
[1] *THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN: SITES OF ENCOUNTER AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION*

Mediterráneo

Lyrics of a song by Joan Manuel Serrat

Quizá porque mi niñez sigue jugando en tu playa
y escondido tras las cañas duerme mi primer amor
llevo tu luz y tu olor por donde quiera que vaya
y amontonado en tu arena guardo amor, juegos y penas.

Yo que en la piel tengo el sabor amargo del llanto eterno
que han vertido en ti cien pueblos de Algeciras a Estambul
para que pintes de azul sus largas noches de invierno
a fuerza de desventuras tu alma es profunda y oscura.

A tus atardeceres rojos se acostumbraron mis ojos como el recodo al camino
soy cantor, soy embustero, me gusta el juego y el vino, tengo alma de marinero.
¡Qué le voy hacer! si yo nací en el Mediterráneo.

Y te acercas y te vas después de besar mi aldea
jugando con la marea te vas pensando en volver
eres como una mujer perfumadita de brea
que se añora y que se quiere, que se conoce y se teme.

¡Ay!, si un día para mi mal viene a buscarme la parca
empujad al mar mi barca con un levante otoñal
y dejad que el temporal desguace sus alas blancas
y a mi enterradme sin duelo entre la playa y el cielo.

En la ladera de un monte más alto que el horizonte quiero
tener buena vista mi cuerpo será camino, le daré verde a los pinos
y amarillo a la . . . Cerca del mar porque yo nací en el Mediterráneo.

Source: http://fotos.euroresidentes.com/fotos/postales_Alicante/Mar_Mediterraneo_Azul/imagepages/image22.html. The song, as written and performed by Joan Manuel Serrat, may be found on youtube.com or on Google under “Yo nací en el Mediterráneo.”

IN Joan Manuel Serrat’s extraordinarily lyrical song “Mediterráneo” (1970), the gifted Catalan singer presents us with a moving vision of the Mediterranean Sea. His song captures the sea’s essence far more compellingly than historiographical debates or scholarly works may do. In its moving lyrics, Serrat packs an emotional and psychological punch that goes to the very heart of the issues this book seeks to address. The portrait of the Mediterranean that emerges from his well-crafted song is a complex one, aiming to grasp and explain what it means to be born and to grow by the shores of a sea or an ocean, and, in Serrat’s case, to be born by the shores of the Mediterranean. Perhaps because I too was born and grew up by the shores of a sea (the Caribbean) – a different sea indeed but as beguiling nonetheless – the song speaks to me in ways that it may not do to someone bound to the land and not to the ocean.

In Serrat’s song, the protagonist carries the “light and smell of the Mediterranean on his skin,” but also the “bitter taste of the tears shed by a hundred different people [nations] from Algeciras to Istanbul.” We gaze therefore on the whole span of the Middle Sea: from one of its most westernmost towns, Algeciras, a town redolent with its Muslim past and Arabic name, to the magical city of Istanbul with its Roman, Greek, and Ottoman overlapping histories. “Mediterranean” evokes the love dreams of childhood and adolescence, but also the accumulated bitter memories of many generations. The sea, compared in a song to a woman – and in several Romance languages the sea is either feminine, as in *la mer* in French, or has changing gender registers, either masculine: *el mar es azul* (the sea is blue), or feminine: *echar un barco a la mar* (to sail a boat in the sea) in Spanish – is longed for, loved, known and unknown, feared. The Mediterranean is a space of storms, long winter nights – something that we seldom associate with the Mediterranean, but which is another of its realities. But the Mediterranean is also a sea of crystalline blue.

Nothing, however, is more telling about the relations of people to the sea than the song’s reoccurring phrase: “yo nací en el Mediterráneo.” I was born, Serrat insists, not in Spain, not in Catalonia. I was born, he reminds us throughout the song, on the shores of a sea that has shaped my identity, my memories, my hopes, and my sadness. And seas truly shape one’s identity – whether Serrat’s, mine, or those of others born by the shores of a sea – in ways not very different but far more intense than the identities shaped by nations. The fluid and constructed way in which Serrat identifies himself is not very different from the manner in which I have often, through my very long life, identified myself as “having been born in the Caribbean.” That is, not born in Cuba itself, but born by the shores of a sea that gives me a shared culture,

language, music, and identity with all those who came from the collection of islands that dot the Caribbean Sea. Thus, my Caribbean identity remains the constant in the long list of all other sorts of identities gained and lost over the decades of my life. And, yet, my connection with the sea remains stronger than identities constructed by political jurisdictions, ideological loyalties, and the like. Written in 1970, Serrat's wonderful song reached out to a world outside Franco's repressive Spain (especially towards the Catalans) and pledged allegiance to something older, broader, and far more enduring than the demands of the nation-state.

This overlapping set of identities, this sense of belonging to an ancestral sea that is our home, can also be found in the Mediterranean Sea's quintessential novel, Alexander Dumas's enchanting *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Although the late chapters of the novel have Paris as a setting, far away from the warm shores of the Mediterranean, the site for its early dramatic developments that power the entire novel are firmly bound with the history of the sea. From the ship, the *Pharaon*, that brought Edmund Dantès from Smyrna, Trieste, Naples, Civitavecchia, and the island of Elba to Marseille and his cruel destiny, from the fears about the fate of the *Pharaon* in a later voyage and thus the threat to the financial fate of the Morrell family, to the Catalan community on the fringes of Marseille, the Mediterranean Sea is ever present, as are its uncertainty, passionless cruelties, and rewards. In *The Count of Monte Cristo* we also meet those sailors – a mysterious and heterogeneous crew in the service of the Count. Their places of origin were to be found in many different towns and islands dotting the Mediterranean. They spoke a *lingua franca*, understood only by those who lived in the sea; they had no home or loyalty to any nation, except to their calling, to their master, to their sea. We also meet bandits on the outskirts of Rome, a reminder of Braudel's description of violence and banditry as resistance to the state in his study of the Mediterranean in the age of Philip II (see below). In Dumas's fictional work, bandits remained a fixture of the nineteenth-century Mediterranean landscape.

In a lesser key, Pérez Reverte's entertaining novel, *La reina del sur* (*The Queen of the South*), a novel inspired loosely by *The Count of Monte Cristo*, presents us, once again, with a group of men carrying drugs between North Africa and Spain. Their allegiances, diverse places of origin, and identities are erased by their illicit activities and by the brotherhood of the sea. That the protagonist of the novel is a Mexican woman, fleeing to Spain away from the violence and vengeance of drug lords, serves only as a reminder, though a fictional one, of the manner in which the Mediterranean, ancient or present, has always been connected to a broader world beyond its shores.

There were of course earlier fictional histories spanning the Mediterranean and bringing into focus the transnational character of the Sea. Storytelling describing the links that bound the Middle Sea is also an important part of this book. These stories often glossed the inextricable relations between Muslims and Christians along the shores of the Mediterranean, or the movement from one shore to another. In Johanot Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanch* (late fifteenth century), for example, the hero, born in Brittany, travels (and fights) in France, England, and the eastern Mediterranean. Serving the Byzantine emperor in his

campaigns against the Ottoman Turks, Tirant, one of Cervantes's most beloved characters and mentioned most lovingly in *Don Quixote*, is a very different knight from the usual preposterous and hard-to-believe warriors of late medieval romances. Through Tirant's deeds, we see a portrait of the diversity and "connectivity" of the entire sea.

Flores y Blancaflor, a medieval text I will revisit in greater detail in Chapter 9, was also a Mediterranean romance (most likely of southern French origin), with versions in several languages. The entire fictional story was integrated as historical fact into one of Alfonso X of Castile's (1252–1284) works. As was often the case, it told the story of a romance between a Muslim and a Christian, alerting us to the porous sexual frontiers, notwithstanding the strict rules governing interfaith sexual liaisons that existed along the shores of the Mediterranean. In Chapter 9, I will discuss Simon Barton's remarkable recent book on the subject of interfaith sexual and romantic liaisons, but we must now move from fiction to history and what it tells us about the Mediterranean.

WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

All who attempt such an enterprise as writing the history of the Mediterranean do so in the considerable shadow cast by Fernand Braudel's monumental *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Any serious attempt to capture the history of that sea and of the people who lived along its shores needs to be located, first and foremost, in Braudel's paradigmatic and ambitious efforts. But Braudel has been followed, altered, and refined by the efforts of subsequent historians. Over the more than a half-century since the original publication, in French, of *The Mediterranean* in 1949, these scholarly works have helped to fill some of the gaps in Braudel's narrative or to mildly and diplomatically critique some of his findings.¹ In many ways, more than a thoughtful and superbly researched history book, *The Mediterranean* is also a heartfelt declaration of Braudel's emotional involvement with the Middle Sea. The first lines of his preface to the first edition (in French) are articulated in a language not far removed from that of Serrat's song with which this introduction begins. Braudel writes: "I have loved the Mediterranean with passion, no doubt because I am a northerner like so many others in whose footsteps I have followed. I have joyfully dedicated long years of study to it – much more than all my youth. In return, I hope that a little of this joy and great deal of Mediterranean sunlight will shine from the pages of this book."²

Braudel sets his monumental work within the context of passion and sunlight. His work is imbued with both: by his obvious relish in his task and by the manner in which he captured the light and spirit of the Mediterranean. Although much has been done over the last three decades to cover some of the gaps left by Braudel and to formulate new conceptual and methodological ways of doing this history, *The Mediterranean* remains the paradigmatic treatment of seas in general and of the Middle Sea in particular. More to the point, the attempts to fill some of the gaps in Braudel's formulations have also coincided with growing interest in the Mediterranean, its religious and

linguistic plurality, and its role as a site of encounter and boundary crossings. These interests have led to vigorous historiographical debates. But all begins with, and stems from, Braudel's legacy. As important as the topic is, however, this book is not about the historiography of the Mediterranean or about Braudel's achievements or faults. This book is about some very specific themes in the western Mediterranean over *la longue durée* (another one of Braudel's contributions to the way in which we do history). Nonetheless, I would be remiss were I not to mention briefly some of the most salient recent contributions to Mediterranean studies. The chapters that follow are of course deeply indebted to them.

MEDITERRANEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Braudel's *The Mediterranean* deployed some formidable and innovative approaches to regional history. Focusing, as he did, on the early modern Mediterranean – though he had written a counterpart for the ancient Mediterranean that has come to light only recently³ – his work was propelled by three significant methodological innovations, emerging, as they did, from the influential *École des Annales*. One was the idea of *histoire totale* or “total history,” that is, a history that examines historical processes and changes as a whole, with attention to geography, climate, economic exchanges, and other historical factors without reifying traditional political narratives. The other significant contribution was to see these historical processes and changes over a long period of time (*la longue durée*). This long perspective allowed Braudel, as it does other historians committed to this methodological project, to see the development and transformations of social, economic, and political structures (Braudel did not always fully address topics such as culture and religion) over time.

His other significant methodological stance had to do with *conjoncture*. This is a difficult term to translate. Its literal meaning is conjuncture, by which Braudel meant the combination of circumstances that propelled historical change and events, or conjuncture between things happening on each different timescale. The third aspect of Braudel's work has often been neglected. Because his *The Mediterranean* is written with such compelling vigor and because the book (two volumes) begins with a long, expansive, and extraordinarily engaging geographical study of the sea and of Mediterranean lands, scholars often fail to pay enough attention to the second part of the book. It contains a detailed account of political events: what he called “*histoire événementielle*,” that is, the history of events. All three elements of this ambitious novel way of writing history offered, or Braudel hoped it would do, a total history of the sea and of its main political protagonists, Philip II and the Sublime Porte or Ottoman Empire.

Placing the sea, geography, and the economy at the center of his account, Braudel promoted an awareness of the environment and the relationship between landmass and sea that forcefully reversed long traditions of historical writing. Although privileging the environment was not new – there is the

remarkable description of the *sertão* or barren lands in Bahia's (Brazil) interior in Euclides da Cunha's late nineteenth-century description of the Canudos rebellion – Braudel's book shook traditional historiography with its bold call to a different kind of history. Still very much read and assigned in graduate courses (I do so even in undergraduate courses) as a model of historical excellence, Braudel has had critics over the years. His "total history" has been found not to be all-inclusive, as critics have noted his neglect or underestimation of the roles of religion and culture in historical processes. Others, such as the noted Mediterranean historian David Abulafia, have questioned the uniqueness of the Mediterranean while engaging in broad comparative approaches to Middle Seas in Europe and elsewhere, though, to be fair, Braudel himself also raised some of the same questions.

Although many historians have sought to modify or challenge specific aspects of Braudel's magnum opus, the most salient additions or critiques have come from several Anglo-American scholars who have redrawn and notably expanded the boundaries of Mediterranean studies. Yet, if I may be bold enough to say this, without lessening the value of Braudel's original contribution, we see further than Braudel because we still sit, paraphrasing Bernard de Chartres's comments about medieval use of classical knowledge, on the shoulders of a giant.

David Abulafia, a distinguished medievalist at Cambridge and one of the foremost scholars of the western Mediterranean, has published numerous works on the topic, ranging from a remarkable study of Frederick II (1212–1250), the Hohenstaufen ruler of Sicily and Imperial Germany, to a series of valuable studies of the western Mediterranean, above all, of the medieval kingdom of Majorca (Mallorca) – which also encompassed areas of what is now southern France. Abulafia has recently defined the Mediterranean as a heuristic category within a global framework. Rather than privileging Mediterranean uniqueness, as has been done traditionally since Late Antiquity, Abulafia posits it as a "Middle Sea," sharing with other "middle seas" throughout the world their role as sites for cultural and economic exchanges. Although Braudel had already described the Mediterranean's role in broader patterns of commercial and cultural exchanges, Abulafia, by decentering the Mediterranean, locates his studies of the sea within a methodological approach in which specific geographical location becomes less important than shared historical processes of material culture and commercial links.

Abulafia's critique of Braudel's preference for structures rather than for human beings may be perhaps a bit unfair. Braudel did indeed conceive his work in a structuralist framework, but he peppered his narrative – even his descriptions of the landscape – with vivid vignettes, showing the interaction between humans and the environment. Nonetheless, Abulafia's emphasis on a comparative analysis and on exchanges and cultural transmissions beyond the narrow geographical borders of the Middle Sea locates human experiences at the center of his inquiry. Braudel, for all my defense of his examples and vignettes, clearly placed the Mediterranean physical space – here understood as a broad geographical region with the sea as its center – as the driving locomotive for his broad understanding of the Mediterranean world.⁴

Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's influential study, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, a book that will be invoked in one of my notes since it provides a thoughtful and expansive historiographical introduction to the study of the Mediterranean, is the first volume of a projected two-volume work. The planned follow-up to Horden and Purcell's ambitious first volume is entitled *The Liquid Sea*. In these two volumes, Horden (a medievalist) and Purcell (an ancient historian) seek to explore those periods of Mediterranean history, ancient and medieval, not examined by Braudel. Although we now know, as noted earlier, that Braudel had written a study of the ancient Mediterranean, it was not published until one year after (2001) the publication of *The Corrupting Sea*. The latter book offers readers and scholars something approaching Braudel's *histoire totale* but in a very different methodological key. Covering a period of more than two millennia, *The Corrupting Sea* defines what the Mediterranean meant to those who have written, lived, or sought to historicize the sea as a category of knowledge. Here also, the historical ecology of the sea trumps the history of nations and lands that surrounded (and surround) the Mediterranean. Horden and Purcell make the critical distinction between the history *of* the Mediterranean, that is, the history of the sea itself, and history *in* the Mediterranean, that is, the history not of the sea itself but of the region's politics and geographical features.⁵

Emphasizing, in Part II of *The Corrupting Sea*, the ecological features of the sea and of Mediterranean lands, Horden and Purcell turn their attention from the broad expanses of the Middle Sea to what they describe as "micro ecologies," narrowing their focus to overlapping "connectivities." Horden and Purcell's eye for detail, their liberal borrowing of a diversity of methodological approaches and ancillary disciplines, and, most of all, the remarkable ambitious breadth of their enterprise makes *The Corrupting Sea* a landmark of historical research and writing. I will come back to some of the most significant features of this book in subsequent chapters, but for now it may be useful to engage the distinction its two authors make between history *of* and history *in* the Mediterranean.

Whether one may agree or not with the usefulness of defining the history *of/in* the Mediterranean, the reality is that Horden and Purcell posit two distinct ways of doing that history. At the simplest level, history *in* the Mediterranean addresses historical developments taking place within specific geographical or ecological contexts. For all practical purposes, these histories are written with little regard to the history of the sea. History *of* the Mediterranean, on the other hand, blends the history of the sea itself, its geography and ecology, with the history of events, the rise and fall of polities along the Mediterranean shores, that is, what happened in the Mediterranean and adjacent lands. In that sense, their critique of Braudel for neglecting, as noted above in the case of Abulafia, human agency is also not fully grounded in the reality of Braudel's contributions.

There have been numerous histories in the Mediterranean that focus on the narrative of battles, piracy, political developments, and the like. John Julius Norwich's *The Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean* (2006) is a very good example of a cultural and political narrative with little or next to nothing about

the sea itself. At the same time, one could not write a history of the Mediterranean that is not at the same time also a history that takes place *in* that sea and its adjacent landmasses. Beyond Abulafia, Horden, and Purcell's signal interventions into Mediterranean historiographical debates, Herzfeld and others have in turn criticized Horden, Purcell, and other historians for artificially constructing the Mediterranean as a category that, according to Herzfeld, may approach the same standing as Edward Said's "Orientalism," that is, a cultural construction of a model that reflects the ideological and methodological proclivities of specific scholars, rather than the reality of the Mediterranean's historical and anthropological structures.⁶

HOW THEN TO WRITE A HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN?

Perhaps one way to escape the essentializing of the Mediterranean as a heuristic or epistemological category (to adopt Herzfeld's ironic trope) is to place the sea, as Abulafia and Bresson have suggested, in a comparative global framework, emphasizing common themes rather than unique aspects. It may also be worth highlighting something that Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* already does so well: the varieties of Mediterraneans (within the Mediterranean itself). The sea must be understood in its totality while, at the same time, the geographical, topographical, and historical differences of its various regions must be noted. In writing a history of the sea and the history of each region *on* the shores of the Mediterranean and of the lands beyond the sea – areas that were connected to it by trade and culture – we may end up with a plurality of histories. As Sharon Farmer discusses in a recent book on the silk industry in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Paris, to give just one example, immigrants from the Mediterranean and silk cocoons from Persia were at the heart of silk production in Paris.⁷ Once again, we see the circulation of people and commodities from the Mediterranean into Northern Europe and back, or the "connectivity" of the Middle Sea with a world beyond. Only if we consider all these links between the sea and other parts of the world may we have a more sensible view of the complexities, difficulties, and romance of Mediterranean history.

The task at hand is therefore challenging indeed. To begin, this volume addresses the history of the western Mediterranean – one of those many seas within the larger sea. There are many excellent reasons to think of the Mediterranean as a whole, and to write its history not piecemeal but as an integrated scholarly enterprise: à la Braudel, Horden, Purcell, and Abulafia. The sea of course knows no boundaries, and the many different subdivisions imposed on the Mediterranean – the Aegean Sea, the Adriatic, the Alboran Basin, the Algerian Basin, and so forth – are the result as much of the geographers' and historians' appetite for creating taxonomies of knowledge as they are the result of specific historically lived experiences.

Nonetheless, the western Mediterranean basin is indeed a recognizable and separate entity within the entire span of the whole Mediterranean. It is clearly

and sharply different in terms of its geography and climate from the eastern Mediterranean (see Chapter 2). It is also distinct in terms of its history after the demise of the Roman Empire in the West. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, I attempt to make a far more elaborate argument of why topographically and historically the western Mediterranean was indeed a discrete and recognizable subject for our inquiry. A companion volume in this series addresses the eastern Mediterranean. These works will, I hope, complement each other and provide a comprehensive portrait of different facets of the entire Mediterranean and Mediterranean society in the context of world history.

In examining history *in* the Mediterranean (a necessary concomitant to the history *of* the Sea) there are powerful incentives to focus on one particular region of the sea and to do so within specific points of departure and conclusion for our story. Circa 400 CE witnessed the progressive disruption of the political, religious, and linguistic unity of the Roman Mediterranean world. Such fractures resulted from the division of the Roman Empire (the prodigious builder of Mediterranean civilization) into distinctive eastern and western parts – a process institutionally started by Diocletian and Constantine in the late third and early fourth century. The further collapse of the empire in the West and its replacement by a variety of Germanic kingdoms in the fifth century, on the one hand, and the emergence of Byzantium in the East, on the other, accelerated the process of fragmentation of the unity of the Roman world. The rise of Islam and its rapid spread throughout the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and eventually into Iberia and Sicily, further helped to create the social, political, linguistic, religious, and cultural context for the emergence of new Mediterranean societies. I will have a great deal more to say about the historical developments of polities in the western Mediterranean in Chapter 3, but for now it suffices to acknowledge the geographical and temporal limits of this book. Succeeding chapters seek to provide, through the use of case studies, vignettes, and a thematic approach, a view of the western Mediterranean. Our story focuses on the sea and the lands adjacent to the sea from the Straits of Gibraltar to Sicily, from the European northern Mediterranean lands – what eventually became Spain, France, and Italy – to the shores of North Africa. Islands also play an important role in Mediterranean history – the Balearic Islands, Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily – so do the smaller islands that dot the western sea. Equally important for this inquiry is the Mediterranean southern coast in North Africa and the narrow strip of lands between the sea and the Atlas and Riff Mountains. The latter served as pathways into the Sahara and into a very different sea of sand.

But as Braudel and others have taught us, the impact of the Mediterranean, whether climatic, economic, political, or cultural, extended far inland into the heart of the continental masses that bounded the sea and beyond the region, as the Mediterranean became an integral part of a global community. Unless this is to become a brief synopsis of historical developments in the Mediterranean, the only possible way to approach the Mediterranean's long history is, as noted earlier, to do so thematically and to illustrate these varied themes with examples that, though necessarily arranged in chronological fashion, attempt to provide the experience of what the Mediterranean meant for those who lived and died in

its waters, for those who traveled, traded, were sold into slavery and redeemed, produced and carried cultural artifacts from one part of the sea to the other, waged war, and loved there. What I wish to do here is to approximate the complex range of experiences of those people who, like Joan Manuel Serrat, were born in the Mediterranean, or who, as Fernand Braudel wrote in the introduction to his great book, “loved the Mediterranean with passion, no doubt because I am a northerner like so many others in whose footsteps I have followed,” in the centuries between the waning of Rome in the West and our modern global world.

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

As noted before, while one cannot easily escape the methodological questions and issues raised by Braudel’s great book more than half a century ago, this volume of Blackwell’s *History of the World* seeks to place the Mediterranean within a broader geographical and chronological context and to address questions about culture, language, and religion partially neglected by Braudel’s rightly famous work. Parting from a not so veiled geographical and climatic determinism, Braudel emphasized the unity of the Mediterranean world. Although the political axis of his book was located in Madrid and centered chronologically on the long and complex reign of Philip II (1556–1598), *The Mediterranean* could have been also titled *The Mediterranean in the Age of Suleiman I, the Magnificent (1520–66)*. The historical reality of what the Romans called “Mare Nostrum” and recent historiography has described as the “corrupting sea” is that one cannot examine one part of the Mediterranean, as this volume may do in emphasizing the Western Mediterranean, without reference to the entire sea. One should also accept the links that bound, in spite of seemingly cultural, political, and religious differences, the Mediterranean world into a coherent or “connected” whole.

Nonetheless, I do not wish to mislead the reader by stressing the unity of the Mediterranean or the continuity of specific structures. One of the most attractive aspects of attempting to write a history of the Mediterranean from the waning of Late Antiquity in the West to the present is the possibility of exploring in some detail the tensions between continuity and discontinuity in the region, between unity and fragmentation. For example, Braudel pointed to the ease of communication provided by the sea as an important factor in making the region a coherent whole (though he pointed to the difficulties of travel as well); yet, recent research has shown that sailing the Mediterranean was not always easy or fast (see Chapter 2 et passim). Calm winds, corsair activity, storms, and the like – which seem to have been rather frequent – could make travel between the Spanish coast and Oran, a Spanish outpost on the North African coast, to give just one example, a very difficult and lengthy enterprise indeed in the sixteenth century.

In facing the challenges of this project, I am conscious of its great difficulties and of the vast literature that needs to be mastered to achieve an acceptable outcome. Any expectation of the most perfunctory chronological coverage must

be immediately abandoned. Even a thematic approach would have to occasionally neglect entire regions and/or chronological periods. The sources extant will also determine what can or cannot be covered in some detail. Perhaps, it may be best to spell out what kind of contributions this volume can make to our understanding of the Mediterranean and to locate the sea and its surrounding lands in the larger context of world history.

THEMES AND CHAPTERS

After this preliminary and introductory chapter, Part I includes six distinct chapters or discussions of different but interrelated topics. These chapters seek to provide geographical, historical, and cultural contexts to the themes subsequently explored throughout the book. Part I, Geography, History, and Cultural Contexts, Chapter 2 explores the geography and climate of the western Mediterranean region. Moving clockwise from Sicily to continental Italy, this chapter offers a summary of our present knowledge of the geography and climate of the region and the role of the environment on the historical development of the Mediterranean world. While I do not think geography solely determines historical developments, it is clear that geographical and climatic features have a great deal to do with historical development, patterns of trade, linguistic transmission, and the like. It is important to note that geographical conditions changed due to diverse historical developments and climatic changes. The coast of North Africa, one of the largest grain-producing regions of the ancient world, to give just one example, has a very different climate today and a very different economic structure.

In Chapter 2 (and in subsequent chapters), I deploy archival information, gathered at the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón (specifically documents from the Consulado de Comercio, 1766–1868). This approach allows for archival-based case studies that illuminate specific moments or issues in the history of the sea. These case studies, in Chapter 2 and in other chapters, add, I hope, to our understanding of the Mediterranean climate and economy. They serve to emphasize the real difficulties found by sailors and sea captains as they plied the waters of the western Mediterranean in pursuit of knowledge, profits, and prey. Since these “protests against the sea,” as these documents are known, will be cited elsewhere throughout this book, I offer here a full reference to these materials, as well as a short explanation of the archive.⁸

In Part I, chapters 3 and 4, I wish to present a brief outline of the political history of the region from around 400 CE to the late twentieth century. While eschewing any hope of providing an extensive political narrative, it is important to establish a political context against which we may explore other themes in the history of the region. My brief historical narrative is told with emphasis on geographical regions – certainly in Chapter 3 – rather than on the world of present-day nations. As I have done with geography, I have attempted to trace the political developments of Sicily, North Africa, Mediterranean Iberia, Mediterranean France, and western Italy, before exploring the well-known world of nations in Chapter 4. Thematically, I am interested here in the swings

from unity to fragmentation, that is, the end of the Roman Mediterranean world, the rise of fragmented political entities, and the eventual reshaping of these polities on the shores of the western Mediterranean around national identities. Emphasis is placed on the medieval and early modern period when the political identities of these different political entities began to be set in permanent patterns of political organization. Only a brief description of modern political developments has been included in Chapter 4. It would take another volume just to list the complex politics of the western Mediterranean in the twentieth century alone.

This does not mean, of course, that political developments in the contemporary world are not important. In many respects, important topics, explored along the course of the book, such as immigration, warfare, standardization of language, religious forms, the transmission of cultural forms, and others resulted from, or were deeply influenced by, the rise of nations. My own sense of this is that, while we should not neglect contemporary events – and I try to comment on them elsewhere – the Late Middle Ages and the early modern period were significant moments in the construction of Mediterranean societies. As I will argue later, increase in corsair activity and naval conflicts between Christian powers, corsairs, and the Sublime Porte radically rearranged the economic structures that had long defined Mediterranean society.

In Part I, chapters 5, 6, and 7, I turn to questions of religious culture and language, and the move from a theoretical religious and linguistic unity in the ancient western Mediterranean to the fragmented religious and linguistic landscape that has existed since the eighth century. For religion, I do so by tracing the development of religious affiliation, or lack of it, over time. Chapter 5 examines not only the diverse religions that to this day divide the western Mediterranean, but also those heterodox movements that challenged the hegemony of some of the religions that had established their systems of beliefs in the western Mediterranean basin. Emphasis is placed on the role of religion in creating regional and national identities; thus, my approach here is less on questions of spirituality, though I briefly examine them, as it is on the function of religion as a cultural factor in the emergence of regional and national identities.

Chapter 6 focuses on the question of individual conversions from one religious culture to another and the role of renegades in the religious, cultural, and political life of the western Mediterranean, while chapter 7 explores the relationship of language, culture, and place. I focus on language formation and linguistic identity. In many respects, the emergence of new languages was closely related to the emergence of national communities. In this chapter, as in other chapters, I seek to address the same issues of unity and fragmentation raised earlier. I do so by following the development of different linguistic communities in the region from the demise of Rome to the present. Language is of course deeply bound to other topics explored in this book. Mediterranean languages, derived as they were from classical languages – Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic – played a significant role in the articulation of distinct forms of spirituality, cultural production, and political life. They did so throughout the slow evolution of the Mediterranean from the demise of Rome and the coming of Islam onward. They do so today.

In Part II, *Mediterranean Encounters*, chapters 8 and 9, I turn from a narrative of the geography, history, religion, and languages of the western Mediterranean to the issues of encounters. These first two chapters of Part II explore the issues of encounters, that is, the movement of people from areas dominated by one religion to another, as a part of the physical encounter with new geographical, cultural, and political realities. In these two chapters, I turn to the questions of representation, that is, of how Muslims voyagers and thinkers described their own lands, *Dar al-Islam*, and their encounters with Christian or modern Europe. Thus, I seek to describe and interpret the encounters of Muslims with the Christian western Mediterranean. Selecting a few case studies, I follow the travels and geographical works of some well-known Muslim medieval and early modern writers. Each of the examples provides a different perspective on Muslim perception of the Mediterranean. These include Muslims who worked for a Christian ruler but never converted to Christianity, and others who traveled exclusively in *Dar al-Islam*. Still others converted to Christianity and embraced Renaissance culture before returning home and reconverting back to Islam. Travel literature, such as the great and numerous examples produced by Muslim writers or converts, among them Ibn Battūta and Leo Africanus, offer particular visions of the Mediterranean world at a moment in time when that world was dramatically changing. Clearly, the vision of these travelers and geographers does not represent the sum total of how specific people from one side of the western Mediterranean looked on the other half. These representations, of course, are grounded in temporal and geographical contexts that help shape the manner in which travelers and scholars from one religion looked on the other side. This has been felicitously described as the “image on the mirror,” that is, that when we look at others in the Mediterranean, we are looking at a reflected image of ourselves. Other more recent Muslim travelers, from immigrants to ambassadors, also make brief appearances throughout this chapter.

The theme of encounters is further explored from Christian and Jewish perspectives in these two chapters. Pilgrims, merchants, diplomats, corsairs, settler colonists (as was the case with Spanish and French colonists in North Africa) populate the pages of chapters 8 and 9. It is not a comprehensive study of all those who journeyed to the lands of Islam (how could it be?), or who encountered Islam, but the chapters seek to provide a taste of what it was like to move across the sea to a world, a faith, a language, and a culture that were different from one's own. Other themes to be examined in as much detail as possible and to be illustrated by vignettes and narrative accounts are the topics of seafaring, travel narratives, pilgrimage, and contacts within the Mediterranean world (with emphasis on the western Mediterranean) and between the Mediterranean and other regions of the world. Along these lines, even though I do not include him in my discussion in this particular chapter, Ramón Muntaner's description of the adventures of Catalan soldiers and merchants in the conquests of Majorca and Minorca (Menorca) and in the eastern Mediterranean is a very good example of the sources that are available to tell this story. Along those lines, and perhaps as a possible line of inquiry for a future work, there is the extensive collection of European material (mostly of

Italian provenance) on the early modern Ottoman Empire, which is far more revealing of western attitudes towards the Sublime Porte than these writings are about life in Ottoman lands. Literary works also provide a veritable trove of engaging information as to what the movement of people may have been like in the Mediterranean. Think, for example, of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, an important section of which (to be cited throughout this book) tells, in fictionalized fashion, the history of his own captivity in North Africa. In fact, the issue is not the paucity of material. Rather, the question is how to select judiciously from these vast arrays of texts to create a comprehensive description (both geographical and chronological) of human movement within and outward from the Mediterranean.

In this vein, hospitality (as described in Olivia Constable's book on the *funduq*), captivity, and ransoming of captives can contribute to a complex depiction of travel, whether voluntary or forced, that would engage the reader with these narratives of movement, dislocation, and identity. Along the same lines, one should make a reference to the role of ambassadors. Often, as was the case of Italian legates, their observations on the countries they visited provide us with the most perceptive account of life along the shores of the Mediterranean. The theme of ambassadors links these initial chapters with the larger issue of Mediterranean contacts with the world beyond. It may be useful to remember that Italians penned most of the first accounts of the New World in the service of Spain. Trade, considered from the perspective of a case study of the protests against the sea and for a period usually neglected in the descriptions of the Mediterranean, is a topic discussed here as well, as are the links between the western Mediterranean and other parts of the world. Migration, a significant issue throughout the long history of the western Mediterranean, is also explored, as are the consequences of the large movement of what are, essentially, mostly Mediterranean people to northern Western Europe.

In Part II, chapters 10 and 11, we turn to a more focused perception of what the relationship between place and cultural encounters was all about. Chapter 10 examines in some detail specific regions of the western Mediterranean that functioned as places or sites of encounter in the medieval, early modern, and contemporary worlds. Sites such as the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, Marseille, Tunis, and other urban centers around the western Mediterranean served as meeting points for different cultures. Their interaction led to new cultural products and artifacts that integrated a plurality of cultures. This is most obvious in architectural projects that borrowed aesthetic sensibilities from different groups to create unique artistic monuments. In Chapter 10, my approach has been to provide succinct descriptions of each of these sites of encounter at particular points in time, while also providing a perspective on change.

In Chapter 11, however, I reverse the approach of the previous chapter by tracing the evolution of a discrete number of small towns, cities, their hinterlands, and islands as representative examples for the tenor of life in certain localities in the western Mediterranean. The chapter compares a few selected port cities such as Oran with small locations such as Vernazza, Sète, and other small ports. Such an approach may yield a far more satisfying vision of the

development of the western sea than simply focusing on the history of major settlements along the shores of the Mediterranean. Similarly, islands can be explored from a comparative perspective, assessing their role in the development of trade networks, warfare, and culture throughout the long span of time covered by this book. Some of the islands, such as Elba, Montecristo, or Sardinia, provide excellent comparisons with the quintessential western Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Majorca (Sicily is examined in detail elsewhere). A final chapter and conclusion focuses on the historical circumstances that led to the decline of the Mediterranean in the Late Middle Ages and at the onset of the early modern period. Here I wish to examine not only how the western Mediterranean became somewhat relegated to a secondary role in the Western European economy and political culture, but also how the Middle Sea became linked to an expansive world economic order. The final chapter also considers briefly how the Mediterranean has regained, although in an unfortunate fashion, some of its centrality. The present-day Mediterranean has become the main gateway, a bridge in fact, for people from Africa and the Middle East, seeking frantically to reach the European Union in general and Northern European industrial nations in particular. Escaping civil war and misery, they ventured into the waters of the Middle Sea, often paying with their lives for their wishes to reach, as Thomas Friedman wrote recently, places of order. It is the movement into and across and out of the Middle Sea that this chapter in particular and this book in general has sought to capture. Not unlike the Mediterranean waves and currents, always in movement, we must also pay attention to the enduring movement of people along its shores and across its waters. But now, it is time to begin.

NOTES

- 1 The book was first published in French in 1949. The first English translation appeared in 1972, translated by Siân Reynolds and published by Harper and Row. I refer here to the reprinting of the 1972 edition, Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
- 2 Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1: 17. See also Lucette Valensi, "The Problem of Unbelief in Braudel's *Mediterranean*," in Gabriel Piterberg, Teofilo F. Ruiz, and Geoffrey Symcox, *Braudel Revisited. The Mediterranean World 1600–1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 17–34.
- 3 Fernand Braudel, *Les mémoires de la Méditerranée: préhistoire et antiquité*, eds. Roselyne de Ayala, Paule Braudel. Preface and notes by Jean Guilaine et Pierre Rouillard (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1998).
- 4 See Abulafia's article, "Mediterraneans," in W.V. Harris, ed. *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); also his collections of essays, *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1993); *The Mediterranean in History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003); his *A Mediterranean Emporium: The Catalan Kingdom of Majorca* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and his superb *Frederick II. A Medieval Emperor* (London: Penguin,

1988), plus numerous other books on the western Mediterranean. Most of all, Abulafia's monumental book *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2011) seeks to address Braudel's neglect of humans along the shores of the sea.

- 5 Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 7–49 for the historical and geographical contexts to the book. See also their individual articles in W.V. Harris, ed. *Rethinking the Mediterranean*: Peregrine Horden, "Travel Sickness: Medicine and Mobility in the Mediterranean from Antiquity to the Renaissance," 179–200 and Nicholas Purcell, "The Ancient Mediterranean: The View from the Customs House," 200–232.
- 6 Michael Herzfeld, "Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything, from Epistemology to Eating," in W.V. Harris, ed. *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, 45–63.
- 7 Sharon Farmer, *The Silk Industries of Medieval Paris: Artisanal Migration, Technological Innovation, and Gendered Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
- 8 On the Barcelona Consulate of Commerce there has been little written. See María Jesús Espuny Tomás, "El Real Consulado de Comercio del Principado de Cataluña (1758–1829)." PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1992). Available on line at <http://www.tdx.cat/TDX-0630109-121322>. The Consulates of Commerce were the heirs to the medieval Consulates of the Sea on which there is an extensive bibliography. See, for example, Román Piña Homs, *El Consolat de Mar, Mallorca, 1326–1800* (Palma de Mallorca: Institut d'Estudis Baleàrics, 1985); *Consulado del mar de Barcelona: nuevamente traducido de catalan en castellano*, trans. Don Cayetano de Pallejá (Barcelona: J. Piferrer, 1732). This title is available on line (though with restricted access). Also Stanley S. Jados, *Consolat de Mar, and related documents* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1975). These holdings in the Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó contain a series of diverse holdings that deal with maritime trade in and out of Barcelona. The holdings are overwhelming. They are organized as follows: there is an inventory of registers and volumes for the Consulate of the Sea (1715–1761) and another register for the Royal Consulate of Commerce (1762–1829) with an additional register for the tribunal of Commerce (1830–1868), plus additional inventories and an index of litigation carried out under the jurisdiction of these bodies. I have focused on the register of protests against the sea. There is an index (that allows for the gathering of information and data speedily: *Indice de los registros de protestas de mar (1766–1868)*, which I have used in the preparation of this book and *Registros de protestas de mar. 1766–1868* in 33 vols. (All of them now gathered in one enormous volume and including close to 25,000 such protests.)