

MITTELMEERSTUDIEN

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This volume is a collection of essays based on selected papers which were presented at an international conference held at the Ruhr University Bochum from 27 to 29 March 2014. The conference was hosted by the Zentrum für Mittelmeerstudien (Centre for Mediterranean Studies) which was founded in 2010 and generously financed for six years by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research). We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Ministry for its support for the Center in general and for the conference in particular.

The symposium entitled “The Mediterranean *Other* – The *other* Mediterranean. Subaltern Perceptions, Interpretations and Representations of the Mediterranean” was organised by the Center’s research unit “People on the Move – Migration as Regional Resource”, headed by Prof. Dr. Mihran Dabag, in cooperation with the Institute for Diaspora Research and Genocide Studies at the Ruhr-University Bochum. One of the main goals of the research directed by Mihran Dabag, and hence of the conference, has been to foster critical and alternative approaches to the study of the Mediterranean and its peoples. It is against this backdrop that scholars of Mediterranean Studies from a variety of disciplinary fields were invited to analyse and question the Mediterranean from an ‘other’ angle and to focus particularly on non-nation-state and migrant communities’ perspectives on the Mediterranean.

During the conference we received great support from all the staff of the Centre for Mediterranean Studies. We would particularly like to single out Eleni Markakidou, the Center’s secretary at that time, and Christine Isabel Schröder, whose participation in planning and organising the conference was so important for its success.

We would also like to thank all those who were willing (and able!) to contribute to the conference from their field of expertise. Among them were Dr. Ferdaouss Adda, Dr. Moti Benmelech, Prof. Dr. Iain Chambers, Dr. Sebastian Elsässer, Prof. Dr. Christoph K. Neumann and Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, whose presentations, much to our regret, could not be included in this volume for one reason or another.

Special thanks are due to the panel chairs and discussants, Dr. Pradeep Chakkarath, Prof. Dr. Alexandra Cuffel, Prof. Dr. Dieter Haller, Prof. Dr. Nicolas Jaspert, Prof. Dr. Volkhard Krech and Prof. Dr. Ilse Lenz, for their excellent management of the discussions and inspiring input during the conference and beyond.

Bochum, November 2018

## The Mediterranean Other: Introduction

Shortly after the turn of the millennium Zygmunt Bauman argued that in the course of globalization space has lost much of its importance, while simultaneously gaining enormously in meaning. There is no doubt that today's global communications and unlimited travel have reduced the significance of physical space. Even late modern concepts of governance do not, at first glance, appear to be bound to ideas of geographical space. At the same time current security policies encourage the association of risk with heterogeneously populated regions.

Alongside the changes in political agendas in the 21st century, it is indeed the new political constellations – the intensified friction between a 'Christian Occident' and a 'Muslim Orient' as well as the transformations brought about by the 'Arab Revolutions' – which push minorities, non-state groups and diasporas into new (even new 'old') margins and expose them to threats. While academic, political and public discourses on the Mediterranean are still dominated by hegemonic perspectives which eclipse other perceptions, interpretations and representations, the focus of the papers presented in this volume is on non-national groups, minorities and diaspora communities in the Mediterranean. For (even positively connoted) persistent images and narratives of the Mediterranean such as 'the cradle of religion' or the 'the cradle of civilisation' often overlook the fact that it was the coexistence of such various communities within heterogeneous societies which enabled (and often carried) these developments.

These papers thus seek both to analyse and question current political developments, which label the Mediterranean in various ways as 'the Other', as well as to focus on non-nation-state, diasporic and migrant communities' perspectives on the Mediterranean. Experts from the fields of migration and diaspora research, and Mediterranean studies as well as scholars from religious studies, history, the political and social sciences cast a critical eye over the Mediterranean in the past and present with particular emphasis on alternative visions: What pictures of the sea and the surrounding lands do we get when we leave aside mainstream perspectives and look for subaltern and anti-hegemonic perceptions, interpretations and representations? How are conceptions of space structured in such perceptions, how are their boundaries defined? How did migratory societies, trans-national groups and diaspora communities imagine, form and change the Mediterranean? What (narrations and perceptions of) breaks and transformations can be identified and how do these

relate to established conceptions? How did slaves and refugees, merchants and those who crossed the cultural, economic and religious boundaries contribute to the historical development of the region? Where and how can we still find traces of their traditions? How are subaltern perspectives portrayed in film, art and literature?

It seems as if the globalization of economy, politics, science, knowledge and everyday life has led to the fear that a multitude of perspectives and, hence, a resulting multitude of answers are causing uncertainty, or at least unease. Research seems to respond to challenges primarily by seeking to narrow down possible issues and emphasize or restore the stability of terms, categories and paradigms. Certainty or being at ease is closely related to both, on the one hand the confidence in having an objective position for new insights by tightening the analytical categories and adjusting the possibilities for comparison, on the other hand the expectation that stagnation may not lead to a richer analytical scope, but will at least preserve the researcher's own perspectives and positions. It is against this observation that the papers presented in this volume explicitly seek to broaden current perspectives on the Mediterranean and provide varying and differing answers, depicting not a hegemonic, let alone homogenous Mediterranean, but a multi-layered, multi-perspective, complex, conflicting and disputed picture of Mediterranean peoples, minorities and societies. Such an intention not only requires a shifting of perspective and a view on specific research fields from the perspective of the 'other'. This idea also seeks to replace the security of categories for uncertainty. Distinguished scholars and experts from a broad academic background reflect on these and related questions and provide stimulating and exciting answers from various interdisciplinary perspectives, touching on historical as well as on current events and processes, but all from the perspective of the 'other': dealing with topics, aspects and facets of 'Othering' and construction of the Mediterranean 'other', Mediterranean models of belonging and identity, cross-Mediterranean perspectives from people on the move, and, last but not least, subaltern concepts and Mediterranean counter-narratives.

In the first paper, which also serves as an introduction to 'the Mediterranean other', **Kristin PLATT** reflects on "Constructing the Idea of 'Identity' in the Mediterranean: Patterns and Practices". The paper outlines current tendencies in a politicization of non-state communities and investigates the historical and political frameworks of 'Mediterranean identity'. Platt examines three aspects: observations about current manifestations of global Mediterranean identity, tendencies in current political views of identity and identity politics, and finally, reflections about the construction and reconstruction of identity based on classical sociology, social psychology or cultural anthropology. She stresses that whenever we speak about 'identity', it is never taken for granted that we are focusing on processes of inclusion and exclusion, of self-determination and external attributions. When speaking about 'global identity', Platt argues, we seem to be talking about 'modules, characterized by open access; we think

about building blocks, colourfully painted, freely movable, based on a digital foundation. The shape of global, transnational identity is a response to both a digitally modified knowledge of identity and a new awareness of space and belonging. Finally the paper reminds us that when we speak of 'Mediterranean identity', an old question should first be revisited: Who is speaking? With the re-emergence of 'identity politics', it is clear, the paper argues, that in current debates on identity knowledge and identity processes, three structures have been forgotten: space, national strategies, and values.

Cristina **BALMA-TIVOLA**, in her presentation "Routes, Migrations, Stories. Counter-Cultural Discourses from Multicultural Theatre in Italy", examines issues dramatized on stage that expose fully the personal and cultural biographies and narratives of migrants who otherwise would be condemned to subalternity and silence. Immigration to Italy is a phenomenon that only became visible in late 1980s and has continued to this day. Nevertheless, both media discourse and political actions still treat it as a temporary event to react to as an 'emergency' irrespective of the fact that immigrants make up a considerable portion of the country's population. Their media and political depiction is – in contrast with the actual data – mainly tied to criminality. Finally, even when there is the effort to offer a broader picture, the mass media discuss the issue of multicultural society through the lenses of exoticism and stereotypes, and contribute little to a real comprehension and representation of the matter. Hence, the paper laments the complete lack of national cultural policies aimed at recognition of immigrants' identity, at their integration into Italian society and finally, for the latter, at renewal in a multicultural and intercultural direction.

At grass-roots level, however, Balma-Tivola argues, the situation is different: at the very same time as the first migrants arrived on Italian shores, a new form of theatre emerged, as a popular instance, that features companies of multicultural composition and brings onto the stage issues such as cultural identity and diversity, migrants' biographies, post-colonial, multicultural and intercultural discourses. Expressed in permanent realities, annual projects, and temporary experiences, its contribution varies greatly and acknowledges many forms of cross-cultural encounters and speeches, but it represents an effective means of addressing Italian citizens' general ignorance on the matter, so that, from the beginning, it has been quite clear that it is a response to the sort of sociocultural crisis now going on.

The paper focuses on the multicultural theatre reality of AlmaTeatro and particularly on case-studies of its performances *Righibé* (about migrations from the southern hemisphere of the world), *Storie Sommerse* (a counter-cultural narration on human migrations) and *Scarti* (about multi- and interculturalism in the Mediterranean area) which propose that we recognise ourselves as the result of ancient worldwide creolisations (in line with scientific and historical findings) as opposed to media and politics discourses which are still

framed in monolithic, settled, static and unalterable cultural identities to protect those within the boundaries of the 'fortress Europe'.

Migration and storytelling albeit from a different angle is also the topic of **Julia BLANDFORT**'s contribution. In "Moving Stories – Roma and the Oral Tradition of a Transnational People" she discusses the Roma and their fairy tales. Roma are either said to have no own tradition of storytelling whatsoever or they are supposed to be the carriers of tales originally from the Indian sub-continent to the whole world. These argumentations are emblematic for Europe's largest transnational minority. Somehow Roma seem never to belong, their lives appear to be in constant transition and in-between extremes. In their 600 year presence in Europe their position at the margins of society has rarely altered as past and current discussions of their social situation show.

However, as Blandfort argues, these debates tend to focus on social problems and – even if they are undoubtedly a pressing problem for a large part of the Roma communities – disregard aspects of cultural exchange that show lively interactions between literary spheres. In fact, a closer look at the oral tradition of Roma reveals that far from being a sign of total exclusion Romani fairy tales serve as a cultural 'contact zone' while at the same time helping to maintain the features that distinguish the Roma. Strikingly, Roma tales are still mainly orally transmitted in sharp contrast to their predominantly script-based surroundings. Hence, the study of the oral tales helps understand how diasporic borders are infringed but also how literary texts help establish and maintain them. Transcripts of these stories and published anecdotes provide us with a unique insight in the Romani worldview and their ways of transmitting common norms and values. By exemplary analyses of these Blandfort illustrates the reaction to different cultural and individual circumstances and pursues a diasporic perspective of the oral Romani tradition.

A different type of archive is under scrutiny in **Paolo GIACCARIA**'s paper on "Cosmopolitanism. The Mediterranean Archives", namely postcolonial literature. Giaccaria argues that existing literature privileges the British and French imperial/colonial history which mirrors the ongoing debate on the relationship between cosmopolitanism, universalism, and imperialism. While these debates take for granted the Kantian and Hegelian hierarchy of European civilizations, the southern shores of Europe and the broader Mediterranean space are marginalised. Drawing on Mignolo's notion of 'border thinking' and on Isin's account of the city as a 'difference machine', Giaccaria addresses the issue of how imperialism, colonialism, and cosmopolitanism come together and relate to each other in the context of the (allegedly) cosmopolitan Mediterranean cities. In particular, cosmopolitanism is read as the outcome of the reciprocal adjustment of interior and exterior borders in the making of modernity/coloniality in the Mediterranean. Focusing on the Ottoman millet system, the paper argues that cosmopolitanism worked as a peculiar device within the urban difference machine, enabling the city to sustain the tension between different accounts of citizenship.

Another chapter of Mediterranean imperial/colonial history, namely the relationship between the Crusaders and the local Muslim population is addressed by **Shlomo LOTAN** in his contribution on "The 'Other' in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Crusaders and their Varying Images of the Muslims in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin". It has always been widely accepted that in the eastern parts of the Mediterranean basin in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries the Crusaders, as the new occupiers of the region, treated the local Muslim population harshly. This argument gained currency in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when Crusader studies were being established and the paradigm of the colonial character was becoming one of their main elements. Since the early 1990s, a new trend has emerged in Crusader research, arguing that the Crusaders did not conquer the land and establish remote and alien colonial rule; on the contrary, they tried to fit in and become part of the kingdom's landscape and population. One of the breakthrough moments in this field came when several Israeli researchers, including Ronnie Ellenblum and Adrian J. Boas, argued that the historical research and archaeological findings within the boundaries of the Latin Kingdom, especially in the cities of Acre and Tyre and in the Galilee mountains, show different, unconventional methods, unlike those of the 20<sup>th</sup> century paradigm. It seems that the Crusaders integrated into the local population, settled in their territory, studied their habits and adopted some of their ways in agriculture, trade and language. As a minority, the Crusaders tried to find a positive path to the local Muslims, who remained in their own settlements and pursued their way of life even more intensively under Crusader rule.

Lotan's contribution draws a distinction between the two sides, and cites sources which include evidence of integration between the different cultures. He emphasises that the dominant occupying society remained intact and struggled to impose its ways; nevertheless this was a minority which needed economic and political ties to the local society. At a time when the Crusader kingdom was weakening, in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and no longer enjoyed the same military superiority, the social element became stronger, bringing together the two different societies. For researchers, this changed the accepted image of the eastern Mediterranean basin within the boundaries of the last Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

**Anna G. PIOTROWSKA** directs our attention to a forgotten musical genre in her contribution on "*Zingarella* or how Mediterranean and Gypsy Merged. The Story of a Certain Musical Genre". The Mediterranean contribution to the history of European music is usually associated with Italian attempts to 'resurrect' ancient Greek tragedy which in consequence led to the creation of a new musical genre – opera e.g. Peri's *Euridice* or Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. In that sense Mediterranean professional music has traditionally been linked with what can be labelled as the mainstream of European music, and developed parallel to the narrative of 'the cradle of civilisation'. And yet, almost forgotten in the realm of musicology is the fact that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Mediterranean themes related to the mysterious aura associated with European 'Others' – Gypsies. This exoticisation was encouraged particularly by their looks (although inherited from their Indian legacy) as well as the 'oddity' of their customs (in comparison with European ones). In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the interest in Gypsies, stimulated by scholarly research, found its reflection in musical life. It is no coincidence that around that time composers began to compose simple songs which they called *zingarellas*, stylized in accordance with – popularized by then – ideas of Gypsy culture and their singing practices. *Zingarella* was conceived in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a form of artistic song based on a fictional, non-existing Gypsy song. In fact there is no particular, original song – of any Gypsy group – that could serve as a point of reference. However, Mediterranean, especially Spanish and Italian connotations were evident during the formative years of the genre, and are thus reflected in the title 'zingarella', or the alternatives 'zingara' or 'zingaresca'.

Piotrowska shows that zingerella can serve as a perfect example of how European intellectuals constructed the image of the Other, their culture and musical traditions, based on certain presumptions and projections connected with the Mediterranean, utilizing the conventional musical measures they had at their disposal. It was deemed necessary to investigate the 'reality' hidden behind prejudices, convictions, and simplifications in the realm of musical culture, especially as these were strengthened by literature and iconography. Zingarellas served as Mediterranean born/anchored 'Gypsy' songs full of allusions to – broadly defined – exotics and never aspired to take the place of authentic Gypsy songs. The contribution further argues that the Mediterranean roots of zingarellas influenced the fate of the genre, which never achieved the status enjoyed by other romantic genres, such as nocturnes. By drawing attention to this forgotten musical genre, its Mediterranean implications, and the mechanisms of its exclusion from musicological narratives the paper addresses the questions of how boundaries and standards are defined and how subaltern and anti-hegemonic conceptions influence the perception of culture, including that of music.

Unlike Piotrowska, **Christopher SCHLIEPHAKE** examines a well known cultural treasure, albeit from an unusual angle. Homer's *Odyssey*, written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., stands as one of the oldest texts of the Western literary canon and has long figured as a central repository of various cultural imaginations and representations of the Mediterranean (or of that "sea in our part of the world" (Hecataeus F18b), as the ancient Greeks referred to it). In antiquity the story of Ulysses, the king of Ithaca, who, after the destruction of Troy, struggles to return home, was already being read as an exploration of the dynamic interrelationships between man and his (natural) surroundings, between the homely sphere of culture and the unknown 'Other' of that world as well as a reflection of man's place within it. The Homeric epic was thus a text concerned both with the negotiation of identity and with opening up an imaginative space for dealing with the heterogeneous and diverse aspects of a world in

constant movement (symbolized by both the wanderings of the hero as well as the fluid, unstable nature of the sea itself). Ulysses, the protagonist of the ancient epos, is, as the first line of the text makes clear, a 'man of many wanderings' (polutropos) who travels far and wide in the Mediterranean world in a desperate search for his home country. Beyond Ithaca, however, the spatial dimension of this world is only sketched out vaguely in Homer's text – it encompasses specific geographic locations as well as unknown places of grave danger, utopian islands and even the 'Underworld'. Ulysses's own status within this imaginative microcosm is equally undefined: although he is well-known in the 'civilized' world, he appears, for the most part of his adventure, as a stranger in disguise (and operates in the dark) – he is, at the same time, 'a man' and 'no-man'.

"Ithaca Revisited – Homer's *Odyssey* and the (Other). Mediterranean Imagination" traces on the one hand the manifold and diverse modes of 'othering' in the *Odyssey*, which can be seen as textual strategies that underline the fantastic elements of the narrative, but that also attest to the socio-historical context of its writing (namely the dawn of naval exploration and Greek colonization) as well as to the various sources which were embedded in its fabric (especially of Near Eastern and Mesopotamian origin). On the other hand, the paper uncovers the deeply heterogeneous and ambivalent role that Homer's text has played in Mediterranean culture. Not only has the epos been read – from Roman Imperial times to the period of the sea powers of Early Modern Europe – as a parable about man's ambition and drive for exploration and frontier spirit in the face of the wilderness and an unknown world, but it has also served as a tale about Western imperialism and cultural dominance. The episode of the Cyclops Polyphemus (book nine of the *Odyssey*) in particular is considered an example of the complex representation of the relationship with the 'other' that has had a lasting and problematic effect on the history of cultural imagination in the Mediterranean world. Against this background, Schliephake explores the counter-narratives and subaltern perceptions that have reversed the roles of Ulysses and Polyphemus and that have re-read the Cyclops from a postcolonial point of view which seeks to disentangle Homer's text from the imperialist (ab)use of the classical canon. In the same vein, he argues that the *Odyssey* itself contains alternative views which highlight openness, diversity and heterogeneity, imbuing the narrative with an ethic which asks its listeners and readers to respect the 'other' – both the humans that roam and live in the Mediterranean as well as its unstable nature, far removed from human influence.

Mobility seen from a diasporic perspective is central to **Paul A. SILVERSTEIN**'s contribution. "Thinking through the Diaspora: Anthropologies of Mobility across the Mediterranean" states that scholars have long seen mobility as a foundational aspect of community formation and transformation in the Mediterranean region, but only recently have peoples 'out of place' become an explicit object of study in itself. The article reviews the theoretical, methodo-

logical, ethical, and political underpinnings of this new attention to Mediterranean diasporas. Generally speaking, ethnographies have tended to privilege a perspective from either the 'homeland', the 'diaspora' itself, or the various 'hostlands': whether focusing on the impact of diasporas on the social, religious and political worlds left behind and the efforts of government actors to recapture and redirect the loyalties and monies of diasporic populations to particular political and economic projects in the name of the 'nation'; underlining the poetics and performances, the media and materialities that unite migrants across space and time, that constitute the social space of a diaspora qua diaspora; or examining the fraught dynamics of incorporation of diasporic subjects in the host countries, their racialization as ambiguous subjects, and the social worlds they build for themselves within and beyond the nation-state. Silverstein elaborates on each of these perspectives, drawing on his own research between North Africa and France, while at the same time insists that these three dimensions of diasporic life are ultimately intimately, indeed inimically, conjoined.

A Mediterranean interreligious interconnection of the three monotheistic faiths is discussed by **Anna TOZZI DI MARCO** in "The Mediterranean Cult of the Seven Sleepers: A Counter-Narrative vs. Official Islamic Representation". The myth of the Seven Sleepers is a shared cultural heritage amongst Christians and Muslims, which is widespread in many Mediterranean countries. Its origins are Christian, dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century Asia Minor. From there it spread to Eastern Christianity through Syriac congregations, and on to the Arabian Peninsula. Typically the shrines are caves, but sometimes a church or a mosque can be the site of veneration. Some of these holy caves highlight the multi-confessional nature, as is common practice in many other Mediterranean shared sacred shrines and sanctuaries.

Tozzi Di Marco considers the Islamic version of the legend which differs from the Christian one, according to the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arab context. The Christian Seven Sleepers' tradition is found in the Koran, in particular in the first verses of the sura XVIII, titled 'Al Kahf', that means 'the cave'. The Seven Sleepers' myth and its current Islamic devotion have been analysed from a double perspective, as authoritative official representation and people's interpretation of the cult. The numerous localizations of the seven sleepers' cave are pilgrimage sites that can be divided in two groups: the first consists of places which have evolved into transnational sacred and heritage touristic destinations; the second involves places attended mostly by local people where the seven sleepers are perceived as saints. However, in some cases this categorization is not so rigid and there are locations where both characteristics are to be found. Tozzi Di Marcos's anthropological fieldworks in Syria, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey have also revealed incorporation of local beliefs beyond the various modalities of the Islamic Seven Sleepers cult. The rituals performed at the many caves encompass an enormous variety of devotional practices and traditions. This complex of traditions traces collective and

personal sacred geographies which represent a counter-narrative to the official representations by the State and the religious authorities. For Islam the veneration of the saints is considered bid'ah (heresy). Hence, in some cases the seven sleepers' pilgrimage sites have recently undergone a State programme of 'heritagization' through a hegemonic construction, classification and display of the past. This procedure involved a 'sanitization' of these formerly religious places through various forms of control, and consequently of regulating the individual spiritual experiences. The paper focuses on those localizations considered as heterotopias, in Foucaultian words, spaces of otherness, where groups of people, ignoring the dominant discourses on Islam, still perform archaic forms of ritual to the Seven Sleepers. As an example of these counter-narratives the rituals performed in the cave near Tarsus in Turkey are examined more deeply. The article argues that the counter-narratives on the Seven Sleepers' caves formulate alternative notions of heritage and, moreover, challenge and contest the ways in which states control the religious beliefs, and in general, the lives of citizens.

In the final article, "Narrating the History of the Other(s). The Near East in European Historiographical Accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries", **Felix WIEDEMANN** argues that historical references have always played a vital role in European representations of 'the other'. Hence, they are an important point in the ongoing debate on 'Orientalism' in the Saidian sense of the word. According to a familiar postcolonial narrative Europeans invented or created the Near East – including, of course, the Eastern Mediterranean – in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as a distinct geo-historical space and have since used it as a negative foil from which European history could be distinguished. This included some more or less fixed narratives or topoi such as the infamous 'oriental despotism' or the interpretation of Near Eastern history as an endless circuit of rise and fall. Ultimately, it has been argued, all these narratives could be boiled down to the opposition between a supposedly repetitive or circular history of the Orient and a linear or progressive history of the West.

Looking superficially at European historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century it is by no means difficult to find evidence of this view. According to Wiedemann it would be misleading to reduce the historiographical discourse to its supposed orientalist biases. Closer reading rather reveals narratives which are much more complex. The process of 'Othering' never refers to a fixed unity of entities but in fact includes a very heterogeneous ensemble so that 'the other' always appeared in the plural. European representations of the Near East includes multiple historical or contemporary actors ranging from different peoples such as the Babylonians, Assyrians and Arabs to diverse religious groups such as Jews, Muslims and Christians. However, each of these groups could be divided into smaller entities. What matters most here is the fact that all these entities are embedded in a complex and varied network of positive and negative identifications. Historians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, tended to construct a single Semitic family of nations opposed to the so



called Indo-European or Aryan peoples. Later on, however, this category dissolved into very different entities, distinguishing, for instance, Jews and Arabs or the Bedouin from the city dwellers. Rather than presenting all 'Orientals' in the same way, European writers engaged in playing different peoples – current as well as historical – off against each other and in initiating cultural proxy wars. Wiedemann demonstrates the complexity of this historiographical 'othering' by looking at European accounts of Near Eastern (or Eastern Mediterranean) history and discusses its theoretical consequences.

Will the articles find a place in current Area Studies? We hope that the further steps follow the step taken by the authors in this volume, namely to move the questions from being about the peculiarity of the Mediterranean area, to being about the peculiarity of relations that connect the 'Other' with a Mediterranean region that is shared, and a Mediterranean idea, before which they stand as beholders. Finally, the consideration of the mutual constitution of region and space, structural stability and uncertainty opens up possibilities for a Mediterranean perspective that approaches the experiences of the 'Other' not as a part of Mediterranean history but as the history of the Mediterranean itself.