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Claire Launchbury and Megan C. MacDonald, editors. *Urban Bridges, Global Capital(s): Trans-Mediterranean Francosphères*. Liverpool UP, 2021.

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Abstract

Review of Claire Launchbury and Megan C. MacDonald, editors. *Urban Bridges, Global Capital(s): Trans-Mediterranean Francosphères*. Liverpool UP, 2021. 224 pp.

Keywords

Mediterranean, Francophone, cultural capital, migration

Claire Launchbury and Megan C. MacDonald, editors. *Urban Bridges, Global Capital(s): Trans-Mediterranean Francosphères*. Liverpool UP, 2021. 224 pp.

Claire Launchbury and Megan C. MacDonald's edited collection of essays offers a series of comparative analyses of the literary and filmic texts, contexts, and crossings of the Mediterranean region. By thematically gathering the essays around the subject of capital, both cultural and economic, and then around a series of geographic nodes, the book immediately illustrates the breadth, depth, and interdependence of what has become known as Mediterranean Studies. The collection expands the borders of the Mediterranean space, and posits it as a place of constant identitarian and linguistic interrogation for both those who occupy it and those who document it.

The collection is divided into three sections, which focus on urban *flânerie* and representations of cities, Marseille as a cultural capital, and trans-Mediterranean narratives with an emphasis on migration. One thread that runs through all three sections is the seemingly open question of cosmopolitanism, a secular value that may or may not connect the creators, characters, and spaces discussed in the essays. The cosmopolitanism of Tunis, Marseille, Nice, and Tangier is marked by code-switching and opportunity, and can often be understood, as Ipek Çelik Rappas remarks in "Screening Cosmopolitan and Mediterranean Marseille," as an ideological strategy for cities whose multiculturalism is being positively rebranded.

It is interesting to read the essays with an eye for the various valences of cosmopolitanism and how ideas of belonging and community shift as analysis moves from text to text and from city to city. In Christa Jones's essay, Nice's apparent wealth and glamour, as depicted in texts by Jean Vigo, Jacques Demy, and Emmanuel Roblès establish the city as a coveted, cosmopolitan space and provide the necessary economic and emotional capital for it to act as a bridge to a better life for the texts' characters. In the works of Kaouthat Khelifi and Dora Latiri that take place in Tunis, Rania Said defines the capital's cosmopolitan nature as one that is intimately connected to France, linguistically and thematically. The Francophone *flâneuses* of Tunis in the texts construct the city as a postcolonial, multicultural (but not necessarily pan-Arabic) place in which the narrators are uneasy and privileged travelers and observers. On the other hand, Claire Launchbury's analysis of the Lebanese capital Beirut as a tentatively moored and repeatedly ruined city highlights hybridity and paradox. Ultimately, through the lens of writers like Samir Khalaf, Amin Maalouf, and Ghassan Hage, Beirut is not cosmopolitan but weakened and undermined by postcolonial connections and global capital. Cosmopolitanism is not a strategy that is available to all Mediterranean cities.

Migration—whether in search of asylum or as part of an *aller-retour* 'round trip' between Mediterranean countries—is unsurprisingly a central issue for many

of the essays here. The ongoing global refugee crisis, which is sometimes figured as a Mediterranean problem, sets up the sea between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe as a treacherous space, physically and politically. Megan C. MacDonald's essay, "Mediterranean Bodies, Istanbul Limbo," considers unnamed twenty-first century stowaways, whose failed crossings are not a metaphor, but a real product of economic despair and conflicting legal and national boundaries. Ending the collection, MacDonald's chapter artfully draws together the theory of trans-Mediterranean narratives and the reality of anonymity and death at sea: a form of bare life that resists narrative and memorialization.

However, migration—whether clandestine or sanctioned—also provides the possibility of multilingual play and experimentation. Indeed, a shared language is the commonality that connects the texts discussed, although the plural term *francosphères* allows for a great deal of flexibility and linguistic diversity. Many, if not most of the chapters include a discussion of how shifting among languages—various forms of Arabic, Greek, English, French—by characters within a text permits greater expression and complexity in the texts discussed. This complication of the idea of French-speaking spaces and the discussion of the strategies of language choice is essential to critical comparative work that engages with the ongoing movement of people and ideas in the region(s). Gemma King reflects on multilingualism in Ismaël Ferroukhi's film *Le Grand Voyage*, arguing that it provides a counterweight to the dominant status of the French language. In this and other essays in the collection, notably Rania Said's chapter on Tunis, the recognition of the fraught position of French in Mediterranean spaces is a reminder that questions raised by earlier generations of anticolonial and postcolonial writers about the role of the French language in cultural production are still being answered.

This collection will be a valuable resource for scholars who are looking for a contemporary and comprehensive entry point into Mediterranean Studies. It will also be of interest to scholars working in the field of the Francophone Mediterranean, broadly defined, since it covers such a range of authors and approaches. Advanced undergraduate students grappling with texts discussed in *Urban Bridges*, *Global Capital(s)* will particularly benefit from these essays, especially since the authors incorporate ideas by important thinkers such as Laura Mulvey, Jacques Derrida, and Michel de Certeau. With its focus on transnationalisms, genre and border crossings, and complicated identities in the constantly reinvented and reinventing space of the Mediterranean, Launchbury and MacDonald's collection offers a wealth of literary and cultural routes to follow.

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