



# Migrations Narrative between Politics and Literature

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# Narrative on migrations\*

- The narrative on migrations varies greatly depending on the viewpoint of an interested narrator, and above all, of his/her belonging to a group that perceives concrete migration either as a chance and benefit, or a threat and disaster.
- These dichotomies can last for centuries after migration, in politics as well as in literature.
- The mankind owes its expansion and cultural diversity mainly to migrations, both group and individual ones, including the interaction of religious and cultural diasporas with a diverse cultural environment.

# Hypothesis\*

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- The perception of each migration - prehistoric or historical, or colonization - depends on the narration of its narrator.
- The late antique Migration Period, the crucial European ethno-genetic intertwining, for the Germans is the *Völkerwanderung* (*Seoba narodâ* for the Slavs), while the ancient and medieval heirs of the Greco-Roman civilization in their new languages conveyed it as the *Barbarian invasions*.

# Trans-Mediterranean migrations\*

- Trans-Mediterranean migrations are imposed as an important, even central, social and political issue in Central Europe, and to a considerable extent in both Southern and Western Europe, prior to the next elections for the European Parliament (May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019).
- At the same time, trans-Mediterranean migrations have been seen, especially in the media, as one of the essential humanitarian problems of Europe.
- The media also portray them as a manifest form of inequality and discrimination, often racial or ethnic.

# Yogurt and famine\*



- “How many kinds of yogurt are on the store shelves?” may be a crucial political question in the North.
- In the South, hunger again becomes a more present political variable.



# FAO's data (2018)\*

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- “For the third year in a row, there has been a rise in world hunger.
- The absolute number of undernourished people, i.e. those facing chronic food deprivation, has increased to nearly 821 million in 2017, from around 804 million in 2016.
- These are levels from almost a decade ago.”

## THE NUMBER OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE IN THE WORLD HAS BEEN ON THE RISE SINCE 2014, REACHING AN ESTIMATED 821 MILLION IN 2017



\* Projected values, illustrated by dotted lines and empty circles.  
SOURCE: FAO.

# Every fifth person is hungry\*



- „Africa remains the continent with the highest prevalence of undernourishment (PoU), affecting almost 21 percent of the population (more than 256 million people). The situation is also deteriorating in South America, where the PoU has increased from 4.7 percent in 2014 to a projected 5.0 percent in 2017.“ (FAO 2018)
- The uncontrolled demographic explosion is an additional factor of hunger.
- Africa now has about 1.23 billion people, the trend shows it will have two billion by 2050, and four billion by 2100.



# Children are the resources\*



Under the conditions of an extensive economic growth, such as a nomadic or semi-nomadic cattle breeding or a primitive farming, every surviving child is a resource: a new workforce, an investment in survival.



# Global warming increases hunger\*

- „New evidence in this year’s report highlights that beside conflicts, climate variability and extremes are also a key force behind the recent rise in global hunger. They are also one of the leading causes of severe food crises.“ (FAO 2018).
- Analysis in the FAO’s report shows that the prevalence and number of undernourished people tend to be higher in countries highly exposed to climate extremes.
- Undernourishment is higher again when exposure to climate extremes is compounded by a high proportion of population depending on agricultural systems that are highly sensitive to rainfall and temperature variability.

# Obvious global warming\*

- “The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising by about three parts per million (ppm) almost every year.
- During much of the early political debate around climate change in the 1990s, many scientists thought that about 350 ppm or perhaps 400 ppm was a red line that shouldn’t be crossed.
- Today the concentration of carbon dioxide stands at 410 ppm, and it is only increasing.”

(Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, Partha Dasgupta, Joachim von Braun, and David G. Victor, *Foreign Affairs*)

# The South starved by the North\*

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By citing figures and data that are difficult or impossible to deny, the FAO claims that the main causes of hunger in Africa and, to a large extent, in Latin America – are droughts and desertification, caused by climate change, such as global warming, which are a direct consequence of resource scattering in the north hemisphere, from combustion of fossil fuels to methane from cattle farms.



# Pursuing a chance\*

- Illegal migration from Africa and Asia to Europe (and from Latin America to the north of Rio Grande) is therefore generally economic, not motivated so much by the improvement of standards, but by the ordinary hunger.
- "They do not arrive exhausted," says Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini.
- True, the families "delegate" the younger and the more powerful member in order to find work and earnings on the market of receiving countries, to help the family in the homeland, or to help them get to the receiving state.

# Migration accelerated\*

- „In northern Nigeria, households facing greater ex ante risk have a greater probability of having at least one migrant.“ (Rosenzweig and Stark, 1989)
- „In the United Republic of Tanzania, for an average rural household, a 1 percent reduction in agricultural income induced by climate shocks increases the probability of migration by 13 percent on average within the following year.“ (Kubik and Maurel, 2016)

# Social-nativism\*

One political narrative argues, often flirting with prejudices, that immigrants seize resources from the natives, leave them out of business, steal, rape, endanger Western civilization, endanger Christianity, impose Islam (Kaczyński, Orbán, Strache, Salvini, Le Pen, Wilders, Farage etc.).



# Growth due to immigration\*

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Another political narrative asserts that...

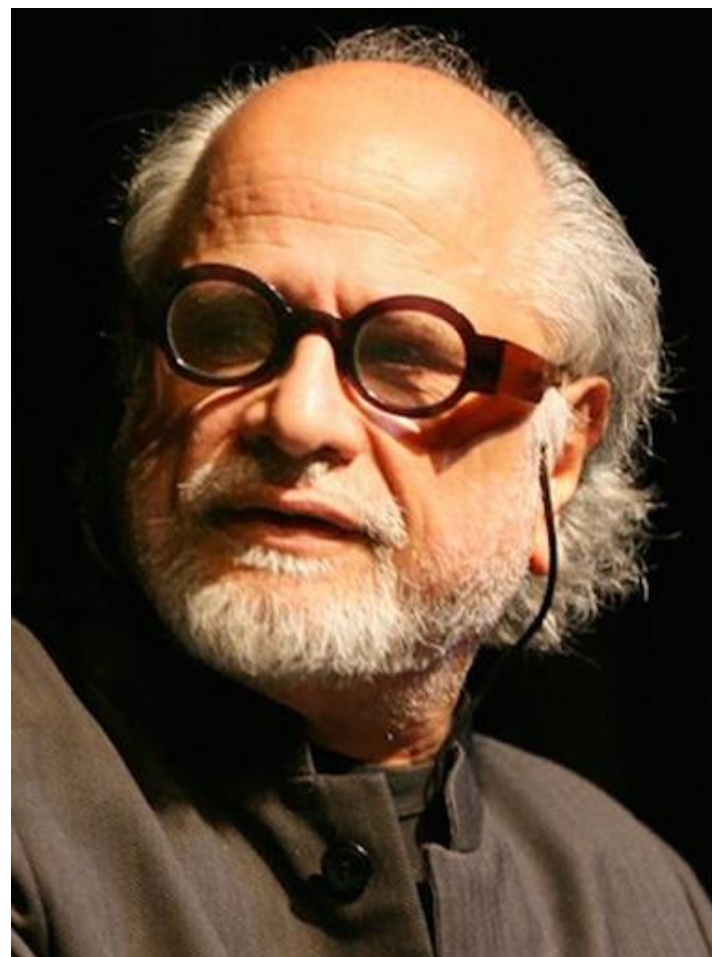
- „...two-thirds of US growth since 2011 is directly attributable to migration.
- In the UK, if immigration had been frozen in 1990 so that the number of migrants remained constant, the economy would be at least 9 per cent smaller than it is now. That is equivalent to a real loss in gross domestic product of more than £175bn over 15 years.
- In Germany, if immigration had been similarly frozen the net economic loss would be 6 per cent, or €155bn.“

(Research by Ian Goldin and Citigroup, *Financial Times*)



# *Unhomely condition*\*

- Migrations *en général* – and within them particularly trans-Mediterranean migrations – have been more present than ever in the literature.
- Its up to literature – fictional or factional – to transcribe the "*unhomely* condition of the modern world" (Homi K. Bhabha's paraphrase of Goethe's concept).





# WRITERS ABOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN

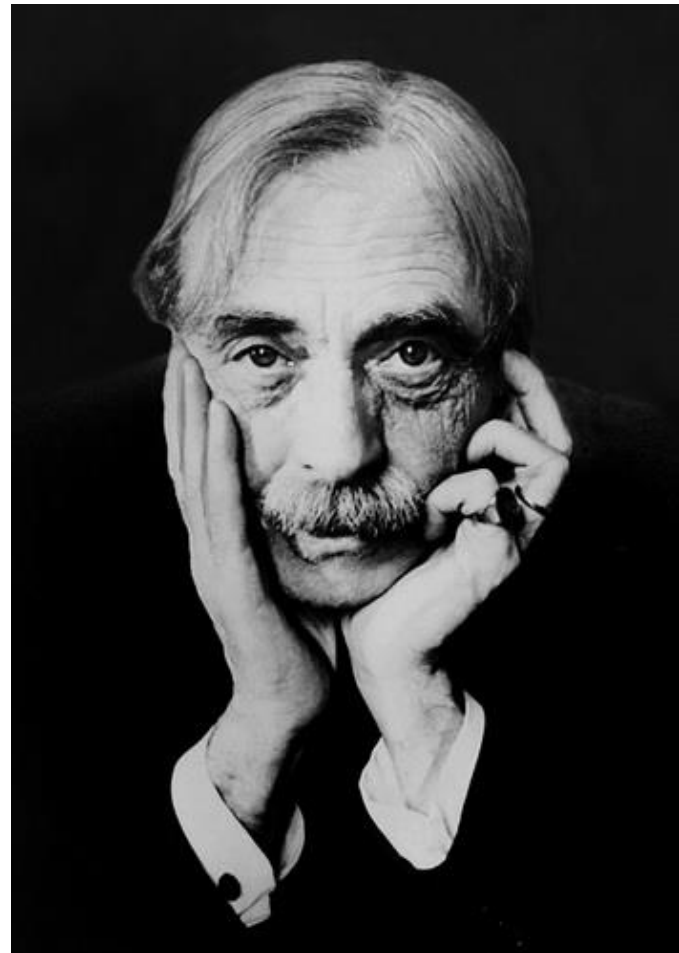
# The Mediterranean world\*



Unlike the policy, which sees the Mediterranean as a frontier or even as a front, literature sees the Mediterranean as a whole for itself, even as a world for itself

# Paul Valéry (1871-1945)\*

- The Mediterranean is a kind of "pre-Europe"
- The Mediterranean has "produced" a European man, universal man, Protagorine "man as the benchmark of all things"
- On its shores, cultures mixed through the trade





# Halikarnas Balıkcısı (1890-1973)\*

„The Fisher from Halikarnas” (born: Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı):

- “The Mediterranean is a continent for itself, separate from Africa, Asia and Europe”



# Predrag Matvejević (1932-2017)\*

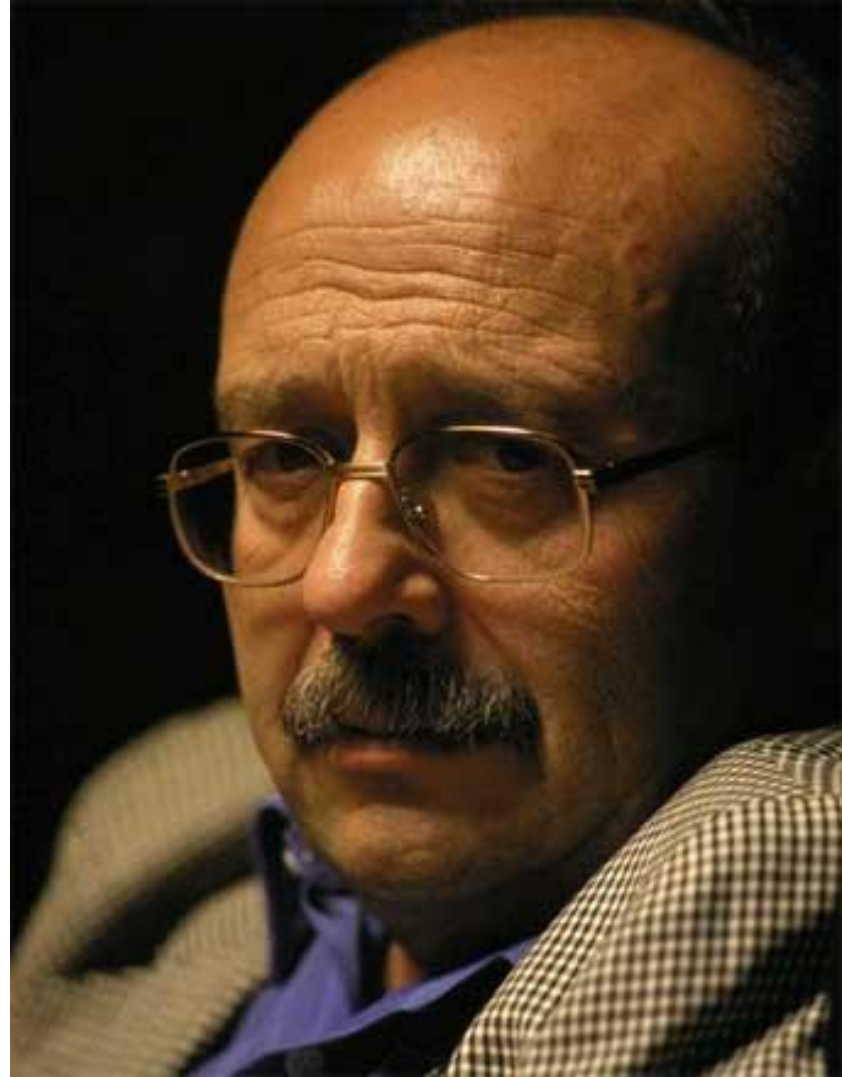


"Mediterranean is the world for itself and the center of the world"  
„Made by places, not by peoples or states”



# Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939-2003)\*

The Mediterranean is a sequence of Barbarians, which have accumulated and mixed until they have produced the Mediterranean man, which is fed with oil, olive and eggplant





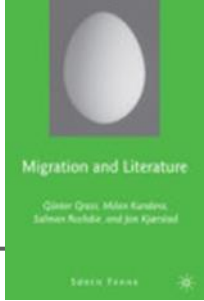
# Blue road, blue tomb\*

- „The sea full of knowledge and shipwrecks” (Matvejević)
- From Odyssey's comrades and many of their predecessors to more than 20,000 immigrants drowned in 2001-2018
- From migrant to migration literature





# According to Søren Frank\*:



- “... ‘migration literature’ is an inclusive term that embraces all literature written in our age of migration, addresses migration thematically and, in some cases, stylistically.
- The move to ‘migration literature’ is “a move away from authorial biography as the decisive parameter, emphasizing instead intratextual features such as content and form as well as extratextual forces such as social processes”

# *Festung Europa\**

They entered:

- **Azel** alive

(Tahar Ben Jelloun: *Partir*, 2006)

- **Anpalagan Ganeshu** as a bone and Identity Card twitched from the sea floor

(Amelia Alberti: *Canto per Anpagalan Ganeshu*, 2001;  
Giovanni Maria Bellu: *I fantasmi di Portopalo*, 2004)



# Anpalagan's message\*

## "Là sotto ci sono i miei nipoti"

**MILANO** - Il messaggio di Anpalagan è giunto a terra un mese fa, dopo aver giaciuto più quattro anni e mezzo in un fondale fangoso tra la Sicilia e Malta. Avvolto nei brandelli dei jeans del suo autore, è stato intrappolato dalla paranza di un peschereccio di Portopalo ed è stato tirato su per un centinaio di metri assieme a qualche quintale di merluzzi, polpi, naselli, gamberi e, molto probabilmente, a qualche grammo di ossa umane. Quando la rete è stata aperta, è caduto sul pontile di un peschereccio e un pescatore l'ha raccolto. E' un messaggio molto breve: un nome, un cognome, un luogo di nascita, e una fototessera in bianco e nero: quella dello stesso Anpalagan Ganeshu, 17 anni, cingalese di etnia tamil, una delle 283 vittime del "naufragio fantasma" della notte di Natale del 1996. (...)

*(la Repubblica, 14 giugno 2001)*



# Identity of the victim\*



- The impersonal statistic reduces the victim to the number.
- Literature - both fictional and factual - chooses one among many,
  - returns its dignity
  - translating it into the character
  - with which it is possible to identify
  - to suffer or be indignant

Aylan Kurdi; Madina Hussiny



# Viewpoint is different\*

	Political narrative	Literary narrative
Mediterranean is a	Battlefield	Culture
Trans-Mediterranean migration is a	Crisis	Tragedy
In the focus are	Statistical figures	Individual destinies
The causes are	Economy and politics	Misfortunes and desires



# Thank you for your attention

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