

This edited book charts the representations of identities of different kinds (religious, racial, cultural) through visual and written expressions in the context of a plural *renovatio imperii*. In the Mediterranean, the universalism of the empire leaves place for a pluralism of empires that clash in their pursuit for hegemony.

Maps and poems, theatrical plays and diplomatic correspondence, pamphlets and academic essays are analysed with different methodologies from scholars specializing in historical, religious, cultural and comparative literary studies. The papers are aligned along two guidelines, dividing the books into two parts. In the first one, Mediterranean powers are caught in confronting themselves on the rhetoric of the empire and in contact zones favourable both to the clash and to the encounter. Spaniards, Italians, Austrians and Ottomans are analysed in their attempt to establish themselves as the heirs of Rome, legitimizing through the connection with the past their struggle for power. In the second part, English writers are dealing with the Mediterranean, as concept and new space of action. In becoming England a peculiar 'Mediterranean' case study, the contributors stress how the 'Mediterranean turn' has profoundly change the field. The re-orientation of the studies of early modern England in this sense allows them to explore with different eyes the history of a country that entered in the Mediterranean very late, but held political and colonial influence there until recently.

The volume opens by the essay of Ania Loomba that makes several considerations on the category of the Mediterranean, criticising the revisions of recent scholarship influenced by Braudel. According to Loomba, the *long durée* joined with the world-system theory, have obscured the cultural specificities of the area, so we need to scale down the apparently unlimited capacity of the Mediterranean as a container of whatever cultural expression. The author's mention of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to support her reflections is perhaps inserted somewhat abruptly, making it difficult to follow Loomba's discourse for a readership that is not familiar with her work.

The action of re-writing and re-drawing imperial claims and projections is analysed in the following essays. Palmira Brummet and Larry Silver focus their enquires on the visual mapping of the Ottoman-Hapsburg rivalry. In Brummet, maps are seen as a tool for projecting power over real or imagined frontiers. Drawing lines for delimiting possessions

represents an attempt to fix the division between the self and the other, a division that was not at all granted, especially along borders where contact with 'enemies' provided a high degree of familiarity with them. Additionally, Silver considers maps together with other forms of representations of the Ottomans. The cases analysed show the variegated opportunities offered by Ottoman otherness when transposed to European images. The powerful enemy is also represented with ethnographical attention to the peculiarity of his culture and costumes.

On representation of Ottoman costumes and empire, Carina L. Johnson explores the theme of Ottoman transmission of imperial power in European texts. The bloody practices of succession in the house of Osman are used to prove Ottomans barbarity, while the Spanish use of the rhetoric of Defender of the Faith in an all Christian clash is the subject of Andrew Devereux essay, where Ferdinand of Aragon opposes Charles VIII of France in the invasion of Naples (1495) using the theme of holy war.

Elizabeth R. Wriarth's paper on the *Austrias Carmen* by Juan Latino, a *granadigno* scholar of African origins, shows how the celebration of the Battle of Lepanto (1571) also expresses sensibility for the enemies' disgraces, while echoing the suffering of the Moriscos of Granada in the campaign launched by the Spanish government for eliminating them. The last essay of the section is centred on the academic discussion of the Palatine Academy of Naples. In the turn of the extinction of the Habsburgs dynasty in Spain, the debates on the nature of imperial power provided a coherent guideline in the in the uncertain policy of the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The second part of the volume opens by the use of the Mediterranean conceptual space by English playwrights. Jane Hwang Degenhardt's essay on theatrical reunions in the Mediterranean and meta-theatrical devices highlight a use of a miraculous and mythical Mediterranean for English concerns, where the imperial theme is reduced to a very thin trace in which the author frames her discourse. Eric Griffing is then charting the persistence of the Black Legend in depicting Spaniards and the role of theatre in sealing this set of stereotypes in the very English identity. On one aspect of this stereotype, the obsession with the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), Emily Weissbourd develops a very interesting comparison between two plays with the same subject, Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Lope's *El mayordomo del la duquesa de Amalfi*. Weissbourd shows how the

supposed Spanish fear of contamination is in reality an English worry, while Spanish text is definitely more open to social intermingling between different classes.

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were significant in the evolution of the imperial idea and its turning in the newer concept of early modern ('national') state. In this sense, the essay of Brian C. Lockett is of particular interest, as he bases the difference in English political discourse not in the Catholic/Protestant division but in the debates of Cosmopolitanism/English diversity (and purity). The essay represents a significant contribution to current scholarship on political theories in the aftermath of the English Reformation. In the closing essay, William S. Goldman focuses on the personal representation of Spain and Spaniards by the English resident ambassador in Valladolid, Charles Cornwallis (1605-1608). The correspondence with the English court reveals a shifting of Cornwallis' attitude from a very biased one, based on English stereotypes, to a more open and sympathetic one, with a touch of genuine appreciation for his hosts.

Considered as a whole, the book addresses a timely topic of wide interest due to the centrality of Mediterranean studies in recent early modern scholarship, and to studies of cross-cultural and confessional interactions. The methodological approach combines insights from borderland studies and comparative literature and represents a fresh contribution to current scholarship on Mediterranean as a conceptual space. It is, however, peculiar that in the bibliography none of the authors considers the classical work of Frances Yates on imperial idea (*Astrea*).

The multi-scale analysis on different kinds of historical writing from different environments reach the editors' goal of producing a nuanced and articulated picture of cross-religious interaction in the central-east Mediterranean.