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Translating Space:

On Rivers, Seas, Archipelagos and Straits[1]

> "Die Schwelle ist ganz scharf von der Grenze zu scheiden. Schwelle ist eine Zone. Wandel, Übergang, Fluten liegen im Worte 'schwellen' […]."
>
> Walter Benjamin (1983: 618)[2]

In this paper I would like to explore possible convergences between translation and geography focusing on a series of spatial metaphors that try to break free from the simple idea of separation and opposition. Languages are viewed here not as radically differing self-contained cultural continents existing on separate shores or riverbanks facing each other, but as moving and constantly intermingling currents and heterogeneous interlinked archipelagos. Instead of the metaphor of the river, that has to be crossed in the course of translation, I am going to focus on the metaphors of the sea and the strait, which stress the porosity of language-borders and the very difficulties of translation, highlighting the absence of any easy binary division.

In the early fourteenth century the Italian priest Opicino de Canistris (1296-c.1350) drew an anthropomorphic portrait of the Mediterranean showing a male European Adam, a fallen monk, dangerously leaning towards a tempting female North-African Eve, whispering dark words in his ear. The scene of the fall is the strait of Gibraltar itself, door to the Atlantic and entrance to the Mediterranean, frontier between North and South, Western Europe and the Arab world, border between the closed circumscribed world of the Mediterranean and the limitless, open-ended surface of a still mysterious Atlantic Ocean.

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[1] The text is based on a speech held at the 3rd Conference of the International Association for Translation and Inter-cultural Studies, Mediation and Conflict: Translation and Culture in a Global Context, Monash University, Melbourne, 8th -10th July 2009.

[2] "The threshold has to be separated sharply from the border. Threshold is a zone. Change, passage, flooding are implied in the word to 'swell' […]." [translation RG]
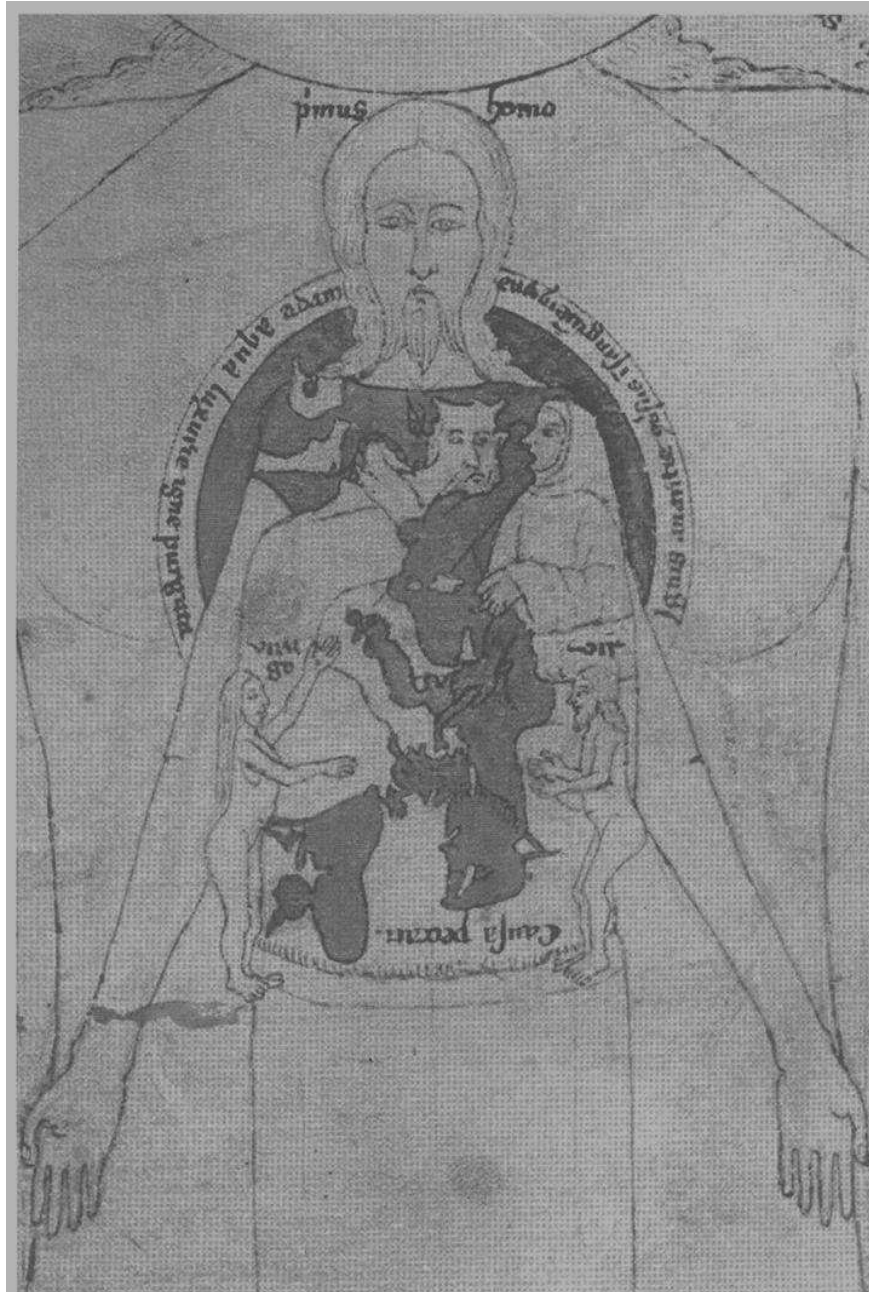
Opicino de Canistris. Anthropomorphic map of the Mediterranean
drawn in reverse. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms Pal. Lat. 1993,
fol. 2v. (Horden and Purcell 2000: 2)

Canistris' medieval vision shows a twofold world turned upside down, an inverted cos-
mos. The horizontal axis that has been projected onto a vertical scale shows Turkey on
the left and Spain on the right. This diabolical inversion is echoed in the twisted distribu-
tion of the main characters, Adam being on the left and Eve on the right. The vertical axis
depicts yet another inversion. The devil's head is upside down and positioned on the infe-
rior side of the drawing, the Oriental, Levantine's end. The drawing labeled "causa
peccati", the origin of sin, portrays a strongly dual vision of the Mediterranean, operating

with a set of cultural oppositions that still play their part in present day Western perception of the Mediterranean. The subtly spoken words migrating across the strait, fraught with sinister meaning, define a double world, a Northern and Western world of clarity, inviolate and endangered purity, the "healthy body of the West" (Chambers 2008: 15) as Iain Chambers ironically calls it, and a Southern and Eastern world brimming over with dangerous, false promises.

Canistri's vision of the Mediterranean suggests a clear cut border between two different if not opposing cultures. The strait of Gibraltar is interpreted as a river that cannot be crossed without serious consequences. Within this conceptual universe, translation amounts to a dangerous enterprise. The treacherous words whispered into the ear of the monk will have to be reformulated adequately in order to avoid any danger of contamination. I would like to use Canistris's drawing and the implicit translation theory it proposes as a starting point for the following reflections on possible theoretical convergences and overlappings between the discursive fields of geography and translation.

Geography and Translation

Geography and translation studies share some common theoretical and metaphorical ground. Interestingly enough, both translation studies and recent geopolitical thinking in the wake of the spatial turn have explored the concept of third space. Homi Bhabha (2008) and Doris Bachmann-Medick (1999 and 2002) have written extensively on this notion from a translational point of view suggesting interesting resemblances with Edward W. Soja's (1996) homonymous concept of *Thirdspace*, that is, a hybrid space located on the border of real and the imagined space. This would be definitely a line of enquiry worth pursuing further.

Translation has often been compared to the crossing of an expanse of water (Guldin 2011b). In German this idea is very aptly summed up in the word "übersetzen", used in the double sense of *über*setzen, setting across a stream or river, and über*setzen*, to translate. In this common metaphorical realm solidity and fluidity play a central role. It is all about land and sea, riverbanks, coastlines, shores, islands, straits and the moving waters in between, streams, rivers, oceans. Languages can be both solid and liquid: coastlines hem-

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ming in a middle ground, riverbanks bracketing a watercourse, the two sides of a strait separating two oceans or the liquid masses themselves. If translating means crossing a river, then the two banks represent the two different languages and the river flowing in between the obstacle to be overcome. But in many other cases it is the languages themselves that are compared to rivers or water surfaces. In Wilhelm von Humboldt's view languages are both rivers and riverbeds in which thought can trustfully drive along its waves. When we speak many languages, adds Vilém Flusser, we can have our thoughts flow in different riverbeds and so reconsider them in a new light. Flusser compares the single languages to islands floating in the sea of nothingness, slowly disintegrating.

The bilingual French and German writer Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt (see Guldin 2007) conceives of language as an endless sea, in which innumerable linguistic currents of different temperature, salinity and speed mingle and blend together. He describes the relationship between German and French as the confluence of two rivers, the Saône and the Rhône, traversing Lyon side by side only to flow into each other when reaching its southern outskirts, suggesting through this the twofold ambivalent nature of water. In fact, water can flow in different rivers; can be cold or warm, sweet or salty, opaque or crystal-clear, slow or fast-moving. In the end, however, all different forms reunite again in the endlessly heaving and shifting colossal pool of the ocean.

In an essay on polyglot poetry Alfons Knauth uses the very metaphor of the sea that for Goldschmidt represents the basic unity of all languages to describe the functioning of multilingual texts. The roughness and choppiness of the sea and its many layered protean nature are used as a metaphor for what Knauth calls *Mischsprachigkeit*, a mingling of languages. "The sea is so to speak the syntagmatic axis of the Babel paradigm. It separates the languages and unites them at the same time […]. From a genetical point of view the sea precedes the mythical construction of the Tower of Babel: it brought about multilingualism and strengthened it. […] in this way […] the internal and external linguistic polyglotism came into being […]. On the one hand, the sea establishes a real contact between the different languages, on the other it embodies a metaphorical analogy for languages [and their relation to each other]: its many-voiced sound is an expression of multi-

lingualism […], and its continuous movement an expression of the constant merging or mixing of languages [translation RG]."[3] (Knauth 1991, 61)

A similar conception can also be found in Haroldo de Campos' poem *Galáxias* (Guldin 2013). De Campos compares the blank page of the book to the surface of the sea and writing to a trip on the ever-moving ocean of intermingling languages. Plurilingualism is not dealt with explicitly but rendered in the comings and goings, the ups and downs of the ocean. The third fragment of the book, which is dedicated to the sea, consistently stresses its open-endedness and manifold iridescence. Indirectly the third fragment is also a reflection on the multilingual writing practice, the status of a plurilingual text and the relationship of the different languages to each other.

Another bilingual author who describes language and the relationship between different languages in the metaphors of flowing mixing waters is Yoko Tawada, who writes and publishes in German and Japanese and very often juxtaposes the two languages in the same text. Water is one of the leading metaphors within her oeuvre. For many years, Tawada who had arrived in Germany with the Trans-Siberian Railway, lived in Hamburg where the Elbe flows into the North-Sea. In an interview with Ortrud Gutjahr she describes the meaning of water in the following terms, stressing its very ambivalence and contradictory relationship to earth. "But water does not exist completely without coastlines or boundaries […]. When you are by the water you can often even see two different riverbanks, as with the Elbe. These riverbanks are for me the Japanese and German language […] makeshift positions from which to experience the water. Through the water, in fact, a space in between is created. In order to perceive this space I do actually need the riverbanks as basic approaches. But these are not borders, they do not exist in order to cross something or pin it down. Water can show very different forms of movement. On the sea, in the river, from the water tap. It is always a play with shapelessness […] [translation RG]."[4] (Tawada 2012: 44-5) Each of the metaphorical conceptions dealt with here

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[3] „Das Meer ist sozusagen die syntagmatische Achse des Babel-Paradigmas. Es trennt die Sprachen und verbindet sie […]. Genetisch gesehen ist das Meer dem mythischen Turmbau von Babel vorgelagert: es bewirkte bzw. verstärkte die Vielsprachigkeit. […] so entstand […] aus ihm die inner- und außersprachliche Polyglossie […] Das Meer stellt einerseits einen realen Kontakt zwischen den verschiedenen Sprachen her, andererseits bildet es ein metaphorisches Analogiemuster für die Sprachen: sein vielstimmiges Rauschen dient dem Ausdruck der Vielsprachigkeit […], seine ständige Bewegtheit dem Ausdruck des Ineinanderfließens der Sprachen oder der Mischsprachigkeit."

[4] "Aber das Wasser existiert ja nicht ganz ohne Küsten […]. Oft sieht man am Wasser sogar zwei Ufer, wie zum Beispiel an der Elbe. Diese Ufer sind für mich so wie die japanische und die deutsche Sprache. […] provisorische Positionen, um das Wasser wahrzunehmen. Denn durch das Wasser entsteht ein Zwischenraum. Um den Raum wahrzunehmen, brauche ich schon die Ufer als Ansätze. Doch dies sind keine Grenzen, sie existieren nicht, um

not only defines the status of the single languages and their relationship to each other but also helps formulating a specific translation theory. As with the metaphor of the strait, to which I will come shortly – and contrary to the metaphor of the endless boundless ocean – water has always been seen in connection with its opposite: earth. The same way that mobility calls for stability, rivers call for riverbanks and seas for coastlines.

To explore this difference, hinging on the metaphorical opposition of fluidity and so-lidity, I would like to focus on three texts discussing the possible epistemological rele-vance of the two spatial metaphors they suggest for translation processes: the sea and the strait. All three texts are intimately related to the Mediterranean as a historical, cultural, political and geographical setting. Iain Chambers' *Mediterranean Crossings*, Franco La Cecla and Piero Zanini's *Lo stretto indispensabile*, The Indispensable Strait, and finally Zakya Daoud's two volumes on the history of the strait of Gibraltar - *Gibraltar croisée de mondes* and *Gibraltar improbable frontière*. Chambers deals with the Mediterranean as a whole focus-ing on the multiple fluxes and counter-fluxes that have animated it in the course of its history. La Cecla and Zanini, on the other hand, deal with the strait from a geopolitical and philosophical point of view. Daoud, finally, discusses cross-cultural relationships in terms of a specific geopolitical setting: the strait as a site of manifold contradictory cross-ings. Before coming to this, however, I would like to discuss briefly, some of the more traditional views of the Mediterranean to create a backdrop against which their view can stand out more clearly.

The sea

At the beginning of their history of the Mediterranean, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2000) critically summarize the history of the Mediterranean from a Western Eu-ropean point of view. Can the Mediterranean be considered a single body as Ferdinand Braudel suggested or is it rather a divided, fragmented whole? The notion of unity has a long history of its own, but is not an uncontroversial geographical datum. In the ancient geographical tradition of the West it was the sea that shaped the land. This precedence of

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etwas zu überschreiten oder festzulegen. Das Wasser kann sehr unterschiedliche Bewegungen zeigen. Auf dem Meer, im Fluss, aus dem Wasserhahn. Es ist immer ein Spiel mit dem Formlosen […]."

the water over the land that ultimately led to the notion of a subjacent unity was seen as an undisputable logical priority. As Strabo writes in his *Geography*, it is "the sea that delineates precisely the layout of the land, creating gulfs, sea-basins […] isthmuses, peninsulas and capes […]."(Horden and Purcell 2000: 27) The Mediterranean itself came to be regarded as a great river and was depicted on the maps as a grossly elongated stream. Even though the unity posited here derives from very ancient geographical ideas it remains, as Horden and Purcell point out, profoundly precarious. In fact outside the tradition of Western geographical thought the Mediterranean has not obviously suggested itself as a single area of investigation. This presupposed unity has, furthermore, been formulated from a one-sided ethnocentric point of view, that of the classical antiquity of Greece and Rome: The *Mare Nostrum* was the homeland of classical culture. In various ways Hellenic and Roman society appropriated the Mediterranean. In the third century B.C. the Greek historian Polybius describes this process of unification in terms of an organic unity: "[…] the doings of Italy and Libya are woven together with those of Asia and Greece, and the outcome of them all tends toward one end." (ibidem: 27) In the first century A.D. Pliny the elder sums up this forcefully imposed unification as a monolithic and monolingual enterprise with Italy at its heart. "[…] to unite scattered empires, to tame savage customs, to draw the discordant and barbarous tongues of numerous peoples together into the conversation of a single language, to give mankind civilization." (ibidem: 27) Translation acts here as a compulsory colonial process of unification substituting homogeneity and unity for heterogeneity and diversity.

This vision of the supposed unity of a homogenous Mediterranean that has only recently been challenged had dangerous consequences for intra-Mediterranean comparisons. It resurfaced in later centuries, after the secular predominance of the Arab world and was mainly used as a political weapon, a category foisted upon a variety of distinct cultures by the more advanced industrial and cultural powers of Europe. It was, furthermore, complemented from the beginning by a North/South and West/East geopolitical dissonance that can both be found in Canistris´ drawing. These two dissonances can be considered on their own or complement each other, amounting to what might be termed *Mediterraneanism*, a concept redolent of Said's *Orientalism* (2012). Horden and Purcell draw attention to the fact that both the notions of Europe and the Middle East that are used as a starting point for the above mentioned cleavages are already highly heterogeneous and

disconcertingly imprecise. For this very reason the two authors strongly emphasize the importance of local irregularities and of a minutely subdivided topography, looking for a redefinition of the Mediterranean in terms of the unpredictable and variable. "The paradox of the Mediterranean is that the all too-apparent fragmentation can potentially unite the sea and its coastlines in a way far exceeding anything predictable of a continent." (Horden and Purcell 2000: 24) Nowadays, the states of the Mediterranean are as divided as they have ever been, but this division harbors a unique chance. "Rather than being a problem whose relevance we should contest, the political and ethnic untidiness of the Mediterranean could turn out to be inspiring." (ibidem: 25) This specific interpretation can also be found in Iain Chambers' book.

In his description of the Mediterranean he introduces the notions of diversity and multilateral exchange. He stresses both the heterogeneity and unity of the Mediterranean, highlighting its contradictory nature. By defining the Mediterranean as a closed, circumscribed space, a "complex echo chamber" in which multiple fluxes bounce and rebounce, "transforming and transmuting each other" (Chambers 2008: 48) he interprets the classical vision of unity against its grain. The very metaphor of unity, the sea shaping the coastlines, is here reinterpreted in a plural, polyglot sense. Chambers speaks of the "open, creolized complexity" (ibidem: 55) and "the polylinguistic and polycultural composition of a hybrid" (ibidem: 32), "multiple and mutable Mediterranean." (ibidem: 9) "The seeming solidity of the lands, languages, and lineages that border and extend outward from its shores here become an accessory of its fluid centrality." (ibidem: 24) In this ever shifting liquid world the foreign is already contained within the familiar. Chambers speaks of Arab elements to be discovered in the very heart of Christianity, as for instance "the Arab letters on Christ's cloak in Giotto's Crocifissione […]. In this doubling and displacement, the very closure sought by cultural monotheism […] is sundered and dispersed. The image and what it narrates, is no longer possessed by a single mode of telling. History, the Mediterranean, returns, rewriting and recounting the narrative, freeing it, from the fixed moorings of a unilateral meaning, allowing it to drift into their accounts […]." (ibidem: 131-2) It is all about a "floating semantics." (ibidem: 79)

In this metaphorical context borders are successfully blurred. Currents mix and mingle on different levels and in manifold ways: "the tributary histories that flow into the 'modern' […] Mediterranean, also suggest deeper and more dispersive currents." (ibidem:

2-3) "Rather than […] a logic of barriers to be breached and differences to be bridged […] overlapping territories and intertwined histories suggest a less rigid, more open comprehension of the making of a multiple Mediterranean." (ibidem: 3) Multiplicity and liquidity complement each other. "[…] borders are porous, particularly so in the liquid materiality of the Mediterranean […] borders are both transitory and zones of transit. They repeatedly draw our attention to the labor of translation […]."(ibidem: 5)

These metaphors of fluidity and liquidity articulate another history and another space. Chambers speaks of the dangers of a solid, solidified sea. "[…] the solidifying of the Mediterranean transform[s] a site of transit into a mounting barrier." (ibidem: 68) "The Mediterranean […] continually 'betrays' all attempts to freeze its composite components into a homogeneous image." (ibidem: 131) This view of "the sea, as the site of multiple mediations and memories […] delivers us over to a fluid geography that […] challenges the very being and becoming European and modern."

This fluid geography allows us to discover new connections, an "unsuspected cartography" that disrupts "the rigid grids of national geographers." The Mediterranean itself becomes this way a complex metaphor for translation processes and intercultural exchanges. "[…] the sea itself, [is] not so much […] a frontier or barrier between the North and the South, or the East and the West, as an intricate site of encounters and currents [animated by] the continual sense of historical transformation and cultural translation which makes it a site of perpetual transit." (ibidem: 32) Before coming to a more detailed discussion of the metaphor of the strait I would like to deal briefly with another possible spatial metaphor for translation and the relationship of languages to each other.

Archipelagos

Besides the idea of ever moving and constantly recombining currents Chambers introduces another spatial metaphor to articulate the mutable transitoriness and complex heterogeneity of the Mediterranean: the archipelago. In an archipelago the single cultural elements are bound together in a fragmented network of interlinked points, "an unfamiliar constellation" (ibidem: 133) without any rigid inner and outer boundaries or any clear cut hierarchical orientations. The idea of the archipelago (see also Cacciari 2005) is, further-

more, connected in Chamber's book to the intricate pattern of the arabesque, whose cultural origin is highly significant within a Mediterranean context. This inconclusive figuration also recalls Deleuze's concept of the baroque fold, which brings together that which a linear Eurocentric vision of history would like to hold apart.

As Ottmar Ette put it, within an archipelago each island, is not only a self-contained world, but at the same time a multilayered complex assemblage of interdependences (Ette 2012: 308). Yoko Tawada's fluid bilingual work on troubled waters between German and Japanese shores could also be described as an archipelago. "In fact", as Ette very aptly puts it, "the whole of Yoko Tawada's work could be seen as one gigantic island-book […] of continents and cultures, languages and language-games […]. Within this world-embracing archipelago the ocean, the sea, represents […] that which separates and unites at the same time, the moving liquefying element that even in separation still connects" the different components [translation RG]."[5] (ibidem: 314) An archipelago is a fragile fragmented world beyond the easy certainties of self-contained monolingual continents.

The Martinican poet and literary critic Edouard Glissant contraposes the archipelago to the continent. "The point of view of the archipelago, an essayistic intuitively seductive way of thinking, could be opposed to the continental point of view that would, above all, be systematic. From the continental point of view […] we see the world as one chunk, one bulk, one single trait, as a sort of impressive synthesis […]. From the point of view of the archipelago we will get to know rocks and rivers, the smallest even, rocks and rivers, we will contemplate the shadowy zones they open up and cover up again […]. The archipelago is diffracted […] fractal […] [translation RG]."[6] (Glissant 2009: 45-7) The metaphors of the sea and the archipelago suggest a translation theory in which hierarchical divisions between different languages as well as between the original and its translation become porous, break down and ultimately dissolve.

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[5] "In der Tat ließe sich das gesamte Schaffen Yoko Tawada's als ein einziges großes Insel-Buch, […] der Kontinente und Kulturen, der Sprachen und Sprachspiele, […] begreifen […]. Das Meer, die See, bildet in diesem weltumspannenden Archipel […] das zugleich trennende und verbindende, aber selbst in der Trennung noch immer relationierende bewegliche, verflüssigende Element […]."

[6] "La *pensée archipélique*, pensée de l'essai, de la tentation intuitive, qu'on pourrait opposer à des pensées continentales, qui seraient avant tout de système. Par la pensée continentale […] nous voyons le monde d'un bloc, ou d'un gros, ou d'un jet, comme une sorte de synthèse imposante […]. Par la pensée archipélique, nous connaissons les roches des rivières, les plus petites assurément, roches et rivières, nous envisageons les trous d'ombre qu'elles ouvrent et recouvrent […]. L'archipel est diffracté […] fractal […]."

Straits

Straits are narrow navigable passages of water that connect two larger also navigable bodies of water. They share some attributes with rivers but articulate a very different point of view, especially if viewed as possible metaphors for translation. Contrary to the steady and quiet one-way flow of rivers, straits articulate an idea of risk, challenge, of danger and fear even. They are tangible metaphors for tension, dynamism and the permanence of passages. Straits are complex geographical and meteorological settings where sudden changes suggest different options for crossing. Winds, violent currents, whirlpools and eddies ruffle their surface, especially in the middle. They are like rivers, but generally much larger; fluid borders joining two bodies of water and two land masses at the same time, articulating, thus, two separate pairs of space: from sea to sea and coast to coast.

La Cecla and Zanini describe straits as interpretative models for the possibilities created when two bodies are separated by a margin of transition. Straits are porous membranes regulating the passage from one world to another. "In a strait the water between the two shores […] filters the transition from one world to the other; sometimes a world infiltrates another, sometimes it takes its place or lies on top of it [translation RG]."[7] (La Cecla and Zanini 2004: 35) Straits allow a circulation between antagonistic spaces that cannot completely fuse into each other because they are of different nature.

The essential aspect of straits, so La Cecla and Zanini, are their fluctuating, composite waters, meeting between two shores and two seas, linking and separating them simultaneously. Straits are thresholds in Walter Benjamin's sense. They introduce the possibility of a change of state. A threshold is not a border but a zone. Not a straight line but a field of possibility. As Benjamin points out, the German word for threshold – *Schwelle* –, implies also a swelling – *schwellen* –, an alteration generated during the passage (see also Menninghaus 1986: 26-58). As borders and thresholds straits articulate a duality but at the same time move beyond it into a zone of transformation. A similar conception of the border as meeting point rather than a clear-cut separation can be found in the later work of Vilém Flusser (see Guldin 2011a).

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[7] "Nello stretto, l'acqua tra le due rive […] filtra la transizione da un mondo all'altro; a volte un mondo entra dentro un altro, a volte lo sostituisce oppure vi si sovrappone."

In Daoud's view straits are above all sites where currents meet and mix: "It is a history of fluxes and refluxes: the waters bump back and forth, from shore to shore […] The strait is a channel where waters mingle and overlap in a very complex way. Because these waters continuously exchanging places are not at all similar [translation RG]." (Daoud 2002a: 29-30) The metaphorical dimensions attributed by La Cecla / Zanini and Daoud to the strait correspond to a great extent to those Chambers attributes to the sea. In the dialectics of the strait, writes Daoud, "borders overlap vertically and horizontally and tend to be blurred [translation RG]" (ibidem: 12): linguistic currents moving against each other in different directions and at different levels; the blue warmer water of the Mediterranean and the green colder of the Atlantic. In this view, translation is more than simply the crossing of a river, moving from shore to shore, from solid land to solid land (see also Guldin 2011b and 2012). Languages are different but overlap continually. They seep into each other without losing their identity because of this. The priority of the liquid over the solid basically abolishes the idea of the border as a straight line. The border itself liquefies and all the attention goes to that which takes place in an indistinct zone in between. The sea and the strait present us with more complex metaphors.

The Strait of Gibraltar[8]

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[8] Satellite image of the Strait of Gibraltar

To conclude I would like to reconsider Canistris' drawing in the light of Chambers' and Daoud's reading of the Mediterranean. The fundamental cultural and geographical asymmetry and the idea of a clear cut rigid border we have come across in Canistri's drawing can be traced to present day discussions of migratory movements from the African to European shores. It also articulates, even if only implicitly, a theory of translation based on the idea of hierarchic superiority and unilateral flow. In this particular context, moreover, translation becomes an act of colonial appropriation of a very particular kind; a unilateral process in which the message carried across must be filtered and transformed in order not to expose the receiver to dangerous consequences. In Canistris' phantasmagorical vision the strait of Gibraltar that for centuries was a complex crossroads between worlds has become a dangerous intersection to be watched closely. As Zakya Daoud puts it, the strait that for eight centuries had been a river flowing within one and the same country, the canal of a unified European and African Andalusia, has turned into a bolt to be secured. The strait was once "a river within one country (…) a river flowing within the same world, a double continent […] [translation RG]." (ibidem: 155-6) "The strait was the channel of Andalusia before being a wall of barbed wire [translation RG]." (Daoud 2002b: 270)

Both Chambers and Daoud reinterpret the African and Arab threat to Europe in revitalizing and rejuvenating terms. The advance of the Arab world in the 7th and 8th century AD had a refreshing and stimulating effect (Chambers 2008 : 69) comparable to the present illegal immigration. The Moroccan immigrants that have found work in Spain and France flock back every year to their places of origin to spend their holidays there. They send money back home; build houses in their native villages nourishing the local industry. Even if rejected at the frontier of the strait, they are actually needed by the job markets in Europe: "boat people attempting the new middle passage across the Mediterranean." (ibidem: 9) Both authors suggest thus a possible utopian reunification of a divided Mediterranean realized thanks to a series of translational moves. These exchanges are a chance for both Europe and Africa: "They alone", writes Daoud about the Moroccan immigrants, "can fill in the empty concept of the Mediterranean. They are the witnesses of a rediscovered Mediterranean, the only homeland that can ultimately join their countries of destination and origin [translation RG]." (Daoud 2002b: 261) "Morocco", she adds, in an

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http://www.mapas-espana.com/Satellite_Image_Photo_Strait_Gibraltar_Spain_Morocco.htm

ironic twist reminiscent of Canistris' apocalyptical vision, "has a surprising geographical set up. It is here that Africa […] desperately offers its mouth to Europe for a kiss […] [translation RG]." (ibidem: 271)

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