IMAGINES

CLASSICAL RECEPTIONS IN THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

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'This text is an exciting entry in the study of ancient Greece and antiquities. The author skillfully weaves historical analyses of Greece, Homer's *Odyssey*, and ancient mythology with ethnographic considerations of the contemporary Strait of Messina. A welcomed and necessary study of the significance of ancient Greek mythology in the contemporary world.'

SCOTT A. LUKAS, PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY, LAKE TAHOE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, USA

Turning to a region of South Italy associated with Greater Greece and the geographies of Homer's *Odyssey*, Marco Benoît Carbone delivers a historical and ethnographic treatment of how places defined in public imagination and media by their associated histories become sites of memory and identity, as their landscape and mythologies turn into insignia of a romanticised antiquity.

For the ancient Greeks, Homer had set the marine monsters of the *Odyssey* in the Strait between Calabria and Sicily. Since then, this passage has been glowing with the aura of its mythological landmarks. Travellers and tourists have played Odysseus by re-enacting his journey. Scholars and explorers have explained the myths as metaphors of whirlpools and marine fauna. The iconic Strait and village of Scilla have turned into place-myths and playgrounds, defined by the region's heritage.

Carbone observes the enduring impact of Hellas on the real Strait today. The continuous rekindling of cultural and visual traditions of place in the arts, media, travel, and tourism have intersected with philhellenic historiographies, shaping local policies, public histories, views of development, and forms of Hellenicist identitarianism. Elements of society have celebrated the landscape of the *Odyssey*, appropriated Homer as their imagined heirs, and purported themselves as the original Europeans – pandering to outdated ideological appropriations of 'classical' antiquity and exclusionary, West-centric views of the Mediterranean.

MARCO BENOÎT CARBONE is a Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at Brunel University, London, UK. He received his PhD in Intercultural Studies and worked as a Teaching Assistant at University College London. He specialises in cultural theory, media history, and social research methods.

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Geographies of Myth and Places of Identity

MARCO BENOÎT CARBONE

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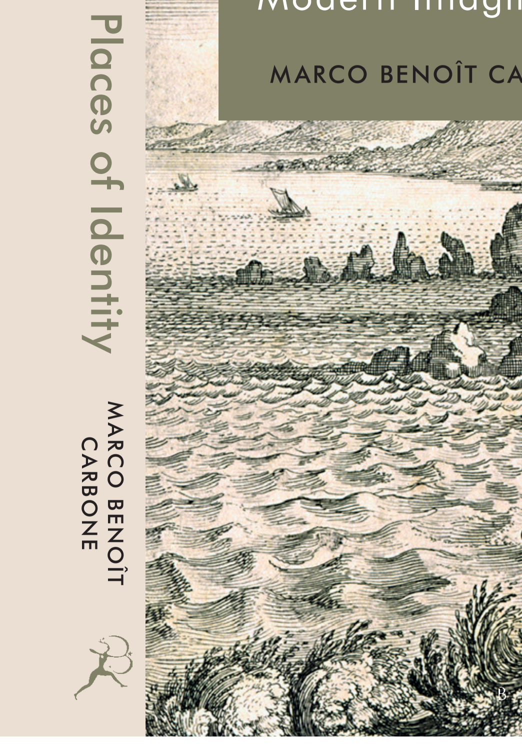
The Strait of Scylla and Charybdis in the Modern Imagination

MARCO BENOÎT CARBONE



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Geographies of Myth and Places of Identity

The Strait of Scylla and Charybdis in the Modern Imagination

Marco Benoît Carbone

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37882.indb 4 17/08/21 3:34 PM

In memory of Francesca, Natalino and Maristella.

Contents

List of Figures ix
Acknowledgements xi
Author's Notes xvi

1 Introduction 1

2 The Strait of Homer and the Strait of Reality 11
2.1 Methodology: Textuality, historiography, ethnography 18
2.2 The exceptional landscape: Myth and history 27
2.3 The South-as-Greece: Hellenicism 29
2.4 Constructing place: The mediated and the real 33
2.5 Projecting identities: Banal identitarianism 36

3 Chronotopes of Hellas: The Strait During the Grand Tour 41
3.1 Geographies of Graeco-Roman mythology 43
3.2 Cartographies of Homeric landmarks 46
3.3 Maps of monsters: The feminine as nature's beauty and dread 50
3.4 Southernizing the landscape: Europe and its Others 52
3.5 From the travelogues to tourism 57

4 Mediterranean Place-Myths 63
4.1 Travel, exploration and mythological journeys 66
4.2 On the track of Odysseus: The Homeric Mediterranean 71
4.3 Italy from the sky: The picturesque South 74
4.4 Vistas of stillness: Greater Greece and Mediterraneanism 78
4.5 Playing Odysseus: The literary travellers 80

5 Myths of Myths: Mapping the Odyssey 85
5.1 Homeric geographies: Between *epos* and history 89
5.2 Contested mappings: Traditionalists, revisionists, heretics 92
5.3 Observations and expectations 96
5.4 The viper fish and the whirlpool: Claiming Homer in the Strait 100
5.5 Experiencing the sea of myths 106

6 Materializing Heritage: Tourism in Scilla 113
- 6.1 Symbolic accretion and pervasive heritage 117
- 6.2 Tourism in Scilla town 124
- 6.3 From the ground: Expectations and disappointments 130
- 6.4 The canon and the environment 134
- 6.5 Monumentalizing antiquity 137

7 Denizens of the Odyssey: Greater Greece in the Strait 141
- 7.1 The Greeks and the 'rabble': Popular histories of the Strait 145
- 7.2 Greece and its Others: Dominant historiographies 148
- 7.3 Foundational fathers: Homer in Reggio 151
- 7.4 Banal identitarianism: Hellas and contested politics 156
- 7.5 Heirs of Homer: Local hide, global pride 162

8 Conclusions: (Re-)Imagining the Strait 167
- 8.1 Mythical lands and historical mirages 168
- 8.2 Deconstructions and reconstructions 172
- 8.3 Places and bodies: Inhabiting history 177
- 8.4 The Strait and the Mediterranean 182
- 8.5 Re-imagining the Strait 184

Notes 189
Bibliography 221
Index 251

37882.indb 8 17/08/21 3:34 PM

Figures

1.1 Aerial view of the Strait from the Sicilian side with Calabria at the opposite end. Photo by author. 2

1.2 A view of Scilla's rock from the sea. Photo by author. 2

1.3 Mythological statue of Scylla in Scilla town's main square by Francesco Triglia, 2014. Photo by author. 3

2.1 '*Caribdis escollo en el Faro de Mecina que fingieron los Poetas monstruo che se tragava las embarcaciones*' (1886), in Crespo Delgado/Romero Muñoz (2009). 16

2.2 A view of the replica of Giovanni Montorsoli's statue of Neptune with Scylla and Charybdis, 1547–64, displayed in Messina, Italy. Photo by author. 17

2.3 Main research locations. Map composition by author. 22

2.4 View of Scilla town, Chianalea quarter. Photo by author. 23

3.1 A route of Graeco-Roman landmarks. Detail from Saint-Non's *Voyage* (1783). Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali – Biblioteca Nazionale 'Vittorio Emanuele III', Napoli. 47

3.2 The Strait of Homeric myths and a view of Scilla's promontory. Detail from G. Fortuyn, *Aspetto meridionale della città di Scilla*, incision (1773). Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali – Biblioteca Nazionale 'Vittorio Emanuele III', Napoli. 49

3.3 A bookstand in Scilla town with histories of the town and Greater Greece. Photo by author. 60

4.1 The Mediterranean of myths, in E. Lessing, *The Voyages of Ulysses* (1965). Photo by author. 69

4.2 Stills from *The Search of Ulysses* (1966). 73

4.3 The promontory of Scilla (top) and a cliff in Palmi (bottom). Photos by author. 77

5.1 A viper fish in Reggio Calabria's Museo di Biologia Marina. Photo by author. 101

5.2 Currents in the Strait from Cannitello, a few miles off Scilla. Photo by author. 104

5.3 Maria Rando's statue to the victims of the sea in Punta Faro, Sicily. Photo by author. 110

6.1 Mythological arch and statue 'Scyllae Civitas', Francesco Jerace, 1935, in Scilla, Calabria. Photo by author. 118

6.2 Actresses in Scilla playing as Sirens and a Scylla monster inflatable. Photo by author. 121

6.3 Tourists in Scilla town, overlooking the Strait and Sicily. Photo by author. 127

7.1 Postcards of the Bronze Warriors in Reggio Calabria's Archaeological Museum. Photo by author. 157

7.2 Replica of Phidias' *Athena Promachos* by Antonio Bonfiglio (1940s, resting on a 1932 pillar), in the modern Anfiteatro Anassilao (Arena dello Stretto), Reggio Calabria. Photo courtesy of Loredana Guinicelli. 164

8.1 A child lifted by a tall wave in Scilla's turbulent waters. Photo by author. 173

8.2 Advertisement for the MArRC (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Reggio Calabria) in one of Reggio's train stations. Photo by author. 180

8.3 View from the Strait, facing Punta Faro in Sicily. Photo by author. 188

37882.indb 10 17/08/21 3:34 PM

Acknowledgements

The story behind this book is rather long and turbulent, spanning little short of a decade. It started with a relocation from Bologna, my adoptive town in the North of Italy, to London, to start my doctorate at University College London. This was a way to pursue my passion in the area of the reception of antiquity, while escaping from unemployment as an intellectual labourer hit by the global crisis in his early thirties. However, as I would realize in hindsight, it was also a marker of ambivalence – a way for me to get further away from my birthplace in Calabria while looking back at it from a distance, as if cautiously assessing its relations with antiquity – and my chances to reunite with it. By the time I got past both the thrills and the painful wall-hitting of a London PhD life with no solid economic backing, I was also initiating my ethnography down in my 'South' of Italy: the land of Graeco-Roman myths from my childhood and teen years.

Soon after, I juggled my doctoral studies with teaching in various universities in London. These years were of febrile labour and a rebuilding of my perspectives as a scholar, subjected to the demands of training rigour and facing a casualized job market as a precarious academic, but encompassing satisfying, interdisciplinary professional growth. Still, this academic empowering was far from painless. Even with the privilege of my ethnicity (a 'white other' in the census) my work constantly faced not only the burden of interdisciplinarity – an enriching approach, albeit one that is exposed to multiplied foci of attack – but, more seriously, precariousness in life and work conditions. There was also a relative displacement and deconstruction of my identity, culminating in 2016 in acquiring a taste of what it means to feel like a 'citizen of nowhere'.

Defending the thesis marked – as for all PhDs – a momentous milestone. But both plans to publish and nostalgia for my homeplaces were superseded by an urge to stabilize my employment. A few months later, in summer, I was in Italy for a short break, electronically signing my first permanent university contract after a successful interview in London a few days earlier. On the same day, I discovered a serious health condition. Three and a half months of hospitalization ensued, but soon after my recovery I was on a flight back to London in search of a flat and to reclaim my new job. From a B&B, I sent back the signed contract of

37882.indb 11 17/08/21 3:34 PM

this book. I had written its proposal on a tiny green-hued glass desk in a reception hall of my hospital wing, in between operations, during convalescence, monitored by medical devices.

The years that followed in London marked a desire to question and refine the scope of my doctoral thesis, do further research, and complete this monograph while initiating a tasking new commitment. My vicissitudes certainly imparted a sense of challenge to the writing up. While it is hard to assess how much this piece of work has been shaped by such tribulations, I am only giving in to the temptation of equating it to an Odyssey – whose reception is part of the object of the study – insofar as the metaphor captures an involuntary journey, largely devoid of sympathy for the narcissistic endeavours of the followers of the canonical hero, even though marked by an obstinate pursuit of its completion. What this experience has hopefully generated is a cognisance of different frames and perspectives concerning not only different methods, and not just a specific place in the world, but also place and identity, transience and mobility more at large. While obviously shaped by my own circumstances, my findings will hopefully have a few interested in relating them to their own stories, contexts and intellectual-historical-ethnographic curiosity.

Over the course of these years, I have met a great number of people with whom I have incurred a debt for contributing to the existence and shaping of this study, undoubtedly more than I will be able to mention here. I should like to thank again my supervisors at UCL, Maria Wyke and Charles Stewart, for agreeing to my undertaking of doctoral work under their guidance and offering their complementary perspectives; and some who then variously helped me by commenting on my research and offering feedback or simply their friendly support, like Stephen Hart, Lee Grieveson, Gesine Manuwald, Stephen Colvin, Catherine Hatton, and Cristina Massaccesi. I owe to UCL Greek and Latin and CMII initial backing of my ethnographic experience in the Strait in 2014. Initially driven by the pursuit of a documentary film, this experience complemented the archival and historical work and enhanced my perception of the method and object of study.

In Calabria and Sicily (and elsewhere) I have been enriched and challenged by my encounters with the many subjectivities that crossed paths with me and allowed me glimpses into their lives and motivations, projects and hopes, irks and disappointments about Greater Greece and the present. Among them (while excluding a few at their own request for privacy, and with the added risk of forgetting too many) are Fortunato Polistena, Antonio Palamara, Francesco Triglia – and his precious documentation about his Scylla statue – Rocco Macrì,

37882.indb 12 17/08/21 3:34 PM

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The spark that led to the present publication was set off by publishing a paper in this very series: I am thankful to Rosario Rovira Guardiola for entrusting to me with the task of writing a chapter for her collection The Ancient Mediterranean Sea in Modern Visual and Performing Arts (2017). Series Editors Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Martin Lindner and the Publisher later kindly welcomed a proposal of mine. I should importantly mention the Editors at Bloomsbury Academic, Alice Wright and especially Lily Mac Mahon, who offered her continued assistance and demonstrated patience with my delays and requests. My reviewers provided feedback on my initial draft and a chance to deliver a more effective piece of writing. For this edition, I am thankful to those mentioned in my List of Figures for kindly allowing use of their textual and iconographic resources; and to the often unsung heroes – the staff at various libraries, from my beloved Senate House, ICS, and UCL libraries in London to the Biblioteca Universitaria in Bologna and Reggio Calabria's Biblioteca Comunale Pietro De Nava. Loredana Guinicelli has graciously granted use of her wonderful photographic artwork to supersede one of my own. Vincenzo Leotta has my gratitude for his willingness to help and prodigality. I should next wholeheartedly thank Louise Chapman as an external Editor who provided her professionalism and wisely used the executive powers bestowed upon her to kill (some of) my textual darlings in my stead while I was in academic burnout, now that books are subjected to an increased pressure to be slimmer. It is my hope that the half-handful of readers

37882.indb 13 17/08/21 3:34 PM

possibly interested in my work will want to seek more extensive documentation on my companion website, www.marcobenoit.net/geographiesofmyth/.

During the write-up I was able to benefit from the readings and insightful criticism of many who have been of precious influence, whether by reading chapters and extracts, sharing their thoughts on my objectives, or confronting me with constructive criticism. Among these are Eric Hirsch and Anna Tuckett from Brunel University, London, Anthropology for commenting on my drafts; as well as Will Rollason and the rest of the department for giving me a chance to present my ideas in their seminar series. I express similar gratitude to Curtis Dozier, Vassar College, and the convenors and speakers of the 2021 Archaeological Institute of America/Society for Classical Studies Joint Annual Meeting for offering an important venue to share some of my theses on Hellenicism in Calabria. In addition to these, Jonathan Burgess from the University of Toronto shared his expertise and travel notes on Homeric geographies; Francescomaria Tedesco of the Università di Camerino has always been willing to discuss Mediterraneism and invaluable for his relentlessly and inspiringly sharp criticism; Giorgio Bertellini, University of Michigan, welcomed discussion of Southernism; and Stavroula Pipyrou, University of St Andrews, has consistently encouraged, acknowledged, and validated my ambitions as a researcher; Mauro Francesco Minervino, ABA Catanzaro, similarly encouraged me. Some of my colleagues and closest friends, Federico Ugolini, University of Haifa, and Federico Giordano, University of Perugia, have not only always offered me enjoyable discussions and constructive criticism, but also invaluable personal support, often bearing the cross of being a patient audience for my brain bugs about both academic and real life. I should also thank Andrew Lemon and Hillegonda Rietveld; Antonio Zoccali and Giulia Cardona, sharing my love of Scilla town; Ivan Girina and Gianluca Balla for their precious friendship and suffering my interminable lamentations; Giovanna Maina and Federico Zecca for their unselfish support and always being points of reference; Henry Martin T. Demasco; Mario de Pasquale; Anna Marie Galea; and Rossella Catanese, Marco Teti, Luciano Attinà, Francesca Barbalace and Massimiliano Spanu for their deep amity and trusted affinity. Notwithstanding the vast amount of support that I was lucky enough to receive, any inconsistencies, misunderstandings, errors or shortcomings of this research will still reside firmly on my shoulders.

Last but not least, I should probably thank my family, for not standing in the way at least some of the time; and Maria Chiara Billi, for never failing to be there when I was really in need. I am indebted to Mimmo Carbone for his vital support with words and actions and to the doctors and staff at the San Donato for pulling

37882.indb 14 17/08/21 3:34 PM

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This book is finally dedicated to my family who could never read it.

37882.indb 15 17/08/21 3:34 PM

Author's Notes

This study is based on evidence drawn in part from ethnographic work carried out during my doctoral research at University College London. Most of the individuals cited in this study have kindly agreed to inform my research and graciously consented to be mentioned in it with their real names. A few have been anonymized to protect their privacy and their narratives have been rendered untraceable.

The reader will find more extensive iconographies, film documentation and interviews with my informants on my companion website, www.marcobenoit.net/geographiesofmyth/.

The author would like to state that he wishes to respectfully distance himself from the denomination of 'classics' usually employed by scholars. He hopes that more specific denominations, like 'Graeco-Roman', or others covering specific subjects, are preferred instead in the future as the debate on 'classicism' evolves in the field. Such denominations will appear in his view less generic and ideologically loaded, and untainted from the exclusionary baggage of the one in traditional and current use. Notwithstanding, the author wishes to emphasize that he holds in high praise and wholeheartedly supports the value and worth of the series and the list, their scientific and intellectual contents, and their Editors and authors.

37882.indb 16 17/08/21 3:34 PM

1

Introduction

Towards the end of August 2014, I got up from my beach mat overlooking Sicily as the sun set on a hot summer day and people enjoyed their last dive. Walking up to the street side and then through a small alley with a café called Calypso, I stepped into a tavern. I was in Scilla, a small town by the sea in Calabria, Italy that has been traditionally associated with the myth of Scylla and Charybdis from Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*.[1] Fortunato and Antonio, a fisherman and fishmonger, welcomed me to have a few drinks and talk about life in a town steeped in the memory (and place branding) of Magna Greacia: the former Greater Greece, a geographic area that encompassed parts of Southern Italy once inhabited by ancient Greek settlers. The two Scillesi also elaborated on the town's economy, which owes a lot to seasonal intake from local seaside tourism. While drinking Peroni, Fortunato described to me the currents of the Strait [Figures 1.2, 5.2] that had generated the 'fable of the monster' from the *Odyssey*. Here, whirlpools would have once dragged down sailors, inspiring the myths.

Indeed, mention of the Strait of Reggio and Messina – a narrow passage of water between the Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas separating mainland Calabria from the Italian island of Sicily [Figures 1.1, 1.2] – frequently conjures up images of Scylla and Charybdis, the ancient Greeks and picturesque Mediterranean Italy. As Fortunato and Antonio reminded me, the Strait has enjoyed an enviably attractive literary aura with international renown owing to Homer and the *poleis* of antiquity. In textual, iconographic and historical traditions, scholars and explorers have explained the myths as metaphors of whirlpools, caves, sea rocks and marine animals. Images of the Strait as the inspirational source and abode of the mythological monsters have been reworked in the modern imagination from popular histories to scholarship, from the arts to travel cultures, from cartography to tourism. Travellers and tourists have often 'played Odysseus' by re-enacting his journey.[2]

This legacy is fairly apparent in Scilla town. In the central square, Francesco Triglia's statue of the mythological Scylla captures the moment of the creature's

37882.indb 1 17/08/21 3:34 PM

Figure 1.1 Aerial view of the Strait from the Sicilian side with Calabria at the opposite end. Photo by author.

Figure 1.2 A view of Scilla's rock from the sea. Photo by author.

metamorphosis, dominating the onlooker from a height of some three metres and a view of the Strait with Sicily in sight [Figure 1.3]. While discussing the mythology of the town, the burly Scillesi jokingly likened themselves to Odysseus, reminding me of the artists and explorers who had reworked the *Odyssey* and even tried to sail in the hero's tracks over these seas. Then, their humour soured. As Fortunato put it, his boat was an ancient *spatara* used to hunt swordfish – a practice thought to hail back to Homer. Politicians, he said, claimed to support traditional activities and praised Scilla's roots in ancient Greece in election times, but did not in reality promote any financially supportive policies. In the guise of hi-tech Charybdes, the boats of the multinational fishing industry devoured fish at a far quicker pace. The town, they continued, also suffered from chronic unemployment; literary tourism had been perennially hailed as a key to development, but it had never taken off. In his raspy voice, Antonio concluded that 'Homer had done a lot, while ourselves – we have done very little'.

Antonio's formulation condenses the gist of my research in the area of the Strait, particularly in the province of Reggio, as a site where the construction of a canonized Greek past has become a fundamental element in the modern region's renown in the arts and literary cultures – and of its hopes and aspirations. At the same time, it plays a role in the region's efforts to cope with a 'crisis of presence' as a marginal economy facing political disenfranchisement in Italy and

Figure 1.3 Mythological statue of Scylla in Scilla town's main square by Francesco Triglia, 2014. Photo by author.

Europe.[3] This book follows the cultural trajectories of the Homeric Strait from modernity to the present, presenting a historical and in-field treatment of the mythological landmark today. It focuses on how Greater Greece binds together ideas about geography and history to create a memory that then sustains local formulations of heritage, aspirations for tourism and development, constructions of cultural identity, and even myths of an ethnic 'descent' from the Greeks.

An interrogation of how historical and imaginative geographies impact on the sense of place and identity, this study discusses the 'projections' of the past[4] and interplay between literature, heritage, landscape and popular histories and archaeologies. It participates in a current approach to historical experience that investigates the specific question of how 'history is subjectively experienced by people in the process of orienting their present toward the past'.[5] I consider two intertwined perspectives. First, there is the Strait's enduring fascination to tourists, travellers, artists and in media such as literature, film and documentaries. Second, the role of Greek antiquity has shaped ways of understanding the landscape, memory and heritage – even inviting the appropriation of Homer as an asset for literary tourism and as a foundational figure.

This is thus an investigation into a sense of history for a sense of place. From this standpoint, the Strait is both liminal and marginal. It is liminal because its geographical position has made it work like an in-between, a 'borderland' between Europe and its Others, stuck in a backward present. Its liminality entails a state of in-between and threshold that has provided a setting suitable for imaginative travel. Yet the region has also been intended as peripheral and far from the centre, working as a geopolitical Other and as a 'place on the margin', 'left behind by the onrush of modernity', evoking 'nostalgia and fascination'.[6]

Within this process, the Homeric landscape is a crucial element in the construction of ideas of belonging – as the Strait has been constructed over time by both visitors and locals as exceptional and myth-inspiring. In fact, the area's reception has been at least as much shaped and produced *by* the history, Homeric myths and the expectations that they generated. Homeric geography in the Strait has become a defining element of heritage, intended as 'the contemporary use of the past'.[7] Historical traditions and iconographies have had an important effect not only on the geographical construction of an imaginatively mythological landscape, but also in building a local sense of place and belonging.

As a native of the area, my own interest in the topic emerged as a way to self-reflexively explore how exposure to various forms of historical mediation shapes

37882.indb 4 17/08/21 3:34 PM

our sense of belonging and identity. As I investigated the visual genealogies of the Strait for my doctoral research, I realized that my earliest recollections of the themes of Greek mythology had also been acquired through the media accompanying my experience in the lived environment, and then via my later exposure to the *Odyssey* as I attended the Liceo Classico Italian high school. As a continuation of the doctorate I undertook on the subject, this study reflects a personal trajectory that has transformed my perception of what counts as local identity and how we attach ourselves to the symbols behind our affiliations – experientially and theoretically.

Punctuated by statues, landmarks and countless examples of place branding inspired by Homeric geographies, Scilla is real-life proof of the impact of the cultural traditions of the Strait as a playground of Homeric geographies attracting generations of artists, filmmakers, travellers, writers and scholars.[8] Centuries of imaginative projections, travels and re-mediations of mythical tales have also contributed to shaping a sense of identitarian belonging. Homeric geography has stood less imaginatively and more politically as a foundational myth to claim continuity with a prestigious past. Yet, the area of the Strait – comprising Calabria and Sicily – has been characterized by stilted modernization, weak industrialization and mass migration to Northern Italy and abroad since the country's unification. Both have been fraught with structural social issues turned inescapable commonplaces, such as backwardness, corruption and criminality. The prestige of the past has thus often fuelled comparisons between a glorious heritage and a disappointing present.

Homeric references have even supported a social mythology of the local inhabitants of the area as the 'heirs of the Greeks'. Heard time and again from my informants in more or less ironic or serious forms, the myth of Homeric descent is a localist version of the ethnocentric belief that 'Greece has made Europe' (in fact, as historians tell us, Europe has claimed Greece).[9] In the Strait, the claim of continuity with Hellas (often seen by Euro-Atlantic agents as one of their own precursors in civilization) has amounted for some to reversing a regional stigma with both a declaration of Mediterranean exceptionality and a romantic over-performance of the idea of having represented the *earliest* Europe. 'Being the Greeks' has meant for some in the South a way to secure one's place both *within* Italy and the 'West' and *in contrast* with those supra-local foci of subordinating power.[10]

This study considers many of the facets of these political and cultural relationships, showing the ambivalent role of historical traditions and mediated representations in shaping an image of place that has often been accompanied by

37882.indb 5 17/08/21 3:34 PM

an underlying narrative of a past historical glory. This narrative has impacted on ideas of development, shaped expectations about tourism as an asset, and even acquiesced to forms of 'regional envy' in the Strait through 'romantic visions of an imagined homeland'.[11] Appropriations of antiquity have fuelled hopes for economic development and a redemptive narrative for a disenfranchised region, alongside more daunting ethno-regionalist myths that intersect with xenophobia and the nation's unresolved racism and colonial past. Thus, at a broader level, this study contributes to a conceptualization of the role played by iconographic and historical forms of popular antiquity in sustaining regionalist views of the territory, where ideas of places intersect and interact with larger historical and geopolitical narratives.

Methodologically, this study emphasizes the importance of ethnographic and empirical observation to these processes in context and in everyday life. In this study, I rely on many informants met in Scilla and other places in the Strait mostly between 2014 and 2016. My experience with them accompanies my reflections on the representational histories of this region. The pervasive presence of Greater Greece is thus refracted across the region into a complex fresco of affective alignments. This presence is found in diverse appropriations of Greek antiquity and its consequences, which range from intense engagement to indifference, showing an array of responses to a grand historical narrative.

Within representations are genealogies of meaning and power. This study connects Graeco-Roman histories to their more mundane effects and observable complexities as they enact a union 'of erudite knowledge and local memories'.[12] My perspective is part of these memories: as an economic migrant born in Reggio Calabria, the provincial capital of the Calabrian side of the Strait, some of my fondest childhood and teenage memories are tied here. Leaving after high school for 'Northern' Italy, and then for the United Kingdom, has largely separated me from these places. Neither an insider nor an outsider, neither 'at home' nor 'elsewhere' but rather switching between these positions,[13] I have traversed different value frames for addressing the sense of identity and even nostalgia that come from affective relations with place. My navigation of this interstitial position informs this study.

By focusing on how grand histories are implanted in everyday existence, I aim to contribute to an understanding of the role of representational processes – particularly from the standpoint of relations between the global and the regional.[14] Among other things, this study shows how the Sirens of a globally renowned historical tradition have lured reasoned scholars of all backgrounds to

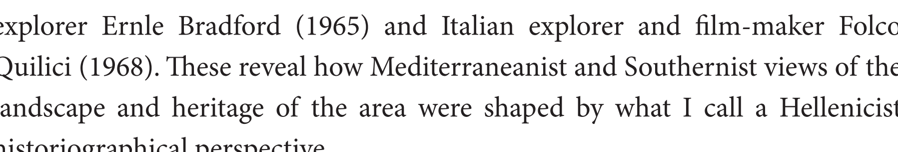
37882.indb 6 17/08/21 3:34 PM

act as gatekeepers of its cultural capital or even claim ideas of descent and origin. Globalized images help promote constructions that are claimed locally as if they were 'natural', even as they emerged from the historical (and globalized) processes of establishment of the 'classics' that have made them possible.[15]

The chapters in this study illustrate these processes by delving into the modern imaginings of the Strait and related areas of research and debate. Chapter 2 clarifies the methodology and theoretical issues that underpin the more evidence-based chapters. It begins with a historical background to the Homeric geographies, then discusses the theoretical notions of the place-myth, the chronotope and the heterotopia.[16] After detailing these and a methodological framework on textuality, critical historiography and ethnography, I introduce the notion of Hellenicism to address ideological appropriations of Hellas in the Strait. These appropriations can be understood in relation to the historical Southern Question (*Questione Meridionale*)[17] and existing theorizations around Orientalism, Mediterraneanism, Southernism and Celticism.[18] Finally, I look at the role of place narratives in heritage and tourism, which are part of an everyday process of the social appropriation of the past.

Providing the historical background to many of the ideas addressed in later sections, Chapter 3 focuses on the European Grand Tour's foundations in a European gaze or view of the Strait – one that is steeped in antiquarianism and philhellenism.[19] I review travelogues and charts that envisioned the Strait of Scylla and Charybdis as a nostalgic chronotope of Hellas for modern European audiences. I also discuss the ascription of the Strait to the visual category of the picturesque and the interest in mythological landmarks that motivate its visitors alongside geopolitical perceptions of the 'South' as a backward boundary of Europe. Showing how the creation of a common site for a lost Homeric landmark and the historical glory of Greater Greece informed cultural industries over the past century, I discuss re-editions of travelogues in local publishing projects in Calabria and how the Grand Tour itself has become a narrative used locally to further acknowledge and appropriate ideas of the South-as-Hellas.

Chapter 4 searches travel photography books, documentaries and tourist media to observe the continuation of these visual tropes from the Grand Tour into twentieth-century global cultural industries, or when the Strait began working as a playground for mythological re-enactments that emerged with the imaginaries of tourism. I look at photo books, travel media, and tour guides published in Euro-Atlantic contexts (mostly Europe, but also Italy and the United States) over the course of the past century, particularly in the post-war period. I also examine film documentaries on the South by British historian and



explorer Ernle Bradford (1965) and Italian explorer and film-maker Folco Quilici (1968). These reveal how Mediterraneanist and Southernist views of the landscape and heritage of the area were shaped by what I call a Hellenicist historiographical perspective.

I also discuss how explorers set out to localize the 'actual' landmarks of the myth of Scylla and Charybdis, often constructing mediated views of the landscape to approximate mythological accounts. Their efforts were motivated by a penchant for adventurous exploration ignited by archaeological missions such as Schliemann's in previous eras, and by more recent endeavours of experimental travel such as Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon Tiki*.[20] Examining travel guides on Calabria published nationally and internationally today, I consider the endurance of primitivist and Hellenicist narratives for this region, and how the mythologies of the Strait have shaped the image of the area as a land of Homeric mythology, former Greater Greece and Italy's archaic Hellas.

Chapter 5 focuses on Homeric geographies as traditions of locating myths on the map – a long-running motif of travel, exploration, scholarship and semi- or utterly fictional attempts to rediscover and re-map the *Odyssey* in the real world. The Strait emerges as a milestone for both traditional and more subversive or imaginative takes on the *Odyssey* within a centuries-old tradition of adventurous geographical discovery in entertainment media, scholarship, popular histories and archaeology. These attempts I group into the categories of traditionalist, enquiring and revisionist Homeric geographies. They include recent ones such as that by Jean Cuisenier, centred around the Mediterranean, and the controversial hypothesis of Felice Vinci, who 'heretically' remapped the whirlpools of Charybdis, Scylla and other traditional mythological landmarks in the Baltic.[21]

Exploratory or armchair endeavours can function as ways to 'own' or claim cultural capital through empirical explanations of 'true' Homeric mappings. I thus turn to how scholars from the Strait have appropriated the *Odyssey* through enduring processes of gatekeeping and ownership. These processes also resonate with strong affective responses to the territory, which include natural forces such as tides and currents, its abyssal fauna, and its history of dreadful but highly mythopoeic earthquakes and tsunamis. One example is found in projects such as Horcynus Orca, which aims to establish a permanent point for an environmental and historical view of the region heavily informed by its cultural traditions (from Homer to more recent literature and the arts). They can also be seen in the work of artists and writers whose responses to the natural landscape are simultaneously shaped by pervasively Hellenicist cultural traditions.

37882.indb 8 17/08/21 3:34 PM

Chapter 6 relates how long-lasting traditions of Homeric references have impacted on the sense of place in Scilla and the Strait since the post-war period. This sense has helped diffuse forms of place branding based on Greek mythology that continue in the present. The pervasive presence of a Hellenist heritage discourse in the Strait can be observed in major archaeological museums, statues and numerous forms of place branding. I trace their appearance as outcomes of a process involving the inscription of antiquity that has been taking shape for the past century (particularly in the post-war period, when discourses on local development started to shape views of the town as a literary tourism destination). Discussing how Greater Greece has been mobilized by the political class and other elements as an asset for place branding, I look at the convergence of the state, media and local entrepreneurship in this narrative to discuss the mythologies, disappointments and short circuits of such expectations. These include the gentrification lamented by local fishermen, environmental dangers, the neoliberal ideology of development locking the South into a position as a tourism consumable, and even the potential, ultimate irrelevance of Homer within a more complicated context of underdevelopment.

Chapter 7 turns to local appropriations of the *Odyssey* in the Strait and the self-fashioning of elements of local historiographies and society as the heirs of Homer. The legacy of Greater Greece as a tradition sustains everyday forms of localist pride and identitarianism that intersect with politically exclusionary frameworks. I provide examples from Calabria that address the issue of how a highly Hellenicist historiographical tradition has led to a highly selective mode of memorialization for Hellas (to the detriment of all other historical eras and ethnicities of the region). I thus focus on the political appropriations of Hellas, including some of the most dangerous intersections between 'classicism', xenophobia and masculinism. These intersections occur in a national and regional context dominated by systemic racism and an unprocessed colonial past, presenting competing political evocations of antiquity. Symbols such as the Riace Bronzes also serve as local variants of Mediterranean whiteness, partaking in exclusionary, racist and colourist formulations of citizenship and the homeland.

Weaving together evidence and discussions from previous chapters, my conclusions reflect on the Strait as a part of Hellas and thus one of the imagined source points of Europe. I consider whether we can frame its mythologies and histories within a more complex and inclusive historiography of the region. In so doing, I suggest that this passage – where the cultural reception of Greater Greece often entails conceptions of difference as well as identity – may also

provide useful ground for reflecting more broadly on the uses of antiquity in the present. This use should be placed in a critical perspective, both for scholars of antiquity and the public at large. The past can enrich our present by allowing us to project fancies and anxieties. It creates space to explore the possibilities of future relations with past accomplishments, the territory and the environment. At the same time, tradition can also tie us to a hegemonic, romanticized setting of imagined golden ages and anchor us in imagined forms of belonging, self-referential claims of importance, complacent approaches to the environment and exclusionary ethnic and political frameworks.

37882.indb 10 17/08/21 3:34 PM