Connections, Mobilities, Urban Prospects and Environmental Threats

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The Mediterranean in Transition

Edited by

Theano S. Terkenli,
Annick Douguédroit and
Louis F. Cassar

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PREFACE

The Mediterranean, the "middle of the earth" in ancient Greek and Latin, a contested, revered and multiply revisited and re-articulated region, where the "West" and the "Orient" part paths: a region of condensed history and geography. This is where the construction of the West, as we know it, starts, our cultural hearth, shared with the Arabic world, and in close correspondence and symbiosis with neighboring African and Asian cultural realms. Aristotle's "inner sea", however, does not belong only to the West; it is universal and omnipresent. Furthermore, it is multiple and dynamically ever-transforming, and it is such 'Mediterraneities' that this book explores, from a geographer's viewpoint—or, should we say, viewpoints.

This world region has always been surrounded by and summoned powerful symbolisms and long-lasting appeal. In the last century or so, the Mediterranean Europe has been attempting to catch up with the rest of Europe socially and economically. In a globalizing world, this upward struggle is dramatically culminating in the current credit/ economic and climate/ environmental crisis, with—as of yet—-uncertain results. Yet, this new crisis notwithstanding, 'mare nostrum' is still largely unknown, in its multitudinous and ever-transforming hypostasis. It is the multiple geographies of this fascinating geographical imaginary that this book turns to explore.

The main objective of this undertaking, then, is to grasp the pulse of the dynamism of such contemporary Mediterranean geographies. Specifically, it addresses trends, challenges, threats and prospects of various sorts to the Mediterranean region (especially Southern Europe and the Middle East), in light of current trends such as climate change, economic crises, accelerated human mobility and info-communication, as these affect an already burdened and fragile part of the world. This is considered to be both, a timely and a pressing task, despite the fact that much has already been written and debated about the Mediterranean.

Thus, the book addresses Mediterranean geographical particularities, but does not attempt to cover every aspect of the human and physical geographies of the Mediterranean region. It rather rests on emergent and increasingly significant issues of Mediterranean bearing, and aims at

providing new perspectives, insights and interpretations to issues exerting various pressures on the region, at various geographical scales. The emphasis is on new and pressing issues, often particular to the Mediterranean; impacts of trends of globalization and crisis on the Mediterranean; discussion of these issues and trends in the context of contemporary world processes. This collective volume provides a more specialized scope on selected Mediterranean geographies, with a focus on emerging and frequently overlooked issues concerning the Mediterranean region, in a world-integrated perspective. Such issues include the increased summer drought and the northward shift of climatic types, littoralisation processes, urbanization trends, human exposure to environmental stresses, the significance of partnerships in tourism and the booming of info-communication technologies.

The present volume comprises an overview on the Geography, History and Heritage of the Mediterranean, and is divided in three parts. The overview sets the stage historically for the specific topics subsequently developed. The first part focuses on issues of urbanization and mobility; it centers on drivers of regional and local dynamism and development and the potentials and challenges posed by and through them. The second part revolves, to a large degree, around climate change in the Mediterranean region and its consequences on the natural and human environment. Finally, the third part of the book features an area of growing significance and interest in and for Mediterranean people and researchers, namely geospatial tools and info-communication technologies, as applicable and applied on contemporary Mediterranean geographies. Issues of globalization thread throughout the book, spanning its historical dimension and its spectrum of geographical differentiation, in the Mediterranean context. Furthermore, this goal is maintained, with an eye to placing the Mediterranean in the context of contemporary world processes, also through the transfer of experiences, ideas, and tools to this region from elsewhere around the world.

Where and when this undertaking fails to deliver its goals, as set above, the failing rests with its editors. Such failings refer to its inability to cover all significant aspects and issues of contemporary Mediterranean geographies or to afford them their due ontological and epistemological breadth and depth. In some cases, the weight of the book's contributions falls more on theoretical underpinnings rather than applied research or vice versa. Consequently, such a task may only assume significance in the context of ongoing work on the geographies of the Mediterranean.

The core of contributions to this volume originates from an initiative of the Mediterranean Renaissance Program of the International Geographical Union (now the COMB Committee of the IGU—International Geographical Union). Most chapters have been authored by members of the latter Committee and additional chapters have been included, in order to cover more aspects of contemporary Mediterranean Geographies.

We would also like to thank our English editor, Mrs. Lena Kontakou (translator/editor, PhD c. Applied Linguistics Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, Madrid) for her thorough editing of the whole manuscript, and all of the book's contributors for their unfailing cooperation and support, throughout this project.

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GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND HERITAGE: A MEDITERRANEAN OVERVIEW

DAVID LOWENTHAL

Foreword

This chapter enlarges on and updates its "Mediterranean heritage: ancient marvel, modern millstone", Nations and Nationalism, 14(2) 2008: 369-92. Its concerns embrace history, heritage and social identity in locales ranging from the Caribbean and Tasmania to the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Greece. Along with the sociology of the islands and their diaspora and conflicted claims to relics and reminders of the classical tradition, it studies Mediterranean environmental and ecological issues past and present.

Abstract

The wealth, variety and seaborne accessibility of Mediterranean societies since late prehistory have made the cultural heritage of the region the most widely acclaimed in the world. But since the fall of the Roman Empire the Mediterranean has been increasingly disadvantaged, its history compromised, its legacy beleaguered. Two millennia of invasion and rapine, religious vendetta, foreign conquest, imperial dominion and colonial subjugation have left Mediterranean people with fewer resources and weaker infrastructures than those of the transalpine and transatlantic nation-states. The consequences for the care and control of the Mediterranean heritage are parlous. That heritage is both, the region's self-defining pride and its economic mainstay, yet a crippling burden to protect and maintain, let alone to interpret and celebrate. It is everywhere beset by natural and human attrition. Weathering and erosion, illicit excavation and pillage, tomb robbery and the international antiquities market exact tolls that legal codes and police forces are all but impotent to stem.

Recent social and political trends suggest potential remedies for some of these dilemmas.

Peerless patrimony, global heritage

Mediterranean cultural heritage is customarily cited as the richest and most widely acclaimed in the world, as well as one of its most ancient. Urban civilisation may have begun earlier in China and Mesopotamia, but it is the Mediterranean, more durably and densely urbanised, that in common Western parlance has long signified civilised antiquity. The megalithic marvels of Malta, the perdurable Pyramids of Egypt, the classical temples of Greece, the multitude of Italian and Spanish UNESCO World Heritage locales, "the sheer quantity of ancient sites and buildings bind past and present more closely in the Mediterranean than anywhere else". A quarter of the one thousand World Heritage sites are in the Mediterranean. With five million catalogued works, Italy alone is said to house half or more of the world's art treasures—a patrimony likened in economic terms to the oil of the Arabian Peninsula. Yet not Italy alone but every Mediterranean country boasts "*a wealth of archaeological and architectural heritage*" that helps to "make it one of the most pleasant places on earth to live in" and to visit (European Community 2002: 11; Benoit and Comeau 2005: 272; Chechi 2009: 187; Lenzerini 2009: 108).

Of that patrimony a high proportion are loci of revelatory sacred import, the focus of millennia of veneration and pilgrimage, along with crusading conflict and contemporary contestation, birthed by and host to the world's three great monotheistic faiths. From Jerusalem west to Compostela and east to Mecca, these "*geographical points of tangency between God and man, between the eternal and history*", in Pope John Paul II's words, infuse the greater Mediterranean with a supremely transcendent living heritage (Ferrari 2014: 4-13). Along with the Mediterranean's extant relics, its long-lost legacies—the cities of Troy and Carthage, the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (Romer and Romer 1995; Scarre 1999: 19-47), the fabled library of Alexandria—continue to infuse collective memory and public art. The lifeblood of the region's vital tourist industry, that heritage is also a global inspiration, "*a monument and symbol of universal civilization*", as phrased in the 1994 Declaration of the Aegean.[1]

Mediterranean civic example suffuses the world's statuary and street names, theatres and plazas, governmental systems and commercial forums, cenotaphs and memorials, colleges and stadiums. The wish to be "Mediterranean" in far-flung New World peripheries enriched colonial elites in Amazonian Brazil with Greek and Roman decor (Marshall 2005: 312). Les Nouvelles Athènes (Retzler 2004) details how classical exemplars from Athens and Florence enhanced eighteenth- and nineteenth-

century Dresden, Weimar, Munich, Edinburgh (by the architect James "Athenian" Stuart), and St. Petersburg. Overseas, a 1936 full-scale Parthenon replica made Nashville, Tennessee, the proud "Athens of the South". Edmonton, Alberta, became the "Athens of the Tundra" when a flood of cultivated Eastern European refugees gave this provincial Canadian capital two symphony orchestras (Lowenthal 1988: 727). "Follow me!" urged mayor W. G. Brookman of Perth, capital of Western Australia, in 1900, "and I will make this city a fairer Athens and a freer Rome" (Richards 1982: 69).[2]

Backing Greek independence in the United States Senate in 1824, Daniel Webster noted that reminders of ancient Greece so enveloped America that "*even the edifice in which we assemble, these proportioned columns, this ornamented architecture, all remind us that Greece has existed, and that we, like the rest of mankind, are greatly her debtors*" (in Lowenthal 1988: 727). Reminiscent of Palladian fame in Georgian Britain (Carré 1996) is the renewed allure of classical architecture in the United States, from Ionic columns and classical proportions, friezes, cornices and statues to a new translation of Vitruvius (Colman 2005). A mere token royalty on every classical ornament erected the world over would enrich Greece beyond compare.

The interlinked Mediterranean: fabled unity and homogeneity

Integral to Mediterranean antiquity were social connections that overrode geographical fragmentation and cultural difference. By the second millennium BC, seaborne accessibility brought trade and industry to every island, to every coast, and deep into the hinterlands of navigable rivers from the Levant to Spain. However distant, what was reachable by sea seemed close, and most of the Mare Internum was safely within landfall. Waterborne mobility linked harbour towns all around and all-year round; oft-trumpeted dangers seldom seriously deterred sea travel (Martín Montero 2002; Horden and Purcell 2005: 367; Malkin 2011; Broodbank 2013). From the first millennium BC, Mediterranean connectivity created concentrations of wealth and culture "*completely unknown anywhere else on the globe*" (Bresson 2005: 113-14). By the second century AD, the Roman Empire had transformed the earlier Greek world into a global village and expanded the Tyrrhenian Mare Nostrum from the Gates of Hercules to the Strait of Gibraltar (Rathbone 2007). The Greco-Roman civilisation during the half millennium from the fifth through the first century BC spread the same architectural styles and ways of life

throughout Greece, Italy, France, Asia Minor, and North Africa. "*Put down in the marketplace of one of these Mediterranean cities of the first century AD you would find it difficult to recognize where you were*", a homogeneity likened to today's ubiquitous skyscraper architecture and global-brand stores (Schäfer 2007: 339).

Here, almost uniquely before modern times, myriad peoples of diverse roots and creeds, customs and tongues, shared habitats and economies. Strife was never absent, but coexistence fostered alertness and flexible adjustment to alien ways, even to the competing monotheistic fealties— Hebraic, Christian, and eventually Islamic—birthed in the region. Proclaiming pan-Mediterranean ties, Greeks inserted themselves into others' histories and traditions, appropriating their patriarchs and legendary heroes, finding fictive founders all around its shores: Cadmus in Thebes, Danaus in Argos, Pelops in the Peloponnese, Perseus in Persia. Romans took pride in Trojan ancestry and Arcadian antecedents. Rivalrous peoples nonetheless, prized interconnection and fabricated kinship; Greeks and Egyptians tied Athens to Egyptian Sais, linking Osiris with Herakles; Hellenistic Jews mingled Egyptian, Babylonian, biblical and Hellenic lore, making citizens of manumitted slaves throughout their mongrel empire. Romans embraced connections with Pythagoras, remoulded Greek and Etruscan rites and rituals, and deferred to the oracle at Delphi (Gruen 2011: 224-227, 355-356).

Although promulgated by Rome, the calamitous Crusades were more often waged as transalpine vendettas. By contrast, Mediterranean folk tended to be urbane cosmopolites' "living proof", in one scholar's view, that "*different cultures [of] diverse traditions and beliefs ... may co-exist*" (C. Schmitt 1954 [1997]). Henri Pirenne's (1935 [1983]) portrait of a Mediterranean hopelessly split by warring faiths is belied by the Cairo Geniza archive's massive evidence of functioning commercial and social networks (Goitein 1999). The facing ports of two small Aegean islands, Herakleia and Schinoussa in the Cyclades, are each protected from gales, one from the Northeast, the other from the Southwest. Espying a threatening wind, fishermen and yachtsmen rush to move boats from one port to the other. The sea is their shared space. The Herakleia–Schinoussa symbiosis is a "fractal" microcosm of the whole Mediterranean's dynamic connectivity (Malkin et al. 2009: 1-2).

Connectivity enabled ancient Rome to extract imperial tribute from the entire basin. Outlasting that empire, Mediterranean unity was long celebrated—longer, in many respects, than it survived. "*The peoples around the Mediterranean*", in the nineteenth-century historian Jakob

Burckhardt's wistful metaphor (1958: 23), "*are really one animate being*". Twenty-three years after the first (1949) edition of his own magnum opus on the Mediterranean world, Fernand Braudel (1972 [1995]: vol. 1, 14) held "*the unity and coherence of the Mediterranean*" a still unchallenged truth. "*The whole sea shared a common destiny*". Following Pirenne, Peter Brown (1982: 168-169) saw "*the basic homogeneity of Mediterranean civilisation [lasting] deep into the early Middle Age*". Divergence within, was "*always dwarfed by the immensity of the gulf which separated the Mediterranean itself from the alien societies*" outside, walled off by steep mountains to the North and East and harsh deserts to the South (Horden and Purcell 2000: 7, 34-38, 134-135; Boissevain 1979: 83).[3]

The basin's homogeneity endured, to some degree, well past early modern times. Even if the so-called "*Mediterraneanism*"—the distinctive features Mediterranean cultures have or have had in common—often seems a wishful reflex in the face of glaring North-South economic disparities (Harris 2005: 38; Calleya 2009: 51), "*the consistency with which the stereotypes appear within the area itself*" vouch for their durable salience. "*From Morocco to Turkey, from Thessaloniki to Toulouse, we hear more or less the same list of traits*" held to be characteristic of everyday life (Herzfeld 2005: 53). The agricultural and social practices, vernacular buildings, cuisine, and folk dances of the Arab Mediterranean are more like those of the non-Arab Mediterranean than of the Arabs of Arabia (Lenzerini 2009: 109n27). As new unities are generated and epitomised by the airplane and the bikini, in reinvented traditions and in local reactions to tourism (Abulafia 2003: 283-312; Horden and Purcell 2005: 363), old unities are revivified by an array of new agencies—the Union for the Mediterranean (now the Barcelona Process), the Euromed University (Calleya 2009; Lesser 2009).

Trade and the spoils of war made the Mediterranean globally crucial until the end of the Second World War, as attested by the strategic importance of Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Crete and Sicily. Control over shipping, however, had already devolved away from Mediterranean empires, centered in Venice and Constantinople, to northern naval powers. Seaborne interaction, once the sine-qua-non of Mediterranean prosperity, increasingly subjugated and impoverished its peoples.

Dwindling influence and prestige

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean by and large became ever more disadvantaged. Two millennia of invasion and rapine, religious vendetta, foreign conquest, imperial dominion, and colonial

subjugation have left its inhabitants with fewer resources and weaker infrastructure than those of most transalpine and transatlantic nation-States. The trading, financial, and commercial power of the Venetian and Genoese empires and other City-States proved a mixed blessing, bringing great wealth through the spice trade and plantation crops at the cost of latifundia slave labour and environmental degradation. After 1550, Venetian, Genoese, and Catalan trade was displaced by Ottoman and Habsburg power and then by French, Dutch, and English commerce, dissolving long-time trans-Mediterranean symbiotic relationships—the Genoese with Castile, Venice with the Sublime Porte, Florence with the French throne. As Portuguese galleons penetrated the Indian Ocean, sugar moved across the Atlantic, and the world's economic hub shifted to the North Sea. Meanwhile the Mediterranean, its shores and lowlands increasingly abandoned for upland occupance, "*was turning into a millpond*" (Tabak 2008: 2, 14-25). As marine trade dwindled, traditional coastal hostelries "accepting all comers" gave way to segregation, rigid disjunctions, expulsions, most notoriously the Spanish expulsion of first Arabs and then Jews (Constable 2003: 11, 356-361). The perceived trend towards divisive fragmentation is epitomised in Nicholas Purcell's (2003) "The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness?"

Mediterranean sovereignties today are mostly poor or small or both; with a few notable exceptions, the Mediterranean parts of larger states (Spain, Italy) are generally least well off, sometimes woefully destitute. "*Almost every region of the Mediterranean*", notes an anthropologist, "*has at some point in the past—generally more than 300 years ago—been much more important than it is now*", whether importance be measured in terms of commerce, capital, or creative confidence (Thomas Crump in Boissevain 1979: 86; see Abulafia 2011: 545-639). A common history of decline suggests homogeneity of a dismaying sort. Since "*the people of the Mediterranean have been engaged in conquest, commerce, colonialism, connubium, and conversation for about five millenniums*", writes another anthropologist, "*it is impossible to imagine that … they have not created common institutions*" (Davis 1987: 22-23). But some see these commonalities as deficiencies that make a mockery, even self-mockery, of Mediterranean distinctiveness (Sant Cassia 1991b).

"*We write*", notes Herzfeld (2001: 675), "*not so much about the Mediterranean, as about "The Mediterranean"*".

The old "Mediterranean" was the famed seedbed of European civilisation. "*All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages has come from the shores of the Mediterranean*", Samuel Johnson summed up Enlightenment views (Fox

1978: 5). As in Art and Law, so in Architecture and Literature and Theatre, Philosophy and Politics, "*when we reflect on supreme human achievement*", wrote Georges Duby in 1988, "*our gaze is drawn to the Mediterranean"* (Carmignani 1996: 9, 15-17).

From ancient cosmopolitan pre-eminence, however, the basin was stereotypically held by transalpine aficionados to have relapsed into quasi-primitive Arcadianism. Against the advanced and dynamic industrial North, the Mediterranean got typecast as southern and backward, rural and artisanal, its "*traditional urban centres more antique curiosity than defining features of the present*" (Herzfeld 2001: 674-675). Seen by Grand (and lesser) Tourists as innocent and childlike, yet conniving and mercenary, at once seductive and effeminate, primitive and violent, Mediterranean youths also fell prey to the homoerotic quests (sanctioned by classical Greek practice and greased by latter-day disparity of wealth) of northerners from Winckelmann, Pater, Symonds and Wilde through E. M. Forster and Thomas Mann (Aldrich 1993: 162-172, 217-229). As resorts of rich rogues, the Riviera and the Costa del Sol became, as Somerset Maugham said of Monaco, "*a sunny place for shady people*" (Chippindale 2007: 742). Meanwhile the golden hordes of holidaying hoi polloi, lured by the banal hedonism of sun, sea, sand, sex, and spirits, penetrate and pullulate in honey pots from Morocco and Mallorca to Corfu and Kefalonia (Crang, Obrador, and Travlou 2012).

Economic need forced locals to promote "*the stereotype of their "hospitality" as presented to foreign tourists*" (Herzfeld 1987: 76-77, 86). But "*in conforming to a model of Mediterranean peoples as unreliable, imprecise, and spontaneous—all virtues highly regarded in Greek cultural intimacy*", they provided "both an excuse for their own failures in the larger spheres of competition and an excuse for others to despise them" (Herzfeld 2005: 57). Given such ambivalence, the only reliable serviceable local defences would seem to be deception and irony—themselves being stereotypically Mediterranean (Zarkia 1996). "*The colonial trauma that envelops the modern Mediterranean, both for its colonized and its colonizers*", concludes one transalpine scholar, "*induces ubiquitous pessimism*" (Chambers 2008: 86, 149).

Legacies of environmental degradation

Over the course of seventy centuries the Mediterranean has not only borne witness to a unique efflorescence of human creativity, it has also endured an unexampled history of human pressure on the natural habitat that periodically left much of it degraded, infertile, desolated. Imperial

depredation typically wasted Mediterranean island and coastal resources. Ancient Rome milked its provinces dry. Venetian, Genoese, and Ottoman commerce transformed the "Isles of Paradise" (Cyprus and Crete), along with much of the former Roman breadbasket in the Levant and North Africa, into soil-depleting and forest-destroying sugar and cotton plantations (Tabak 2008: 303). Aragonese and Savoyard monarchs stripped Sardinia of its forests for timber and fuel; Genoa impoverished Corsica by imposing intensive agriculture. The classic tale of environmental desolation may oversimplify, but its residues are everywhere apparent in landscape and vegetation, soils and sands and watercourses. It is worth recalling George Perkins Marsh's (1864 [2003]: 7-12) famed indictment, penned while he was American Minister to Italy:

> The Roman Empire, at the period of its greatest expansion, comprised the *regions of the Earth most distinguished by a happy combination of physical advantages. The provinces ... of the Mediterranean enjoyed a healthfulness and an equability of climate, a fertility of soil, a variety of vegetable and mineral products, and natural facilities for the transportation and distribution of exchangeable commodities [unequalled] by any territory of like extent in the Old World or the New. ... [But today] more than one half of their whole extent ... is either deserted by civilized man and surrendered to hopeless desolation, or ... greatly reduced in both productiveness and population. Vast forests have disappeared from mountain spurs and ridges; [soils] are washed away; meadows, once fertilized by irrigation, are waste and unproductive, because the cisterns and reservoirs that supplied the ancient canals are broken, or the springs that fed them dried up; rivers famous in history and song have shrunk to humble brooklets ... ; the entrances of navigable streams are obstructed by sandbars, and harbors ... are shoaled by the deposits of the rivers ... ; the elevation of the beds of the estuaries ... have converted thousands of leagues of shallow sea and fertile lowland into unproductive and miasmatic morasses. ... The decay of these once flourishing countries is partly due ... to geological causes ... but it is, in a far greater proportion, either the result of man's ignorant disregard of the laws of nature, or an incidental consequence of war, ... tyranny and misrule ... acts and neglects which have blasted with sterility and physical decrepitude the noblest half of the empire of the Caesars.*

Above all else it was "*the exhaustion of Roman soil and the devastation of Roman provinces*", said a later historian echoing Marsh, that doomed civilised antiquity (V. G. Simkhovitch [1921] in Horden and Purcell 2000: 317). In fact, the deforestation, erosion, flooding, estuarine silting, and lowland abandonment noted by Marsh had been much augmented by logging for timber and fuel since the fourteenth century and

by upland clearing for livestock and New World food crops (maize, potatoes) from the mid-sixteenth century on (Tabak 2008).

The saga of anthropogenic degradation sketched above is dismissed as hyperbole by Grove and Rackham (2001: 8-10, 262-263), who date the general aridity of the Mediterranean rather to the fourth millennium BC. But its main thrust is substantially accepted by many scholars (Sallares 1991; Hughes 1994). Horden and Purcell (2000: 316-340) would recast the history of ecological damage as episodic and locally variable rather than basin-wide and imperial Roman. But they do not suggest that Mediterranean peoples lived in general harmony with their environment, and they stress the grim effects of entrepreneurial greed over the whole of history (Horden and Purcell 2005: 369). In particular, imperial Rome's centralising power and huge demands for food, fuel, and timber indubitably led to deforestation and degraded soils, neglected and abandoned lands, and impoverished peasants and slaves, as tellingly chronicled by Lucretius, Varro, Columella, and Tertullian, first for central Italy and then for North Africa (Williams 2003: 79, 95-100; Walsh 2004: 241; Montgomery 2007: 62-65).

To laud any part of the Mediterranean as a "monument of nature which has remained practically unaltered throughout time", as does the 1994 Declaration of the Aegean, is a myth. Every locale has witnessed continual change, every aspect of nature altered by human usages since the earliest antiquity. Ongoing flooding and alluviation, silting of shorelines and harbours, layering of urban habitation, and manifold enterprises of irrigation and channelling culminating in Suez show man and nature together ceaselessly transforming Mediterranean lands and waters. Environmental pressures exacerbated by tourism continue to degrade much Mediterranean land, with fragile coastal areas and islands especially vulnerable (Allen 2003: 260, 270-272; Benoit and Comeau 2005: 261-271, 282-289, 305-354; Hillali 2008). One of the world's richest and most endangered ecosystems, the Mediterranean, is in dire need of decontamination from industrial emission, municipal waste, and urban waste water (Lesser 2009: 33-34; Holst-Warhalf and Stenhuis 2010).

The crippled and crippling heritage

These retrogressions are parlous for the care of Mediterranean artistic and architectural heritage, whose glories have long seemed virtually synonymous with social decay and political degeneration. Although the self-defining pride and an economic mainstay of many Mediterranean natives, that heritage is at the same time a crippling burden to protect and

maintain, let alone to interpret and celebrate. It is everywhere beset by natural and human attrition. Weathering and erosion, illicit excavation and pillage, tomb robbery and the international antiquities market exact tolls that legal codes and armed guards are all but impotent to stem. At Pompeii, trampled by 2.6 million visitors a year, cracking walls, falling stones, abandoned work sites and flaking frescoes led to a year-long closure in 2008; half the houses, their interiors carpeted in weeds, remain shut. Escalating cultural loss has increased sharply in recent decades owing to voracious and insatiable international markets, armed conflict, civil unrest, and economic hardship (Vrdoljak and Francioni 2009: 3; Popham, 2010; A. Wallace 2013).

Competing national, regional, local, and family claims to "ancestral" legacies bedevil heritage stewardship throughout the Mediterranean. Such conflicts are especially rife in Italy, owing to the weakness and felt alienation of Rome from the Provinces, and of provincial authorities from the villages and the countryside (Odermatt 1996). Italy's combined police force and army cannot secure its relic-laden soil against *tombaroli*, its thousands of museums and a hundred thousand churches against theft, nor its borders against illicit export. Rome has been impotent to staunch the outflow of antiquities that defies the blanket prohibition against the sale abroad of its *beni culturali*. Illicit traffic is most widespread in Tuscany and Sicily, whose inhabitants confront reminders of their ancestors daily, living atop them, building on their graves, stumbling across relics in fields and foundations.

Tomb robbing, a practice as ancient as the burial of the grave goods, is an economic mainstay and a source of local pride among enduring family networks. "Illegal digging is an institutionalised part of community life"; it is a rule that "any money made has to be spent immediately" for the benefit of all. *Tombaroli* are widely viewed as Robin Hoods stealing from the rich to give to the poor. They feel entitled to the rewards of digging by consanguinity with those buried there. "*Many inhabitants of modern Tuscany see themselves as direct descendants of the Etruscans. They claim to have Etruscan physical features and ... to maintain intimate links with the Etruscan ancestors*", whose spirits direct the digger to the chosen site (Thoden van Velzen 1996: 111-113, 118).

Tombaroli and their neighbours regard outsiders—the State, the Police, and, especially, archaeologists from Rome—as extortionate interlopers. As locals see it, "*excavations should not be the prerogative of landowners and archaeologists alone*" (Thoden van Velzen 1996: 117). That view is reinforced by the central Government's predisposition to favour the

Greco-Roman heritage and, until lately, to relegate even the notably ancient Etruscan to second rank. Given the profusion of forged Etruscan antiquities and documents, of which Annius of Viterbo and Curzio Inghirami of Volterra were only the most famed perpetrators, the anti-Etruscan bias is not wholly unjustified (Rowland 2004).

Tomb robbing has grown since the 1950s owing to increased public interest in Etruscan culture, intensified agriculture, the lucrative global market for antiquities, and, until the late 1990s, casual official disregard of illicit export. Although post-war *laissez-faire* resignation has given way to a new cultural militancy that scored recent spectacular recoveries of illegally exported antiquities and, it was said, reduced illegal digging, permanent protection remains chimerical (Chechi 2009: 157-158; Lobay 2014). All apart from long-term conservation, daily care of the architectural and urban legacy exacts costs beyond Italian means or will (Benedikter 2004). With a mere fifth of one percent of the national budget devoted to cultural heritage, even Rome's greatest antiquities—the Colosseum, the Domus Aurea, the Palatine—are crumbling (Kimmelman 2010a; Squires 2010; Rocca 2011), and much of Italy's heritage is increasingly privatised. During the summer of 2004 a lone iconoclast armed with no more than a wrench and a screwdriver wreaked havoc in Venice with total impunity; to safeguard the massive heritage of that city it would require putting the whole of it behind glass or replacing every original piece of marble, stone and plaster with a copy (Povoledo 2004). Hence the sardonic Italian joke (www.euronews.com 2013): "*You know that 60% of the world's cultural heritage is in Italy? And the rest? The rest is safe!*"

Herein lies the conundrum of the Mediterranean heritage. This wondrous legacy is crucial to the identity and, for many, to sheer livelihood. "*Our Government can do nothing for us, and this thing that was built thousands of years ago is still helping me feed my family*", said a postcard vendor outside Cairo's Egyptian Museum. But that is all it means to him. "*We feel the weight of this History when we get paid*", added a peasant farmer hauling debris from a newly discovered third millennium BC Pyramid near Cairo. "*But if we don't get paid, we feel nothing*" (Slackman 2008). Wholesale rifling of Egyptian museums, historic sites, and archaeological excavations during the turbulent years since attests the prime value of the past as a disposable resource for survival in the ravaged present.

Mediterranean heritage is on the one hand so voluminous and cumbersome, on the other so fragile, envied and exportable, that it is unsustainable. This fearsome imbalance, along with the continual attrition of theft and sale, copying and faking, has given rise among many

Mediterranean folk to a bitter or resigned sense that the heritage in which they are steeped does not really belong to them, but is an incubus to be overcome or eradicated.

The present in thrall to the past: Italy and Greece

The most agonising burden of a voluminous glorious past is to feel not just swamped by but inferior to it.[4] Ancestral marvels demean modern heirs who, in the prevailing stereotype, cannot create but can only admire, husband, display, and copy. The sheer weight of Rome's monumental ruins, alike sublime spectacles of ancient glory and gloomy images of death, seemed to Petrarch (Liber sine nomine 1347-1354 in Coogan 1983: 3)—"*dwellings are propstrate, walls are toppling, churches are falling, sacred things are perishing*"—to freeze its populace, immured among the Eternal City's ashes and petrified memories, into defeatist inaction (Mazzotta 1993: 120). Eighteenth-century Grand Tour gentry dismissed Italians as hapless custodians of the treasures that northern worshippers of antiquity came to admire. Italian painters and draughtsmen—Panini, Piranesi—so immortalized the Roman decay and dissolution that tourists closed their eyes to everything modern as a sad defilement of the city's aura of antiquity (Cooper 1999: 107-108; Siegel 2005).

The Romantic poets who flocked to Italy after 1815 were besotted by its past and dismissive of its present; they learned Italian to read Renaissance sources, not to converse with Risorgimento patriots. "*Rome is a city of the dead, or rather of those ... puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot ... made sacred to eternity*", wrote Shelley (1912: 2:653) in 1818 of Europe's third most populous city; "*you see nothing of the Italians*". In "*transition from Europe's "museum" to Europe's "mausoleum", Italy without the Italians*" was a land of sepulchres, tombs, and cemeteries (Luzzi 2002: 49-52; 2008). The overwhelming sense of decay from imperial greatness was epitomized in the painter Thomas Cole's scenes of destruction and desolation in his 1833-1836 Course of Empire series, derived in large part from ruins at Baia and Pozzuoli in the Roman Campania. Lapped in sentimental adoration of Dante and Petrarch, the Brownings and their expatriate successors to the present day, cared for in their Arcadian villas by obsequious servants, treated Italy as a museum of its own "*ancient and weary civilization*" (Cavaliero 2005: 207-223).[5] Deadly malarial Rome, whose every haunting dream of beauty was tainted with "*the fever of fear*", epitomized, for Ruskin, the "*strange horror*" of this "*mass of accumulated human corruption*" (Pettitt 2014).

Casting off this demeaning heritage was the *cri de coeur* of Italian Futurists. By the late nineteenth century, thwarted national aspirations left Italy's youth completely subjugated to the past. Faced with *risorgimento* failures, as earlier with foreign oppression, Italians had long taken refuge in classicism and neoclassicism, their dreams of a new life harking back to Imperial Rome. The Futurists scorned this worship of the past as an insuperable obstacle to progress. Their manifestoes termed Italy as "the country of the dead", its people dozing over the glory of their ancestors, Rome and Venice mired in mouldy relics, Florence a cemetery kept up for tourists besotted with the antiquarian rubbish celebrated by transalpine visitors like Goethe and Ruskin. Italians had been reduced to slavish lackeys purveying fake antiques, thus denying and demeaning themselves. The real Italy lays in modern machine-age Milan and Turin, not in the Baedekered, *dolce far niente*, fetid necropolises (Marinetti 1909; Rainey et al., 2009: 52, 63-4, 75, 105, 218, 260, 274).[6]

Many Futurists soon morphed into fascists, and Mussolini initially echoed their iconoclastic rhetoric. Italians must, "*quit living off the glories of the past*", he declared in the early 1920s, "*cease being degenerate and parasitic grandchildren*" and make sure "*past glories are surpassed by those of the future*" (in Nelis 2007: 403, 409). But whereas the Futurists condemned the entire past, fascism simply got rid of the dolorous epochs, the smothering "centuries of decadence" following Imperial Rome. And fascists celebrated, purified, and modernized selected idealised pasts for urban regeneration, to foster Italian pride in identity, and to promote tourism. Futurists rejected fascism's cult of past glories (Gentile 2000: 11; 2007).

In Rome Mussolini identified the heart and soul with the features of the imperial past, "wise and strong, disciplined and imperial", virtues "valid yesterday, tomorrow and always". He fancied himself as a new Caesar, Augustus or Trajan. Adopting ancient Roman paraphernalia—fasces, wolf, eagle—along with Roman salute and military step, festivals and spectacles, he destroyed medieval and Renaissance structures, "liberat[ing] all of ancient Rome from the mediocre pasts" to create celebratory spaces and the triumphal Via dei Fori Imperiale (Nelis 2007: 400, 403, 412). And Mussolini's architects rebuilt Rome in neo-Roman style. The unadorned simplicity of the streamlined Roman Plain Style harked back to Greco-Roman while stressing vernacular Italic influences, exemplified in the columns, arches, and stairways of the modernist Esposizione Roma in the late 1930s (Kostof 1973; Lasansky 2004: 16).

In Tuscan cities lacking relics of classical antiquity, the myth of *romanità* gave way to a myth of *italianità,* autochthonous Etruscan and

Italic traditions signifying independent self-reliance and reinforcing popular faith in Italian superiority. Stripped of later additions, purified medieval and Renaissance buildings and antiquated festivals and pageantry made Tuscany's heavily restored towns and traditions "*appear more medieval and Renaissance than they ever really were*" (Lasansky 2004: xlii-xliii).

Greece became the next, and remains the most conspicuous, victim of its fabled history. From the failed revolt against Ottoman suzerainty in 1770 to the War of Independence half a century later, Greek patriots learned that in order to enlist essential Western support they had to accept Philhellenes' nostalgised Eurocentric constructions of their identity and their cause. As the reformer Richard Monckton Milnes (Picturesque Sketches, 1834) found a decade after Greek freedom, modern Greeks became "*the pensioners of the culture which the rest of Europe has learnt by labour and by the fruition of the ages; they have to think with others' thoughts, almost to feel with others' feelings*" (in Roessel 2002: 15, 116). Omnipresent reminders of the unmatchable virtues of the past, the monumental remains of Classical Antiquity are sacred to Greek national ideology. And they wield potent moral authority. Since the past stands for purity, the present is *ipso facto* polluted; at least since the seventeenth century ancient glory has been felt to imply modern decadence (Saīd 2005: 277-289; Hamilakis 2007). In Kostas Mitropoulos's cartoons the ancient Greek past becomes a "prison" for modern Greeks (Hamilakis 2000).

"*I woke with this marble head in my hands*", wrote the poet Seferis (1935 [1969]: 7, 53); "*...it exhausts my elbows and I don't know where to put it down*". The poet's antique "brothers in stone … united hardness and weakness". The curated hordes of armless and mutilated classical statues bespeak the support exacted from the living to prop up the dead. "*For modern Greek artists*", concludes an interviewer, "*the ancient forebears are a tough act to follow*" (Carr 2005b). Many feel conscious, in museum director Niko Stavroulakis's words, of inhabiting "*a nation aware of a past too grand to live up to*" (in Lowenthal 1988: 734). Long before the 2011 financial crisis, a cartoonist was asked whether he thought Greece had a future. "*Well, he said, we have a past. You can't have everything*" (Storace 1997: 159).

Since the War of Independence Greeks have vehemently repudiated the notorious ethnic slurs (not true Hellenes, just Slavs and Albanians, or worse yet, "wretched Orientals", Turks in disguise) of Jakob Fallmerayer and his ilk (Just 1995; Saīd 2005: 277). Yet they shared philhellene dismay at the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between "*what it was that the Greeks had been, and what it was that they are no longer*", in Virginia