# Mediterranean Studies

*A Journal of Scholarship on the Mediterranean Region and Its Influence*

VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

*A Journal of Scholarship on the Mediterranean Region and Its Influence* 2020 VOL. 28 NO. 2

*Mediterranean Studies*

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# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

You know you are in for a different sort of history lesson when the keynote essay of a commemorative issue begins with the simple sentence, "It all started in September 1986." What exactly was it that started thirty-four years ago? Put the question to any member of the Mediterranean Studies Association, and you will hear a different answer. In this collection of delightfully personal essays, ten members of the association commemorate the MSA in their own way. First, Ben Taggie, Executive Director of the organization, looks back at more than half a century of events in his essay, "History of the Mediterranean Studies Association: An Eyewitness Account." This is history with a 360-degree view. Readers will learn of random events in the perpetual motion of Ben's academic life, such as an invitation to a conference in Malta, a chance encounter with a new acquaintance over a glass of Jack Daniel's, and the disappearance of a photograph. But these events would not remain random for long. His essay captures the rapid and organic evolution of his vision for a new kind of academic practice. This commemorative issue recognizes that whatever started in 1986 has flourished because of Ben's unflagging pursuit of an ideal association that would gather scholars from many disciplines to honor the best of the past while creating the scholarship of the future.

As Ben tells the story, the mere idea of an association that focused on the study of the Mediterranean was a thought that came to him and his original collaborator Richard Clement well after they had expended a great deal of energy on many exhausting projects. In his essay "The Mediterranean and 'Mediterranean Studies': An Editor's Retrospective," Geraldo de Sousa turns the intersecting academic interests of Ben's and Rick's "mere idea" into a portrait of the young MSA. While he recounts the early years of the association from his perspective as an editor of its journal, he also played major roles in the early Congresses and post-tours. His record offers a glimpse of the day-to-day work that brought the MSA to life.

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0145
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If Geraldo's essay is a portrait of the MSA in its formative years, Louise Taggie offers a record of the association's growing pains. Louise was drawn to the MSA by the same passion and commitment that characterize the association's membership, but she also has the practical know-how that is essential to the endeavor. In her essay, we follow the learning curve of the MSA as it developed the muscles necessary to coordinate the movement of hundreds of scholars across multiple borders, the approval of endless numbers of visas, the completion of complex international financial transactions, and the scheduling of disparate and obligatory Congress events, all just to ensure that everyone would be in the same place at the same time for the same reason. These challenges are not for a timid spirit. Louise's stamp is on every Congress. In addition to giving the MSA its muscle, she gives it a face.

These three opening essays narrate the evolution of the MSA as a forum that supports interdisciplinary scholarship. The essays that follow show the MSA in action. Its Congresses, its journal, and the signature post-tours are integral components of the association, but each component has a life of its own. Of course, the Congresses command the greatest share of attention. Four essays illustrate the challenges and rewards of these three-day marathons of scholarly exchange. Just the selection of a Congress site alone demands intense collaboration over several years. Vaios Vaiopoulos takes us through the calculus for this task, drawing on his experience as host for the 2011 Congress in Corfu. Vaios grants that the value of a Congress site lies in its contribution to an understanding of the Mediterranean past. But as he learned when he hosted the Corfu Congress at his university, the greatest power of a Congress site lies in its ability to inspire participants with an evocation of a truly Mediterranean space.

This sense of Mediterranean space was the uppermost concern for Ángel Felices Lago, coordinator of the 2002 Congress in Granada. He deliberately chose sites in his beloved city that would lead Congress participants to envision a concept of Granada beyond a geographical one. For Amikam Nachmani, a native of the eastern Mediterranean, the promise of a sense of place is precisely the attraction of MSA Congresses. He finds in these annual gatherings rare opportunities to explore the Mediterranean as a heritage that he hopes will serve as a bridge between differences in his part of the world. To Richard Raspa, the entire MSA Congress, from preliminary days in the Mediterranean region to the Congress itself and the tours that follow, is a springboard for lasting collegial exchanges that deepen and expand his understanding of what is meant by "Mediterranean." Together these four essays attest to the dynamic combination of social exchange

and commitment to scholarship that produces the excitement of the annual MSA Congress.

The annual excitement of an MSA Congress would be difficult to maintain throughout the year without *Mediterranean Studies.* This biannual journal is the voice of the MSA, facilitating a year-round discussion of ideas that inform interdisciplinary scholarship on the Mediterranean. The journal did not just appear out of the blue to perform this daunting task. Susan Shapiro, editor of the journal from 2010 to 2019, knows a thing or two about the evolution of the publication. Sue's essay shows her fearless determination to experiment with new ways to express Mediterranean scholarship in the journal, as well as her ability to meet with consummate intellectual rigor the challenges of editing a truly interdisciplinary journal. With a historian's eye, she describes her efforts to provide a forum for scholars to ask new questions for a changing world while remaining true to the disciplines that shape their inquiry.

As John Watkins observes in his essay on the MSA post-tours, these annual movable feasts that follow the heady three-day banquet of Congress panels are no dessert course. The post-tour usually extends over a three-day period and follows a different itinerary each year. John's essay describes the utter delight of these nomadic treks, their revelations of the hidden connections between great moments in the Mediterranean past and the daily lives of scholars who make the Mediterranean the essence of their research. In John's essay, the post-tour is seminar, social gathering, and group research project all rolled into one memorable adventure.

The epilogue to this comprehensive portrait of the MSA is the itinerary of one person's journey to the association, my own. It is meant as a tribute to the organization, past, present, and future. In Ben's version of MSA history, back when "it all started in September 1986," he simply hoped to revive a dormant journal. But the essays in this commemorative issue let us in on his secret. His desire all along was to create an experience for scholars that would release their passion for collective intellectual discoveries, so often repressed by the harsh politics of academic life. This final essay is proof positive that Ben has succeeded.

A commemorative publication would not be complete without some reflection on the sustainability of what has been created. For that reason, we have chosen to frame the end of this issue with four book reviews that promise ample reward for interdisciplinarity in scholarship, a value built into the foundation of the MSA and perpetually enhanced by its members. In their practice of studying the past in the Mediterranean, the reviewers of these books have entwined historiography, literary tradition and literature, semantics, sociology, anthropology, political

science, and jurisprudence. Their interdisciplinary perspectives look to a future for scholarship that, as Ben Taggie envisions it, engages today's scholars in the study of the whole Mediterranean world, honoring its past while looking to its widening horizon ahead.

A final word of thanks is due to the essayists and book reviewers who made this commemorative issue possible, especially to Dr. Susan O. Shapiro for generous editorial support.

*Susan L. Rosenstreich*, Dowling College

# HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION: AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

*Benjamin Frederick Taggie, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth*

ABSTRACT: *The formation of the Mediterranean Studies Association was the result of a chance meeting and new friendship established at an academic meeting at Notre Dame University in 1986. In the years that followed, the collaborations of Rick Clement and Benjamin Taggie led to the unanticipated establishment of the academic journal* Mediterranean Studies*, now in its twenty-eighth year of publication. In 1994 the Mediterranean Studies Association was formally established and in 1998 organized its first International Congress in Lisbon, Portugal. Over the next quarter century, overcoming many challenging situations and through the efforts of the original founders and including, since 2001, Louise Taggie, the organization has grown into a major organization devoted to interdisciplinary and international education and research, now with over sixteen hundred members worldwide. The MSA has also been an active participant and/or creator of such academic endeavors as the Nocciano Institute for the Arts and Culture, the University of Massachusetts Summer Sicily Program, and the Summer Program in Évora, Portugal.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean Studies Association,* Mediterranean Studies*, educational post-tours, annual international congress, government, organization, Dr. Ben Taggie, Louise Taggie, Portugal*

## IN THE BEGINNING

It all started in September 1986. Leslie Workman, founder of *Studies in Medievalism*, invited me to attend the First International Conference on Medievalism and assigned me to speak on a panel that included Richard Clement. Rick had just taken the position of Special Collections Librarian at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library of the University of Kansas. I had recently accepted the position of Dean

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0149
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

of Arts and Sciences at Central Missouri State University, so to a degree, Rick and I were neighbors. At the conference, we were both lodging at the Morris Inn on the Notre Dame campus, giving us the opportunity to have a conversation and libation together that evening after our panel. In the process, we discovered we had many mutual friends and interests, and a shared enjoyment of Jack Daniel's. And so began a friendship and academic partnership that was to span the next quarter century.

During that first conversation, I discovered that Rick had substantial editorial knowledge and skills. We both saw it as a misfortune that Leslie Workman's *Studies in Medievalism*, established in 1979, had not been published since 1983. After another glass of Tennessee nectar, we agreed to undertake the mission of restoring *Studies in Medievalism* to the academic community. That decision led to several conversations with Leslie Workman, who, not surprisingly, was pleased to accept our offer of help in restoring life to his journal. The plan called for Rick to offer his time and editorial skills to the endeavor while I was to provide some fiscal support from my modest discretionary funds (no matter what academic deans say, there is always a discretionary fund) to get the journal back into print.

During the following year, Rick and I worked diligently with Leslie to publish volume 3, number 1 of *Studies in Medievalism* in the fall of 1987. The issue, titled *Medievalism in France 1500–1700*, was no easy task to produce. We soon discovered our triumvirate to be no more harmonious, nor as long lasting, as the one formed by Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus in 60 BCE. As an independent scholar, Mr. Workman seemed to have limitless time to constantly introduce changes we could not agree on. For example, Leslie relentlessly advocated the rebirth of *Studies in Medievalism* as a perfect-bound publication. I had endless unsuccessful conversations with him, trying to convince him that my discretionary funds could not cover the cost of so elaborate a volume. Rick, who carried the major burden of preparing the camera-ready copy, had even more serious issues with Workman. The inevitable result was the termination of the triumvirate.

Though Rick and I ceased working on *Studies in Medievalism*, the two of us furthered our personal friendship, seeking a new venture we could undertake together. Opportunity soon appeared on the horizon.

## CHAPTER 1: THE BIRTH OF *MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES*: THE HUNGARIAN AFFAIR

To put the next episode of the MSA evolution in perspective, let me look back for a moment to 1976. I was teaching at Central Michigan University, and during the summer of that year, I received a succinct, handwritten note from Professor

Norman Holub of Dowling College, inviting me to present a paper at a conference he was organizing at the then Royal University of Malta. I had never heard of Norman Holub or Dowling College, nor did I have any idea why he had contacted me. But I had never been to Malta and was intrigued by the invitation. My department chair generously informed me that department travel funds were available, but they would be lost if not used by the end of the fiscal year, so he gave me a generous stipend to attend the Malta Conference.

What can I say about the meeting in Malta? It was an interesting event, hard to define, very disorganized, with an ad hoc agenda and a surreal, eclectic mixture of participants, ranging from highly distinguished scholars like Robert I. Burns of UCLA to nonacademic friends of Holub's who offered papers about hotels they owned and tourism in the Balearic Islands where Holub had a domicile. It was not really an academic conference but a gathering of individuals, some of them scholars, in the beautiful and fascinating city of Valletta for a grand time. In retrospect, I have come to think of the gathering as a *soirée* lasting several days. Whatever it was, it was not an academic conference.

Four years later, in 1980, Holub invited me to another event, this time a meeting at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv. The university would be celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, and the event was to be another interesting gathering with participants as heterogeneous as those I had encountered in Malta in 1976. The Bar-Ilan meeting was a wonderful opportunity to see Jerusalem and to visit the ancient and holy sites of the city. At the end of the conference, I thanked Holub for the invitation and we said our farewells. I presumed it very unlikely that our paths would cross again. But the future and fate were to prove otherwise. For Holub's gatherings would lead to what I call the Hungarian Affair.

Seven years later, after I had moved to Central Missouri State University as Dean of Arts and Science, the chair of the history department brought a candidate for a history department position to my office. Though it was over thirty years ago, I can recall the meeting with the clarity, as if it happened yesterday. The candidate was a young man by the name of Dan Crews, who in the future would work in cooperation with Rick and me on editing the *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*. But that was in the future. On the day in question, the history chair had brought Dan to my office with his credentials to obtain my approval in hiring him. We had an interesting conversation. Dan had solid credentials, and as I was about to stamp his hiring with my approval, the chair said to Dan, "Show the dean the invitation you have to present a paper in Rome." Thereupon, Dan presented me with a brief scribbled, handwritten letter on Dowling College stationery, signed by Norman Holub, almost a carbon copy of the invitation I had received eleven years earlier. The Hungarian Affair was about to commence.

The following day, for no reason, I decided to write Norman Holub that I had just hired a young historian whom he had invited to his 1987 gathering, and I informed him that I had moved to the "Show Me State" as Arts and Science Dean. Three days later (most likely as soon as he opened my letter), Holub called me, congratulated me on my new position, and insisted I come to his meeting in Rome. As for the invitation, I told him it was impossible. I was a new Dean and could not take a week off to go to Rome. But Norman countered with another offer. He was organizing a meeting in Budapest for the following year, and I should attend. I said that was a possibility, but we would have to see how things developed.

Well, things developed. Life can be stranger than fiction in the way that a series of totally unrelated events and circumstances can merge into entirely unanticipated outcomes. In the case of the Hungarian Affair, one of the circumstances that determined the affair was my own background in international programs. I had been Director of International Programs at Central Michigan University, and in 1985 I had received a three-year Fulbright Exchange grant from the U.S. Information Agency to establish a faculty exchange with Leiden University in the Netherlands. Another circumstance that directed the course of the Hungarian Affair was the presence on our campus during the academic year 1987–88 of a Hungarian scholar, Anna Adamik, who was a Fulbright Scholar in residence at Central Missouri. A third circumstance that guided events was that, at the time, the president of our university, Ed Elliott, loved to travel. And finally, I had a new friend and colleague who was an excellent editor.

Fortified by these circumstances, I accepted Holub's invitation to go to Budapest in 1988 and asked him to invite Rick Clement, which he did. Unfortunately, Rick was unable to obtain sufficient funding from the University of Kansas, and I needed some kind of justification to provide him any financial support. I also needed to obtain permission from my president and provost to venture off for a week into the land of the Magyars. This is where all the events and circumstances coalesced. I went to see my president, Ed Elliott, and informed him that Anna Adamik, our Fulbright Scholar, had close connections with both the Karl Marx University of Economic Science (the name was changed in 1991) and Eotvos Lorand, the preeminent liberal arts university in Hungary where her husband was on the faculty. I suggested that these connections offered an excellent opportunity to employ my successful experience in establishing foreign faculty exchanges, something I knew President Elliott was very interested in. I further proposed that President Elliott attend the Budapest meeting and that Central Missouri State University publish the proceedings (which he would pay for) and have the volume dedicated to him. President Elliott liked the idea of the publication. He

informed me that he had business in Europe in September 1988 and would attend the Budapest meeting if it could be moved from the scheduled July to September. I also advised President Ed that to produce a high-quality publication we would need a very good editor. When Ed asked if I had anyone in mind, I mentioned a friend at the University of Kansas who I thought would take on the task in return for a travel grant. The president said fine (he obviously had a MUCH larger discretionary fund than I did).

Holub quickly agreed to reschedule the meeting, to get the proceedings published, and to have President Elliott in attendance. In summary, I got funds to help Rick get to Budapest, I commenced successful negotiations with the Hungarians for faculty exchanges, and by the end of 1988 we had created a publication that would become *Mediterranean Studies.* In 1989, *Iberia & the Mediterranean* was published with a grand picture of President Elliott wearing academic regalia and the Mediterranean Commemorative Gold Medal, the precursor to the first MSA Presidential Medal. Thus ended the Hungarian Affair, and the life of *Mediterranean Studies* began.

## CHAPTER 2: THE QUEST TO SAVE THE JOURNAL

*Iberia & the Mediterranean* was published in spring 1989 by the Central Missouri State University Printing Service. It was a small press with no experience in publishing books, but they did an excellent job, thanks to a lot of encouragement from President Ed Elliott. Not long after the publication's release, I received an amazing phone call from a totally discombobulated Norman Holub. Instead of being pleased with the volume, he was very unhappy that President Elliott's picture was in the work. He said, "Meskill will go crazy if he sees that picture." I inquired as to who this Meskill person might be, and learned that he was president of Dowling College, Holub's institution. I asked why the picture was a problem since Elliott had attended the meeting, paid for the publication, and funded Rick Clement's travel expenses to secure his agreement to edit the work. Norman said Meskill was very possessive of anything relating to Dowling, and he would have to cut Elliott's picture out with a razor blade before showing him the publication. At that point, I realized I was entering La La Land, and I would be wise to avoid future contact with the Dowling "Twilight Zone." What I did not realize was that *Iberia & the Mediterranean* had produced the first salvo in what would eventually evolve into a lingering conflict and lugubrious saga with Holub, Meskill, and Dowling College. It was a conflict that would endure until 1994.

At first, I considered the Meskill-Holub-razor blade incident to be totally surreal, and gave it little thought. Rick and I assumed we had produced a single volume, and that would be the end of it. Furthermore, I was very busy preparing to move to a new job in Pennsylvania, having accepted the position of Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs at Millersville State University. Consequently, I had little time to give thought to the possibility of there ever being another volume, and frankly I was not sure I wanted to participate in a replication of that first volume. Rick had done a highly professional job of editing, and Central Missouri State University had produced an attractive book. However, it contained articles that had undergone nothing in the way of a referee process, and the quality of the articles ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. Many were excellent scholarly works, but others were embarrassingly terrible. After I had relocated to Millersville, Holub invited Rick and me to a conference in Athens in 1989. Holub considered *Iberia & the Mediterranean* a publication of conference proceedings and wanted another one that he could put Meskill's picture in. I was much too busy with my new position and declined the invitation, but Rick attended, with Dowling College paying his expenses. That led to the publication of a second volume, titled *Greece and the Mediterranean*, with articles drawn from the 1989 Dowling Conference in Athens.

Rick had extensive contacts in the publishing world and was good friends with Dr. Robert Schnucker, director of the Thomas Jefferson University Press at Northeast Missouri State (since 1996 Truman State University). Schnucker was also publisher of the *Sixteenth Century* journal that published *Greece and the Mediterranean.* In the acknowledgments included in *Greece and the Mediterranean*, thanks are given to President Ed Elliott, Dean Robert Schwartz who was also a co-editor, and Central Missouri State University for its financial and secretarial support. There is no mention of Dowling College, but there is, however, a picture of Victor Meskill, and his comments form part of the acknowledgments. The volume was dedicated to the Del Mar Foundation, which I later discovered was a source of funding for Dowling's Conferences, though they offered no support to the publication. *Greece and the Mediterranean* was published in 1990. Quality-wise it was superior to volume 1, though the Editorial Board of the journal would not be established until 1991. There was no double-blind peer review of the papers in the 1990 publication, but much more discretion and rigor had been applied in selecting articles for *Greece and the Mediterranean.*

After the publication of *Greece and the Mediterranean* in 1990, several seminal events occurred. First was the establishment of an Editorial Board to oversee the double-blind peer review of all submissions for publication in what we were

now calling an annual monographic series, each volume having its own ISBN. In addition, an Advisory Board was established, and included distinguished scholars such as Sir Raymond Carr, Giles Constable, and Gabriel Jackson. Millersville University and Dowling College had come to an agreement to share the expenses of publication, and James Caraway of Dowling College was made a co-editor, replacing Robert Schwartz of Central Missouri State University.

Now I must confess that I was quite uncomfortable entering into an agreement or partnership with Dowling College and Norman Holub. The absurd "razor blade saga" was still fresh in my mind, and I was aware that Holub and I (and Rick) did not share an academic philosophy. I feared we would have philosophical problems with the journal, a fear that unfortunately proved to be well-founded.

But before that moment of truth, we fell into a routine in readying the volume for publication. Clement was going to do most of the work, and in the Thomas Jefferson Press, we had an excellent publisher. Our new Dowling co-editor, Jim Caraway, seemed to embrace academic values consistent with the vision Clement and I had for a quality academic publication, and it would be financially helpful to have Dowling share the cost of publishing the series. Despite my reservations, the pros seemed to outweigh the cons. The future, however, was to demonstrate to me that, just as Faust had learned, it is always dangerous to make an agreement with the Devil.

In 1992, our third volume, *Spain and the Mediterranean*, was published. All articles had gone through the Editorial Board's double-blind peer review process. Many of the papers had been presented at the Dowling 1990 Conference in Murcia, Spain. But others were unrelated to the conference, an example being an article by Camilo Jose Cela, recipient of the 1989 Nobel Prize in Literature. Cela had been newly named to the journal's Advisory Board. Millersville University served as the Editorial Office, where I received submissions and sent them to the appropriate reviewers. Accepted papers were forwarded to Rick, who continued the editorial work. With *Mediterranean Studies* established as an ongoing serial, having now obtained an ISBN for volume 4, we discontinued the practice of a separate title for each volume in favor of a numerical designation. We also discontinued including a picture of someone associated with the Dowling Conference, as this was no longer appropriate. We began to think of the series as a journal, and from this point on we used that designation. The relationship with Dowling functioned amicably through volume 4. But this volume offered clues to the difficulties we faced in this relationship. Unlike previous volumes, volume 4 drew no papers from the 1991 Annual Mediterranean Conference that Dowling College

usually sponsored. As it happened, there were no papers from Dowling's 1991 conference because that conference had been canceled. The events that led to this cancelation had nothing to do with the academic goals of the conference. Instead, it was due to Norman Holub. Holub had asked to be named Director of International Programs at Dowling College, and President Meskill was not inclined to grant this request. He was, however, inclined to withhold funding for the 1991 conference. Thus, that year no conference papers were to be gleaned from Dowling's annual Mediterranean Conference. Not to be deterred from our goal of establishing a first-rate journal, we composed volume 4 instead from papers that had been given at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. The association had accepted my invitation to hold its annual meeting at Millersville University in 1991. For volume 5, there were many publication submissions from the 1992 annual meeting of the SSPHS, held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

It was with volume 5 that my anticipated problems with the Dowling partnership came to a head. Volume 4 had not been a problem. Dowling had canceled its 1991 conference, and as I noted earlier, most of the excellent papers in that volume were from the 1991 Annual SSPHS Meeting held at Millersville. However, in 1992 Dowling resumed its annual meetings with a gathering in Palma de Majorca. By this time, the Editorial Board had established a rigorous review process, and the journal received papers from the SSPHS meetings and many independent submissions in addition to papers from the Dowling Conference. The matter that precipitated the dissension with Dowling College was the assurance Holub had given some individuals that their papers would be published in volume 5. Unfortunately for the fragile alliance between Dowling and the publication, some of the articles Holub wanted published were rejected by the Editorial Board, being deemed as not being up to the publication's standards. The détente with Dowling College became untenable, and matters came to a head in Pau, France, in 1994.

## Chapter 3: The Miracle of Lourdes and Salvation of the Journal

The conflict with Dowling crescendoed at the Dowling Conference in Pau, France, in July 1994. By this time, I was winding down my tenure as Provost at Millersville University, and would no longer be able to contribute to the cost of publishing *Mediterranean Studies*. The simmering conflict with Dowling was to explode over a disagreement as to what kind of publication *Mediterranean Studies* would be.

By 1994, we had established a very respectable journal. Volume 4 was being published with all the articles having gone through a double-blind peer review process, volume 5 was in preparation, we had an excellent Editorial Board, and many distinguished scholars served on the Advisory Board. That, however, was not the sort of publication that Dowling College was interested in. When I say Dowling College, I am referring specifically to three individuals: Norman Holub, Victor Meskill, and James Caraway. Meskill was president of Dowling College, and I have no idea what sort of journal he wanted, except that he clearly wanted a journal that would promote his institution (and not have the picture of another university president on it). James Caraway, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Dowling, had been a co-editor of the journal since the 1992 volume 3 and claimed to share the same academic values Rick and I held, aiming for the same kind of journal as we were.

Unfortunately, Caraway seems to have had little influence in the decision-making process. The major nemesis in this conflict was Holub, who had the support of Meskill. Holub opposed the rigorous review process and wanted to be empowered to allow articles he approved of to be published without a review process. He also wanted to add all kinds of pictures from his conferences, particularly of local officials getting medals. These conflicting concepts of the journal reached its apex with volume 5, when the Editorial Board reviewers rejected several articles Holub wanted published. He had assured some individuals that their articles would be published, only to be embarrassed and angered when the reviewers rejected the articles. Holub was unhappy with the journal's established academic process and wanted more authority in determining what would be published in *Mediterranean Studies*. To be brutally frank, academic quality and integrity did not seem to be important to him. He projected the values of an entrepreneur rather than of an academic. Holub wanted a publication that promoted his projects and self-interest and sought the power to promise publication regardless of quality on a quid pro quo basis. That was the great philosophical divide, entrepreneurship versus scholarship.

These issues of authority and stewardship of the journal were to be decided in Pau. We had assembled for a conference there in 1994, and during the conference a private meeting was scheduled, to be attended by Meskill, Holub, Caraway, Clement, and me. As we prepared to enter that meeting, the Dowling team seemingly held the upper hand. I was stepping down as Provost at Millersville University and would no longer have access to the necessary discretionary funds for the publication's subvention. The plan was for Dowling to cover the full subvention in return for editorial control. Rick would continue doing the major editorial work; Caraway and I would continue as co-editors.

The day of that meeting, Rick and I were in Lourdes walking around the shrine, brainstorming on how we could save *Mediterranean Studies*. I was in a particularly dark mood, not looking forward to the meeting with the Dowling gang and very angry about an earlier brief encounter with Meskill, who had said to me with a slight smirk on his face, "Happy you are going to continue helping us with the journal." I looked at him for a moment, using all my energy to suppress the genetic mutation I experienced growing up in inner-city Detroit. That mutation urged the immediate termination of the object that had uttered those words. Instead, I walked away without comment, determined that I would not be working for Mr. Meskill.

It may not have qualified as an epiphany, but during our walk, Rick and I developed a plan. We would not let the journal go to Dowling to be academically degraded, undoing all our hard work in establishing the publication. We derived a plan (that we for many years jokingly referred to as the Miracle of Lourdes) in which we would decline Dowling's offer to pay the full subvention in return for editorial control of the journal. The plan was to forge an alliance with a new player in the drama, our colleague, Professor Guy Mermier of the University of Michigan. Guy would be a co-editor, and his Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies would be the new home for the journal. It was a workable plan with one serious weakness: Guy did not have the necessary resources to cover the publication subvention. It was a problem that, like Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, we would worry about the next morning. Armed with this plan, we entered what I recall being a gloomy storage room for the meeting with the Dowling Three. We immediately informed them we would not require their subvention to support the journal or give them control of it. Instead we had decided to collaborate with the University of Michigan and Guy Mermier, who shared our academic concept of the journal. Rick and I would retain full editorial control. Our goal was to publish only worthy refereed articles. To say that the Dowling Three were amazed would be an understatement. Holub was speechless, best of all. Meskill no longer had a smirk on his face. Caraway was less surprised. He knew Rick and me well and had possibly anticipated we would not surrender the journal. We offered our "thanks, but no thanks" and left the meeting.

Rick Clement later informed me that, after the meeting, Norman Holub made him an offer to fund his future attendance at Dowling conferences if he would separate from me and edit the journal for Dowling College. Rick declined the offer (an act of loyalty and friendship that I will never forget). Rick further told me that when he declined the offer (the integrity of which Holub must have found unbelievable), Holub said to him, "You have attached yourself to the wrong

star." Rick and I had many laughs in the future regarding that statement as we oversaw the successful growth of the MSA.

The final act of the Miracle of Lourdes came when I returned to the United States a few days later. I had a message from Chancellor Peter Cressy of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth offering me the position of Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, a position I accepted with pleasure. It was not only an excellent position in a part of the world where I wanted to live, but it also had a substantial discretionary fund, which could be used for academic endeavors like supporting an academic journal. *Mediterranean Studies* had been saved and would continue to grow in excellence with a history now of over a quarter century.

## CHAPTER 4: FORMAL BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS OF THE MSA

Between 1994 and 1996, our endeavor was restructured in ways that would significantly shape its future. The most salient feature of restructuring efforts was the actual creation of the Mediterranean Studies Association. From 1988 to 1994, the MSA existed only as an informal organization. Although the Miracle of Lourdes had separated the organization from Dowling College, the informality of the organization's structure left open the possibility that Dowling College would attempt to press for control of the journal. To protect MSA's stewardship of *Mediterranean Studies*, we made the decision to incorporate the MSA. This task was accomplished by the end of 1994 with the establishment of Mediterranean Studies Association, Inc. The year 1994 then represents the official birth of the Mediterranean Studies Association as an incorporated bona fide academic organization. The following year a request was made to the government for tax-exempt status. That request was approved the following year, and since 1996 the MSA has been a publicly supported organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Another development took place in February 1995. Robert Bjork had been appointed Director of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS) in 1994 at Arizona State University. In February 1995, he inaugurated the First Annual ACMRS Conference, which Rick and I attended. We were impressed with both Bjork and the academic quality of the conference. We met with Bjork to explore the possibilities of collaboration. Bjork was receptive to an academic relationship with the MSA, and we began working together. Robert became a co-editor in 1996 (volume 6) and remained in that post through volume 12,

published in 2003. After six years of collaboration, we had an amicable separation over philosophical differences related to the governance of the MSA.

During the six years of our collaboration, Robert Bjork made important contributions to the MSA. The severance of the relationship with the Dowling Conference served to save the quality of the journal, but it also eliminated a major source of paper submissions. Our original motivation in approaching Bjork to form a relationship with the ACMRS Conference was to gain a new potential source for submissions of papers to the journal. In addition to meeting this expectation, ACMRS over the years made financial contributions to the MSA, which were very helpful. In sum, the six-year relationship between the MSA and the ACMRS was very positive.

In 1996, the history of the MSA was moving smoothly. The co-editor partnership of Clement, Mermier, Bjork, and Taggie was congenial; Clement's office was functioning as the primary site for the journal's manuscript preparation; and volume 6 was scheduled to go to press in July 1996. The MSA had new stationery with an attractive logo of a ship, which became the association's official logo. Rick had utilized his innovative computer insight and skills to create an MSA website when few organizations had them. By the end of 1996, however, new storm clouds began to hover over the journal.

The problems were the increasing difficulty in finding sufficient quality articles to publish in the journal and the difficulty of marketing *Mediterranean Studies* to university and college libraries. The late 1990s were a time of fiscal belt-tightening, and libraries were compelled to reduce the number of their subscriptions for academic journals. As an interdisciplinary journal, *Mediterranean Studies* was in a more vulnerable category than publications that were more discipline-specific. The marketing problem was exacerbated by the fact that Robert Schnucker, Director of the Thomas Jefferson Press, who had been a champion and generous friend to *Mediterranean Studies*, was about to retire. Even with the subvention, the journal had not been a moneymaker for the press, and Schnucker's successor did not share his sense of *caritas*. The future of *Mediterranean Studies* was once again in question.

Since 1995, I had been contemplating the concept of international congresses. I had always been fascinated in the abstract by what Dowling College was attempting to do, so it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge the influence of the Dowling/Holub efforts on the quarter century of successful MSA Congresses. On several occasions, Rick and I had attempted to convince Norman Holub that, while he had a good idea, he needed to eliminate the often circus-like atmosphere of Dowling's meetings and introduce academic rigor to his endeavors. The last effort to do so was at the Dowling Conference in Palma Majorca in 1992, which

failed to produce the desired results. It became clear to me that if there were ever to be an international, interdisciplinary congress as I envisioned it, I would have to organize it myself. It took six years for the MSA to launch its first Congress in Lisbon in 1998, but history has proven it was well worth the wait. What kind of Congress did I envision?

When Rick Clement and I started the journal in 1988, we had no goal or long-term plan. The journal just evolved as circumstances dictated. I did, however, have a clear vision for the MSA Congress from the first one in Lisbon in 1998. I had no idea if it would work, but my goals were twofold. Number one: I wanted an international and interdisciplinary experience for the participants. In my teaching and administration career dating back to my twenty years at Central Michigan University, I worked to develop a curriculum offering students interdisciplinary programs. Thanks to over $750,000 in grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, we developed several successful interdisciplinary programs. I wanted students to see the connections among history, literature, the arts, human civilization, in sum, when they studied subjects such as classical civilizations and the Middle Ages. Those programs were very successful and led in 1984 to an interdisciplinary master's program for teachers (which I believe is still going strong today).

On the strengths of that original ambition and of the success I had enjoyed in bringing it to fruition, I thought to myself, "Why not try to offer academics a similar experience?" Instead of medieval historians, Shakespeare specialists, art historians, philosophers, literary theorists, linguists, and scientists meeting in their highly specialized, esoteric, and separate venues, I wanted to see academic interaction in a unique type of Congress. That was my premise when, in 1998, the MSA held its First International Congress in Lisbon, Portugal.

This historic first marked the debut of MSA Congresses as a forum where scholars from around the world and from a multitude of academic disciplines would convene to inspire and to learn from each other's scholarship. Achieving this international and interdisciplinary character was in no way an easy accomplishment. It has been a grand, complex, and arduous journey, greatly advanced in the early years by the collaboration and support of my friend and colleague Richard Clement, and later by the enormous energy and drive for perfection that my wife and partner Louise Taggie has brought to the Congress. But this is getting ahead of our story. That First MSA International Congress in Lisbon was the fruit of unremitting labor, and as luck would have it, it came about in the very year Portugal celebrated the quincentenary of Vasco da Gama's Great Voyage of Discovery.

## CHAPTER 5: THE SECOND 10 YEARS: THE LISBON CONGRESS AND BEYOND

As I redeployed into my new position at UMass, I was confident that the journal was in very capable hands. The four editors, Clement, Mermier, Bjork, and me, worked in a congenial manner. Rick Clement and I had many mutual friends when we met in 1986, and Guy Mermier was among them. Guy and I had been friends for a decade before I met Rick, and Rick had known Guy for many years before meeting me. That friendship continued until Guy's death in 2011. Bjork was the newcomer to the group. He and Rick became good friends, I never got to know him well, but I found him an amicable colleague. So with the journal in good hands, I could turn my attention to something I had long wanted to do, organize an interdisciplinary international conference.

The Kansas City editors' meeting minutes in November 1995 indicate that the decision had already been made to hold the first MSA International Congress in Lisbon in 1998. Soon after returning from Pau, Rick and I had begun to explore the organization of an international congress like Dowling's, but with a much stronger academic ethos and a preliminary review process for papers that would be presented at the conference. After a year discussing possible venues, we settled on Lisbon for several reasons.

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth is surrounded by the largest Portuguese population in the United States. During my first year as Provost, I developed a good working relationship with a young faculty member named Frank Sousa. Frank was persuasively advocating for the establishment of a Center for Portuguese Studies, a concept that I strongly supported. As we moved forward with the formal creation of the center, we worked with Portuguese politicians and foundations, most importantly the Luso-American Development Foundation (FLAD). Working with Sousa, I established a very positive relationship with FLAD and their Director of Cultural Affairs, Luis dos Santos Ferro, that was to prove valuable in the future. Another important factor was the appointment of distinguished historian George Winius as a Visiting Professor by the Center for Portuguese Studies. Winius was highly respected in the Portuguese academic community and had excellent connections with Portuguese foundations, from which he had received many grants. These factors synthesized into Portugal being the logical venue for the first MSA Congress in 1998. With the help of Sousa and Winius and the good will earned for my help in establishing the Center for Portuguese Studies, the Portuguese foundations generously supported the inaugural MSA Congress in Lisbon. After three years of preparation, the development of excellent Portuguese

relationships and connections, and excellent support from the Portuguese foundations, we set May 1998 for the first MSA International Congress.

I was invited by Luis dos Santos Ferro to visit Lisbon as the guest of FLAD in the fall 1997. I utilized that visit to plan the 1998 Congress and became acquainted with Rui Machete, President of the FLAD Executive Board, and Francisco Bethencourt, President of the Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon. Bethencourt was amicable to Thursday and Friday sessions of the Congress being held at the Biblioteca Nacional, and FLAD offered their facility and a reception for the Wednesday Opening Session and Saturday sessions.

As we proceed through the history of MSA Congresses, I will attempt to note what I recall being unique characteristics, problems, and events of a particular congress. But before doing so, I want to digress to a discussion that took place in Barcelona during the Seventh Annual MSA Congress in May 2004. During a break between sessions, Rick, Guy Mermier, Bob Bjork, Geraldo Sousa, and myself convened for a libation and conversation.

Barcelona had been a particularly difficult conference to organize with many problems to overcome. That prompted the question, "How long are you guys going to keep doing these conferences?" Rick answered, "When they stop being fun." Over the years, I have thought about that conversation and have concluded that organizing the Annual Congress has never been fun. Had fun been the criterion, Lisbon would have been the first and last congress. That is not to say that I have not derived enormous gratification from the success we have achieved. I take pride in having succeeded in producing the academic, international, and interdisciplinary congress I had envisioned years earlier. That success has resulted in a wonderful sense of pride and achievement in doing something I conceive as being a good for the academy. The process however has required a great deal of blood, sweat, and tears, the challenge of often working with difficult people, and the task of resolving one problem after another. Indeed, there were many times I would have been more than justified to say "basta," enough is enough. In retrospect, many of the difficult and crazy problems encountered engender humor and laughs today, but at the time they often brought into focus the thought that it was time to quit.

Despite the many advantages Lisbon had to offer, events were to demonstrate that the dates and venue had not been wisely selected. In fact, the Lisbon Conference presented such a multitude of problems and challenges that it could well have been the end of the MSA's journey into conference land. We had selected the very year that Portugal celebrated the quincentenary of Vasco da Gama's Great Voyage of Discovery. The result was Lisbon hosting Expo 98, which commenced

May 22, 1998, and attracted eleven million visitors. The dates selected for the Congress coincided with the first week of Expo 98.

The tradition of holding the Annual Congress in May evolved from a casual conversation with Jim Powers, an old friend and colleague at Holy Cross College. Jim made the cogent suggestion we hold the congress in late May during (what existed at that time) the airlines' "shoulder season," with lower fares. I found that a persuasive recommendation, so we selected May 27 to 30 as dates for the Annual Congress, when the academic year was over in most American colleges and universities. That is how the last Wednesday in May has become the traditional start of the MSA Congress. No sooner had Rick and I sent out a call for papers than we realized that Expo 98 would start May 22 and hotel rooms in Lisbon would be almost nonexistent. Much of the week that I was the guest of FLAD in Lisbon, I spent looking for hotel rooms with limited success. I finally booked rooms in the resort town of Cascais, nineteen miles west of Lisbon. The room problem was solved, but a costly transportation dilemma was created in needing a coach for the participants staying in Cascais. Another unexpected financial problem related to the use of the rooms at the Biblioteca Nacional. The rooms were gratis, but there were associated costs the MSA had to cover for security and fire marshal compliance. These expenses would not be covered by the modest Congress registration fees (eighty-eight papers are listed in the 1998 program, but there were many no-shows who did not register). The revenue from the Congress registrations would fall thousands of dollars short of unanticipated expenses.

I needed six thousand dollars to cover the fiscal shortfall and solved that problem only by creating another one. Even as Provost, I could not take six thousand out of my discretionary fund to support an international congress without the Chancellor's approval. Chancellor Cressy was a flamboyant, ambitious, charismatic, energetic, mercurial ex-Navy Admiral, much more at home in the political world than the academy. Peter was always looking for means to promote the university and eager to work with the Portuguese community, so I was successful in convincing him of the value of supporting the Lisbon Congress. The Chancellor had substantial funds in the University Foundation he could use to subsidize the Congress, but his help came with new problems. First, he wanted an impressive conference with activities that would entice William "Billy" Bulger, President of the University of Massachusetts system, to attend. Bulger had been President of the Massachusetts Senate for eighteen years before being appointed President of the UMass system in 1996. He served in that capacity until 2003, when Governor Mitt Romney forced him to resign for refusing to testify in a congressional hearing on

his fugitive crime boss brother, James "Whitey" Bulger. I knew President Bulger well; I found him a delightful, intelligent, witty man, and I was happy to have him participate in the Congress. Cressy wanted an elaborate reception to which he could invite many people not connected to the Congress, including a UMass tour group consisting of wealthy donors and several members of the Board of Trustees in Lisbon at that time. He also wanted me to travel with the group (which arrived several days before the Congress commenced) and serve as their guide. So now I would be guiding a VIP tour around Lisbon while working on the Congress. Since the Chancellor was picking up the tab it was not difficult to find an elegant venue with excellent food for the reception. With the advice and help of Frank Sousa and George Winius, we selected an excellent menu at the beautiful Casa do Leão, located near the Castelo de São Jorge on the Alfama. With a large guest list, we reserved the entire restaurant. Given the fact that the restaurant would be closed to the public for the evening, the management (not unreasonably) required the full payment of several thousand dollars two weeks in advance.

The need for the prepayment at the Casa do Leão led to another very stressful problem. The check was sent three weeks in advance by Registered Priority Mail to be safe. It was guaranteed to arrive in three days. But a week later, the Casa do Leão had not received the check and was threatening to cancel our reception to which the Chancellor had invited many important people including President Bulger. After a frantic and time-consuming investigation, we discovered the check (for some unknown reason that we have never discovered) was being held in Portuguese Customs. The closer we got to the Congress, the more stressful life became since the Chancellor reception hinged on our incarcerated check being released by Portuguese Customs. The day I was to leave with the UMass tour group (five days before the start of the Congress), the check arrived at its destination. Another disaster averted, but I was quickly qualifying to be Valium Poster Boy of the year.

I come now to the final traumatic episode that in absurdity challenges the infamous Holub/Meskill/journal/ razor blade story of 1988.The First MSA Congress commenced on Wednesday, May 28, 1998. The Opening Session was held in the beautiful headquarters of the Luso-American Development Foundation, to be followed by an elegant reception hosted by FLAD. The session was very well attended, with many members of the Portuguese academic community, politicians, members of the FLAD Executive Board including President Machete, Congress participants, President Bulger, and Chancellor Cressy. Francisco Bethencourt, President of the Biblioteca Nacional, and a distinguished historian had been invited to give the plenary address. (Note: After the Coimbra Congress in 1999, we discontinued

inviting plenary speakers by popular demand of the membership.) Bethencourt spoke fluent English and was requested to give his talk in English, since most Congress participants did not speak or understand Portuguese. He was also asked to limit his presentation to thirty minutes or less. Bethencourt agreed to both of our requests without any objections. After years of planning and endless problems, we were about to launch our first MSA Congress with a large audience of scholars and distinguished invited guests, in a beautiful venue. What could go wrong?

The Opening Session head table included Rick and me, President Bulger, Chancellor Cressy, Rui Machete as President of FLAD's Executive Board, and Bethencourt. I positioned Bethencourt to my right, near the lectern where I would introduce him. Rick was to my left (intentionally) between Cressy and me, and Bulger was seated next to Machete. Following comments by Bulger, Machete, and Cressy, I thanked our sponsors and introduced Bethencourt to speak on "The Longevity of the Portuguese Empire." Bethencourt, in English, thanked the MSA for the honor of being plenary speaker. Then the bomb dropped. He announced that he had decided to give his presentation in Portuguese. I was totally shocked, but what could I do? Ten minutes into his (forty-minute) talk I noticed Rick shaking his head "no" to Cressy, not a good sign. I kept my eyes on Bethencourt, not looking in Cressy's direction.

A brief word about the Chancellor who had many redeeming qualities, a creative mind, and a charismatic personality, but he suffered from serious attention deficit. The limit for him to listen to anyone was five to ten minutes. For the next twenty minutes, while Bethencourt rambled on in Portuguese that over half his audience did not understand, I could see Rick repeatedly shaking his head and telling Cressy "no"; it did not take a sage to interpret that we had a problem with Cressy. At twenty-five minutes, Cressy was beyond being bored but was trapped in the middle of the head table with no possible escape. He kept telling Rick he had to make Bethencourt stop talking.

About thirty-five minutes into the talk, Rick handed me a note from Cressy stating that President Bulger was bored, tired, and angry, and I had to make Bethencourt stop. I am sure that over half the audience concurred with the Chancellor, but how does one stop the President of the Biblioteca Nacional during his talk? I looked at Cressy (for the first time during the talk), tried to look calm, smiled, nodded "yes," turned back to Bethencourt, and prayed he would stop talking. In a few minutes, my prayers were answered; Bethencourt ended his lecture, I thanked him, adjourned the session with an invitation to the FLAD-sponsored reception, and raced to the bar to fortify myself and consider how much fun I was having. The Chancellor soon arrived and wanted to know why

I had not terminated the lecture since it was too long and in Portuguese. My response was, "Peter, be serious. How was I going to interrupt the President of the Biblioteca Nacional during his talk with this audience, and in this venue?" After a bit more grumbling, Cressy acknowledged I had been in a difficult situation, but he said Bulger was angry and I needed to apologize to him. I said I would do so. Later, I saw President Bulger in a conversation with a drink in hand, and as merry as an Irishman could be when it was not Saint Patrick's Day. When the opportunity presented itself, I apologized for the long lecture in Portuguese. Bulger laughed and said that after eighteen years as President of the Massachusetts Senate, he was used to long-winded talks. The crisis was over, and I am happy to say the Congress proceeded without further incident.

While I have dwelled upon the many problems of the Congress, in total it was a successful event, receiving very positive feedback with many requests to do it again (which of course we did). Many participants at the Lisbon Congress continued to attend future MSA meetings. Four attendees at the first Congress, Susan Rosenstreich of Dowling College, David Bergeron of the University of Kansas, Richard Raspa of Wayne State University, and Glenn Olsen of the University of Utah, continue to regularly attend the Annual MSA Congress over twenty years later.

Another very important and positive development that emerged from the Congress related to the journal. On the Thursday following the Opening Session, I had to take the UMass tour group to Évora, while Rick remained at the Biblioteca Nacional overseeing the Congress. During the day, Rick met John Smedley, publisher of Ashgate Press in the United Kingdom, who expressed interest in taking over publication of *Mediterranean Studies*. We arranged a lunch meeting with Smedley the following day and very quickly came to an agreement that Ashgate would assume publication of *Mediterranean Studies.* This was a very fortuitous meeting and agreement because the journal needed a new publisher. Robert Schnucker, Director of the Thomas Jefferson University Press, had supported the publication of volumes 2 to 6 of the journal. Schnucker, however, was retiring in 1998, and his successor had no interest in continuing to publish the journal. The agreement with Ashgate was most timely and fortuitous, allowing for the continuation of the journal without disruption. The MSA had an excellent working relationship with both John Smedley and Ashgate, who published the journal from 1998 (volume 7) to 2004 (volume 13).

As a brief epilogue to the 1998 Congress in Lisbon (which happily Rick and I survived to tell about), we agreed to do another congress in 1999. As mentioned earlier, we received very positive participant feedback and encouragement to hold

another congress in Portugal the following year. I do not recall exactly when the decision was made to plunge again into Conference Land, but it was very soon after Lisbon. We believed that if we could put on a successful meeting in Lisbon under the conditions we encountered in 1998, we could do it again. So it was on to the University of Coimbra in 1999. It was also at this time that we formulated the idea of possibly holding the 2000 Congress (if we survived that long) in Brazil to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of Pedro Álvares Cabral's voyage to Brazil.

## *The Journey to Coimbra*

Why did we select the University of Coimbra as the venue for the Second MSA International Congress? There were many good reasons. We had an excellent infrastructure of goodwill and support in Portugal. FLAD was interested in another Congress in Portugal and was prepared to offer generous grant support. Both George Winius (who had been appointed for a second year as a Visiting Professor) and Frank Sousa, Director of the Portuguese Center, had good contacts at the University of Coimbra. Winius, the MSA Honorary President for 1998–99, also had excellent contacts at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and believed he could obtain grant support for a Coimbra Congress. Finally, Coimbra was the site of the oldest and most prestigious university in Portugal. All factors indicated Coimbra would be an excellent venue for the 1999 MSA Congress. So the decision was made to organize the Second MSA Congress in Coimbra.

While there were problems to be encountered in Coimbra, big and small, it was in fact an excellent venue. The Rector and the university administration treated the MSA very well, and it was a very successful Congress. The individuals we coordinated with at Coimbra were Anibal Pinto de Castro, Professor of Literature and Director of the library, and Professor João Marinho dos Santos, Director of the Institute of the History of Expansion. Dr. Castro, our primary contact, generously provided space in the university library for the concurrent sessions and the magnificent eighteenth-century Joanina Library for the Congress Opening Session. The organization of the Congress went well, hotel rooms were available in all price ranges, and the Closing Reception was to be at the beautiful Hotel Quinta das Lagrimas, where, according to legend, Ines de Castro, lover of King Pedro I, was murdered in 1355.

The problems started early, first a small one, followed by one that was more cosmic. As Congress participants arrived in Lisbon, they discovered that a strike of train workers was disrupting rail service, the most convenient mode of travel from

Lisbon to Coimbra. Geraldo Sousa later wrote me, "The train station was desolate. Nobody there; no trains in sight. We took the bus—small, hot, and uncomfortable but it got us to Coimbra." The transportation problem was just an appetizer. The main course was soon to follow.

Several hours before the Opening Session on May 26, which was to be held in the amazing Joanina Library, we confronted our first very serious problem. I had found Castro, whom I had met with several times during the year, to be very congenial and cooperative to work with. But a few hours before the Opening Session, MSA President George Winius informed me that Castro had prepared (without any consultation with Rick or me) the Opening Session agenda and would not tolerate changes. I was surprised and not prepared to acquiesce to this Salazar-like (Salazar was once an economics professor at Coimbra) authoritarian behavior.

On the positive side, this problem proved to be a valuable learning experience for the future. Still being neophytes in organizing international meetings, Rick and I had not anticipated such a problem. The Lisbon agenda was easy. We only had to carefully include the appropriate individuals. However, Castro's insistence on total agenda stewardship resulted in the establishment of an MSA policy on the Opening Session agenda. The Opening Session agenda of every congress since Coimbra has been prepared in cooperation with local organizers. The MSA policy is to follow the host institution's protocol with one caveat. After the host institution completes its portion of the agenda, the session is turned over to the MSA. The MSA component usually consists of thanking the host institution, awarding the Presidential Medal, introducing the representative from the following year's host institution, and offering comments from the journal editor. Thanks to Dr. Castro, we now have a clear understanding with our host institutions regarding MSA's expectations for the Opening Session. However, Castro's recalcitrance made it difficult to establish that modus operandi in Coimbra without bruising a very large and formidable ego.

Castro's Opening Session started with comments by the Rector, Dean, other university dignitaries, and representatives from FLAD and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation who had given generous grants to the MSA. Next was a plenary lecture delivered by Professor João Marinho dos Santos, who spoke in Portuguese for over an hour on "Brazil and Colonia Portugal." Those who understood Portuguese informed me it was an excessively long, but brilliant, talk. Unfortunately, as in Lisbon, over half the audience did not understand Portuguese, leaving us time to enjoy the beauty of the Joanina Library or to take a nap. After thirty minutes of trying to count every book on the library shelves, I found myself overcome with a tsunami of nostalgia, missing Chancellor Cressy and fantasizing about what

he would do if present. Finally, the lecture ended, and it was my turn on the agenda to make some brief comments. However, there were people I wanted to introduce and allow to make brief comments. Most importantly, I wanted George Winius to address the audience. A distinguished scholar and MSA Honorary President, he was responsible for a large grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation. That Gulbenkian grant was of enormous importance, being used to support the participation of Brazilian scholars in the Congress. Their participation was of vast importance since the decision had been made to hold the 2000 MSA Congress in Brazil. But to acknowledge Winius and others, I had to defy Castro's mandate, so, as Alexander Pope wrote, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Once I had the floor, I proceeded to do what I considered necessary. I introduced Winius and invited him to address the audience as MSA President, which he did for about ten minutes. I also wanted to introduce Marcos Freire d'Aguiar of the Federal University of Bahia in Salvador, Brazil, which would host the 2000 Congress. Marcos was Head of the Office for International Affairs, Special Assistant to the Rector, and 1999–2000 MSA President.

When I finished, I turned to Castro, thanked him, and sat down. Castro gave me a furious look, quickly ended the session, and rushed out of the library, not to be seen for the rest the Congress. This led to an extremely awkward situation. The Rector had organized a reception for Congress participants, to which Castro was to extend an invitation and give directions to the venue. Castro failed to share that information before his abrupt departure. So Rick and I found ourselves in another fun moment, standing outside the Joanina Library with no answers to give colleagues who were asking about the reception. At that moment, our plenary speaker, Professor João Marinho dos Santos, walked up to me with a smile on his face and said, "Come, I will show you where to go." The reception was a lavish event with food, drink, and wonderful thirteenth-century tuna music performed by university students in traditional university dress, playing traditional instruments. The Opening Session ended on a happy note, but a few more bumps in the road awaited us. The Thursday and Friday sessions went well. But Saturday was another day.

The University of Coimbra was not a great distance from the hotels where the participants were staying. However, the campus was high above the Mondego River and the hotels, making it a very difficult walk uphill for many participants. To ameliorate that problem, the MSA had chartered a coach to transfer participants from their hotels to campus and back and for transport to the Closing Reception on Saturday night, which was on the opposite side of the Mondego. On Saturday morning I was informed the coach had not arrived for its morning

hotel pickups, so Rick, Geraldo Sousa, and I went to the coach company. I will have much to say about Geraldo in the pages that follow, but on that Saturday he joined us as an interpreter since no one at the coach company spoke English. The source of the problem was quickly discovered. For an unexplainable reason, the coach company had our service listed for Thursday, Friday, and Sunday. After lengthy discussions and some additional payment, it was agreed that a coach would be available to transport our colleagues to and from the Closing Reception at the Quinta das Lagrimas. Problem solved.

Having solved the transportation issue, concurrent sessions were drawing to a successful conclusion, and a magnificent Closing Reception was planned for that evening. All was well. But we had one last big surprise. Returning from the coach company, I encountered my colleague, Frank Sousa, Director of the Portuguese Center at UMD, who asked me if I had seen the local newspaper, which I had not. He handed me a copy, and there was a big story about the MSA Congress on the front page. As I read the article with Frank's help, I discovered it was a very nasty diatribe written by a Coimbra faculty member condemning the MSA and its editorial policy. It seems that this professor wanted to publish an article in *Mediterranean Studies*. A member of our Editorial Board had told him that his submission would be welcomed, but it would have to go through our double-blind review process. Apparently, the information that *Mediterranean Studies* had a review process put this individual into a frenzy, which led to his lengthy article about the arrogant Americans who had the audacity to think they were better judges of what should be published in the journal than a distinguished member of the Coimbra faculty. Thinking of the Opening Session, I wondered whether such temper-fueled outbursts were systemic in Coimbra. I said to Sousa, "At least we made the front page, but I do not see an invitation to return to Coimbra in the near future." With that event, we had a grand Closing Reception at the beautiful Quinta das Lagrimas. Our thoughts then turned to 2000 Congress, celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of Cabral's discovery of Brazil, and the Third Annual MSA Congress in Salvador, Brazil.

## *Third Annual MSA International Congress 2000: Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil*

Going back to 1999, it is difficult to recall exactly when the decision was made to hold the third Annual MSA Congress in Brazil. There was a keen interest from many people to do so, but it was not a firm decision until a venue for the Congress was found. Rick was much more instrumental in acquiring Salvador as a venue

than I was because of his casual acquaintance with David Bergeron and Geraldo de Sousa (both of whom I met for the first time in Coimbra). As it turned out, the primary catalyst in getting us to Brazil was Geraldo, who was to be become (and remains) a major figure in the MSA for the next twenty years. Geraldo was to serve a decade as editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, for many years he was Chair of the Congress Program Committee, and for a time after Rick Clement departed he served as Deputy Executive Director. Geraldo has been a quintessential force in shaping the development, history, and success of the MSA.

Rick met Geraldo through David Bergeron, a member of the University of Kansas Department of English. David frequently did research at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, where he met and befriended Rick, who was Special Collections Librarian. David's partner, Geraldo de Sousa, was on the Xavier University faculty and met Rick during a visit to Lawrence. With the help of George Winius and Frank Sousa, I had obtained a generous grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The grant was to be used for travel funds for Brazilian scholars, so they could participate in the Coimbra Congress. Since Geraldo was born in Brazil and still a Brazilian national in 1999, we could award him one of the Gulbenkian travel grants.

Given Geraldo's Brazilian background, it was natural to enlist his help in identifying a home for the 2000 Congress. Fortuitously, Geraldo and David were traveling to Brazil in the summer of 1998 to visit Geraldo's family in Brasilia. During his visit, Geraldo consulted his sister Rejânia Araújo, who was Senior Program Assistant at the Binational Fulbright Commission/Brazil in Brasilia. By good fortune, Ms. Araújo was aware that the Federal University of Bahia in Salvador was planning a celebration in honor of the five hundredth anniversary of Cabral's discovery of Brazil. She was also well acquainted with Marcos Freire d'Aguiar, who was Head of the Office for International Affairs and Special Assistant to the Rector at Bahia University. During a conference call with Marcos, Geraldo explained the MSA requirements and needs from the host institution. Marcos affirmed he was very interested in hosting the 2000 MSA Congress, could meet the MSA requirements, and would fax a formal invitation to Geraldo.

To facilitate planning for the Salvador Congress and build rapport and a working relationship with Marcos, he was also awarded one of the Gulbenkian travel grants. It is important to divulge that, except for Geraldo's sister, none of us had ever met Marcos, and neither Rick nor I had been to Salvador (though Geraldo and David had). The Salvador Congress remains the only venue that neither Rick nor I visited in advance. It was somewhat risky to organize a congress in terra incognita, but Geraldo and David recommended the venue, and Marcos Freire

d'Aguiar projected himself as an extremely competent and energetic man. He made us confident he would fulfill his obligations and those of Bahia University to host a splendid congress. We were not disappointed, though there were a few minor bumps in the road.

Before leaving Coimbra, an important innovation was introduced, demonstrating a cogent example of the organic nature and evolution of the MSA. The decision was made to establish the honorary office of President of the Congress. George Winius had been Honorary President of the Coimbra Congress because he was influential in the Portuguese academic community and provided vital help in my successful efforts to obtain FLAD and Gulbenkian grants. The new practice formalized the President of the Congress on a permanent basis. Starting with the 2000 Bahia Congress, every year there would be a President of the Congress from the host institution who would be the primary liaison between the host institution and MSA. That person would receive the appointment as President a year in advance of their Congress. It is now standard MSA practice that during the Opening Session of a Congress, the outgoing President receives the Presidential Medal and the President for the following year Congress is inaugurated.

## *Aquarela do Brasil: Watercolor of Brazil*

After Coimbra, the Congress in Salvador was almost anticlimactic. That is not to say that we did not experience a deal of stress in the lead-up to the Congress. The anxiety was partly due to the fact that we had never visited Salvador before and had no idea what to expect. That anxiety was exacerbated two weeks before the Congress when we learned that the headquarters hotel where most Congress participants planned to stay had been interdicted (aka "bankrupted") and had been closed. That was followed several days later with news that the staff and faculty at all federal universities in Brazil would be on strike during the Congress. So there we were, a week before the Congress, going to a venue we were totally unacquainted with, our headquarters hotel closed because of bankruptcy, and the university faculty/staff on strike. No problem. Marcos found another hotel. He said not to worry about the strike (he was an administrator and not on strike). As soon as we arrived in Salvador and saw how Marcos had everything under control, all concerns evaporated. Salvador, the first slave port in the Americas, is a fascinating community. Like many Caribbean islands such as Grenada, Barbados, and Martinique, the Salvador population is predominantly African/multiracial, descended from African slaves brought to Brazil to work on sugar plantations. The result is a fascinating Afro-Brazilian culture famous for its cuisine, music, and

architecture. The Federal University of Bahia was officially created in 1946, but its genesis was as the Medical School of Bahia, the first medical school in Brazil, founded in 1808. The medical school was established by royal patent from João VI, who had fled Portugal during the Napoleonic War and arrived in Bahia with his court in January 1808.

Thanks to Marcos, the Congress was a great success. The alternate headquarters hotel he had found was excellent, and the strike did not hinder the Congress. Marcos utilized his many friends and students to carry out the necessary tasks that allowed the Congress to run smoothly. Over two decades of organizing the annual conferences, I have had the pleasure of working with many wonderful and capable individuals at the host institutions. None, however, has ever matched the incredible job done by Marcos Freire d'Aguiar. He was everywhere, doing everything. From the grand Opening Session in the beautiful Palácio da Reitoria to the splendid closing dinner at the Salvador Yacht Club featuring Afro-Brazilian music and dancers, the Congress progressed flawlessly to the great pleasure of all those in attendance.

### *2001 Aix-en-Provence*

The year 2001 saw the MSA's return to Europe and the only MSA Congress (regretfully) ever held in France. The Congress organizer was our colleague and journal co-editor Guy Mermier of the University of Michigan, who had been so instrumental in saving the journal in 1994. While Salvador as the 2000 Congress venue was decided only a year in advance, Aix-en-Provence was several years in the making. In 1999 Guy Mermier had offered to organize a Congress in Aix but stated that it would take time. It in fact took Guy several trips to Aix to negotiate with the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, one of the most august institutions to host an MSA Congress. It is a teaching and research center founded in 1996 with a focus on human and social sciences. The center is affiliated with the French National Center for Scientific Research and the University of Paris. It was a beautiful modern facility with a convenient restaurant that served lunch. Its only drawback was its location, several miles from the city center, requiring a coach to transport participants back and forth. Guy had met with the mayor and city officials, resulting in the mayor hosting a lovely Congress Reception at the beautiful seventeenth-century Hotel de Ville.

The Congress was well prepared and organized, the center was a wonderful venue, and Guy found an excellent headquarters hotel where most participants stayed. In sum, the Congress went off well, there were no significant problems,

and Aix is a beautiful city. Guy also made an extremely important innovation in the practice of the Annual Congress. He organized a pre-congress excursion to Nîmes to see the first-century Roman temple known as the Maison Carrée and to visit the Pont du Gard and the magnificent Roman aqueducts, one of the greatest engineering masterpieces of the ancient world. This pre-conference excursion to Nîmes and Pont du Gard represents another innovation in MSA history. This activity greatly enriched the cultural experience of those who participated.

To appreciate the importance of Guy's inaugural excursion requires a digression into the challenges of funding a professional organization, organizing an annual international congress, and publishing a journal. The Mediterranean Studies Association is a nonprofit, self-supporting, tax-exempt organization with all work done by uncompensated volunteers. For the initial Lisbon Congress, I managed while still Provost to support the Congress with six thousand dollars of university funds, thanks to the participation of Chancellor Cressy, President Bulger, and several members of the UMass Board of Trustees. For the Coimbra Congress, we were benefactors of generous grants I obtained from FLAD and the Gulbenkian Foundation. But with Salvador, we were financially on our own, reliant on Congress registrations and memberships, supplemented by annual thousand-dollar donations from the UMass Center for Portuguese Studies, the Arizona State University Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and the University of Kansas. Given the high cost of publishing the journal (an annual three-thousand-dollar subvention), it was very difficult to keep the organization in the black.

Guy's brilliant, innovative idea of concurrently providing enriching experiences and raising additional revenue for the MSA was the harbinger of the future. We sold out the forty-eight-passenger coach (out of the ninety Congress attendees), clearly indicating considerable interest in travel enrichment experiences. In Brazil, Geraldo Sousa organized an informal post-congress tour, filling a ten-passenger van with his Kansas colleagues, and while not an MSA activity, it was another example of considerable interest in educational travel activities. Guy's inaugural pre-congress excursion in Aix resulted in annual pre-congress activities, usually historic walking tours of the host city.

Geraldo's successful post-tour adventure resulted in discussions between Rick and me (Rick had participated in Geraldo's tour) about organizing an MSA post-tour. The result was a pilot post-tour after the 2003 Budapest Congress. It was a financially unsuccessful learning experience, but it did offer encouragement for the future. Congress post-tours were to become a permanent and important feature of the Annual Congress.

## *2002 Granada*

During the inaugural MSA Congress in Lisbon in 1998, Rick and I had the fortuitous opportunity to meet Professor Frances Luttikhuizen of the University of Barcelona. Frances was to be a regular attendee of our Congress (Lisbon, Coimbra, Granada, Budapest, Messina, and Évora) until her retirement. During a conversation with Frances in Coimbra, she proposed Barcelona for a future MSA Congress and offered to help with its organization. But she also informed us that things moved slowly at her university and that it could take several years for our efforts to materialize. In fact, it took five years. In the interval, Frances introduced me to her colleague, Ángel Felices Lago, Director of the Centro de Lenguas Modernas at the University of Granada. While Guy was putting the Aix Congress together, I had begun a working relationship and friendship with Ángel. I met him in Granada in 2000, when he expressed interest in the MSA and extended an invitation to host the 2002 Congress. As President of the 2002 Congress, Ángel was invited to Aix to participate in the 2001 event. I visited Granada again in early 2002 to finalize details for the Congress and met Ángel in Washington, D. C., for dinner that summer when he was attending the NAFSA Annual Meeting for International Education to recruit students for his center. By the time of the Congress, I had developed an excellent working relationship with Ángel. That friendship continues to the present. It was to be important not only for the Granada Congress but for future conferences in Salamanca and Malaga. The Congress in 2002 was highly successful, without any significant problems. Building on the experience Guy Mermier had initiated in Aix, the morning of the first day of the Congress was devoted to an excursion to the Alhambra. That evening, the Opening Session was held in the beautiful historic Hospital Real, commissioned by Isabella and Ferdinand in 1504, and was followed by a generous reception hosted by the Rector. Following three days of paper presentations, the Congress ended Saturday night with a lavish MSA reception at the Carmen de la Victoria with a spectacular view of the Alhambra.

Janos Bak of the Central European University in Budapest, who would host the 2004 Congress, was present at the Congress. Janos's participation at the Congress requires yet another digression. At the Coimbra Congress in 1999, the decision had been made to continue annual MSA international congresses. Having made that decision, it became imperative to look for venues and start planning several years in advance. For example, while Guy was organizing the 2001 Aix Congress, I had already begun working with Ángel on the 2002 Granada Congress. For several years, Rick and I had been regular attendees at the Annual Conference

on Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Arizona State University. At the meeting in February 2001, we met Janos Bak, who was one of the conference plenary speakers. Rick and I approached Janos about his possible interest in hosting the 2003 Congress. Janos indicated a positive interest, and before the end of the year we had a formal invitation from the Rector of the Central European University. Since I was involved with organizing the 2002 Congress in Granada and engaged in ongoing negotiations with the University of Barcelona, it was agreed that Rick Clement would work with Janos in the organization of the Budapest Congress. My negotiations with the University of Barcelona were facilitated in Granada by the attendance of Frances Luttikhuizen and her colleague Joan Bellard, a Senior Professor who would be President of the 2004 Congress. In the fall of 2002, we would receive a formal invitation to host the 2004 MSA Congress from the Rector of the University of Barcelona. It was to be one of the most difficult congresses to organize in the history of the MSA, but that is a story for the future.

### *Budapest 2003*

The Budapest Congress was a very interesting one. It was a return to one of my favorite cities that I had visited a number of times. Rick had worked with Janos Bak to organize the Congress while I was working on Granada for 2002 and Barcelona 2004. It had not been a particularly happy working relationship for Rick since Janos had a temper and a propensity for gruffness that Rick found hard to work with. The result was that, after the Congress, Rick and I made a decision that he would devote his efforts to the journal, something he excelled at, and I would take full responsibility for organizing the Annual Congresses starting with Barcelona in 2004. It was a project that I preferred, so the formal division of future responsibilities was mutually very satisfactory.

The Congress itself was well organized; Janos, a no-nonsense person, and despite his nature to be unpredictably volatile, was an excellent host and organizer; and the Congress went well. The Central European University was an excellent host; the Closing Reception was in the magnificent Academy of Science that featured a wonderful piano recital by MSA member Alexandra Mascolo-David of Central Michigan University. Joan Bellard of the University of Barcelona was present to be appointed President of the 2004 Barcelona Congress. There was also a delegation from the University of Genoa present to extend an invitation to host the 2006 MSA Congress.

It was also the first Congress in which we organized a post-tour. I had a great deal of experience taking students on educational tours, but I had to return to

Massachusetts for graduation and could not lead the group myself. In my absence, we used a private tour company, which was a big mistake. They ate up all the potential profits and more. But while the post-tour was an economic failure with a small number of participants, it indicated great interest in such an activity. Consequently, undeterred by the Budapest failure, I organized a tour for the 2004 Congress, which I would guide myself.

The most interesting and historically important event of the Budapest Congress, however, occurred during the Opening Session in a scenario bordering on the surreal. But it was to be an event that led to an interesting experiment in international education and to a new chapter in MSA history totally separate from the journal and Annual Congress.

## *Nocciano Institute for Arts and Culture*

To understand the event in Budapest that led to the Nocciano Institute requires another adventure in digression. In reading this history, one would find it difficult to forget the comedic episode at the first MSA Congress in Lisbon. I refer to Chancellor Peter Cressy wanting me to apply a *garrote* to Francisco Bethencourt, President of the Biblioteca Nacional, to terminate his long-winded lecture in Portuguese. During my five years working with Cressy, a retired Navy Admiral, I spent hundreds of hours with him. He could be clever and creative but also mercurial, unpredictable, and impractical. An example of the latter is that he would hire people he liked, but for whom no job existed. A prime example was bringing his friend and retired Italian Navy Captain Renato Miele to UMass. Renato, now deceased, was a wonderful, talented, intelligent gentleman who preceded me by a year in joining the Cressy workforce. Peter met Renato in Italy during the first Iraqi War, and Renato followed him to UMass with the promise of employment. Not knowing what to do with him (Miele was very capable but without academic credentials), Cressy told me to find something for him to do. Prior to having Renato assigned to me, I had noted he frequently brought Italian nationals to campus to meet with Cressy, usually without my participation. A frequent visitor was Dino Di Gregorio from Pescara, President of the Robert Schuman Foundation in Italy. Dino loved to give awards and Peter loved to receive them. It was a marriage made in heaven. Dino on one occasion presented Peter with a flag from the European Union (under whose authority was never made clear) that the Chancellor proudly hung on a flagpole at the entrance of the campus. The meetings I attended usually consisted of Dino rambling on endlessly in Italian (really a soliloquy) with Renato giving very abridged interpretations.

In 1999, I began working on the development of a Summer Program in Sicily for UMD students and was aided in the project by Renato Miele, who got Dino DiGregorio involved. Dino was well connected in Italian political circles, was an advocate for international education, and liked and supported the establishment of a UMass Summer Program in Sicily. To spare subjugating readers to many pages of detail, let me be succinct and say that I traveled to Messina with Dino and was introduced to Rector Gaetano Silvestri of the University of Messina, and in 2001 UMass commenced a very successful summer program that ran until 2013. The purpose of this digression is to introduce Dino DiGregorio into the fabric of MSA history. The first collaborative effort between Dino and the MSA was organizing an international symposium at the University of Messina in 2000, cosponsored by the MSA, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and Università degli Studi of Messina. The organization of the symposium was done by the MSA, but it required close cooperation with DiGregorio who was instrumental in raising funds to support the event. The germane manifestation of that symposium was the initiation of DiGregorio into the history of the MSA. We must fast-forward to the 2003 Annual MSA Congress in Budapest at the Central European University to put Dino in his relevant historical context

For two months before the Budapest Congress, I had frequent communications from Dino regarding his plan to give me an award from the European Parliament for promoting international education. Dino was aware that the Summer Sicily Program had been a great success and that the Annual MSA Congress was drawing an increasing number of European scholars. He wanted to attend and make the presentation at the MSA Congress in Budapest. I requested through my translator that Dino please give the award to the MSA, not to me, which he reluctantly agreed to do but then gave the award to me in Budapest. I knew that Janos Bak would not be amused by Dino's verbose wandering oratory during the Opening Session. For that reason, I attempted to impress upon Dino that he could have only five to ten minutes to give the award and make his comments. I might as well have been talking to a wall. Dino, as I feared, had no intention of limiting his time once he got the spotlight. It would have been easier to pry a gun from Charlton Heston's "cold dead hands" than to limit Dino to five minutes. The evening of the Opening Session was to be an unforgettable one. Janos had been forewarned of Dino's anticipated presence, his verbosity, and his awards, and very reluctantly agreed to provide a limited time at the beginning of the Opening Session for Dino. I breathed a sigh of relief until we reached seven o'clock and there was unsurprisingly no sign of Dino, and Janos was justifiably becoming increasingly irritated. Finally, at seven thirty Janos insisted we start without Dino.

The first part of the Opening Session went well. The Central European University portion ended after the Rector had made his comments, and Janos was about to turn the program over to me. Just as I started to think we were home free, the back doors of the large auditorium burst open, and Dino with a smile from ear to ear entered the auditorium followed by a blond woman with a blue streak in her hair, a representative of the European Parliament, and a man carrying a large carton filled with sample boxes of pasta.

The woman in Dino's entourage was Rosanna Paolini, a highly successful entrepreneur from Pescara with excellent political connections to the Berlusconi government and a major funding source for many of Dino's schemes. I had met Rosanna during my Sicilian negotiation, and she had attended the symposium at the University of Messina in 2000. While I do not recall the name of the European Parliament representative, I do recall that the pasta man started passing out samples from his pasta factory, and after running out of pasta disappeared from history. Dino, still smiling, ascended the stage with Rosanna and the European Parliament representative in tow and began handing out awards to everyone in sight. One to Janos, one to the Rector, and the European Parliament man gave me an attractive one called the Stella d'Oro. After fifteen minutes they ran out of awards and since hope springs eternal I assumed and prayed they would vacate the stage, so we could return to the agenda. My hopes were soon dashed. Instead of leaving the stage, Dino removed a multipage document from his pocket and proceeded to indulge us with his Italian rhetoric. Professor Liana Cheney of UMass Lowell who had been translating while Dino presented his myriad awards did an excellent simultaneous translation of what followed for the next fifteen minutes. Near the end of his talk, Dino suddenly got everyone's attention when he said he wanted to give the MSA a *castello* in Nocciano, Italy.

I vividly recall the startled reactions of everyone at the head table when the word *castello* came out of Dino's mouth. Even Liana paused, not being sure what Dino had said. Then he said it again and reinforced his comments with a picture of the castle. Though I did not realize it at the time, Dino was a catalyst that evening for the commencement of an endeavor that became known as the Nocciano Institute for the Arts and Culture. Having engendered thirty minutes of chaos in the Opening Session, during which Janos took on the appearance of Mount Vesuvius before destroying Pompeii, Dino, Rosanna, and Signori European Parliament and Pasta left as quickly as they had arrived. As described previously, the Budapest Congress *sans* Dino was very efficiently organized and was very successful. I returned home with my Stella d'Oro, a picture of the Nocciano Castle, happy to have survived Dino and the Opening

Session, and giving no thought to Nocciano or its castle. Knowing Dino quite well by that time, I thought it nothing more than another of his grandiose ideas expounded with his typical verbosity that would amount to nothing but hot air contributing to global warming.

Later that month, while teaching in the Sicily Summer Program, I received a call from Dino wanting to know when I was coming to see my castle, that it was important that I do so. Making the long journey to Nocciano alone that June was a very unwelcome venture. Truthfully, I would have preferred a root canal. But after discussing the matter by phone with Rick and my Sicily Program colleague Tony Miraglia, who would be instrumental in anything we developed in Nocciano, I reluctantly agreed to journey into the unknown. Arriving early on a hot June morning in Rome's Termini Station after a painful overnight journey, I was met by a man named Massimo. Massimo treated me to a terrifying ninety-mile-an-hour ride over the Apennines to Pescara, where I was deposited in a hotel and given two hours to rest and clean up for my journey to Nocciano. Several hours later, I arrived in Nocciano and was greeted by a large delegation in front of City Hall led by Dino, Rosanna, and Mayor Gabriele Di Rupo of Nocciano, who was festooned in his Italian Tricolori mayoral regalia.

The welcome was followed by several hours of meetings and a three-hour lunch in which I understood little of what was said, thanks to my limited Italian and a translator who spoke less English than I did Italian. During the long day, I had the opportunity to speak alone with Mayor Di Rupo, a very kind and sincere man, and I asked him what he wanted me to do with the castle, a lovely twelfth-century structure that had undergone major renovations. His answer was to do anything I wanted that would bring young people to Nocciano to promote international understanding and learning. Armed with that mandate, I pondered the question on the long return train trip to Messina and began to conceptualize a program that, with refining from Rick and particularly from Tony Miraglia, was to become the Nocciano Institute. Back in Messina, I communicated my experiences to Rick and brainstormed with Tony, an artist and Professor of Fine Arts at UMD and the man who kept the Sicily Program on track. Tony would also become the Director of the Nocciano Institute that came to life in the summer of 2004.

The end result was the creation of a program we called the Nocciano Institute for Arts and Culture. It was not an easy program to implement. There were many difficult hurdles to overcome. Some were due to Dino, who fell ill and became difficult to deal with, some over who held custodianship of the castle,

and others the result of political infighting in Nocciano. There are many amusing stories that could be told, but to a large degree, thanks to Tony Miraglia and his wife Kathy, Professor of Art Education at UMD, the first program was successfully launched in the summer of 2004. The program we designed was for high school students who would take two noncredit courses in painting, photography, drama, survival Italian, or music over a two-week period. The wonderful citizens of Nocciano generously opened their homes to our students for home stays, and the classes were taught in Nocciano's twelfth-century castle. The successful 2004 program was followed by an even more successful one in 2005, after which things began to go south. The Great Recession hit, and there were fewer people financially able to take advantage of a high school enrichment program in Europe. Our problem was further exacerbated by the development of political issues in Nocciano that could give the history of Tammany Hall a run for its money. There were questions of misappropriation of funds, of recall elections, and of stewardship of the castle. Despite these problems, Tony and Kathy did a marvelous job of running the program from 2004 to 2007, and a modified version that incorporated college students from 2009 to 2011. After the 2011 program, Tony and I came to a mutual understanding that it was too difficult to recruit students in the current economic environment and that the political turmoil in Nocciano was making it impossible to continue. Consequently, the Nocciano Institute came to an end after the 2011 program. It was a failed but noble effort. However, for the fifty to one hundred students who participated in the institute, it was an enriching educational and cultural experience that will hopefully serve them well in the current xenophobic, nationalistic, and racist environment being preached by many in America today. In sum, it was worth the effort.

### *Barcelona Congress 2004*

The 2004 Congress in Barcelona was both one of the most successful and one of the most stressful of the many MSA Congresses. Barcelona is a magical and amazingly appealing city, unique in the world, and it was one of the best-attended Congresses of our first ten years. Frances Luttikhuizen had worked very hard to bring the Congress to Barcelona and to have her colleague Joan Bellard travel to Granada to meet with us in 2002. Dr. Bellard had enthusiastically accepted the 2004 Congress Presidency at the Budapest Congress. We obtained a written invitation from the Rector of the University of Barcelona offering concurrent meeting rooms and the beautiful Aula Magna for the opening meeting, all *gratis*.

In addition, we were offered an opening reception. On the surface, this had the appearance of a Congress that would be easy to organize, but appearances can be deceiving.

The problems began with hotel rooms. We needed a sufficient number that would be near the university and in the price range acceptable to the membership. But with Barcelona being one of the most beautiful cities in the world and a mecca for tourism, its hotels are among the most expensive in Europe. It required several days of searching to find rooms that many members still found too expensive. Unlike other meetings, this one presented a problem of communication. In Budapest Janos Bak, in Granada Ángel Felices Lago, and in Salvador the amazing Marcos Freire d'Aguiar had remained in constant contact with us and were all hands-on in helping organize the Congress. In Barcelona, our contacts were off the grid much of the time. Joan Bellard, who was to be President of the Congress, was on sabbatical and frequently incommunicado. The colleagues working with him were equally difficult to reach. The one person eager to work with us, Frances Luttikhuizen, was a nontenured visiting lecturer and for unknown and incomprehensible reasons was told by some senior colleagues that her help was not wanted, that it was the business of the senior tenured faculty to deal with the Congress. This is another seminal example of the magical and mysterious workings of the land we call the academy. As a result, the task of organizing the Congress continued its journey from bad to worse, but little did I know that the painful blow was yet to come.

In March, Louise (my future wife Louise Taggie) and I visited Barcelona to make sure everything was in order, particularly with regard to the haphazard to nonexistent communications during the previous six months. We were aware that a new Rector had been elected, but we were totally shocked when Joan Bellard and his colleagues informed us (Francis Luttikhuizen was unaware of this fact) that the new Rector was not prepared to honor the commitment his predecessor had made to the MSA. We were informed that, while we were welcome to use the Aula Magna and concurrent meeting rooms, we would have to rent the rooms at a cost in excess of three thousand euros. I must point out that in the early years the Annual Congress was lucky to have seventy-five paid registrations. I was no longer Provost at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and unable to subsidize the Congress, which made the fiscal demands of the University of Barcelona impossible to meet. What followed were very difficult negotiations with the university's administration.

During the negotiations, a process my fifteen years as a dean and provost had given me a great deal of experience in, and with a written document signed by the

previous rector that I argued constituted a contract, my best efforts produced only a compromise. These negotiations sharpened my awareness of how the bold and aggressive Catalans had once conquered and ruled a Mediterranean Empire. What was the Great Compromise of Barcelona? The university relented on requiring payment for their rooms. They would provide the Aula Magna for the Wednesday Opening Session, followed by a reception they would host, and they would provide some of the concurrent meeting rooms on Thursday and Friday, though not all seven we needed, and they could not provide any rooms on Saturday. Thus, we needed to find additional rooms for Thursday and Friday and all of the rooms for Saturday. Anticipating such a result, and being President of the Congress, Joan Bellard had entered into preliminary negotiations with the Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, a research facility located nearly a mile from the university.

This compromise created a logistical nightmare for Rick, who had responsibility for putting the Congress program together, and for many participants who had malfunctioning senses of direction. Many of our colleagues have a hard time without GPS finding meeting rooms when they are located in the same building. Now we were asking them to find rooms in two buildings a mile apart. The logistics were further exacerbated by the fact that Louise, who was assuming responsibility for on-site Congress coordination, discovered that she could not attend Barcelona. UMass was implementing a new software system during the Congress, and she was responsible for the process. The result was throwing together a registration/information desk run by students that Francis Luttikhuizen gallantly attempted to supervise. We would have to wait until Sicily in 2005 to improve and establish continuity with on-site Congress management and coordination, a process that has been vastly improved in the past fifteen years. Despite the logistical problems and many colleagues getting lost while journeying between venues, the Congress was a success, closing with a modest reception at the Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània. Sunday morning brought another challenge with the commencement of the first Congress post-tour that Louise and I had organized, but one I was flying solo on guiding.

### *Barcelona Post-Tour: An Experience to Remember*

The origin of the MSA's Educational post-tours started at the 2001 Aix Congress, where Guy Mermier organized a successful excursion to Pont du Gard, the first educational travel activity associated with an MSA Congress. That excursion was followed by one to the Alhambra, Granada 2002, the Angevin Renaissance castle in Visegrâd after Budapest 2003, and Tarragona after Barcelona 2004. Twenty years

after Aix, the pre-Congress excursions continue to be popular. The outsourced pilot post-tour in Budapest lost money but demonstrated sufficient interest to motivate organizing a post-tour for Barcelona. That post-tour was very successful, but enormously stressful for one person to manage. Forty participants, particularly strong-willed academics, are far too many for one person to deal with. It led to some stressful experiences, particularly working with a truly awful coach driver. That said, the tour had excellent historical/cultural substance and provided a worthy educational experience for participants and financial help for the MSA. I am going to dwell on the Barcelona tour at length because it will be the only one of the sixteen that will be described in this history. I emphasize Barcelona because it was the first and the most difficult, but most importantly, it cogently demonstrates why the MSA has succeeded for over a quarter century and continues to do so.

I would like to say that the MSA's success has simply been the product of the founder's genius, but it has not been. That is not to say that it did not require large investments of intellectual capital synthesized with innovative ideas and an abundance of hard work. But the seminal elements in the MSA's success have been fortitude and perseverance, the unwillingness to give up.

It would have been easy for Rick and me to have yielded to Norman Holub and Victor Meskill and allowed then to convert *Mediterranean Studies* into a ridiculous journal designed to promote self-interest and Dowling College, but we did not. Instead we fought hard to save the journal and prevailed. *Mediterranean Studies* is now in its thirtieth year of publication and working successfully with Pennsylvania State University Press, producing a high-quality academic journal.

The First MSA Congress in Lisbon in 1998 could have been the last after making the mistake of selecting a Congress venue that also hosted the World Fair at the same time. It was an exhausting but worthwhile effort to overcome many obstacles and organize the small but successful 1998 Congress in Lisbon. It could have been justifiable to make it a one-and-done effort, but we did not. Instead we continued pushing the boulder up the mountain, seeking future host institutions, increasingly internationalizing Congress participation, and achieving greater prestige because of the enhanced quality of papers and presenters. Now, as the Twenty-Fifth Annual Congress draws near, the number of participants has quadrupled since 1998, with twenty to twenty-five nations represented each year. We no longer need to search for host institutions like mendicants searching for their next meal. Rather, institutions now come to us, extending invitations and willing to wait three to four years for their opportunity to host the Congress.

The same sense of perseverance contributed to the eventual success of the post-tours. The Barcelona experience will demonstrate why the temptation to not do

another one raised its head after the difficult first post-tour. In the end, however, the same tenacity to keep at it until we got it right that led to the success of the journal and Annual Congresses was applied to the post-tours. So let's take a look at the first post-tour and why it took a degree of fortitude to do a second one.

## *Five Days with Mad Max, the Driver from Hell*

On May 30, 2004, with forty of my colleagues gathered at the appointed rendezvous, we awaited the coach that would take us into southern France through the Languedoc, returning to Catalonia through the small country of Andorra. The first premonition of the problems that lay ahead was the late arrival of the coach with a driver who was not the one I expected. As the event was to play out, the driver assigned to the post-tour had been reassigned, and the new driver was not expecting to work on Sundays. As a result, he had been very merry in his cup Saturday night and was suffering from a hangover, the effects of which persisted through most of the post-tour. Having guided many tours over the years, I can say without hesitation he was the most unpleasant, uncooperative, incompetent driver I have ever dealt with. That said, we loaded the coach but not without a generous dose of drama. After checking everyone on the coach, I boarded to take the front seat, which I found already occupied, and started a heated debate among a number of my colleagues regarding who would occupy the front seats. Apparently, we had a contingent that suffered from severe motion sickness and insisted they would expire if they did not ride in one of the four front seats. This was the type of task that was in Louise's portfolio, and since she was not present, I decided discretion was the greater part of valor, and left them to mediate the issue; I took a seat in the middle of the coach. We then set off with our Mad Max driver for the lands of the Cathars. Our first destination, the magnificent (eleventh-century) Castle of Queribus, the last Cathar stronghold, was the harbinger of a most difficult post-tour.

I soon learned that Mad Max had limited experience driving outside of Catalonia and none in southern France. Driving up the narrow, unpaved road to Queribus was challenging for him, and our journey was not accomplished without considerable drama. On the way up, one must share the road with vehicles going down. In the process of moving the coach to make room for a descending vehicle, the coach wheels went off the road onto a soft shoulder, got stuck, and in trying to maneuver back onto the road, the driver managed to stall the coach, causing it to rock and tilt. That set off some screams from the motion sickness group in the front of the coach that "we are going to roll over the cliff, let us off the coach." The coach door opened, and about a dozen people shot

off the coach like they were abandoning the *Titanic*. Mad Max got the coach restarted and continued to the castle with a dozen or more deciding to walk the remainder of the way.

After out visit to Queribus, we eventually set off for our overnight destination in Carcassonne, but not without another crisis. The driver failed to see a portable restroom as he was backing up and inflicted noticeable damage to the French version of Johnny on the Spot, the good news being that it was unoccupied at the time. After an hour of serious negotiations between the driver and on-site French officials, papers were signed and we left for Carcassonne and the next adventures that awaited us in the morning.

The itinerary called for a trip to the beautiful French city of Albi, from which the name Albigensian (another name for the Cathars) is derived. In planning the post-tour, I had driven the road from Carcassonne to Albi through a beautiful area of Toulouse. The coach ride to Albi was intended to be part of the total aesthetic experience. It had been agreed in the contract with the coach company that the route to Albi would be through the countryside and Castres, not on the toll road through the city of Toulouse. As we boarded the coach Monday morning, Gil Fernandez, a frequent participant in the Annual Congress, approached me and said he had been talking to the driver who told Gil he would only drive to Albi on the toll road. Mad Max had been talking to some French coach drivers whom he claimed told him it was a very dangerous road, and he was afraid he would have an accident. I was certain Mad Max was embellishing the danger, that the French drivers were having a little fun with him, and that his self-confidence had been diminished by running the coach off the road in Queribus, having a dozen passengers leap from his coach screaming "we are going to die," and losing a demolition derby to a portable toilet.

I argued with him for fifteen minutes as he headed for the toll road, but he was recalcitrant. Coach drivers in Europe are an interesting breed. I have worked with dozens of them. It is a relatively prestigious job among the nonprofessional working class, and drivers will often become stubborn and a bit domineering if you allow them to do so. Using persuasion and reason is usually sufficient to gain a driver's compliance, but unfortunately reason was not in the lexicon of Mad Max. When all else failed, I resorted to what one could call the nuclear option: calling the coach company's owner and complaining that the driver was not complying with the terms of the contract. That phone call could easily result in the termination of the driver. I took out my phone and started to dial a number. Mad Max saw me and asked whom I was calling; I said, "Your boss." Of course I was not calling his boss; I didn't even have the number. I was calling Frances Luttikhuizen,

who had worked with the coach company and would have advice for me in this situation. I was bluffing, but it worked; Mad Max surrendered and headed for the scenic route to Albi. (As an epilogue, he later told Gil Fernandez he was glad we had taken that road because it was so beautiful. The man was surreal.)

I wish I could say this lugubrious tale ended on the road to Albi, but as the entertainer Al Jolson would often say, "You ain't heard nothing yet." Hanging over the driver's head was a large sign that said NO SMOKING. Nevertheless, thirty minutes after his concession to travel the scenic highway, he lit a cigarette. The immediate reaction from those in the front of the bus (mainly the "I am going to die" leapers at Queribus) was "make him put it out." I was about to reluctantly talk to the driver when Gil Fernandez, sitting next to the driver and trying to keep him calm, said, "I think it is best to let him smoke, he is very nervous." Since everyone on the coach knew the driver was an unhappy neurotic about driving the scenic road he thought was dangerous, they responded like a Greek chorus, "Let him smoke." Since the overwhelming majority on the coach seemed to have a greater fear of the driver than of dying from lung cancer, I bravely did nothing. For the next fifteen minutes the coach took on the ambiance of a contentious Faculty Senate meeting with the front yelling "Make him stop!" and the back responding "Let him smoke, it is safer." I sat back and wondered again what I had got myself into. The issue was eventually resolved when the driver finished his cigarette.

I am not sure if even Mel Brooks could have written the final scene that was still to come. The last night of the post-tour was to be at the Parador of Cardona, located in a beautiful twelfth-century castle. I had stayed at the Parador in preparation for the post-tour. The Parador was well prepared to receive groups that arrived by motor coach. There was a back entrance for the coach to unload passengers and the luggage, which porters would take to the rooms while the group was registered and given their room keys. That was the plan. I had gone over it with the staff. I knew exactly how it worked and where the back entrance was located. As we climbed the road to the castle, I explained to Mad Max, with help from Gil Fernandez, where he was to take us, but to no avail. He did not want to go around to the back. He thought the road was too narrow. He insisted on going to the front entrance that was up a steep, two-hundred-foot grade from the coach. The driver was impossible. Even the "call the boss" trick wouldn't work. Accepting temporary defeat, I got off the coach to climb to the Parador and get a desk clerk to come talk to the driver and assure him the back entrance was safe, that coaches unloaded there every day. Before leaving the coach, I asked Rick to keep everyone on the coach, and failing that, under no circumstances to allow the driver to start unloading the luggage.

After hiking up the incline to the Parador, I attempted to explain to a bewildered desk clerk that my driver was fearful of unloading at the back of the Parador. I finally convinced him to journey down to the coach, assure the driver the back entrance was safe, and show him how to get there. As we walked out the door of the Parador, I saw to my dismay not only that the group was off the coach but that the driver had opened the cargo doors and they were retrieving their luggage. The Parador clerk shouted, "What are they doing? Is the driver crazy letting people off down there?" I didn't answer. Within minutes the driver and desk clerk were in a heated argument in Catalan so I don't know what they were saying, but they were not exchanging pleasantries. I stood there looking at the surreal scene of my colleagues, some in their eighties, attempting to drag luggage up the steep incline to the Parador in the afternoon heat looking like Ferguson's flailing army at Kings Mountain. I wondered how many of them might drop from heat exhaustion or cardiac arrest. At the same time Rick was trying to explain to me why he could not keep the group on the coach and telling me next year I needed to bring Louise to help me. My thoughts at that moment were that there was not going to be a next year; this was the *coup de grâce*, this was the end, I was mad to undertake this task, I would not make the mistake again. Of course, I was wrong.

But I was not going to attempt to do it alone again, and I was going to do careful vetting of coach companies. No more drivers like Mad Max. The result is that Louise and I have been doing post-tours now for fifteen years. During that time, over five hundred of our colleagues have participated in post-tours that have gone from the Minoan ruins of Crete to Santiago de Compostela, Dubrovnik, ancient Olympia, Albania, Cinque Terre, and a hundred other fascinating venues. They have not always been easy, but they have become a very established and enriching component of the Annual Congress. Fortitude and perseverance have been the common factors in the success of the journal, the Annual Congresses, and the post-tours.

### *2005 Messina*

The 2005 Congress in Messina was an interesting and challenging one that offered both serious problems and a valuable learning experience for the future. To put this Congress into its proper context requires a lengthy but important digression. Barcelona was a difficult Congress followed by an even more difficult post-tour, but that also sent us an unrequested surprise in the form of Professor Angelo Sindoni from the University of Messina. During the first seven Annual Meetings, we always had a responsible contact person or persons, usually a senior faculty member, on site to work with. Even with the stressful difficulties of the change

of administrations in Barcelona, we had dependable contacts in Professors Joan Bastard (though Bastard would fall off the radar from time to time) and Frances Luttikhuizen. They were people we knew who remained constant fixtures at the university and whom we could work with. That was not to be the situation at Messina.

I had developed a very good working relationship with the senior administration in Messina, particularly with Rector Gaetano Silvestri and Vice Rector Adriana Ferlazzo, through working with the UMass Dartmouth Summer Sicily Program I started in 2000. Consequently, when I approached Rector Silvestri in 2003 asking if he would host the 2005 Congress, he replied affirmatively. At the time I knew the Rector's second term would end in 2004, but there was a general belief that Vice Rector Adriana Ferlazzo would succeed him. However, like so many European rector elections, particularly Italian ones, and very particularly Sicilian ones, they are eminently unpredictable and, like God, often work in unexplainable ways. The 2003 Messina rector election was no exception. Ferlazzo did not win. Instead, Dr. Francesco Tomasello of the Medical School and an adversary of the Silvestri party was elected Rector. So that you do not think I am overly dramatizing the intensity of the political rivalry between these parties, I offer as evidence that Silvestri and his administration were so vexed they immediately resigned. Since the Tomasello election victory had not yet been certified in Rome, the university was left without an administration for several months. Dr. Tomasello was a controversial Rector, highlighted by the fact that he was later sentenced to two and a half years in prison for misappropriation of university funds, and his wife Melitta Grasso was accused of taking bribes for university supply contracts but died before she was sentenced.

To be fair to Dr. Tomasello however, on the three occasions I met with him he was always friendly, courteous, and generous with his time. During our first meeting he confirmed that he would honor Rector Silvestri's commitment to host the 2005 MSA Congress, which was a great relief, but he did not identify whom he would appoint as his liaison to work with the MSA. We later discovered his appointee would be an old crony of his named Angelo Sindoni, whom Tomasello had appointed to a minor administrative position. Sindoni also served appropriately as Director of the Mafia Institute at the University of Messina. Without going into a long and lugubrious journey through the painful Messina Congress, let me just say that Sindoni was in a cosmos all his own of the most difficult campus liaisons we ever had to work with. He really had no interest in the MSA Congress beyond using it to enhance his own reputation. He organized his own

conference within the context of the MSA Congress, inviting thirty to forty of his friends and colleagues who attended *gratis*. This large group of his attendees resulted in considerably raising the Congress expenses but without any additional registrations for the MSA. Then at the end of the Congress, Professor Sindoni wanted to renegotiate our original financial agreement by asking for an additional twenty-five hundred euros from the MSA. This disagreement became very contentious and continued into November 2005, when I was in Sicily on another matter.

I was in Taormina leading a tour group through Sicily and agreed to attend what became an acrimonious meeting at the university. The meeting was chaired by Sindoni and attended by several university officials, none of whom I knew or understood what they did, nor did any of them say anything during the meeting. I think Sindoni had them present as window dressing, assuming I would be intimidated by numbers when in fact I found the meeting rather amusing. A very good friend, Mrs. Trays Ricciardi, who worked as on-site coordinator for the UMass Summer Sicily Program and knew Sindoni, attended the meeting as my translator. The meeting started with a lengthy and comical diatribe by Sindoni. He thought it inexcusable for the MSA to not gladly submit to his demands for an additional twenty-five hundred euros given all the wonderful things he had done to organize the Congress. I responded, telling him his request was totally unjustified, that he was ignoring the terms of our original agreement, that it was his forty unregistered colleagues who were responsible for his additional costs, and that the MSA did not have the resources to comply with his demands.

At the same time, I realized I had to exercise caution since there was a concurrent issue I had to consider, independent of the MSA. While Sindoni had foolishly entered into a confrontation that he was not going to win, I had to allow him an opportunity to save face. While truthfully I cared little about Sindoni saving face, I had to consider the future of the highly successful UMass Summer Sicily Program. Sindoni had the potential to sabotage that program given his relationship with the Rector. Thus, I adopted my mendicant mode, offering my best imitation of Saint Francis (*sans* wooden bowl) pleading unabated poverty. I said however that for the sake of world peace, my *humanitas*, and my great affection for Professor Sindoni, I could offer a thousand euros to show the MSA's goodwill, though we were not obligated to do so. A brief pow-wow ensued in Italian, followed by the announcement by Professor Sindoni that he would accept the offer. Case closed. The Messina Congress was history. As a humorous epilogue, the following year Mrs. Ricciardi informed me that Professor Sindoni was very unhappy that I did not send him a Christmas card.

## *The Dawn of a New Era*

The difficulties presented by the Messina Congress once again gave oxygen to the question that had emerged in Barcelona: "How much longer are you going to keep doing these conferences?" The answer, which had always been "When they stop being fun," was close at hand in Messina. Barcelona and Messina had been conspicuous by their total absence of fun. However, the Messina Congress also presented some very positive contributions, most important beyond question being the introduction of a Congress Coordinator. Louise (now Louise Taggie) had been scheduled to take over as Coordinator for the Barcelona Congress and to help me with the post-tour. However, her responsibilities at UMass had prevented her from doing so. But in 2005 she assumed her new role as Congress Coordinator, and we were most fortunate she agreed to return in that capacity in 2006. Louise had trained my graduate assistants, who worked on the Congress for several years, but this was her first time on the front lines. She could not have started with a more difficult and chaotic Congress. I have already described the shenanigans of our Congress President; in addition, the facilities were very arcane, engendering many complaints from participants. Most of our problems were due to the lack of coordination and communication with Sindoni. The on-site organization was very haphazard, so much so that Louise must have felt like Alice in Wonderland, and I am sure she entertained serious thoughts of escaping back to the real world.

It was most fortunate for the MSA that she did not do so. Within several years, Louise has taken over all the administrative responsibilities of coordinating the Congress. She reorganized the registration process, taking care of all registrations leading up to the Congress, and improved the registration desk procedures. She prepared all the participation certificates required by many non-U.S. faculty, took stewardship of all financial matters related to the MSA, including the preparation of federal and state income taxes, and became a partner with me in leading what became fifteen years of highly successful educational post-tours, which continue today. The membership database has increased from approximately six hundred to eighteen hundred. She expanded the use of Constant Contact, a highly efficient and professional means of communicating with the membership. All these factors have been crucial for the growth of the Annual Congress, which has gone from one hundred presented papers to over two hundred. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the past sixteen years Louise has become the face of the organization. She deals with all the phone calls that come into the MSA office, answers endless questions by email, and knows hundreds of the members by name from her constant presence at the registration desk during the Congress. As a result,

she is the one person in the leadership circle who would be nearly impossible to replace. Her arrival as Congress Coordinator was indeed the dawn of a new era by converting the MSA's on-the-fly administrative amateurism into a highly professional, efficient, and user-friendly organization.

### *The Congress Post-Tour*

I will wrap up the history of the 2005 Sicily Congress with a few words about the incredible post-tour. The participation in the Sicily post-tour of over fifty people required a large double-decker bus. It was a wonderful experience. Louise and I were already doing educational tours independent of the MSA and had brought groups to Sicily. The result was that we worked well together as a team, knew the itinerary well, and were acquainted with the hotels we utilized; best of all, Mad Max was far away in Barcelona while we had a professional driver who was actually prepared to take us where we wanted to go. That is not to say that there was not unplanned excitement during the five-day tour, the most exciting being when the double-decker coach took down a balcony on a narrow medieval street in Enna (that may be a primary reason why coaches are no longer allowed on that street).

The Sicily post-tour confirmed the importance of offering a Congress post-tour. Since the inception of the MSA-sponsored post-tours in 2004, hundreds of participants have taken advantage of these collegial and educational experiences. I believe it safe to say that the post-tours are a major incentive for some participants to attend the Annual Congress. It is also important to point out the financial value of the tours to the MSA. The MSA is on very solid economic footing today, thanks to good economic stewardship, a substantial increase in Congress registrations, and a large reduction in the cost of the journal. But that was not the situation before 2014. While the MSA is run by volunteers, we still incur many expenses to keep the organization running. In addition to all the expenses associated with the Annual Congress, there is extensive cost associated with publishing *Mediterranean Studies*. Since the inception of the journal in 1986, it had been a serious expense in the budget. Thomas Jefferson Press had required a substantial subvention, and both Ashgate and Manchester University Press had required the MSA to purchase a large number of volumes of the journal every year that cost thousands of dollars. It should also be noted that until 2013, a copy of the journal was included in the price of membership, which included shipping. There were also expenses associated with the Editorial Office, so at the end of any given fiscal year, the MSA was barely in the black. The post-tours helped to rectify that situation. In Messina, the Congress barely broke even after giving Sindoni his thousand euros,

but the highly successful post-tour was sufficiently profitable to carry the MSA to the Genoa Congress in 2006. The post-tours are now such an important feature of the Annual Congress that it is not atypical during the first three months of registrations to have more colleagues registered for the post-tour than for the Congress.

### *Genoa 2006, Évora 2007, Lüneburg 2008, Cagliari 2009*

For the next four years, we did not have to entertain the question, "How much longer are you going to keep doing these conferences?" These four meetings went off without any major complications, and all four were followed by excellent post-tours. That is not to say that there were not mistakes and bad decisions still to be made and much more to learn. Louise continued to improve the organizational processes; Rick continued drawing Geraldo de Sousa into the editorial process, with Rick becoming senior editor and Geraldo taking on the role of editor. Another important task was to clean out no-shows from the Congress program. Rick and I had been very lax in putting in the program names of presumed participants who had assured us they would register on site. The results were appalling—dozens of no-shows who had their names in the program. This practice resulted in considerable complaints from attendees and left some sessions with only one or two papers. We learned to our chagrin that we were not in More's *Utopia* but in the academy of the real world where ethics are often absent. We found to our dismay that many proposals were submitted by individuals who never intended to attend the Congress but wanted only to get their names in the program. This became another assignment for the Congress Coordinator: get the no-shows out of the program. By working first with Rick, later with Geraldo de Sousa when he was Program Chair, and now with the current Chair John Watkins, Louise got it done. Mission accomplished. We now enforce a rigorous policy of eliminating on-site registrations and removing anyone from the program who is not registered by the time it is ready to go to press. The end result has been a nearly pristine program. Everyone in the program has registered for the Congress, and the very few no-shows are the result of last-minute emergencies or illnesses.

We were very fortunate in all four conferences to have excellent on-site faculty to work with. Paola Valenti and her colleagues in Genoa were amazingly helpful, as were Jose Machado, Ana Clara Birrento, and Fernanda Olival in Évora.

Lüneburg and Cagliari, while highly successful meetings with excellent on-site Coordinators, did however further our education of what to do and what not to do in the organization and coordination of the Annual Congress. We made serious judgment errors that created difficulties for us. In the case of Lüneburg, it was a further elucidation of the mistake made in Messina of not having a trustworthy

senior faculty member to work with. Henriette Javorec, a recent PhD graduate in French from the University of Kansas, contacted Rick before the Messina Congress inquiring about the possibility of the University of Lüneburg hosting an MSA Congress. Rick and I agreed to meet Javorec, a very junior nontenured faculty member from Lüneburg, during the Messina Congress. The prospect of working with a junior faculty member and taking the Congress to Lüneburg was met with considerable skepticism. However, Javorec, a very self-confident and intelligent young woman, made an impressive presentation at our Messina meeting that was followed by an impressive on-site visit to Lüneburg by Rick, Louise, and me. Lüneburg, once a member of the Hanseatic League, is a beautiful medieval town. The university administration was very supportive, they had excellent facilities to host the Congress, and the town was very impressive. There were however two factors we had to gamble on. Could a Mediterranean Congress be held in northern Germany, and was it prudent to rely on a very junior nontenured faculty member? The answer to both questions was no. With regard to the former, we trusted in the MSA Mission Statement: "The MSA is particularly concerned with the ideas and ideals of Mediterranean cultures from antiquity to the present and their influence beyond these geographical and temporal boundaries." Unfortunately, the Mission Statement did not fit with the venue or the membership. Consequently, Lüneburg was a very small Congress. That was most unfortunate because the faculty and administration were very kind and hospitable, the venue was wonderful, and the papers were excellent.

The second mistake was depending on a junior nontenured faculty member to be the primary contact person at the university. In the fall of 2007, the call for papers went out and, except for the rather anemic response, all seemed to be progressing well for a good if somewhat small Congress when potential disaster hit. Sometime in the fall of 2007, I received a phone call from an unhappy and apprehensive Rick Clement informing me that disaster was at hand. He had received an email from Javorec stating (and I paraphrase) she was no longer employed by Lüneburg University and was sorry about the Congress. Hopefully we could find another home before May; if not, have a nice Congress in 2009. While I was not sure what to do, I told Rick not to worry since the Congress was my responsibility. The first thing I did was to carefully reread the official letter of invitation from Lüneburg written by Professor Stefan Schaltegger, Vice-President for Research and President's Delegate for International Activities. It was a very clear commitment from Lüneburg to host the 2008 MSA Congress and identified Henriette Javorec as our primary contact person. After reading the letter, I emailed Professor Schaltegger that I had been informed Javorec was no longer employed by the university. Could he please inform me as to whom her replacement would

be as the MSA's contact person for the 2008 Congress? Within several days I had a reply from the Vice-President that my new contact person would be Ms. Claudia Volk. Claudia turned out to be one of the most competent and delightful on-site coordinators we have ever worked with. Claudia and Louise made the trains run on time. The Lüneburg tale turned out well, but the lesson was learned. In the future, never bestow the stewardship of a future MSA Congress on a (junior) nontenured faculty member.

The lessons from the Cagliari Congress fall under the rubric of never surrender control of a vital component of the Congress, aka "don't make a stupid mistake." The Congress in Sardinia was spearheaded by Professor Luciano Gallinari, a research professor at the Institute of European Mediterranean History in Cagliari. Luciano put together a coalition of support from the University of Sardinia, the Office of the Mayor of Cagliari, and his Institute of European Mediterranean History. The Congress was held in the excellent facilities of the University of Sardinia. It was supported by the mayor and was very well attended and successful, except for the Closing Reception. That is where we made a very big mistake and learned a very excruciating but valuable lesson. In addition to being an excellent scholar, Luciano also proved to be very entrepreneurial. He had obtained use of the university facilities though he was not a faculty member. He had convinced the mayor to support the Opening Reception and to provide coffee service during the breaks in the concurrent sessions, and now he informed us that he had found a local sponsor for the Closing Reception. The Closing Reception had become a major feature of the Annual Congress, but also a very expensive one, costing two to three thousand dollars. So when Luciano had a sponsor who would do it *gratis* for MSA, and with the MSA finances at the time resembling those of a family living paycheck to paycheck, the offer was very tempting. The venue according to Luciano was a beautiful beach thirty minutes out of town. To my embarrassment I did not perform my due diligence by checking out the venue site and logistics before acceding to the opportunity to save several thousand dollars. The result was a Closing Reception that still lives in infamy in the MSA annals and the memory of colleagues who still remind me of that fiasco.

On Saturday evening at the end of the Congress about eighty colleagues gathered at the designated coach pickup point at six o'clock to be transported to the reception, and the fun soon began. First, the coaches were over half an hour late. Then we were transported to a town near the beach where the coaches parked with no explanation for forty-five minutes with a large group of hungry and more importantly very thirsty academics aboard. Luciano was nowhere to be found. Finally, at about seven thirty the driver received a phone call. The coaches started

moving and soon reached a beach where Luciano was waiting to greet us without any explanation for the delay. In retrospect I believe the caterers were running very late and instructed the drivers to delay reaching the beach. We were told to queue up (Italian version) to get a drink. The line was soon longer than a football field and moved at a snail's pace. It took half an hour for the end of the line to get a drink (by which time everyone needed another drink). Did I mention there was no food in sight? By eight thirty I began to feel like Julius Caesar on the Ides of March in the Senate House. Everyone was looking at me and wanted to know where the food was. My answer: "It is on the way." Finally, at about nine o'clock a truck pulled up and unloaded large tables, chairs, grills to cook on, and food. By ten o'clock they had started cooking, and before midnight the food was ready. Finally came the *coup de grâce*. People began asking where the toilet facilities were located. I asked the caterers (Luciano did not know), who were still setting up the tables and grills. They pointed to two large rocks about forty yards down the beach, one for men, the larger one for women. Behind the rocks were nothing but more rocks and sand. Needless to say, this news was not well received. Some of the ladies refused to commune that closely with nature and had to be driven to the nearest town some distance away by the caterers. The evening dragged on for hours with no toilets and the food still cooking. I did not have a happy group of campers and could not think of another *mea culpa* to utter. To further exacerbate the mood of many colleagues, who began to resemble a lynch mob, many of them had very early morning flights and no way to get back to the city until the coaches reappeared, which did not happen until after midnight. I think one can easily appreciate a serious mistake had been made and that surrendering control of the Closing Reception or any other part of the Congress was an exercise to not be repeated.

## CHAPTER 6: A TIME OF CHANGE 2010–2020

As we moved on, the decade of 2010 to 2020 was a contradictory period of stability and drastic change. It was a time of stability in that the cycle of preparing for the Annual Congress had become stabilized. Louise had arranged a time schedule that was employed with regularity. Institutions now more frequently came to the MSA with the offer to host a Congress, freeing us of the need to search out host institutions.

That did not mean that in any given year a problem could not unexpectedly emerge. The 2010 Salamanca Congress is an excellent example. Our colleague Ángel Felices Largo from the University of Granada introduced me to his friend Juan Felipe Garcia, Director of the Cursos Internacionales of the University

of Salamanca in 2007. We engaged in communications with Professor Garcia through 2007 and early 2008. Finally, in February 2008 Ángel informed me that Garcia had obtained support for the 2010 Congress (not without some opposition) and a letter from the Rector would soon be on the way. Shortly thereafter a letter arrived from the Rector with an invitation to hold the 2010 Congress in Salamanca. It was interesting and curious that Professor Garcia proposed that his Deputy Director, Jose Luis Herrero, would serve as President of the Congress. That proved to be a harbinger of future problems. It was particularly concerning since I had learned that Herrero had been in opposition to hosting the Congress. I was soon to discover we were once again entering another interesting chapter of university politics. At the time we received the Rector's letter, we knew there would be a rector election before the Congress. But since Professor Garcia was a very senior professor and had held the prestigious Directorship of the Cursos Internacionales for many years, I assumed the election results and related politics would not affect the Congress. History proved that as usual I was wrong. We did not lose the Congress, but we came much too close to doing so.

Ángel had been urging me to visit Salamanca ever since we received the Rector's invitation letter in March. It was December before Louise and I were able to do so. She had a problem called a job (I was retired). By the time we reached Salamanca, I learned that Professor Garcia had resigned his position effective in early January 2009, and he informed me that I was to meet with his Deputy and President of the 2010 Congress, Jose Luis Herrero. We had a very pleasant meeting with Professor Herrero, a gentleman and scholar who informed me that he was also resigning his position and the MSA Presidency of the Congress too. My head began to spin. Later that day I was to meet with the person who was to be appointed the new Director, Professor Noemi Dominguez. Louise and I spent several hours (including lunch) with the soon-to-be Director. Dominguez was delightful, very intelligent, and also enthusiastic about the Congress. She informed us that she would be President of the Congress and would join us in Cagliari in May. Noemi and Louise spent a good deal of time talking and seemed to bond well, and I assumed they would work effectively together. Professor Dominguez gave every indication of being an excellent person to work with. So as we left Salamanca, it looked like we were back on track and in harmony with the cosmos. But once again I was wrong.

Within four months Professor Dominguez had been removed from the Directorship. We never learned why. She had a good relationship with the new Rector, José Ramón Alonso, who later appointed her a Vice Rector. The Directorship remained opened for a month until late April, when Luis Santos, Head of the Linguistics Department, was appointed Director (the third in six

months). The first four months of 2009 were a lengthy period of silence from Salamanca. All of this was happening while we were drawing closer to the 2009 Cagliari Congress. When we were four weeks out, without word from Salamanca, we began working on a backup plan to move the scheduled 2011 Corfu Congress to 2010. Finally, only three weeks before the Cagliari Congress, I received an email from an administrative assistant at the Cursos (from his appointment in April 2009 to the 2010 Congress I never received a single communication from Santos, nor did I ever meet him) that the Salamanca representative would be Alberto Buitrago, Coordinator of Academic Activities.

Buitrago, who could join us only for the Wednesday Opening Session and Thursday morning, proved to be a most pleasant individual, but one also without decision-making authority. While he resurrected our hopes that there would be a 2010 Salamanca Congress, he could guarantee nothing and urged Rick and me to make another journey to Salamanca to speak with his superiors.

The result was another journey to Salamanca in November. This time it was the triumvirate of Rick, Louise, and me. We met with Alberto Buitrago, dined with him, and enjoyed an excellent tour of the historical campus, including the famous sixteenth-century Edificio Histórico, where the medieval library and classroom of the legendary Fray Luis de León are found. The story goes that in 1572 during a lecture, the Inquisition arrested Fray Luis de León. He was imprisoned for six years, released, restored to his professorship, and during his first lecture to hundreds of students, is reputed to have started his lecture by saying "as I was saying yesterday." We were ecstatic to learn that we would be allowed to use the Edificio Histórico for the concurrent sessions. While we had the grand tour and worked on some logistics like the Closing Reception (the Sardinian disaster still very alive in our memory), the only person we met with was Alberto. None of the senior administrators of the Cursos Internacionales were available or interested in meeting with us. As it turned out, no one was ever appointed to serve as President of the Congress. Salamanca was the only Congress to not have a Congress President since the position was created in 1999. Still a little uncertain of what to expect in May, the MSA triumvirate left town as inconspicuously as we had arrived three days earlier. It reminds one of the philosophical questions, "If an MSA delegation visited Salamanca and no one in Salamanca knew it, were they really there?"

Bottom line is that in May 2010 over 125 MSA colleagues gathered in Salamanca for the Tenth Annual MSA Congress, and they enjoyed a fantastic experience. When they arrived at the registration desk to be welcomed by a smiling Louise and receive their name badge and folder, they were thrilled to be in Salamanca. They did not need to know about the difficulties faced by the Congress organizers. All they knew was that the Congress was to be held in one of the great medieval

universities of Europe, chartered in 1218. The concurrent sessions were to be held in the beautiful and venerable Edificio Histórico, which was also home to the Old University Library and the famous classroom of Fray Luis de León. They could also look forward to a glorious Closing Reception in the beautiful fifteenth-century Escuelas Menores Courtyard. To them, it was another day at the office. To Rick, Louise, and me, it was a lot of Churchillian "blood, toil, tears, and sweat" and a sense of a job well done, mission accomplished.

The year from the Salamanca Congress in 2010 to the one in Corfu in 2011 also had many significant events that are necessary to note. Some relate to Rick Clement, a cofounder of the MSA, and to Guy Mermier, who had been instrumental in the early years of the organization. During the formative years of the MSA, there were several individuals who had made significant contributions far above and beyond just attending the Congress and presenting papers. There were individuals such as Frank Dutra, who had invested many hours working with Portuguese and Brazilian scholars to put their papers in good English so they could be published in *Mediterranean Studies*, and Geraldo de Sousa, who had help organize the 2000 Congress in Brazil and served as editor of *Mediterranean Studies* for ten years and, even later, as Chair of the Congress Program Committee responsible for organizing the Annual Program. Wishing to acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of people such as Frank and Geraldo, we created an award known as Fellows of the MSA. Over the history of the MSA, only eight people out of hundreds of MSA members have been so acknowledged.

In Salamanca, our old colleague Guy Mermier from the early years of the MSA was recognized as a Fellow of the MSA. Guy had been in poor health for many years, having undergone several major surgeries. The original plan had been to give him the award in Lüneburg in 2008, but that did not work. Then it was to be in 2009 in Cagliari. But he had major surgery in the spring and was not able to travel. Finally, we were able to get Guy to Salamanca to recognize him for his many contributions to the MSA. Guy had helped Rick and me save the journal from the Holub Dowling Mob in 1994. He played a cogent role in organizing the 2001 Aix Congress, and of course it was Guy who introduced optional educational travel as part of the Annual Congress, organizing the first travel activity when we took a large group to Pont du Gard and Arles before the Aix Congress in 2001. Rick and I had both known Guy for many years before he and I encountered each other in 1986.

Guy received his award during the Opening Session. He was very happy and proud. He had brought his wife Martha to the Congress with him so she could share in the event. Following the meeting I had dinner with Guy and Martha, and Guy expressed his gratitude for the recognition and award. When I said goodbye

to Guy at the end of the Congress it turned out to be the last time I saw him. In early April 2011, I received a letter from Martha informing me that Guy had recently died during surgery. We had lost a dear friend and major contributor to the MSA.

Guy's death had been preceded by another grave loss, both professional and personal, in the fall of 2010. In June 2008, Rick Clement left the University of Kansas to take a position at Utah State University. His move came as a surprise to many of us. Rick had been at KU for twenty-two years, and his wife had an excellent job in Lawrence. It was, however, a major promotion for Rick, his new position being Dean of Libraries at USU. It also meant that Rick would now have much less time to devote to MSA matters, particularly the journal. For many years Rick had worked in cooperation with Geraldo de Sousa publishing *Mediterranean Studies*. Rick was senior editor and used his excellent editorial skills to work with authors and to produce the final camera-ready copy for the press. Geraldo was editor and had responsibility for the content of the journal. Rick also maintained the MSA website, chaired the Program Committee, and, with help from Geraldo, prepared the Congress program. Rick and I continued to talk on the telephone three or four times a week as we had for the past dozen years, but it was obvious that Rick's new position was placing greater demands on him than the KU Spencer Library had. Rick and Geraldo de Sousa produced volume 18 of the journal in 2008, with Rick preparing the final camera-ready copy for Manchester University Press. In 2009 Rick informed Geraldo that he could no longer devote time to the journal. Consequently, Brian Harries, a talented KU PhD student who had been working on the journal for several years, was promoted to associate editor to assume the work previously done by Rick. Brian prepared the camera-ready version of volume 19, the last hardcover volume published by Manchester University Press.

As I was struggling with the University of Salamanca to host the 2010 Congress, Rick was negotiating a new home for the journal. MUP had published the journal since volume 14 in 2005, but the marriage was not a happy one. The press was not pleased with the low sales of the journal, and part of the agreement obliged the MSA to purchase a hundred copies of the very expensive journal every year. The contract with MUP was to expire in 2010 with the publication of volume 20. In the meantime, Rick had reached a very favorable agreement with Pennsylvania State University Press, which was willing to start our agreement by publishing volume 20. This new agreement with PSUP called for a total overhaul of the journal's format. Starting with volume 20, the journal would be published in two annual paperback editions, and there would also be an electronic version. This major transition began in the context of Rick now

unavailable to work on the journal and of Brian Harries leaving for a teaching position at Concordia University. That context became more complicated when Geraldo de Sousa resigned the editorship after ten years of commendable service to the journal, including tours of duty as its editor or coeditor. Rick and I were to discuss PSUP and the editorship during the Congress in Salamanca, but that meeting never took place.

I had arrived in Madrid a day early to allow my aging body to recuperate from jet lag and was to pick Rick up at the Madrid Airport the following morning. However, I received an email from Rick that evening that he was suffering from a severe inner-ear infection and would not be able to travel. Rick's absence in Salamanca was an unfortunate omen of the future. Following the Salamanca Congress, I remained in frequent contact with Rick as he completed negotiations with PSUP and we concurrently considered candidates for the editorship. We eventually made the most fortunate decision to appoint Susan Shapiro, Professor of History at Rick's new institution, Utah State University. I had met Susan at an MSA Congress. Geraldo de Sousa and Susan had been colleagues at Xavier University before Geraldo moved to Kansas and Susan to Utah State, and Rick had gotten to know Susan when he traveled to Italy with her on a grant she had received from Utah State to explore starting a summer program in Italy. I will have more to say about Susan later, but the short version is that she was an extraordinary editor from her appointment in August 2010 until she resigned from the editorship in 2019.

With the Salamanca Congress behind us, Shapiro appointed as the new editor of the journal, a new publishing contract with PSUP, the 2011 Corfu Congress in very able hands, and the call for papers sent to the membership, Louise and I departed at the end of August for a month of cruising. I was to be the Resident Historian for three back-to-back Celebrity cruises from Southampton to Malaga. It was to be a period of fun and relaxation. Those plans drastically changed the second week in September, when I received an astonishing email from Rick Clement informing me that he had to immediately terminate all of his activities and responsibilities associated with the MSA. I could not believe what I was reading, nor could I comprehend what had motivated Rick to take such action without warning or explanation. It had been obvious since Rick accepted the USU Library Deanship in 2008 that he had to decrease the amount of time he devoted to the MSA. He had already ceased working on the journal. Understandably, he became increasingly more interested in his career path and less interested in the MSA. Nevertheless, after the Salamanca Congress, Louise, who was soon to retire from UMD, asked Rick if he would like her to take responsibility for receiving paper proposals and sending out the acceptance letters, a very time-consuming activity. Rick had responded in

the negative, saying he had sufficient clerical help to deal with the letters. Rick's rejection of help made his sudden departure all the more surprising. Whatever the reason, it was an extraordinary way for Rick to sever his relationship with an organization he had played a pivotal role in creating. I am sure that in his mind he had viable and urgent reasons. In any case, he left Louise and me in a temporary crisis mode, afloat in the Bay of Biscay with very limited Internet and telephone service, while paper proposals for Corfu were already arriving. In a few days, we were able to put the circumstances in perspective and developed an action plan to put the train back on the tracks. Rick had already given up the journal editorship, but he still performed many important functions. First, I contacted Geraldo de Sousa, asking him to assume the Program Chairmanship, which he fortunately agreed to do. Geraldo had worked with Rick on preparing the program, so he had substantial experience at that task. Louise would now receive all paper proposals, forward them to Geraldo, and send acceptance letters when the papers had been accepted. I contacted a webmaster to take over the MSA website, which Rick had created and administered. Louise asked Rick to forward the paper proposals he had received for Corfu, and she changed the website email address to have proposals come to her. On September 21, Rick sent us an email with the templates for the acceptance letters and the information to access Constant Contact and the MSA Website. By the time our cruises were over, the transitions were implemented and everything was running relatively efficiently for the 2011 Congress at the University of Corfu.

It was disappointing to lose Rick. But we all approach challenges in different ways. Most importantly, Rick's departure should not overshadow his vast contributions to the MSA. For the first ten years of our working association and friendship, Rick did most of the heavy lifting. I was deep into my administrative career, and while I could offer substantial resources and clerical support, my long work days left me little time to devote to the actual work. Rick for the most part single-handedly edited the first ten volumes of *Mediterranean Studies*, created the website, managed the extensive paperwork when we incorporated in 1994, and performed many other time-consuming tasks. Given my fifty- to sixty-hour work weeks, it is not an exaggeration to say that the organization that existed at his departure in 2010 might not have existed without the time Rick was able to devote to it during its formative years. Possibly the most difficult problem his departure left for me to handle was the constant question: "What happened to Rick?" Rick had been a very visible presence at the Congresses from Lisbon in 1998 to Cagliari in 2009, so people missed seeing him and constantly asked what had happened. My answer, repeated numerous times, was, "He needed to devote more time to his on-campus administrative responsibilities and career." In the years since Rick's departure, we have had an amazing growth and turnover of Congress participants,

the great majority of whom attended their first MSA Congress after 2011, so the question of what happened has been put to rest. I remain in infrequent contact with Rick and continue to consider him a good friend.

While the definite downside to 2010–11 was losing Guy and Rick, there were also some extremely positive developments. Fortuitously for the MSA, Louise had retired only three weeks before Rick's sudden announcement that he was relinquishing his MSA responsibilities. Consequently, while Louise had already been devoting hundreds of hours to the MSA, she was now in a position to pick up many of Rick's previous responsibilities, such as handling arriving paper proposals and working with Geraldo de Sousa in organizing the Congress program. In the years since 2010, Louise has become the mainstay of the Annual Congress, the primary figure of continuity as other players have changed. She has created a nearly full-time unpaid position, which will present a real challenge for the MSA in the future. But I will address that point later.

Another important development I already referred to was the passing of the journal editorship from Geraldo de Sousa to Susan Shapiro. While Rick's *modus operandi* in leaving the MSA made it difficult for us, he did leave two superb going-away contributions. One was his recommendation to appoint Shapiro as editor. The other was moving the journal from MUP to PSUP. The MSA had started as a journal in 1988, ten years before the first Congress. Maintaining *Mediterranean Studies* had always been a major financial challenge, devouring most of the revenue the MSA made in other endeavors, such as its monograph series, that brought in needed revenue. It was because of the large subvention required by Thomas Jefferson Press that Norman Holub and the Dowling Mob were nearly able to abscond with the journal in 1994. When the journal moved to Ashgate and later to Manchester University Press, both publishers required the MSA to purchase a large number of journals (until Volume 20, a journal was included with membership), which cost many thousands of dollars. The additional substantial costs of maintaining the Editorial Office changed in 2012, however, when Pennsylvania State University Press published volume 20 in two paperback issues and also made the journal available electronically. Certainly the two annual paperback editions lacked the elegance of the hardcover volumes, dark blue with gold lettering, but the new format was much more marketable. Part of the credit must go to the marketing capability of PSUP and the journal's availability online, but major credit also goes to Susan. She first had to meet the challenges of overseeing the transitions from MUP to PSUP and from a single hardcover annual volume to two paperback volumes. Another problem she faced was an insufficiency of submissions. There were so few, in fact, that the decision was made to forgo publication of volume 20 until 2012, giving her more time to accumulate quality articles.

Rick and Geraldo had both been excellent editors, but Sue was responsible for moving the journal in new directions. In addition to the transitions already mentioned, she immediately expanded the time period covered by the journal. In the past we had published only articles on topics concerned with the period from late Antiquity (ca. 500 CE) to the Enlightenment. Sue expanded the period from classical Antiquity (ca. 800 BCE) to the twentieth century. This not only better reflected the range of papers presented at the Annual Congress but also broadened the pool from which to draw submissions. To garner greater buy-in and participation by the Editorial Board members, she implemented Editorial Board meetings during the Annual Congress to discuss the state of the journal and consider ideas for improving it. These meetings have proved very helpful in engendering new ideas, such as special issues with special editors, a recommendation by Susan Rosenstreich. This led to "The Mediterranean Voyage" (volume 23, number 2) in the fall of 2015, edited by Rosenstreich. Two special editions followed, "Non-state Actors in Mediterranean Politics," edited by John Watkins (volume 25, number 1), in the spring of 2017, and "Shakespeare's Mediterranean," edited by Geraldo de Sousa (volume 26, number 2), in the fall of 2018.

Louise Taggie made the recommendation at an Editorial Board meeting that Susan prepare brief summary notes for each new issue to be sent to MSA members on Constant Contact. Susan adopted that recommendation, and now every member of the MSA knows when a new issue has been published and receives brief critiques of the articles in that edition of the journal. That innovation was well received by the membership. Susan also changed the format of articles to include bibliographies and created a more concise style of footnotes in an effort to make the articles more useful to scholars. Finally, she began collecting statistics on the numbers of submissions, acceptances, and rejections to better understand the state of the journal. We now know not only that the number of submissions has increased, but also that our five-year acceptance rate (2014–18) is a very respectable 23 percent. At the 2019 Congress in Rethymnon, Crete, Susan Shapiro stepped down as editor after eight commendable and innovative years, turning that important position over to Susan Rosenstreich. Consistent with Shapiro's eight extraordinary years as editor, she agreed to remain as senior editor for a year in order to mentor and guide the transition to Rosenstreich, who will be the fifth editor in the thirty-two year history of *Mediterranean Studies*.

Another positive development of this period was the introduction of Professor Vaios Vaiopoulos into the ranks of MSA leadership. Vaios had participated in the Annual Congress for several years, eventually extending an invitation from the Ionian University in Corfu to host the 2011 Congress. The Corfu Congress was an outstanding, well-organized Congress, to a large degree because of the

hard work and diligence of Vaios. In past years, we had worked with many outstanding on-site coordinators such as Marcos Freire d'Aguiar in Salvador, Brazil, and Claudia Volk in Lüneburg, Germany. Unfortunately, once the Congress was over, we lost contact with those individuals. But with Vaios, it was different. He continued to be an active participant in the MSA and now serves on the Editorial Board. Most importantly, it was through his vast international contacts that we received invitations to celebrate the Annual Congress at the University of Athens, the University of Palermo, and the University of Crete. Vaios continues to make many contributions to the MSA and is currently Assistant Director.

There are others who have played, and still do play, a cogent role in the success of the MSA. After serving ten years as editor of *Mediterranean Studies* and six years as Chair of the Program Committee, Geraldo de Sousa remains a pillar of strength in the organization. Geraldo continues to serve on the Editorial Board, he edited the special edition of "Shakespeare's Mediterranean" in the fall of 2018, and he organizes sessions, presents papers, and chairs sessions every year. Susan Rosenstreich, a longtime MSA member, has served many years on the Editorial Board, bringing her wisdom and creative ideas to the Board and is now editor of the journal. John Watkins has also served many years on the Editorial Board and edited "Non-state Actors in Mediterranean Politics" in the spring of 2017. In 2016, John replaced Geraldo de Sousa as Chair of the Program Committee and works with Louise in preparing the Annual Program. Finally, a few words about Ángel Felices Lago. Ángel used his extraordinary professional contacts in Spain to bring the Annual MSA Congress to Granada, a Congress that he hosted in 2002. But Ángel has been instrumental in bringing Congresses to Barcelona, Salamanca, Malaga, and Valencia, where the 2024 Congress will be held. While there are others who over the quarter century have made important contributions, these individuals constitute an important cadre of contributors to the foundation of the MSA's success.

One reflection of that success is that we no longer need to expend great energy to find institutions willing to host the Congress. Between the successful contacts of Vaios and Ángel and the growing prestige and success of the Annual Congress, we have a multitude of institutions eager to host. That is true to the point that some institutions are willing to wait three to four years for their opportunity. At this writing, future congresses are booked into 2024, with invitations in hand for 2025 and beyond.

There is little that is extraordinary to write about from the ten years that followed Salamanca. There were no more difficult or chaotic institutional issues such as those we faced in Barcelona and Salamanca, no more confrontations with difficult on-site individuals of the sort we encountered in Messina and Coimbra,

no more Mad Max's to terrorize us on the post-tours, and no more chancellors demanding the eradication of an Opening Session plenary speaker because he was speaking too long. That is not to say that there have not been moments of serious anxiety and stress or major problems to deal with in the decade. But there was nothing in that faraway galaxy inhabited by some earlier difficult congresses. The Annual Congress has for the most part fallen into a harmonious repetition like the seasons. We tinker with it a bit from year to year to make the coordinating more efficient and user-friendly. It is a constant learning process that hopefully leads to consistent improvement. The call for papers goes out in late August; papers begin to trickle in immediately, always reaching a crescendo in January, and continue to be received into the early spring. April and May is a frantic time for Louise and John Watkins, finalizing the program so that by the first week in May it can go to the printer. During the year while John is assembling the sessions, Louise is dealing with registrations, memberships, all financial matters related to the Congress, and details for the Closing Reception and answering endless questions. I am working with the host institution to prepare for the Congress, sometimes making an on-site visit if I am not familiar with the venue. I need to be sure we have sufficient hotel rooms for participants while at the same time updating the website and working on the popular educational post-tours.

The Congress has continued to grow, now exceeding two hundred papers, and growing not only in total numbers but also in its internationalization, which was an original goal when we launched the MSA. It is now not unusual to have U.S. participants be a minority as we attract scholars from twenty to twenty-five different nations each year. The future looks very bright for the MSA, but there are issues that will need to be confronted before the end of the decade. Those matters I will deal with in the final chapter of this work. For now, suffice it to say that it has been a long, sometimes arduous, never boring, but eventually successful journey for the MSA, from its humble beginnings to the present. Let us hope that success continues.

## CHAPTER 7: THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MSA

Back in the 1960s, while still working on my PhD, I took a seminar on the Antebellum South and American Civil War. A course requirement was to read Kenneth Stampp's 1956 book *The Peculiar Institution.* That would not be an inappropriate title to apply to the Mediterranean Studies Association as an institution. The MSA does indeed have a governance structure that offers a challenge to define

to a large degree because once it was born, it grew through an unplanned process of evolution. If one returns to the beginning of this long journey through MSA history, it will be recalled the MSA started almost by accident. The 1989 publication of what is now volume 1 of *Mediterranean Studies* was not part of a grand plan to create the organization that exists today. In fact, there was initially no vision or plan at all. Volume 1 was a single project, an opportunity to visit Budapest and participate in an interesting conference of dubious academic quality that was fun to attend. The volume that grew out of that meeting was also of dubious quality, more a record of proceedings than a journal with nonrefereed articles that ran from the sublime to the ridiculous. When I left Central Missouri State University in the summer of 1989, I had no idea that there would be a volume 2 of *Mediterranean Studies.* Even as we moved forward publishing future volumes of the journal, eventually entering into an uncomfortable partnership with Dowling College to help with the subvention required by Thomas Jefferson Press, little thought was given to establishing a formal organization. That did not happen until 1994, five years after volume 1 was published, and just after escaping a hostile takeover of the journal by Norman Holub and Dowling College. The journal had been copyrighted since volume 1 was published in 1988, but having saved the journal, Rick and I nevertheless feared further attempts by Dowling to publish a rival journal by the same title. In 1994, with the help of our publisher Bob Schnucker of the Thomas Jefferson Press, we incorporated the Mediterranean Studies Association. In 1996, thanks to a lot of very hard work by Rick, we obtained the extremely important IRS 501(c)(3) tax classification as a nonprofit corporation. Nevertheless, bizarre things continued to happen, as was the case in 2003, when we were notified that a former colleague was forming an organization called the Association of Mediterranean Studies (we will not reveal the name to protect the guilty) that required further action to protect the MSA brand and logo trademark. While we were unable to get protection for the phrase "Mediterranean Studies Association" alone, we did get protection of the logo, which bears that phrase. The Association of Mediterranean Studies seems to have disappeared from history, but a result of its short life was that the distinctive MSA logo is trademark protected.

The quintessential factor impacting MSA governance structure and processes is the original Articles of Incorporation, which provide for only two voting officers. These are mentioned by name: Benjamin Taggie and Richard Clement. The voting officers can establish an Executive or Advisory Board and create other officers of the corporation, but they would be advisory officers, not voting participants. Rick and I had unintentionally created a two-person oligarchy. Of course, in 1994 who else was there to include in the governance? There were really just the two of us.

Rick did all the editing, and I helped the peer-review process by finding readers to review the papers. We had honorary editors who had nothing to do with the journal and an honorary Advisory Board of distinguished scholars including a Nobel Prize winner. The Board was eventually dissolved. We also had an Editorial Board that reviewed article submissions. So for the next four years, we moved along, maintaining the status quo, with few questions being asked about who was in charge. Indeed, who was going to ask such a question? It was really only Rick and me doing all the work of publishing an interdisciplinary journal and working hard to find funds to pay the subvention. It is true that other names appeared in *Mediterranean Studies* as honorary editors. James Caraway of Dowling College was named for volumes 3 to 5 as a requirement for Dowling's financial support, Guy Mermier for volumes 6 to 10 in recognition of his help in saving the journal from Holub, and later Robert Bjork in return for his financial help. Caraway, Mermier, and Bjork were honorary editors who had nothing to do with editing. Caraway was a front man for Holub and Meskill who wanted to downgrade the academic quality of the journal but had no interest in the MSA per se, and Mermier was delighted with his honorary title. The question of governance was not a factor until after 1998, when the MSA expanded its mission by organizing its first International Congress in Lisbon.

In 1996, when we replaced James Caraway with Guy Mermier as an editor, we also brought Robert Bjork, Director of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS), into the fold as an editor for volumes 7 to 12 (1998–2003). The motivation was simple. He had resources to contribute toward the annual subvention for *Mediterranean Studies.* As it turned out, Bjork was more interested and involved with the journal than either Caraway or Mermier had been. Though he never did any editing, he attended several editorial meetings, where he participated in policy development and decision making. Problems with him did not begin to develop until after the Second MSA Congress in Coimbra in 1999, when it became clear that Bjork had his own agenda. He had played no part in the 1998 Lisbon Congress but attended the Coimbra Congress, where he began to raise questions about governance and make recommendations for the future.

While these discussions continued over the next several years, we continued with Bjork as an honorary editor. Rick produced the journal while I devoted my energies to the Congress. ACMRS continued to contribute a thousand dollars each year to the subvention of the journal. Even though I was in total disagreement with Bjork on the governance structure he wanted to create, there was a positive side to the questions he raised. They motivated me to think about what the MSA was and how it should be managed. I had never really given thought to those

questions until after Coimbra. Until then, the MSA had been run by the very congenial partnership of Rick and me. While my crystal ball did not see very far into the future, I did know unequivocally that I did not want to be tied to a faculty governance process. During my long academic career of more than half a century, I attended hundreds of department meetings, chaired the Honors Council when I was Director of the Honors College at Central Michigan, chaired meetings of department chairs when I was an Arts and Sciences Dean, chaired vice chancellor meetings at UMass, and spent hundreds of hours in President/Chancellor Council meetings. That does not count the additional hundreds of senate and university committee meetings I had attended. By the time Bjork started raising questions of governance, I had long ago overdosed beyond hope of recovery on faculty meetings. If the idea of creating the MSA was to do something important and enjoyable, and for Rick and me to have a little fun doing it, more meetings with our colleagues was definitely not the path to travel.

The issue of MSA governance was exacerbated to a degree because on the surface the MSA looked like a traditional academic organization, so it was not unreasonable for someone like Robert Bjork to think, "Why not run the entire organization like one?"

As time passed, to a degree the MSA became a two-headed Hydra. One head was the journal, run increasingly on the traditional academic model. For example, ever since volume 2, papers had been going through a double-blind peer-review process. That academic model was further enhanced by Susan Shapiro, who introduced annual Editorial Board meetings where new ideas and policies could be discussed by Board members appointed by the editor and serving at his or her pleasure, the editor being appointed by the Executive Director/President. The other more complex head is the Annual Congress and associated activities such as the Nocciano Institute, the Summer Sicily Program, and the Summer Portuguese Program, which operated on a corporate business model run by two corporate officers with authority to make decisions, with or without consultation of the membership. We will elucidate more on that point, but let me return to the governance issues that arose in the early years of this century.

Bjork's wish to introduce a faculty-governed structure to the MSA provoked the need to think seriously about the subject. I needed to mentally work through the process, ask the right questions. What is the MSA? How should it be managed? I came to some unequivocal conclusions. The MSA was a service provider that only looked like a traditional academic organization. Because of its varied and complex functions, it needed to be managed like a business. I convinced myself that if the organization was to survive and succeed, it could not be subjected to

the traditional model of academic governance, which is typically a slow process at best. For better or worse, that was my reality. As the great Sicilian writer Luigi Pirandello informs us, "It is so when you think so." That is where Bjork and I (and it was my understanding that Rick shared my views) clashed in irreconcilable disagreement. It was my firm belief that the MSA had to be positioned to be able to act and respond quickly, sometimes taking risks when opportunities presented themselves, be it an invitation to host a congress, entering into a partnership with UMass operating the Summer Sicily Program, accepting contracts to publish profitable books in our now extinct monograph series, or creating a challenging new program like the Nocciano Institute.

While employing the business model was efficient, it was not always easy. A difficult episode in utilizing the corporate model in MSA decision making presented itself in 2001. In May 2001, Rick and I decided to make major changes in the number of journal editors. We had reached the point where we had five journal editors, an excessive number, of which only two were functional. There was Rick, who did most of the editing, and Geraldo de Sousa, who provided indispensable help. I was devoting my efforts to the Annual Congress and the new Summer Sicily Program we were doing in cooperation with UMass. Consequently, in a rather arbitrary fashion (actually quite arbitrary, but not capricious), we decided to remove Guy Mermier and me as editors. Once upon a time, I had been active, mainly finding readers to review the papers, a task I surrendered once we started doing an annual congress. Guy's appointment was totally honorary, an acknowledgment of his help in saving the journal from Holub/Dowling College. It had always been intended to make his appointment temporary, but once we informed Guy that he would be removed with the 2002 edition, he was totally discombobulated. Rick and I had totally underestimated how important Guy considered that honorary appointment to be. Guy was a very senior full professor at the University of Michigan and Director of a center, with an impressive vitae that included many excellent publications and the recipient of many awards. Our rather cavalier process of removing him as an editor was based on the belief that he did not require the editorship of a struggling new journal such as *Mediterranean Studies*. But that position was apparently important to him. As events unfolded, I had to travel to Michigan for a May 12 funeral, and I took advantage of that visit to meet with Guy at his home in Ann Arbor. I spent two hours trying to mollify him, with only partial success. The fact that I was also being removed as an editor helped to somewhat ameliorate his anger, but he was not a happy camper. Guy raised an interesting question. He wanted to know what authority was removing him as an editor. As I recall, I was rather taken back by that question of authority. No

one had ever asked me that question. Finally, I told him Rick and I had made the decision. Guy's response was, "You guys are worse than the Kremlin," to which I responded, "I hope we are more efficient." I further informed Guy that to be successful we had to run the MSA like a business, not an academic organization. I believe he grudgingly accepted that explanation. I believed strongly that it was necessary to remove some of the many honorary editors (Bjork was retained because he made it a condition to continue his financial contribution) to maintain the journal's integrity. But dealing with Guy was difficult. It made me feel much more like Attila the Hun than Albert Schweitzer, but then ten years in the Provost Office had given me lots of opportunity to play Attila.

I do not know if Bjork and Mermier ever communicated about the arbitrary removal of Guy as an editor, but the disagreements with Bjork continued. We made a final effort to come to an accord by convening an editors' meeting in Massachusetts in the fall of 2003 to iron out our differences. In a lengthy meeting, Rick and I presented our reasons for managing the MSA as a nonprofit business (from which neither of us took compensation) and explained our justification and the reasons for which we had developed and retained the corporate model. I actually thought we had come to an understanding of sorts. But the thought that we had resolved the issue was short-lived. At the Barcelona Congress in May 2004, Bjork presented an ultimatum. Either we would adopt a participatory model of governance or he was withdrawing his annual thousand-dollar contribution and resigning as an editor. For me, the decision was easy, quick, and unambiguous. It was goodbye. We appreciated his past help, but obviously the time had come to go our separate ways. His modest contribution was not worth the problems he was creating. Rick and I had no intention of getting bogged down in the management model of committees and elections that Bjork wanted adopted. Rick and I had devoted hundreds of hours to the MSA without compensation. We were not prepared to submit our decisions and plans to the judgment of a committee or council. The MSA would continue to function as a corporate service provider with a journal run closely to the traditional faculty model.

I did not know Robert Bjork very well, only as a professional colleague. Rick knew him much better, and possibly considered him a friend. For a number of years, Rick received travel support from Bjork and was his house guest in Tempe, Arizona, during the Annual ACMRS Conference. In return, Rick would present a workshop on the History of the Book at the conference. Since I hardly knew Bjork, it was and is very hard for me to understand and interpret his motives and persistence in wanting to revamp how the MSA did business. I was not sorry to see him go, but he had been a good supporter of the MSA, and his desire for change engendered the need for thought on how the MSA should be governed. For the

immediate future, it would continue to be governed as it had been the past, with Rick and me doing the work and making the decisions.

With the departure of Bjork after the Barcelona Congress, the question of governance ceased to be an issue, or at least the issue was never brought to my attention. Louise, after helping for several years behind the scenes, entered the MSA as a major player when she assumed the role of Congress Coordinator at the 2005 Messina meeting. From the beginning, she joined Rick and me in a troika that took on the decision-making process. In doing so, Louise brought her business acumen and entrepreneurship to an organization that was trying to function (and made decisions) like a business, but with only modest success. She improved our operational model by making it more efficient and less wasteful. I do not think it is by accident that the Annual Congress has grown from one hundred to over two hundred papers under Louise's coordination. A prime example is the Certificates of Participation required by most of the non-American participants. In pre-2005 Congresses, these certificates were not available until after the Congress when I returned to Massachusetts and had one of my secretaries prepare them. Today the approximately one hundred scholars who require certificates typically receive them the same day they present their paper. This is only one example of how Louise has ratcheted up the efficient operation of the Congress, making it much more user-friendly. Following Rick's departure in 2010, Louise filled a significant part of the large void he left. In 2013, given the fact that Rick did not plan to return to the MSA, he resigned his position and the vote designated to him in the Articles of Incorporation, including the vote to amend articles, so he could reassign his permanent vote to Louise.

Hardly a day goes by that Louise and I do not discuss some matter related to MSA business. We are not always in agreement at the start, but we always eventually reach that point. Rick and I had engaged in similar daily discussions until he left the MSA in 2010. I have also often sought the advice, wise counsel, and opinion of individuals in the MSA, soliciting their opinion on matters such as venues for Congress meetings. Over the years, I contemplated the idea of establishing an Advisory Council, and in 2014 I seriously considered recommending to Louise that we do so. I could see advantages from having such a group from which we could derive advice and recommendations. I decided to wait however to see how Susan Shapiro's first Editorial Board meeting went at the 2014 Malaga Congress. Unfortunately the Gods of Advisory Councils were not kind that day. The meeting went in the direction I always fear such meetings will go, which is nowhere. Before Susan could even get to the first agenda item, a Board member took off on a philosophical tangent that led the meeting in a direction with no relevance to Susan's agenda. While the discourse was not totally irrelevant to the philosophy of

the journal, it was in my opinion a totally inappropriate and unnecessary digression from the editor's agenda. As a result, we managed to squander most of the meeting time before Susan could get to an agenda item. That journey into what I have always considered to be an academic purgatory only reinforced concerns I harbored for many years, which is that decisions and government by committee are often very painful, wasteful, and frustrating. As that meeting moved toward yet another failure to answer the seminal question, "How many angels can stand on the head of a pin?," I realized that my attention deficit disorder problem and I were still not ready for this nonsense. In all fairness, I must state that Editorial Board meetings since Malaga have gone extraordinarily well, some being very productive, and have revived my thoughts of an Advisory Council. Nevertheless, the Malaga peroration remains a vivid reminder of something I do not want to invest time in, an academic filibuster engendered by the joy of hearing the sound of one's own voice. It has consequently prevented me from pulling the trigger on what I believe eventually will come to be: the inevitable establishment of an Advisory Council.

As I move to the next and final chapter of this history, I offer some words of clarification to my colleagues whom I hope I have not offended, and attempt to mollify those I may have.

In stating my strong preference for a nontraditional business model of governance, it is not my intention to disparage or affront my friends, colleagues, and fellow academics. Keep in mind that we are all part of the same tribe. I have been a member for over half a century. Also keep in mind that most of us have had extensive university committee experience, and I think most of us would agree that some committees are productive, some tolerable, and many (far too many) totally banal. I personally subscribe to the belief that most committee meetings are unpleasant and unproductive and squander time that could be better invested in more productive endeavors. While you may have a very different perspective and do not share my sense of my reality, I again turn to the great Sicilian writer Luigi Pirandello, "It is so when you think so."

In our academic tribe, the great majority of us are much better talkers than listeners and often enjoy the sound of our own voices. One of the most difficult jobs for a committee is staying on task. We start a meeting with the question, "Should we excavate a foundation for this structure?" and in fifteen minutes before even finding a building site, a colleague is ready to debate the color of granite we will have in the kitchen. Try chairing a Dean Council meeting. You may have better luck with a herd of cats. I do not claim to be innocent of the crimes mentioned above. I simply deplore government by committee. I find prolonged discussion usually leads to no agreement and thus to no action, serving only as

an impediment to the efficient management necessary to run an organization like the MSA. You may ask, "How did Rick and Ben have the audacity to set up such a fascist management model?" The answer is quite simple—because we thought it would work best, because we wanted to, and most importantly, because we could.

## CHAPTER 8: THE FUTURE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

My crystal ball is only a little clearer than it was twenty years ago when I first consulted it regarding the future of the MSA. But I have thought a great deal about the future, and I have reached one clear conclusion. Major organizational and leadership changes are in the MSA's future in the next five to ten years. Among those seminal changes, I believe the task of replacing me as the official head of the organization will be among the least difficult and significant issues to deal with. My most important contributions to the creation and growth of the MSA are to be found in this history. They rest in the distant past. The most valuable of those contributions has been placing the MSA on a solid financial footing, and I believe that is largely because we have followed a business model. That has been an essential achievement that Louise and I are very proud of. If we continue to operate the Congress at a similar size or larger, and if it is followed by a good post-tour, the new leadership should never have sleepless nights worrying about how to pay the bills. It also means that it should never be necessary to deal with draining and counterproductive struggles such as Rick and I dealt with in our struggle to save the journal from Dowling College, a struggle necessitated by our funding needs for the journal's subvention.

Most of the other difficulties of the past should not emerge again if the eventual new leadership does not repeat the mistakes of the past. For example, no congress venue should ever be accepted until we know whom we will be working with, thus avoiding another Messina. There should be no more dealing with undependable untenured faculty who can leave you stranded as we were for a time in Lüneburg. It should also never be necessary to endure exhausting and stressful experiences such as those we had at the Barcelona and Salamanca Congresses, because today, if a university wants to change the rules in the middle of the game, as happened in Barcelona, or force us to tread water while a political crisis was being resolved, as happened in Salamanca, we can quickly transition to a new venue. The Annual Congress has reached a level of prestige and status that institutions are now lining up for an opportunity to host. That was not the situation in 2004 and 2010. When I step aside, the next Executive Director will inherit the stewardship of a well-established organization with over a quarter century of success behind it, resting on

a solid economic foundation, and with an excellent journal and prestigious Annual Congress.

The truth is that my position in recent years has become more or less honorary. My participation at the Annual Congress is to emcee the Opening Session, award the Presidential Medal, and thank everyone at the Closing Reception. The most difficult tasks are occasional problems dealing with annoying issues, which are encountered in any leadership role. For example, one year we received a phone call from the Sexual Harassment Office of an American university regarding a complaint they had received that a host institution administrator had been overly friendly with a young female graduate student who attended the Congress. Even more irritating was a letter of complaint sent to UMass Dartmouth protesting that the MSA's post-tours were not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The letter writer obviously did not know that UMass has absolutely nothing to do with the MSA, but it did waste several hours of time having to deal with one of the UMass technocratic minions. It is another example of the irritants that pop up from time to time, irritants that the Executive Director needs to deal with. Such problems come with the territory, particularly when that territory is geographically located in the academy.

The most important executive decisions I make these days are selecting future Congress venues. And even in that process I typically discuss it in length with Louise and in consultation with colleagues. My most important contributions at present are not even related to the Executive Director portfolio, and I doubt if my successor will want to perform them. Those efforts are directed at organizing the annual educational post-tours. It takes many hours of work developing the itinerary, reserving hotels and transportation, and finding guides. It also takes time to prepare a good tour presentation for the website. I do it because I enjoy doing it and have considerable experience in organizing travel tours. That is true in both my personal business life where I have extensive experience organizing and leading tours as part of the travel business Louise and I established and in my academic life in arranging foreign education and travel experiences for students while serving in positions like Director of International Programs and Dean of Extended Programs. The same interests motivate me to organize the annual pre tours and in the past led me to undertake the creation of the Nocciano Institute and the Summer Sicily Program. I doubt a successor will want to invest the necessary hundreds of hours to such endeavors. Regarding the educational post-tours, I strongly suspect that if the tours survive after Louise and I step back from the MSA, they will be outsourced to a travel company that unfortunately will devour much of the profits that now go into the MSA treasury. Nevertheless, the post-tours have become an intrinsic part of the Congress and should be continued,

even if they only break even financially. These post-tours are not always easy. You will recall the story with Mad Max in Barcelona, and the Sorrento post-tour was such an unpleasant experience that we were almost led to terminate future tours. However, because of the many requests to do so we have continued them on a year-to-year basis, making them a very important and popular component of the Annual Congress. I hope they can continue.

In sum, when the day comes that I step down from my position (and I have no immediate plans to do so) as Executive Director, the task of replacing me should not be a problem. I can think of half a dozen colleagues qualified to take over if they are prepared to commit the necessary time. Truthfully, I believe the most important thing for that individual would be to keep the ship sailing (with gentle modifications and innovations from time to time) in the well-established direction that has been charted over the past quarter century. I would hope that person would keep the ship on course, and always keep in mind that even the unsinkable *Titanic* could sink if prudence and due diligence are ignored.

Now leaving the rather mundane task of selecting a new Executive Director to the future, we come to the more cosmic issue of what the organization will do when the time comes for Louise to step down as Congress Coordinator. How that matter is resolved will truly be the key to the future success or failure of the MSA. While it is a truism that no one is irreplaceable, Louise comes very close to defying that principle. I say that not only because of her talent and dedication to the MSA, and all the hard work and energy she brings to her job, but because of the substantial financial implications her departure will represent to the MSA.

In the very early 2000s, before Louise took over as Congress Coordinator in 2005 (and while she was still working full-time at UMD), Rick and I pondered how to make Louise a full-time employee of the MSA. While at the time she was performing only about 30 percent of the task she is now responsible for, Rick and I acknowledged how indispensable she was to the organization. Unfortunately, the MSA's revenue at the time made it impossible to make Louise a full-time employee. We could not get the registration barometer to move much above one hundred participants at the Annual Congress, and the journal was still at Manchester University Press at a substantial expense. As time passed, and as Louise took on more and more responsibility, I was finally able to encourage her to take an early retirement in 2010. That was a most fortuitous confluence of circumstances since Louise's retirement was followed only a few months later by Rick's unexpected departure. In the years since 2010, Louise has increasingly carried the major burden of running the Annual Congress, which has doubled in size since 2010. It would be an exaggeration to say that she has a full-time twelve-month job, but it is

nearly full-time from February to June, and she devotes hundreds of hours to the MSA (all uncompensated) during the remainder of the year. Those tasks include dealing with all financial matters, seeing that bills are paid, tracking registrations and memberships, preparing financial data for our annual IRS returns, and filing our annual corporation report with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, she receives all paper proposals for the Annual Congress, responds to the senders, helps John Watkins prepare the final program, puts all abstracts on the website, prepares everything necessary for the Congress such as name badges and folders, answers hundreds of questions from our colleagues, and helps me run the post-tour. And of course during the Congress she is on full-time duty at the registration desk for four days, in addition to preparing certificates of participation and dealing with emergencies as they arise. My intention in describing Louise's large portfolio is not to lavish well-deserved praise on her but to point out what a challenge it is going to be in the future to replace her.

I have already indicated that when I step down as Executive Director it will not be difficult to replace me. That scenario will definitely not be in play when Louise decides she has had enough. I do not anticipate her departure will be in the immediate future, certainly not before I step down, and indeed she may well continue for a time after I retire. But in that scenario, I suggest what I believe will be her conditions for remaining on the job. I offer the disclaimer that what follows is my interpretation, which has emerged from our many conversations on the subject. She may in fact disagree with some of my opinions and interpretations, but I know Louise, indeed I am married to her. We work together on MSA business nearly every day, and I think what follows is an accurate assessment.

Louise is a very hard but independent worker and does not appreciate or accept interference in her work. That does not mean she is not a good team player. Those who know her would agree she has excellent people skills and is inclined to be helpful and cooperative. My point is this: if she continues to work as Vice President/Congress Coordinator after I leave, my successor will be in for an enormous surprise if they think they will be her boss. That is just not going to happen. Louise has her job, does it flawlessly, and spends a lot of time helping the Chair of the Program Committee. I never interfere in what she is doing. I am not a micromanager. If she has an idea for change we discuss it, as I am sure she would with my successor. Plain and simple, if Louise continues in her current role after my departure, I am sure my successor will have the wisdom to leave her to do her job without interference. It will also be valuable for that person to remember that she is one of two permanent voters mentioned by name in the Articles of Incorporation. In fact, except for not having an academic background (aka not being a member of our crazy tribe), though she does have an MBA and many years

of experience working at a university, I can think of no one who would be more capable of running the MSA than she is. But this is all a preamble to the problem that will emerge when Louise does decide to give up her role in the MSA. How is she going to be replaced? It is going to be difficult, but it will not be impossible to find people capable of filling her role. The crunch is going to be the money. How is the association going to afford to pay for Louise's replacement? I think realistically the MSA is going to need to find a minimum of thirty thousand dollars a year to pay a person or, more likely, persons to perform the myriad tasks Louise now performs. And thirty thousand may be an overly conservative figure. The good news is that, barring some unexpected and unforeseeable events, the MSA has at least a five-year grace period to work on that future challenge.

Having presented what I see as the inevitable future changes the MSA will experience, let me present some scenarios to prepare for those changes. Life is precarious. Conditions can change rapidly. But given my present perception of the future, I would base my scenario on my intention to serve as Executive Director for another three to six years, as long as I am capable of doing so. I believe Louise intends to continue in her roles for another five to ten years. Of course, sudden changes in health can quickly alter those estimations for either or both of us. To prepare for the future, I would propose taking some preliminary steps, as the MSA will eventually need to do to make the transition from the current business model under which we have operated for more than a quarter century to a more traditional model of committees and elections. I would first suggest the implementation of an Advisory Council of some six to nine members, initially by executive appointment, later by election. (As noted below, this Council has now been formed). The Executive Director and the Associate Director would serve on the Council by virtue of their office, and we could add three to six at-large members. This Advisory Council would meet preferably on the Wednesday afternoon before the Opening Session of each Congress, since trying to find more than an hour during the Congress itself has proven to be impossible. Susan Shapiro has done an excellent job of squeezing a meeting into a one-hour lunch, but I would think that some subjects to be under discussion by the Advisory Board will require much longer meetings. With new technology like Zoom it will be possible for the Council to meet during the academic year. Susan Rosenstreich recently had a very successful Editorial Board meeting via Zoom. One of the first items I would like to bring to a new Board is the selection of future Congress sites. I believe for the most part that Rick, Louise, and I have done a good job with those selections. Lüneburg was a reach and was unfortunately poorly attended, and I have received some criticism for selecting Masaryk University in the Czech Republic for the 2023 Congress because some think it is

too far from the Mediterranean. My justification, as in the case of Lüneburg, is found in the MSA Mission Statement: the MSA "is particularly concerned with the ideas and ideals of Mediterranean cultures from antiquity to the present and their influence beyond these geographical and temporal boundaries."

I personally think Masaryk University is a good choice for a venue. Historically, I have wanted to expand the footprint of venues for the Annual Congress because I believe, and I have been proven correct, that in expanding the range of our venues, we expand the pool from which we draw participants in the Annual Congress and authors in our journal. Nevertheless, I think the time has come to bring the venue selection issue to a committee of peers. For example, at present we have a generous and attractive invitation from the University of Haifa to host the 2024 Congress. I have delayed taking action on that invitation because it presents some significant logistical issues, one being that we would have to change the traditional dates of the Congress. Given the religious customs of the region, it would not be possible to hold concurrent sessions on Saturday. That means if we were to celebrate the Congress in Haifa, we would have to break the quarter-century tradition of the Congress opening on the last Wednesday in May. Now if we were to start the Congress on a Tuesday rather than Wednesday, I do not think civilization as we know it would come to an end, though we could set a precedent that could come back to haunt us in the future. At the same time, I am most mindful that our academic tribal culture is one that is very true to tradition. The decision on Haifa is one that I would prefer to not make unilaterally but rather to seek recommendations from an Advisory Council.

As to the issue of finding an individual, or more likely individuals, who could fill the many positions Louise now holds, the best preparation is financial. The only way we can do that is by increasing participation, and thus registrations, at the Annual Congress. As I have noted, we have seen a steady increase in participation of almost 100 percent over the past ten years. Personally, I would prefer not to see the Congress grow too large, for fear it would lose its friendly ambience. But an increase to around 250 or 275 attendees would provide a sufficient financial cushion to eventually supply the more than thirty thousand dollars I estimate we will need to employ a Congress Coordinator, fiscal officer, and/or manager to perform the tasks now found in Louise's portfolio. This growth in membership is also paramount in light of the uncertainty of the continuation of the educational post-tours, which have been an excellent revenue flow for the MSA treasury since 2005. At present we are continuing those tours on a year-to-year basis. As I have previously mentioned, we enjoy doing them, but we have reached an age and a time in our lives when we are not able to tolerate the occasional nonsense we have experienced.

Being constantly harassed during the tour and having a letter of complaint sent to UMass after the tour is going far beyond the pale for people volunteering their time. We will do the work necessary to continue the tours as long as we can, but there are limits to what can be tolerated. For that reason, it is best for future financial calculations to not include the annual subsidy from the tours. If we outsource tours, there will be very limited revenue because of what a tour agency will charge.

In conclusion, over the next five to ten years, the MSA will need to prepare for a major transition from its historic successful business model, which has served the organization extremely well for over a quarter century, to a more traditional model for academic organizations. I see no reason for this transition not to be successful for all the reasons I have mentioned above. If done correctly and with the right leadership, we will even be able to endure the occasional debate on "How many angels can stand on the head of a pin?" I consider that the first necessary step in this process is the creation of the Advisory Council I described, so that the dialogue on the future of the MSA can commence. What shall the MSA look like? How can we get there? How will it be administered and governed? These are the questions we will need to answer.

It has been a long road from 1996, when I first met Rick Clement at a conference at Notre Dame and we decided to collaborate on some projects. That led to volume 1 of *Mediterranean Studies* in 1989, followed by the first Annual Congress in 1998, then by the many other projects such as the Nocciano Institute, and fortuitously by the addition of Louise in 2001 to form that original triumvirate.

I look back with a great deal of satisfaction to where that road has brought us. I look forward with optimism to where I hope we will go. I always wanted the MSA to be an international organization that was dedicated to inclusiveness. But when we started the MSA in the last century, I could never have foreseen the quagmire of the present age in America and elsewhere in the world. That the greatest fear of many Americans today would be domestic terrorism propelled by xenophobic white nationalism never occurred to me in the 1980s. That many Americans would be focused on building walls to keep others out of our country, that children would be separated from their families and put in cages, that neo-Nazis would march in our streets shouting anti-Semitic slogans was from the history of the 1930s, not from today's world. Never could I have imagined in the 1980s that the idea of gathering scholars from many different lands in a single congress as a demonstration of internationalism and inclusiveness would have the paramount importance it has today. Hopefully, when scholars from some twenty-five nations come together for four days at the Annual MSA Congress, it will be not only a community of shared scholarship

but also a demonstration that our great task of today is not to build walls and tear families apart. The work of today is to build roads that will bring us together. We are a small organization that meets for only four days a year, but as Confucius tells us, "The man who moves the mountain begins by carrying away small stones." Let's continue to move those stones.

## STOP THE PRESS: AN ADDENDUM TO THE HISTORY OF THE MSA

I remember going to the movie theater as a child, seeing films about newspapers and newsrooms. Near the end of the movie, the hard-drinking, grumpy editor would shout "stop the press!" This meant a major story had broken, a story that would change the fate of society. That is how I feel as I write this addendum. Major issues have erupted, and they make my task something like trying to write a history of World War II in 1942 or 1943. But the editor and the press cannot wait for the final act of the current drama, so once again I will dare to "rush in where angels fear to tread."

Some fourteen months ago, having put the last period after the last word on (what I thought was) the last page of the history of the MSA, the future of the organization looked bright. There were, of course, some concerning storm clouds, as there always are. The United States, for example, was plagued by divisive leadership and a government that advocated xenophobic nationalism. Across the Atlantic, we were wondering how Brexit might affect European unity. But "hope springs eternal," we thought. Despite these concerns, the U.S. economy was flourishing and elections were only a year away, and when considered in the micro-context of academic organizations in 2019, the road forward for the MSA looked to offer a smooth and successful journey. The editorship of *Mediterranean Studies* had made a seamless transition from Susan Shapiro to Susan Rosenstreich, registrations for the Twenty-Third Annual Congress in Gibraltar were excellent, forty colleagues had registered for an exciting post-tour to Morocco, and venues for the MSA Congress had been selected for the following three years, with additional invitations awaiting decisions. All these developments gave us a sense of optimism for the ongoing success of the MSA. But to paraphrase Solon the Wise's advice to King Croesus, "Don't judge a man happy until the Fat Lady sings."

As 2019 ended, the ominous signs of an impending calamity appeared. The new coronavirus that had originated in China had reached Western Europe by January. Through February, the number of cases was growing in Western Europe, and we began receiving inquiries at the MSA Office about possible cancelations or

postponements of the Twenty-Third Annual MSA Gibraltar Congress. On March 11, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

With the danger of the pandemic increasing, Louise and I held several Zoom sessions and conference calls with the Congress organizers in Gibraltar and concurrently consulted some U.S. colleagues. By the first week in March, it was obvious that the Congress would need to be postponed (not canceled). On March 17 (the same day all fifty U.S. states reported cases of COVID-19), the MSA sent an official announcement to the membership that the Twenty-Third Annual Congress had been postponed until 2021.

The ability to postpone and not cancel was made possible by the cooperation and understanding of the University of Gibraltar, Nova University, Masaryk University, and the University of Valencia. All agreed to move the date of the Congress they are to host to a year later so Gibraltar could be rescheduled for 2021. The decision to postpone the Congress proved to be wise, since before the end of March major restrictions on international travel were imposed by both the United States and European Union members. At this writing, most of the European Union, China, Canada, and many other countries have made great strides in their efforts to contain the pandemic. However, in the United States, with no leadership, an unprepared federal government, and an administration focused more on politics than on humanity, the coronavirus has brought the country to its knees.

The decision to postpone the Congress for a year engendered at the time a feeling of grave disappointment and a disruption of business as usual, but also an optimism that everything would be back on track by the new year.

This coronavirus crisis currently terrorizing the world, shattering the U.S. economy, and overwhelming our medical and social system will obviously have a profound effect on the future of the MSA. The pandemic makes past issues for the MSA, such as the struggle with Dowling College to save the journal, the stressful difficulties with Congresses in Barcelona, Salamanca, and Messina, the wild post-tour journey with Mad Max, and a chancellor's demands to liquidate a verbose plenary speaker, seem like trivialities. Since I am writing at a time far from the end of the pandemic saga, I can only hypothesize about the state of the world of academe in general, and the MSA in particular, when it is over. But let me offer some educated guesses as to what the future may hold for us.

1. Will There Be a Congress in 2021? That is our hope. While the 2021 Congress is several months away at this writing, the pandemic still needs a vaccine to control it. International travel for Americans is currently restricted. But these obstacles aside, we expect to convene the Twenty-Third Annual Congress in Gibraltar in 2021.

2. Economic Impact: The pandemic has been devastating economically. The anticipated decline in government revenues in many countries where our members reside will ultimately affect the MSA, since Annual MSA Congress attendees frequently rely on institutional and government-related financial support to travel to the Congress. Time will tell.
3. Closing of Institutions of Higher Learning: This pandemic is also bound to affect higher education in the United States. Change was already on the horizon before the current pandemic, but the rate of change is unquestionably going to accelerate.
   A. Cost of Attending College or University: In the United States, the cost of attending many private schools now surpasses fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year, leaving students who do not have affluent parents or a major scholarship with enormous student loan debt. Even those attending public institutions experience financial hardship.
   B. Distance Learning: As a result, more students are moving to less expensive online programs. As of a recent count,20 percent of all students are now enrolled in distant learning programs, and the current pandemic has compelled many institutions to move their classes online. This represents a particularly difficult situation for small private schools that justify their high tuition on the "total and unique learning experience" they offer students, a justification that quickly evaporates when classes are not offered in person and on campus. Many institutions including Harvard and MIT have already committed to online classes for the fall 2020 semester.
   C. Foreign Students and Demographics: An additional problem is that demographics are beginning to work against traditional colleges and universities. Foreign students are an important cohort in American colleges and universities. But the cost of tuition and the difficulties of obtaining visas threaten to reduce the population of these students who bring so much to our institutions of learning. In addition, the pool of eighteen-year-olds is on the decline, particularly in the Northeast, where there is a disproportionate number of small private schools, some of them already in financial trouble.
   D. Faculty Unemployment and Retirement: The next several years will probably present a challenge to the academic profession. Aside from the pressures on smaller colleges and universities, the danger of the pandemic is a particular threat to faculty in the United States. Many in the profession are over age sixty, in the high-risk group for COVID-19,

> and university faculty members are twice as likely as the general population to work beyond age sixty-five. That means many of our colleagues will be very vulnerable if they return to the classroom this fall. It is possible that some senior faculty members will feel compelled to retire since institutions are often eager to buy out high-salaried senior faculty during times of fiscal exigency. In their totality, these considerations are cause for concern in American higher education.

This brief overview of the current academic environment may give us pause as we contemplate the immediate future. Organizations like the MSA will certainly be affected to some degree by such disruptions in academe. But we will get through this crisis together, the dust will clear, and the sun will shine again. Most of our venerable institutions of learning will survive; faculty will continue to profess, research, and learn. Fortunately, the MSA is well positioned to remain stable during this time of economic and public health crises. Had this disruption taken place ten or fifteen years ago, we likely would not have survived. Today, however, the MSA is in a much stronger position to survive several years of turmoil. *Mediterranean Studies* is very stable, is under excellent editorial leadership, receives a sufficient number of publishable articles, and, unlike in the past, is cost-effective due to its new format and excellent partnership with Pennsylvania State University Press.

Equally important is that because of prudent fiduciary stewardship, the large increase in membership, and our successful post-tours, the MSA is financially viable, allowing it to survive several years of financial hardship. Another advantage today is communication technology. Through the employment of features such as Zoom, a great deal of MSA business can continue to be conducted during the travel prohibitions implemented because of the pandemic.

Finally, for many years the MSA has enjoyed a stable and competent leadership. That leadership is aging. At some point in the future, it will need to be replaced. To ensure continuity of leadership and to commence the process of moving the MSA from a business-model nonprofit corporation to a more traditional academically governed organization, we have appointed an Advisory Board. The primary charge to this Advisory Board is to develop new bylaws and governance policies that will be implemented when Louise and I begin to step back from our leadership roles, possibly in the next three to six years. We envision this process being evolutionary rather than a sudden transition. The business model has served the MSA well, and we want to be comfortable that the new model has the appropriate structure to provide the opportunity for the MSA to succeed.

So the facts in the newsroom are that the boulder we have been pushing up the mountain for over a quarter century has rolled back a distance. That should remind us of Solon's words to Croesus: "It is not over until it is over." This is the time for all of us to gather from our various corners of this planet, join together shoulder to shoulder, and help to keep pushing that boulder, which is very heavy these days, up the mountain. We may not reach the summit, but we will not know unless we keep working at it. As Nelson Mandela once said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

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# THE MEDITERRANEAN AND "MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES": AN EDITOR'S RETROSPECTIVE

*Geraldo U. de Sousa, University of Kansas*

ABSTRACT: *This essay focuses on the meaning of "Mediterranean" and "Mediterranean studies," offers an overview of the author's tenure as editor of the journal* Mediterranean Studies *(2001–11), and provides reminiscences of the Congresses and educational post tours organized by the Mediterranean Studies Association. A singularly capacious view of what defines the Mediterranean and the complexities of the field of Mediterranean studies emerge from an examination of articles published in the journal and from a cluster of experiences that the Mediterranean Studies Association has bundled into a package, including the international Annual Congresses, the journal, and the educational post tours. The post tours in Rio de Janeiro (2000); in Southwestern France, the sites associated with the Cathars, Andorra, and Aragon (2004); on the Island of Sardinia and the Island of Corsica (2009); and in Epirus, Western Greece, and Albania (2011) are highlighted to underscore scholarly discoveries and insights, opportunities for academic collaboration, and shared experiences.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean Studies Association (MSA), Mediterranean Studies, the Mediterranean region, journal publication, Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, Petropolis, the Cathars, Brazil, Greece, Sardinia, Corsica, Barcelona, Andorra, Albania, educational tours, academic collaboration, history, academic organizations*

As I write this retrospective in the early summer of 2020, we have begun to emerge from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, only to see an alarming surge of infection in the United States and in other parts of the world. We have sought refuge in our homes—"hunkered down"—having battened down the hatches, as our health authorities have told us to do. Conferences have been canceled or postponed. Countries have closed their borders. The world seems to have come to a grinding halt. In a short period, our habits of mind and social interactions have undergone radical changes, offering us an opportunity to reflect on experiences

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0227
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

and interactions we hope will soon be restored to our lives. In what follows, I offer an overview of my time as editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, and I ponder the meaning of "Mediterranean."

In Mediterranean studies circles, the year of 2020 will be remembered as the year the Twenty-Third Congress of the Mediterranean Studies Association, scheduled to take place at the University of Gibraltar, had to be postponed until 2021. In a message to the MSA membership, Benjamin Taggie, President and Executive Director of our association, expressed his hope for a return to normalcy in our lives, but he also aptly analyzed the current situation as follows: "As the world awaits the eventual recovery from the pandemic, we must also wonder what our adopted home, the Academy, will look like when the Coronavirus tsunami finally recedes. I fear that many traditions and some of our institutions, particularly in the USA, will not survive this crisis. I sincerely hope I am wrong."[1] As part of our efforts to write a history of the MSA, I focus primarily on my tenure as editor of *Mediterranean Studies* for a period of ten years (2001–11), but also provide reflections on the central question that, as editor, I repeatedly had to confront: "What is the Mediterranean?"[2]

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75), in *The Decameron*, written sometime between 1348 and 1353, sets a series of one hundred tales, told by seven ladies and three young men from Florence, against the background of the Black Death that ravaged Florence in 1348. One passage in particular resonates profoundly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; it details the symptoms and the progression of the contagion. When "plague-boils" ravaged human bodies, Boccaccio indicates, this constituted "a very certain token of coming death" (1975: 2). No one, not even the physicians and those who had received "any teaching of medicine," knew what to do. In *The Decameron*, those seven ladies of Florence gather after Holy Mass at the church of Santa Maria Novella to lament their situation and commiserate with one another. Joined by three young men, they seek shelter from the plague in a palace atop a hill some two miles outside of Florence. To while away the time, they agree to tell stories. Reading these fascinating tales as I reflect on the history of the MSA has opened my eyes to the complexities of the human and cultural landscape and the diversity of experiences that I associate with the Mediterranean.

Since 1998, the Annual Congresses of the Mediterranean Studies Association have provided an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas and many opportunities for shared experiences. In my introduction to a special issue of *Mediterranean Studies*, titled "Shakespeare's Mediterranean," published in 2018, I suggested that "for Shakespeare, the Mediterranean represents a sense of in-betweenness" (2018: 137). As an English Renaissance drama scholar, editing that special issue of the journal,

I found occasion to reflect anew not only on the depth of Shakespeare's fascination with things Mediterranean but also on my own love for and interest in the Mediterranean. As a field, Mediterranean Studie*s* engages the imagination of diverse scholars from different disciplines, time periods, and regions. As editor of *Mediterranean Studies* for ten years, I sought to encourage interdisciplinary approaches and foster fresh insights into the study of the Mediterranean region. A singularly capacious view of the Mediterranean and what constitutes Mediterranean Studies becomes apparent in the volumes that I edited, as well as in the volumes that preceded my tenure as editor. My successor as editor, Susan Shapiro of Utah State University, further expanded this capacious view to include the contemporary Mediterranean world.

## EDITORSHIP OF *MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES* (VOLUMES 10–19)

I do not recall how or precisely when I agreed to become the editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, but it must have occurred over the course of a conversation with Richard (Rick) Clement of the University of Kansas and Ben Taggie of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, perhaps over a cocktail or dinner around 2000. In 1999–2000, David Bergeron and I had taken a leadership role, with the help of my sister Rejânia Aparecida dos Reis Soares Mazioli, of the Fulbright Commission / Brazil, and Manoel Marcos Freire d'Aguiar Neto, of the Federal University of Bahia, in the planning and organization of the Third International Congress of the MSA, "Crossing Boundaries: Europe Arrives in the New World: An International Conference in Celebration of the Quincentenary of Cabral's Voyage to Brazil," Salvador, Brazil, May 24–27. This was an early harbinger of my commitment and increasing service to the Mediterranean Studies Association, which would entail editing of its journal, chairing the Program Committee, and serving as Deputy Executive Director for a period of time.

Although I had no formal experience as a journal editor, I had been a keen observer of the editorial work of David Bergeron, who served as editor of *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* (1972–2000). It was clear to me that journal editing had to be the labor of love and to stem from a deep commitment to the scholarship in the field and the spirit of service to the profession. I thought it was an exciting opportunity to work with international authors and widen my network of academic friendships and connections. At the time, the editorship seemed less daunting to me as well. As the editorial page of volume 10 (2001) makes clear, I was to be one of five "editors," along with Rick Clement, Ben

Taggie, Robert E. Bjork, and Guy Mermier, well-known and experienced scholars in their fields.[3] My title changed over a ten-year period, but my role did not. Rick Clement and I had an ideal distribution of labor. I was to be the managing editor of the journal, receiving submissions, overseeing the double-blind peer-review process, working with authors on revisions, and finally seeing the articles through publication. Clement, on the other hand, was in charge of production: preparing the publication agreements with the authors, overseeing copyright matters, copyediting, and formatting, preparing camera-ready copy, and working closely with the press. Eventually, Brian Harries, first as a doctoral student at the University of Kansas and later as assistant professor of English at Concordia University Wisconsin, joined us as associate editor. Although in 2008 Clement left the University of Kansas to become the dean of libraries at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, we continued to work together on the journal, despite his increasing responsibilities as administrator. In 2011, we decided that, because of other professional commitments, it was time for us to step down from editing the journal. Susan Shapiro, of Utah State University, was appointed editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, and I went on to assume other responsibilities in the MSA.

Editing the journal was an enjoyable experience, but there were also challenges. Generally speaking, academic institutions do not always recognize the merit of journal editing. At the time, the journal had both an Advisory Board, made up of twelve scholars in various Mediterranean fields, and an Editorial Board, consisting of twenty-eight scholars, primarily from the United States. Eventually, we eliminated the advisory board and shaved the Editorial Board down to a more manageable size. Consequently, the duties of the board members became more labor-intensive, but the reorganization also created incentive for me to turn to other scholars to assist in the evaluation of submissions. I developed a close working relationship and friendship with Editorial Board members including Ricardo Bigi de Aquino, Mary L. Dudy, Luis Corteguera, Daniel Crews, Francis Dutra, George Gorse, Caroline Jewers, David Johnson, Rebecca Leuchack, Mindy Nancarrow, Susan Rosenstreich, Clara Estow, Daryl Palmer, Richard Raspa, Susan Shapiro, Marilyn Stokstad, Elise Goodman, Angélica Lopes, Patricia Zupan, and Ronald Surtz, among others.[4] In many ways, we had assembled an ideal Editorial Board, an impressive and diverse group of scholars, who were fluent in various languages and represented a wide range of time periods and Mediterranean fields. Many others, not officially on the Editorial Board, generously read and evaluated manuscripts for us. With such a group of dedicated professionals, we had a short turnaround for the evaluation of manuscripts and more time for working with the authors on revisions.

During my tenure as editor, *Mediterranean Studies* was a hardback annual volume, averaging over two hundred pages and eleven to thirteen different articles, often with illustrations. For the purposes of the MSA congresses, Mediterranean Studies was defined very broadly to encompass all fields and all historical periods; the journal, however, defined the field more narrowly: "An interdisciplinary annual concerned with the ideas and ideals of Mediterranean cultures from late antiquity to the Enlightenment and their influence beyond these geographical and temporal boundaries." Basically, this definition excludes contemporary political, historical, and cultural topics beyond the Enlightenment, while allowing some wiggle room. In my work as editor, I tried to abide by these guidelines; however, I felt that essays dealing with later historical periods, such as Marilyn D. Rugg's outstanding "The Women of Orbajosa: Patriarchy as the Definitive Ideology in Galdós' *Doña Perfecta*" and Paola Valenti's insightful "Paul Klee's Journey to Italy and Tunisia," seemed to be a good fit for the journal.[5] Likewise, I did not hesitate to publish a personal essay, titled "A Twisted Trail: Borges and Me (and Eco and Theroux)," by Robert G. Collmer, professor emeritus at Baylor University, a frequent participant in the MSA congresses and fellow traveler on the MSA's educational post-tours. Between 2001 and 2010, we published ten volumes, comprising approximately 109 articles from authors from seventeen different countries. Working with international authors, whose English language writing proficiency varied considerably, posed challenges and was time-consuming for me, but others lent me a hand in my editorial work. For example, Frank Dutra often copy-edited essays written in Portuguese. Established senior scholars and junior scholars from non-English-speaking countries sought to disseminate their scholarship to a wider, international, English-speaking audience. International collaboration proved particularly gratifying.

## WHAT IS THE MEDITERRANEAN?

David Abulafia poses what has to be the central question of our field, "What is the Mediterranean?" (2011: 11). However, he cautions against defining the Mediterranean by "its edges" (2011:11) because, as I have observed elsewhere, "it downplays the complexity and diversity of a region made up of many seas, each with its own distinctive history, and whose historical, cultural, and political influence extends far beyond its geographical borders" (2018: 140). John Head, Kate Marples Simpson, and Jon Simpson offer a fresh ecological, agricultural perspective: "the Mediterranean Basin encompasses a number of transboundary rivers and

aquifers discharging into the Mediterranean Sea"; therefore, it "bring[s] a variety of states and peoples within its perimeters" (2017: 100–101). To me, it seems desirable to define the Mediterranean broadly, a region in between continents, encompassing the Mediterranean Sea and basin, consisting of many seas and regions with distinctive characteristics. It is also important to gauge its "social capital," as John C. Pierce, Nicholas Lovrich, and William Budd have suggested (2016: 271–81), and, of course, to recognize the region's enormous appeal to a broad spectrum of international visitors, students, and scholars. If, however, we define Mediterranean too narrowly, we run the risk of missing the essential qualities of the region and its global geopolitical influence and cultural reach through commerce, migration, cuisine, literature, film, and art.[6] Some of the papers published in *Mediterranean Studies* were first presented at the annual congresses of the MSA; therefore, they bear the distinctive marks of the deep interdisciplinary contexts of the congress. Others, not first presented as papers at the congress, were clearly inspired by our flexible, interdisciplinary approach to Mediterranean Studies. These scholars sought opportunities to disseminate their scholarship to a broader international audience.

I cite two volumes in particular—14 (2005) and 19 (2010)—to illustrate the range of topics covered, the fields of studies represented, and the complexities of the field that we refer to as Mediterranean Studies. Particularly fascinating seem to be the different ways that scholars from various disciplines and studying different historical periods repeatedly recover the Mediterranean in unexpected contexts. In volume 14, for example, Joseph Elie Louis Garreau investigates "the voice of the unwillingly cloistered nun lamenting her celibate life in the convent" (2005: 2). Garreau's essay makes apparent that fluency in multiple Mediterranean languages often underlies scholarship in the area. Other topics covered in the same volume include the households of Portuguese queens (Lourenço 2005: 17–26); the fifteenth-century Catalan poet Jaume Roig and the *Converso* controversy (Aronson-Friedman 2005: 27–43); the first letter Columbus sent home in 1493 (Dudy 2005: 44); the ambassadors of Ferrante d'Aragona (1458–94) (Dover 2005: 57–94); Portugal's elite seafarers (1481–1600) (Dutra 2005: 95–105); transatlantic Spanish and indigenous textuality in sixteenth-century Mexico (De Looze 2005: 106–24); the concept of wonder in Shakespeare's late plays (Fusch 2005: 125–47); seventeenth-century sculpture; seventeenth-century Spanish fiction; twentieth-century Spanish literature; and Northern Europeans' photography of Italy.

Likewise, volume 19 (2010) breaks new ground by broadening the borders of Mediterranean Studies to recognize the distinctive Mediterranean dimension

and context of English Renaissance drama, with essays on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1590) and *Taming of the Shrew* (1594), Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1605–6), Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Honest Whore, Parts 1 and 2* (1604–5), and Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (1621).[7] This volume makes a major contribution to the topic of English Renaissance drama and the Mediterranean. Perhaps it also reflects, if not anticipates, what Lea Puljcan Juric refers to as a "'Mediterranean turn' in early modern studies"; that is, "an explosion of interest" in and engagement with the Mediterranean region on the part of English Renaissance scholars (2019: 3). These authors and an imaginative editorial board recognized the pervasive nature of things Mediterranean even in works of early modern English playwrights, usually not associated with the Mediterranean region.

## THE BOOK OF MEMORY

From my perspective, the concept of the Mediterranean and what constitutes Mediterranean Studies evolved and expanded over a period of time, thanks in large part to the annual international Congresses of the MSA, which had shown considerable innovative flexibility in recognizing the great diversity of what we refer to as Mediterranean Studies. Border crossings, literally and figuratively, and international cooperation and collaboration have been hallmarks of the Mediterranean Studies Association from its inception. Over the years, the MSA has brought together a cadre of first-rate scholars for the Annual Congresses held in beautiful, exciting locations and, perhaps even more memorably, the post-tours. I organized the first informal post-tour for a group of friends and colleagues after the MSA congress at the Federal University of Bahia in Salvador, Brazil, in 2000.[8] We went to Rio de Janeiro together, rented a van, and went to various sites in Rio de Janeiro and Petropolis, the summer capital of the Empire of Brazil in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, because of a federal workers' strike, all the federal museums were closed, but we still managed to visit the Santos Dumont House and the grounds of the Imperial Museum in Petropolis; and in Rio de Janeiro, we visited the famous Maracanã soccer stadium, the Paço Imperial, the Botanical Gardens, Corcovado Mountain, the Sugarloaf Mountain, the famous Copacabana Palace Hotel, and the recently opened Carmen Miranda Museum. While we were in Petropolis, we ran into a German student from the University of Stuttgart, who was then working on his doctoral dissertation, titled "Die postkoloniale deutsche Literatur in Namibia (1920–2000)," which he would defend in 2003. He was in

Brazil to research the life of Austrian novelist, playwright, journalist, and biographer Stefan Zweig (1881–1942) and had gone to Petropolis to visit Zweig's grave. As we had an extra seat in the van, he joined our group for the tour of Rio and later for drinks *au clair de la lune*, under the Southern Cross, by the poolside of the Copacabana Palace Hotel. We learned a lot about German literature in Namibia, and I am sure Thomas Keil learned a lot about the Mediterranean. These unexpected exchanges and friendships would become characteristic of the MSA post-tour experience.

Later post-tours took us literally across many borders. The post-tours, and the closing receptions, evolved over the years to help define the "Mediterranean" for the MSA membership.

Following the Barcelona congress in 2004, we traveled through southwestern France in search of the archaeological sites associated with the Cathars, a dualistic heresy of the Catholic Church that flourished in France in the twelfth century. The Cathars opposed not only what they perceived as corrupt practices of the Catholic Church but also its teachings and doctrines. The Gospel of John was central to their beliefs; they administered the sacrament known as *Consolamentum* to those about to die. During this post-tour, which took place May 30–June 3, 2004, we seemed to be entranced by the Cathars, as we heard lectures, read about them, and visited the archaeological remains of their fortifications. We visited Queribus, Peyrepertuse, Perpignan, and the Château de Monségur in Cathar country; we also visited other places such as Carcassonne, Albi, Andorra La Vella, Parador de Cardona in Aragon, and Montserrat, before we were dropped off back at Plaza de Cataluña in Barcelona.

This post-tour became known for other reasons, as well. Here is the story. The tour company sent us a relatively comfortable, but very old, bus with mechanical problems and an inexperienced coach driver, who did not know the route we were to follow or the sites we were to visit. As it became clear, he would misjudge the conditions of some roads. For example, he drove up a narrow road to the castle at Queribus on top of a mountain. The bus was too big for the road. To compound the problem, the bus had a defective transmission. As we drove up that mountain road, the driver struggled to shift gears and we began to slide down off the side of the road. Fortunately, disaster was avoided, but several fellow passengers decided to walk on foot to the base of the mountain rather than ride the bus down. On the same post-tour, we made a stop at a small Café-Hôtel owned by Mme Aimée Couquet, in Monségur. As it was near lunch time and there was no restaurant in town, we persuaded Mme. Couquet to serve us lunch. She improvised a meal for some thirty guests with everything she had in her pantry and refrigerator,

and even indulged us with her homemade brandy. The daughters of Rick and Susanne Clement, Kristina and Elizabeth, joined me in helping Mme Couquet in the kitchen and in setting the tables and serving her unexpected guests. Later on the same day after a steady rain, I was walking back with Robert Collmer from the last Cathar stronghold at the Château de Monségur, when I slipped in the mud, did a complete cartwheel, and, to everyone's amazement including myself, landed on my feet. My hands were covered with mud: I was embarrassed but unhurt. To add insult to injury, our bus coasted down the mountain highways to a gas station in Andorra la Vella as the bus ran out of fuel. This post-tour is certainly one to be remembered in the annals of the MSA.

Sometimes, the post-tours offer a study in contrast of the countries hosting the congress. After the Lüneburg congress (2008), we boarded two vans, driven by Ben Taggie and Rick Clement, with Louise Taggie as navigator, for the road trip through north and east Germany, including Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, Wittenberg, and Berlin. We searched for Mediterranean connections, if not in landscape, architecture, or customs, at least in Italian art in the museums of Germany, such as Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (ca. 1601–2) at the Sanssouci Picture Gallery in Potsdam. Over the years, David Bergeron and I have made it a personal quest to see every Caravaggio painting we can in our far-flung travels, some with our learned and delightful travel companions and friends, Marilyn Stokstad (1929–2016), Karen Leider, and Anna Leider.[9]

In contrast to the Germany post-tour, the one after the Cagliari congress (2009) took us through the entire island of Sardinia and, then on a ferryboat, to the island of Corsica. The Cagliari congress is notable for many reasons, including the closing reception. The organizers planned what promised to be a memorable event in the romantic surroundings of a Sardinian beach with a view of the *Pan di Zucchero*, Sardinia's own magnificent Sugarloaf Mountain. Fresh fish was to be grilled on the spot over fire pits. The sunset was beautiful. Then the night fell. We sat around long tables especially set up for the occasion and waited for four hours for the food to be prepared. There were no bathrooms or toilets anywhere near the place, and we had to improvise. It was around midnight when we headed back to Cagliari: some had an early-morning flight to catch, and others had an early morning departure on the post-tour. This disastrous experience became known as our "Italian beach party," and we still laugh about it. In the morning, we boarded our coach for our post-tour through Sardinia's beautiful landscapes and unique archaeological sites, and an exploration of Sardinia's rich history and culture. We stayed in thatched-roofed Nuraghe-like huts, ensconced in the fog-wrapped mountains near Orroli.[10] We visited Alghero, which bears the

signs of its colonization by the Crown of Aragon; and then we stayed at a resort in San Pantaleo in Northern Sardinia, where we heard both the cuckoo bird and the nightingale, prompting jokes about hearing the cuckoo and, reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a humorous disagreement as to whether we had heard the nightingale or the lark.

After the Corfu congress in 2011, we went on a bus tour of Epirus and western Greece, including Dodona, Meteora, and Ionnina; after that, we traveled in Albania. To indulge me, Benjamin Taggie arranged for an unplanned stop so that I could see the Oracle at Dodona, the most ancient of Greece. The oracle, dedicated to Zeus, was delivered from the top of a sacred oak. The priests ascertained the will of the gods by listening to the rustling of leaves and the ringing of brass plates suspended from the branches of the tree. After this magical experience, the Greek coach driver—after getting lost, driving to an old abandoned closed border checkpoint, and asking a young peasant Greek woman for directions—finally dropped us off at the Greek checkpoint on the Albanian border because the Greek bus was not permitted to leave Greek soil. Wheeling our suitcases and with carry-ons strapped around our shoulders, we proceeded on foot across the no-man's land between the Greek and Albanian checkpoints to reach the Albanian passport and customs control station, where we were met by our Albanian tour guide and the Albanian bus. Tourists have not yet discovered Albania's stunningly beautiful landscape and the hospitable nature of its people. In Albania, we visited the UNESCO World Heritage city of Gjirokastër, the seaside town of Sarandë, and the beautiful Butrint National Park, among other places. The repressive isolationist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha (1912–85) and the unrest that followed the fall of communism have left behind deep scars, including systemic unemployment and poverty. Gun emplacements built in the Hoxha era still dot the landscape along the major highways. However, in the last two decades, Albania has become a representative democracy, joined NATO in 2009, and is hoping to join the European Union. After this most memorable post-tour, I learned to offer a libation to the gods of old and to listen more deeply to the rustling of the leaves of the Sacred Oak of Dodona, even from faraway Lawrence, Kansas.

To me, Mediterranean Studies has come to signify a cluster of experiences, such as I have described, that the Mediterranean Studies Association has successfully bundled into a memorable package. In that package are an international academic conference hosted by wonderful universities and academic institutions in beautiful Mediterranean locations, paper sessions on a variety of topics, a scholarly journal published by a first-rate press, opening and closing receptions, walking tours, and unforgettable unique post-tours. As editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, however,

I found the closing receptions and the post-tours particularly valuable opportunities to know my colleagues, to interact with prospective authors and the members of the Editorial Board, and, of course, to network and cultivate professional and personal friendships. As a part of its leadership team over the years, I think that the MSA embodies the best that academia has to offer. As editor of our journal, *Mediterranean Studies*, I can attest to the fact that many scholarly discoveries and insights, as well as opportunities for academic collaboration, arose from these extraordinary experiences that we shared. During the COVID-19 lockdown, I have found time to reflect on our quests and adventures as travelers, colleagues, and friends. I have pored over the pages of our journal, programs and abstracts of past congresses, pictures and slides that I took, and my personal journals, souvenirs, and cookbooks. Mediterranean Studies signifies these clusters of wondrous Mediterranean adventures, journeys, and discoveries of friends, scholars, and fellow travelers.

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## NOTES

1. Taggie 2020. The success of the Annual Congresses and the imaginative, delightful post-tours would not have been possible without the indefatigable work of Ben and Louise Taggie in particular. I dedicate this essay to them in gratitude for their kindness and friendship over the years.

2. My friend John Pierce suggests that the question should be "What does it mean to be *Mediterranean*?" I think that all of these questions, including "What are Mediterranean studies?," are intertwined, as I suggest below, in the cluster of experiences that the Mediterranean Studies Association has bundled for its membership.

3. In fact, however, Ben Taggie, Bob Bjork, and Guy Mermier had already decided to transfer all editorial responsibilities to Rick Clement and me.

4. I would like to express my gratitude to these and other colleagues for their service over the years.

5. These two essays were published in *Mediterranean Studies* 16 (2007: 191–223) and *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (2006: 190–209), respectively.

6. I am fascinated by the great diversity of regional Mediterranean cuisine. Over the years, I have developed a repertoire of Mediterranean dishes that I prepare from time to time, and I have also accumulated a number of Mediterranean cookbooks.

7. Volume 19 also includes Bob Collmer's personal account of his interaction with Borges. Bob told me that this would be his last publication. I was honored to publish this wonderful piece. Bob passed away at age ninety-one on November 21, 2018. https://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=204886&_buref=1169-91771.

8. This group consisted of Bruce Smith, Rick and Susanne Clement, Jerry and Nike Cline-Bailey, Nina Molinaro and Daryl Palmer, David Bergeron, and me.

9. In the past several years, we have explored the Mediterranean region with our friends and delightful travel companions: John Head, Lucia Orth, Gaywyn Moore, Robyn Moore, and Ardith and John Pierce.

10. http://www.antichiovili.it/ristorante.php. Nuraghe Arrubiu in Orroli and Su Nuraxi (Barumini) are the most famous of these ancient settlements. Archeologists have identified some seven thousand megalithic structures known as Nuraghi, which were built nearly four millennia ago; and they estimate that Sardinia may have well over ten thousand similar structures scattered all over the island.

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# DO IT ONCE, OWN IT FOREVER?

*Louise A. Taggie, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth*

ABSTRACT: *The author shares the challenges of maneuvering a nonprofit academic organization into a business model so it can be sustainable while following strict federal and state guidelines. By overhauling the entire conference registration process, streamlining international financial transactions, and better managing visa application requirements of multiple countries, we have been able to transform the MSA. These were the steps that were necessary to make the Mediterranean Studies Association a successful and thriving global organization.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean, Mediterranean studies, Mediterranean Studies Association, business practices for nonprofits, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth*

People ask me many questions about the Mediterranean Studies Association, but the two questions they ask most frequently are: "When and how did you get involved in the Mediterranean Studies Association?" and "What exactly do you do?"

Let me start with the when and how. I became involved in the MSA in 2002. I was working at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth as Assistant Director of Administrative Services. My domain was the purchasing department, print shop, mailroom, bulk mailing process, receiving, asset management, and lead position on the Financial Software team for the UMass System. The graduate assistant who worked for Ben on Mediterranean Studies Association matters would often call my office to ask for help to expedite printing and mailing tasks. Now anyone who has worked for, or dealt with, academia knows the red tape involved in getting things done. Those who know Ben Taggie, Executive Director of the MSA, are aware that he carries a special pair of scissors to cut that red tape. His motto is "start at the top." Forget about starting from the bottom and working up. It is also a universal rule in academia that if you do something once, you own it!

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0240
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

So, I began by helping with the printing and mailing for the MSA. And then, one day, there I was, visiting conference sites, securing hotel rooms, and helping organize the post-tours. The problem was the conference started at the end of May, which coincided with the closing of the university's fiscal year and the opening of the next fiscal year. In addition, in 2002, I was finishing up my Master's Degree in Business Administration. I was in the difficult position of making concrete arrangements for the conference in absentia, unable to see the fruits of my labor.

It was not until 2005 in Messina that I finally attended the conference as on-site coordinator and saw firsthand the chaos created at the site registration. Putting names on folders before the conference seemed like a good idea unless you were the only person at the registration desk trying to find the folder for a specific participant. This led to distributing folders with no names attached and handing out name badges in a separate transaction. That was an easy fix. What an improvement! Next problem: listing presenters in the program, only to find that they never showed up. These no-shows seriously impacted the quality of the conference sessions. So we made sure participants were informed that they would not be listed in the program if they had not paid their registration fees. All these recommendations helped to streamline the registration process and build camaraderie with the many professors who were participating. The conference itself is the easy part. Making it all come together and happen is the most challenging part.

In 2006 and 2007, Ben's graduate assistants lasted from September until Christmas break, but never returned for the spring semester. I was the one who had to go through the files to see which participants had paid and which had not paid, and entering information on a spreadsheet in order to print name tags and folder labels. After doing this for two consecutive years, I thought it might be easier to reinvent a totally new registration process instead of handling someone else's mess. The challenge was doing this while still working full-time. Many nights were spent running credit cards, typing up receipts, and corresponding with various professors from around the globe. This also had its own nuances. The time differences caused big delays in responses, and getting things done was a challenge.

Over the years, I was able to streamline the processes, making registration and check-in at the conference easier for all involved. Making the payment process more secure has added complexities and schooled us in the learn-as-you-go process. We have had to make our payment system PCI-compliant, meaning we have had to learn and observe the technical and operational standards that businesses follow to secure and protect credit card data provided by cardholders and transmitted through card processing transactions. We did not invent these standards. They are developed and managed by the Peripheral Component Interconnect Security Standards Council for the safety of credit card data worldwide. If we had

stayed with our old credit card system, we would have been unable to comply with those standards, and we would be fined by the credit card companies.

Since the MSA is a nonprofit organization and is supported by its members, we had to be frugal and find opportunities to raise revenue without increasing membership dues and registrations fees. One way of saving money was to be able to transact international wire transfers ourselves, so that we were not paying the bank to generate the transfers for us. Presently, the incoming and outgoing transfers cost forty dollars per transaction. By executing the outgoing transfers ourselves, we pay pennies on the dollar. Another way to save money was to schedule historical walking tours on the Wednesday morning of the conference. The monies from the walking tour go into the coffers to help support the conferences. Ben and I also do a five-day, four-night post-tour, and we donate the proceeds from the tour back to the organization.

The nonprofit status of the organization comes with its own to-do list. An annual report must be completed by March 15 each year and submitted to the U.S. State Department. The yearly tax reporting to the state and federal governments must be done by May 15 to retain nonprofit status.

Through my work with the Mediterranean Studies Association, I have become adept at performing many different tasks. Thanks to my position at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and to my business background, these processes have been made easier. It is now part of standard operating procedure for us to generate letters for visas, letters of acceptance for travel permission from universities, and formal receipts for participants seeking reimbursement from their institutions.

I feel very fortunate to be part of this global organization. I have met many interesting people along the way and have grown as a person. I am thankful for the opportunity to be part of this endeavor. I will continue to serve the Mediterranean Studies Association as long as I am capable.

**Louise A. Taggie** is Vice President, Chief Fiscal Officer, and Congress Coordinator of the Mediterranean Studies Association. She holds a BS in Management / Human Resources and MBA from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Before retiring from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in 2010 she held the positions of Assistant Director of Administrative Services and Information Systems / Procurement Manager. In that capacity she taught classes for faculty on how to implement new educational software. She has extensive experience as an entrepreneur in the business world including real estate development and sales, and ownership of private businesses. She was an active participant in the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Summer Sicily Program and MSA Nocciano Institute. She has traveled extensively and with her husband founded MSA Cultural Tours in 2004, which conducts educational tours to the Mediterranean region.

# THE MSA ACCORDING TO VAIOS

*Vaios Vaiopoulos, Ionian University*

ABSTRACT: *The experience of hosting a Congress for the MSA changes a scholar's view of American scholarship, of the Mediterranean, and of Mediterranean studies. The "big size" model of MSA Congresses has brought a special meaning to the study of the Mediterranean, offering opportunities for scholars to view the region simultaneously in a tightly localized context and in the region's expansive context.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean, Mediterranean studies, Mediterranean Studies Association, Ionian University, Corfu*

What might your first impression be if you are a young scholar who is participating for the first time in a congress such as that of the Mediterranean Studies Association? The often endemic European prejudices toward whatever comes from the United States may be maximized, especially at the southeastern edge of the Balkans, where anti-Americanism usually fades once we reach adulthood. The academic certifications accompanying the association, thanks to the institutions affiliated with it, are impressive, while the European universities hosting the congresses are most attractive.

For me, it was at the University of Genoa where I first met the MSA. Together with the announcement of the program came the confirmation of my first impression: everything was in accordance with the theme of "big size," reflecting the vast dimensions associated in the subconscious of a European with the western coast of the Atlantic. More than one hundred papers were to be presented in six parallel sessions within three to four days. And in the Congresses that followed this one in Genoa, the number of papers would reach almost two hundred.

And then, on the first day of the Genoa Congress came another big surprise: even before the first paper was presented, right after the host university's welcome

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0243
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

speech, came the presentation of the next Congress and the invitation by its host university. I must admit that the position of the person charged with this (premature, as I thought) presentation seemed rather challenging. The Genoa Congress was about to start, and there we were listening to someone announcing the following year's Congress in Evora. This foretaste of the academic future was not an exception but the rule at MSA Congresses. In Evora we attended the presentation of Lüneburg, in Lüneburg we were informed about Salamanca, and so on.

What was the reason for this absolute, almost provocative self-confidence of the organizers that led them to take care of the next congress before the current congress had even started? I got my answer only after having experienced myself the preparations and the details of the entire procedure. The selection of the host institution always started at least four or five years before the congress, so that the appropriateness of the space, the institutions, and the infrastructures was secured. Above all, the universities selected were institutions enjoying a great history, situated in places with a deep history, in cities carefully preserving their identity. The collaboration between the MSA and the universities included departments or faculties engaged in the fields treated by the association, offering various aspects of Mediterranean studies. Moreover, the persons involved were characterized by their collaborative and hardworking spirit.

My home institution, the Ionian University, had the opportunity to be included in this privileged group. Ben and Louise Taggie and Rick Clement came to visit (and carefully examined us) before they took the responsibility of accepting our invitation. Corfu may possess a famous brand name regarding its cultural impact, but there is a lot of touristic jargon blurring its academic image. A congress in Corfu offered an interesting perspective indeed, but the university needed to come to the forefront as an academic unit, so that the attractive package would be completed. In addition to Corfu's crucial position in the center of the Mediterranean, its long history is reflected in rich archaeological and architectural remains and finds. The Ionian University has been instrumental in reviving the long cultural and academic tradition of the island.

My university's history began with the Ionian Academy, founded in 1824 as the first Greek university. It was closed in 1864, then reopened in 1984, thanks, among other reasons, to Corfu's rich Venetian archives. What is certain for me is that Ionian University benefitted from the MSA Congress held in 2011, diffusing our profile to the international community, not to mention the academic friendships and collaborations that began with this conference in Corfu.

The Corfu Congress became, like any other MSA Congress, a forum appropriate for exchange of academic experience and ideas, of research experimentation,

practically representing what the Mediterranean space had always been. I soon realized that the "size" of the congress, which initially appeared to me as an outcome of the "American" style, perfectly matched with diachronic data of the Mediterranean in all its breadth. After all, if the ancient *orbis terrarum* basically coincided with whatever was around the Mediterranean Sea, the unification of the ancient *οικουμένη* under the Romans brought the matter of size to the forefront in the ancient United States of the Mediterranean.

Just as the Mediterranean gradually broadened, thanks to Roman domination, becoming an increasingly friendly cultural space, today the academic breadth and variety, often searching for the liberty of big sizes also, determines the contemporary global scenery as the "new Mediterranean." I am not sure if the United States or the unified Europe are or may become what Rome used to be for the ancient world; in my opinion we are not even at the end of the beginning of this procedure, which often goes either way, back and forth. What seems certain to me is that what the Mediterranean used to represent, at least from a cultural point of view at the end of antiquity, that is, an ecumenical space, a meeting point suitable for cultural interaction, cannot be bound stricto sensu by geography nowadays. The openness and the variety of the ancient Mediterranean *oikoumene* are now reflected in the broadened global scene.

In this spirit, an American, an Australian, or a Japanese person may in fact be more Mediterranean than an actual inhabitant of the Mediterranean coast if they possess the overall perspective and ability to absorb tendencies, ideas, impacts, and influences. This was the case in the ancient ecumenical Mediterranean. From this perspective, a scholar today needs to be post-Mediterranean in order to qualify as a real Mediterranean, even when his or her origins are in the Mediterranean. Without deleting their origins and bonds with a specific place, Greek, Spanish, Catalan, Italian scholars do not derive their "Mediterraneanness" from their Mediterranean origins; nor are they expected to simply reproduce the perspective of their provenance of their specific geographical area. On the contrary, it is necessary to be disengaged from locality, if scholars want to have an overall idea, if they want to examine elements at the local level, while remaining at a safe distance from the partiality that local position implies.

In other words, a Greek or an Italian classicist does not study ancient Greek or Latin culture because it is about "their" language and literature, but because both Latin and Greek literature are important parts of a civilization that had been ecumenical and global for many centuries, and that remains our common global heritage today. Not to mention that in antiquity, a sophisticated citizen living by the Roman Mediterranean "Lake" was familiar with both parts, Greek and Roman, of

classical culture. This equilibrium was lost during the Middle Ages, but it returned with humanism and is still preserved, at least in what concerns classical philology. The same is true in the field of history: an Italian, a Spanish, a French historian needs to stay away from locality. Any discussion about local history should take place starting from a wide perspective, although one's Mediterranean origin may always remain an advantage.

In light of this Mediterranean breadth, it is obvious that an association like ours would be suitable for the expression of whatever is conceived of as Mediterranean, that is, a wide forum of communication, interaction, and meeting. I would say that the MSA, free as it is from bonds and stereotypes connected with origin, is more appropriate to express this open spirit than an association founded by Greeks in Athens who were unable to rid themselves of the shackles of locality. On the contrary, the concept of creating an association in terms of general academic interests and research guarantees Mediterranean variety, and easily comprises scholars originating from Mediterranean nations, offering an open academic frame.

In this spirit, it should not be obligatory to organize congresses about the Mediterranean in Mediterranean universities only. I would dare to say that it would have been closer to the ambience of the Mediterranean, as conceived of these days, to have a Congress outside the Mediterranean. Lüneburg remains an exception, but the same symbolic undertaking will be repeated in Brno in the not-too-distant future. The degree to which the genuine Mediterranean spirit can be freed from locality is reflected in the fact that Portugal is inscribed on our subconscious as Mediterranean for years. No one questioned the suitability of Lisbon to host one of the first MSA Congresses, or later, of Evora, and Lisbon for future congresses. The Eurovision song contest may rightfully comprise Israel or remote Australia into Europe but would not attract the interest of a jihadist's "state," despite its proximity to Europe, after all. . . .

In my opinion, this open ambience is reflected in our association and its most important annual activity, our Congress. Strictly scientific papers are presented in sessions characterized by well-defined thematic cohesion, while other sessions have remarkable thematic variety; those charged with composing the program—Geraldo de Souza in the past, John Watkins today—incite the scientific curiosity of the participants by the titles they give to the sessions. There is no field of humanities that remains uncovered by the congress. History, of course, plays the most important role in these sessions, but classical philology, papyrology, archaeology, the history of arts are emphatically present. The chronological space covered by presentations ranges from the roots of Greek-Roman civilization and of every

civilization developed in the Mediterranean up to the impact and the reception of these civilizations in modern times.

The presence of all these fields relative to each other does not produce confusion, since the classification of the papers is done with great care, so that the sessions have the necessary cohesion. This avoids the pitfalls of multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, but produces the advantages of the all-important simultaneous gathering of scientists coming from different but relative fields. After all, speakers may be in the same field in each session of the congress, but the audiences come from a wide range of interests. So the feedback for every speaker does not come exclusively from a colleague's perspective that would be closer to his own ideas. Interventions, comments, questions of the audience belonging to various scientific fields often offer ideas for new, innovative interpretations, as discussion often ranges far beyond a speaker's field of scholarship. Thus, questions may not be as detailed as they often are in more specialized conferences, where similarly broad discussions might occur. But the profit gained in recompense is the clarity of an overall perspective and the opportunity to clearly reframe research questions because the stereotypes produced by the exaggerated segmentation of scientific knowledge have no place here.

This is the reason why the association and our congresses are most appropriate for someone to present a paper before it is submitted to a journal or published. The feedback may open the horizon of the research in an unpredictable manner. At the same time, the reception of the paper's concept is tested by specialists with regard to its originality and maturity, but also towards a non-specialized audience with regard to its clarity. After all, this coexistence of scholars coming from different schools of thought is one of the main priorities of associations of this type. Our intention is not to neglect the advantages offered by a specialized symposium, but to emphasize the multiple gains that the osmosis of numerous relative fields may offer.

The openness and variety are strengthened not only by the coexistence of different fields but also by the presence of different schools of thoughts within the same field. A classicist, for example, has to deal with the questions of a historian, of an archaeologist, of an anthropologist or of a linguist, widening his or her horizons, since he or she has to communicate with relative but different fields and various chronological periods. One who studies antiquity discovers the utility of methods used for modern times, making the necessary adjustments, of course. On the other hand, within the same field, the exchange of ideas becomes creative, thanks mainly to the size of the Congress. Speakers provide different schools

of thought to a higher degree in comparison with specialized colloquiums, and research stereotypes give way to academic globalization.

All the above are also crystallized in the journal published under the aegis of the association. This journal has already evolved over time to a high level. Here, the originality and variety of the papers are strictly filtered by high-quality standards. Only a small portion of the papers presented in the congress are published in the journal, which draws on the wider scientific universe and is not restricted to what comes out of the congress.

Both the journal and the association are the fruit of long discussions, long-lasting bonds of friendship, and academic collaborations among the members. This collaboration is neither static nor definite: it continues, as new members add experience and vigor to this constantly renewed creation. The panorama of the members of the MSA and the journal's Editorial Board reproduce a small Mediterranean, a meeting point in the Braudelian sense. Members coming mainly from American or European universities cover all fields of the humanities, a variety of tendencies and schools.

The development of the journal has been remarkable, especially in the past decade. Starting from an already high level under the direction of Ben Taggie and Rick Clement, then under Geraldo de Souza, it has passed to the age of Scopus and of high evaluations under Sue Shapiro, who created a stable basis for the new phase under Susan Rosenstreich. To maintain a balance between high academic quality and deep scientific analysis on the one hand, and to preserve multidisciplinarity and cross-thematic approaches on the other hand, is an extremely ambitious goal with a changing dynamic.

That I am included in this forum is a great honor for me. I could not omit to refer to those who have functioned as mentors, introducing me to this important academic community. Ben Taggie, the MSA strategist, assisted by senior members, and Louise Taggie, the good angel of the association, have played, and still play, major roles for me. I should not omit the lessons received from Geraldo de Souza, a former editor of the journal and planner of the Congress program for years. Hundreds of hours were spent during our communications regarding the Corfu Congress, and the ones that followed right after. I do not owe less to Sue Shapiro, editor of the journal during a very important period, and to our conversations on classical philology. I am very happy that this fertile collaboration continues with Susan Rosenstreich, who represents Mediterranean breadth and fantasy, and John Watkins, adding the necessary creative ambiguity to scientific thoroughness.

Why am I right to be optimistic about the association and its development? Because the MSA looks more and more like the Mediterranean, changing, sometimes gradually, and at other times rapidly, expanding, enlarging, widening its horizon inside and outside Europe, both to the east and the west. It is a continuous transformation that secures its survival. The Mediterranean itself, after all, is an example of continuous change, not only from a cultural point of view, not only metaphorically. The Mediterranean Sea changed even in its material status, even in matters that are considered to be unchangeable, even in its geography: Gibraltar is no longer the only point of communication with the world outside the Mediterranean. In the past two centuries, the Mediterranean has gained access to the southeast also, with its two channels renewing its waters from both sides. We hope that the same will continue to happen with its cultural channels too.

**Vaios Vaiopoulos** is Professor of Latin Language and Literature at Ionian University.

# TWENTY YEARS OF FRUITFUL COOPERATION: SPAIN IN THE MSA

*Ángel Felices Lago, Universidad de Granada*

ABSTRACT: *The role of congress host is essential to the success of MSA Congress, helping to connect the history of the venue of each congress to the organization's mission of building collegiality with scholars of the Mediterranean. The author was instrumental in planning the 2002 MSA Congress in the historic city of Granada and has continued to work with colleagues in Spain to host MSA Congresses in cities of historical importance on the Iberian Peninsula.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean Studies Association, Mediterranean studies, Granada, University of Granada, fellows of the Mediterranean Studies Association*

In the year 2000 I received a phone call from Frances Luttikhuizen, a dear colleague and friend at the University of Barcelona. She offered me the opportunity to host a conference in Granada for the Mediterranean Studies Association, an academic organization located in the United States. She had intended to organize it in Barcelona in 2002, but she lacked the necessary institutional support for doing it that year. At first, I was hesitant. I had no experience in hosting conferences and, besides that, I was Vice Dean for International Relations in a faculty that was not in the area of humanities but in the field of economics and business administration. That meant an extra complication involving the Dean and other academic authorities in this adventure. However, I have always been a bit of an entrepreneur. So I took the risk and arranged a meeting with the President of the MSA, Benjamin Taggie, having in mind the purpose of going ahead with this challenging proposition and discussing the organization details. The outcome of that meeting was not only my determination to host that conference in Granada but also the beginning of fruitful cooperation and a long-lasting friendship with Ben and other members of the MSA.

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0250
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

Consequently, Granada became the first venue for MSA conferences in Spain. Could there have been a better choice? What can I say about the symbolic role of Granada, a crossroads between Europe and Africa, Islam and Christianity, the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean? It was the location where Queen Isabella I of Castile met Christopher Columbus and gave birth to further encounters between European civilization and the New World.

Looking back, circumstances conspired to favor the organization of this Fifth MSA Congress in Granada. In May 2001, I was appointed the new Director of the Center for Modern Languages at the University of Granada, and, luckily, I was in a more prominent position to bring the venue of the conference to the historic heart of the city: the Palace of Santa Cruz in the old district of El Realejo (sixteenth century), which was (and continues to be) the main site of the university's language school. The setting was perfect for a conference where history, art, literature, and languages met (among other related disciplines). The opening reception was offered at the Hospital Real, a late fifteenth-century building, a magnificent example of the Renaissance in Spain and the main site of the University Rectorate. Other great moments on the agenda followed suit: a free tour of the Alhambra was offered to all participants (courtesy of the University of Granada), and a splendid farewell dinner was held at the Carmen de la Victoria in the historic district of El Albaicín. With the illuminated Alhambra as a backdrop, this closing event was the culmination of a memorable congress.

I will never forget the days we shared in my hometown and the friendliness and kindness of all the association members. Since then, the MSA has occupied a special place in my memories and in my heart; as a consequence, I promised myself that I would do my best to bring the association back to Spain on future occasions.

I did not influence at all the organization of the Congress in Barcelona in 2004, but it was my dear colleague and friend Francis who took the first steps in that direction. However, I did my best to find the appropriate contacts to host some other successful and unforgettable MSA conferences in Spain: Salamanca in 2010 and Marbella in 2014. My communication with Louise and Ben has always been fluid and fruitful over all these years, and thanks to this we have been exploring new possibilities to host more congresses in Spain. Only two years ago I was able to renew contact with a very dear colleague and friend, Miguel Martínez López, former Education Counselor of the Spanish Embassy in the United States and Full Professor of English Literature at the University of Valencia. He accepted the challenge of hosting the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the association in Valencia in 2023 (moved to 2024 due to the coronavirus crisis), and I am convinced that it will be another memorable event.

If time and circumstances allow me to continue on this path, I would like to accompany this great academic project in favor of knowledge, humanities, friendship, peace, and reconciliation of different civilizations, which is the MSA. I would not like to conclude this recollection without mentioning a milestone in my academic life that I will always remember with the greatest love and affection: On May 28, 2008, in Lüneburg, Benjamin Taggie, representing the MSA, awarded me the honorary distinction of Fellow of the Mediterranean Studies Association during the opening ceremony of the Eleventh MSA Congress. I have always proudly held this distinction and hope to continue to do so in the years to come. Thanks to the MSA for allowing me to be part of this most honorable enterprise.

**Ángel Felices Lago** is Full Professor and has worked as a member of the Department of English and German Philology (University of Granada, Spain) since 1987. He teaches English and Spanish for business and tourism. His main areas of research interest go from lexicology, discourse analysis, and axiological linguistics to NLP applied to LSP. He has coauthored or coedited ten scholarly and pedagogical books or textbooks and has also published over eighty scholarly articles and reviews in specialized national and international journals and volumes. He has served as invited reviewer or member on the editorial and scientific boards of a dozen journals and has also taken part in various international academic projects funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education or the European Union (Tempus, Leonardo, Erasmus, Erasmus-Mundus, etc.).

# THE MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION: THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN AS A LABORATORY

*Amikam Nachmani, Bar Ilan University*

ABSTRACT: *This essay examines the mistrust of the Mediterranean in eastern Mediterranean thought. The Annual Congresses of the Mediterranean Studies Association offer opportunities to confront this mistrust and to transform it into a catalyst for building trust between scholars from Israel and those from other countries in the region.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean studies, eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, Arabs of the Middle East, city planning*

> The first thing [in the replanning of Haifa's waterfront and connecting the town to the sea] was to persuade the railroad authorities to build a sunken railway instead of the ground-level tracks that separate the town from [the sea and the] port. . . . *In Haifa—a city of 300,000 people—the rail tracks separate the water from the city and everybody accepts this abnormality*. In the new plan [to connect Haifa to the sea] we left a middle option: to build bridges over the train tracks, because we knew that building sunken rail tracks was an option which could not be taken lightly. So, I am glad that we managed to persuade them to build a sunken railway. The situation that presently prevails in Haifa is not greatly different from what exists in other towns in Israel; *the last thing that you could say about these towns is that they are Mediterranean towns*. Haifa, really, does not look like Piraeus, or at least for the moment doesn't resemble it. "Where are we and where is the Mediterranean Sea?" asks Shinar. "*We are so much separated from the Mediterranean atmosphere, and it is particularly so in our towns*. Apart from Tel Aviv that somehow only just reaches the sea, *none of our towns*

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0253
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

> *reaches the sea*. This is an unbelievable phenomenon. I really fail to comprehend it. *Why? Why run away from the sea when you could cling to it like in every other normal Mediterranean town? . . .*
>
> "*Towns were planned and designed here [in Israel] that are . . . separated from the sea*." —Interview with architect Ami Shinar, designer of Haifa's urban seafront[1]

## INTRODUCTION

Congresses of the Mediterranean Studies Association serve many purposes. As an Israeli, I want to mention one of the most important of these. Israeli scholars live in the same eastern Mediterranean as their east Mediterranean Arab counterparts. They share the same seashores, sun, olive trees, climate, scenery, landscape. And yet, we never meet. Or almost never. The Congresses of the MSA offer an opportunity for encounters between the two groups, but few Arab intellectuals come to these annual gatherings. Perhaps for them, the Mediterranean Sea is a threat, a springboard for the colonial and imperial European and Western invasions of Arab countries, and the subsequent subjugation of Arab peoples. I will return to the Arab perception of the Mediterranean Sea in a moment. For now, I am wondering about this history. Is it a strong deterrent to Arab intellectuals who might otherwise investigate the region? Not many of them have attempted to decipher the ancient and modern enigma variously called the Mediterranean Sea, "The Great-Sea" (Hebrew = הים הגדול), the Levant, and the eastern Mediterranean. Nor have many of them sought Israeli colleagues with whom they might share findings and cooperate. Similarly, not very many Israelis offered collaboration to Arab scholars in an attempt to decipher that enigma. Still, those Arab scholars whom I have met at the MSA Congresses have been a great help to me in overcoming inhibitions and creating initial contacts. I am hopeful that our contacts were helpful to them as well, for it is the nature of MSA gatherings to serve as a unique laboratory where scholarship strengthens existing acquaintances and creates new ones. Scholars from the eastern Mediterranean could learn so much from each other.

Ruth Almog, a regular contributor to the cultural and literary weekend supplement (in Hebrew: תרבות וספרות Tarboot VeSifroot) of *Haaretz*, an Israeli daily newspaper, mentioned the phenomenon of Israeli intellectuals who wished to be connected to the Mediterranean world. In her seminal article, "Who Will

Stand in the Shadow of the Olive Tree and in the Company of the Cricket?," Almog clearly distinguishes between European values and Mediterranean ideas.[2] She concludes that the latter were ideal substitutes for the geographically distant Europe. The Continent is culturally different, after all, and its values could be seen as threatening and off-putting to the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, history might bring East Mediterranean Arabs and Israelis closer together. Europe has not been kind to its minorities, in particular to its Jews. Nor was the Continent particularly benevolent when she invaded and subjugated the Arab eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. We, the peoples of the Middle East and of the eastern Mediterranean, share an attachment to our environment. The region's flora and fauna are familiar to all of us. Through my rare encounters with Mediterranean Arab scholars at MSA conferences, I have learned how much we of the eastern Mediterranean have in common.

## ALIENATING THE SEA

One shared characteristic is our mistrust of the sea. Turning away from the Mediterranean Sea, certainly before the twentieth century, was a known phenomenon in east Mediterranean Palestine in the Jewish community there, and in the early years of independent Israel.

For all bad things seemed to come from the Mediterranean: the dreaded biblical Philistines, the ruthless Crusaders, and more. Incredible, but this attitude was reflected in Israeli urban culture and architecture, even in railways and train services. Tel Aviv, a relatively modern city established in 1909, knowingly and intentionally turned its back on the Mediterranean. A string of high-rise hotels along Tel Aviv's shoreline acts as a partition or barrier between the city and the sea. Tel Aviv's main streets and boulevards run *parallel* to the sea, along a north-south axis, rather than being oriented along a *perpendicular* east-west axis, which would have brought the sea into the city. Italy's Palermo is the opposite of Tel Aviv; Spain's Barcelona is the opposite; Greece's Thessaloniki is the opposite; and such are many Mediterranean Sea towns and cities. Barcelona's 1.2-kilometer Ramblas Promenade that connects the city center's Plaça de Catalunya and the Christopher Columbus monument at the city's port brings (metaphorically) the Mediterranean Sea deep into the city's center. Even the Promenade's paving stones are in the shape of sea waves.

In addition to this mistrust of the Mediterranean Sea, another explanation for the orientation of Tel Aviv's boulevards lies in the perceptions of urban space held

by the founders of the city, who were primarily of Eastern and Central European origins. European towns and urban centers were built mainly around and along rivers. For the European-born founders of Tel Aviv, the Mediterranean Sea was their European river; the Mediterranean seashore is the European riverbank; and so Tel Aviv's main boulevards follow a north-south axis, parallel to the sea, not an east-west axis, perpendicular to it.[3]

In a recent article, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* examined the perceptions prevalent among the founders of Tel Aviv, using as an example the idea that Tel Aviv's rooftops needed to be protected from snow! In an eastern Mediterranean city, with a semiarid climate where snow is extremely rare, these founders planned a city of steep red-tile roofs to *help the snow slide down from the rooftops of the buildings!* (Laor 2018). Once only, in 1950, a short snowstorm reached the city of Tel Aviv. In addition to protecting Tel Aviv from European snowstorms, the founders saw the need to protect the city from gale force—or even stronger—windstorms from the Mediterranean. To block these anticipated winds, Tel Aviv's boulevards were oriented north to south, and not east to west, which would have allowed the Mediterranean Sea to be integrated with the city:

> Like red tile roofs that protect from the snow, exactly like this Tel Aviv was built. As if the city is built along the seashore of the North Sea. Hence, in order not to allow stormy sea winds to hit the heads of people, Tel Aviv's roads do not descend into the Sea [going east-west], but protecting Tel Aviv [from the wind by going north-south]. (Laor 2018)

In another *Haaretz* article, the author wrote, "Tel Aviv has *discovered quite late in the day that it is a coastal town*—see the sharp turn that Allenby Road makes towards its end: suddenly those who built the road discovered the [Mediterranean] Sea!; and suddenly they were *haunted and attacked by the strongest of passions: to come closer to the Sea*."[4] Abraham Balaban, an Israeli essayist and author of literary reviews who writes regularly in *Haaretz* about Tel Aviv's flora and fauna, describes a summer afternoon along Tel Aviv's seashore promenade:

> Many enjoy the relief in the heat and the dropping of temperatures, and the seashore promenade is full of walkers, joggers and cyclists. It is hard to believe that *the founders of Tel Aviv initially asked to keep a distance* not only from the [Arab town of] Jaffa, but *also from the sea*. It took them half a century to discover that they founded a seashore town and not a garden city.[5]

The latest observation (July 2020) against the historical planning of the streets of Tel Aviv and the city turning its back to the sea came in a letter to *Haaretz* editor. The quotation speaks for itself:

> The sea is not only a place for sun tanning and sunbathing. The sea with its blue and pacifying panorama serves the person who asks for relaxation, who wants to gaze at the horizon and see nothing but sea and sky. . . . As for the planning of the streets of Tel Aviv, it is indeed faulty. I refer to Hayim Nahman Bialik [Israel's national poet, 1873–1923] who had a wise perception regarding Tel Aviv and the sea. Bialik asked [October 1932]: "What should be done to improve Tel Aviv—an advice from one of the citizens." Among other defects that Bialik found he referred to the issue of the seashore, in particular to the planning of the city's streets that hides the sea. "Particularly spoiling is the failure that causes the vanishing of the sea from certain streets; this is the original sin."
>
> This is the main issue. Many littoral cities were planned so that the main roads and boulevards descend into the sea, they do not parallel the seashore. By this they allow people to enjoy the panorama of the sea and the refreshing breeze that comes from it.[6]

Israeli town planners, architects, and engineers are still coping with the implications of this alienation. Turning away from the sea and the havoc this causes to urban architecture is the message of Ami Shinar's protest that opened this essay. Shinar, an Israeli architect, was hired to reconnect the Israeli northern city of Haifa to its eponymous port on the Mediterranean Sea.[7] Haifa, a seashore city no less, was, like Tel Aviv, separated from the Mediterranean. But in the case of Haifa, neither hotels nor north-south boulevards were used. Instead, the culprit here was the railway line running north to south that functioned as a steel barrier, separating the city from its port and the seashore. One has to hear Shinar's cry to understand what he is protesting: the incomprehensible separation of Israelis from the Mediterranean Sea.

> This is an unbelievable phenomenon. I really fail to comprehend it. Why? Why run away from the sea when you could adhere to it like in every other normal Mediterranean town?[8]

Shinar calls himself an "urban rectifier" or "urban repairer" who mends and fixes what was ruined, destroyed, and so poorly designed and planned in Israel's urban

architecture over the past seventy years, in particular the separation of the Israeli people from the Mediterranean Sea.

## THE SINKING OF THE ISRAELI SUBMARINE *DAKAR*

The Israeli submarine *Dakar* sank on its maiden voyage in the Mediterranean in January 1968. None of its crew of sixty-nine survived. In 1999, the sub's wreckage was found on the seabed at a depth of three thousand meters, south of Crete. The loss of the *Dakar* triggered a national trauma in Israel. Painful thoughts of Israel, Jews, the Mediterranean, and *Dakar* blended together to create fear of the sea as a source of threats and disasters. The relations and symbiosis between Jews, Israelis, and the sea were questioned. In his obituary of the sailors of the *Dakar*, journalist Uri Kesari wrote, "20 years ago when the State of Israel was established, when the founders of the State of Israel opened an outlet to the Great Sea, it was already then a defiance to mother nature, a defiance to the very Creation. . . . *The most puzzling procurement acquired by the Jewish nation, which later became Israel, was the Mediterranean Sea*."[9]

In 1919, fifty years earlier, when Tel Aviv was ten years old, its first Lord Mayor, Meir Dizengoff, declared that "Jews do not like to bathe in the Sea," and determined that the people of Tel Aviv should not bathe in the Sea.[10] The first municipal beach where people were allowed to bathe and the first municipal lifeguard services appeared in Tel Aviv in the late 1920s. The same Lord Mayor had plans to separate between Tel Aviv from the sea, by laying train tracks along Tel Aviv's seashore, as had been done in Haifa. He also planned to make the city's industrial quarter a buffer zone that would separate Tel Aviv from its seashore. Fortunately, public protests changed these plans. The attraction of the Mediterranean was irresistible. Unlike in Haifa, the train tracks were not laid in the planned buffer zone of Tel Aviv. Gradually, Tel Aviv connected itself to its seashore, although leather factories built in this industrial area produced an unpleasant odor, and for years the city's sewage system emptied directly into the Mediterranean.

David Ben-Gurion, the founding father of modern Israel, ridiculed the naval adventures and "achievements" of the ancient Hebrews and their attempts to become seafarers. These ancient Jews called the Mediterranean the Great Sea, though comparatively speaking it is a closed lake, certainly small in comparison to the earth's oceans. To these early inhabitants of the region, the Mediterranean certainly was immeasurably huge relative to the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea and Red Sea. So if they called the Mediterranean the Great Sea, Hebrew seafarers

demonstrated that they had very limited naval experience, that they did not reach the oceans beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar), and that certainly they did not cross them, wrote Ben-Gurion.[11]

## THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA: ARAB IMAGES

The building of mosques with their minarets along the shore of the Palestine Mediterranean helps to elaborate the Arab world's perception of the sea. Mosques are frequently used, often around the clock, and are often manned day and night; they thus serve as listening posts, tasked with monitoring the sea for threats and raising an alarm if an approaching invasion from the sea is spotted. To name but a few, mosques spread from Acre in the north to Sidna-Ali (near Jaffa), Jaffa's mosques, Nebi Rubin, Isdud, Majdal Askalan, and Gaza's mosques in the south, a long line of sacred spaces built along the shore of the Palestine Mediterranean.

But mosques as listening posts along the coast are not the only example of the Arab perception of the Mediterranean as a threat. For the Arab world, in fact for all Middle Easterners, save perhaps for the Maronite Christians in Lebanon, who consider themselves descendants of the ancient Phoenicians, the sea is a constant disaster waiting to happen. Eyal Zisser observes the way Arabs of the Middle East view the Mediterranean:

> Pan Arabism . . . viewed the Mediterranean Sea as hostile, even as a border that had to be converted into a fortified wall separating "them" from "us." Everything coming from beyond this sea was considered a threat. After all, it was from there—in the distant as well as the recent past—that the invader had come. Moreover, the Mediterranean Sea, and all that it symbolized, contained an ideological threat as well. The Mediterranean idea was considered cosmopolitan, an epithet in the Arab lexicon. . . . Thus, the sea was meant *not* to connect but to separate the Arabs on one side, from the West and Europe on the other.[12]

Napoleon, France, Great Britain, the British-French 1956 Suez Crisis, the June 5, 1967, Israeli Air Force attack on Egypt's airfields and air force, the frequent U.S. interventions in Arab countries, even the 2011 NATO-led coalition military operation in Libya that eventually toppled Muammar Gaddafi's regime, and more—all foreigners invaded the Arab Middle East via the Mediterranean Sea. The Israeli Air Force's frequent attacks on Iranian bases in Syria between 2011 and 2020 all

have been carried out by way of the Mediterranean. In short, all initiatives that attempted, or even brought about, the disintegration of the Arab Middle East came from the sea.

Hannan Hever observed that Shmuel Joseph Agnon, the Israeli Nobel Laureate novelist and writer (1966), erased the Mediterranean from his prose because it was secondary to the national Zionist narrative. "Usually," writes Hever, "the sea is not an independent entity, but almost always subject to the Land [of Israel]. In the hierarchy, whose peak is the Land of Israel . . . the way into it is not more than a means to achieve the territorial goal."[13] "All roads lead to [Jerusalem]," meaning that Zion is much more important than the sea that leads into it.

Yes, Israeli and Arab scholars share an inherited distrust of the Mediterranean. But there are also opportunities to share and analyze their mutual distrust. The author of this article hopes for such opportunities at the Annual Congresses of the Mediterranean Studies Association.

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## NOTES

This article adapts material from Amikam Nachmani, "A Threatening Sea, a Bridging Sea: Images and Perceptions of the Eastern-Mediterranean—A View from Israel," in *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern-Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security, Re-imagining the Eastern-Mediterranean Series*, ed. Tziarras Zenonas (Nicosia: Peace Research Institute Report (PRIO), PRIO Cyprus Centre (PCC), 2019), 31–52.

1. Kril 2014: 52 (Hebrew; emphases added; all translations from *Haaretz* by the author).
2. Almog 2014 (Hebrew).
3. I am indebted to Dr. Eliezer Papo, Department of Hebrew Literature, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, who drew my attention to this explanation.
4. Balaban 2014 (Hebrew; emphases added).
5. Balaban 2017 (Hebrew; emphases added). Garden City was an urban planning ideology that described communities surrounded by green areas and containing areas of residence, industry, and agriculture. Tel Aviv (established 1909) was built on the sand dunes north of the Arab town of Jaffa. Tel Aviv's first mayor, Meir Dizengoff, commissioned the Scottish planner Patrick Geddes to draw up a plan for a new Garden City that would be called Tel Aviv.
6. Nir 2020, a sea geologist (Hebrew).
7. Kril 2014.
8. Kril 2014.
9. Kesari 1968, reprinted in *Haaretz*, January 25, 2010 (Hebrew; emphasis added).
10. Reprinted in *Haaretz*, March 17, 2010.

11. In Hever 2007: 17 (Hebrew).
12. Zisser 2003.
13. Hever 2007.

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# DISCOVERY, NEW FRONTIERS, AND EXPANSION AT THE MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES CONFERENCES: 1998–2019

*Richard Raspa, Wayne State University*

ABSTRACT: *In this essay, I remember my 20-year history of extraordinary moments in the Mediterranean Studies Association. From the first MSA conference I attended, the theme has always been discovery, new frontiers and expansion. The same theme characterizes the many memorable social interchanges I have enjoyed at the annual meetings. This essay traces my personal odyssey in the MSA. Others will have their own parallel though different experiences.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean, Mediterranean studies, Mediterranean Studies Association, Botkin Prize, Shakespeare*

My coauthor in folklore Elizabeth Mathias invited me to participate in the first Mediterranean Studies Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1998. I trusted her judgment since the book we coauthored, *Italian Folktales in America: The Verbal Art of an Immigrant Woman*, won the Botkin Prize from the American Folklore Society for the best first book in the field of folklore. Moreover, she told me at the conference I would meet her good friend Ben Taggie, organizer of the event. She said Ben was a genius entrepreneur—historian, professor, and academic administrator at the University of Massachusetts. He was creating a new kind of academic conference, one that brought to life current research about the complexities of the Mediterranean world and invited dialogue across disciplinary boundaries. In addition, the conferences would be held at universities and research institutes in stunningly beautiful environments all over the Mediterranean. "Yes," I said. "Yes, I'll be there," and I have been going every year since.

The theme of that first conference, "Discovery, New Frontiers, and Expansion" of Mediterranean states from Antiquity to the present, continues as a leitmotif through all subsequent conferences. As such, it uncovers robust possibilities

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0262
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

for research, learning, and dialogue in every session. The presentations treat the kaleidoscopic societies bordering on the Mediterranean, and their aspirations to explore the world and extend their influence. As well, the subtext applies to participants at the conference, who, in engaging the presentations, may discover new ways of making meaning out of humanities texts and expanding their understanding of how Mediterranean societies negotiate the forms and claims of life.

At that first conference in Lisbon, everybody—panelists and audience—seemed excited to be there. Our panel explored the power of image in Italian culture. Elisabeth Mathias presented a paper on the St. Filomena cult in Naples, Moire Byrne did flagellants, mass domination, and class in Italy, and I presented a paper on body image in the Italian fashion industry. We savored the energy that arises when dialogue flourishes over the exchange of ideas.

After the session, I was paging through the program and came upon a name I recognized: Jose Greco. Could it be the Jose Greco whom *Los Angeles Times* dance critic Lewis Segal praised as "the greatest of all dance stars until the advent of Rudolf Nureyev"? When I entered the conference room, I recognized immediately the great flamenco dancer. He was presenting a paper called "Canciones de Ir y Venir" (Songs of Coming and Going in the Old World and the New). Filling the room with his knowledge of Spanish music, he drew loud applause and question after question. It seemed the audience was discovering a new frontier for expanding their knowledge of Spanish music. After the presentation, I approached the podium to congratulate him on his presentation. He was gracious in his thanks.

Then on a whim I said: "Le persone dicono che non sei realmente italiano, pero spagnolo" (Many people say you're not really Italian but Spanish). He laughed heartily and took my arm: "Yes, it's true. I was born in Molise and grew up in Brooklyn and have never disguised that fact. But many people believe that only a Spaniard could dance the flamenco as I do."

Then I replied: "My family is from Molise." He threw back his head and laughed. "Allora, siamo paesani" (So, we are like brothers or friends from the same town). "Tonight, before I forget," he said, "you must go to hear the best *fado* singer in Lisbon. It's her final performance here. My wife and I went last night. You will be stunned by the beauty and power of her singing." Before we departed, he invited my wife and me to visit him whenever we came to Spain. And we did, the next year, after the 1999 Mediterranean Studies conference in Coimbra, Portugal. We took the train to Madrid, and Jose met us at our hotel, arriving as we were unpacking. He looked around the room and, like an older brother watching out for us, said the hotel was too expensive: "I know a place you can stay that will save you lots of money." So we packed our bags and left. Later, Jose brought us to a restaurant to see blazing flamenco performers. Before the show and after, the

dancers surrounded our table and paid homage to the master of the dance. Jose treated my wife and me as if we were members of his family, making introductions all around, including us in the conversations. It was a moment of enchantment. Because of the magnanimity of Jose Greco, we had crossed the tourist line in Spain and entered a special space where artists shared stories about flamenco.

Each conference has offered the excitement of meeting new people and entering into their creative lives. At the 2001 Congress in Aix-en-Provence, France, we met Guy Mermier, renowned professor of Medieval French and Provençal literature at the University of Michigan, author of influential articles and books in the field, and *chevalier-officier des Palmes Académiques* awarded by the French government. He was also a licensed pilot, and, like my wife, a wine connoisseur. Guy had extraordinary elegance, the quality that Castiglione refers to as *sprezzatura*—the ability to say and do difficult things with ease and grace. We shared evenings dining at his home in Ann Arbor and ours in Detroit talking about great French and Italian wines and discussing literature. Guy was alive to things of beauty and thrilled to share them with those he drew into his life. We were privileged to enjoy that relationship begun at the MSA.

The conferences have been a bounty of new knowledge for me, particularly in the art history panels. In the 2005 Congress in Messina, Sicily, Tina Waldier Bizzaro, Professor of History of Art at Rosemont College and Villanova University, and author of the Cambridge University publication *Romanesque Architectural Criticism*, brought the splendor of the Romanesque style to life in her presentations and in discussions before and after the sessions. Before the conference, some participants including my wife and me were with Tina on a bus passing through Reggio Calabria to take the ferry to the MSA site in Messina, Sicily. Suddenly, Tina rose and approached the bus driver and said in Italian: "Please may we stop here at this great museum, the National Archeological Museum of Magna Grecia?" It has on display the magnificent fifth-century BCE bronze Riace statues of two Greek warriors rescued from the Mediterranean Sea. When the driver resisted and argued that the museum was not an official part of the conference tour, Tina pressed on and charmed the man: "The professors on the bus have come to Italy to experience the wonders of Italian culture and art. If you don't stop, you will deprive them of the experience that will intensify their love for Italy and increase their admiration for Italians as the greatest artists in the world." The driver succumbed, stopped the bus, and, to remind us of his authority, limited our visit to strictly one hour. Inside the exhibition, Tina's spontaneous observations on the bronzes were luminous as she revealed their grandeur.

At that same conference, we met two other art historians, Ben's colleagues at the University of Massachusetts: Liana de Girolami Cheney and Memory Holloway.

Liana's passion for art led her to book a flight during the Messina conference to Malta and back to view two superb Caravaggio paintings in the Oratory of the Cathedral of St. John in Valletta: *Beheading of St. John the Baptist* and *St. Jerome*. Liana has published twenty-five books on art ranging over different genres and time periods. She had a wonderful way of eliciting people's responses to painting and could extend their implications into new horizons of knowledge.

Her colleague Memory Holloway was an ardent lover of Portuguese culture and Picasso's late works. She was especially good at bringing postmodern perspectives to bear upon Picasso's work, inviting the audience to join her in a new way to think about the creative process.

At the 2008 conference in Lüneburg, Germany, we met Marilyn Stokstad, the Judith Harris Murphy Distinguished Professor Emerita of Art History at the University of Kansas. *Time* magazine named her thirty-third of the hundred most read female authors in the American college classroom. Her book *Art History* is in its sixth printing and widely used at universities. After the conference, we were on a post-tour through what had been East Germany, traveling in the smaller of the two rented vans with David Bergeron, Geraldo de Sousa, Marilyn's sister, and Franziska my wife. Everybody was cheerfully looking forward to the tour. David and Geraldo were in the front seats perusing a German-English dictionary. When they tried to pronounce funny-sounding words like *Einfahrt* (entrance), which requires twisting the tongue in uncommon ways, we all burst out laughing. As they continued their attempts at elocution, laughter intensified, bone-grinding giggling that hurt and normally embarrassed people. But we were all rollicking in it, chortling all through the manicured German countryside. When we arrived in Dresden, Marilyn led us to the great museum Menaldegalerie Alte Meister. The laughter subsided only as we moved quickly past great collections of Vermeer, Rubens, Van Dyke, and Durer to get to Raphael's masterpiece, the *Sistine Madonna*. We were made sober in the presence of sublimity, stunned by Raphael's art. Marilyn discussed the layers of meaning the painting had for Catholics and Protestants, and its place in art history. No tour guide or book could have opened to us the profound understanding Marilyn shared. Later we continued the discussion of Raphael at a café, savoring ice cream and six-layer slices of German chocolate cake.

While the art historians extended my interest in the grandeur of art and the Mediterranean, David Bergeron and Geraldo da Sousa—two noted scholars of Shakespeare—rekindled my first love, Shakespeare. Their published books and articles about meanings in the great tragedies and comedies have drawn praise and citations from admiring researchers for the originality of their thinking. Before I joined the Shakespeare panel at the 2005 Conference in Messina, I had been

immersed in interdisciplinary studies at Wayne State University, exploring corporate culture and folklore in modern organizations, like General Motors, AT&T, Aero-jet, Shell Oil Company, and even Sea World. David and Geraldo, in their elegant way, created an ebullient Shakespearean community of practice within the Mediterranean Studies Association. They delight in engaging discussions about the brilliance of Shakespeare's late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century plays, a body of work that one literary historian has said created the modern understanding of "the human." One result of our sessions occurred in 2018 when Geraldo edited a special edition of our essays on Shakespeare and the Mediterranean in *Mediterranean Studies*. I am indebted to Geraldo for enlarging my understanding of tragedy, home, and the sea developed in his presentations at the MSA conferences and fully articulated in his book *At Home in Shakespeare's Tragedies* (2010), which inspired my 2018 publication on *Coriolanus*. As well, I am grateful to David for rich and thick discussions during and after our many sessions together. At the last MSA conference in Crete, David engaged me in a sustained exchange about one of Shakespeare's last plays, *Timon of Athens*. By turning my attention to the foolishness of Timon's prodigality, he widened my understanding of my thesis—the way Aristotle's notion of friendship pertained to the main character's tragedy. David and Geraldo bring a special quality of listening to our panels that encourages innovative thinking: an openness for surprise, I would call it. Even on occasions when we disagree, they show high regard for another's point of view. I continue to learn from their ways of engaging the art of Shakespeare and the Renaissance.

Several years ago, Geraldo and David invited Gaywyn Moore, a talented young researcher, to join our panel. Gaywyn enriches our discussions with her imaginative ways of approaching the plays, including allusions to contemporary expressive forms of culture. So many others have contributed to my understanding of the physical and cultural forces in the Mediterranean, and I regret that I cannot pay homage to them all in this short essay. But I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge those who work directly with Ben in bringing his dream of a Mediterranean Studies Conference to life. First is Ben's wife Louise, who does impeccable work as Associate Director and Conference Coordinator, managing and coordinating all the moving parts of the association, particularly solving breakdowns and unexpected crises. She is a dazzling problem solver, moving with intelligence and speed to handle matters instantly. And she does it with wit and a smile. Her sensitivity to the uniqueness of people makes participants, particularly new ones, feel welcomed, even those participants not presenting a paper, like Phil Parisi, Susan Shapiro's husband. While not occupying any official position

in MSA, Phil had spontaneously arranged a great event in Palermo at the 2016 conference—a visit to the Sicilian puppet theater. The puppets are a folk tradition that traces its origin back to the Middle Ages and dramatizes important characters in Sicilian history, such as Roger and Orlando Furioso. We spent an afternoon at the theater, enjoying the show. Afterward, we were invited backstage to see the puppets close-up and watch master puppeteers explain and demonstrate how they are made to move.

Susan Shapiro is the past editor of the *Mediterranean Studies Association Journal*. She followed the tradition of great editing by former editors Ben Taggie, Rick Clement, and Geraldo de Sousa. Like her predecessors, Susan has a talent for identifying what a paper needs to compel the attention of an informed reader. She brought to her editorship qualities that define a superb organizer as well as a sensitive coach. Recently, she edited my essay for publication in *Mediterranean Studies* on Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, and she guided me through editing with the patience of Job.

Two couples deserve mention: Susan and Saul Rosenstreich and Amikam and Nitza Nachmani. They have been participating in the Mediterranean Studies Association Conferences as long as I have. The four are sensitive and talented human beings. Since the beginning, Suzi Rosenstreich has contributed her prodigious gifts as a scholar of early modern literature, Mediterranean studies, and French and Francophone studies in papers at each conference. As well, she is a talented organizer who sees what needs to be done and produces the result. She has worked behind the scenes with Ben as well as on the Editorial Board of *Mediterranean Studies*. Suzi's husband Saul, a physician as well as an accomplished painter and photographer, can talk knowledgeably about art, medicine, and the art of medicine. Last year in Crete, as we were walking back to our hotel after dinner, Saul stopped, struck by the beauty of the moonlight, and reflected on how he would render that view in a painting or photography. Other times, our discussions range effortlessly into other areas, like the role of the humanities in medical diagnosis, and even the best interventions for constipation while traveling and why.

Amikam and Nitza bring their amazing curiosity into every encounter. Amikam's presentations on the Mediterranean Sea as a paradoxical place of danger and opportunity offer new explanations regarding the conflicts in the Middle East. Nitza's accounts of her adventures organizing traveling excursions for Israelis offer sensitive insights into that culture. My wife Franziska finds our meetings an engaging place to talk about her own fiction writing and even hear how her work is understood through the eyes of a sympathetic audience. We all share an

understanding of what Bakhtin calls the power of dialogue to make life happen. We listen and speak to each other as if there were nothing more important in that moment. We recount the papers we've heard at the conference, or adventures with family, or tell numbskull stories. And we laugh and laugh and laugh. We take joy in Suzi's project of practicing for competition at senior swim meets, or delight in Saul who has completed a challenging wilderness experience, or are happy for Amikam and Nitza who share their pride in their son who has been promoted to Israeli military attaché in Canada. Or they turn their attention to my wife and me and listen as we share our excitement over earning Black Belts in karate.

I am grateful to Ben Taggie for having created the Mediterranean Studies Association that is a welcoming forum for engaging powerful discourse about things that matter. The MSA has become for me a place to meet people of remarkable achievement, be with them, talk with them, be listened to, and even, sometimes, become friends.

**Richard Raspa's** research interests are interdisciplinary and include Shakespeare, folklore, and medical humanities. He has coauthored five books, one of which *Italian Folktales in America: The Verbal Art of an Immigrant Woman* received the Botkin Prize from the American Folklore Society for the best first book in the field of folklore. A Fulbright recipient to Italy and an Ellsworth Fellow, he is also Adjunct Professor in the School of Medicine, where he teaches medical humanities to fourth-year medical students doing rotations. He has twice received the highest teaching award at Wayne State University, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching, in 1987 and 2005.

# BIG TENT MEDITERRANEAN

*Susan O. Shapiro, Utah State University*

ABSTRACT: *A former editor of* Mediterranean Studies *reflects on some of the changes she instituted at the journal.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean Studies Association, Mediterranean studies, Fernand Braudel, oikumene, interdisciplinary*

*Mediterranean Studies*, the official publication of the Mediterranean Studies Association, is the organization's peer-reviewed journal and serves as its public face to the scholarly world. In December 2010 I had the honor of being selected as the incoming editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, a position that I held for the next eight years (2011–2018). The year 2011 was a momentous one for the journal, since *Mediterranean Studies* also switched publishers in that year and changed from a hardcover, book-like format that was published once a year to its current form as a biannual softcover journal with a distinctive design in white, brown, and Mediterranean blue. In light of all these changes—new editor, new publisher, new format and publication schedule—the decision was made to cease publication for a year, to allow these changes to be instituted in a calm, deliberate manner. Thus, *Mediterranean Studies* was not published in 2011, and volume 20, numbers 1 and 2 came out in 2012.

Since *Mediterranean Studies* was already being redesigned, I decided to use this opportunity to make some more substantial modifications to the journal. The first and most important change I initiated was to begin accepting articles from a broader time span. Previously *Mediterranean Studies* had published only articles concerned with the period from late antiquity to the Enlightenment (roughly 500 to 1800 BCE). While this is certainly a long period of time, it conspicuously

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0269
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

excludes the Greek and Roman civilizations, which dominated the Mediterranean in their day, as well as the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, a period of flux that demands to be understood even though we do not yet have the benefit of temporal distance.

The field of Mediterranean studies is often considered to have begun with the work of Fernand Braudel (1902–85), whose works concern the Mediterranean as a distinctive region and whose research focused primarily on the early modern era (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries)[1]. As a result, the field as a whole has tended to revolve around this time period, with forward and backward glances at the periods immediately preceding and following it. And while there is certainly nothing wrong with this focus, scholars in the field of Mediterranean studies sometimes forget that the Greeks and Roman had their own concept of the Mediterranean as an interconnected world—the *oikumene*, or "inhabited world"—from which our word, "ecumenical," is derived.[2] Because so many of our modern concepts (including some of those considered the most innovative) have their roots in the ancient world, it is important to enrich the field of Mediterranean studies with the scholarship of this period, just as it is important to open up the field to emerging future trends.

A second innovation—one that added a great deal to the journal for the short time it existed—was the Mediterranean Forum. This section of the journal was intended to provide a space for shorter, less formal articles on the history, scope, and future direction of Mediterranean studies as an academic discipline. A good example of the kinds of articles featured in this section is the pair of articles by John Watkins (2013 and 2014) on the past, present, and future of Mediterranean studies. In these two articles, Watkins first gives a brief historical overview of the field and then argues that while Mediterranean studies is by definition interdisciplinary, it should not disavow its roots in traditional, academic disciplines: "Regional expertise can ground global theorization in praxis at the same time that globalized perspectives can redeem area studies from academic provincialization" (Watkins 2013: 152).

While the articles in the Mediterranean Forum did contribute to a lively and ongoing debate on the nature of Mediterranean studies, that debate was mainly taking place at events such as the MSA conferences and in the regular articles published in *Mediterranean Studies* and elsewhere; there were few contributions to the Mediterranean Forum itself. When it became clear that there were already plenty of venues for this vital conversation to take place, we decided to phase out the Mediterranean Forum and replace it with a Book Review section, which debuted

in volume 24, issue 1 (2016). The book reviews, which were first suggested at an editorial board meeting, have proved to be a popular and engaging feature of the journal, providing short and entertaining discussions of books from a wide range of fields, including history, philosophy, economics, and literature. The very diversity of the books reviewed in *Mediterranean Studies* reflects the complex nature and expansive scope of the field.

The final change I would like to discuss is also the most fun—the editorial board meetings. As a new editor, I was looking for ways to get the members of the editorial board more involved in the journal, and I also wanted to show my appreciation for their work on behalf of the journal. Thus, the annual lunchtime editorial board meetings (always at a local eatery and sometimes accompanied by vino) were born. Between salads, pastas, and sips of wine, we review the triumphs and mishaps of the journal during the previous year and open the floor for new suggestions. The discussions are always lively and substantive, and often unpredictable. Many of the best new ideas for the journal were first proposed at editorial board meetings, such as book reviews and special issues. The first special issue, "The Mediterranean Voyage," edited by Susan L. Rosenstreich (the current editor of *Mediterranean Studies*), was published in 2015 as volume 23, issue 2. This special issue (which contains articles on such varied topics as early modern Genoese trade, Medieval North African music, and a nineteenth-century Turkish novelist and storyteller) was such a success that it inaugurated a series of special issues, every one of which was first proposed and vetted at an editorial board meeting, including the special issue you are reading right now. But the best part of the editorial board meetings is also the best part of *Mediterranean Studies* and the MSA as a whole: the opportunity to help shape the future of an emerging field and to forge new friendships with like-minded scholars we would never get to meet on our own.

**Susan O. Shapiro** is associate professor of history and classics at Utah State University. A former editor of *Mediterranean Studies*, she has published articles on Catullus, Herodotus, and Greek intellectual history, among other topics.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Harris (2005: 3) and Rosenstreich (2015: 89).
2. For more on the origin and history of this term, see Davies (2019).

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# HOW ALBANIA CHANGED MY LIFE

*John Watkins, University of Minnesota*

ABSTRACT: *The process of intellectual discovery that is so much a part of the MSA conferences continues informally on the post-conference tours. The author focuses on his first MSA post-tour, the 2011 trip through Epiros and Albania. Highlights include dashing up mountainsides with colleagues, unsanctioned explorations of old communist prisons, and Virgilian epiphanies.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean, Mediterranean studies, academic conferences, Albania, the* Aeneid

"You went to Sardinia??? What on earth were you doing in Sardinia?" I never thought that a passing conversation with Barbara Weisberger on a frozen Minnesota afternoon would change my life. But that was the first time I learned that the Mediterranean Studies Conference included the option of a post-conference tour. The next year, I was on the bus.

In later years, I listened to amazing stories about even earlier post-tours: Sardinia, Spain, even Germany. Quaint hotels, stunning scenery, relaxing dips in the Tyrrhenian Sea: what wasn't to love? It all sounded so idyllic. Well, *my* first tour was a little different. It was the spring of 2011, and we were headed to Albania.

The first couple of days were as idyllic as I had imagined. After leaving Corfu, we wound through the mountains of Epiros to Meteora with its ancient monasteries teetering on sandstone buttes. I'd been there before. But I had not been there with one Professor James Gilroy, a man who shared my lifelong determination to see every square inch of the earth's surface. Jim and I had been to the nunnery of San Stephano on our previous trips. So while everyone headed there to take in its garden and its celebrated view of Thessaly, Jim and I headed to the far more remote monastery of Agios Triadas. That's the one James Bond rappels to in *For Your Eyes Only*. "Come on, John, we can do it. We will have enough time." Oh why not? Jim

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0273
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

shot out of the group, raced like a Coloradan bighorn down a deadly little path, crossed the valley floor, and started up an even scarier path. I grabbed my asthma inhaler and followed up behind him. When we arrived, a monk greeted us with a tray of homemade lokum. When we rejoined our group back at the bus, Louise greeted us with folded arms and narrowed eyes: "You almost missed us, and we weren't gonna go up there to find you!"

We stopped for lunch the next day at Ioannina, famous for its frog legs, and settled in for the drive to the Albanian border. But then we couldn't find it. Or rather the driver went to the wrong border, which was closed. Had someone failed to tell the patrol that the Cold War was over???

Three more hours of winding along odd roads just on the Greek side of the border. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Balkan peasants stare at Jonathan Harker in curious but also menacing ways on his route to Dracula's castle. I now know exactly what he felt. Entire villages turned out into the streets and stared at us while we passed. In the meantime, our own people were getting fidgety and hungry. Snacks started passing up and down the aisle of the bus.

When we finally reached an open border, we were told that we had to get out of our Greek bus, gather up all our belongings, and walk across the border on foot. That would have been just fine, except that meant we had to climb up a long hill. So there we were, the stalwart members of the MSA, dragging our luggage up a steep and dusty road. As Ron Surtz put it, "Well, guys, it's time to leave Anatevka!"

For a boomer who grew up in the Cold War, what greater thrill than crossing that border! I remembered learning in grade school that of all the countries behind the Iron Curtain, Albania was the most inaccessible. But there we were, and a half hour later, we were pulling into our hotel in Gjirokastër, a UNESCO World Heritage site famous for the stone-roofed houses that make the city look like a giant nest of turtles. I had stayed in Soviet-era hotels in Russia, so our less-than-lavish accommodations came as no surprise. The Internet didn't work, of course, and brown water poured from the shower, which doubled as the toilet stall.

I braced myself for dinner and recalled a week I had spent in Perm during the Yeltsin years living on mushrooms and vodka. As a newbie who still knew most people by their names and writings rather than by their faces, I was a little nervous about just sitting down and introducing myself. As luck would have it, there was a vacant seat beside David Bergeron and Geraldo de Sousa. I did a double take when I saw David's name tag. His book on James I had been a godsend when I started writing on the seventeenth century, and I was delighted to meet him. Mary Rowan was also there. Dinner was a local specialty: a fried wad of vegetables that rivaled the worse meal my Irish mother every boiled up during Lent. As we

washed it down with a suspiciously sour wine, I realized that I was meeting people who would be my friends and collaborators for decades to come.

The next day we trudged up to see the fortress of Gjirokastër, which had served as a prison during the communist period. Once again, Jim and I misbehaved. We broke off from the group, tiptoed down a grimy corridor past abandoned cells, and discovered a room filled with old statues that had once graced public squares and foyers of government buildings. We admired various versions of the local heroines, Bule Naipi and Persefoni Kokëdhima, two courageous young partisans whom the Nazis executed in 1944. We had already met the "two hanged women of Gjirokastër" the previous evening, when our guide pointed out their statue in the square just across from our hotel. They always appeared in the same unflinching pose, always with the ropes around their neck. The highlight of this tomb of discarded socialist realism was a giant statue of a priest and an Italian officer, the latter cradling an armful of skulls, fleeing before the triumphant figure of Mother Albania. "John! Look at that!!!! What do you think it is?"

Years would pass before I could answer that question, but gradually the pieces came together. Our guide had referred several times to an Albanian writer named Ismail Kadare and had recommended his novel *Chronicle in Stone* as an introduction to modern Albanian history. At the time, I was more interested in Byron's Albania than Kadare's. But one summer, I set out to revise my Mediterranean Literatures and Cultures class syllabus and decided to add something Albanian, mostly because I kept coming back to recollections of those days we had spent winding through the mountains around Gjirokastër and Sarande. So I decided to have a look at Kadare. *Chronicle in Stone* needed a better plot. I liked *The File of H*, but in order to enjoy that one, you need to know something about Homer and quite a bit about Milman Perry, which was asking a lot of my undergraduates. Then I discovered *The General of the Dead Army*, a Gogolesque story about an undistinguished Italian general who goes to Albania in the 1960s to retrieve the bodies of Italian soldiers who had died there during the war. Just the thing for a frozen Minnesota February! It is a brilliant novel that opens up all kinds of interesting questions about Italy, Albania, and the many twists and turns of their intersecting histories. I couldn't put it down the first time I read it, and my students have always loved it.

Best of all, *The General of the Dead Army* answered Jim's question. You see, the general's companion is a priest who served in Albania during the fascist occupation and picked up the language. While the general chauvinistically contrasts Italian heroism and the primitive violence of the Albanians, the priest, who actually knows a lot about the country and the atrocities that Italians committed there,

listens in silence. The general eventually reveals a horrible, disillusioning, truth. The more I read the novel, the more I thought about our creepy statue. Kadare was born in Gjirokastër. Obviously, the statue had something to do with Kadare's novel. I assume it was a tribute to the novel, and to the city's famous literary son. But I also wonder if the statue came first. Its "plot" does not exactly fit Kadare's novel. Was the statue simply a communist commemoration of the expulsion of the Italian army and its religion to boot? Did the young Kadare know it? Did that grotesque image of a priest, a general, and a collection of skulls inspire the novel that has given me and my students so much pleasure?

Magic happens on MSA post-tours. You make new friends, discover new books, and find yourself learning new things about books you've loved and taught for decades. At a rustic restaurant in the most beautiful valley I've ever seen, we saw a goatherd coming down the mountainside with a couple of hundred goats in tow. I thought of Byron. But then the meal! The waiter asked if I would like my lunch grilled or spitted. Thinking this time of Homer, I went for spitted. What followed was something so revolting it defied description. Once again, I survived on stale bread and dried feta. I thought of Panos Kernezis and his descriptions of the food gnawed by Greek soldiers trapped behind the Turkish lines.

After Gjirokastër and Sarande, we headed out to Butrint to see some Roman ruins. This was late in the trip. I was getting tired of scary meals, dodgy Internet, and brushing my teeth with bottled water. Mary Rowan and I soul-bonded over our longing to head back to Corfu the next day. Along the way, the guide pointed to a group of newish villas overlooking the sea. "You will notice that several of them have been exploded. They are all built illegally. If you fail to bribe the local authorities, they blow you up." Mary and I looked at each other.

We parked the bus at Butrint, and I tried to ignore the guide's comments about the river mussels we would have afterward. I focused instead on the Roman harbor town. I knew nothing about it, and I was eager to learn. The ruins of the lower city circled a little hill, with an impressive acropolis on top. We are walking along, half listening to the guide, admiring this bit of column and that bit of cornice, and wondering if those mussels would finish us off. But then I looked up again at the acropolis and it hit me: this isn't "Butrint" at all. This is "Buthrotum!" I'd never heard of Butrint, but I have spent a lifetime coming back again and again to the *Aeneid*, and I knew Buthrotum well, at least as a mythic space. Vergil's description was exact. In the *Aeneid*, the war-weary Trojans end up there and find, to their delight, that some of their countrymen had already arrived and had built a simulacrum of their lost city. I remembered Aeneas's words: "I walk on, and recognize a little Troy, the copied citadel of Pergama, and a dried brook bearing the name of

Xanthus." This marks a crucial moment in the *Aeneid*. Buthrotum tempts the hero with a false destiny, the comfort of just settling down somewhere and comforting yourself with an imitation of the world you have lost. But that project is doomed to failure. You will end up at best with a "little Troy," a dried up stream posing as the mighty Xanthus. As Tony Kushner would put it two millennia later, "the world only spins forward." You have to press on to Rome.

I've traveled a lot over the years, but I have never experienced such a stunning conjunction of the literary past and the traveler's present as I did reliving Aeneas's *anagnorisis*. I, too, felt that I had been there before, but in my case, in the poetry I have loved for forty years. Our guide may have mentioned Buthrotum in the morning, but I wasn't listening. If I had not been brain-fogged by spitted mutton and queasy-making mountain roads, I could have read up on the connection the night before in my guidebook. But I was glad I hadn't. If I had, I could never have had that moment of sudden, epiphanic, identity with Aeneas in his labor of recognition.

Not every post-tour has been as physically, intellectually, and emotionally demanding as the trip to Albania. But each one has come with moments of awe. Breakfast with Suna Guven on a terrace at Enna that overlooks half the island of Sicily; Jim, always misbehaving, snarfing down fresh cherries purchased from a roadside stand above Sarande; the tuna carpaccio in a waterside restaurant in one of Malta's three little cities; the taste of wild thyme and prickly pears on a path in Gozo. I always cherish my classical explorations with Susan Shapiro, the one person who shared my joy the day we toured a garum factory in Andalusia. In 2012, Susan, Phil, and I went over every inch of Diocletian's palace in Split. Later that afternoon, Pam Sezgin set out to find the town's synagogue. I wasn't going to miss that one. But what was even better than the little synagogue was watching a canny anthropologist going about her craft. "You see that bookstore over there? That's a Sephardic name. They may know something." The store was in fact no longer under Jewish management, although they had kept the name. They also knew how to find the synagogue. When we got there, there was a sign basically telling everyone to go away. I'd have done just that, but Pam said, "Hang on. There's a bell." A voice behind the door told us to go away. Right on cue, Pam switched into Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish carried by the exiles from Andalusia across the Mediterranean. It was also the language Pam's grandmother spoke growing up in Istanbul. We were inside a second later, and spent over an hour learning things about the community. A few years later, Pam and I joined Etty Terem to explore Cordova's unforgettable mosque-cathedral, a building I now regularly use to talk about cultural shifts and displacements in the Mediterranean world. As Etty

translated Arabic inscriptions, I found myself agreeing with Charles V's comments to his architects after they turned the mosque into a cathedral: "You took something exquisite and turned it into something ordinary."

Some people think of the post-tour as the dessert that follows a three-day meal of conference sessions, editorial board meetings, and lunches with potential coeditors and collaborators. I never have liked that model. Yes, you get a sense of how other scholars think by listening to their presentations and debating their conclusions in formal settings. But you get an even better sense by scampering over ruins with them or having ever-longer dinners in odd towns in Sicily or on the Dalmatian coast. The conversations that such settings inspire have encouraged us all to think across the boundaries of discipline and national academic traditions. Many a coauthored article or special edition started with a conversation on the long drive from Zara back to Pula, or swaying along a scary mountain road in Epiros. And so have lasting friendships.

**John Watkins** is Distinguished McKnight University Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, where he holds affiliate appointments in History, Medieval Studies, and Italian Studies. With Kay Reyerson and Patricia Lorcin, he cofounded the Minnesota Research Collaborative on the Mediterranean, Middle East, and North Africa. He is the author of several books and numerous articles dealing with problems of historiography; cultural, political, and economic exchanges between premodern England and the Mediterranean; diplomacy; and the classical and medieval underpinnings of modernity: *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* (1995); *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England* (2002); *After Lavinia: A Literary History of Premodern Marriage Diplomacy* (2017); and, with historian Carole Levin, *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds: National and Transnational Identity in the Elizabethan Age* (2009). He has held fellowships from the American Philosophical Society, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. He is the program chair for the Mediterranean Studies Association.

# GOING MEDITERRANEAN: A JOURNEY TO THE MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

*Susan L. Rosenstreich, Dowling College*

ABSTRACT: *Mediterranean studies is often a destination for scholarship, rather than a point of departure. That is the case in this essay. At the outset of her academic career, the author sought a larger field of inquiry than her discipline could accommodate. Undeterred, she turned to curriculum development as a means of expanding disciplinary boundaries. But her interdisciplinary teaching practice isolated her from her departmental colleagues on the one hand, and met with resistance on the other hand from colleagues in other disciplines who resisted designing the shared objectives needed for good interdisciplinary programs. A chance decision to attend the first conference of the Mediterranean Studies Association introduced her to the focused approach to interdisciplinary studies that she had sought in her own work with linguistic and literary studies.*

KEYWORDS: *Mediterranean, Mediterranean studies, Mediterranean Studies Association*

As an American teenager studying at the University of Bordeaux in the 1960s, the only thing I knew about the Mediterranean was its surfing spots. I was not to learn any more about it from Monsieur Loiseau-Lagrange's required master course. Instead, the eminent historian of French jurisprudence spoke without pause and without notes for two hours each week about the nation that had emerged fully formed on the high land where it now stood, an unassailable edifice that housed a civilization of its own. The Mediterranean was not in the story.

France without the Mediterranean was the nation my neighbor Madame had in mind when she included me in her Sunday salons in Bordeaux. At those sessions, the topics of conversation were French politics and French literature, all untouched by the Mediterranean. France without the Mediterranean also ruled over the annual program at the Opéra National de Bordeaux, where one could

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0279
MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES, VOL. 28, NO. 2, 2020

lounge in a velveteen-upholstered chair as pianists and ballet ensembles, opera companies, and touring theater groups performed the classics of French culture. In these moments, Monsieur Loiseau-Lagrange's edifice of France was in a world of its own, far from the Mediterranean.

But during the year, a group of us periodically escaped from Monsieur's lecture hall to discover another France. This France rose up on shifting ground, an assemblage of moving parts with no architect in charge. On bicycles, on overnight trains, on hitchhiking trips, we made our way south to early-morning markets where a person hoping to stretch a *franc* could mix with crowds of *Pieds-Noirs*, newly arrived from their native Algeria, as they wove in and out of open air markets, avoiding claustrophobic lines at neighborhood bakeries. In the bars just kilometers away from the Spanish border, we could eavesdrop on Galician-speaking plasterers who, fortified by their midday *petit rouge*, would broadcast their assessments of French soccer players. We even made it to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where a Basque-speaking guitarist sang to us in a language that had nothing to do with French. This France was unfortified territory.

That summer, we ran out of money in southern Italy. We found a room we could afford in a small village on the Bay of Naples. For entertainment, we documented life along the waterfront, counting the fishing boats hauled into the bay at dawn, the swimmers who splashed into the waves at lunchtime, the ferries transporting local produce to Naples all afternoon long, and in the evening, the bars along the beach that hydrated the community after the heat of the day. Our statistics showed us a village blissfully revolving around itself. But as we know, statistics are statistics.

Three years later and a continent away, I read Fernand Braudel's *Méditerranée dans l'âge de Phillip* II. How far from reality those statistics had led me! The village across the bay from Naples, like all the villages we had hiked and sailed to that summer, was not some independent little enclave allotted its spot in a world defined by the bay. In fact, the fish, the swimming workmen, the tomatoes and zucchini, the jugs of wine of our village were products of other systems interlocking with those of the bay, all of it forming a gigantic world that hung together because its parts cooperated. But the sense of this cooperation was new to me. In the sense the Mediterranean gave the word, cooperation had nothing to do with many parts working toward a mutual goal. Instead, the term signified that these systems were working at the same time in the same space. Only if they worked simultaneously, only if they cooperated in that Mediterranean sense of the word, could they function productively. Here was the Mediterranean that had challenged Monsieur le Professeur's France.

Mediterranean space was a concept tailor-made in those years for those of us teaching in degree programs for foreign languages and literatures. We needed a context for the study of transatlantic colonial and postcolonial literatures, and the concept of a Mediterranean space offered some guidance in this effort. But other disciplines were unhappy with our lax approach to borders and territories. I will not soon forget the experience of speaking on early modern France at a conference on the Mediterranean sponsored by a senior history colleague. My point at the time was that the marine and riverine imagery in works by Rabelais and Montaigne was not just literary fancy. The images were drawn from the authors' direct observations of the world around them. Everywhere they looked, they saw the work of impermanence, the cycles of destruction and reconstruction. For them, nothing—neither borders, nor frontiers, nor territories—could withstand the forces of erosion. This was no reason for despair; it was simply the way of the Mediterranean. And for them, the way of the Mediterranean was how the world worked. As I talked my merry way through this claim, I could see the storm clouds gathering on my colleague's face. When would the weather in the Mediterranean clear for my departmental colleagues and me?

Academic life resembles life in the Mediterranean in that there is never a dull moment, but change is slow to come. In 1998, yet another colleague invited me to attend yet another Mediterranean conference to talk on yet another topic on the early modern period. Here we go again, I thought. How could a conference sponsored by an entity called the Mediterranean Studies Association be any different from the many other Mediterranean conferences I had attended? Yet something felt fundamentally new in this conference. The venue was Lisbon, gateway to the Atlantic, portal to the Mediterranean. Talk about the power of water to challenge boundaries! But who would listen to me? Bravely, I dusted off my notes on Voltaire's 1755 "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne" and mustered arguments from the arts and social sciences one more time to make the case for impermanence and permeability as markers in the early modern discourse of French literature. As I spoke on that rainy day in Lisbon, I stared at the wall in the back of the room, hoping to spare myself the disappointment of surly expressions on the faces of the hard-core disciplinarians I imagined among the listeners. When would I finally be among fellow travelers who would leave their disciplines long enough to see the Mediterranean not as just a place, but as a way of seeing the world?

My paper had been the third of three. When I finished speaking, I looked up, expecting to meet that surly gaze. But this was the Mediterranean Studies Association. From the moment I concluded until the moment we all adjourned to a nearby bar, questions and answers, arguments and counterarguments, hypotheses

and theories flew around the room. I could hardly believe the speed with which we tore down the walls of our disciplines and let the Mediterranean flood the place. If this was an annual conference, I had found my people.

It has now been more than two decades since Lisbon, but each May I repeat the journey that led me to the Mediterranean Studies Association. As I make my way to the conference venue of the year, I relive the transformative experience of the Mediterranean. It begins with the unique color of the water at each port of call. You stare, hoping to capture what is special in the chroma of the place. But the water moves too quickly, and you are pulled along with it. You lose sight of the shoreline, you forget about the horizon. The Mediterranean is all you see. You have come home.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

Savvas Neocleous. Heretics, *Schismatics or Catholics? Latin Attitudes to the Greeks in the Long Twelfth Century*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019. Pp. 291. $111.38. ISBN: 9780888442161.

*Reviewed by Marc Carrier, Université de Sherbrooke*

In his compelling study, Savvas Neocleous aims to reassess and challenge the generally accepted idea that Latin animosity toward the Greeks, stemming from the schism of 1054 and that festered during the Crusades, led to the sack and capture of Constantinople in 1204. The author argues that a thorough analysis of twelfth-century primary sources does not support the belief of a deep-rooted cultural and religious antagonism between Western Christendom and Byzantium, but rather demonstrates that Latin attitudes to the Greeks were quite more nuanced than long-established views propagated in Crusade historiography.

The book's title initially lends itself to confusion, since "Catholics" is a denomination currently reserved for the followers of the Western Roman rite, and not the former Byzantines of the Eastern rite. While the use of this term is obviously intentional for the purposes of the study, the author dispels any anachronism in the preface by specifying that "catholic" and "orthodox" are not capitalized in the text, thus referring to their original meaning derived from the Greek words *katholikos* (universal) and *orthodoxos* (of the right belief). In this way, "catholics" signals the other end of the spectrum as the opposite of "heretics" by questioning whether the Byzantine Greeks might have been considered united with Western Latins in a universal and united faith during the long twelfth century. Neocleous thus ably uses carefully chosen terminology to trigger thought and discussion among readers unfamiliar with the topic of the East-West religious divide between Christians in the Middle Ages.

The book is structured chronologically, in order to measure and assess the evolution of Latin attitudes toward the Greeks during the long twelfth century. The analysis begins in the last quarter of the eleventh century, from the papacy of Gregory VII to the Second Crusade in the mid-twelfth century, and addresses a wide range of authors and different sources, including numerous letters. Of particular interest is the analysis of Bohemond of Tarento's role in the First Crusade and its aftermath, since accounts of his deeds are often reputed to have sparked Latin suspicion and resentment toward the Byzantines (i.e., the anonymous *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* and its alleged impact on Crusade historiography). Neocleous makes the case that accounts negatively depicting the Greeks are often the exception and not the rule, since testimony and passages favorable to them as fellow Christian brothers are just as widespread. With this premise firmly established, the author then examines the period from the Second Crusade to the end of the reign of Manuel Komnenos, before addressing the more contentious last two decades of the twelfth century. While not disputing that language used by some chroniclers toward the Greeks could be inflammatory, Neocleous contends that it is often directed toward individual emperors of this period (as it had been toward Alexios I decades before), and that there was no widespread animosity toward the Greeks, save for limited frustrations surrounding isolated issues or events. While the provocative rhetoric of Odo of Deuil, Godefroy of Langres, and William of Tyre stands out, it was not in line with the opinion of Western Christians at the time. Similarly, the massacre of Latins in Constantinople in 1182 and the ill-fated crusade of Frederick Barbarossa a decade later, while tragic and unfortunate, did not trigger lasting resentment beyond denunciations, threats, and/or limited military retaliation. Finally, the Fourth Crusade was diverted and led to the conquest of Constantinople through a series of mishaps, while later Western chroniclers writing apologetically after the fact and in retrospect, or desperately attempting to justify the outcome the expedition, did not consistently level the accusation that the Greeks were schismatic.

This summary obviously oversimplifies a study that demonstrates considerable research and nuanced examination of a wide range of sources. Through a masterful command and analysis of primary documents, and the use of examples that are both precise and persuasive, the author makes a truly compelling case. Nevertheless, some sections (the first chapter and other areas, for instance) focus principally on primary sources and do not provide much discussion on secondary literature, which is abundant for the First and Fourth Crusades. In the end, one is left feeling that more weight could have been added to the author's demonstration by addressing long-standing historiographical debates on some sensitive issues and

ideas. Also, quotes from primary sources are usually provided in English translation, save for scattered keywords in their original language, when full quotes are preferable, even if in footnotes (as it is done nearer the end of the study).

This being said, the author's general thesis is aptly argued, and I personally cannot refute it since it echoes (in spirit) the PhD dissertation I defended in 2006 at Université Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), and which I later published in 2012: *L'Autre à l'époque des croisades: les Byzantins vus par les chroniqueurs du monde latin (1096–1204)*. While Neocleous's study is distinct, original, and in all ways refreshing in its scope and ambition, neither my PhD thesis nor my book nor my published articles[1] on the topic are cited or referenced in the bibliography—and yet references to other French studies are provided throughout the text. All things considered, the study cannot claim in its description to be "the first to deal exclusively with Latin perceptions of and attitudes toward the Greeks in terms of religion, [and] to revisit and challenge the view that the so-called schism between the Latin and Greek Churches led to the isolation of the Byzantine Empire by the Latin states and eventually to the events of 1204." Not only has the religious (and cultural) perception of Greeks by Latins been addressed before by myself and others, but the impact of the East-West Schism (1054) has already been downplayed by Michel Kaplan, among others, in a number of studies.

Despite these points of information, Savvas Neocleous's study does produce a much-needed reassessment of Greco-Latin relations in the long twelfth century, and his book certainly promises to become the reference on the topic, especially for English-speaking academia.

## NOTE

1. "L'image d'Alexis I$^{er}$ Comnène selon le chroniqueur Albert d'Aix", *Byzantion. Revue internationale d'études byzantines*, 78, 2009, pp. 1–32; "Pour en finir avec les *Gesta Francorum*: une réflexion historiographique sur l'état des rapports entre Grecs et Latins au début du XII$^{e}$ siècle et sur l'apport nouveau d'Albert d'Aix", *Crusades*, 7, 2008, pp. 13–34; "La vision œcuménique d'Ordéric Vital à la veille de la deuxième croisade", *Memini. Travaux et* documents, 11, 2007, pp. 131–150.

Stefan Esders, Yitzhak Hen, Pia Lucas, and Tamar Rotman, eds. *The Merovingian Kingdoms and the Mediterranean World: Revisiting the Sources*. Studies in Early Medieval History. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. Pp. 280. $102.85. ISBN 9781350048386.

*Reviewed by Samuel Cohen, Sonoma State University*

One of the most productive trends in the study of the Merovingians—and indeed of the early medieval period more generally—has been the blurring of boundaries that supposedly divided various post-Roman polities in the fifth and sixth centuries (and beyond). Eschewing the "what happens in Gaul, stays in Gaul" approach, the essays in this volume, which grew out of a collaboration funded by the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (GIF), emphasize the myriad of connections that linked the Merovingian kingdoms chronologically to the Romans before and the Carolingians after and geographically to Spain, Britain, Ostrogothic, Byzantine, and Lombard Italy, North Africa, and the Byzantine Empire. With this methodological approach as its foundation, each of the volume's thirteen essays, divided into four subsections, begins with an extended quotation from a source drawn from a variety of different genres, including historical writing, geographical excurses, letters, *leges*, *ordines*, and chronicles, although for obvious reasons Gregory of Tours makes his presence felt repeatedly. These quotations, some of which appear in English translation for the first time, serve as a jumping-off point for thinking about the methodological, textual, and interpretive issues related to the sources of Merovingian history embedded in its Mediterranean context.

Part I, titled "Setting the Context of the Post Roman World," consists of two papers, by Yitzhak Hen and Helmut Reimitz. Hen's examination of the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, a mid-fourth-century geographic and economic survey of the late Roman Empire and beyond, illuminates the intersection between historical and geographical writing in the early medieval period. While a common feature before the second century CE, short geographic digressions in otherwise historical texts disappeared, according to Hen, until it was revived in the fifth-century West. Reimitz's contribution compares Gregory of Tour's account of the Council of Mâcon in 585 with the surviving canons of the synod. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Reimitz detects a stark difference in emphases. Where as the bishops, leaning on Roman and canon law, attempted to define "the clergy as a separate social order with bishops at the top of this new hierarchy," Gregory, in contrast, sought to minimize Roman legal precedent in order to promote "a Christian vision of community for the post-Roman Merovingian kingdom," which was rooted the canons and the *lex Dei* (24).

Part II, "Mediterranean Ties and Merovingian Diplomacy," contains four essays that examine, as the title suggests, the diplomatic connections linking post-Roman Gaul to the wider Mediterranean world. In chapter 3, Anna Gehler-Rachůnek considers the diplomatic connections between the Frankish world, the Visigothic kingdom, and the Byzantine Empire, through the lens of marriage

negotiations, situating the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism under Reccared within this larger context. In a useful complement to Gehler-Rachůnek's essay, Hope Willard's stimulating contribution investigates *amicitia* and diplomacy in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours. In one of the strongest chapters in the book, Willard demonstrates how *amicitia*—a word, that tends to evoke only positive connotations for modern readers—was understood much more ambivalently by Gregory, who applied the term to a range of often instrumental relationships. Personal friendship, according to Gregory, was often a veneer obscuring ambition and manipulation. And when he uses it to describe relationships between political communities, *amicitia* appears as a tool used by rulers, especially those in weak positions, to bolster their positions with more powerful men. Part II concludes with chapters by Bruno Dumézil and Yaniv Fox, both of which investigate the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, a letter collection that Dumézil argues was compiled at the initiative of Magneric, bishop of Trier, by one of his followers in the late sixth century. Fox's chapter takes up the diplomatic rhetoric in the communication between Emperor Maurice and Childerbert II, preserved among the *Epistolae Austrasicae*.

The four chapters composing part III examine the sources for law and religion. Lukas Bothe's amusingly named *Mediterranean Homesick Blues* describes how barbarian *leges* appropriated Roman law in order to protect the interests of slaveholders, especially in frontier regions, from the danger of a shrinking labor (and military) force that resulted from the "illegal" seizure and sale of men and women and their sale beyond the frontiers. This chapter also reminds us that our understanding of Merovingian slavery must both be situated in the wider context of Mediterranean trade, but also in its Roman legal precedents. In the following chapter, Till Stüber takes up the vexing topic of the Three Chapters Controversy and its reception in Gaul. Highlighting the intersection between theological dispute and political expediency, Stüber argues that "theological and church-related knowledge was more likely to be transmitted if it aligned with the political aims of the respective rulers" (102). This is amply illustrated by the imperfect understanding of the controversy among the Gallic bishops who attended the Council Orléans in 549 CE. Part III ends with contributions from Rob Meens and Tamar Rotman. Meens discusses the eighth-century Gellone Sacramentary's *ordo* for purifying and rededicating a defiled altar, while Rotman considers Gregory of Tours's encounter with the Lombard ascetic Vulfilaic, who lived on top of a pillar in imitation of famous fifth-century eastern stylites like Simeon.

The final section, "Shifting Perspectives: Emperors, Tributes and Propaganda," contains three essays, two of which consider Frankish depictions of Byzantine rulers.

Pia Lucas's chapter examines Gregory of Tours's superficial "cardboard-character" portrayal of Emperor Tiberius II (574/8–582). Lucas argues that Tiberius is mobilized as a foil by Gregory against which other Byzantine—but more importantly, other Merovingian—rulers could be compared and, in the case of Chilperic I, unfavorably contrasted. Of course, this was a rhetorical device; but as Lucas shows, Gregory's use of this device demonstrates that he knew quite a bit about the Byzantine world. In a similar vein, Stefan Esders discusses the depiction of Heraclius and Constans II in the *Chronicle* of Fredegar. As was the case with Gregory, the author of the *Chronicle* was well informed about affairs in the east. The volume concludes with an excellent short chapter by Federico Montinaro, which examines chronological discrepancies and later updates to the Byzantine *Chronicle* of Theophanes the Confessor (d. 817/818) in order to demonstrate its dependence on Frankish sources. Montinaro's conclusions parallel those of Lucas and Esders, and all three essays nicely illustrate the interconnectivity between the Merovingian and Byzantine worlds.

Taken together, the volume's essays raise interesting questions regarding how we think about the sources of early medieval history. For instance, the renewed emphasis on geography in history writing during a period of political and social dislocation, as Hen's contribution argues, can be understood as a novel way to integrate barbarians into the Roman understanding of the world. Gregory of Tours is not *merely* a historian, but as Reimitz, Gehler-Rachůnek, Willard, Rotman, and Lucas demonstrate, in different ways, he was both an author of histories and an actor in them, a man deeply embedded in the society he described—even if his descriptions cannot be taken at face value—and an author who shaped and reshaped the past in order to serve his own purposes. Chronicles are much more than a repository of historical information; as Esders and Montinaro argue, they could also be polemical documents and, more importantly, provide insight into the Mediterranean-wide world perspective of their authors, hinting at networks of knowledge linking east and west. Letter collections too are more than the sum of their parts. Dumézil, Fox, and Stüber highlight the importance of rhetoric in letters and demonstrate the intentionality of the collections, which, compiled as they were for specific purposes and intended to convey a particular perspective, are worthy of study *as* collections. Roman law, as Bothe's contribution demonstrates, was reinterpreted and repurposed for new contexts and reminds us of the centrality of slavery and the slave trade to the early medieval Mediterranean economy and beyond. Finally, Meen's fascinating examination of the *ordo* for rededicating altars illustrates how liturgy, an often-neglected area of historical research, can shed light on evolving ideas of sacrality and sacred space, pollution, and ritual.

As readers of this journal well know, the Mediterranean, both as a subject area and as a framework for understanding premodern history, has grown in popularity and importance in recent decades. The contributions in the volume demonstrate why this approach can be so interpretively fruitful, particularly by undermining geographically essentialist interpretations of the early Middle Ages. In the words of Lucas and Rotman, the Merovingian kingdoms were "deeply rooted in the Mediterranean politics and culture: understanding the inner workings of the Merovingian kingdoms means that we cannot sever them from these links" (3). Importantly, the editors and the authors do not conceive the Mediterranean in merely geographic terms. As Willard notes, when scholars fail to consider the continuities in diplomatic language that link the Merovingians with their late Roman antecedents, they artificially "disconnect early medieval diplomacy from its late antique precedents leaving a gap in our understanding of how medieval writers responded to these precedents" (42). Her observation could be taken as programmatic for the book as a whole.

The volume itself is well produced. One minor annoyance is the insistence of publishers that books pitched at an academic audience employ endnotes rather than footnotes, which makes following up citations needlessly tedious. But the biggest shortcoming of the volume is that each contribution is quite short—often too short to fully address the important issues they raise. With thirteen chapters, each averaging around twelve to thirteen pages in length, the essays are often underdeveloped. This is particularly noticeable in the introduction and conclusion, both of which could have done more to place the volume and its approach within the field of Merovingian history and to situate the individual contributions more firmly in relationship with one another. To take one example: questions of trade and exchange, and specifically the analyses of Henri Pirenne and Michael McCormick, are addressed explicitly in several essays and implicitly in several more. It would have been useful if this strand had been teased out more than it is. On the other hand, by including so many different contributions, the editors have exposed the reader to a range of topics and introduced (at least to me) new voices alongside more established scholars. This is to be applauded. Indeed, this is perhaps the book's greatest strength, and the chapters by graduate students and early-career scholars are some of its strongest.

Miguel Gómez, Kyle C. Lincoln, and Damien Smith, eds. *King Alfonso VIII of Castile: Government, Family and War*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. Pp. x, 251. $55.00. ISBN: 9780823284146.

*Reviewed by Donald J. Kagay, University of Dallas*

A basic symbol of medieval Castile was the reconquest knight who spent his life in warfare against Iberia's Muslim population. By the thirteenth century, kings assumed this profession, repeatedly leading armies against Muslim territory. One of the most interesting of these leaders was Alfonso VIII of Castile and León (r. 1158–1215), who stands as one of Castile's great sovereigns.

This collection of articles by American and Spanish scholars reflects the strong links of Iberianists on both sides of the Atlantic. The eleven contributions focus on one of the great figures of the reconquest and his long reign that marked the beginning of the end of Muslim power on the Peninsula. The result is a multifaceted, well-written, and well-edited contribution to the study of Castile's ascendance over both Christian and Muslim Spain.

After a basic discussion of Alfonso's importance as a warrior, lawmaker, political leader, diplomat, and patriarch, Teofilo Ruiz briefly reviews the aims and accomplishments of this collection. On the surface, there seems little to link these studies except for the core provided by through the life, accomplishments, and even failures of Alfonso VIII himself. To more easily engage in the description of these works, I divide my discussion of them into three groups: kingship, royal propaganda, and the royal family, warfare, and the relations of Alfonso's reign with political, religious, and even cultural leaders.

With Alfonso's significance for other Castilian kings of the thirteenth century, such as Fernando III (r. 1217–52) and Alfonso X (r. 1252–82), royal status and its advancement though his family is thoroughly studied in this collection. Joseph O'Callaghan discusses Alfonso's royal image as it is presented through the preambles of his various types of letters. Like his predecessors, Alfonso described himself as the "king of Spain" who fulfilled his office through the defense of his people, realm, and the Church. These documents never forgot the king's principal opponents, the Muslims, who attacked the "Cross of Christ" and thus had to be defeated. James Todesca explores a significant line of royal propaganda connected with the issuance of gold and silver *denarius* as well as a gold *morabitino Alfonsino*. This second type of money was an extremely well-received coinage across the Mediterranean and, as such, reinforced the perceived importance of the king's reign.

Alonso's deep concern for his family is addressed by several of the collection's papers. Miriam Shadis discusses the strong family to emerge from the king's marriage to the English princess, Leonor. While this match produced the strong yet tragic Prince Fernando, his death in 1212 left the royal couple's daughters Berenguela and Blanca to carry Casilian influence into Leonese and Navarrese marriages. This surfeit of strong Castilian women underpins Janna Bianchini's

study of the *Infantazgo*, the means by which such princesses were supported through the revenues of fortresses and other properties. While this practice had markedly decreased during Alfonso VIII's reign, Berenguela's husband, Alfonso IX of León, extended his control over this funding so fully that the queen bitterly opposed his actions even after their marriage was annulled.

Not surprising, given Alfonso VIII's military record, some of the collection's articles focus on warfare. Carlos de Ayala Martínez follows the king's crusading policy through the various phases of his reign. As a child under an aristocratic regency, Alfonso witnessed repeated campaigns against Almohad outposts that were reinforced by constant papal pressure for war against Spanish Islan. With his shameful defeat at Alarcos, Alfonso pulled away from holy war until 1212, when the influence of Archbishop Rada aided in his drive toward the great victory at Las Navas. As discussed by Sam Zeno Conedera, this triumph was largely due to the king's constant royal support of the Iberian military orders, which provided his armies with first-rate professional troops. The greatest military achievement of the Castilian king took place in the summer of 1212 with the stunning victory of Las Navas de Tolosa. Miguel Gómez, following the largely firsthand account of Archbishop Rada and those of other Castilian chroniclers, leads the reader from Alfonso's cautious attitude toward the Almohads after Alarcos to the king's growing belligerence against Islam after 1210, an attitude strongly influenced by his son, Fernando, and the archbishop. Gómez then provides a detailed discussion of how the battle proceeded.

The last essays on Alfonso's world focus on his relations with foreign, secular, religious, and cultural leaders. Damian Smith expertly reviews the king's checkered relationship with late eleventh- and early twelfth-century popes. These disagreements largely centered on the king's attitude to war with Islam as the papacy defined it. Martín Alvira Cabrer explores Alfonso's friendship with Pedro II of Aragon (1196–1213), long a favorite of the papacy until his death at Miret (1213) fighting with the defenders of southern France. This friendship, no matter how defined, did lead both sovereigns in 1212 to test their martial fates when they stood together at Las Navas.

The last articles of this collection center on Alfonso's most stalwart supporters and hated enemies. Kyle Lincoln studies the Castilian episcopate throughout the king's reign by assessing the social origins from which these prelates originated and their qualifications for service as bishops. Most were native Castilians, but others, like Archbishop Rada, hailed from other Iberian realms. Though a few were from great families, most hailed from "middling" clans and gained their training in cathedral chapters. Thomas Burman astutely shows how Christian writers

during Alfonso's era used Almohad theological treatises to more skillfully oppose the message of Islam. The "summary of doctrine" (*kal ā m*) had long been used by Almohad theologians to argue against Christianity, but Spanish Christians successfully adopted this method against their Muslim enemies. Like so much else in medieval Spain, then, even apologetics demonstrated the marks of opponents who fought bitterly for the last word.

This collection, a melding of Spanish and American research, is one of the finest gatherings of articles on one of medieval Castile's greatest rulers. The authors and editors are to be congratulated for the thoroughly professional product they have brought to both general and academic readers.

Daniela Saresella. *Catholics and Communists in Twentieth-Century Italy: Between Conflict and Dialogue*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. 272. £76.50. ISBN: 9781350061422.

*Reviewed by Selcen Öner, Bahcesehir University*

Daniela Saresella, professor of contemporary history at the University of Milan, published this work in 2020. The author provides a rich review of the literature on the historical evolution of collaboration and conflicts between Catholics and the Italian left in the twentieth century. Moreover, while many scholars have studied twentieth-century Italian history, most have written in Italian, whereas this study is in English.

The author argues that, from the late nineteenth century, voices in the Italian Catholic world sought a dialogue with the leftist world. The case of Italy is significant because of the crucial influence of religion on Italian culture and politics.

Focusing on the relationship between Catholics and communists in Italy, the author analyzes the role of religion in Italian politics, particularly critical moments in relations between the Catholic world and the Italian left in the twentieth century. She covers the Catholic communist movement in Rome (1937–45) and the collaboration between the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) until 1947. She also explains the dialogue between various key figures from both sides during the Cold War. Saresella touches briefly on the legacy of these interactions for Italy in the twenty-first century, although this legacy part and its influence on contemporary Italian politics could have been explained more extensively. Nevertheless, the book makes an insightful contribution to the literature on Italian history and twentieth-century Italian politics.

The Catholic-communist experience (1937–45) in Italy developed within an intellectual environment as Catholic communists tried to discover new cultural horizons. The author emphasizes that Marxists and Christians were able to unite on the basis of shared interests in human dignity and social justice. She argues that Italy's strong Catholic presence and social tradition and its deeply rooted communist intellectual circles provided a suitable atmosphere for exchanging theoretical views.

Some Catholic figures believed that they had to engage with the left because both cultures focused on solving the problems of the poor. They thought that the Church should return to the principles of early Christianity by abandoning its hierarchical character. During the 1970s, the secretary of the PCI engaged in dialogue with moderate Catholic groups, while moderate Catholics favored political collaboration with the left, given their common fascist threat.

In the post–Cold War era, the DC and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), having governed for decades, were overwhelmed by corruption investigations. Meanwhile, the long-standing relationship between Catholics and Marxists ended. During the 1990s, despite ongoing secularization, the Church reconfirmed itself as a reference point for Italian society. A growing uniformity reduced pluralism in both Catholic institutions and the press while the Vatican aimed to "re-Catholicize" modern society.

Nevertheless, the Vatican took a position different from that of Berlusconi's government by criticizing the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003. The pope's objective was to avoid the so-called "clash of civilizations," protect Christian minorities living in Islamic regions, and bring political debate back to international forums.

Following the 2001 elections, Berlusconi became head of a coalition government while the center left's defeat made it necessary to find a new leader. Romano Prodi was chosen due to his recognition as president of the European Commission. He was one of the founders of the Democratic Party (PD), a new political group bringing together members of the left and progressive Catholics.

After John Paul II died in 2005, his successor as pope, Ratzinger, continually complained about the modern world and its culture while focusing on moral issues rather than social problems. After he resigned, Jorge Mario Bergoglio from Argentina was named pope on March 13, 2013. In contrast to his predecessors, Bergoglio had experienced life in Argentina's *favelas* as the son of Italian immigrants. For his first domestic trip outside Rome, he chose Lampedusa, one of the main arrival points for many North African immigrants. He has become known as the pope of the left.

The book's first chapter provides historical background on relations between Christianity and socialism in Italy. The break between conservative and democratic Catholicism coincided with the French Revolution as democratic Catholics concentrated on rediscovering the experiences of the first Christian communities.

It was feared that Marxism would erode Christian sentiments in Western culture. Engels, who had a religious education, dealt with the question of religion differently from Marx. He showed interest in the original Christian Church and emphasized the common ground shared by early Christian experience and modern workers' movements. Marx, however, mainly considered religion as a tool of the ruling class for controlling the lower social classes.

When Italy was constituted as a national state in 1861, it incorporated the Vatican state. Compared to other European countries, Italy's slow economic development meant that contact between the Catholic and socialist worlds began relatively late. From the end of nineteenth century, Italian Catholics had to deal with socialism, which led to their collaboration in certain periods.

The turning point occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1898, when the population of Milan strongly supported demonstrations protesting food shortages, part of the Catholic world started to realize the influence of the rise of socialism in Italy.

The relationship between Catholics and socialists emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century with the start of industrialization. While Italy is a Catholic country, it has a deeply rooted Socialist Party as well. The Italian left has always shown an interest in the Catholic world. Since the foundation of the PSI in 1892, important party members have taken an open attitude toward the Catholic world, primarily because Vatican City state lies within Italy's national territory but also because of the strong religious tradition of Italians. The PSI was rooted in the countryside, and the rural people were strongly influenced by Catholicism. Economic and social changes in Italy encouraged some Catholics to start a dialogue with the socialist world. They thought that the programs of democratic Catholics and socialists had many things in common, especially their intention of improving the conditions of the lower social classes. According to the author, the contradictions of capitalism opened up the possibility of an alliance of Catholics and socialists.

The second chapter focuses on Catholic anti-Fascists and their relations with the left. The Italian People's Party (PPI) was determined to differentiate itself from both socialists and liberals by claiming that its political project was based on Christian principles. This heterogeneous party split on October 31, 1922, over whether or not to support Mussolini. Despite opposition by the majority of the party, many members decided to back the fascist regime.

During the Mussolini era, antifascism found roots in even the most official areas of the Catholic world. However, during this time, contacts between Catholics and the left were marginalized. The PCI was the most organized force in the fight against fascism.

Antonio Gramsci emerged as a left-wing intellectual who engaged in dialogue with the Catholic world. He began as a member of the Socialist Party before cofounding the Communist Party in 1921. He was the first Italian thinker, after the Marxist philosopher Antonio Labriola, to deal with the religious question, influenced by his reading of Engels. In his *Prison Notebooks* he argued that it was crucial to understand the history of the Church when considering why fascism had defeated democratic forces in Italy. He argued that the vision of the Catholic world had to be taken into account for Italy's "intellectual and moral reform."

The third chapter focuses on the Catholic communist movement during the fascist regime (1937–45), including a new openness to center-left governments. The chapter discusses relations between the Holy See and the fascist regime as well as relations and collaboration between the PPI and the left to fight against fascism. The Movement of Communist Catholics' manifesto announced the necessity for a new social order based on control over the means of production, the abolition of class, and the foundation of a society that included neither exploiters nor exploited. The 1950s were characterized by an atmosphere of anticommunism that was emphasized in the Catholic world, imposed by the Holy Office decree of July 1, 1949.

In the fourth chapter, the author argues that room for dialogue remained in some Italian Catholic circles during the 1960s. The Second Vatican Council led to numerous demands for change. Many Catholics decided to be more open to the realities of the contemporary world, to confront the problems of poverty and underdevelopment. Meanwhile, a new openness in the Marxist world also led to discussions between Marxists and Christians, usually through journals. However, this opening up to the left by many Catholics provoked a strong reaction within the Church under Paul VI.

The fifth chapter focuses on the 1970s. In 1970, the Italian parliament voted on the law on divorce, an issue that had been part of Italy's history since unification. The new law, which reflected a new climate in Italian society influenced by the student movement, passed due to a majority of secular and left-wing parties. The law on abortion, which was harshly condemned by the Vatican, was introduced in 1978. A referendum was held in 1981 after calls to limit the right to abortion. However, 68 percent of the votes were against this limitation.

The sixth chapter focuses on the late 1970s and 1980s. Collaboration between Catholics and the left had halted, partly because of Pope John Paul II, chosen in 1978. During the 1980s, society became increasingly more secularized. For example, the obligation for schools to teach Catholicism was abolished, as was direct economic support of Catholic priests, who had been paid completely at the state's expense since 1929. The way that different popes engaged and cooperated with the left also affected these developments. In particular, John Paul II harshly criticized Marxist ideas. Instead, he favored a new Catholicism, reintroducing the values of Catholic traditions and curbing secularization.

Italy's 1992 parliamentary elections were an important turning point as voters chose their own party without considering the communist "other" for the first time in Republican history. Meanwhile, the Milan Public Prosecutor's Office began the Clean Hands anticorruption investigation the same year. The whole Italian political system found itself under investigation. The PSI and the DC, which had been dominant political actors in Italy for decades, were the parties most involved. Silvio Berlusconi, a construction entrepreneur and TV magnate, had gained great economic and media power. He launched the Forza Italia movement in 1993 before entering politics himself in 1994.

Despite ongoing secularization, the Church reconfirmed its function as a reference point for Italian society during the 1990s. Growing uniformity reduced space for pluralism in both the media and Catholic institutions.

In the conclusion, Saresella emphasizes that Italian Catholicism is multifaceted, including various ideas relating to social issues. It has therefore engaged in dialogue, first with the Socialist Party, then the Communist Party after 1921, then during the 1970s the radical left, which acknowledged religion's crucial role in Italian society. In the twenty-first century, however, no political parties have officially claimed inspiration either from religious principles or from Marxist ideology.

The conclusion is unfortunately somewhat relatively short for such a detailed book. In particular, it fails to discuss even briefly how this legacy of engagement and cooperation between the leftist and Catholic worlds may influence the twenty-first century. Further research topics and possible new questions are not suggested either. Throughout the book, although the rich literature review gives us detailed information about this period of Italian political history, presents multiple Catholic and communist voices from Italy, and analyzes in depth how they communicate and interact, the author's own voice, comments, and analysis are rarely heard.

Overall, this book shows us in detail the heterogeneity within the Catholic world and the leftist politics in Italy. Some of these multiple voices are more

open to dialogue and collaboration with each other. During the twentieth century, despite tensions, various groups and figures from the Catholic world and the political left collaborated with each other, especially for common goals such as improving the socioeconomic conditions of the lower classes of society. The wide socioeconomic gaps within Italian society and particularly the gap between the north and the south are still crucial. With the effect of rising problems after the economic and migration crises, there has been a rise of populism and the radical right in Italian politics, which manifested itself especially with the rising influence of *Lega* in recent years.

The debates within the Catholic world also include how to define European identity. While some are in favor of a more plural and inclusive Europe, others are more exclusive and less open to collaborate with different actors. These ongoing debates within the Catholic world about which perspective will dominate will also influence the future of European identity, while reactions from left- and right-wing politics may influence this process as well. As a result, according to this reviewer, the book provides a crucial contribution to the literature that can help researchers, experts, scholars, and students better understand modern Italian history, politics, and culture and the role of religion in Italy.

# LOCATIONS OF ANNUAL MSA CONGRESSES

The Mediterranean Studies Association is a forum for scholarship on the Mediterranean region and its influence. The locations selected for the Annual Congress reflect this interdisciplinary understanding of Mediterranean studies.

1998: May 27–30, Luso-American Development Foundation and the Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, Portugal

1999: May 26–29, University of Coimbra, Portugal

2000: May 24–27, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

2001: May 23–26, Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, Aix-en-Provence, France

2002: May 29–June 1, University of Granada, Spain

2003: May 28–31, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

2004: May 26–29, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

2005: May 25–28, Università degli Studi di Messina, Messina, Sicily, Italy

2006: May 24–27, University of Genoa, Italy

2007: May 30–June 2, University of Évora, Portugal

2008: May 28–31, Leuphana Universität, Lüneburg, Germany

2009: May 27–30, University of Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy

2010: May 26–29, University of Salamanca, Spain

2011: May 25–28, Ionian University, Corfu, Greece

2012: May 30–June 2, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Pula, Croatia

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0298
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2013: May 29–June 1, University of the Azores, Angra do Heroismo, Terceira, Azores, Portugal

2014: May 28–31, Universidad de Màlaga, Malaga, Spain

2015: May 27–30, School of Theology, University of Athens, Athens, Greece

2016: May 25–28, Università degli Studi di Palermo, University of Palermo, Palermo, Sicily

2017: May 31–June 3, University of Malta, Valletta, Malta

2018: May 30–June 2, Sant'Anna Institute–Sorrento Lingue, Sorrento, Italy

2019: May 29–June 1, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece

2020: May 27–30, University of Gibraltar, Gibraltar

2021: May 26–29, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

2022: May 25–28, Masaryk, University, Brno, Czech Republic

# BRIEF ITINERARIES OF MSA POST-TOURS

Local guides accompany MSA post-tour participants. Tour participants with knowledge of some aspect or other of a destination frequently offer spontaneous presentations and mini-tours. All post-tours with itineraries and pictures can be viewed at www.mediterraneanstudies.org through the conferences link.

**2003: Prague**

Brno, Vienna, Budapest

**2004: Southern France**

Carcasonne, Queribus, Peyrepertuse (visiting castles and historical sights), Albi, Andorra, Montserrat, Barcelona

**2005: Sicily**

Enna-Erice-Segesta, Agrigento, Monreale, Cefalu

**2006: Liguria and Tuscany**

Genoa, Camogli, San Fruttuoso, Portofino, Castell'Arquato, San Giminiano, Sienna, Montalicino and Pienza, Abbey of San Galgano, Pisa, Lerici, Portovenere, Riomaggiore, Manarola

**2007: Northern Portugal and Galicia**

Evora, Tomar, Batalha, Guimães, Santiago de Campostela, Coimbra, Braga, Conimbriga, Alcobaca, Obidos, Sintra, Lisbon

**2008: Eastern Germany**

Lüneburg, Goslar, Leipzig, Weimar, Dresden, Potsdam, Berlin

**2009: Sardinia and Corsica**

Cagliari, Sant'Antioco, Orroli Nuraghe, Bosa, Alghero, Corsica, Bonifacio

DOI: 10.5325/mediterraneanstu.28.2.0300
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**2011: Albania and Greece**

Corfu, Saranda, Butrint, Meteora, Gjirokaster

**2012: Dalmatian Coast**

Pula, Split, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Montenegro, Zadar

**2013: Tour of the Azores**

Angra do Heroísmo Terceira, São Miguel, Ponta Delgada, Faial, Pico

**2014: Marbella and Spain**

Marbella, Cordoba, Sevilla, Los Pueblos Blancos, Ronda, Jerez de la Fontera

**2015: Athens**

Nafplio, Corinth, Olympia, Delphi

**2016: Sicily**

Monreale, Cefalu, Agrigento, Taormina, Enna, Siracusa

**2017: Malta**

Ħagar Qim, Tarxien, Marsaxlokk, Dwejra, Ta Pinn Sanctuary, Victoria, Ġgantija, Three Cities, Mdina Rabat

**2018: Campania, Italy**

Sorrento, Paestum, Herculaneum, Naples, Caserta Palace and Capodimonte

**2019: Crete**

Aptera Monastery, Chania, Phaistos, Knossos, Psychro Cave, Kourtaliotiko Gorge, Argyroupolis Waterfalls, Heraklion

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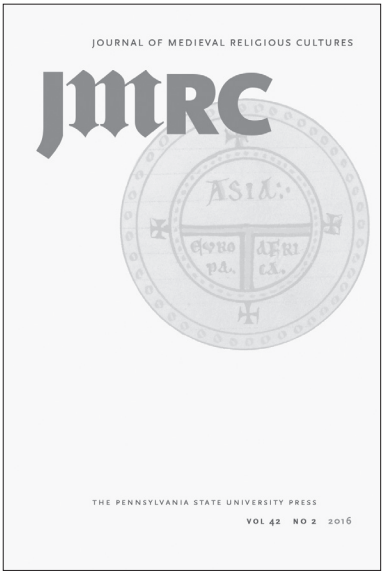


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ISSN 1947-6566 | E-ISSN 2153-9650
Biannual | Available in print or online

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
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