Literary Exchanges in the Post-Cold War Mediterranean Area

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, one of the central sites of the Cold War confrontation, the Mediterranean Basin, has become again a fertile crossroads for the interplay of Eastern (including Eastern European) and Western, Northern and Southern (including African) literary traditions and for the pursuit of transnational agendas. This article contrasts pre-1989 literary works – which described the Mediterranean as the focal point of nationalistic and political superpower conflicts, tied directly to the lingering Cold War divisions – against post-1989 literary phenomena and works that bridge the former ideological divide, promoting transnational messages and concerns. The examples in this article are taken especially from the eastern and southern flanks of the Mediterranean basin, emphasizing their role in creating new literary hybrids and pluralizing national cultures. The first part of the article argues for a transcultural literary history of the Mediterranean area that explores not only north-south, but also east-west relationships, recovering an entire geocultural area (the Eastern Mediterranean) that has not been treated as often in Mediterranean studies. The author argues for a comprehensive multicultural approach to the region that questions both all absorbing global vision and the polarizations that oppose northern and southern, eastern and western paradigms. The following two sections, focused on Mediterranean relationships before and after 1989, similarly explore the conflicts and convergences that have continually restructured our understanding of the Mediterranean world, emphasizing “interference” and “translation” between local and global, national and transnational. The author proposes a type of regional multicultural history that, by comparing and interfacing cultures within a larger region such as the Mediterranean, can help us move beyond our polarized pre- and post-1989 worldviews.