

A word of introduction from the editors...

The idea which nurtured this first issue of *Mediterraneans* was born in the early spring of 1990. It came from a desire to assemble on a regular basis a body of writing that would reflect the diversity of life and the wealth of cultures in those countries facing one another along and across the Mediterranean Sea, writing that would at once delight and inform. It seemed to us that the rekindled interest in Eastern Europe, so strongly felt at that time, needed to be complemented by a rediscovery of the common humanity of Europeans and other peoples. We thought we could contribute to that by focusing on those who live around the Mediterranean, an area we are attached to by passion, interest and experience.

Thus we began with a denial—that the Mediterranean Sea doesn't and shouldn't divide between North and South; and with an ambition—that we would create an enlightening and entertaining forum for creative ideas in a review which would juxtapose writings from and about North Africa, the Middle East and Southern Europe. A vision rather than an ideology, our project is concerned with subjects and views that normally do not receive much notice and with people or groups whose voices are too seldom heard. If the reader discerns bias, it is our

sympathy for the unheralded, the unknown or little known, and the unexpected.

While preparing our first number, some of the places and issues of the region we had in mind came uncannily to the forefront of world attention. Thus, the articles about Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, and Yugoslavia which were in hand proved relevant for understanding subsequent unfolding events. The Gulf War, in particular, has shown the extent to which the Arab world is complex and seemingly unpredictable in its regimes, its populations, their reactions and their sensibilities. We feel now more than ever the importance of publishing informed writing from and about this part of the world. Of course, the tendency to ignore the region will reappear; but the unresolved problems will ensure that it regularly returns to centre stage.

From the beginning we have enjoyed tremendous encouragement from those connected with matters Mediterranean. Positive response to the idea of the review, as well as suggestions for articles and readiness to contribute, has given us encouragement and has come from writers and readers alike. The combination of eyewitness accounts, reportage, conversations, fiction and poetry, articles on food and drink, photographs and graphic arts found in this first issue are characteristic of the creative approach of *Mediterraneans*. Our interests extend from the personal to the political and from social issues to the environment, and in the future we expect to select from these a main theme for each number of the review.

This first number is meant to show the wide range of subjects and talent tied in some way to the Mediterranean. It leads off with Juan Goytisolo's evocative account of Cairo's enormous cemetery (*The City of the Dead*) accompanied by Bernard Guillot's powerful photographs and includes eyewitness accounts from Baghdad to Barcelona by David Hirst, Mahmoud Darwish, Julie Flint, Yigal Sarna, Ian Traynor, Montserrat Roig; an excerpt from the last book by Lawrence Durrell (who died in November 1990); Lucia Graves, born on the island of Mallorca, writing about her father Robert,

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accompanied by drawings of Graves in his last years by David Templeton; a conversation with Jacques Berque; one of Alberto Moravia's last interviews before his death in October 1990; stories by Clarisse Nicoïdsky, Abdelwahhab Meddeb and Habib Tengour; Claudia Roden on Italian regional cooking; a portfolio of Mediterranean youth by the Swiss photographer Jean Mohr and drawings of Tangier by the Nottingham artist Peter Dyer; poems, original and translated (in Arabic, English, French, Maltese, Catalan, Hebrew, Croatian) by Adonis, DJ Enright, John Berger, Desmond O'Grady, J-C Depaule, Joe Friggieri, Alex Sussana, Ammiel Alcalay, Rony Somek, Drago Stambuk; and an article in memory of JP Thieck, a brilliant orientalist who tragically died last year at the age of 40, by Jean Hannoyer.

Mediterraneans publishes articles, stories and poems in English or French, in the hope that readers will appreciate both languages. In most cases we prefer to leave work written in either language in its original form; but we have done and will do some translating from one to the other. As for other languages of the Mediterranean, we intend to translate either into French or English, except in the case of poetry where we will publish the poem in its original language alongside translation into French or English. We are gambling that readers will find these forms of presentation reasonable and agreeable.

We are gambling, as well, that we can offer the material that the subject deserves and that you will want to read. Our enterprise is as audacious as it is modest. We think that we have assembled some marvellous texts. Read them and judge for yourselves!

Manchester
June 1991