

Panel 14: **Bodies, Discourses and Geographies: Mediterranean migrations in postcolonial perspectives**

Thursday 17, 16.30-18.45, Auditorium Giancarlo De Carlo

Convenors: **Gabriele Proglia** (European University Institute / University of Tunis 'El Manar'),
Chiara Giubilaro (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Il presente panel intende analizzare le recenti migrazioni tra le due sponde del Mediterraneo da diverse prospettive interpretative e con molteplici sguardi disciplinari. In particolare, l'intento dei paper qui accolti sarà quello di problematizzare, a partire dalle elaborazioni avanzate degli studi postcoloniali, della geografia critica e della storia culturale, le trasformazioni sociali, culturali, politiche di questi ultimi anni (diaspore, primavera arabe, Isis, ecc.). Questo significa rimettere in discussione tanto la geografia del piano e la violenza della ragione cartografica che la sottende (Farinelli 2009), quanto la storia lineare della modernità e le rimozioni che la autorizzano (Chambers 2007), essendo l'una e l'altra strategie attraverso le quali l'Europa ha tentato di riconfermare la sua centralità rispetto al resto del mondo, e, in particolare, all'Africa e all'Asia. La decostruzione di queste narrazioni, mirata a porre attenzione alle conflittualità che si muovono tra i confini e all'interno del Vecchio Continente, rivela infatti l'esistenza di una serie innumerevole di frammentazioni dello spazio e del tempo attraverso cui l'Europa si è rappresentata come Fortezza. Queste "rotture" sono anche i punti attraverso cui è possibile accedere ad altre geografie e altre storie dell'area. Seguendo questa traiettoria interpretativa, il panel accoglie paper che analizzino i rapporti culturali tra le due coste del 'mare interno' in termini di posizionamento dei discorsi tra l'Europa mediterranea e le ex-colonie, tra Europa e Africa. In particolare, ampio spazio sarà dato al rapporto tra corpi e confini nelle pratiche di oltrepassamento dei limites europei, alle strategie di narrazione dei soggetti non (solamente) europei, alle pratiche di visualizzazione e nascondimento degli harragas, ai processi di risignificazione dei luoghi da parte dei migranti, di produzione e condivisione di memorie di viaggio capaci di eludere i dispositivi di contenimento ed espulsione messi in campo dalla Fortezza Europa.

Paper givers:

1) **Giulia de Spuches** (University of Palermo), *Mediterranean Diasporas: una herida abierta*

The concept of diaspora has become increasingly fluid. One has to focus the attention on the diasporic condition in order to appreciate that mobility is not just the analysis of a "community" studied in the country of arrival, or in that of origin. This emphasizes all various, spatial and temporal, phases migrants go through their movements. However, diaspora must absolutely not become a synonym of movement, because one cannot lose the sense of violence and conflict implicit in it. We could, actually, say that the diaspora phenomenon plays a double role: on the one hand, with an internal movement, it reinforces discourses on the necessity of maintaining a nation's homogeneity; on the other hand, with a movement towards the outside, it allows the relation between nation-state and European Union (EU), as a supranational entity, not to be put into question by the incapacity of dealing with the phenomenon. As Fernand Braudel (1949) used to say, the Mediterranean is

a complex of seas rather than a single mass of water. Thus, the duty of naming and tracing the boundaries of *mare nostrum* has been, and still is, an endeavour that many scholars have taken on. But, whereas the name has undergone only slight modifications, tracing its boundaries has proved almost impossible. My paper wants to explore the action of the Mediterranean in suspending diasporas: the Mediterranean has become a passage and a zone. Shifting places but not the idea, and so doing according to Anzaldúa (1987), is a *herida abierta*. Despite being a very patrolled zone, the Mediterranean Sea is a very dangerous passage. In the overlapping between zone and passage is hidden the concept of human, because human status carries all its subjectivity, and it involves arguments about geo- and biopolitical boundaries. It is in this suspension that the human concept reveals how much it's socially articulated and changeable; how much it depending on race, morphology, sex and ethnicity. Accepting a border culture signifies recovering the hidden histories by re-telling the past; it signifies, in Spivak's words, imagining the other: a necessary and impossible but an endless work.

2) **Liliana Ellena** (European University Institute), *Archival Relations across Mediterranean Borders*

The paper focuses on various connections between memory and 'movements' which point to dislocation as an intrinsic feature of memory itself. In this exploration it takes as a starting point two art projects: the performance action *Erster Europäischer Mauerfall* runned by the Berlin based Centrum für Politische Schönheit and Emily Jacir's installation *Material for a film* (2004-), based on the life of Palestinian writer Wael Zuaier who was assassinated in Rome in 1972. Reshaping asynchronous relations between archival and memorial materials, spaces and temporalities, these works chart unexpected or silenced relationalities between the two shores of the Mediterranean connecting the struggles around internal and external European walls as well as different activists networks arising from the Palestinian diaspora and the intraeuropean migrations. By insisting on strategies of intervention rather than strategies of representation they draw attention to memory acts as performative cultural practices engaging with new affective political geographies which might emerge when practices of remembrance are recognized as implicated with each other. The paper discusses the theoretical and political potential of a "critical anachronism," as a creative and critical stance able to uproot and disrupt previous linear historical intelligibility and to forge new transformative interventions which look back and forward from our diasporic present.

3) **Gaia Giuliani** (University of Coimbra), *Lampedusa: Performing Dystopias*

As a dystopic space, Lampedusa represents the hyper-real functioning (or dys-functioning) of border control. Site of biometrics and definitions of European 'imagined community' (Anderson), Lampedusa is the conundrum of a number of colour lines/borders that have older and more recent origins: the North/South (Continental Europe vs. Mediterranean Europe), the South-South (Mediterranean Europe vs. Mediterranean Africa), South-East (Mediterranean Europe vs. the Middle East) faults – constructed within a set of discourses that are racialised, gendered, and sexualised. My paper wants to explore the overlapping of local, national and international colour lines and European borders, as well as their

cooperation in constructing a system of definitions - fixing the meaning of 'life' (Butler 2009) - and distinctions - between 'killability' and 'grievability' (Asad 2002) - within what Talal Asad has called the «small colonial war». By local, national and international colour lines, I mean the cultural, social, and geographical axes assigned of a specific colour (racialised identities) by European agencies implied in transnational migration's control and management. With 'European borders' I mean those 'instable fictional boundaries' established by European government(s) in order to contain Europe within an idea of itself that identifies the EU as the Northern outpost of civilisation, whiteness and rightfulness.

4) **Gabriele Proglia** (European University Institute), *Fortress Europe, Border Lampedusa*

This paper aims to explore some cultural expressions of Lampedusa as a metaphor of the Fortress Europe and mediatisation of the border. In particular, my intention is to compare some pictures of migration in Lampedusa with those in Melilla and Greek/Turkish border. The goal of my intervention is to highlight how various forms of narrations combine one with each other in order to affirm: - a unique representation of the European territory overlooking the Mediterranean sea, in opposition to a fragmentation of the migration's cultural geography; - the Mediterranean sea as space of 'controlled movements', in opposition to a "crossing space".

5) **Chiara Giubilaro** (University of Milano-Bicocca), *Regarding the shipwreck of others: Migrations, necro-aesthetics and the politics of affect*

Since at least 1992 the Mediterranean has become the unstable ground where the dominant policies of regulated mobility and discontinuous surveillance are continuously challenged by bodies which struggle for their fundamental right to move. This conflict between global regimes of disciplined mobility (Philo 2014) and singular forms of embodied resistance (Agamben 1990) involves also the field of representation and its forcible effects on perception and responsiveness. If representation is the main domain where practices of humanization and dehumanization ceaselessly occur (Butler 2013), then it becomes crucial to analyse the production of images critically and to understand how socio-political and visual norms are inextricably linked to each other. This relationship between politics and aesthetics (Rancière 1995) is particularly strong in contexts marked by violent asymmetries between those who gain representation and those who have no chance to represent themselves, as for the migrants crossing – or attempting to cross – the Mediterranean today. The aim of this paper is to move beyond the contemporary European representation of migrations and to critically explore the political, economic and cultural relations underlying its production. To learn to see these frames and their dehumanizing effects means not only to unveil norms and patterns regulating our field of perception, but – more radically – to open up a space of political responsibility and critical intervention.

6) **Andrea Brazzoduro** (Oxford University), *A Genealogy of the Present: Contemporary Echoes of the Algerian War of Independence*

This paper challenges—and potentially undermines—the “historical” national narratives that work to maintain the Mediterranean as a border, in the frame of an unexhausted “memory war” that is ongoing both between and within Algeria and France. It proposes to frame a transnational history of the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), going beyond both the (opposing) French and Algerian (national) narratives, to resituate the war in its Mediterranean, European, and eventually its global contexts. This general research objective, however, will be achieved by using a microhistorical approach: instead of looking at the conflict as a generic “whole” and examining its reverberations in an elusive “collective memory”, the paper focuses on a specific region, the Aurès-Nememcha in the Algerian south-east. At the core of my analysis are the specific experiences and memories of French and Algerian veterans who fought each other for eight years in this mountainous, Berberophone area. Who were they? What kind of war were they fighting, and why? And fifty years after the ceasefire, how do the citizens of each country cope with their combat memories? Thereby, a special focus will be placed on issues of mutual representation of the “enemy”, and therefore of the self; did de Gaulle not say: “La Méditerranée traverse la France comme la Seine traverse Paris”? What, then, was France, and what not? What was Algeria, and what not? Less than “collective memory”, what is proposed here is a genealogy of the present—both in Algeria and France—by means of an investigation into the social frames of memory.