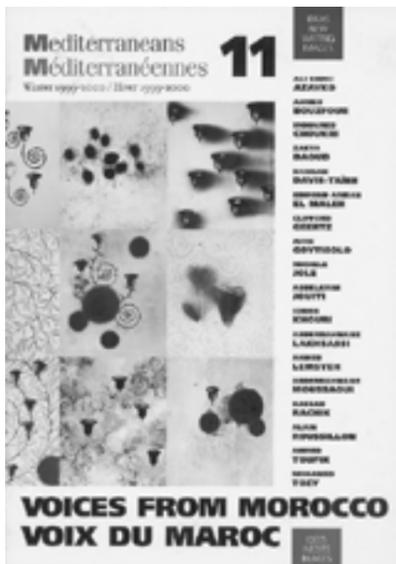


Periodical  
ROBERT WATERHOUSE

## The Azur Decade: A Brief History of Mediterraneans

Millions of words are published every year by and about the peoples of the Mediterranean. Its place at the crux of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and its historical importance overlaid with present-day relevance means that *Mediterraneans* are never far from the news. Many cultures, speaking many tongues, have shared interests and concerns, even if the act of sharing often seems more like smash and grab. Yet among all the words and images there are a precious few voices saying just what it is to be a Mediterranean today.



Or so it seemed to Kenneth Brown when, in the spring of 1990, he began testing his thoughts and ideas on a group of friends in Manchester, where he was a senior lecturer in sociology. Brown's working background in Morocco, Tunisia and the Middle East, and his knowledge of Arabic and Hebrew as well as Spanish and French should have warned those of us he corralled that the ride would be lively.

### Made in Manchester

The first two issues of *Mediterraneans* bore the imprint of Didsbury Press, a small independent Manchester publishing house whose owner, Patrick Quinn, personally funded the venture. They carried an extraordinary selection of contributors – novelists, poets, journalists, artists and photographers – covering an extraordinary variety of topics. From the outset, *Mediterraneans* published uncompromisingly in English or French, without translation. Designed on desk-top by Trevor Hatchett, edited from the garrets and pubs of South Manchester, *Mediterraneans* proved an immediate *tour de force*: 'a new bold literary review' wrote the *Guardian*. *Le Monde Diplomatique* called it an 'éblouissant sommaire [...] de très beaux écrits de poètes, journalistes, romanciers de la région.'

### Goytisolo, Durrell, Moravia

Issue 1 of Summer 1991 had Juan Goytisolo on Cairo's City of the Dead, Lawrence Durrell on bull-worship in Provence, Alberto Moravia in conversation, David Hirst on Saddam before Kuwait, Clarisse Nicoïdski on a French soldier's diary from the Algerian front in 1960. Mahmoud Darwish described how he risked on a daily basis a sniper's bullet to make early-morning coffee during the height of the Beirut civil war; Yigal Sarna detailed an infamous sectarian murder in Israel. Lucia Graves told how her father Robert came to Mallorca, while Claudia Roden explored Italy's regional cuisine.

So it went on. By the third issue, Brown had taken himself and the review to Paris, where the official funding climate was more promising. He found a new co-editor, Hannah Davis, and set about widening a circle of supporters who eventually evolved into an advisory panel.

### Moments of destiny

The first of the themed issues, Algeria, Summer 1993, came at a moment of destiny as civil war loomed. This was closely followed by Beirut/Sarajevo and Israel/Palestine. *Mediterraneans* showed no aversion to the hot spots, though it retained a section of *Varia* at the back, and had the ability to attract spicy pot-pourri contributions like Andreu Martín's story of sex – and worse – among beach hoodlums (Issue 4).

Financial support from the Centre National de Lettres helped establish *Mediterraneans* in Paris, but the review remained – and remains – at the commercial margins, depending upon the goodwill of contributors and subscribers. Involvement with Med-Media, the EC programme for journalist training led to a Spring 1994 seminar in Marseille and subsequent publication of an *hors serie* title, 'Etre journaliste en Méditerranée' (also in Spanish and Arabic, but not English). A second such seminar took place in Alexandria in cooperation with *Al Ahram*, *il manifesto* and *Milliyet*. Continuation of the project awaits de-freezing of the EC Mediterranean programme budget.

For Issue 7, Autumn 1995, Brown and Davis devoted almost a whole review to the falling apart of Yugoslavia, 'Le pont détruit'. The title referred to Mostar, the Bosnian city dismembered by Croats. *Mediterraneans'* by-now proven mix of reportage, short stories, poetry and telling images described, with passion but without side, a Balkan tragedy which continues to unfold.

### Alexandria, Istanbul, Morocco

More recent issues have been, perhaps, less consciously from the frontline yet are hardly irrelevant. 'Alexandria in Egypt' (Autumn 1996) found the ancient waterfront city at the point of shaking off economic

doldrums and Durrellian ties. 'Istanbul, Many Worlds' (Autumn 1997) explored the Turkish dilemma of embracing the West while fighting a war in its own eastern backyard. 'Voices from Morocco' (Winter 1999-2000) captures Maghreb aspirations at the millennium, with a change of king and perhaps of regime.

### Five-year programme

*Mediterraneans* has survived almost a decade in the tough theatre of international publishing. It commences the millennium in good spirits with the next issue, on Marseille, planned for Autumn 2000, homes both in the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris and the Friche Belle de Mai in Marseille, and high hopes of a five-year publishing programme based on two issues per year. The proposed subjects for 2001 are Haifa and Salonika.

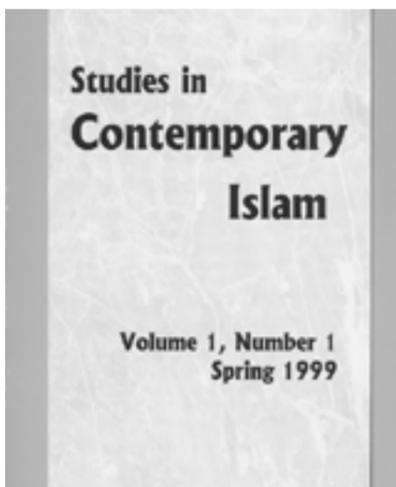
The struggle, as ever, is not for good material but for the financial wherewithal to publish. In a world where book selling is becoming more global by the day, small operators have a huge marketing challenge. *Mediterraneans* is soon to fight back via its own website ([mediterraneansreview.com](http://mediterraneansreview.com)) which will offer readers the opportunity to sample back issues, as well as being able to order and subscribe on line. ◆

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PERIODICAL

## Studies in Contemporary Islam



*Studies in Contemporary Islam* is a new, refereed journal focusing on Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world, published by the Center for Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University. It is published two times a year and is devoted to the understanding, review, analysis, and critique of contemporary Islamic religious and intellectual developments, on the one hand, and of socio-political changes in Muslim societies, on the other. The journal aims to be interdisciplinary and international in its range and cover-

age. Intended to serve as a forum for scholarly dialogue and exchange, *Studies in Contemporary Islam* does not to promote a particular point of view or ideology. The editors are Mumtaz Ahmad ([junaid@erols.com](mailto:junaid@erols.com)) and Mustansir Mir ([mmir@cc.ysu.edu](mailto:mmir@cc.ysu.edu)).

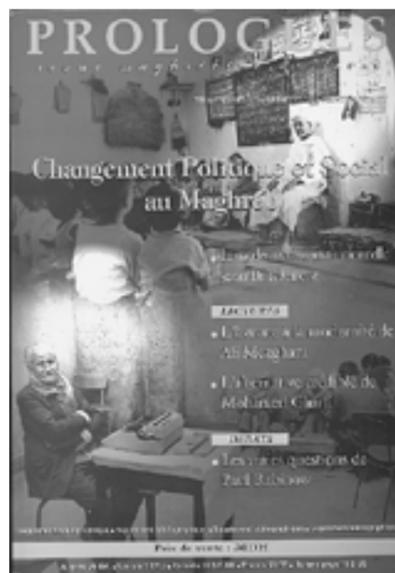
The first issue (Spring 1999) includes the following articles:

- Farhang Rajaei, 'Paradigm Shifts in Muslim International Relations Discourse';
- Anas B. Malik, 'Understanding the Political Behavior of Islamists: The Implications of Socialization, Modernization, and Rationalist Approaches';
- Timur Yuskaev, 'Redeeming the Nation: Redemption Theology in African-American Islam';
- Frederick M. Denny and the Late Olga Scarpetta, 'Jailhouse religion: The Challenge of Corrections to the American Muslim Community'; and
- Mumtaz Ahmad, 'Democracy on Trial in Malaysia'. ◆

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PERIODICAL

## Prologues: Revue Maghr bine du Livre



*Prologues* is a Maghreb book revue. Above all it is the voice of a group of intellectuals who seek to renew, from within, contemporary Arabic thought through debate and analysis. For this reason, *Prologues* seeks to bring together themes that are of central concern in the Mediterranean region. It aims to stimulate communication among social scientists, scholars, and intellectuals

from North and South and to reach out to broader audiences. Although literacy levels in the Maghreb are on the rise, public exposure to the world of ideas remains limited. With its critical reviews, interviews and essays, *Prologues* aims to facilitate access to this world. The journal expresses disagreement over the way Islamic dogmas and laws are invoked and used in the political arena and advocates democratic alternatives, arguing that these are probably closer to Islamic ethics or, at the least, not incompatible with them.

A bilingual (French-Arabic) scholarly and cultural journal, *Prologues* has been published quarterly in Casablanca since 1993. To date, eleven issues have been published. It is distributed in particular in the Maghreb, but also reaches readers in Europe, the Middle East and North America. Abdou Filali-Ansary is the editor. ◆

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