



Mediterranean Studies and the Remaking of Pre-modern Europe¹

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Abstract

Why have we begun to study the Mediterranean again and what new perspectives have opened up our renewed understanding? This review article surveys recent research in a number of disciplines to ask three questions about Mediterranean Studies today: What is the object of study? What methodologies can be used to study it? And what it all means? The general problem of the object of study in Mediterranean Studies in its ecological, economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions is introduced in a summary of the works of Pergrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, Michael McCormick, Chris Wickham, and David Abulafia. Recent methodologies suggested by Peter Burke, Christian Bromberger, Ottomanists, art historians, and literary scholars emphasize both the macro-historical and micro-historical level in order to understand both the local and the regional, material culture and beliefs, mentalities, and social practices as well as its internal dynamics and external relations. The end results point to three conclusions: the relationship between structures and mechanisms of change internally and interactions externally, comparisons with “other Mediterraneans” outside the Mediterranean, and to connections with the Atlantic World in the remaking of premodern Europe then and now.

Keywords

Mediterranean, Braudel, Annales school, Purcell, Horden, McCormick, Wickham, Abulafia, Venice, Toledo, Ottoman Empire

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Introduction: Why the Mediterranean?

Mediterranean Studies focus on the great sea, its lands and climes, ships and boats, passengers and passages, and the peoples, products, and ideas across and around its great basin of almost three million square kilometers.² A majolica dish, from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, painted in polychrome, commemorating “Doge Agostino Barbarigo supervising the loading of Money into a Ship destined for the Relief of Naples” in 1495, may serve as a kind of emblem for our voyage (Fig. 1).³ The note attached to the ship’s rigging, *fatte fatte fatte / et non parole*, “deeds, deeds, deeds, and not words,” carries the sentiment of the Italian proverb on the gulf between words and actions: *tra il dire e il fare c’è di mezzo il mare*, “between words and deeds lies the sea,”⁴ as quoted by Eric Dursteler in his very fine book, *Venetians in Constantinople*. Likewise, facts or deeds, not faith-based history, will be our destination.

Why have we begun to study the Mediterranean again? The Middle East conflict? Radical Islam? Terrorism? 9/11/2001? No, really none of the above. Forgetting the past or remembering only our own parochial national experience necessarily distorts the present; and traumatic amnesia misconstrues the facts. Thus, misbegotten and misleading claims for the “clash of civilizations” or the “golden age of toleration” between Christianity and Islam are more about contemporary politics and ideology than about discovering the past. Let us look at the facts. Greek historian Thomas Gallant has identified the post-1990s crisis in history, especially European history, as a primary cause for seeking a solution in the regional history of the Mediterranean from three factors: the anachronistic dominance of the nation-state as the measure of analysis, the rise of scholarly journals on the Mediterranean, and mass migrations both from tourism and peoples from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.⁵

² Salvatore Bono, *Un altro Mediterraneo: Una storia comune fra scontri e integrazioni* (Rome, 2008), 19, n. 1 gives approximately 2.5 million square kilometers for the area of the Mediterranean and another 500,000 square kilometers for the Black Sea.

³ It is reproduced in David Abulafia, ed., *The Mediterranean in History* (London, 2003), 205.

⁴ *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, 2006), 21.

⁵ Thomas W. Gallant, “Europe and the Mediterranean: A Reassessment,” in *Europe and Asia: Towards a New Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Gerard Delanty (London, 2006), 50-78.

While newspapers mourned Fernand Braudel's death in 1985 as the loss of "the world's leading historian," the third generation of the *Annales* school was already engaged in rethinking, revising, rebutting, reformulating, and rejecting its former master.⁶ Soon no one—especially in France—was a structuralist or a Braudelian, and certainly no one aspired to write his kind of history. Nevertheless, four decades after Braudel's *Mediterranean* first appeared,⁷ a new moment and movement in Mediterranean Studies had begun to take shape with the launch of six new journals in the first half dozen years after his death: *Mediterranean Historical Review* (1986), *al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* (1988), *Mediterranean Studies* (1989), *Mediterranean Quarterly* (1990), *Confluences, Méditerranée* (1991), and the *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* (1991). In the succeeding twenty to twenty-five years, significant contributions have created a growing subfield in Mediterranean Studies with seven additional journals: *Mediterranean Politics* (1996), *Rive* (1996), *Mediterraneo Antico* (1998), *Mesogaios* (1998), *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* (2000), *Mesogea* (2002), and *Mediterranea, Ricerche Storiche* (2005). However, the most important and challenging work in the post-Braudel reassessment of Mediterranean Studies has been another magisterial work still in the making, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (2000), that claims its broad ecological model "reveal[s] what kinds of continuity, similarity, or generality must preoccupy Mediterranean historians."⁸

Still, recent initiatives in these same years by Mediterranean institutions in France and Italy give us a greater sense of the complexity of the Mediterranean Studies agenda.⁹ In France, MMSH (Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l'homme) at Aix-en Provence published ten short books between 1998 and 2000 examining "Representations of the Mediterranean:

⁶ Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer et al. (New York, 1995), 477-649, Part IV: "Criticisms and Reformulations"; and André Burguière, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca, 2009), 46-59. See also John A. Marino, "Braudel's *Mediterranean* and Italy," *California Italian Studies [CIS]* (2010): 1-19.

⁷ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1st ed., Paris, 1949; 2nd ed., 2 vols., Paris, 1966); in English translation, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (London and New York, 1972-73).

⁸ *The Corrupting Sea* (Malden, MA, 2000), 77.

⁹ Bono, *Un altro Mediterraneo*, 184-229.

Perspectives across the Mediterranean.” Each volume is dedicated to an individual European or Arab-Islamic country (Egypt, France, Germany [the only one not on the Mediterranean], Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey) and each country reveals a more or less unique historical and cultural understanding and vision of the Mediterranean. In Italy, the SIHMED (Société internationale des Historiens de la Méditerranée), based at the University of Perugia, was founded in 1995 and started a three-year research project in 1998 with the participation of the universities of Palermo and Catania focused on “The Mediterranean Idea: History, Ideology, Perspectives.” It found that in the West the idea of the Mediterranean as a unified entity is relatively new, less than three centuries old, dating from the time of Napoleon’s Nile campaign. Whatever physical or geographical reality the sea presents, its meaning is and has been seen differently by those around its shores and only relatively recently construed by some as having commonalities and shared destinies.

It is clear that something else beyond scholarship was going on between 1985 and 2000. The admission into the European community of Greece (1981) and Spain and Portugal (1986) along with application for membership by Morocco and Turkey (1987) added a new dimension to the continent’s self-image. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, together with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the debate over the expansion of the EU to these former communist states took this process to a new level. Furthermore, new trade networks forged across Europe by EU members to the Islamic Mediterranean and the Middle East were political-economic realities that reverberated with the new Middle Eastern and North African states. These states, decolonized from the 1950s, established at the 1995 Conference of Barcelona a tripartite agenda concerning common “euro-Mediterranean” relations.¹⁰ In 1998, for example, the governments of Italy and Algeria formed the HistMed (Histoire de la Méditerranée) project and later federated with the broader EuroMed Sciences Humaines program, affiliated with MMSH of Aix-en-Provence, in order to initiate a dialogue “to rebut reciprocal fears, ignorance, and prejudices and to promote research, study, and understanding of a comparative history.”¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., 142-83, especially 161-62 on new political initiatives in the 1980s and 164 for the Conference of Barcelona. On the “Barcelona Process,” see also, Irad Malkin, “Introduction,” in *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity*, ed. Irad Malkin (London, 2005), 1, n. 1.

¹¹ Bono, *Un altro mediterraneo*, 175.

Globalization wrought not only markets and migrants, but also fostered intellectual exchange to find common traditions and heritage before the nation-state.

Let us begin by looking back at an earlier generation's discovery of the Mediterranean with two foundational French language works that both found inspiration in German prison camps during World War I and II respectively, in order to demonstrate how much Mediterranean scholarship has been tied to its times. For these two francophone historians, the Belgian Henri Pirenne and the French Fernand Braudel, the "problem" of Germany in the first half of the twentieth century loomed large. The question of war and peace in their day was the root cause for their rethinking and reconceptualization of the past—whether the Germanic invasions in the fifth century caused the so-called fall of the Roman Empire for Pirenne or the consequences of the division of the Habsburg empire and the Habsburg-Ottoman wars in the sixteenth century did not alter the essential unity of the Mediterranean for Braudel.

Beginning his inaugural lecture to the Collège de France (December 1, 1950) by addressing the "formidable but challenging responsibilities" they all faced still recovering from the traumas of nearly a half-century of world wars, Fernand Braudel invoked the historians' truism that every generation must write its own history.

"History is the child of its time" . . . Now, over the past forty years those experiences have been particularly harsh for all of us; they have thrown us violently back into our deepest selves, and thence into a consideration of the whole destiny of mankind—that is to say, into the crucial problems of history. It is a time to lament our state, to agonize, to ponder, a time in which we must of necessity call everything into question . . . All society's dearest symbols, or nearly all—including some for which we would have sacrificed our lives yesterday with hardly a second thought—have been emptied of meaning. And now the question is not whether we will be able to live without them as landmarks and beacons to light our way, but whether we will be able to live and think peacefully. All intellectual concepts are distorted or destroyed.¹²

¹² Fernand Braudel, "The Situation of History in 1950," in *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago, 1980), 6-7. See also, Braudel's conviction in his 1946 Preface to the First Edition why historians should think big: "I hope too that I shall not be reproached for my excessive ambitions, for my desire and need to see on a grand scale. It will perhaps prove that history can do more than study walled gardens. If it were otherwise, it would surely be failing in one of its most immediate tasks which must be to relate to the painful problems of our times and to maintain contact with the youthful but imperialistic human sciences. Can there be any study of humanity, in 1946, without historians who are ambitious,

Braudel's claim to fame at that point was the publication a year earlier in 1949 of his great book on the Mediterranean, a work whose first draft was composed by memory without his notes during his incarceration as a German prisoner of war at Mainz and Lübeck between 1940 and 1945. Reflecting on the previous forty years of European history and still chafing over his disappointment at not winning the competition for a chair of early modern history at the Sorbonne, Braudel found a consolation prize in explaining as an inductee to the Collège de France what he meant by social history, that is, the need "to remain sensitive" to both the individual in history and collective destinies.¹³ In his *Mediterranean*, Braudel attempted to resolve the "fundamental contradictions" between continuity and change and between the role of the individual and the underlying structures and forces constraining action.¹⁴ Finding expression for such unresolved tensions in history and defining the boundaries of one's own study constituted Braudel's philosophy of history.¹⁵ It was above all a vision of a unified world "structured [around] the dialectic of space and time (geography and history),"¹⁶ a Mediterranean world joined together by time and space in the long term, economies and exchange in the medium term, and only broken by short-term politics and events. To put it in Braudel's own words of the 1946 Preface to the First Edition: "The final effect then

conscious of their duties and of their immense powers?" Idem, *The Mediterranean* (2nd ed., 1972), Preface to the First Edition, 21-22.

¹³ Braudel, "The Situation of History in 1950," 20: "The dangers of a social history are clear to us all, and in particular the danger of forgetting, in contemplation of the deep currents in the lives of men, each separate man grappling with his own life and his own destiny; the danger of forgetting, perhaps even of denying, the inimitable essence of each individual... The problem is to remain sensitive to both at one and the same time and, fired with enthusiasm for one, not to lose sight of the other."

¹⁴ Braudel, *The Mediterranean* (2nd ed., 1972), Preface to the Second Edition, 16: "Is it possible to convey simultaneously both that conspicuous history which holds our attention by its continual and dramatic changes—and that other, submerged, history, almost silent and always discreet, virtually unsuspected either by its observers or its participants, which is little touched by the obstinate erosion of time?" See also, James Amelang, "Braudel and the Cultural History of the Mediterranean: Anthropology and *Les lieux d'histoire*," in *Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World, 1600-1800*, ed. Gabriel Piterberg, Teofilo F. Ruiz, and Geoffrey Symcox (Toronto, 2010), 239.

¹⁵ Braudel, *The Mediterranean* (2nd ed., 1972), Preface to the First Edition, 18: "To draw a boundary around anything is to define, analyze, and reconstruct it, in this case select, indeed adopt, a philosophy of history."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Preface to the Second Edition, 16.

is to dissect history into various planes, or, to put it another way, to divide historical time into geographical time, social time, and individual time".¹⁷

In 1972, twenty-two years after his inaugural lecture, Braudel recollected how some forty years earlier, after military service in 1925-26, he changed his thesis topic from initial considerations of the geography of his native Lorraine and his political interest in modern German history to Philip II and Spain. Then, however, between 1927 and 1933, he gradually came to shift the focus of his Sorbonne *thèse* from a traditional diplomatic history on "Philip II and Spanish foreign policy in the Mediterranean" to emphasize the Mediterranean itself and invert his study to the Mediterranean in the age of Philip II.¹⁸ Braudel's resolve matured slowly—aided by Lucien Febvre's advice in a 1927 letter, summer archival forays followed by long days and nights reading proto-microfilm while teaching *lycée* in Algeria during the academic year, and upon hearing Henri Pirenne's "marvelous lectures" in 1931 at Algiers "about his ideas on the closure of the Mediterranean after the Moslem invasions" (a thesis that the Belgian historian had first conceived between 1916 and 1918 when he had been imprisoned in a German internment camp for his resistance to German occupation during World War I). Braudel remembered that Pirenne's "lectures seemed prodigious to me: his hand opened and shut, and the entire Mediterranean was by turns free and locked in!"¹⁹ This image of the 28-year old Braudel in his seventh year teaching history in a French Algerian *lycée*, inspired by the animated 68-year old Henri Pirenne speaking without notes, opening and closing his hand as he sparked the vision of a unified Mediterranean in Braudel's mind, may also serve as our point of departure for the ebb and flow, expansion and closure, insularity and boundlessness, complex diversity-yet-unity of the Mediterranean Sea. Pirenne was lecturing on Islam's division of the Mediterranean and the subsequent rise of

¹⁷ Ibid., Preface to the First Edition, 21.

¹⁸ Fernand Braudel, "Personal Testimony," *Journal of Modern History* 44:4 (December 1972): 450-52; Idem, *The Mediterranean* (2nd ed, 1971), Preface to the First Editions, 19; and Pierre Daix, *Braudel* (Paris, 1995), 64-65, 74-75. After his father's death in January 1927, Braudel returned to Paris that summer to help sort out family affairs. He began his first serious archival research at the Archives Nationales and Bibliotheque Nationale in earnest and changed the title of his *thèse* to "Philippe II et la politique espagnole en Méditerranée de 1559 à 1574" (i.e., from the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis to the Turkish reconquest of Tunis).

¹⁹ Braudel, *La Méditerranée* (1st ed., 1949), Preface, xv; and Idem, "Personal Testimony," 452.

Europe in the western Middle Ages a half dozen years before the posthumous publication in 1937 of his classic book, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*. It was eighteen years before the 1949 publication of Braudel's magisterial *thèse*, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, and another seventeen years before Braudel's 1966 revised, second edition.

The Object of Study

Looking more closely at our emblem of the Venetian plate should allow us to take up three questions about Mediterranean Studies today: What to study? How to study it? And what it all means? My first point, the general problem of the object of study in Mediterranean Studies in its political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions can be seen in the emblematic plate's narrative history. The scene illustrates the 1495 shipment of money sent from Venice by Doge Agostino Barbarigo in defense of Ferdinand II's Naples against the French invasion that entered the Kingdom in February (Fig. 1). The plate was made in commemoration of the Mediterranean commonalities that came from war and diplomacy, since the Venetian aid was support in keeping with the anti-French Holy League, whose treaty had been concluded by the end of March and made public on Palm Sunday, April 12, 1495. We also learn about money, international currencies, and exchange, since the ship moored at the wharf on the right carries six money bags propped up against its mast. Five of these bags are labeled: "papal ducats," "Hungarian ducats," "Ancona ducats," "Venetian ducats," and simply "Venetian." In addition, on the far left, a sailor is carrying two more sacks of money labeled "March" (small silver *marchesane* or *marcelli*) and "Troni" (silver *lire* introduced by Doge Niccolò Tron [1471-74]).

Different currencies would introduce us to trade, merchants, shipping, banks, and the whole medieval economy. In like manner, the doge, two full figures and five unseen in caps and gowns, and the sailor give us some indication of social and political hierarchy in the Venetian state. One of the capped and gowned figures shares the same rose-textured toga as the doge and the same brown-colored hat as four other unseen figures who may be identified as Venetian ambassadors or counselors, while the other figure in full-toga view wears a different pattern design, yellow-damask toga and different blue-colored hat (which is the same colored hat as the



Fig. 1. Doge Agostino Barbarigo supervising the loading of Money into a Ship destined for the Relief of Naples in 1495. Used with permission, © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK.

barely seen counselor behind him).²⁰ These latter two *togati* probably represent the Neapolitan ambassadors sent to secure the pledged Venetian support and to accompany it safely back to Naples. And finally, study of the artifact itself raises more questions than it answers. Since there is no firm evidence for the manufacture of majolica in Venice in 1495, and

²⁰ My thanks to Linda Carroll for her suggestions on costume and office.

dishes with historical scenes are rare before 1500, experts on such earthenware suggest that the dish's shape, certain aspects of the figures, and the decoration of the reverse make it more likely to have been made in Faenza between about 1500 and 1520 than in Venice (or at least probably decorated by a painter trained in Faenza).²¹ As its provenance before 1922 is unknown, we are left with speculation; but what we do know is that both the applied arts and the high arts could present and represent pan-Mediterranean exchanges.

No one has set the contemporary agenda for Mediterranean Studies more than Horden and Purcell, who claim to provide "material for a unified and distinct discipline."²² *The Corrupting Sea* is an even vaster vision than Braudel's. It encompasses the Mediterranean from prehistory to the early modern period and touches upon every topic imaginable with indefatigable erudition and extraordinary bibliographic detail (523 pages of weighty text, a 112-page double-columned bibliographic essay, and a 95-page bibliography). Two subsequent update articles (2005, 2006) and three applications of their method to problems of ancient history by Purcell (2003, 2005, and 2005) have led to a promise of an equally comprehensive second tome to be called *Liquid Continents*.²³ Their contribution to the "new Thalassology" or "study of the sea" can justly be described as the stimulus for the present wave of Mediterranean Studies, especially among pre-modern scholars of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Part One of *The Corrupting Sea* examines "the nature of Mediterranean history as others have perceived it."²⁴ Thus, readers are introduced to positive and negative ideas about the Mediterranean both as a geographical

²¹ Fitzwilliam Museum website, http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/support/artfund/opac/cataloguedetail.html?&preref=80774&_function=_xslt&_limit_=100, accessed March 28, 2010.

²² Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: a Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000) 9.

²³ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, "Four Years of Corruption: A Response to Critics" in W. V. Harris, *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford 2005), 348-75; and Idem, "The Mediterranean and the 'The New Thalassology'" in a 2006 AHR Forum on "Oceans of History," *American Historical Review* 111:3 (June 2006): 722-40. Nicholas Purcell, "The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness? On Defining the Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18 (December 2003): 9-29; Idem, "Colonization and Mediterranean History," in *Ancient Colonizations: Analogies, Similarities and Difference*, ed. Henry Hurst and Sara Owen (London, 2005), 115-40; and Idem, "The Ancient Mediterranean: The View from the Customs House," in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, 200-32.

²⁴ Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 5.

expression and how historians have seen it, from its classical and Romantic image to its scholarly profile in the writing of the “Four Men in a Boat”—two scholars born in the second half of the nineteenth century: Mikhail Rostovtzeff (1870-1952) and Henri Pirenne (1862-1935); and two born at the turn of the century: Shlomo Dov Goitein (1900-1985) and Fernand Braudel (1902-1985). Horden and Purcell focus on historical ecology as “the many-faceted interaction between humanity and environment, rather than of environmental primacy, of human autonomy, or of the limited responsiveness to surroundings implied by geographic ‘possibilism’.”²⁵

Soon after Horden and Purcell, three other men joined their “new boat,” rethinking the history of the Mediterranean. Michael McCormick’s *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (2001); Chris Wickham’s two massive syntheses, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (2005) and *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000* (2009); and the prolific Professor of Mediterranean History at Cambridge University David Abulafia’s chronologically organized *The Mediterranean in History* (2003), when taken together are tomes weighty enough to sink any ship. That sunken old boat constitutes the remains of an earlier generation’s grand theses on the making of Europe, from ancient Rome and the early Middle Ages to the late Middle Ages and the early modern world. Within the last decade pre-modern studies of the Mediterranean world have picked through the archeological wreckage of that earlier work, which was still standard historical orthodoxy at the time of Goitein and Braudel’s death twenty-five years ago, to propose new syntheses and hypotheses on the social and economic transition from the ancient to medieval to early modern world.

New archeological evidence—everything from analyzing the air for levels of long-buried air pollution that allows for hypotheses on changing aggregate metal production to sunken ships and pottery shards that provide information on the level of trade and its dispersion—is the most important of the new sources revolutionizing our knowledge of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In addition, numismatics that traces money and its movements, early medieval literary sources read with new methods made possible by digitalization and aggregated in prosopographies that reveal collective patterns, and hagiography, the most common source, no longer read to prove the truth and falsity of miracles and saintly claims but

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

rather for the ancillary information the lives of the saints provide, are all being used to reformulate questions and to interrogate assumptions about Carolingian commerce. McCormick's methodological contributions in all these areas have provided a new, comprehensive, and systematic evidential base to reexamine the early medieval economy and refine Pirenne's thesis on the seventh-century Islamic closure of the Mediterranean to the Latin West and the subsequent rise of the Carolingian making of the Middle Ages in the land-based economy of northwestern Europe. With more precision and detail at his disposal, McCormick demonstrates that the reorientation of the Mediterranean world "looked southeastward to Mecca and points beyond, rather than northwestward toward Rome" as "the culmination, not the beginning, of generations of profound economic change inside the ancient world."²⁶ Horden and Purcell argue that Pirenne "explains too much in terms of towns and long-distance trade, too little in terms of production and aggregate demand."²⁷ Wickham, for his part, exonerates Pirenne for his conclusions made before the new archeological evidence was available, but similarly finds fault with his over-emphasis on long-distance trade and luxury goods, both of which were marginal to "the real economic changes" taking place with exchange "inside regions or between neighbouring regions" and "the much more mundane products: clothes, knives, plates" rather than long-distance transportation of the few products for the rich. For Wickham, "Pirenne was actually wrong to say that the Arabs closed the Mediterranean; well before the Arabs arrived, the western part of the sea already had dramatically less shipping."²⁸ All agree, nevertheless, that Pirenne's thesis "may still be immensely valued for its assertion of continuity in Mediterranean history from the ancient into the early medieval world" and that "the 'horizontal unity' [of the East-West axis] of the Mediterranean might also be applied to the commercial and cultural history of the Mediterranean into the central Middle Ages"—from the tenth to the thirteenth century.²⁹

Horden and Purcell propose that "the distinctiveness of Mediterranean history results from the paradoxical coexistence of a milieu of relatively

²⁶ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge, 2001), 118.

²⁷ Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 33.

²⁸ Christopher Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000* (London, 2009), 223-24; *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), 700-01.

²⁹ Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 33-34.

easy seaborne communications with a quite unusually fragmented topography of microregions in the sea's coastlands and islands".³⁰ Their aim is "to discover on what basis we can treat ancient and medieval—or, more widely, premodern—Mediterranean history as a single field of inquiry."³¹ They argue that to understand the history of the Mediterranean, rather than history in the Mediterranean region, "knowledge of microecologies and their interrelations is essential."³²

Horden and Purcell emphasize the Mediterranean's structure and change as a way to understand diversity and unity. They privilege the Mediterranean's "microfoundations—its shortest distances," because they argue that "the principal elements in a microecology's character derive as much from its changing configuration within the web of interactions around it, across aggregates of 'short distances,' as from any long-lasting physical peculiarities." For them, "the texture of the landscape in terms of the attempt to satisfy human needs from the resources of the environment" is what makes for an ever-changing fragmentation whose unity is found in "the 'structures' which overcome the fragmentation, and above all by maritime communications."³³ Thus, appreciation of the diversity of these microecologies "offers the possibility of a systematic approach to the task of relating the mutable patterns of productive choices and the formation of networks of power, cooperation, allegiance, and dependence."³⁴ What is important is "the connectivity of microregions" no matter their size or supposed isolation. This "complex connectivity within and between microenvironments" is the glue of Mediterranean unity. The implications of these microregional landscapes for Horden and Purcell lead to the question of response to variability and risk in terms of the nitty-gritty of the agrarian economy; false peasant stereotypes; technology as a false indicator of change; false medieval agricultural, urban, and accounting revolutions; recurrent catastrophes as insignificant markers of change; and the mobility of goods and peoples which are as much the product of the more common and continuous lower-level exchanges as high commerce. In sum, Horden and Purcell's

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

³¹ Horden and Purcell, "The Mediterranean and 'The New Thalassology,'" 737.

³² Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 2. For a history of climate and vegetation in southern European, see A. T. Grove and Oliver Rackham, *The Nature of Mediterranean Europe: An Ecological History* (New Haven, 2003).

³³ Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 54, 79.

³⁴ Ibid., 88.

Mediterranean continuity denies the sharp turning-points, innovations, and periodizations claimed by medieval history.

The pluses and minuses of the study of the Mediterranean have come to the fore with Horden and Purcell's work. As they argue, "The new interest in regional history derives, fundamentally, from the task of finding a different approach to world history."³⁵ Regional history renounces the anachronistic dominance of the nation-state as the measure of analysis; neither is it imperialist nor does it suffer from the ethnocentric exclusivism, elitism, and exceptionalism often claimed or inherent in Mediterranean Studies. Here the anthropologist of Greece, Michael Herzfeld, although modifying his views somewhat with regard to Horden and Purcell, tells many excruciating tales of "Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything, from Epistemology to Eating."³⁶ The point of the anthropologist critique is that the Mediterranean does not form a coherent "culture area," something that the geographers had also come to understand.³⁷ This denial of cultural and spatial unity has been mirrored by the historians who question its temporal limits: whether Mediterranean origins are a slippery slope that take us back to antiquity and beyond to prehistory; whether the ecological change associated with the Little Ice Age of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries and the rise of world markets challenging the Mediterranean products of cereals, tree crops, and small livestock as in Faruk Tabak's *Waning of the Mediterranean* overturns the timeless and unchanging Mediterranean to bring us up to 1870.³⁸ Or are we back in the immobile world of Braudel and the *Annalistes*, where nothing really seems to change? The answer to all these problems is what the Horden and Purcell project on microecologies and connectivities is all about.

While still signaling the importance of *The Corrupting Sea*, critics of many fields have raised serious questions about a wide range of issues.

³⁵ Ibid., 722.

³⁶ Michael Herzfeld, "Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything, from Epistemology to Eating," in Harris, 45-63; and Idem, *Anthropology through the Looking-glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge, 1987).

³⁷ For a new approach to Mediterranean Studies from a postcolonial and geographical perspective, see Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, "The Mediterranean Alternative," in *Progress in Human Geography* published online September 14, 2010, 1-21 and accessed on November 17, 2010 at <http://phg.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/09/13/0309132510376850>.

³⁸ Faruk Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean 1550-1870: A Geohistorical Approach* (Baltimore, 2008).

James and Elizabeth Fentress find fault with Horden and Purcell's connectivity, which does not allow for change, especially in the dismissal of the city as an agent of change.³⁹ Brent Shaw asks, "just how and why it is that the sea both isolates *and* links" at the same time.⁴⁰ Tony Molho's critique of the ever-shifting, ever-diminishing size of the Horden-Purcell units of analysis suggests that fragmentation becomes the incommensurable distinctiveness of infinite regressions.⁴¹ Paolo Squatriti finds that the argument for connectivity and microecologies denies too much (state, culture, religion) and leaves too little to grasp onto such as the climatic or botanical understandings of Mediterraneity.⁴² Kate Fleet finds the absence of any serious Ottoman presence a cause for serious concern.⁴³ Edward Peters wants to know how far back the long-term unity goes, how is the Mediterranean defined geographically and linked to Europe, and how do these two issues relate to the problem of expansion in the year 1000.⁴⁴ Horden and Purcell get the last word in Harris, as they try to clarify their arguments and answer their critics in a rejoinder that also outlines more of the future second volume, *Liquid Continents*.⁴⁵

As Horden and Purcell acknowledged, "The early medievalists have a Mediterranean, but it remains different from ours."⁴⁶ McCormick's central focus is on his subtitle, "communications and commerce," which means travelers and their aggregate movements, things (especially relics and coins), and ideas. His major contribution is methodological in the identification of new sources with the establishment of a database published in four appendices that provide the names of 669 Mediterranean travelers between 700-900 CE; sixty-one Arab coins (*mançosi*) up to 850 CE; 111 finds of Arab and Byzantine coins up to 900 CE; and 828 references to movements in and around the Mediterranean from 609/10 to 968 CE. He

³⁹ James and Elizabeth Fentress, "The Hole in the Doughnut," *Past and Present* 173 (2001): 203-19.

⁴⁰ Brent D. Shaw, "Challenging Braudel: A New Vision of the Mediterranean," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001): 419-53.

⁴¹ Anthony Molho, Review, *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 486-92.

⁴² Paolo Squatriti, "Review article: Mohammed, the early medieval Mediterranean, and Charlemagne," *Early Medieval Europe* 11:3 (2002): 263-79.

⁴³ Kate Fleet, "The Mediterranean," *Journal of Early Modern History* 6:1 (2002): 62-73.

⁴⁴ Edward Peters, "Quid nobis cum pelago? The New Thalassology and the Economic History of Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34:1 (Summer 2003): 49-61.

⁴⁵ Horden and Purcell, "Four Years of Corruption," 348-75.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 350.

offers two important conclusions. First, McCormick's research pinpoints the beginning of a new growth up to the last quarter of the eighth century, around 800, then, an up-tick of a new-growth trend instead of the rise of cities circa 1000 marking the beginning of this second Mediterranean trade cycle. Second, he identifies what items the underdeveloped Europeans had to sell to their more developed neighbors across the Mediterranean, namely slaves shipped south from the Carolingian wars by way of Venice.

McCormick's conclusion appreciates Pirenne's understanding of the importance of the rise and economic consolidation of Islam upon Europe; but he turns Pirenne's argument on its head. Muhammad did not put an end to the declining trade of the late Roman exchange system in the 600s. Rather, Islam provided its wealth and markets as the catalyst in the late 700s for the rise of a new European trade network that developed gradually over time. Byzantinist and Western early medieval critics, however, find McCormick's conclusions more rhetoric than novelty, since much of what he proposes is well known to specialists and his macro-economic assumptions on the significance of long-distance trade are problematic.⁴⁷

Wickham's analysis follows Horden-Purcell and McCormick in general agreement, with a corrective framing of the question of economic exchange: "the framing for answers and generalizations that are consistently qualified by regional variation."⁴⁸ By way of cautioning qualifications, Wickham reminds us of three points: first, the different types of exchange, (gift exchange versus commerce) and the scale or levels of exchange from luxury goods, bulk goods, and local small-scale exchange; second, the three Mediterranean trade cycles—Ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, and the early modern Atlantic World to the present; and third, that "internal trade is the main motor of economic growth" and long-distance trade is less economically important.⁴⁹ Wickham explores regional variation through an analysis of the variables of "fiscal structures, aristocratic wealth, estate management, settlement patterns, peasant collective autonomy, urbanism, and exchange"; but reminds us that additional variables such as "belief

⁴⁷ Warren Treadgold, "Review: Travel and Trade in the Dark Ages," *The International History Review* 26:1 (March 2004): 80-88; and Julia M. H. Smith, Review [untitled], *Speculum*, 78:3 (July 2003): 956-59.

⁴⁸ Wickham, *Framing*, 825.

⁴⁹ Christopher Wickham, "The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of the Second Trade Cycle," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 161-74 at 162-65.

systems, values, gender roles and representations, ritual and cultural practices” could also be added to the mix.⁵⁰

Wickham concludes with seven identifiable trends in the early middle ages. Firstly, “fiscal structures were nearly universally simpler than before”; secondly, there was “relative aristocratic weakness”; thirdly, “peasantries were, nearly everywhere, more autonomous”; fourthly “aristocracies changed substantially in their culture and identity”; fifthly, there was “much more regional divergence than before”; sixthly, regional development and central state weakness meant “a notable fluidity in most . . . local societies”; and seventhly, this period saw “the end of Roman imperial unity.”⁵¹ Thus, Wickham demands that only the comparative method will reveal the internal factors that cause social change. His point is that only a study of regions comparatively can help us identify the causal elements or turning-points in history. There is no inevitable, determinative path to the formation of nation states, but polities are analyzed on their own terms as successor states to the Roman Empire dealing with similar problems, not as generators of national histories. Major trends and issues are examined in their widest possible geographical horizons with a Mediterranean-wide perspective from Charlemagne’s Francia to the ‘Abbasid Caliphate.

David Abulafia’s new 814-page book: *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, focuses on the sea itself—its islands, ports, and peoples, rather than the lands around the Mediterranean. As a single-authored vision of human agency and diversity roaming from the first female Neanderthal skeleton dated 24,000 years ago found in a Gibraltar cave and the oldest large-scale buildings in the Mediterranean at the mysterious temples at Mnajdra in Malta from 3,500 years ago to the headlines of 2010 announcing the immanent extinction of the blue-fin tuna and the arrival of migrant refugees from Africa, Abulafia’s work consciously avoids the Braudelian geographical possibilism. Rather, Abulafia provides lively examples of commercial, cultural, and political interaction and exchange among human actors—merchants, pirates, soldiers, war fleets, refugees, missionaries, pilgrims, and tourists organized in a five-period chronological narrative of integration and disintegration in which diversity and changeability are the sea’s only unity.⁵²

⁵⁰ Wickham, *Framing*, 825.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 827-31.

⁵² David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London, 2011).

Abulafia's 2003-edited volume, *The Mediterranean in History* has already introduced a range of revisionist perspectives. In its introductory chapter, "What is the Mediterranean?" Abulafia identified five not-mutually-exclusive current strands or "schools" of Mediterranean Studies. First, "the history of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean," studied both internally and individually but also collectively through their linkages. Second, the study of "Mediterranean culture as the foundation of a world culture," as Iberian overseas expansion from both Spain and Portugal made contact with Africa, America, and Asia, which links Mediterranean Studies to the Atlantic World. Abulafia himself carried out such a study in *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus*, which ranged from twelfth-century Europe's images of primitive peoples to the 1341-1496 Franco-Iberian conquest of the Canary Islands before going onto Columbus and the New World.⁵³ The third school consists of "another 'world history' approach, [that sees] the Mediterranean Sea as one of several Mediterraneans, or Middle Seas," in a comparative method with other Middle Seas such as the Sahara, the Baltic and North Sea, the Atlantic Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Japanese Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and others,⁵⁴ as a counter-factual to Braudel's epigraph from Josè de Acosta in the first edition of *The Mediterranean*, "Until today no one has truly discovered in the New World any Mediterranean as there is in Europe, Asia, and Africa." Fourth, there is the study of contacts and interactions that "cross the Christian-Islamic divide," whether commercial or religious "from the perspective of the Muslim presence in the Mediterranean" around the theme of a "theatre for cross-cultural trade and for the exchange of ideas and populations" à la Philip Curtin's 1984 *Cross-cultural Trade in World History* or Janet Abu-Lughod's 1991 *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*.⁵⁵ Abulafia's final point brings us closer to

⁵³ David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus* (New Haven, 2008). For an example of the connection between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic World in the sixteenth century, see David Wheat, "Mediterranean Slavery, New World Transformations: Galley Slaves in the Spanish Caribbean, 1578-1635," *Slavery and Abolition* 31:3 (September 2010), 327-44.

⁵⁴ David Abulafia, "Mediterraneans," in Harris, 64-93.

⁵⁵ Two recent review articles in March 2010 deserve special mention with regard to this approach. Monique O'Connell's masterful review article, "The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean, or, Between East and West," argues for the special debt Renaissance culture owes to East-West exchange and Renaissance assimilation of people, goods, ideas, and traditions. It is included in a new online journal, *California Italian Studies*, (http://escholarship.org/uc/ismrg_cisj), which contains forty-seven other thematic articles on "Italy in the Med-

“the idea of an infinite number of localities” championed by Horden and Purcell, so that “diversity within unity” and “connectivities” become the vehicle to cross and erase the artificial periodization of history.

Abulafia presents a strong, anti-theoretical narrative in favor of more traditional case studies, telling details, and enumeration of multi-causal factors in history. His introduction to his co-edited book, *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices* (2002), outlines “seven types of ambiguity, c. 1100-c. 1500” on “some historiographical frontiers” that provide a good insight into his approach not only on frontiers, but also on the Mediterranean and history in general. Abulafia’s starting premise is that the problem of defining the object of study (in pre-modern studies, here frontiers, but also Mediterraneans) has been so dominated in our contemporary world by the concept of the modern nation-state that it requires a different set of mental habits to free ourselves from anachronistic modern theory. His seven cleansing graces warn us to be aware of our preconceptions, as they apply to the economic frontiers of core and periphery and the idea of “colonial economies”; the political frontiers and power relationships in a world without edges; the miniature frontiers of enclaves and anomalies within, rather than on the external boundaries; the cultural frontiers of language and identity; the mental frontiers from distant horizons; the religious frontiers of “Abraham’s triple legacy” of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and, finally, the ambiguity of divergent responses to the stimuli of new conditions and new contacts.⁵⁶ In sum, there is much to learn from Abulafia, but he is wary of generalizations and remains committed to an empiricist and contingent approach to history.

Mediterranean Studies Methodologies

How then should we study the Mediterranean? We need to frame Mediterranean Studies at both the macro-historical and micro-historical level in

iterranean.” And seconding this new turn in Renaissance Studies, Francesca Trivellato’s review article, “Renaissance Italy and the Muslim Mediterranean in Recent Historical Work,” *Journal of Modern History*, 82 (2010), 127-55, makes clear that the question is ripped from today’s headlines. Trivellato begins her review by quoting a 1951 article in the *American Historical Review* by Roberto Sabatino Lopez, “Still Another Renaissance,” which is a medieval economic historian’s view that the tenth century was the beginning of the “new birth” and “the long age of European preponderance in the world.”

⁵⁶ David Abulafia and Nora Berend, eds., *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, (Aldershot, VT, 2002): 1-34.

order to understand both the local and the regional, material culture and beliefs, mentalities, and social practices as well as its internal dynamics and external relations. We will begin to see convergences, while avoiding insularity and making undifferentiated reifications. This kind of unity is not an old-style set or system of similarities versus cultural islands or conflict versus cooperation, but rather a comparative method identifying areas of interaction, encounter, and exchange. Frontiers and exchanges crossed over long distances between northern Europe and the southern Mediterranean lands; they applied to soil and ploughs, trade networks, or the North-South prejudice of the kind that claims that the Risorgimento did not unite Italy but divided Africa. Likewise, whether between the Ottoman East and the Habsburg West in the sixteenth-century, Islamic warriors and Christian Crusaders earlier, or small communities among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, we must pay attention to reception with transference and divergence at the margins and strong constructions of self-identity with closer contact. Peter Burke suggests four methodological concepts as possible approaches: acculturation or diffusion, syncretism, creolization, or resistance—each with their attendant strengths and weaknesses in his anthropological categorization of Mediterranean interaction.⁵⁷

The French anthropologist Christian Bromberger in a 2007 article, “Bridge, Wall, Mirror: Coexistence and Confrontations in the Mediterranean World,” has argued that there are “three contradictory images of the Mediterranean”: the “polyphonic” image of exchange, *convivencia*, diffusions, and cohabitations; the “cacophonic” one of conflict, incompatibility, hostility, aggression, and ethnic cleansing; and the “anthropological” one of underlying cultural complicities.⁵⁸ The two musical metaphors each have problems: on the first point of exchanges and meetings, whether hybridity or metissage are in fact incompatible with the logic of the religions of the Book or that in the practice of group membership and identity such social fluidity can really stand; or in the second case of conflicts and hatred, whether sociological explanations that emphasize the poor, the dispossessed, and the powerless have been over-rated. Bromberger’s alternative synthesis employs another sonic metaphor of “a common basic melody” where “complementary differences [are] inscribed in a reciprocal

⁵⁷ Peter Burke, “Civilizations and Frontiers: Anthropology of the Early Modern Mediterranean,” in Marino, *Early Modern History and the Social Sciences*, 123-41.

⁵⁸ Christian Bromberger, “Bridge, Wall, Mirror: Coexistence and Confrontations in the Mediterranean World,” *History and Anthropology* 18:3 (September 2007): 291-307.

field” so that the Mediterranean is “a game of mirrors (customs, behaviours, affiliations) with his neighbor.” These complementarities can be seen in alimentary behaviors (such as those related to alcohol and pork or the symbolic status of blood), in the status of appearance (such as the treatment of hair, whether covered or uncovered heads or the wearing of beards and moustaches), and in the status of images (icons, iconophobia, or iconoclasm). This relational game of symmetrical inversions is made up of both “family resemblances” and contradictions that are in play with an ebb and flow that makes interactions “now rigidify and then relax” so that rules are sometimes adapted or transgressed. Bromberger concludes with an anthropologist’s keen eye on “what factors can transform sympathetic curiosity, benign coexistence [of neighbors] into bloody conflict... [by calling for researchers to try] to understand the genesis and the functions of complementary differences”.⁵⁹

Ottomanists with the requisite language skills may be the most important contributors to how we study the Mediterranean. Scholars such as Palmira Brummett, Linda Darling, and Molly Greene bring a different intellectual formation to the table. The starting point for American scholars of the Islamic world is Marshall Hodgson’s vision of a Mediterranean world facing East that has the rise of the West in the seventeenth-century Scientific Revolution as the culmination of a millennium-long process of the assimilation and transfer of Eurasian culture.⁶⁰ Brummett explains how the Islamic world saw the Mediterranean’s space in a different way through her study of Muslim geography and mapping in her article, “Visions of the Mediterranean: A Classification.”⁶¹ Darling has applied Western paradigms such as the Renaissance and Border Studies to explore such topics as the transformation of the state through administrative centralization and bureaucracy, how acculturation works in the trans-border Mediterranean world, and to call into question the Eurocentric views of progress and modernity.⁶² Greene has studied the Venetian and Ottoman empires

⁵⁹ Ibid., 301-04. On how benign coexistence (*convivencia*) worked, see Brian A. Catlos’s book in progress, “Paradoxes of Pluralism: Ethno-Religious Diversity and the Medieval Mediterranean,” for development of the alternative principle of *conveniencia* (convenience) as a model for ethno-religious interaction in the medieval Mediterranean.

⁶⁰ Hodgson (1922-68) set out his ideas in *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols., (Chicago, 1974).

⁶¹ *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37:1 (Winter 2007): 9-55.

⁶² Linda T. Darling, “The Renaissance and the Middle East,” in *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, ed. Guido Ruggiero (Oxford, 2002), 55-69; Idem, “Political

around the 1669 Ottoman conquest of Crete to show the continuity in the transition to Ottoman rule. In her study of Greeks under the Ottomans, the international maritime order becomes more ambiguous and she has argued that Christian-Islamic relations were no more fraught than those between Latin and Orthodox Christians. Her Ottoman Mediterranean is a sea of the restoration of trade and tradition.⁶³ Recent Ottoman history overviews such as Daniel Goffman's *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (2002), and Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman's edited collection, *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire* (2007), are essential if one is to understand the Mediterranean and correct the Eurocentric narrative of the transition from medieval to modern.

Art historians and literary scholars have also been important new players in how to study the Mediterranean. In his companion piece to this essay, Eric Dursteler discusses the work of art and architecture historians Julian Raby, Rosamond Mack, Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, Deborah Howard, and Gülru Necipoğlu, as well as two recent exhibitions to demonstrate the kind of cross-culture exchange in the visual arts between East and West.⁶⁴ Here let me emphasize the important work of Sharon Kinoshita, Karla Malette, and Nina Zhiri, who have been rethinking the problem of transmission and imitation of literature across languages and cultures from early French vernacular epics and Boccaccio's tales, manuscript variants and translation in the interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* and variant perspectives on the Arab inheritance in southern European philological scholarship, and the riveting case of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, called Joannes Leo Africanus in the West.⁶⁵ Post-nationalist thinking,

Change and Political Discourse in the Early Modern Mediterranean World," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38 (2008): 505-31; and Idem, "Mediterranean Borderlands: Early English Merchants in the Levant," in *The Ottoman Empire: Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes'* ed. Eugenia Kermeli and Oktay Ozel (Istanbul, 2006), 173-88.

⁶³ Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, 2000); Idem, "Resurgent Islam: 1500-1700," in *The Mediterranean in History*, 219-49; and Idem, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton, 2010).

⁶⁴ Eric R. Dursteler, "On Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts," *Journal of Early Modern History* 15:5 (2011): 413-34.

⁶⁵ Sharon Kinoshita, "Medieval Mediterranean Literature," *PMLA* 124:2 (March 2009): 600-08, and Sharon Kinoshita and Jason Jacobs, "Ports of Call: Boccaccio's Alatiel in the Medieval Mediterranean," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007): 161-93. Karla Malette, "Beyond Mimesis: Aristotle's Poetics in the Medieval Mediterranean," *PMLA* 124:2 (March 2009): 583-91; Idem, *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100-1250: A Literary*

deemphasizing the religious divide, and placing exchange and the circulation of stories at the center of critical inquiry should lead to new perspectives and understanding of the larger context and wider resonance of medieval and early modern literature from its Latinate roots and vernacular traditions in French, Italian, and Spanish to the broader world of Mediterranean routes.

Meanings in Mediterranean Studies

What can all these approaches to Mediterranean Studies teach us? What are its implications and meanings? There are three main lessons. Firstly, a greater understanding is required of the structures and mechanisms of change internally within the region on a local level and in interactions across the region both short and long distance. Secondly, an awareness of the possible comparison with “other Mediterraneans” outside the Mediterranean. Thirdly, with regard to the making of Europe and the invention of America—whether in statecraft and political models, trade and economic mechanisms, or religion and belief systems—we need an appreciation of how the precedents of the early medieval Mediterranean set the terms for European and New World development in the early modern period.

For the internal argument, we could make a long list of topics to study, as Eric Dursteler has done in his companion piece: trade and traders, image and ideas, literature and learning, art and architecture, religion, politics and society, cultural intermediaries, and gender. At the same time, we should take seriously theorists, such as Pierre Bourdieu on *habitus* and Clifford Geertz on “local knowledge,” both of whom did their field work in North Africa on the other side of the Mediterranean. We need to bring together the material, the social, and the cultural; thus, a first concern would be the building blocks of ecology and social life, the environments and the household, which includes public and private space, language, and silence. This leads us to a second set of topics around property, the family, and its values with an interest in knowledge and fictive kinship (god-parenthood), marriage and inheritance, gender and masculinity, honor and shame, violence, insults, and feuds, as well as gender and

History (Philadelphia, 2005); and Idem, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia, 2010). Oumelbanine Zhiri, *L'Afrique au miroir de l'Europe: Fortunes de Jean Léon l'Africain à la Renaissance*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 247 (Geneva, 1991).

women, liberation and oppression, seclusion and the veil. A third set of topics moves between the private and the public, and takes us from domestic affairs to affairs of state, from private life-cycle events to public festivals, myths and rituals, patronage and friendship, gifts and hospitality, saints and pilgrimage. In the end, we must consider the individual actor, the formation of identity, citizenship, attitudes and beliefs, decision-making, and the contingency of actions.

For a truly comparative history of a region, one must move beyond the local to consider the broader context and remember that the apparent givens of land, labor, and exchange are not natural objects, but are mediated and defined variously by law and custom, religion and belief, language and the arts. While history is the study of change over time, comparative regional study adds the dimension of space to the analysis of change and difference. Movement from the local and regional to the global takes the next step when comparisons lead to comparative world history of other Mediterraneans. General laws and lessons from the identification of common denominators provide a spatial and temporal understanding of both structure and change. Such consequences offer conclusions on a macro scale of unity in diversity.

How the Mediterranean “invented” rather than “discovered” the world beyond itself in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas is an oft-told story, now retold. This so-called expansion of Europe brought with it “the darker side of the Renaissance”—slavery, colonization, and world hegemony. Contact and conquest had been forged in the crucible of power and struggle in the rivalry between the sea city-states such as Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi dating from the end of the eighth century. Above all, the Iberian-Genoese maritime, commercial, and colonial expansion outside of the Mediterranean basin to the islands of the so-called Mediterranean Atlantic, West Africa, the Americas, and Asia brought more than a half millennium of their theory and practice of economics, society, politics, and religion for good and ill to the wider world.

The prejudice or stereotype that the sea brings “corruption” to landlubbers just as the city corrupts innocent rubes from the countryside comes from the ancients. And the quintessential urban vector of corruption: the sea-city of Venice, went so far that its duke even married the sea! But what the new developments of Mediterranean Studies ultimately teach us is that the myth of corruption means, in fact, that the sea brought contact, communication, commerce, and change that explode the myths of a so-called time immemorial of an immobile society; that neither progress nor decline,

neither involution nor evolution are inevitable; and that myths of decadence are as equally illusory and imaginary as those of the Serenissima, the Most Serene Republic, itself.

The Making of the Mediterranean and the Remaking of Europe

Imagination and invention worked on creating the idea of unified land and sea spaces as much as it did temporal continuities and discontinuities. Veronica della Dora argues in "Mapping Metageographies: The Cartographic Invention of Italy and the Mediterranean," that "Italy and the Mediterranean share an ontological quality. They are metageographical objects carved out of the land and of the sea by human imagination."⁶⁶ Like the idea of Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean were only geographical expressions until the sixteenth century. Indeterminate boundaries and diverse people crossed each without creating the concept of a unified place. But, della Dora explains how two kinds of cartography configured bivalent spaces—on the one hand, ancient and medieval itineraries and portolan charts created "a functional region and a sequence of interconnected coastal places"; on the other, Ptolemaic maps introduced in the West at the beginning of the fifteenth century created "a compact geographical area and geometrical space" with "the production of Italy as a discrete, organic component of the Mediterranean basin as a whole." And these "two modes of mapping lead to two very different historiographies of Italy and the Mediterranean: the ensemble of coastal microregions advocated by Horden and Purcell and Braudel's organic region."⁶⁷

Cartography invented a history for Europe and the Mediterranean especially in the historical maps of works such as Abraham Ortelius's *Parergon*.⁶⁸ This atlas appendix to his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* mapped the topography of ancient lands, biblical geography, and classical history. The *Parergon* first began to appear with three supplementary maps in 1579, prominently announced on the foot of its first separate title page in 1595 that "Geography is the eye of history" (*Historiae Oculus Geographia*), a motto that Ortelius had included in his introduction to the original 1570 *Theatrum*. By

⁶⁶ Veronica della Dora, "Mapping metageographies," *California Italian Studies* 1:1 (2010), 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Mapping metageographies," 2-3; 22.

⁶⁸ John A. Marino, "The Invention of Europe," in *The Renaissance World*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (London, 2007), 140-65.

the *Parergon's* 1624 edition, its thirty-nine historical maps included “The Peregrinations of St. Paul” (*Peregrinationis Divi Pauli*), “Image of the Roman Empire” (*Romani Imperii Imago*), “Europe, or Old Celtica” (*Europam, sive Celticam*), “The Sea Journey of the Trojan Aeneas” (*Aeneae Troiani Navigatio*), and “About the Argonauts” (*Argonautica*)—all five maps with the Mediterranean at their center. Ortelius created such maps less for the study of history than for the making of history, and his “Theater” presented his reader-travelers with the opportunity to visit distant places in both time and space.

The last three maps in the *Parergon* editions after 1601 reproduced plates of three earthly paradises in the Mediterranean to provide rest and recreation to weary travelers from their page-turning journeys in print. The first was Tempe (The Paradise of Thessaly), a map reproduced in the end papers of Abulafia's *The Mediterranean in History*. Ortelius describes Tempe as “a large and pleasant plain (through the middle of which runs the excellent clear river *Peneus*) between the two stately mountains *Ossa* and *Olympus*”. Here one finds Braudel's master geographer Vidal de la Blache's mountains, hills, and plains. Ortelius writes,

This is a most impressive and glorious sight for the eyes to behold. In the plain, when the sun is at its [maximal] height in summer, you shall have many excellent shadowy groves and various places of shelter into which travelers, desirous to refresh their weary limbs from the violent heat and their bothersome sweat, betake themselves, as [also] into the most pleasant and delightful inns and shelters that there are in the world. . . . We have wanted to portray this in our map-book so that, nearing its end, we provide a resting place and pleasure garden for the weary reader. This we also hope to achieve with the description of Daphne, which follows after this one.⁶⁹

This second paradise, Daphne, a pleasant suburb of Antioch in Syria, was preferred by Apollo above all other places in the world. Ortelius describes its pleasures:

There are many tall cypress trees here, and also various other trees, which have grown together so closely that the earth seems to be covered with a roof against the sun. Under the trees, the earth, depending on the season, produces various flowers, which emit a sweet smell. Then there are beautiful clear springs. This region is sweet, the winds whistle in a lovely manner, providing pleasure and satisfaction for all.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Cartographica Neerlandica Map Text for Ortelius Map No. 231, *Tempe*, online, http://www.orteliusmaps.com/book/ort_text231.html, accessed October 18, 2010.

⁷⁰ Cartographica Neerlandica Map Text for Ortelius Map No. 232, *Daphne*, online,

Then Ortelius introduces the *Parergon's* final plate:

the Typographer [writes] to the Reader: To the old geography a new crown has been added through the exertions of our mighty king, and after Tempe of the Thessalians and the pleasures of Daphne of Antioch, a very attractive place in Spain, which is equally famous on account of its holiness, should not be left out from this series, although the depiction of the royal monastery by this royal cartographer, together with his other geographical maps, took a long time to accomplish.⁷¹

The third of these earthly paradises is the monastery/library/university/palace of Ortelius's patron, El Escorial of Philip II. The poem in the cartouche praises the Spanish king's colossal construction as excelling the buildings of ancient Greece, Rome, and Christianity, as it asks rhetorically, "Who can match the King, and Spain?"⁷² The answer is, of course, found in another power, the Ottoman sultan and empire in the eastern Mediterranean world. Dividing the Mediterranean by excluding the Islamic South and East denies its essential unity wrought over centuries of communication and exchange, yet present in the map's visual representation.

A painting by El Greco, within the tradition of emblematic city views, as explained by Jonathan Brown, might draw our view of paradises around the Mediterranean to a close.⁷³ Painted ca. 1595 in the propaganda campaign to restore Toledo as home of the royal court in keeping with its historic tradition as seat of the monarchy and the church, the *View of Toledo's* misty landscape in the approaching storm employs awesome atmospherics to evoke its illusory cityscape. In his westward journey across the Mediterranean from his birthplace in Venetian Crete in 1541, Doménikos Theotokópoulos, El Greco, references Giorgione's *Tempest* from his Venetian studies in an interpretive style that creates a quasi-naturalistic portrait of an imaginary city. El Greco's *Toledo* is a city view intended to look to the city's future prosperity with the hoped for return of the royal court, by

http://www.orteliusmaps.com/book/ort_text232.html, accessed October 18, 2010.

⁷¹ The plate of El Escorial was first reproduced in 1591 by Ortelius from an engraving by the Flemish artist Pierre Peret (1555-c. 1625) from a drawing made by the Spanish architect Juan de Herrera (1530-1597).

⁷² Cartographica Neerlandica Map Text for Ortelius Map No. 233, *Scenographia Totius Fabricae S. Laurentii in Escuriaco*, online, <http://www.orteliusmaps.com/book/ort233.html>, accessed October 18, 2010.

⁷³ Jonathan Brown, "In Detail: El Greco's View of Toledo," *Portfolio* 3:1 (January-February 1981): 31-39; and Jonathan Brown and Richard L. Kagan, "View of Toledo," *Studies in the History of Art* 11 (1982): 19-30.

building its argument on an erasure of two-thirds of the city and the rearrangement of local landmark locations in order to emphasize the iconic structures of the Alcázar, the Cathedral, the Alcántara Bridge, the Tagus River, and a set of mysterious buildings in the lower left perhaps representing the Agaliense monastery where the city patron St. Ildefonso went on retreat. Cartographic accuracy is eschewed in favor of this more essentialist map of the city's nodes of power—political, ecclesiastical, strategic, religious, and commercial links to the outside world. This reorganized cityscape of Toledo could replace the Venetian majolica plate as an emblem of the kind of new Mediterranean map that contemporary Mediterranean Studies is beginning to redraw as it rearranges inherited traditions and restores locutions to find deeper truths and broader connections as we move not only West to East and North to South, but also South to North and East to West in the reinventing and remaking of Europe. Remaking premodern Europe requires rediscovery and reconstruction of the representation of forgotten and elided realities that will lead us from past unknowns to unknown futures and prepare us to weather fortune's many storms.