew of undocumented workers – most of whom seem to come from Africa and the Middle East – all managed by a merciless German supervisor, who also calls Francis a "stupid ape." The imbalance of power is best displayed here: Francis is used as a poorly paid laborer who can be deported at any point. When his co-worker – a man from the Middle East – gets hurt on the job, Francis is warned against calling an ambulance and seeking any medical help, for it will create problems for their German supervisors. Francis and his co-workers are thus a disposable workforce who must remain complicit in their own illegality. This only further thwarts Francis's goal to become good and decent, for after he loses this job, he will have no other choice than to join Reinhold in his criminal endeavors. There is also a clear spatial division at work in this scene: the underground hides Black and brown men, who build the city from the ground up. As illegal workers, they are hidden from the unsuspecting, "law-abiding" citizens, or from those who,

30 Étienne Balibar, "Es gibt keinen Staat in Europa: Racism and Politics in Europe Today" *New Left Review,* no. 186 (1991): 16.

according to Scholz, have the right to stay in Germany. Right after work, as they emerge from the underground, they are transported in a van to the outskirts of Berlin. Their labor and misfortune are invisible to the eyes of those above ground (just as they remain invisible to the eyes of the law until they get apprehended) while the white men who employ them take all the credit for and profit from their labor. As modern-day slaves, they clearly serve the unsuspecting Germans who live their lives undisturbed above ground, in the streets of the Berlin, yet, ironically, they remain invisible to the audience of Qurbani's film. The film thus comments on the fact that the splendor of contemporary Berlin, that we see throughout the film via beautiful night shots of the skyline and empty streets, was made possible by those oppressed by systems both past and present, who are excluded from enjoying it. Sadly, despite some recent public attempts at raising awareness about Germany's colonial past, present-day Berlin still has streets named after German colonialists and works of art on display that show Germany's shameful involvement in the colonial project.[31]

Germany's colonial past and present-day racism are explicitly put on display in a scene with a drug- and alcohol-fueled party at Reinhold's apartment that starts with Reinhold waking Francis with a menacing chokehold. The murderous gesture soon turns into Reinhold's cheerful invitation for Francis to join the party with him and his female German friends. As the camera spins around the room to the sounds of techno music, Reinhold's friend asks laughingly: "Francis, what kind of name is that? Sounds like a woman." Another friend comments: "Francis, so heißt doch kein Mensch!" ("Nobody is called Francis!") This statement, however, literally translates as "*no human* is called like that." Francis understands the retort's literal meaning and asks: "Denkst du… ich bin kein Mensch?" ("Do you think… I am no human?") The girl insists that she did not intend to offend Francis, and even Reinhold agrees that they did not mean anything by this, yet Reinhold continues in the same offensive tone: "Es wird Zeit, dass du *eingemenscht* wirst" ("It is time to make you a human"). Both girls agree: "Etwas Stabiles, Deutsches, wie Christian oder Markus" ("Something stable, German, like Christian or Markus"). Reinhold and his German girlfriends see no issue with their words, as they carry on with their playful search for what they think would be an appropriate new name for Francis, i.e., one that would work with the color of his skin. Finally, Reinhold proclaims: "Du bist Franz" ("You are Franz"). What follows is a

31 *Afro.Deutschland*, directed by Jana Pareigis, Susanne Lenz-Gleißner, Adam Ulrich, *Deutsche Welle*, 2017, https://corporate.dw.com/en/film-afrodeutschland/a-38990283.

drunken act of baptism, during which Reinhold, holding Francis by his throat and pouring alcohol over his head, bestows Francis with a new, German name. Again, the words used in German reveal that this is not just an act of renaming Francis, but of turning him into a human, or, as Reinhold calls him: "Menschenkind" ("human child") implying that he was not one beforehand. The word "child" also underscores the patronizing tone of Reinhold's interaction with Francis. Soon thereafter, Reinhold will also proclaim that "Francis was his slave name. Now his name's Franz. And he can even speak German." Consequently, Reinhold, as Francis's German host and benefactor, holds not only the power of naming him but also that of granting Francis his status as human. This act of renaming Francis to Franz, or making somebody (i.e., human) out of him, is an unequivocal allusion to the relationship between colonizers and their colonial subjects. It represents Francis's rite of passage into "civilized" society, but it also brings to mind present-day Germany's immigration procedures, i.e., that immigrants who are not granted legal status in Germany are neither considered nor treated as human beings.

Qurbani further highlights the problem of racism in contemporary Germany with the figure of Eva (Annabelle Mandeng), the Afro-German owner of a nightclub emblematically named "Neue Welt" (New World) who will become Francis's friend and protector. As soon as she meets Francis, the issues of race and identity come to foreground. In the conversation about their respective origins, Francis/Franz tells Eva that she must not have grown up in Nigeria, the country of her father, for she dances like a German. While he sees her as German based on her body language and demeanor, Eva is aware that she is always perceived as the Other due to the color of her skin. During a love scene that is intercut with fragments of their conversation, Franz brings up the issue of race with Eva: "There is so little sun here in Germany. I am getting more and more pale. Soon I'll be white." Eva's response, however, is less metaphorical: "People look at me and all they think is black. But then they hear my voice. And it is white. My words are white." Francis, with his newcomer's naïveté, calls her racist but Eva, who has spent her entire life in Germany is more discerning: "I see the world through their eyes, as if I were white. But even if everyone were blind, I would still know I'm black. And that it makes a difference. Because it does make a difference." Thus, Eva may be a financially independent and successful businesswoman whose mother tongue is German, but the color of her skin just as her openness toward the Other (e.g., migrants and her transgender lover Berta) set her apart within the white mainstream Germany. She is not a fully integrated member of the society, for she still

represents a limited success, circumscribed to the underbelly of Berlin. Moreover, she belongs to the group of people that – according to El-Tayeb – will never be able to assimilate no matter how German they may be, for they will always have to explain their provenance to the white Germans (even after living in Germany for generations).[32] However, her existence on the outskirt of society is precisely what provides her with a critical voice regarding contemporary Germany. She is both German and non-German; and this duality (of belonging and not-belonging at the same time) allows her to recognize the issues within German society, i.e., to see through the patterns of abuse to which Reinhold subjects Francis.

Reinhold – just like Germany in the wake of the migrant crisis – acts as Francis's benefactor, but he continues to reject Francis as well, literally pushing him out of a speeding car after a fight during which Francis rebels against being called "an ape." Following the accident is a dreamlike cross-cutting sequence, in which Francis is again transposed back to Africa where he faces an ox. In one shot, Francis is the one holding a machete as he approaches the ox held by two men, with Reinhold appearing in the background while in the next one, Francis is on his knees and being restrained by the same two men while Reinhold holds a machete against his neck, the entire sequence accompanied by a non-diegetic, elegiac vocalization. As Reinhold cuts Francis's throat, there is an intercut of the kneeling Francis being hit by a car in a tunnel in Berlin. Consequently, the invisible psychological trauma of the drowning in the Mediterranean becomes the visible physical trauma of Francis's crippled body, for upon waking up following his accident, Francis discovers that he is missing his left arm. While Döblin's Franz lost his right arm, Qurbani's version delivers a more impactful symbolism, linking Francis's missing left arm to his heartache over losing Ida, for, as Mieze, who enters the plot at that point, soon explains, the pain from his missing left arm was spreading directly to his heart.

Francis's reaction to the trauma of the accident is marked by sorrowful and unintelligible cries that persist even after the camera switches to show a beautiful evening skyline of Berlin and continues to follow the movement of a luxury car that carries Francis lying in Eva's lap. The iconic television tower, or Fernsehturm, first visible in the sequence's establishing shot, can now be seen as a reflection in the window of the car and through Francis's eyes as he keeps gazing at it. The tower is an unequivocal symbol of the city that was built at the expense of everyone else. Mieze's voice-

32 Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft.* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016): 217.

over narration tells the story of another fall from grace, i.e., foreshadowing Francis's falling even deeper into the throes of Reinhold's dominion and announcing her own involvement in the plot. Thus, it is no surprise that Francis's goal – ultimately, the only reason why he agrees to work for Reinhold – is to obtain a German passport, a document that would allow him to enjoy the splendor of Berlin and make him somewhat equal to Reinhold, at least in the name of the law.

The parasitically symbiotic relationship between Reinhold and Francis is reminiscent of Germany's public efforts to portray itself as a nation that has learned from its transgressions and attempts to rectify the atrocities committed in the past, e.g., by setting a positive example within the EU at the beginning of the migrant crisis. At the same time, however, in the most recent years, Germany continues to employ the politics of disassociation and deflection when it comes to migrants stranded in the Mediterranean. Recent debate between Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni and German chancellor Olaf Scholz about Germany's financing of sea rescue NGOs, and Scholz's subsequent, publicly voiced reservations about guaranteeing the financial help are a case in point.[33] This public feud has turned into a shouting match between the two nations about who has carried a heavier burden, i.e., accepted more migrants. Meloni has openly criticized Germany for overstepping its areas of remit by becoming involved in Italy's affairs; and by financing sea rescue NGOs, Germany has tacitly admitted its own responsibility for and role in causing the Mediterranean crisis. Moreover, by financing organizations that help migrants on Italy's soil as well, Germany also in a sense washes its hands of direct responsibility for those migrants and seeks to prevent them from reaching Germany.

An early tub scene also mirrors the problematic relationship between Germany and the regions in the South: as Reinhold joins Francis for what seems like a moment loaded with an unreciprocated homoeroticism, he nonchalantly denounces the system that they are both part of by saying that he is also the rejected one: "I am garbage to them. White trash." His statement could also be read as echoing a criticism that Germany has been facing within the European Union during the last decade for trying to define a different path with regards to migration. At the same time, Reinhold's self-deprecating comment subsequently turns into criticism

33 Der Spiegel, "Olaf Scholz distanziert sich von öffentlicher Finanzierung von Seenotrettung," *DER SPIEGEL*, October 6, 2023, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/scholz-distanziert-sich-von-oeffentlicher-finanzierung-von-seenotrettung-a-f28b10b8-f46f-477a-972f-66415ffbb746.

of Germany and its problematic involvement in global politics: "This country sells weapons to dictators. Is this good? Everything you see here was built at the expense of others. You know where you'd be if we paid three euros for a liter of gas instead of one-something? Home, that's where. In your own house, which you paid for. With a full stomach and a family in peace. […] Of course we pay the bill, but you pay the price." This statement explains the film's perpetual conflation of the images of Francis with that of a sacrificial ox, for Francis is a mere casualty of the globalized economy.

Despite his criticism of global injustice, Reinhold does not want Francis to succeed in Germany, just like Germany does not want Black migrants to become fully integrated members of modern German society; for as El-Tayeb explains, the German (i.e., white) society finds nothing more irritating than "das Deutschsein" or "Germanness" of the racialized migrants.[34] This is best portrayed toward the end of the film, when Francis/Franz takes Reinhold's role at the shelter for migrants and gives his jubilant speech (his own reiteration of Reinhold's recruitment speech from the beginning of the film): "I hate when they call me a refugee. Call me new arrival, call me immigrant, but don't call me refugee. I've run all of my life, and I came here to stay here. To build something for me. I'm not a refugee and I am not going anywhere. When I look at you, I see myself. Young, strong, and proud men who want to stay here. To have a life here." Despite being ridiculed by the migrants initially on account of his new German name, at that point, Franz wins their attention by recounting his difficult journey: "Money rules the world. When I arrived in Germany, I had nothing […] Now it's completely different. I can say I am the German dream! I make my own money. I drive a German car. I have a German woman. I even have a German name." He concludes with powerful statements that have the crowd cheering: "I have made it here. I'm here. Black, strong, and fearless. I am Germany." However, as Franz gives his passionate speech, the camera ominously delivers glimpses of the pregnant Mieze at the doctor's office, and simultaneously also of Reinhold sitting in on Franz's successful performance, clearly displeased with his words. This sequence underscores the sentiments of envy and resentment felt by Reinhold, onto whom Qurbani projects the host country's prevalent sentiments toward Black immigrants, for as Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson point out, it appears that Germany (just like

34 Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft.* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016): 15.

the rest of the EU) "wants Africa's labour, but not the Africans, at least not in the form of prospective rights-bearing citizens."[35] With his speech, Francis/Franz dares to boast about his rightfully earned place in German society; however, Reinhold/Germany cannot accept Franz's success and happiness and will deliver his final blow to Franz by murdering Mieze and framing Franz for her death in the end.

The film's most explicit commentary on German postcolonial fantasies is finally underscored in a sequence that shows Franz at a costume party organized by Reinhold at Eva's club. Franz is given a gorilla costume and is surrounded by other Black migrants wearing stereotypical African military uniforms with red berets and machine weapons. Eva finds the entire set up humiliating, but Franz laughs it off, seemingly unaware of the offensive implications and of the downfall that Reinhold had already orchestrated for him. Reinhold appears at the party too, dressed in a German colonial uniform requesting to talk to Franz. He ceremoniously gives Franz a German passport, along with tickets to Tenerife, but behind this seemingly benevolent gesture hides Reinhold's, i.e., Germany's ultimate wishful thinking: to get rid of Franz. With this move, Reinhold/Germany seeks to expulse the new Black citizen not just to the outside of Europe, but to the other side of the Mediterranean, almost back to where he came from.

At that point in the plot, it becomes obvious that Franz's presence in Germany can no longer be tolerated by Reinhold, for Franz, despite his mental and physical trauma, is perceived as a rising threat to Reinhold. He not only serves as a powerful witness to Germany's postcolonial disillusionment and persistent racism but also to Germany's perpetual dependency and perverted fascination with the Other that only works if the Other stays subjugated and weak, i.e., in fear of deportation. When Balibar wrote about racism in the aftermath of Germany's reunification, he accurately prophesied that "the future 'iron curtain' and the future 'wall' threaten to pass somewhere in the Mediterranean, or somewhere to the south-east of the Mediterranean, and they will not be easier to bring down than their predecessors."[36] The Mediterranean that once served as a connecting point between German colonialists and their goals in the South, now keeps separating migrants from their final destination, Germany. In that same essay, Balibar also announced that "Berlin, as the political-geo-

35 Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, "EU Migration Policy Toward Africa," in *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics*, eds. Sandra Ponzanesi and Gianmaria Colpani, (London: Rowman&Littlefield, 2015): 54.

36 Étienne Balibar, "Es gibt keinen Staat in Europa: Racism and Politics in Europe Today" *New Left Review,* no. 186 (1991): 9.

graphic centre of a historical area encompassing London, Stockholm, Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, Istanbul, Baghdad, Cairo, Rome, Algiers, Madrid and Paris, cannot become the capital of the new Germany without also being the 'centre' of political tensions emanating from the various regions in this space."[37] With Francis's crossing of the "iron curtain" of the Mediterranean and the film's repositioning of the migrant crisis to the middle of Berlin, Qurbani highlights both points made by Balibar, but his film also underscores the disquieting notion that Germany keeps failing the migrants in the Mediterranean. With trauma being brought to Germany and relived in the middle of Berlin, the film indicates that no matter how far Berlin may be from the Mediterranean, Germans cannot disavow the tragedy that takes place far away at sea. Yet, despite this geographical distance and politics of disassociation, the connection between Berlin and the Mediterranean is particularly visible at the end of the film, which in itself represents a strong deviation from Döblin's novel. Qurbani explains the motivation behind this directorial decision: "I made a very clear choice for a happy ending, almost like a utopia of arriving. Because I think, especially nowadays with the AfD and other populist and right-wing forces getting stronger, I decided to sacrifice the more elegant ending for one that has more meaning to myself and the character."[38] The end of the film is accompanied by the voiceover of the already deceased Mieze who, just as elsewhere in the film, reads fragments of Döblin's text and announces that Franz has settled his debts and can start a new life in a new world. After being released from Tegel Prison and reunited with his daughter, the final scene shows Franz sitting at the edge of the Neptune Fountain; then the movement of the camera away from his face reveals the object of his gaze: the Berlin *Fernsehturm*, the metaphor for Alexanderplatz and the city of Berlin. The Neptune Fountain evokes the Mediterranean one final time and its connection to Berlin is made obvious by the camera moving away from the water of the fountain to *Fernsehturm* and then back to Francis, only to settle on the water one last time. Francis is no longer triggered by the presence of water for his optimistic gaze implies that he has worked through and overcome his trauma. Qurbani thus allows the audience to imagine a better future for Franz and his child – a child of a German woman and an African migrant, and as such an unequivocal symbol of the utopian future Germany that Qurbani

37 Ivi, 11.

38 Burhan Qurbani,"*Berlin Alexanderplatz*: Berlinale Hit Director Interviewed," interview by Yony Leyser, *Exberliner.* July 31, 2020, *https://www.exberliner.com/film/burhan-qurbani-interview*

envisions with his happy ending. The major problem with Qurbani's ending, however, is the fact that the Mediterranean remains a painful locus of trauma for thousands of migrants, while Germany, despite holding a central place in today's Europe, keeps pulling away from an active engagement in this very European tragedy.

While Qurbani's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has by and large been ignored by scholarship[39], it holds an important place in its contestation of Germany's current discourse on migration and race and its confrontation of Germany's colonial past. Unlike the public debates in German media over the last two decades, in which Germans have not only denied the presence of structural racism in present-day Germany (and Europe) but also refused to admit that they (and their own identity) are at the root of the problem and not the migrants, this film opens up an important alternative space not only for questioning the current idea of German identity but also for naming and confronting racism openly. In his portrayal of the relationship between Reinhold and Francis, Qurbani successfully underscores the troublesome dynamic between the host country and its unwelcome guests, i.e., between the white Germans and the racialized migrants from the South. Reinhold (just like Germany) acts as a benefactor and helper toward Francis, as someone who supposedly wants to make Francis's life in Germany easier by demanding of Francis that he assimilate, both knowing that Francis will never be able to assimilate and fully integrate into contemporary Germany (as it sees itself) and – more importantly – not really wanting for him to do so either. The end of the film seems to suggest that Francis can only become visible (i.e., German) once Reinhold is out of picture, implying that migrants may only be able to be seen as a constitutive part of German society once Germans finally separate themselves from the idea of Germans as only white and recognize that non-white Germans have already been an integral part of this country for a long time. For this to happen, Germans must begin to confront their colonial past and acknowledge that there is an indisputable link between the legacies of colonialism and Germany's responsibility for the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean.

39 There is a growing body of scholarship on migration across the Mediterranean in film: Áine O'Healy's *Migrant Anxieties: Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame*, Claudia Berger's *Making Worlds: Affect and Collectivity in Contemporary European Cinema,* Christian Rossipal's "Poetics of Refraction: Mediterranean Migration and New Documentary Forms", Randall Halle's *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities*, Sandra Ponzanesi's "Of shipwrecks and weddings: Borders and mobilities in Europe" and many more.

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DIALECTIC OF IDENTITY: PASKVALIĆ'S GUIDE TO FOUR POEMS DEDICATED TO *SERENISSIMA*

Ane Ferri*

Abstract

This paper comprehensively explores the national-literacy identity of the Renaissance poet Ludovik Paskvalić, through a study of four of his poems, in which the poet's close relationship with the Republic of Venice is reflected. Despite the note about his identity that the poet himself left on the cover of his printed Italian songbook entitled *Rime volgari*, the scientific and professional public often placed Paskvalić in different, often inaccurate, identity frameworks. The reasons for the poet's inclusion in the corpus of Italian or Venetian Renaissance poets can be found in Paskvalić's prominent Italianist activity, in his linguistic virtuosity in the Italian language, which was not his native language, as well as in the fact that until today the scientific public has not managed to find Paskvalić's literary legacy in his mother tongue. Thus, the Renaissance poet from the Bay of Kotor first found his place in Italian and world anthologies, and many years later in scientific studies from this side of the Adriatic Sea. Wrong premises regarding the poet's national identity often had a negative impact on the analysis of his verses. The aim of this paper is to use the example of four of Paskvalić's poems dedicated to the Republic of St. Marco from his collection in the Italian language, the occasions and contexts in which the poems were written are analyzed to shed light on the poet's identity through the explanation of his attitude of full respect and admiration towards *Serenissima*. The method is of a comparative, research and literary-historical character, based on combinatorial research about the author, through the analysis of four of his poems dedicated to the capital of the Republic of Venice. In this way, for the first time, attention would be paid to the analysis of the opening and closing songs of the second part of the Italian songbook, completely excluded from the significantly larger number of other songs from the same collection that have been analyzed in detail so far according to their stylistic and typological characteristics. Our research strongly supports the claim that the writer's national identity should be based on an understanding of the wider context of the time and space in which he created, as well as his own determination, which can be read from his work, but also from other testimonies.

Keywords: Ludovik Paskvalić, national identity, Venice.

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Introduction

Ludovik Paskvalić (1500-1551) ranks among the renowned poets of the Renaissance, representing the most sophisticated poetic expression of the Bay of Kotor's poetic circle. By birth, he is the son of a patrician, by education a law graduate, and by choice a poet, soldier and patriot. Paskvalić was born in Kotor in an old respectable family with deep roots in the nobility. His ancestors occupied the most prominent positions in the city. His father Franjo was remembered in the archival records as a judge. Based on the elegy (*Carmina,* 17) that Ludovik Paskvalić addressed to his friend from Kotor, a member of a noble family Buća, in which he begs the gods to return him to his father's land where his mother and sister are waiting for him, it is possible to read that Franjo Paskvalić died during the poet's young days. Thanks to the poem "Nella Morte di M. Bernardo Pima. Del 1508",[1] preserved by his son Ludovik in his first Italian songbook, the elder Paskvalić is also known to the scientific community as a poet. Based on preserved songs it is notable that father and son exhibit a remarkable thematic and stylistic congruence in their respective poetic works, reflecting a discernible hereditary influence on their shared approach to poetry. That is why he is often credited with profiling his son Ludovik's literary taste in original works of classical literature. The coexistence of three languages – the native tongue, Italian, and Latin – in the 16th-century town of Kotor provided the young Paskvalić with the invaluable opportunity to read literary works in their original forms, a privilege that not only enriched his linguistic and cultural repertoire but also fostered a deep appreciation for the nuances of language and classical literature. The Renaissance town Kotor and the social conditions in the town additionally instilled in the younger Paskvalić a humanist model of life and activity. During the poet's youth, his hometown experienced a cultural, political and economic boom. It was a period when literature and culture flourished in Kotor. The city hosted many highly educated individuals who often occupied important positions both locally and in the community on the other side of the Adriatic Sea. Many prominent residents of Kotor were professors or rectors at Italian universities, especially in places such as Perugia, Padua and Bologna. The cultural opportunities in the city attracted many educated Italians, including doctors, apothecaries, notaries, professors, priests, artists and other professionals. Thanks to its favorable geographical position, the

1 Ludovico Paschale, *Rime volgari. Non più date in luce* (Vinegia: Steffano & Battista Cognati, 1549), 96.

medieval city of Kotor inherited the heritage of humanism, other values of Western civilization, and the Renaissance from its immediate neighbors, such as Italy. The reflection of the new cultural movement arrived in the Bay of Kotor by sea, accompanied by people, cargo, and ships. However, cultural influences from the hinterland and other coastal areas also reached Kotor by land. The printing press that turned the capital of the Republic of Venice into a center of printing at the end of the 15th century contributed to the creation of a different cultural climate, and one of the first printers was Andrija Paltašić from Kotor.[2] In such a social and cultural climate, Ludovik Paskvalić also attended the oldest school in the country at the time, in addition to Dubrovnik and Zadar.[3] The school provided the youth of Kotor with a broad humanistic education and had immeasurable importance in shaping the Renaissance man. Greek and Latin languages, astronomy and astrology[4], rhetoric, philosophy, ethics, mathematics, music[5], grammar, poetics and literature[6] were studied at the school. Educated pedagogues, local and foreign humanists, often cultural workers themselves, provided students with knowledge that enabled them to enroll in the desired faculties in Italy without difficulty. Ludovik Paskvalić took advantage of the benefits afforded to him by the fact that his hometown in that period was part of the powerful Venetian Republic, thus enhancing his educational opportunities and after 1520 he went to study law in Padua.[7] At the university, in the center of the new cultural era, Paskvalić's colleagues were people who would mark and change the course of European culture, science, literature and human history, such as: Copernicus, Savonarola, Bembo, Tasso and others. Among the famous professors, the name of Galileo Galilei stands out.[8] Italy, at that time, was the epicenter of the new literary movement, the Renaissance. Poet from the small Bay of Kotor harnessed the power of ambitious, learned young individuals he was surrounded by, as well as the inspiring surroundings that fueled his aspirations. Despite his studies in legal sciences, his interest in poetry had begun, as he himself noted in his

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2 Злата Бојовић, "Књижевни живот ренесансног Котора,", in *Књига о Котору,* eds. Катарина Митровић (Београд: Магелан Прес, 2014), 227.

3 Ристо Ковијанић, Которски медаљони (Пераст: Госпда од Шкрпјела, 2007), 71.

4 Risto Kovijanić and Ivo Stjepčević, *Kulturni život staroga Kotora (XIV–XVIII vijek)*, (Perast: Gospa od Škrpjela, 2003), 51.

5 Kovijanić and Stjepčević, *Kulturni život staroga Kotora (XIV–XVIII vijek)*, 53.

6 Radoslav Rotković, "Хуманиста Људевит Паскалић Которанин," *Стварање – часопис за књижевност и културу*, XXX (1975): 111.

7 Rotković, "Хуманиста Људевит Паскалић Которанин," 111.

8 Kovijanić, Которски медаљони*,* 70.

work, ever since his "idle youth"[9]. After his studies, Paskvalić returned to his hometown and like many other noblemen's sons who did the same, he lived in accordance with the experiences gained in the center of Renaissance culture. As a result, the atmosphere in Kotor was constantly renewed, encouraging the development of new lifestyles, ideas and culture that were inspired by the Renaissance.

The influence of history on poetic expression

The Renaissance period brought a paradox to Kotor – on the one hand, cultural flourishing, and on the other, extremely unfavorable historical circumstances that were reflected in the constant fear of occupation by the Ottoman Empire, which deeply marked the life of Ludovik Paskvalić and clearly reflected on his literary creativity. Paskvalić's youthful years were marked by unrest in the Mediterranean between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire. The political conflict began before Paskvalić was born, back in 1499, when the Ottoman Empire sought to conquer the coastal territories around the Venetian cities, which barely resisted Turkish pressure. For the people of the Bay of Kotor, a possible conquering campaign by the Turks represented more than a change of government. This would mean the expansion of Turkish domination, but also the introduction of Turkish culture, religion and way of life.[10] In order to protect themselves from the Ottoman Empire, the people of Kotor decided to seek protection under the Venetian protectorate. It was a significant step because it symbolized their loyalty to the Republic of Venice. The act of voluntarily seeking a protectorate carried with it a multitude of advantages, both for the protector and the protected. In such instances, the people willingly placed themselves under the protection of another nation, forging a relationship based on mutual consent rather than conquest. This choice not only ensured that they would not be not under occupation by foreign forces but also fostered a sense of trust and goodwill between the protector and the protected. The protectorate arrangement often led to the development of a profound relationship characterized by gratitude and respect. The protected entity benefitted from the stability and security offered by the protector, while the protector may have derived strategic, economic, or diplomatic advan-

9 S. Kalezić, nav. djelo, 1996, 100.

10 Fernan Brodel, *Mediteran, prostor i istorija* (Beograd: Centar za geopoetiku, 1995), 96.

tages. This voluntary act, rooted in the principle of consent, exemplifies the potential for peaceful and mutually beneficial international relations, underlining the significance of respect and cooperation. This election was of great importance because it guaranteed the Republic of Venice that there would be no resistance to its authority in the city itself. The protectorate became a key mechanism for preserving the autonomy and cultural integrity of Kotor in turbulent times and contributed to its further development and economic empowerment. The key to the interpretation of Paskvalić's verses dedicated to the capital city of *Serenissima* is hidden precisely in the new close relations with Venice. For Paskvalić, deterring the Ottoman Empire and preserving the position of the Republic of Venice in the Mediterranean was also his life's struggle, which marked his creative work. It is evident that the poet, in aligning himself closely with Venice, was not only advancing the interests of the Republic but also safeguarding his own national identity within the constraints of the historical circumstances. Many of his verses extolling Venice can be seen as expressions of gratitude for Venice's assistance in preventing his region from falling under the sway of the Ottoman Empire, sparing him the need to abandon his language, religion, and customs – integral components of identity. Paskvalić's poetic celebration of Venice thus embodies a profound acknowledgment of the Republic's pivotal role in preserving his distinct cultural and national identity amidst the complex historical dynamics of the era. The poet as a fervent patriot, defended his homeland, his identity, and the integrity of his hometown not only through his literary endeavors in which he glorified Serenissima but also through the use of arms. That is why Paskvalić voluntarily joined the army when the Venetians were collecting the civilian population with the intention of defending Crete from Turkish attacks. All the political background circumstances surrounding Paskvalić's professional and personal life led certain researchers of Paskvalić's works to conclude that he was a Venetian, an Italian, and not a poet from the Bay of Kotor.

There are different approaches and theories in the analysis of a literary work, some of which emphasize the importance of isolating the work from any external factors, including the writer's biography and historical circumstances, to instead focus on the linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of the text, such as the formalist approach. However, especially in the case of the analysis of Paskvalić's poems dedicated to Venice, the biographical approach not only proved more appropriate, but also necessary. Understanding the broader social, cultural, and especially historical and political context provides valuable insight into the circumstances under which Paskvalić's poems were created. This context allows for better understanding of

the motivation of the poet, his personal attitudes and his connection with *Serenissima*, which is crucial for creating a more comprehensive and deeper interpretation of Paskvalić's verses. Knowing the political and historical background of Kotor during the Renaissance period helps us to recognize why Venice was an important theme in Paskvalić's poems. Understanding the poet's origin and personal experiences facilitates greater understanding of the messages and symbolism of his poems, which contributes to a richer and more comprehensive perspective for the interpretation of his poems, understanding their social function and significance.

Understanding the sociocultural and historico-political context of the 16th century in the Bay of Kotor is not only essential for deciphering Paskvalić's verses but also a crucial element for a deeper comprehension of his national and literary identity. This period in the history of the Bay of Kotor was exceptionally dynamic and marked by numerous challenges, which played a significant role in shaping Paskvalić's poetic and personal identity. Firstly, the social environment of that time was characterized by the presence of powerful entities, including the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice, competing for control of this strategically vital region. Paskvalić's poetry often reflects his deep immersion in these political rivalries, as these powers exerted a significant influence on the everyday life and fate of the local population. Furthermore, Paskvalić's poetry often reflects the relationship between the local population and the Republic of Venice, which ruled over the Bay of Kotor at the time. Comprehending this relationship helps us to grasp his ambivalence towards Venice and his gratitude towards the republic for its support in preserving the Bokelian cultural and national identity. Ultimately, Paskvalić's poetry becomes not only a poetic expression of his love for his homeland but also a testament to the complex social and political forces that shaped the Bay of Kotor during his era. Thus, understanding the context of this period is crucial for a deeper comprehension of both his verses and his literal and national identity, providing insight into his profound connections with the history and culture of his time.

Portraying the poet's identity through the example of four poems

Even today, five centuries after the poet Ludovik Paskvalić lived and created, the question "whose poets are ours" and how stretchable the word "our" is in the context of national borders is often raised in scientific circles. The debate about Paskvalić's national and literary identity is even

more absurd having in mind that the poet from the Bay of Kotor had printed on the cover of his first and during his lifetime the only published collection of poems in the Italian language *Rime volgari*[11] (1549) the phrase “Da Catharo Dalmatino”. That is, he left about himself a record of where he was born and how he felt about national identity in the context of the national borders at the time. With the aim of arguing our thesis about the national and literary identity of Ludovik Paskvalić, in the following, we will consider the scientific criteria that determine the poet’s identity, how the change of identity began in the case of the poet from the Bay of Kotor, as well as how the interpretation of the verses of four of Paskvalić’s poems can avoid erasure, injustice, or damage to his cultural heritage.

Radoslav Rotković was the first to notice how Paskvalić was “included in foreign collections and anthologies”[12]; he had been waiting for a long time to experience the same honor on this side of the Adriatic Sea. The reasons why the knowledge about the poet and his work first spread to the soil of Italy are justified, if we know that his first published collection of poetry was not only written in Italian but also printed in the capital city of *Serenissima*. Respecting the validity of Torbarina’s[13] conclusions that writing in the Italian language provided fame and a larger readership to Renaissance poets, we believe it is important to take into account additional elements that are not included in this perspective, which would enrich the research on the national and literary identity of Ludovik Paskvalić. We must not lose sight of the fact that at the time of the publication of Paskvalić’s *Rime*, Kotor was part of the administrative composition of the *Serenissima*, i.e. that the protectorate of the Republic of Venice was not imposed on it, but that the inhabitants of the Bay of Kotor voluntarily requested it in order to protect themselves from enemies from the East, which is why Paskvalić’s decision about creating in the Italian language does not necessarily have to be guided by artistic, but also practical reasons – especially knowing that Venice at that time was the center of the printed word, whose first printerwas a fellow citizen of Paskvalić. Due to geographical, historical and political circumstances, the printing press of the Cognati brothers in Venice was more accessible to Paskvalić than

11 *Rime Volgari di M. Ludovico Paschale da Catharo Dalmatino* n*on più date in luce*, In Vinegia, appresso Steffano et Battista Cognati al Segno de S. Moise, Con gratia et privilegio, M. D. XLIX.

12 Radoslav Rotković, “Хуманиста Људевит Паскалић Которанин,” *Стварање – часопис за књижевност и културу*, XXX (1975):, 109.

13 Josip Torbarina, “Kotoranin Ludovik Paskvali u engleskoj književnosti,” *Hrvatska revija* VII (1934): 337.

Crnojević's printing house in Cetinje. Additionally, Paskvalić's poetic virtuosity, which was reflected in an elegant and harmonious poetic expression and form, as well as a vocabulary that was purified from words that were considered vulgar, bore the stamp of harmony and musicality in a language that was not native to the poet from the Bay of Kotor, but who managed to mislead some English researchers who called him a "rather obscure Italian", and some even called him a Venetian.[14] At the beginning of the twentieth century, the reception of Paskvalić and his work spread to English scholars: Kastner, Lee[15] and Walker[16]. For them, language is the primary scientific criterion that determines the poet's national and literary identity. Given that they learned about Paskvalić from Italian anthologies, lexicons, literary histories and articles, as well as that the poet writes in the Italian language, this was enough for them to identify him among the Italian, more specifically, Venetian Renaissance poets. However, it is necessary to delve deeper into the reasons for Paskvalić's Italianist activity. In addition to the striving of the Renaissance poets to secure fame for themselves with their works and the fact that the Republic of Venice, as a cosmopolitan environment and leading power, opened a wide window to the world, there are other reasons that deserve to be explored. One of them is the fact that in addition to the military forces during the 16th century, the *Serenissima* was also a cultural meeting place, i.e. the cradle of new ideas and a new direction, whose literary concepts and conventions were inherited by Ludovik Paskvalić in his works, which is why his decision to create in the language of the writer who was his role models is fully justified. This certainly does not mean that this act changes his national identity.

Paskvalić's feeling towards his own national identity is complex. It is possible to recognize it in the verses of four of his poems, which are found in the second part of the Italian songbook, and which he directed to *Serenissima*. The importance of the capital of the Republic of Venice and their protectorate was to him is reflected in the poet's thoughtful decision to open and close the second part of the Italian songbook, which bears the special name *Rime diverse*, after the dedication, with poems that, like the others in this part, are not addressed to friends, but to Italy and the city

14 Leon Emile Kastner, "Thomas Lodge as an imitator of the Italian Poets," *The Modern Language Review* II (1907): 156.

15 Sidney Lee, "Elizabethan Sonnet," *The Cambridge History of English literature* III, eds. A. W. Ward & A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1927).

16 Alice Walker, "Italian Sources of Lyrics oAf Thomas Lodge," *Modern Language Review* XXII (1927): 75-79.

of Venice. As if it were another songbook, and not a continuation of the same one, right below the title, Paskvalić allowed his name to be printed once again with the addition of "da Catharo". Insisting on and seizing every opportunity to subtly emphasize his place of origin indirectly reflects the profound sense of attachment the poet felt towards his hometown and underscores the significance he placed on maintaining a delicate balance between his local identity and the linguistic influence of the protectorate, all while striving to distance himself from a strong national identification with the same protectorate. This complex dynamic is a testament to his intricate negotiation of identity within a linguistically and politically diverse context, where he tactfully navigated the nuances of allegiance to both his homeland and the protectorate.

That he never felt that he was a Venetian/Italian, according to his determination, is already confirmed in the first verses of the first poem of the second part, which, unlike the other three, does not have a title, but it is clear from the verses that it is addressed to the Republic of St. Marco. For the poet from the Bay of Kotor, as well as for other humanists, Italy represented a famous land ("famosa terra"[17]) that was celebrated by warriors symbolically represented in the figures of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare, and Mars – the Roman god of war ("Fiorir gli studi di Minerva et Marte"[18]), as well as other greats of the spirit ("Felici Spirti che produce ogn'hora"[19]). Writing about neighboring Italy, Paskvalić states that he comes with the desire to see everything he had read and learned about, clearly drawing a distinctive line between himself and the Italians.

> Ecco ch' io vengo da lontana parte
> D'un bel desio sol di vederti ardente
> Et contemplar con gl'occhi apertamente
> Quel c'he io già letto nell'antiche carte
> (*Rime volgari,* 68)

From the mentioned verses, we recognize that for Paskvalić, Italy, although he knew its language, culture and customs, was nevertheless a country that was unknown to him and to which he came for the first time when, as a son of a patrician, he went to high schools in Padua. In addition to openly distancing himself from the Italian identity, Pask-

17 *Rime volgari*, 68.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

valić uses every verse to glorify the country under whose protectorate he and his compatriots are enabled to live normally even though in the Adriatic sea, not so far from Kotor, war is raging. The victory of Venice over the enemy transcended the realm of geopolitics; it was a testament to Paskvalić's enduring commitment to safeguarding his national identity. The poet is in his double role of a Venetian soldier and a patriot who loves his hometown and his country recognized that the security of their national identity was solely contingent upon the military successes of *Serenissima*. That is why he is especially pleased when every enemy is forced to obey under its dominace ("ch'ad ogni gente ponesti il giogo, in cui si largamente"[20]).

The second and third sonnets dedicated to "Vinegia" are one of the few that have a title. In them, Paskvalić openly expresses his attachment and admiration for the Republic of St. Marco, under whose territory Dalmatia and the Bay of Kotor were at that time. With these introductory sonnets, Paskvalić presents himself to the reading public not only as a patriot, but also as an engaged poet who tends to pay homage to the Venetian lion at the beginning of the second part of *Rime volgari* with the essential intention of providing support for the strength and unity of the entire territory of the Republic of Venice and ensuring common interest for defense against the key enemy of Turkey, which threatened to occupy Kotor and the other cities of the Bay of Kotor. The lyrics of these songs hide an important reason why the poet from the Bay of Kotor wrote in his non-native language. Singing in Italian was a gesture of gratitude to the Republic of Venice, an expression of deep respect for its contribution to the preservation of peace, stability and territorial sovereignty. This atmosphere is also recognized in the verses of the first song, at the beginning of the second part of the songbook, in which Paskvalić sings that Italy offers refuge in its arms to every foreigner and that with its love it makes even foreigners become loyal in showing respect for it.

> Il bel terren, Date fra voi ricetto
> Al Peregrin che'l nome vostro honora,
> Et co'l vostro natio cortese affetto
> Giungete il mio ch'ogn'hor piu m'inamora
> A reverirui et esserui fuggetto.
> (*Rime diverse,* 68)

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20 *Rime diverse*, 69.

However, bowing to the Venetian lion, and especially creating in their language, for Renaissance poets from the Bay of Kotor was much more than just a language choice. It protected inhabitants of the Bay of Kotor from the language and religion from the East, which was not close to them and in many ways differed from their cultural identity. This complex strategy in combination with the Venetian protectorate enabled Renaissance poets of the Bay of Kotor like Ludovik Paskvalić to sing openly against the Turks, unlike their pen colleagues from the independent Republic of Dubrovnik, because their humor and irony were not censored, because the authorities "watched morality citizens".[21] For Paskvalić, choosing to write in the language of his role models was also a means of freely expressing his own political views, which as such are an even stronger confirmation of his national identity.

The longest canzone of 107 verses with which Paskvalić ends the collection *Rime volgari* is dedicated to Venice. It is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful that a poet from this side of the Adriatic Sea addressed to the capital of *Serenissima*. The roundness or repetition of the theme from the beginning of the second part of the Italian songbook indicates the deep emotional importance of the theme for the poet, which in a symbolic way creates a frame, i.e. represents the leitmotif under which all the other songs in the second part of the Italian collection are united. In this way, all verses are brought into harmony, which leaves a strong impression on the readers, emphasizing the central idea that the poet wanted to convey. With these verses, Paskvalić once again wants to repay the country that protected the interests of his people by selflessly providing protection, as well as the country from which the revival that he inherited in his songs originated. Although it was created as a literary convention in imitation of his poetic role models who addressed their final verses to the capital of the Venetian Republic, Paskvalić, with the virtuosity of his poetic language, managed to distance himself from his muses and to enrich the verses with poetic sincerity and emotion that arose on the basis of the poet's of life experience, and was not created artificially in order to fit into the style and form of the time in which it was created. Paskvalić addresses Venice in his verses with chosen words: *trifonante*, *beata*, *sacra*, *divina e stupenda*. He considers it a city that overshadows every other with its glory, both in the past remembering all its victories, and during the century in which the poet lived and created. What kind of authority the main port of the *Serenissima* possessed,

21 Ivana Vidinović, "Satiričko pjesništvo Mavra Vetranovića," 7, https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:744764 7.

Paskvalić described in the words in which he considers her the queen of the Mediterranean ("Vera de'l mar Reina"[22]). Describing her deserved fame and the justified fear of her enemies,

> I tuoi Nemici (…)
> Al suon de'l nome solo
> (…)
> Giaccean sepolti e per timor confusi.
> (*Rime diverse,* 91)

Paskvalić sings about a topic that was most important to him for preserving his own identity, because the identity of the Venetian Republic did not reflect the centuries-old identity of the Bay of Kotor, but existed in parallel, while Catholicism was a common cohesive element in that symbiosis. The Venetian protectorate and its military supremacy in the Mediterranean belonged to Paskvalić and his his compatriots the freedom of the coastal areas on this side of the Adriatic Sea ("La Libertà, co'l bel Dominio eterno"[23]).

Considering the above, I believe that it is necessary to accept the appropriation of the poet Ludovik Paskvalić by theorists and historians of literature as an expression of recognition of poetic skill and talent. Literature as a form of art should transcend ethnic or linguistic divisions and as such should belong to everyone. However, scientists are obliged to protect and respect the writer's identity determination, about which he left written traces during his lifetime. Thus, Paskvalić's Italian collection, especially its second part, in its inescapable connection with historical-political and socio-cultural influences, is a confirmation that the poet from the Bay of Kotor never felt Italian or Venetian, but in his verses called for the resurrection of the fatherland, the expulsion of the enemy, the end of fratricidal battles and much-needed peace for his compatriots, that is, regardless of the decision not to create in his native language, he remained deeply tied to the climate from which he came from.

Conclusion

The exploration of Ludovik Paskvalić's national-literary identity in this paper, illustrated through an analysis of four of his poems, underscores the poet's intricate relationship with the Republic of Venice.

22 *Rime diverse*, 90.
23 *Rime diverse*, 91.

Paskvalić's self-identification, as evident from the cover of his printed Italian songbook titled *Rime volgari*, has often been a subject of debate and misconstrued categorizations within the academic community. This paper seeks to rectify the misinterpretations surrounding his identity by examining the historical and contextual factors that influenced his literary choices and affiliations. Paskvalić's inclusion in the canon of Italian or Venetian Renaissance poets can be attributed to his notable Italianist endeavors and his remarkable mastery of the Italian language, which was not his mother tongue. Furthermore, the scarcity of Paskvalić's literary legacy in his native language has perpetuated this association. Consequently, the Renaissance poet from the Bay of Kotor first found recognition in Italian and global anthologies, with academic studies from his own side of the Adriatic Sea emerging much later. The mischaracterization of Paskvalić's national identity has often hindered the accurate analysis of his verses. This paper, through a comparative and literary-historical approach, aimed to rectify this by focusing on four of Paskvalić's poems dedicated to the Republic of St. Marco, which have not received adequate attention in previous analyses. These poems, situated at the beginning and end of the second part of his Italian songbook, offer insight into the poet's profound respect and admiration for the Serenissima. This study advocates against reducing a writer's identity solely to the national literature of the languages in which they wrote. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of considering the broader historical and spatial context in which the writer created, alongside their own self-determination, as discerned from their works and other historical evidence. Ludovik Paskvalić's national-literary identity is a complex tapestry intricately woven into the cultural and historical landscape of his time. It is a testament to the intricate interplay of language, culture, and individual determination, which should be appreciated within the context of the Renaissance era. Understanding Paskvalić's identity requires a nuanced approach, one that transcends narrow definitions and embraces the richness of his literary contributions to both Italian and Venetian Renaissance literature.

Source

Rime Volgari di M. Ludovico Paschale da Catharo Dalmatino non più date in luce, In Vinegia, appresso Steffano et Battista Cognati al Segno de S. Moise, Con gratia et privilegio, M. D. XLIX.

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RE-PLACING THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET: HISTORICAL EXCHANGES AND POSSIBLE FUTURES

Juliann Vitullo and Arina Melkozernova*

Abstract

The term Mediterranean Diet (MedDiet) suggests a strong geographic orientation, a connection to a region—its flora, fauna, land, sea and histories--that its current generic and ephemeral classification (2018-2023) as the "the best diet overall" by the *U.S. World and News Report* ignores. As this consistent ranking suggests, one of the most common representations of the "Mediterranean" today, in the U.S., and even globally, is that of the MedDiet. It is a concept, tied to idealized images of health and pleasure, which first developed through exchanges in the post-WWII period between scientists from the United States and communities in Greece and southern Italy, which had not yet been substantially transformed by industrialized agriculture and highly processed foods. In the 1950's the now-famous physiologist from the U.S., Ancel Keys, "discovered" the MedDiet during a research trip to Naples. Ever since, tension has existed between Keys's place-based research and the call for this diet, based largely on plant foods, seafood, olive oil, and limited consumption of meat and dairy products, to be universally translated. Any attempt to evaluate the influence of the MedDiet must face the overwhelming influence of the model in scientific studies (with over 5,000 publications a year just since 2020 in the U.S.) as well as its branding by agri-food interests. While Ancel Keys's epidemiological research on lipids and heart disease was groundbreaking, the concept of the MedDiet has evolved into a global scientific mythology that needs to be reevaluated and re-placed into specific historical and social contexts that acknowledge the biological and cultural diversity of Indigenous, peasant, and traditional foodways as well as the challenges of the contemporary industrialized food system. As early as 1998, two southern Italian researchers, Vito Teti and Massimo Cresta, formed a transdisciplinary team that questioned the tunnel vision of the scientific model, reminding scholars that the southern Italian communities associated with the MedDiet had evolved agricultural and eating patterns, which maintained balanced and sustainable relationships, not as a choice but as a means of survival in specific environments. Although their research has been largely ignored by scholars of the MedDiet, it invites us to examine how certain traditional Italian foodways were de-territorialized or stripped of their rich and complex cultural and environmental histories, as scientists paradoxically categorized them using the often-slippery geographical term of "Mediterranean."

At the same time, the contemporary revalorization of the biocultural heritage created over generations within marginalized communities in southern Italy, which Vito Teti continues to help document through his concept of *la restanza*, emphasizes the importance of recognizing transdisciplinary and transnational exchanges as well as the possibility of healthier and more sustainable futures through relational and collaborative foodways wherever we live.

Keywords: Mediterranean diet, relational foodways, biocultural heritage, transdisciplinary exchanges, mobile identities

The term Mediterranean Diet (MedDiet) suggests a strong geographic orientation, a connection to a region—its flora, fauna, land, sea and histories--that its current generic and ephemeral classification (2018-2023) as the "the best diet overall" by the *U.S. World and News Report* ignores (Hinze and Chien, 2023). As this consistent ranking suggests, one of the most common representations of the "Mediterranean" today, in the U.S., and even globally, is that of the MedDiet. It is a concept, tied to idealized images of health and pleasure, which first developed through exchanges in the post-WWII period between scientists from the United States and communities in Greece and Southern Italy, which had not yet been substantially transformed by industrialized agriculture and highly processed foods. In the 1950s the now-famous physiologist from the U.S., Ancel Keys, "discovered" the MedDiet during a research trip to Naples.[1] Together with his wife Margaret Chaney Keys, he popularized that diet in their best-selling advice manuals, *Eat Well and Stay Well* (1959) and *Eat Well and Stay Well: The Mediterranean Way* (1975). Ever since, tension has existed between the Keys's place-based research and the call for this diet, based largely on plant foods, seafood, olive oil, and limited consumption of meat and dairy products, to be universally translated (Anderson and Sparling 2014, 165-167).

Any attempt to evaluate the influence of the MedDiet must face the overwhelming influence of the model in scientific studies as well as its branding by agri-food interests. While Ancel Keys's epidemiological research on lipids and heart disease was groundbreaking, the concept of the MedDiet has evolved into a de-contextualized global scientific mythology that needs to be re-placed into specific historical and social contexts that acknowledge the biological and cultural diversity of Indigenous, peasant, and traditional

1 Ancel Keys investigated the low rates of cardiovascular disease among southern Italian workers.

foodways[2] as well as the challenges of the contemporary industrialized food system. As early as 1998, two southern Italian researchers, Massimo Cresta and Vito Teti, formed a transdisciplinary team that questioned the tunnel vision of the scientific model, reminding scholars that the southern Italian communities associated with the MedDiet had evolved agricultural and eating patterns, which maintained balanced relationships, not as a choice but as a means of survival in specific environments (Cresta and Teti 1998, 1-6). Although their research has been largely ignored by English-speaking scholars of the MedDiet, it invites us to continue examining how certain traditional Italian foodways were de-territorialized or stripped of their rich and complex cultural and environmental histories, as scientists paradoxically categorized them using the often-slippery geographical term of "Mediterranean." At the same time, the revalorization of peasant knowledge and practices within traditionally marginalized communities in southern Italy today, which Vito Teti continues to help document, emphasizes the importance of recognizing transdisciplinary and transnational exchanges as well as possible futures of relational and collaborative foodways wherever we live.[3]

Historicizing the Mediterranean Diet as a Scientific Paradigm

> Romantic thoughts about the remote past come naturally while lunching somewhere in view of the sparkling Tyrrhenian Sea. A ball of fresh mozzarella cheese, still dripping whey, dark country bread warm from the oven, a local wine, and a basket of fruit … this is the ideal menu to conjure up the vision of Ulysses—or Aeneas—standing at the prow, his men straining at the oars of the little boat not far out beyond the breakers.
>
> Keys and Keys, 1975, 27

In *Eat Well and Stay Well: The Mediterranean Wa*y (1975), Ancel and Margaret Keys describe specific coastal territories of the Mediterranean basin as romanticized lands of health and pleasure whose traditions began with the feats of western heroic colonizers. This was the second bestseller in which the couple translated the famous physiologist's research and their own lived

2 We are following the lead of Indigenous activists and scholars such as Shiloh Maples and Rowen White, who use the term "foodways" or "relational foodways" to reflect their communities' ancestral and affective connections to lands, seeds, and plants (Valeriote 2021).

3 For Teti's recent research, see the Bibliography.

experience into a nutritional self-help book, complete with recipes, for American consumers to replicate the "Mediterranean way" in their own homes.

Keys's mythology of the Mediterranean basin, especially the Italian region of Cilento where he and his wife lived for over 30 years, proposed that seemingly timeless Ancient Greek practices continued through the twentieth century to cure the alimentary confusion and chronic illnesses of the increasingly industrialized and globalized food system of the post-WWII United States. This imaginary vision of the Mediterranean also obscured the tensions of Keys's "discovery" and translation of place-based food traditions into a scientific, universalizing language, which has in its own way contributed to today's homogenization of traditional diets and health inequities (Moffatt and Morell-Hart 2020). In addition, in the Introduction to his 1975 bestseller, Keys defines the Mediterranean Way, later labeled the Mediterranean Diet (MedDiet), in ethnic and racial terms that would appeal to his readership in the United States.

Even though Keys was very aware of class-based differences in eating habits as well as the ways in which the industrialization of the globalized food system was affecting traditional foodways, he focused on what he described as seemingly stable and timeless ethnic and racial characteristics (Keys and Keys 1975, 40). *The Mediterranean Way* paradigm avoids structural social and economic changes by focusing on how to translate "our" Mediterranean world, which is "a direct heritage of the Greeks," into eating guidelines for individuals in the United States rather than on the larger patterns of dramatic change in food production and consumption on a global level (Keys and Keys 1975, 26).

In the "Introduction" to their second bestseller, Ancel and Margaret Keys outline his "Diet-heart hypothesis" that "the concentration of cholesterol in the blood has much to do with the development of the kind of hardening of the arteries, atherosclerosis that is the basic fault in coronary heart disease, the `epidemic of our age'" (Keys and Keys 1975, 2). By "our" Keys is referring largely to men in the United States where he worked at the University of Minnesota (Keys and Keys 1959, 23). He also describes how his research from the 1950s-1975 throughout the world, including the famous study, *Seven Countries. A Multivariate Analysis of Death and Coronary Heart Disease*, demonstrated that very different traditional foodways with plant-based diets led to populations with much lower levels of both obesity and heart disease. They describe, for instance, how research in South Africa in 1955 demonstrated that the "Bantu" population suffered much less heart disease than the "Europeans" from the same nation despite large economic inequities. Yet, they conclude "Great! Who wants to be a

Bantu?" (Keys and Keys 1975, 6).[4] In a similar section they discuss the lack of heart disease in Fukuoka, Japan. Despite this awareness, they chose to construct their concept of the healthiest food practices, the "way," based on the cultures of just four out of 26 countries of the Mediterranean basin: Greece, Italy, southern France, and the coastal region of Spain (Keys and Keys 1975, 25). In describing why they limit the Mediterranean region to these four territories, they explain that the "native cookery of Africa must be ignored" and that food of the Middle East "does not quite fit" (Keys and Keys 1975, 26). They conclude that non-European Mediterranean foodways would not "assure cultural and culinary harmony," suggesting that their primary audience of readers in the U.S. would only find European cooking and eating models appealing (Keys and Keys 1975, 25).

Keys's description of "our" Mediterranean world also includes imagined links between the contemporary diet and the mythology of epic heroes from Ancient Greece and Rome, inviting readers to see themselves as part of a unified and authoritative western culture. In Elisabetta Moro's extensive research on Ancel Keys's experience in the Cilento, she describes the origin stories that he creates, which are based on an idealized scientific lineage with historical roots in the same land where he purchased property for his own villa in 1965. While he was learning recipes from local sources, especially from his own cook and housekeeper, Delia Morinelli, he imagined himself as part of a Western philosophical tradition that dated back to the founding of the nearby Greek colony of Elea (Velia) where there might have existed an early school of medicine (Moro 2014, 114; Keys and Keys 1975, 23). In 1983, Keys explained that after he bought the property in the 1960s with money made from the couple's first bestseller, they decided to name the compound where they lived with other colleagues, Minnelea (Keys 1983, 23). The name of their utopian scientific community combined the Sioux word for water (minne), derived from the name of their academic hometown Minneapolis and the name of the nearby archeological site of Elea (Moro 2014, 114).

With the creation of Minnelea, the Keys highlighted an imagined connection between Ancel and the Greek Eleatic School of philosophers. While making those links, though, Keys did not consider the historical, political, and economic structures that allowed him to transform the

4 Interestingly, Mintz and Nayak (1985) note that a large group of Bantu peoples of South Africa, known as the Bemba, share a foodway focused on their "core" crop, millet. The "kasha" made with this grain is embedded in the local community context as the nutritional, emotional, and spiritual base of the diet. While the core in the case of the Bemba is millet, in Mexico it is maize tortilla, in Eastern Europe black bread, in Asia rice, etc.

place-based agricultural and culinary knowledge of Cilentan farmers, fishers, and cooks into a timeless guide to healthy living, a commodity that he was able to sell based on his own authority as a scientist. Although the Mediterranean represented traditional cultures that could be easily idealized from the perspective of readers in the United States[5], the Indigenous foodways of the Americas, as well as many other non-European cultures, were ignored because they could not be embedded into this invented landscape without confronting racial and gendered hierarchies and historical traumas.[6]

Racial hierarchies and historical traumas also played a role in the history of the Cilentan foodways, but not in Keys's interpretation of it as a prime example of their Mediterranean way. While Ancel Keys was very aware of historical and economic differences between northern and southern Europe (Keys and Keys 1975, 7), he mostly ignored them in the development of his notion of the MedDiet, and particularly in Cilentan food as its emblematic variety. As Vetri Nathan has described, even today Italy continues to be described through different media, including cinema, as "Europe's internal, hybrid Other" for several factors including its relatively late political unification as a state, its cultural fragmentation, and the representation of southern Italy as the "internal Other" within the nation (Nathan 2017, 33-35). This "chronic ambivalence" about Italy's status as a modern European state allowed Keys to both encourage readers from the United States to identify with the eating habits he developed in the Cilento as part of what he describes as a communal Western heritage and to exoticize southern Italy within a vague pre-industrial yet culturally prestigious Mediterranean culture of leisure and pleasure.

Ancel Keys's successful translation of local foodways into the universal model that became the MedDiet can be largely attributed to his authority as an internationally recognized scientist whose comparative, epidemiological studies presented findings as global, nutritionally-based

5 Harry Eli Kashdan, for example, writes about the Anglophone cookbooks of Mediterranean food published around the time that Ancel Keys was conducting his research and writing his popular books with Margaret Keys on the MedDiet. Kashdan concludes that the authors, such as Elizabeth David, construct a seemingly cohesive regional identity "rooted in its foodways and render this Mediterranean newly available for consumption by Anglophone readers" (2017, 2).

6 Gary Nabhan describes the connections between lifestyle and place among Native American peoples, which is applicable to traditional European farmers with a long-term land tenure: "Because certain indigenous peoples have lived in the same habitats for centuries, their language often encodes traditional ecological knowledge" (2000, 1288).

solutions for health challenges.[7] While this research was cross-cultural in its comparisons of dietary patterns and analysis of health disparities between different societies, its emphasis on the science of nutrition often limited important examination of communities' evolving cultures, histories, and relationships to their environments, which impacted their ability to sustain healthy food patterns.

Ancel Keys was also aware that traditional diets, including those he labeled as paths in the Mediterranean way, were quickly eroding as societies industrialized and became more affluent (Keys and Keys 1975, 24); although he acknowledges those challenges, his specialized scientific training encouraged him to focus on individual eating patterns and macronutrients, especially lipids, minimizing the analysis of larger economic and cultural trends such as intensive agriculture and fast food that were making it difficult for people even in the Cilento to follow traditional pathways.[8]

Keys's research on the relationship between lipids and heart disease created an interest in the "oldways" or traditional diets in which many communities had much less access to sugar and saturated fats (Silva 2018, 578-79). Yet the MedDiet became the "best" universal model for nutritional recommendations or what Tracy calls "the gold standard of healthy eating" because it is the most frequently studied for several reasons, including transnational ethnic and racial hierarchies, which celebrated Italian foods when Keys was writing his bestsellers, but had demonized them during the period of mass immigration from southern and eastern Europe (Willett et al. 2019, 454; Tracy 2019, 390).[9] These

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7 Sarah W. Tracy notes that "Keys believed other countries and regions of the world had much to teach Americans about their health. As the United States staggers to meet the health needs of its 325 million residents, the same may be true today" (Tracy 2019, 387). Although this is certainly still true today, it is important to keep in mind that Keys's dietary model greatly restricted the cultures from which he thought readers in the United States could learn new ways of eating; his model accepted contemporary racial hierarchies rather than challenging them.

8 While Keys was very interested in the Greek origins of the Cilento where he lived, he never referenced the contemporary issues facing southern Italians in the post-World War II period such as land reform, the rapid industrialization of the "economic miracle," and mass emigration to northern Italy as well as other countries. For a summary of those changes, including the disappearance of the traditional peasant culture Keys praised, see Bevilacqua 2005, 133-161.

9 Donna Gabaccia traces this uneasy transition describing "how the postwar years instead saw ethnicity `go corporate' and become American in a newly tolerant culture, where eating had finally and truly become big business" (Gabaccia 1998, 148). Two examples are Progresso and Pizza Hut (Gabaccia 1998, 169-170). This industrialization and corporatization of Italian peasant traditions that had arrived

transnational racial narratives still affect how the MedDiet is translated in the United States in addition to how it is re-translated into the regions of Italy where it had evolved.

Historicizing the Mediterranean Diet as an Anthropological Paradigm

> These days, food and olive oil seem to travel with a great deal more welcome than people.
>
> Anne Menelay, 2020, 79

After Ancel Keys translated the practices of certain Mediterranean communities into a universal, scientific language, the concept of the MedDiet migrated to new epistemological fields as it expanded into both the anthropological sphere of food practices and the agri-food's branding of Spanish and Italian olive oil, what António José Marques da Silva calls the Med Label (Silva 2018, 574). Silva traces how an NGO, the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust (OPET), played an important role in connecting the MedDiet scientific research on cholesterol with the branding of olive oil by the International Olive Council (IOC) to consumers in the United States and other industrialized English-speaking countries who had new concerns about nutrition and health (Silva 2018, 578). The IOC started to work closely with OPET in the 1990s and helped finance a conference in January 1993 at the Harvard School of Public Health where experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations, scholars from universities, and also agri-food business interests designed a MedDiet pyramid (Figure 1) modeled on the recently disseminated US Department of Agriculture (USDA) pyramid (Silva 2018, 578-79).

in the U.S. with earlier immigrants happens just as Ancel Keys is disseminating information about the importance of fresh foods in his popular books on the "Mediterranean Way."

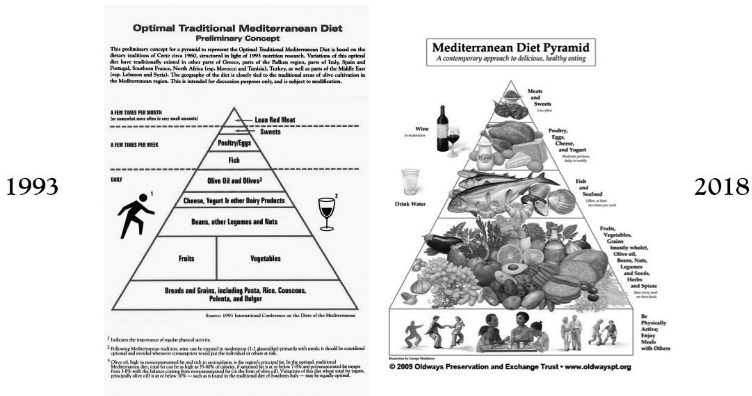

Figure 1: Transformation of the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid 1993-2018 (©Oldways, www.oldways.org) (Baer-Sinnott, 2018).[10]

While OPET was disseminating the MedDiet pyramid in the United States, a different organization, the Mediterranean Diet Foundation (MDF) [Fundación Dieta Mediterránea], which also included large agri-food companies, promoted the MedDiet internationally. Centered in Barcelona, the MDF's mission to protect the MedDiet as a model of health and well-being could not be separated from its promotion of products, especially olive oil. As Silva summarizes "it is clear today that the olive oil lobby . . . made a visionary move with a durable effect" (2018, 580). In just one generation, there has been an increase of consumption by 49% in countries outside of the Mediterranean region with Spain being by far the largest producer in the world (Maffia et. al 2020, 2). The graph below (Figure 2), which indicates the number of scientific publications with a hit phrase "Mediterranean diet" in each year for the selected country shows how the rise of popularity of the concept in the 1990s coincides with the increase of sales of olive oil, especially in the United States.

10 Sara Baer-Sinnott, "Happy 25 Years to the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid!," Oldways, January 18, 2018, accessed December 21, 2023, https://oldwayspt.org/blog/happy-25-years-mediterranean-diet-pyramid.

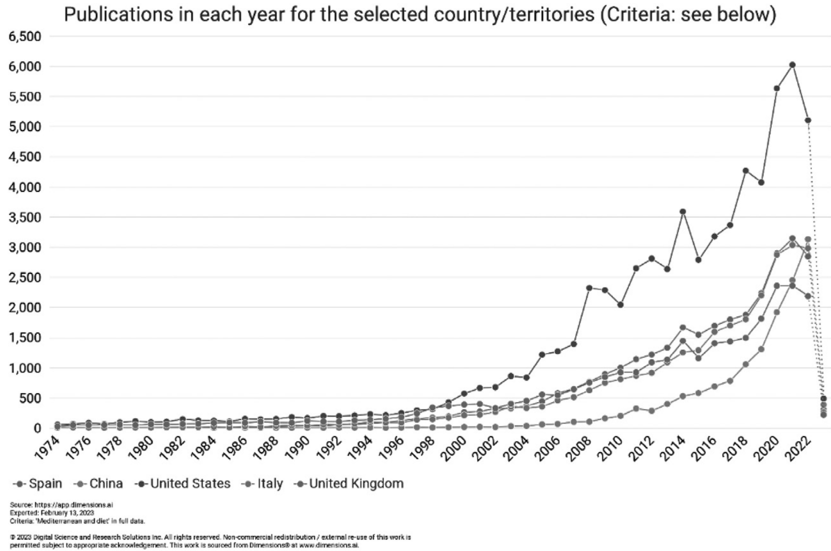

Figure 2: The screenshot of an interactive visualization shows the number of research publications with target words 'Mediterranean' and 'diet' in each year for the selected country (Spain, United Kingdom, United States, China, Japan, Italy and Israel) from 1975 to 2021 [the graph was generated using the dimensions.ai database that includes datasets from repositories such as Figshare, Dryad, Zenodo, Pangaea, and many more]. [11]

If Ancel Keys's scientific paradigm of the MedDiet provoked a de-territorialization of Cilento's practices, the movement to valorize them through a more anthropological lens, working to have the MedDiet recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, paradoxically continued that process. At a trans-Mediterranean meeting in Madrid in 2007, leaders of the effort to earn UNESCO recognition decided that Spain, Greece, Italy, and Morocco would serve as the representative national teams to draft the UNESCO proposal. In Rome in 2008 the four national groups decided that the MDF would coordinate the drafting of the proposal and choose four "emblematic communities" that represented the different nations (Silva 2018, 581-82). Largely due to its connection to the scientist Ancel Keys, Cilento was chosen as the emblematic region for Italy. Although one of the intentions was to promote community in-

11 Arina Melkozernova, personal screenshot, "Publications per year/country graph," February 13, 2023.

volvement by focusing on representative or emblematic communities from different countries of the Mediterranean rather than on national identities, the term “Mediterranean” often ends up camouflaging the distinct local foodways—like those of the Cilento--that it collects under one umbrella (Nestle 1995, 1317S; Nestle 2018, 173-75). In fact, the representatives of the four emblematic communities, which were supposed to exemplify the lifestyle not only of their localities and their nations, but also of the entire Mediterranean basin, met for the first time only four months before the application’s submission (Silva 2018, 583).

One of the goals for the MedDiet pyramid was to include everyday habits, interpreted as part of the Mediterranean heritage going back to the Ancient Greeks, as well as recommend a combination of different types of foods and portion control. While even the first pyramid focused on complementary physical activity, later iterations embedded numerous practices such as adequate rest, conviviality, seasonality, moderate consumption, and cooking of local foods at the base of the pyramid (Sahyoun and Sankavaram 2016, 48). The graphic’s increasing focus on the MedDiet as a lifestyle aimed to ground cultural practices within the heritage of certain localities and at the same time propose them as behaviors that could be imitated globally. Simona Stano (2018) interprets the increasing focus on lifestyle practices within the evolution of the pyramid as part of the process to have the MedDiet included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The proposal was first rejected because of its focus on scientific criteria and a lack of cultural factors that connected the emblematic communities. As Stano summarizes, the 2009 Oldways MedDiet pyramid and the 2010 MDF MedDiet pyramid served as responses to the “oxymoronic tension between globality and locality characterizing contemporary foodscapes” (Stano 2018, 457).[12] Both OPET and MDF played important roles in supporting the effort to have UNESCO recognize the MedDiet as an intangible cultural heritage; UNESCO granted that status in 2010 and then extended it to Portugal, Croatia, and Cyprus in 2013 (Sahyoun & Sankavaram 2016, 49). In this way, the UNESCO process of recognizing the importance of local, traditional foodways, was at least partially appropriated to brand certain products, especially olive oil, rather than addressing in a more relational and holistic fashion the contemporary health and environmental issues that challenged not only the

12 2010 FUNDACIÓN DIETA MEDITERRÁNEA, “¿Qué Es La Dieta Mediterránea?,” FUNDACIÓN DIETA MEDITERRANEA, accessed December 21, 2023, https://dietamediterranea.com/nutricion-saludable-ejercicio-fisico/#pyramid.

consumers of the MedDiet-branded products in the United States but also increasingly the communities whose practices inspired the model.

It is also noteworthy that the UNESCO recognition of the MedDiet includes only one community that is usually categorized as North African or Middle Eastern. The dietician, Kate Gardner Burt (2021), pointed out that even though foodways from those geographical areas are very similar to Greek and Italian eating practices, they have never received the same attention from researchers. As Burt summarizes: "if the dietary pattern associated with the lowest incidence of heart disease was truly sought, unbiased researchers would have explored Keys's findings in these (or other) non-white populations with lower meat consumption" (Burt 2021, 47). It seems that Ancel Keys's initial focus on southern European Mediterranean food cultures, which supported the notion of a homogenous Euro-centric population in the United States, continues to have an effect on how the model develops. While recent research suggests that the contemporary countries that follow most closely the MedDiet nutritional model are outside of Europe, such as Egypt (Sahyuon and Sankavaram 2016, 54), the whole Mediterranean basin, including areas famous for the MedDiet in Europe such as Greece, Spain and Italy, face increasing health and environmental challenges because young people are abandoning traditional foodways.[13] Nonetheless, those southern European countries remain the focus of the MedDiet promotion both in terms of its representation and the branding of olive oil.

The uneven access to the marketing benefits of the MedDiet as well as the global olive oil market supports southern European nations and communities while it largely excludes others. For instance, Anne Menelay writes about the political, economic, and cultural challenges that prevent the circulation of Palestinian olive oil, commenting that "the idea of 'place' is particularly charged when your place is being taken from you" (Menelay 2020, 78). The recent tragedy of terrorism and warfare in Israel and in Gaza, has made it even more challenging for Palestinian farmers on the West Bank to harvest the olives from their trees, a fundamental practice of their own traditional Mediterranean foodways.[14] Menelay also notes that

13 For data about the lack of adherence to the traditional eating patterns in southern Italy, see Cresta 1998, 154-55 and Grosso and Galvano 2016, 13-19. For a more general analysis of the "paradoxical" decline of adherence to the MedDiet in most Mediterranean countries and its negative consequences for human and environmental health, see Ridolfi et. al 2020, 124-25.

14 Newspapers from across the political spectrum have reported in November and December 2023 on violence against Palestinian olive farmers that have not only prohibited the harvesting of olives but also at times cost them their lives: https://

while we promote transnational identities like the MedDiet in terms of the circulation of foods, these ideas are in conflict with the strong sense of nationalism, which reinforces borders in terms of the movement of people (Menelay 2020, 79). In this way national and racial hierarchies continue to influence how the MedDiet shapes foodways both in countries outside of the Mediterranean basin, particularly the United States, and in the communities that have depended on the fruits of the olive tree over millennia. Instead, an emphasis on the common need to revalue and protect the Mediterranean basin's rich and dynamic agrobiodiversity, together with the people who cultivate it, would shift the attention away from a focus on specific products, and encourage more thoughtful and holistic consideration of the role of traditional foodways in the health of contemporary communities throughout the region.

Historicizing the Mediterranean Diet in the Cilento

> Food has a history: frightening, heroic, miraculous.
> Sacred scripture contains stories of provisions from heaven.
> The word hunger has been feared more than the word war,
> than the word plague, than earthquakes, fires, floods.[15]
>
> Erri De Luca, 2022.

It is often remarked that Ancel Keys embodied the MedDiet because he lived in Cilento for over 30 years where he joined the ranks of the community's famous centenarians. Keys, though, lived there with distinct privileges, which certainly facilitated his own access to delicious fresh food and good health. Due to the historical poverty of southern Italy, the strong racism against Southerners because of their work as farmworkers in an agricultural economy that permitted them little power over their own lives, the rapid industrialization of the "economic miracle" in northern Italy, and

www.npr.org/2023/11/10/1211687030/the-death-of-a-palestinian-olive-farmer-emphasizes-conflict-over-land; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/30/no-work-and-no-olives-harvest-rots-as-west-bank-farmers-cut-off-from-trees; https://www.wsj.com/story/palestinians-flee-the-west-bank-after-settler-violence-3abf817e.

15 "Il cibo ha una storia spaventosa, eroica, miracolosa. La scrittura sacra contiene narrazioni di provviste del cielo. La parola fame è stata più temuta della parola guerra, della parola peste, di terremoti, incendi, inondazioni." (De Luca 2022, 7).

another wave of mass emigration,[16] Keys could afford ocean-front property as well as a gardener and a cook to produce his food. His personal chef and housekeeper, Delia Morinelli, was an important source of his knowledge of local foods and recipes, which were often passed down orally through generations of mothers and daughters (Moro 2014, 46). Yet she has only recently received some recognition for her contributions to his research as a knowledge holder of the traditional strategies.

From recent interviews with Morinelli and other women of her generation and their daughters, most notably by the anthropologist Elisabetta Moro, the story of invisible labor unfolded: on the daily basis women participated in vegetable and wheat production, milled their own flour, made their own breads and pasta, managed to conserve important foods in their culture such as eggplant and anchovies, and also transported fish from the seaside to the hilltop towns where families practiced terraced farming and produced olive oil (*Granai del Mediterraneo*).[17] The knowledge and experiences of these women is erased when their Cilentan traditions are reinscribed in Ancel Keys's scientific paradigm or in a vague anthropological notion of traditional Mediterranean practices.

Focusing on Elisabetta Moro's interview with Morinelli, we will first examine how the conversation comments on the MedDiet pyramid's focus on conviviality or the sharing of food together at the table (Morinelli 2013). She discusses Ancel and Margaret Keys' favorite culinary preferences and the dishes that they would ask her to prepare, including for their own meals with friends and colleagues. Morinelli clearly expresses her affection for the Keys and what she learned from exchanges with the scientists about the contrast between her own salutary traditional food practices in comparison with to the so-called Western, industrialized diet. She relishes thinking about their admiration for her "piatti poveri," especially those made with fresh pasta, seafood, legumes, and produce. She describes in detail a "simple" yet clearly labor-intensive dish that the Keys included in their book because it was one of their favorites. For this dish, Morinelli would first peel eggplants and potatoes and then layer them with tomatoes and fresh

16 In describing the post-war changes in the South, Piero Bevilacqua explains that since the traditional peasant agricultural work disappeared, for many it left no other choice than to emigrate. From 1946-1976 it is estimated that 4 million people left southern Italy. Ironically, this is the period in which Ancel Keys disseminates the traditional eating patterns of the same region as a model for healthy living. Bevilacqua 2005, 152.

17 See for example, the 2013 interview with Giuseppina Martucci and Rosetta Petillo. https://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/granai-del-mediterraneo-cura-delluniversita-di-napoli-sob/giuseppina-e-rosetta.

herbs--parsley and oregano—before cooking the dish slowly over a low flame (Morinelli 2013, 3:25; Moro 2014,165).

When asked if she would eat the dish with the Keys, Morinelli responds "no" because "of the time" and continues "do you know how [much] I worked in those early years?" She goes on to explain how she cooked for both her own husband, a fisherman, who lived "the life of the sea" and ate in the early morning, and then for the Keys mid-day, only to return home at 3:30 to feed her husband again (Morinelli 2013, 4:32). Because of her dual responsibilities as a cook in two households, Delia comments that she often did not have the time to sit at the table to eat as the MedDiet pyramid recommends. Instead, she chuckles as she explains how she would eat a "panino" with zucchini as she traveled between one house and another making sure that everyone else was able to eat at the table.

The translation of Morinelli's recipes and practices into a utopian MedDiet model of daily familial meals around the table effaced her knowledge as well as her labor, creating a quotidian ideal which probably never existed for peasant families. As Monica Truninger and Dulce Freire describe in their research on Portugal and Morinelli's story illustrates, traditional farmers often struggled to keep a fixed eating schedule because of the demanding requirements of their work: "The mythologizing of Mediterranean lifestyles such as eating together at the table enshrines an ideal rarely attained in practice" (Truninger and Freire 2014, 199). Even today the MedDiet's continuation of an idealized commensality together with its focus on seasonality and fresh food, places the burden of achieving those nutritional goals on families, especially mothers "without giving them resources to provide better food, such as flexible work hours, reductions in the gender wage gap, and changes to a welfare system that has pushed many women to low-wage jobs" (Kimura et al. 2014, 41). This is also true in the Mediterranean societies that Keys used as models that have experienced "demographic and cultural transformations," including greatly increased female participation in the paid workforce and yet the "moral expectations about eating together" persists (Truninger and Freire 2014, 199).

At around the same time that Keys was beginning his research on the traditional foodways of southern Italy, an Italian biologist from the Cilento, Massimo Cresta, started a longitudinal study in a small town of the same region. Although this study provides extensive data about how people in rural Cilento ate and lived from 1954-1997, it was published in Italian and received very little attention from those defining the MedDiet outside of Italy. At the beginning of the study, Virgilio Tosi, a filmmaker, made a short documentary about the goals and early results of the research; *Inchi-*

esta alimentare a Rofrano emphasizes the isolation and poverty of a small town in the mountainous interior of the Cilento as well as its resilience and creativity. The data that the film shared about the daily food intake of Rofrano's families, describes a variety of the MedDiet that, like Keys's model, depended mostly on grains and produce, yet the subsistence farming did not allow the town's youth to grow at the same rate as children in other more urbanized areas of Italy (Cresta et. al 1982, 73-76). The fear of not having enough to feed one's children was an aspect of Cilentan peasant culture illustrated by the video that Keys glossed over in creating his dietary model.[18]

While the documentary stresses that almost everyone in Rofrano engaged in strenuous physical agricultural labor, the visuals, in particular, emphasize the amount of physical work required of women. One graphic communicates that 84% of households lacked running water and included an illustration of women collecting water at a fountain to carry home (Figure 3).

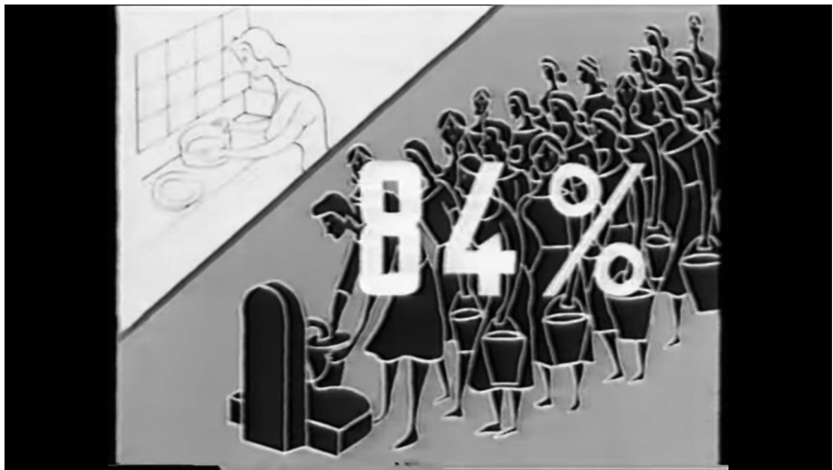

Figure 3: A still frame from *Inchiesta alimentare a Rofrano*, directed by Virgilio Tosi (1954).[19]

18 In describing the poverty of post-war Italy in 1945, Donna Gabaccia writes that "over 90 percent of Italians lacked one or more modern amenities (electricity, drinking water, or a toilet) in their own homes" (2000,155).

19 Virgilio Tosi, *Inchiesta alimentare a Rofrano*, Archivio Storico Luce, Cinecittà, video, 6:57, https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000088466/1/-

Another sequence shows a woman carrying her newborn child in a cradle on her head as she heads to the field where she will work. Yet another sequence shows women carrying heavy rocks, which can weigh up to 50 kilos, up a mountain as the narrator explains that they also often worked as laborers in construction projects (Figures 4 and 5).

Figures 4 and 5: Still frames from *Inchiesta alimentare a Rofrano*, directed by Virgilio Tosi (1954). Left: Women carry containers of many sizes on their heads, among them a cradle with the newborn.[20] Right: Women carry building stones on their heads. [21]

These still shots of women's hard physical labor contrast starkly with the depictions of physical activity in the MedDiet pyramids, such as people dancing, playing soccer or taking a relaxing walk. The poverty and physical challenges that women confronted to feed their families in southern Italy were also largely overlooked by Keys, and certainly do not find a place in recent romanticized representations of the Mediterranean diet like this Oldways book cover, which associates the traditional foodways with bucolic landscapes and leisure (Figure 6).

49255.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=.

20 Virgilio Tosi, *Inchiesta alimentare a Rofrano*, Archivio Storico Luce, Cinecittà, video, 7:24, https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000088466/1/-49255.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=.

21 Virgilio Tosi, *Inchiesta alimentare a Rofrano*, Archivio Storico Luce, Cinecittà, video, 8:11, https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000088466/1/-49255.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=.

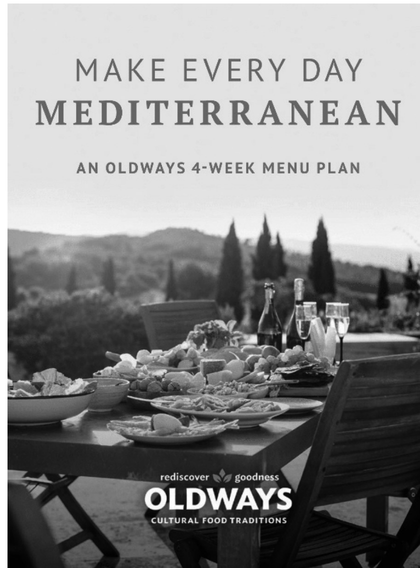

Figure 6: The cover of *Make Every Day Mediterranean: An Oldways 4-Week Menu Plan*, Oldways, www.oldwayspt.org, 2019.[22]

This kind of juxtaposition, though, brings up challenging questions about the missing people and invisible labor in many visual contemporary representations of the MedDiet, which focus on tables full of fresh food.

Over twenty years ago in 1998, Massimo Cresta, the Cilentan scientist responsible for the longitudinal study cited above, organized an international conference with a southern Italian anthropologist, Vito Teti; the goal of their international research was to reevaluate the "road of food habits in the Mediterranean" from both a biological and cultural perspective. In the introduction to that conference's proceedings, the two southern Italian scholars examined both the limits of studying any foodway in terms of individual bodies and instead insisted on the importance of humanity's biological and cultural connections to place, history, and environment when working toward the goal of creating balanced food practices:

22 "Oldways 4-Week Mediterranean Diet Menu Plan Book," Oldways, accessed December 21, 2023, https://oldwayspt.org/resources/oldways-4-week-mediterranean-diet-menu-plan-book.

> Walking along the shores of the Mediterranean and looking at the world from these shores, seems to us a way of re-establishing, or establishing in new terms, profitable dialogue between the humanities and sciences. At a historical moment when … advances in biology are forcing us to face difficult ethical and philosophical problems, we should remind ourselves that a human being is not only his or her body, but also the places, the culture, the personal and social history, and the environment to which he or she belongs (Cresta and Teti 1998, 1).

This place-based, transdisciplinary approach to Mediterranean foodways, however, has been largely unheeded by scholars and nutritional professionals writing on the MedDiet. Cresta and Teti also focused in their introduction on the fear of hunger that had shaped the different varieties of the MedDiet as communities were forced to develop relational foodways in which environmental resources had to be used with frugality and moderation: "hunger is a condition which was historically experienced and lived through by Mediterranean peoples and this had biological and cultural implications" (Cresta and Teti 1998, 3).[23] Thus, the foodways' "precarious and fragile equilibrium" necessitated a "parsimonious and balanced relationship between human beings and the food environment" (Cresta and Teti 1998, 2-3) as well as survival practices based on attitudes of dependence, of conservation, of sacrality toward the web of life in which the Mediterranean communities were embedded. At the same time, Cresta and Teti also noted that in the second half of the twentieth century, just as the Mediterranean foodways were being defined by scientists from outside of those traditions as a "simplified dietary science that anybody can apply," the balanced model had already "been broken in the industrialized countries of the Mediterranean" as food production began to shift from a "biological rationality" to an "economic rationality," which to great extent erased the importance of place, relations, and culture (Cresta and Teti 1998, 3).

The critical analysis of the MedDiet's portrayal of traditional foodways as a homogenizing model that Cresta and Teti engendered in 1998 still continues

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23 Indigenous scholars and writers focus on the affinities that place-based traditional foodways manifested in utilizing their fundamental relationships with land for survival. Simon Ortiz, Acoma scholar and poet, describes land as the foundation of the Indigenous morals and ethics (Ortiz 2018). Desert and semi-desert people of the American Southwest such as Acoma, Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham to name a few, adapted to abundant and scarce periods with their feast and famine life cycles (Cajete 1999, 97). For example, long-term research demonstrates how the Tohono O'odham's foodways sustain their community and habitat in the Sonoran Desert where we live (Nabhan 1985; 2000).

in Vito Teti's contemporary work on southern Italian cultures today. His writings on southern Italy and its diasporic cultures question historical notions of the South and nutritional branding of the MedDiet by focusing on the territory's history of poverty, emigration, and depopulation as well as the evolving and potentially regenerative relationship between those who chose to stay and those who arrive as recent immigrants. By re-territorializing the concept of the MedDiet in southern Italy, we consider both the past and current traumas of its communities and acknowledge the potential for thoughtful engagement with and revalorization of the relationships, which structure traditional foodways that have been largely marginalized despite their global branding.

Possible Futures of the Mediterranean Diet

> You buried us but you didn't know that we were seeds.[24]
>
> JR and Alice Rohrwacher, 2022.

During the writing of this article in 2023, public exchanges about the MedDiet from across the political spectrum developed into a debate in the Italian media (Vigna 2023). A provocative food scholar and public intellectual, Alberto Grandi, sparked the polemics with interviews in newspapers and on television as well as his popular book and podcast with the same title, *Denominazione d'origine inventata* (DOI), in which he challenges what he describes as food mythologies that have fossilized the dynamic food traditions of the Italian peninsula for purposes of product marketing and "gastronationalism"[25] (Grandi 2020, 62-63).[26]

In a similar vein, Grandi has questioned the notion of the MedDiet as an invention of Ancel Keys, emphasizing the poverty of many southern Italians during the period in which the Keys lived in the Cilento. While Grandi's concern about the representation of "timeless" heritage foods for economic, political, and racist purposes is important to keep in mind, his

24 "Ci avete seppelito ma non sapevate che siamo semi." JR and Alice Rohrwacher (8:39).

25 For Alberto Grandi's views about the MedDiet, see his book originally published in 2018, 62-63 and listen to Episode 43 of his and Daniele Soffiati's podcast. It would also be helpful to watch the short video story by the journalist Tecla Biancofiore, which includes a short segment from an interview with Grandi from an episode of the TV show, *Piazza pulita*.

26 Michaela DeSoucey developed the concept of gastronationalism in her 2010 article about the contemporary uses of national food identities in the European Union.

statements often completely dismiss the creativity and resilience of dynamic peasant foodways that have nurtured a cultural and biological diversity, which has been threatened during the age of industrialized food. During one interview on a popular television show, Grandi not only states that Ancel Keys invented the MedDiet, but that Keys was the one who taught the women of Pioppi how to prepare food because they didn't know how to cook (Biancofiore, 2023).

One public response from the mayor of Pollica (Pioppi) emphasizes the historical evidence that the Keys learned about traditional Cilentan foods from the women of the area. He also suggests that the local sense of food identity is defined by the place-based knowledge and creativity with which these women had developed the traditional foodways by using the ingredients and tools available to them (Biancofiore, 2023). In fact, Grandi's assessment of the MedDiet devalues the ingenuity and skills of women like Delia Morinelli and reinforces stereotypes of southern agricultural communities that the more nuanced research of scholars such as Moro and Teti avoid. Like Grandi, Teti describes the ways in which a mythological MedDiet is marketed today, but Teti also examines the survival histories of southern Italian rural communities including the sacrality conferred on food because of the constant fear of hunger coupled with the adaptability manifested through contemporary efforts to protect the agricultural biological diversity of these resilient towns as a form of "mobile identity," which has evolved in relation to specific environments (Teti 2015, 138). Such mobile identities acknowledge the suffering of the past, respond to the challenges of the present, and envision the largely neglected territories connected to the Mediterranean Diet as places in which it is possible to imagine healthier and more sustainable food futures (Teti 2018, 203).

Fabio Parasecoli's research on food identities also relates to the contemporary debate about the MedDiet. Broadening the concept of "gastronationalism," Parasecoli coins the term "gastronativism" as a conceptual tool for analyzing "the ideological use of food in politics to advance ideas about who belongs to a community (in any way it may be defined) and who doesn't" (Parasecoli 2024, 9). In this way, he examines how intersecting food identities at different scales —not just those of nation states—influence the ways in which a community is able "to assess its past, negotiate its present, and imagine its future" (Parasecoli 2022, 17). Parasecoli also distinguishes "exclusionary" gastronativism that supports different forms of intolerance (51) to "nonexclusionary" gastronativism that does not "imply the exclusion, exploitation, or debasement of others," but instead focuses "on establishing alternative food networks that prom-

ise more equitable and sustainable forms of food production, distribution, and consumption compared to mainstream commercial enterprises" (66). While exclusionary gastronativism promotes the notion of timeless and stable food communities, nonexclusionary forms of gastronativism conceive of relational foodways as heterogenous and dynamic with mobile identities that "could generate more openness toward 'them,' whoever 'they' may be" (Parasecoli 2022,194).

It is this alternative and nonexclusionary view of the future of traditional foodways associated with the MedDiet that Teti examines in his most recent research texts; in which he develops the concept of "restanza" or multigenerational initiatives of individuals and groups who decide to stay in Italian rural towns, especially in the mountainous interior, with the goal of creating "new projects, new aspirations, new demands" for revalorizing their biocultural heritage and regenerating communities that value a sustainable relationship with environments that are often dismissed as backward wastelands (Teti 2020, 7). Teti suggests that the relationships between humans and their environments that developed in these southern Italian communities due to a "parsimonious" yet "balanced" agricultural co-evolution, could serve as important sources of knowledge moving forward (Teti 2015, 7). Likewise, groups that work to sustain local foodways such as the Rete Politiche Locali del Cibo, have regenerated the concept of the MedDiet in their advocacy not as a "decontextualized nutritional model" or a "new brand for the marketing of Made in Italy products" but rather a "territorialized cultural model" that is characterized by a "plurality of biocultural local patrimonies" together with "an ethical approach founded on sustainability, health, and the diversity of food systems" (*Gruppo di Lavoro Sistemi e Politiche Locali del Cibo 2019*).

Following these re-territorialized concepts of the MedDiet, we will examine two examples of how the MedDiet has been re-historicized and re-placed in southern Italy, offering other possible futures. The first one derives from the same southern Italian locality where Keys lived the last decades of his life. The Cooperativa del Nuovo Cilento is an agricultural Coop with over 400 farmers, which sits above Keys's beloved home of Pioppi in the hill-top town of San Mauro Cilento; it produces olive oils from local varieties such as la Rotondella, as well as providing support for its members who cultivate and protect local foods of the region such as ancient grains and beans like the chickpeas of Cicerale. In addition, it provides opportunities for farmers and gardeners to learn about traditional forms of terraced farming and irrigation that protect the soil from more intensive, industrialized agricultural practices. The Coop is committed to

using farming practices that regenerate the soil, protect the sea as well as freshwater springs, allow residents access to healthy foods, and promote sustainable tourism. Its founder, Giuseppe Cilento, has cleverly altered the MedDiet pyramid in his own presentations and on the Coop's website to add healthy soil at its base. The adoption of practices connected to regenerative agriculture, including the use of traditional polycultural farming, sustains the Coop's entire relational system.[27]

For this community, the MedDiet model begins by acknowledging that more equitable food patterns start with healthy soil and water. In order to achieve this goal, the Coop creatively encourages exchanges between those who preserve local forms of traditional agricultural knowledge and scientists who connect them to networks of regenerative agriculture both at the national and international level. For instance, the Coop promotes the recycling of the organic materials left over from the olive oil extraction process into natural fertilizers. Its efforts to create a circular agricultural cycle in which local farmers who are using the Coop's own compost are supported by a national network, RETE HUMUS, in which professors from several Italian universities serve as consultants. In a similar collaborative fashion, Giuseppe Cilento knew and learned from the scientist Ancel Keys; the Coop cites Keys's work, and they have also invested in new technologies that allow them to preserve and verify a high level of antioxidants in their olive oils based on what they have learned from studies of the MedDiet (Figure 7). What strikes us as important, though, is that the nutritional knowledge connected to the presence of Ancel Keys's legacy in the area is only one source of authority in the map of the Coop's relational agricultural work, which also highlights the importance of protecting local biodiversity and health through collaborations between local farmers, scientists, consumers, and even tourists.

27 We conducted interviews with members of the Cooperativa del Nuovo Cilento, including Giuseppe Cilento, in person at the Coop and on their farms in September/October 2021. Unless otherwise cited, Cooperativa del Nuovo Cilento members provided the information in this article about their collaborative agricultural work, their community projects, and their personal/familial/community relationships with plants/foods. We are grateful to them for sharing their knowledge and experience so generously and consider them co-collaborators in this project. For more information about the pyramid and the Coop's regenerative practices, go to its website: https://nuovocilento.it/chi-siamo-cooperativa-a-san-mauro-cilento/per-vivere-20-anni-di-piu

Figure 7: The map of the Cooperativa del Nuovo Cilento's relational foodway.[28]

The Coop's collaborative exchanges remind all of us that what made the Cilento lifestyle healthy when Ancel Keys decided to live there in order to lengthen his life is not something we can purchase as a commodity but rather a relational food network that still valued the reciprocity principles protecting the traditional ecological knowledge of its ancestors and the community itself. In 2021 we spent time at the Cooperativa and with Giuseppe Cilento as we toured the land of Antonello Di Gregorio, a young farmer of heritage grains and produce like the region's famous white figs. Giuseppe mentors Antonello, passing down both scientific and traditional knowledge (Figure 8). Together they discussed the various strategies they adopt to avoid soil erosion and protect biodiversity such as cultivating the territory's traditionally spontaneous herbs.[29] In this way, the Coop promotes re-territorializing and re-placing the MedDiet. Recently, Di Gregorio has become the new Coop President demonstrating the importance of the kind of intergenerational exchanges of place-based knowledge that we witnessed.

28 "The map of the Cooperativa Agricola Nuovo Cilento's relational foodway," digital image, the Cooperativa Agricola Nuovo Cilento, accessed December 21, 2023, https://th.bing.com/th/id/OLC.ihALa9rR2oFbJw480x360?&rs=1&pid=ImgDetMain.

29 We were surprised to see that Antonello Di Gregorio applies the "three sisters" method of planting corn, beans, and squash together, which is a traditional practice of Native American farming that illustrates the cultural knowledge exchange in relational foodways.

Figure 8: Antonello Di Gregorio (left) and Giuseppe Cilento (right) on the farm. Photo is courtesy of Juliann Vitullo.

Another example comes from the southern territory of Basilicata, connected to the Parco Nazionale del Pollino, where the center for biodiversity of the Agenzia Lucana di Sviluppo e di Innovazione in Agricoltura (ALSIA) has created a network of gardeners, small-scale farmers, and scientists, which was the first in Italy to take advantage of 2015 legislation that encouraged regions to organize *comunità del cibo* [food communities] as the model for other regions (Figure 9). The *comunità del cibo* developed into an interwoven system of custodians, which began with the *agricoltori custodi* [agricultural custodians], gardeners and farmers who sustain mostly traditional plant varieties but also animal breeds, at risk of extinction, and now also includes interwoven networks of *produttori custodi/trasformatori custodi* [food producer custodians], *cuochi custodi* [chef custodians], and most recently, *scuole custodi* [school custodians], which have not yet been added to the map (Formica 2020, 15).

Figure 9: The map of ALSIA's network of custodians.[30]

All together, these networks have managed to valorize and protect hundreds of fruit and vegetable varieties, which were a particularly important part of southern Basilicata's biodiversity and foodway.

In assemblies in 2018, the founding members of ALSIA developed the design of their community based on three shared concepts: biodiversity, protection of the rural landscape and its cultures, and finally the importance of a collaborative network of stakeholders (Formica 2020, 16-17). The community connected the protection of the land's biodiversity to its cultural identities, acknowledging the role of humanity in the landscape and affective connections to it. The founding members emphasized the need to recuperate the territory's traditional ecological "knowledges" and the "strategies for survival," linking the historical traumas of the region with the loss of ancestral practices that connected them to plants and other animals:

30 "The map of the ALSIA network," digital image, the Lucanian Agency for Development and Innovation in Agriculture, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.alsia.it/opencms/export/sites/alsia/.galleries/biodiversita/PANNELLO.jpg

> The relationship between territory, biodiversity, food, and community was considered the foundation of the perspective for a material, economic, social and cultural regeneration for the southern area of Basilicata. The depopulation and the decline of biodiversity in the area's communities have coincided with the economic and cultural loss of their "knowledges" and their strategies for survival. (Formica 2020, 18.)

ALSIA's focus on the protection of agrobiodiversity encourages collaboration between traditional farmers (the agricultural custodians) and plant geneticists to recuperate and protect heritage varieties by creating a process in which seeds and plants are validated, their germplasm conserved in a seed bank in Rotonda, the rich diversity of ancient varieties nurtured in ALSIA's own experimental fields, but most importantly, the seeds are shared with members of the network to make sure that they continue to evolve in situ in various gardens, farms, and schools of the community. In this way, seeds of heritage varieties are saved and shared among ALSIA members as farmers had traditionally done; they do not belong to an individual or to a company but rather to the community, a gift from the past for the future.

These collaborations between traditional farmers and scientists combine the advantages of place-based knowledge, accumulated over millennia, with genetic scientific methods in order to revalorize and develop the territory's traditional agricultural biodiversity, which has evolved through seed selection by generations of farmers.[31] One of ALSIA's current projects is developing mixtures of various bean varieties. Back in the 1960's, Ancel and Margaret Keys had described the importance of legumes in traditional foodways like those associated with the MedDiet, publishing a book entitled *The Benevolent Bean*, which encouraged readers in the United States to follow the practices of contemporary southern Italians and include more beans in their diets as an alternative plant-based protein source to meat that had both health and environmental benefits (Keys and Keys 1972, 18. 26). Although the Keys praised the southern Italians as bean eaters, the production of legumes has plummeted in Italy since the years in which they wrote their volume (Corrado 2022, 4).

31 Michaela DeSoucey warns that organizations, which resist a globalized homogenization of gastronomic cultures by focusing on local foodways, "must remain cognizant of their potential to promote a romanticized past that ignores the travails of peasants, farmers, and the poor, what Lauden (2004) calls `culinary Luddism'" (2010, 449). ALSIA seeks to avoid these problematic strategies by purposely examining the area's historical and contemporary traumas and encouraging collaborations between traditional farmers and scientists.

While beans in southern Italy probably represent the crop with the largest number of varieties, many of them are now in danger of extinction (Corrado 2022, 6; Ceccarelli, Grando, and Cerbino 2022, 7). ALSIA's focus on fostering the evolution of local bean cultivars recognizes the historical significance of the crop in the territory and also anticipates its importance for creating a healthier and more sustainable food system. The scientists involved in the project note that its realization is possible only because there are local farmers whose families share an affective attachment to the plants and the traditional dishes they prepare with the beans. (Ceccarelli, Grando, and Cerbino 2022, 7).

The kind of plant breeding practiced by ALSIA, known as "participatory genetic betterment," is based on a collaborative method developed in different countries of the global South by the geneticist Salvatore Ceccarelli, who works closely with the association (Ceccarelli, Grando and Cerbino 2022, 18-21; Bevilacqua 2022, 180; Boscolo and Tola 2020, 16-17). Local farmers within the network plant a mixture of bean seed varieties, both heritage and modern, so that the polycultural populations can evolve differently depending on the geographic and climatic conditions of the farms. While the genetic breeding of the Green Revolution focused on developing uniformity and monoculture, which led to a dramatic reduction of agricultural biodiversity, participatory genetic betterment mimics the cyclical process of traditional farmers who choose the seeds and varieties (including new ones) from the dynamic diversity of mixed populations that are particularly well adapted to their environment, changing climatic conditions, and tastes. (Ceccarelli, Grando and Cerbino 2022, 13; Bevilacqua 2022, 35; Boscolo and Tola 2020, 18-19).

Genetic breeding becomes participatory when different members of the community collaborate in the cyclical cultivation, assessment, and selection of the varieties; in the case of ALSIA, farmers, chefs, and students evaluate the plants as well as the traditional foods that chefs create with them. Innovating an ancestral tradition, local farmers choose which varieties to plant based on the information they have gathered in the fields, in the kitchen, and in laboratories. As Teti remarks, a renewed focus on traditional food systems does not mean ignoring science and technology, but rather requires "new forms of exchange between science and culture. A reintegration of agriculture and food within a social, cultural, economic, and environmental framework that may result in long-term sustainability" (Teti 2015, 131). It is a dynamic collaboration that helps both the biological and cultural genome evolve into the future.

Conclusion

As the two examples above illustrate, we will not create a future of healthier and more sustainable foodways based solely on the scientific authority of universal food pyramids or the consumption of olive oil. Healthier and more sustainable food futures depend on respecting the ways in which food connects us to each other and the environments in which we are embedded. This is a nonexclusionary approach that encourages us to question classist, ethnic, and racial hierarchies, among others, in order to better protect biological and cultural diversity in our food systems. It also fosters both local and transnational exchanges between the place-based knowledge of traditional farmers and culturally embedded scientific research, which leads to innovative ways of developing more diverse, and thus, more resilient food systems. Rather than mythologizing the local food systems of southern Italy connected to the MedDiet, with the risk of promoting the kind of exclusionary gastronativism that Parasecoli and Grandi challenge, re-placing them, together with their histories of trauma and survival, may help us imagine their regeneration as well as the future evolution of Indigenous and traditional foodways across the planet.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Sicilian Puppet Theater of Agrippino Manteo (1884-1947). The Paladins of France in America. Jo Ann Cavallo. London/New York: Anthem Press, 2003, ISBN:9781839987663. Pp. 304.

The world of Sicilian puppets is a vivid and imaginative concert of adventure, chivalry, love and battle – magically construed over the course of hundreds of years by poets and puppeteers. The richness of the tales and the awe-inspiring puppets evoke a range of emotions and reactions in spectators regardless of their age or culture. What is at the heart of this artform? What makes the *opera dei pupi* tradition so impactful and what are the tales they tell? Answers to these questions and more, can be found in Joan Ann Cavallo's new book, *The Sicilian Puppet Theater of Agrippino Manteo (1884-1947). The Paladins of France in America.*

Currently one of the foremost scholars on Italian literature and Sicilian puppet tradition, Cavallo delves into the life and work of Agrippino Manteo. Her purpose is not just to pay homage to a man who was more than a puppeteer but an artist and a poet, but also to trace the cultural and artistic traditions that shaped his overall oeuvre. Her analyses of the history and scripts of the *opera dei pupi* bring to life the enchanted world that Manteo and others helped create. The quest for artistic expression, storytelling and entertainment is nowhere better highlighted than in the life of this Catanese puppeteer who immigrated to the United States with a set of tools and creative inspiration but little else in terms of resources. But this is not just a book about an existential journey – far from it. Jo Ann Cavallo brings us this carefully researched book to make an important point. She argues convincingly, and with detailed evidence, that the Sicilian adaptation of the Paladins of France was not a reductionist oversimplification of the Renaissance epic *chansons de geste*. Nor was the Sicilian version a watered-down duplication of a more illustrious French chivalric epic. In fact, and in true Sicilian form, the process of adaptation was so dynamic and fluid that Cavallo paints a vivid picture of creative and sustained elaboration. Building on the records and scripts left by Agrippino Manteo (and generously made available to the author by his family), she presents us with a genealogical discursive analysis of how poets invent. Cavallo outlines in her book how magic is created in the tales of the *opera dei pupi* and how this creative genius and cultural collaboration become the catalyst for the production of a quintessentially Sicilian tradition of epic proportions.

The book is divided into two parts with Part I focusing on "The Sicilian Puppet Theater of Agrippio Manteo and family." The two chapters that constitute this part address the puppeteers and the scripts, respectively.

These pages provide a backdrop for Part II and explain the historical developments of Manteo's life and upbringing as well as those of his children. Part II focuses on "Select Plays from the Paladins of France Cycle," which is comprised of ten different chapters and an introduction. Jo Ann Cavallo takes each of the plays written and recomposed by Agrippino and analyzes each storyline, how it preserves some traditions and the ways it departs from common themes. She carefully unpacks Agrippino's masterful intellectual production, tracing the choices he made in storyline and in the subtle nuances of his linguistic and literary selections.

The Sicilian *opera dei pupi* has a long and exciting history of co-creation, rewriting and collaboration – a multilayered artform that though inspired by Frankish stories about Charlemagne and his paladins, nevertheless reflects the intellectual, performative and artistic skills of generations of writers and poets alike. In Jo Ann Cavallo's narrative history of this national treasure – also a UNESCO protected artform – 15th and 16th century poets like Matteo Maria Boiardo, Luigi Pulci and Ludovico Ariosto, the 19th century writer, Giusto Lodico, and others have continued to be the bedrock of the Sicilian puppet tradition. The book traces how their work is interwoven with Agrippino Manteo's journey and his work and analyzes essential plays like *Orlando Innamorato* by Boiardo; *Morgante* by Pulci and *Orlando Furioso* by Ariosto. Cavallo underscores Sicilian innovation and vision and debunks a perspective on chivalric epic as the product of separate cultures and elucidates instead the transnational character of the Sicilian version of the plays. The vast array of characters from across the Old World already attests to the vast scope of the Sicilian world view as opposed to a tendency to remain more culturally situated in the Frankish tradition. Moreover, she points out how the plays enfold common themes from the classics of the ancient world, such as Homer and Virgil. An emphasis on a wider cultural approach in the plays is evident in Agrippino Manteo's collected works, according to Cavallo, which is congruent with the Sicilian approach in the *opera dei pupi*. To Cavallo, the Sicilian approach departs from its Frankish counterpart in precisely this point. Boiardo and Ariosto provide an alternate viewpoint to the centering of religious and ethnic conflict, evoking instead motivations like love, loyalty, and personal ambition. Therefore, kings and conquerors fight over common universal desires like political clout and territorial expansion rather than issues of ethnic and/or religious difference. Similarly, Manteo's plays deliberately deflect from potential confrontations over the latter.

Jo Ann Cavallo's reading of Manteo's plays, contributes a nuanced understanding of the poet's style and thoughtful arranging of the scripts of

the plays he puts together. In her careful reading of his notes, she uncovers as well that in the course of recopying the scripts, Manteo would modify and rearrange the lines in various color pencils. His descriptions of the proceedings of action reflect careful deliberation and thoughtfulness. Though Manteo positions the French plays as central to his vision and inspiration, he draws directly from Renaissance tradition in his long stanzas and writes poetic verses which are original and unique, in Cavallo's view.

In sum, this book makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the historical background of puppet theater composing and directing. It makes a sound critique of commonly held generalizations about Sicilian puppet theater and offers a never- before-known transnational experience of one great Catanese puppeteer, Agrippino Manteo, and his innovative vision and passion. One missing element is a longer conclusion that could have tied the interesting arguments discussed in the volume more succinctly for the reader and could have provided a clearer closure to the themes explored therein. Nonetheless, the book is easy to follow and is laid out in a systematic as well as thematic scheme which allows the reader to use it also as a quick reference.

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Mediterranean ARTivism: Art, Activism, and Migration in Europe. Elvira Pulitano. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. ISBN: 978-3-031-05991-9. Pp. 235.

Elvira Pulitano's *Mediterranean Artivism* offers a rare and acute close reading of artifacts that complicate a simplistic reading of the current refugee crisis in Europe. Focused on the island of Lampedusa as the clashing hotspot where refugees from the global South are met with the legal barriers of global North on route to safety, the book carefully unpacks rusty metaphors of migration whether in museums such as the Louvre or on street corners in Palermo, Sicily. The book offers a multimodal lens to the study of aesthetics, politics, and the poetics of exile, specifically in the Black Mediterranean, and is composed of an introductory chapter, eight additional chapters and an epilogue. Whereas the chapter titled "Stones and Water: Monuments and Counter-Monuments" discusses the monument *Porta d'Europa* erected in 2008 on the southeastern part of Lampedusa and

the chapter titled “Boats and Cemeteries: Landscapes of Memory” discusses art created with the driftwood of the boats wrecked near the island, in the final chapter, titled “Watery Confluences,” Pulitano discusses *The Foreigner’s Home* (2018), a documentary directed by Geoff Pingree and Rian Brown featuring the 2006 exhibition in the Louvre museum. The epilogue focuses on two examples of ARTivist cultural practices and transnational solidarity, based in Palermo: *Moltivolti*, a social enterprise started in 2014 to celebrate diversity, and *Giocherenda*, a cooperation project run by young refugees residing in the Sicilian capital.

Located mid-way between Tunisia and Italy, the tiny island of Lampedusa marks the frontier between Africa and Europe. Quoting Igiaba Scego, the author asks why “is the journey guaranteed to those who travel a North-South direction and not vice versa?” (1). Not only is a journey northward not guaranteed, but the azure waters surrounding the island of Lampedusa are, in fact, a graveyard of thousands of drowned migrants. Those who do reach its pearly white shores are criminalized and sent to inhumane detention centers away from the tourists’ open vistas of sea and sand. There is hope in humanity, however. The author recounts numerous efforts to “help” migrants, whether in their home or the host countries. These friendship laboratories aim to “offer dignity, creativity, and new models of citizenship and belonging” to the stranded individuals (221). The author urges the host nations that they have much to learn from their migrants, as sharing is what will define the globe’s future survival or demise.

Pulitano bravely situates the right of migration and mobility as an international human right which has become illegalized for the disenfranchised in the past decades. The twenty-kilometer square island receives more than double its inhabitants in the form of asylum seekers from northern Africa, an influx that the infrastructure of the island is not ready to accommodate. The weight of caring for asylum seekers is usually borne by geographical areas that are struggling financially themselves. But Pulitano reminds her readers of the ravages of the global north, including the role and history of Italy in Africa and the Middle East, prior to the onset of current refugee influx. The Mediterranean is the fluid yet cement border between the two worlds. Moreover, Pulitano is open about the scope and limitations of her study. She agrees that the voices of the island’s incarcerated migrants are completely absent from the book. She questions her own ethical dilemma by positioning herself at once as a “tourist” on this land, a scholar with a sabbatical research agenda, and even as an exiled individual. She recognizes that having the privilege of coming back home does not qualify her squarely for the latter. Pulitano is also adamant not to distinguish between

asylum seekers and economic migrants who travel northward in search of a better life. Such distinctions are excuses for the governments to deny migrants what they rightly deserve, she argues.

The book is a valuable addition to the study of refugees and its forte is in close analysis of artifacts that point to the traumas of asylum seekers. It contributes to current debates on "TransMediterrAtlantic" scholarship. Despite the focus on art and activism, the book's cover image is not appropriate. The digitally enhanced image displays a brown hand reaching out to a white luminescent one, which could be misread. But what the brown hand is pulling is not exactly a white hand, but a ghost of one, with shades of green and purple. Nonetheless, the book brings awareness to the shared fabric of the world we inhabit and the responsibility that fluid, imaginary borders create.

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