
INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Brown and
Robert Waterhouse

A word of introduction from the editors...

The response to *Mediterraneans 1* has been positive and encouraging. We have received many letters, almost all of them highly complimentary. One, from Richard Garrett of Manchester, was especially gratifying: *I very much enjoyed the first issue... In particular I was impressed by Yannis Ritsos and Mahmoud Darwish – making a cup of coffee will never be the same again... This is a super magazine, the best I've ever come across, and I really don't know how you've managed to find so many good writers. It deserves to be blessed with good fortune.*

Mr Garrett also had a criticism with regard to the material in French: *Have you really thought about what you're doing here? Because it feels to me like a form of exclusivity; a way of shutting out anyone who is not, you know, one hundred percent au fait.*

The French novelist Claude Ollier (an excerpt of whose novel on Marrakesh appears in this number in English translation) expressed a similar reservation: *Je trouve que la plupart des contributions sont intéressantes, la présentation est très bien, mais je ne suis pas d'accord avec la plurilinguisme, je pense qu'une revue doit se cantonner, se 'reserrer' autour d'une seule et même langue. Mais cette opinion, bien sur, est tout à fait criticable.* We are in unsurprised by these misgivings coming from opposite sides of the Channel: they serve to strengthen our commitment to combat insularity on all sides. Moreover, the review is doing

well among both anglophones and francophones.

We have been pleased to receive many unsolicited contributions in English and in French, almost all of them of quality and interest and coming from unknown or unheralded writers. It has confirmed another resolve – to tap into what we believe to be a large reserve of good writing and to help its authors find their way into print as contributors to our literary venture. At the same time we have had a measure of success in persuading and cajoling established writers to join us and to believe that our review is important and original.

Our experience in the less dramatic but at least equally fundamental task of attracting the attention of the wider reading public has been more difficult. The reviews of *Mediterraneans 1* in the press and magazines – in *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *Le monde diplomatique*, *Libération*, *Impressions du Sud* – have been very encouraging; but there have not been at all enough of them. We miss the kind of support and notice that the Philip Toynbees of other times lent to literary magazines like ours. And distribution, especially in the US, is a serious problem; the ailments of the book trade make libraries and bookshops reluctant to take risks. But we have found that when *Mediterraneans* does find its way into the shops, readers buy it and enjoy it. Sales and subscriptions are both promising and precarious. We need soon to be able to print and sell 3,000 copies of each number to be ‘in business’. Our means are quite limited. Our aim is to become a commercial venture and to be able to pay contributors more than the minimal sums that we can afford at the moment.

Some readers have expressed bemusement over the emergence of a review on matters Mediterranean in a place such as Manchester, as well as curiosity about our credentials and biases – what we stand for – and who stands behind us. So we will try to locate ourselves, make more explicit some of our aims and hopefully dispel some suspicions of sinister or grandiose reasons and ambitions. This will not be a Manifesto, but rather a few explicit words about our motives, standards and mottoes, and about how we got *Mediterraneans* onto its feet.

Put simply: our idea at the origin was to find writing of

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quality and interest, according to our subjective standards, about the peoples and the cultures around the Mediterranean, and to publish these on a regular basis for what we hoped would become a committed readership. We felt sure that in the vast domain of writing from and on the region, there was much that would amuse, enchant, and inform, and a potential audience that would appreciate a periodical that was 'literary', but also 'political' and 'sociological'. One of our mottos that appeared in the letter sent to potential contributors and in the first issue was from DJ Enright's poem *Reflections on Foreign Literature*:

*"Whispering that nothing is exotic, if you understand it, if you
stick your neck out for an hour or two;
That only the very worst literature is foreign;
That practically no life at all is."*

Mediterraneans was born in the Withington Bowling Club, the Red Lion (a well-known South Manchester pub), and the Café Istanbul (Manchester's finest Turkish bistro). The joint editors, the one an academic teaching sociology at the university, the other a journalist of a literary bent, hatched the plot over pints of Holts and Robinsons beers, agreeing to disagree on tastes from the beginning. Patrick Quinn, an enterprising publisher, was then seduced into putting up the money over several pints of Guinness stout in the Red Lion, and finally Trevor Hatchett, a prominent typographer and designer, found himself roped in around a table of Turkish delights in the Café Istanbul. Eventually Elaine Scanlan, a student of English, joined in, administering an office in Quinn's garden. (Only later did we discover that his namesake John Quinn, a New York lawyer and patron of the arts, had financed the publication of Joyce's *Ulysses*. A nice accident to nurture our literary designs!)

That the project was born in Manchester is probably no accident. Legitimations come easily. *Cottonopolis*, the world's first modern city, still boasts its monumental wholesale warehouses, impressive sites of industrial archeology with names like *Orient House*, scattered along Princess Street in the city centre. Rusholme, now the hub of businesses of people from the

Indian sub-continent, still maintains the best Mediterranean grocery shop in the Northwest and Azir, an Armenian from Cyprus who came here a half century ago to study medicine and who speaks about a dozen languages, can supply any titbit imaginable for his customers. The Syrians, Greeks and Moroccans who had flocked here to work in the textile industry at the turn of the century have mostly gone, but their stately houses and churches, mosques and synagogues in Didsbury remain, and they are filled with their descendants and newcomers from wider climes. Moreover, Manchester has been and seeks to remain a city of learning and culture, and its heritage includes some eminent thinkers and writers – Engels, Marx, Freud, Canetti, the Hourani brothers, Butor; its publishers and libraries – Carcanet and the John Rylands with its wonderful collections of classical and oriental manuscripts – and its universities all have Mediterranean dimensions. There is some logic, as well as the circumstances of hazard, to justify the location of our review amongst all of this.

Thus, a literary, political and sociological periodical concerned with big issues and everyday matters and about the Mediterranean came to life in Manchester, of all places. Its contributors are writers – whether academic, creative, or journalistic (much of the best contemporary history is being written by journalists) – who are bright and hungry for attention, recognition and livelihood. Its style is discursive, topical (or not), and subjective, and its format is words and images. Its subject matter is defined by our curiosity and estimates – and that of our contributors and readers – of what needs to be told, written about and shown. David Gascoyne in his *Remembering the Dead* sums it up nicely: *There is no other way of solving the problems of life and death than by thinking about them always... Those who have neither curiosity nor doubts are the only real dead.* What we hope to have in common with contributors and readers is the respect which we give to the written word.

This issue of *Mediterraneans* focuses on Yugoslavia and the Gulf War and its aftermath. We have gone from Ian Traynor's brilliant evocation of the situation of Albanians in Kosovo in the first issue to Richard West's explanation of the background and

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context of Yugoslavia's civil wars and to 'literary' expressions of 'the problems of life and death' there at the moment. And we have highlighted experiences of the Gulf War by some people who lived through it directly or vicariously. These follow the subjective analysis by David Hirst of the situation in Iraq on the eve of the war in the first issue. To these texts are added a variety of fresh writing about the kind of world we and people of the Mediterranean live in.

A few apologies are in order for major and minor teething problems in *Mediterraneans 1*. The quality of the reproduction of Jean Mohr's telling photographs dissatisfied everybody. We intend not to repeat that disservice. In David Hirst's article a typographical error placed the first Gulf War between Iraq and Iran in 1908 rather than 1980! The English translation of the title of Roni Somek's poem should have read *7 Lines on the Marvellous Yarkon*. In Clarisse Nicoidski's text a note was inadvertently omitted. It stated that the story was an extract from an unpublished novel made up of letters and fragments of letters which express the transposition of myth and the story of Héloïse and Abélard into the contemporary world and within the context of the Algerian War: two periods, the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1970s, and four places, Lyon, Pas-de-Calais, Paris and Algiers. In Claudia Roden's article the recipe for *FAVE STUFFA AL CACIO* should have read, of course, *One large onion (not melon!), chopped*. Finally, what appeared as the Preface to Yannis Ritsos' poem *Persephone* should have come as an Afterword at the end of the poem. Because of that serious error on our part and because the end of the poem presages Ritsos' death which took place when *Mediterraneans 1* was in press, we have reprinted here the last stanza and what should have been the Afterword.

Although we have presented no manifesto, we would like to offer a motto. It is a quotation from John Ruskin about the best poetry of Byron, a man of extensive Mediterranean sensibilities:

[He] spoke only of what he had seen and known; and spoke without exaggeration, without mystery, without enmity, and without mercy: 'That is so – make what you will of it.'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Copyright for all material included in the review remains with authors, translators and publishers.

The drawing of Marrakesh comes from the *Paintings of James McBey* (Harper Collins, London) thanks to **Jennifer Melville** of the Aberdeen Art Gallery where McBey's work is on exhibition and who has edited the book.

Rolly Rosen's article first appeared in Hebrew in the Jerusalem weekly *Kol Ha'ir*.

Abderrahman Munif's text is an excerpt from *Cities of Salt III: Variations on Night and Day* to be published in 1992 by Pantheon Books.

The excerpt from **Yehoshua Kenaz's** Hebrew novel, *Heart Murmur* (Am Oved, Tel Aviv 1986. 597 p.) was made available thanks to the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature (POB 10051, Ramat Gan 52001, Israel). A French translation of the novel is being published by Actes Sud, Arles.

Juan Goytisolo's article originally appeared in *El Pais* (Madrid) on 27 January 1991.

The conversation between **Naguib Mahfouz** and **Muhammad Berrada** originally appeared in Arabic in *an-Naqid* (London), no. 18 (December 1989) and in French in *Revue des études palestiniennes* (Paris), no. 31 (Printemps 1989).

Ismail Kadaré's story appeared in *Le monde diplomatique* (Mai 1990) and has been reproduced with the kind permission of his editor **Claude Durand**.

Maxime Rodinson's obituary of CA Julen originally appeared in *Nouvelle Revue Socialiste*, Septemeber 1991.

Hommage to Dubrovnik by Ljubinka Trgovcevic was published in English translation in *Yugofax*, London, 16 November 1991.

Mimoun by **Raphael Chirbes** was published in Spanish by Editorial Anagrama, Barcelona 1988.

Claude Ollier's *Marrakch Medine* was published in French by Flammarion, Paris 1980.

The help of **Michèle Jole** and **Daniel Brown** in the preparation of the French texts has been invaluable.