

# Editorial Note

Towards the end of a year of difficult and unprecedented challenges for our modern society, the editorial team of our periodical is happy to present the first 2020 issue. Beyond the pandemic crisis, the severe impact of which did not spare academic workflows and deadlines, this significant delay in publication resulted from a substantial restructuring within our journal. This will enable the editors and a devoted team of research assistants to maintain more direct contact with all potential contributors, and to monitor more effectively all stages of the editorial and peer-reviewing process. We are confident that these changes will simplify submission procedures and—more important still—increase our commitment to the principles of scholarly excellence, publication ethics, and transparency.

The present issue appears with one individual article, and a themed section of three papers dedicated to “Fluid Mediterranean Memories.”

Anne Ring Petersen’s thought-provoking article is a powerful plea against hegemonic, monocultural notions of community, exploring the active role that public art and culture can play in the collective reimagining of cultural citizenship, home-place, and belonging. The starting point of her analysis is a set of public art projects, among them the fourth Berlin Autumn Salon *DE-HEIMATIZE IT* (2019), the documentary art project *100 % FREMMED?* by photographer and curator Maja Nydal Erikson (2017–2019), and the public park project Superkilen in Nørrebro in Copenhagen, curated and designed by the Danish artist group Superflex. In assessing the wider significance of these projects, the author employs an elaborate theoretical analysis based on an insightful discussion of transcultural, diasporic, and postmigrant perspectives on cultural citizenship, community-building, and belonging. She vividly demonstrates how these concepts challenge monocultural understandings of identity and overcome notions of bounded cultures, both national and diasporic. Aiming to fruitfully combine these projects in order to exploit their hermeneutical potential, Petersen introduces the concept of the “postmigrant imaginary,” which refers to a postmigrant and transcultural sense of belonging and collective identity. This imaginary is not only imagined but also real, since it relates not to a “there,” i.e. a distant homeland, but to a “here,” the reality of a new life or a new form of community. Moving from theory to reality, the author seeks in the last part of her article to demonstrate how art can intervene in public and societal debates. By using public spaces for their interventions, artists are able to engage a broad range of citizens, and thus become genuine agents in the reformulation of collective identities.

The themed section revolves around the triangle of the Mediterranean, memory, and transculture. These articles were first presented at a conference entitled “Transcultural Memories of Mediterranean Port Cities: 1850 to the

Present,” which took place in May 2017 in London. The region in focus comprises a distinct geographical entity that in the last couple of decades has been the subject of intense scholarly, political, ethnic, and social discourses. In a vast and still-growing body of literature on the topic, the Mediterranean has evolved from a mere subject of scholarly enquiry into an analytical frame for studying cultural phenomena of global interest. This is more than evident in the case of memory and transculture. On the one hand, the Mediterranean is a region that sinks under the ponderous weight of its history—or rather histories—and produces innumerable mnemonic layers that have shaped and still shape collective identities. On the other hand, the transcultural element, which has for millennia been a crucial dimension of Mediterranean life and history, makes the engagement with the notion of memory even more intriguing. The authors confront not one coherent and uniform way of engaging with the past, but rather multiple memories, which can be mutually complementary, divergent, or even contrasting, but nonetheless fluid and dynamic across space and time.

Focusing on Mediterranean port cities, the three papers seek to explore how transnational/transcultural memory is constructed and negotiated through visual and textual representations. They discuss different places or media of memory, including monuments, literature, and film. All three case studies refer to the recent past (twentieth and early twenty-first century), and are geographically widely distributed across the Middle and Eastern Mediterranean, thus enabling varied perspectives on individual and collective responses to shared remembrance.

Katia Pizzi’s contribution focuses on Trieste, a Mediterranean port city that due to its geographical position and history has been both peripheral and cosmopolitan, serving in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a melting pot of languages and cultures. In the recent past and present, Trieste’s multiple identities have been repeatedly reconfigured in response to new local, national, and global challenges. The author’s main concern is how these hybrid transcultural memories were mediated in the urban and non-urban landscape, in fiction, and in cinema. The dominant theme is the ambivalence and fragility of Trieste’s identity, which is nurtured by the city’s position at the juncture between East and West, and between Communism and Western democracies. This ambivalence is reflected in diverging or even conflicting memories among different ethnic and social groups, which cannot easily be combined into a single shared remembrance. These “fractured memories” continue to reproduce old ethnic and cultural divides. Their heterogeneity is enhanced by the variety of mnemonic media at play, which not only unfold their communicative potential in different milieus, but are also targeted at different audiences in Trieste and abroad. The author explains in a clear and lucid manner how in recent years, the traditional “granular” memory has transformed itself

into a genuine transcultural memory that negates or overcomes old binaries. Credit for these developments goes mainly to contemporary novelists, to whom we owe a fresh, truly transcultural contribution to the negotiation of the city's collective memory. They create a new dialogical frame, in which the long-standing divisions, ruptures, and fragmentations of collective memory can be re-negotiated.

Gianmarco Mancosu's paper deals with the process of modernization of Sardinia's capital Cagliari, as documented in twenty-five newsreels produced between 1947 and 1964. Following the transcultural memories paradigm, the author strives to demonstrate the fluid status of Cagliari, fluctuating between isolation or archaism and the modernization driven by the nation-state. One further concern of his approach is to expose the mechanisms of the cinematographic reconfiguration of the city, which was determined by contrasting forces: local traditions vs. hegemonic national discourses. To accomplish these goals, the author addresses the liminal position of the city at a level both diachronic (time) and synchronic (space). His main analytical tool, at both levels, is the three-stage passage of *séparation*, *marge*, and *agrégation*. The critical analysis of the newsreels starts with the historical background and the tension between the traditional (or in several aspects even "archaic") local society, and the national aspirations towards modernity and the capitalist economy. Beyond these forces, a further decisive factor for non-fiction film production in this period has been ideology, since the short films were politically and socially biased. The author succeeds in explaining the ambivalent character of the newsreels, which praised the governing Christian-Democratic party, and celebrated a modern, consumerist lifestyle, whilst at the same time keeping an emphasis on local traditions and religious values. Mancosu's convincing analysis demonstrates how tradition and modernity were articulated in brief yet succinct film sequences in the newsreels, thus documenting the gradual dissolution of the island's traditional character in favor of national unity and Western-style modernization. By thoughtfully deploying theoretical notions such as liminality and *dispotif*, the author highlights the agency of the medium: the strategic function of short films was not only to innocently reflect Cagliari's transcultural memory at the crossroads of Sardinianness, Italianness, Mediterraneanness, and the Western world, but mainly to filter and redefine it.

In Joseph McGonagle's paper, we see one of the major Mediterranean port cities, Algiers, through the eyes of one of Algeria's most prominent contemporary filmmakers, Merzak Allouache. Based on a thorough assessment of his filmography, which spans almost four decades, the author asks to what extent this individual gaze on the Algerian capital evolved over time, and how the city was configured on screen for both domestic and international audiences. The captivating discussion of Allouache's films elucidates the symbolism

of crucial film sequences with acute references to the historical and social setting. We learn about the recent history of Algiers through Allouache's eyes and, equally, through the forces determining that history (political and social conflicts, a clash of generations, postcolonial attitudes, and gender issues). In the treatment of the later period of his career, after Allouache had moved from Algiers to France and started to make films attracting French viewers rather than the Algerian viewership targeted by his earlier works, the paper acquires a more pronounced transcultural dimension. The author demonstrates how Allouache's impressive transformation—or, better, adaptation—was accomplished through a change of the films' subject, genre, and language. McGonagle's apposite critique of a filmmaker who moves from an authentic and confident vision of Algerian identity to a Western perspective sprinkled with transcolonial stereotypes is fully justified. Beyond this primarily filmographic approach, the paper explores notions of transcultural memories rooted in the city's post-independence history and geography. In this context, the films function as a kind of transparent documentation of how the cityscape is lived by Algerians and non-Algerians alike.

Implicitly or explicitly, all four papers return at various points to several common themes or issues of broader interest for transcultural theory at large. These include the possibility or even imperative for transculturation and transculturality in collective memory—the explicit theme of our themed section; the question of how transculturality relates to the movement of people(s), for instance, in migration or resulting diasporas; the roles that the arts can or even should play in the negotiation or construction of transculturation; political, ideological, and ethnic dimensions of transculturality and, no less, of its denials; the shadowy question of whether transculturation or transculturality, or particular modes thereof, are distinguishing features of modern or colonial and postcolonial scenarios; the relations and tensions between transculturation and historical traumas; the relation between the conditions, limits, and histories of various media, and the potential of these media to achieve diverse transculturation effects; and the relations between geographic positionality and different webs or configurations of transcultural forces. In these respects, we hope that beyond their particular cases and empirical foci, the articles presented in this issue can contribute to the ongoing project of enriching the toolkit of approaches and conceptual frames in the field of transcultural studies, and making it more adequate to the complex range of objects we confront in pursuing it.

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