Transnational Literature
Volume 8, no. 2
May 2016

Complete articles in one file for ease of downloading and printing

Peer-reviewed articles

Pablo Chiuminatto and Ana Cortés
Patagonia, Land of Nomads: A Glance at a Territory Shaped by Displacement

Laila EL-Mahgary
Live Entertainment in a Fairytale Art-Peripheral Tourist Setting

Per Henningsgaard
Changes in Tone, Setting, and Publisher: Indigenous Literatures of Australia and New Zealand from the 1980s to Today

Adnan Mahutovic
Global Citizenship in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Adriana Elena Stoican
Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors

Daniela Vitolo
The Performance of Identity in Kamila Shamsie’s Burnt Shadows

Carmen Zamorano Llena
A Cosmopolitan Conceptualisation of Place and New Topographies of Identity in Hari Kunzru’s Gods Without Men

Lecture

Margaret Baker
Patagonia, Land of Nomads: 
A Glance at a Territory Shaped by Displacement

Pablo Chiuminatto and Ana Cortés

Once upon a Voyage

In the year 1878, an English Lady named Florence Dixie decided to flee the busy comforts of London for a strange, nearly deserted place at the southernmost corner of the world. Patagonia was back then a broad, untouched landscape, barely inhabited by nomad peoples as rough and wild as their territory. For Victorian society, it must have seemed extremely odd that a refined Lady should wish to venture into such inhospitably cold regions. Perhaps this is the reason why Florence Dixie felt the need to respond to these questionings on her book about her journeys Across Patagonia (1881):

What was the attraction in going to an outlandish place so many miles away? [...] Precisely because it was an outlandish place and so far away, I chose it. Palled for the moment with civilization and its surroundings, I wanted to escape somewhere, where I might be as far removed from them as possible.1

This was, in fact, a time when technological development had made travelling fairly safe and was becoming increasingly frequent, even popular. These explorations engendered a great volume of writings which were later comprehended under a literary genre devoted specifically to the detailed narration of such world-wanderings. Travel literature of the nineteenth century constitutes, in this sense, a sort of evidence of a world suddenly set in movement. Of course, the transformation of the world map had initiated more than four centuries ago with the discovery of newer continents. The discovery of the Americas produced the opening up of a whole new world through which to wander. This was both the subject matter of early travel writings, and the triggering of the dusk and extinguishment of more than 10,000 years of native nomad cultures: the first great bouleversements of trans-oceanic displacements and cultural collisions.2 Yet it was not till the very end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century that these voyages begun to evolve into global movements.

Lady Florence Dixie’s travels across Patagonia portray and foreshadow the coming of an era of great world displacements that were to be intensified throughout the twentieth century and into contemporary times. This modern condition has been described and interpreted by literary theory not merely as a group of phenomena that have facilitated physical displacements across the globe, but as a generalised social acceleration, a nomadic way-of-being and thinking, a geopoetic3 turn brought about by the virtual dissolution of frontiers. It follows that, together with the

---

1 Florence Dixie, Across Patagonia (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1880) 2.
2 Anne Chapmam, Fin de un Mundo. Los Sel’knam de Tierra del Fuego (Valdivia, Ch.: Taller Experimental Cuerpos Pintados Ltda., 2008).
movement of bodies and vessels, modern technologies have made it possible for cultural objects to move and be accessed from distant points of the earth, thus blurring away the boundaries of disciplines and intellectual fields.

Patagonia is a place shaped by movement. ‘This outlandish place so far away’ is not merely a young wilderness, isolated from modernity: it is an abyss at the southernmost limit of the world; beyond it, there is but a void of sea and ice. This place is at once young and ancient, ineffable and evocative, a land of local nomads like the kawéskar, selk’nam and yaganes and foreign travellers; both a physical territory and an imaginary space, open and unlimited. The nomads, local and foreign, who have wandered this landscape have produced imaginaries to represent and create a territory. This essay will attempt to look into these images and the displacements that have shaped Patagonia as an imaginary and physical space. This exploration will reveal the interweaving of the local and foreign images in an attempt to make sense of a land pushed into instability by a peculiar convergence of phenomena: the vanishing of local peoples, the arrival of passing travellers, and the decline in geopolitical relevance of a location that was, for many centuries, the only bridge between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Indeed, a land of nomads and dis-located identities.

**Making sense of a world in movement**

The map of the world ceases to be a blank; it becomes a picture full of the most varied and animated figures.5

> - Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*

If one were to map out the beginning of these queries about cartographies and displacements in literary theory, the first use of the term *Weltliteratur* would probably constitute a good initial touchstone. It was during a conversation with his fellow poet and friend Johann Peter Eckermann that Goethe first used the concept. These conversations were recorded by Eckermann in a series of notes which were later published in the form of a book entitled *Conversations with Goethe*. One of them, dated Wednesday 31 January 1827, speaks of a Chinese novel by which Goethe was captivated at the time. Amongst other deliberations about this reading, Eckermann recalls this audacious, almost prophetical, statement pronounced by his friend: ‘National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World literature (*Weltliteratur*) is at hand, and every one must strive to hasten its approach.’6

---

4 Dixie 2.
5 Charles Darwin, *Narrative of the surveying voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle between the years 1826 and 1836, describing their examination of the southern shores of South America, and the Beagle's circumnavigation of the globe. Journal and remarks. 1832-1836 [The Voyage of the Beagle]* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839) 607.
Goethe’s oracular words reflect an intensely lucid interpretation of his contemporary world, which was on the verge of becoming an open global territory. They describe, with urgency, the coming to an end of a long tradition of National literatures within which people identified the spirit of its own folk: a common territory of images, the voice of its elders. As localities begun to crumble and texts begun to travel, the very experience of literature underwent a profound transformation. More and more, individuals from any nations and cultures would find themselves – like Goethe – reading books from strange and foreign lands and encountering the feeling that poetry must be ‘the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times, in hundreds and hundreds of men’. With the emergence of a new world-order, human beings across cultures begin to identify with imaginaries beyond national boundaries. Identities are thus re-shaped to the image of this moving cartography.

However, the concept of Weltliteratur contains in itself a sense of hastiness and vertigo that is not without a taint of contradiction. In his essay ‘Philology and Weltliteratur’ (1952), Erich Auerbach unravels the deeper conflict underlying the comforting idea of universal identification with humankind that the term Weltliteratur seems to signify. In fact, the word translates literally as World-literature, which does more than to point out ‘what is generally common and human; it rather considers humanity to be the product of fruitful intercourse between its members’. In this sense, Weltliteratur presupposes ‘mankind’s division into many cultures’.

Auerbach’s interpretation of the historical conditions that shape the notion of Weltliteratur suggest that a dissolution of cultural divisions is at hand. Hence, there is an imminent tendency towards assimilation between cultures. The inherent danger of this tendency is that, if it should come to be fulfilled, no cultural exchange could possibly take place, for there would arrive a state of cultural homogenisation, such that there would be nothing to share or exchange: ‘herewith the notion of Weltliteratur would be at once realized and destroyed’. In a way, the discovery and conquest of the Americas entailed such a destructive encounter, which very seldom produced any culture out of exchange. Specifically in the southern part of Chile, it seems assimilation never took place. A proof of this is the fact that bilingualism never occurred; moreover, the few native languages that still persist, have battled their way back into cultural life through actions of recovery.

Whether Auerbach’s bad omen has come to be realised or not may be the matter of a different essay. But there is yet another scope to this idea that deserves consideration here. The concept of World-literature reflects what may be called a geographical or spatial turn in humanities. Consistently, the fading of stable limits between nations, national identities and countries, and the disintegration or reconfiguration of literary and cultural boundaries, are all space-alluding

---

7 Eckermann.
9 Auerbach 2.
10 Auerbach 3.

'Patagonia: Land of Nomads:' Pablo Chiuminatto and Ana Cortés.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
metaphors, which describe a phenomenon taking place as physical world-displacements as much as theoretical phenomena. It seems the very language of humanities has adopted a vocabulary that speaks of space. In this sense, it is quite telling that Auerbach chose to write a philology about literature’s digression about the world: a philology of literature and its spatial relations. At the same time, it is quite shocking that his writing could almost foretell the final violent outcome of these global displacements, virtual dissolution of frontiers and nomadic European travelling, which theory would, later, try to conceptualise through somewhat obscure notions such as hybridisation.12

The spatial turn is a turn away from linear, chronological approaches to philology, and towards the open world, ‘a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits.’13 This is, in fact, the cultural project put forward by Kenneth White through the concepts of Geopoetics and cosmoaesthetics. White imagines a new kind of intellectual activity, one that would undertake the very worldly task of wandering, with fresh eyes, and experiencing the new world sensation14 that global phenomena present: ‘To leave the ranks for a promenade, to abandon disciplines for a diversion, to become open to the texture of the world implies a renewal of the notion of text.’15 Nineteenth-century travellers across the steppes of Patagonia incarnate this kind of spirit and aesthetic disposition. Darwin’s work, for instance, speaks of a craving for the new: new creatures and new names. This very gesture implies the tracing of connecting lines and ramifications in the taxonomic tree of species. Darwin theory draws a map in which every new individual re-interprets an ancient line of ancestry. There emerges a landmark, a recognisable being, both similar and different from others which are suddenly recognised as his kind. Darwin’s story of species does not just trace a line across time, but draws a web between beings across the globe.

Geopoetics is an aesthetic vision of the world made whole. The broad vision of distant texts and territories being pulled together by movement. Perhaps not so much the assimilation that Auerbach feared in the realisation of World-literature, but a sort of dance. For sure, an acceleration of planetary displacements that makes it difficult to set eyes upon a single local reality; as localities overlap and interweave in the global order. It follows that, understanding this chaosmos16 consists in the unveiling of the hidden harmonies that relate distant texts and territories.

14 White, ‘Elements of Geopoetics’ 165.
16 The term is used by James Joyce in Finnegans Wake to describe a fragile order, at the very verge of chaos: ‘every person, place and thing in the chaosmos of Alle anyway connected with the gobblydumped turkery was moving and changing every part of the time: the travelling inkhorn (possibly pot), the hare and turtle pen and paper, the continually more and less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators.’ James Joyce, Finnegans Wake (London: Faber & Faber, 1975) 118.

"Patagonia: Land of Nomads:" Pablo Chiuminatto and Ana Cortés.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
locations. This supposes the construction of a referential network: somewhat like the fabrication of a map. Hence, ‘The quest will be successful if it results in something that could be called a poem of the world (in the field of scattered forces that is the matter here, the only possible convergence is of poetical order), maybe ... a sort of music.’\textsuperscript{17} Here emerges an intellectual unconstrained by rigid chronologies, whose meditation is itinerant and multidirectional; one Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would have called a \textit{Nomadic thinker}.

Wai Chee Dimock’s proposal for a literary framework understands literature as such an object: a nomadic ground of cultural exchange and vagrant displacement of texts. In her book \textit{Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time} (2006), she explores how literary and intellectual influences make their way through and across space and timelines. Thus, effacing the traditional notion of national literatures.

\begin{quote}
Literature is the home of nonstandard space and time. Against the official borders of the nation and against the fixed intervals of the clock, what flourishes here is irregular duration and extension, some extending for thousands of years or thousands of miles, each occasioned by a different tie and varying with that tie, and each loosening up the chronology and geography of the nation.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

What her investigation unveils is that there are profound relations taking place outside the time-frames within which contemporary humanities usually work; her undertaking is to look into \textit{deep time} for the remnants of thought-traces unfolding into discourses. In this sense, Patagonia is a location where time and space fold, European images crush into and overlap with the wild, arid rock, and great empires such as the Spanish and the English push their borderlines into the primitive land of nomads. Here, oral tradition battles with writing – and loses – while native ecologies are rattled even by the tender bleating of sheep. A place with no riches, but still a passage between two worlds: exotic, remote and coveted. A land of permanent migrancy.

The rise of the nomadic intellectual implies – as White points out – a ‘renewal of the notion of text’\textsuperscript{19} that calls for a new way of understanding literature, literate activity and literary identities. Nomadic activity develops on a territory that is twofold, at once physical and intellectual or imaginary. Both of these planes are boundless and unstable, desert grounds with no borderlines nor landmarks. ‘The variability, the polyvocality of directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography. The nomad, nomad space, is localized and not delimited.’\textsuperscript{20} Suddenly, with the setting-in motion of texts and bodies all across the planet’s surface, interpretation of the local is no longer possible within the limits of national territories: all reading requires a deep gaze into the distance. In the open landscape,

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
17 Our translation. The original quotation reads, ‘La recherche sera réussie s’il en résultait quelque chose qu’on pourrait appeler un poème du monde (dans le champ de forces éparées dont il est question ici, le seul rassemblement possible est d’ordre poétique), peut-être, [...] une espèce de musique.’ Kenneth White, \textit{L’Esprit} 14.
\footnotesize
\footnotesize
19 White, \textit{L’Esprit} 82.
\footnotesize
20 Deleuze and Guattari 382.
\end{flushright}
nomads wander about, they leave trails and pathways which weave a network in space and create a territory. Similarly, humanist interpretation consists in projecting an orientation and creating a theoretical space in movement. This violent world is not merely the nomadic thinker’s milieu, but also the model – the architecture – and the product of nomadic activity.

**Imagining from afar**

Patagonia is just such a territory of nomads; a location visited and shaped by the wandering of travellers. It is a cold desert at the very end of the world, where the land is lashed by the raging Pacific Ocean and bone-like rocks are hammered by a constant, sharp wind. A century after Dixie explored this strange location, by the end of the twentieth century, a traveller named Bruce Chatwin once found himself trying to fix his eyes upon something that could recall, if vaguely, a human gesture.

> In one place the rocks were alternately lilac, rose-pink and lime-green. There was a bright-yellow gorge bristling with the bones of extinct mammals. It led into a dried lake bed, ringed with purple rocks where cow skulls stuck out of a crust of flaky orange mud.

The unnatural colors gave me a headache, but I cheered up on seeing a green tree – a Lombardy poplar, the punctuation mark of man.21

There, amongst the hostile beauties of this land located at the farthest edge of the planet, Chatwin distinguishes a landmark. The Lombardy poplar is an element strange to this landscape, it murmurs in the language of tamer lands and it speaks of trans-oceanic journeys (its seeds dream dreams of nostalgia). Placed there by some traveller – perhaps in an attempt to trace an orientation – the tree is a pristine vestige of the path of modern displacements through Patagonia. Moreover, it suggests the manner in which this blank land is endowed with meanings transplanted here from abroad.

The fact that Florence Dixie had read Darwin’s writings before embarking on her own adventure in Patagonia makes her enthusiasm for choosing this destination even more obscure. On the last pages of his *Voyage of the Beagle* Charles Darwin attempts to recapitulate the most outstanding episodes of his four-year journey across the globe. Amongst these, he recalls Patagonia. Surprisingly, he seems incapable of verbally articulating any positive feature to describe this location. His discourse is, on the contrary, a string of negative phrases:

> I find that the plains of Patagonia frequently cross before my eyes; yet these plains are pronounced by all wretched and useless. They can be described only by negative characters; without habitations, without water, without trees, without mountains, they support merely a few dwarf plants. Why, then, and the case is not peculiar to myself, have these arid wastes taken so firm a hold on my memory?22

It seems as if, despite his experienced naturalist observation skills, which enabled him to be an

---

22 Darwin 605. (The emphasis is ours).
acute note-taker and an accurate taxonomist, he found himself deprived of images with which to grasp the elements that composed his awe before this arid wasteland. Dazzled by the open blank geography, he failed to find anything that could suggest ‘the punctuation mark of a man’; no expressive signs, no allusive gestures. Perhaps when the Beagle docked by the shores of Patagonia, roughly a century before Bruce Chatwin’s visit, there was, in fact, no such a mark to find.

Eventually, as time passed by, and other travellers wandered these steppes, the territory begun to acquire images through which to appear, positively, in language. A set of landmarks, a rhythmic pattern, that can be read by the nomad traveller and provide an orientation. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, ‘There is a territory when the rhythm has expressiveness. What defines the territory is the emergence of matters of expression (qualities).’ The writings by Lady Florence Dixie contain, indeed, a fuller pallet of signs and gestures. One reference, in particular, provides an interesting description of Torres del Paine, three very characteristic mountain peaks of the Chilean Patagonia: ‘The background was formed by thickly-wooded hills, behind which again towered the Cordilleras, – three tall peaks of a reddish hue, and in shape exact facsimiles of Cleopatra’s Needle, being a conspicuous feature in the landscape.’ This passage illustrates how, amid this desert of negative qualities, Dixie places a gesture, a recognisable punctuation mark that echoes and resonates with an image from a far-away location on the globe.

The obelisk is an image transplanted to the steppes of Patagonia from the streets of London. It traces an orientation line back to England, where it was already an echo of a distant land of arid sun and radiant sands. With this very simple gesture – the assimilation of Torres del Paine to Cleopatra’s obelisk – Dixie unfolds a web across the surface of the globe which relates these very different and distant locations in a geopoetical order. Harmut Rosa’s theory of social acceleration suggests that this gesture ought to be read as a sign of the enhanced pace of contemporary cultural exchanges. ‘Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: it pours (sic) us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal.’ Hence, as territorial divides collapse, images reflect the overlapping of referential marks in literature. In this way, reading itself becomes a nomadic activity: a wandering across vast landscapes, tracing pathways and placing landmarks. This transposition reflects, too, the paradoxes of nomadic activity. Dixie travels away from London, to the most remote location, only to find a replica of piece of London standing as an exotic slender Lady amid the harsh Andes.

The simile of Cleopatra’s Needle puts forward a crucial question about the experience of the traveler that will be examined hereafter. When embarking towards remote locations, one would expect the most stirring and thought-provoking sights to be those which are altogether new and unfamiliar. Still, Darwin’s and Chatwin’s notes on the Patagonian landscape prove otherwise.

---

23 Deleuze and Guattari 315.
24 Dixie 164.
26 Berman in Rosa 35.

That which is radically novel proves to be very difficult to apprehend with language, what results of this attempt is a stunned dizziness, a collection of ‘negative characters’. When sense and orientation finally occur is when the voyager’s eye meets something (anything) that might wake in him the echo of a mental picture, a memory kept in some corner of the spirit. What Dixie finds in Torres del Paine is the reflection of an image from her own imaginary, more so, an image of her homeland. It is through this projection that she can have a vision of the desert and create a mental territory.

In this way the nomad sets forth on ‘a voyage of recognition from territory to territory’, from the mental territory of imagination to the imagination of the landscape, from homeland to foreign lands and back again. As Gaston Bachelard explains in his Poetics of Space, ‘one never lives the image directly. All great image has an unfathomable oneiric background, and it is on this oneiric background that personal past meddles its particular colors’. All in all, ‘One can, thus, travel not to flee from oneself, which is impossible, but to find oneself.’ Attaining location ultimately translates into finding oneself through the emergence of echoes or gestures in open space. These landmarks are nothing but the re-cognition of a personal memoir; the apparition of a particle of homeland amid the exotic. In this sense, travelling is always an act of nostalgia – which in Greek means the pain (algia) for home (nost[os]). Nomadic wandering thus goes back over its trails and landmarks, repeatedly, searching for marks that might trigger remembrance. In order to shape his territory and create an orientation, the nomad travels back home in every expressive sign of the landscape that sounds an echo in his imagination. In every gesture found on the territory he longs for home and thereupon the very territory is transformed by his longing.

Darwin, Dixie and Chatwin travelled across Patagonia in a nomadic, geopoetic, journey of discovery and rediscovery. As they imagine this landscape and populate the desert with images, a territory emerges. Their pathways trace a network on the surface of the globe. Of course, that which for one culture appears as a clear web of lines that draw the map of its expansion, constitutes the traces of other culture’s extinction. Thus, the literature produced by European travellers is evidence of a world in movement. For local peoples, though, this literature is the semiotic, aestheticised materialisation of the violent effects of migration and occupation. The images evoked in these works reflect the displacement of imaginary territories, from the Old

Darwin 605.
30 White, L’Esprit 39. Our translation. The original quotation reads, ‘On peut donc voyager non pour se fuir, chose impossible, mais pour se trouver.’
31 Defined as: (1) a wistful desire to return in thought or in fact to a former time in one's life, to one's home or homeland, or to one's family and friends; a sentimental yearning for the happiness of a former place or time: a nostalgia for his college days. Word Origin: 1770-80; < New Latin < Greek nóst (os) a return home + -algia. [algia < Greek algos pain.]
World to this novel land. Paradoxically, in this very strange land, nostalgia takes travellers back home in their imagination and the voyage becomes as much an act of recognition and return as one of discovery: as much a longing for home as a transplanting of that home to this novel land. The consequence of these displacements for Patagonia itself is a sort of invasion: suddenly amid the barren steppe there stood a green-foliaged foreigner, and the wild, rough Cordilleras were dreamt to be the slender sisters of a distant icon that stood, sadly sand-longing, in the middle of a noisy metropolis.

Lost nomads, found landscapes

Of course, it is inconceivable to speak of nomads in Patagonia without at least mentioning the native, local nomads who once inhabited this region. It seems this essay arrives at this consideration almost too late. But such is the story of the native inhabitants of Patagonia who first had contact with Occidental men and women in the nineteenth century, and were fully acknowledged only by the twentieth century. By that time, they were already at the verge of extinction. Alas, the task of accounting for these nomads and their culture might be now as challenging as the attempt to paint a clear picture of a body fading in the mist. The indigenous peoples of these steppes were indeed already near both cultural and physical extinction in the 1920s, when the Austrian priest and anthropologist Martin Gusinde begun his studies on their culture and way of life. In his writings, these peoples – whom Darwin found so distant from the civilised man, he ventured a comparison between this difference and the one existing amongst domesticated and wild animals – are described as a group of tribes with very simple, Stone-Age economies, but a complex and rich spiritual culture, and a deep sense of morality.

Over the decade or so that Gusinde spent between field notes and extended visits to these communities, he seems to have been moved by the innocence of their ways, the simple purity of their customs and their pious pantheism. In between the lines of his very scientific documentary prose there is, in fact, a bitter tone of grief and regret for the imminent extinction of this naïve, profoundly spiritual peoples. While conducting his investigations, he witnessed as ‘The vital flow of ideas between the generation that departs and the generation that arrives has been interrupted.’ The arrival of European travellers, objects, habits and images was not guiltless in the disappearing of the peoples of Patagonia. As Gusinde points out: ‘It has been proved that from colonists and white land owners, from merchants and travelers, laborers and gold-seekers never arose a useful influence for the preservation of the good old ways. Those strangers, as a whole, came out to be a destructive force.’

32 Darwin 228.
33 Martin Gusinde, El mundo espiritual de los Selk’nam (Valdivia, Ch.: Serindígena Ediciones, 2008) 70. Our translation. The original quotation reads: ‘La vital corriente de ideas entre la generación que se va y la generación que llega se ha interrumpido. ¿Cómo puede entonces seguir fluyendo la información acerca de lo ancestral?’
34 Gusinde 71. Our translation. The original quotation reads: ‘Está demostrado que de los colonos y estancieros blancos, de los comerciantes y viajeros, de los jornaleros y buscadores de oro nunca partió una influencia útil para el mantenimiento de las buenas costumbres antiguas. Aquellos extraños, en su conjunto, resultaron ser una fuerza destructora.’
The emergence of foreign images and gestures in the cold desert is, in this way, inevitably accompanied by the occupation of the landscape by strange settlers. In Patagonia, the creation of territories by wandering and displacement is not a mere metaphor to describe the emergence of poetical imaginaries and literary products, but a concrete historical fact. Hence, with the dissolution of national borders and the opening of a global space of wandering, it was the local nomads of Patagonia who experienced an evil never conceived before in the shape of borders, fences and barbed wires. So, in the construction of new territories, foreign nomads displace local nomads – sometimes into the abyss. On this matter, the work of the Franco-American anthropologist, Anne Chapman is quite revealing. Her work collects the testimonies of the last Selk’nam peoples of Tierra del Fuego. Amongst these is an interview with Garibaldi, a Selk’nam descendant, which captures the lucid impressions of this Patagonian native regarding this turbulent era:

It was a thing of Our Lord that this race had to end, so other races come. […] Ever since the world is made the situation of races has always been changed, coming other races. Then this one also had to end, it has been over the earth for many years, it must be finished [he laughs].

Given that neither the Selk’nam, nor any of the other native inhabitants of Patagonia, possessed a written literature, their culture was forever silenced once they were extinguished. So, there were no local voices to speak the images of this landscape. Yet there are literatures about this place which are not foreign nor local, not travel literature or Weltliteratur, but not exactly national literatures either. Patagonia is not a national territory, it was first the land of three nomads cultures and then a geopolitical territory shared by Argentina and Chile. This is the literature produced by Chilean poets in an attempt to make sense of and shape an imaginary of Patagonia.

Gabriela Mistral devotes the tenth section of her Poem of Chile (1967) to Patagonia. In these verses, the same land that was once described as a hostile wasteland appears as a vast, serene Mother and mother-land. In fact, the enunciating voice seems to react to the injurious evil tongues that dare say that God never loved this land, and for that he made her infertile and remote:

They speak too much who never
Had a Mother so white
And never the green Gaia
Was this angelic and white
Nor this nurturing

35 Chapman 84. Our translation. The original quotation reads: ‘Ya era cosa de Nuestro Señor, que hay que terminar esta raza, para que surjan otras razas. […] Desde que está hecho el mundo se ha ido siempre cambiando la situación de las razas, volviendo otras generaciones. Entonces esta también tenía que terminar, ya lleva muchos años sobre la tierra, hay que terminar con ella [rie].’
And mysterious and quiet.\textsuperscript{36}

Again, in the poem ‘Austral Islands’, there are feminine images assimilated to the landscape. This time, the verses speak not about the Mother-steppe, but of the playful archipelago into which the land breaks at the southernmost part of Chile:

What will the pilgrim do,  
The globetrotter looking  
at the dance of the hundred islands  
that laugh or are singing?  
A sharp fragrance comes,  
an incitation, of a Bacchic choir of girls  
thrown to the open sea,  
virgin but intoxicated.\textsuperscript{37}

In this fragment, the scattered islands are compared to a choir of young maenads. The frenetic turmoil of the waves and the howling of the wind are herein transmuted into the wild dance and sweet singing of this choir. It is this feminine exuberance that drives travellers mad, as if enchanted by a parade of nymphae or mermaids. In this manner, all that was hostile and deserted in the imaginaries of foreign travellers is imagined anew. The vast void of the steppe is in the poetic imaginary of Mistral a broad motherly bosom. The icy cold of the south is displaced by an image of virginal purity and sublime serenity. Mother and virgins oppose both the hostility of the arid waste and the violence of the male invasion. These images are, nonetheless foreign. Through those, Mistral turns towards Greco-Latin mythology; that is, the most foundational of Western texts and imaginaries. This necessity for classical images suggests that, before Chilean poetry could elaborate an aesthetic of its own territory, this space was already intensely populated by poetical images conceived far offshore, in remote time-spaces. Such is the obelisk Dixie installs as a parallel of Torres del Paine and such is the Lombard tree in which Chatwin finds a piece of green home.

On a different note, the narrative poem \textit{The Sword in Flames} by Pablo Neruda narrates the story of a great destruction: the collapse of an Eden–like world that resulted in the death of all human kind, save the one hero of this poetic fiction: king Rhodo. After the cataclysm, Neruda’s hero sets forth in a long vagrancy across the world. Having accepted his absolute loneliness, he searches for a new land where to found a new realm. At last, he arrives at the southern end of the world, the cold Patagonia. In that glacial, majestic landscape, he discovers that he is not alone in the world after all: he finds Rosía, and falls in love.


\textsuperscript{37} Gabriela Mistral, ‘Islas Australes’ in \textit{Poesías Completas} (Santiago, Ch.: Editorial Andrés Bello, 2009) 714. Our translation. The original quotation reads: ‘¿Qué va a hacer el peregrino, / el trotamundos mirando / la danza de las cien islas / que ríen o están cantando? / Viene una aguda fragancia, / una incitación, de coro báquico de niñas / tiradas a la mar libre, / virgenes pero embriagadas.’

'Patagonia: Land of Nomads:' Pablo Chiuminatto and Ana Cortés. 
\textit{Transnational Literature} Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.  
In the extreme south of Chile the planet breaks: the sea and the fire, the science of the waves, the strikes of the volcano, the hammer of the wind, the hard rush with its furious blade, cut land and water, they split them: there grew phosphorous islands, green stars, invited streams, jungles as clusters, hoarse gorges: in that world of cold fragrance Rhodo founded his realm.38

This is a harsh new Eden, ‘The last Eden, the one of pains.’39 It is so remote that God never visited it, in the sky above it – says the poem – there was nobody looking down. This is the virgin ground where Rhodo chose to start a new kingdom. It is not the motherly landscape that Mistral imagined, but a magnificent chaos, all the forces of nature unleashed.

Surprisingly enough, despite the contrasts between the Chilean approach to the Patagonian territory and that of foreign travellers, all of these poetic imaginaries are populated by images that come from other times and spaces. The obelisk and the Lombard tree, are, of course, foreign elements, but so are the Bacchic choir and the Biblical tale of the expulsion from Paradise. These are examples of images dislocated, displaced, and re-signified in this new physical and imaginary territory. Chilean poetic imaginary does not itself constitute World-literature; still, the classic and biblical allusions which are recurrent recourses in its construction are signs of the World taking place in this locality.

This phenomenon might very well be interpreted under Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity. This notion explains cultural contact as a dynamic interaction towards identity. Hybridity, somehow, relates to this deep sense of common belonging to humanity which is implied in the idea of Weltliteratur, yet it takes a step further. It proposes that this sense of what is common and what different between cultures – the shaping of the boundaries that define identity – is in fact constructed through contact:

What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, ‘opening out’, remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a ‘singular’ or autonomous sign of difference.40

These signs are the manner in which the global expresses itself in the particular, or as John Tomlinson would word it, the way global space and its displacement shape cultural identities. As


39 Neruda IV. Our translation. The original quotation reads: ‘en el último Edén, el de los dolores’.

40 Bhabha 219.

this author asserts, ‘cultural identity, properly understood, is much more the product of globalization than its victim.’\textsuperscript{41} Such a conceptualisation, however, obscures a cruel and certain historical fact behind the idea of human friendship and cultural mélange. The truth is kawéskar, selk’nam and yagan cultures were effaced from the land by European displacements, and left no traces. Herewith Patagonia’s poetical identity is dis-located, constructed through violent migration, synthesised through local appropriations of strange, foreign images.

In Patagonia, contact was seldom smooth or friendly. Beneath the rich flow of displacements and images which operate a re-shaping of the territory in the imaginary and poetic spaces of literature, there is a physical displacement that takes place, which exerts physical, visible forces on the territory and its inhabitants. The transformation of this landscape which, at the end of the eighteenth century, suddenly opened to contact with the world often proved to be violent. For a fact, the vanishing of the oral imaginaries of the Selk’nam was not a merely poetical occupation of a virtual space, and certainly not a collaborative exchange and between cultures, but the extinction of a people and the brutal silencing of a culture. In this context, Tomlinson’s choice of words exceeds the limits of casual naivety. Globalisation may very well produce new identities, but the destructive power of its expansion cannot be disregarded; while contemporary digital globalisation appears milder and less violent, the silence of its displacement makes it effects on local cultures no less corrosive. Thereupon, concepts such as globalisation, nomadic displacement or hybridity create aesthetic categories that often obscure and facilitate the oblivion of the material events and conditions taking place just beneath the thick layer of theoretical discourse.

\textbf{Pablo Chiuminatto} is Associate Professor, Faculty of Letters, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. He holds a PhD in Aesthetics and Art Theory, and MA in Visual Arts, University of Chile. He is a researcher and teacher in the field of history of ideas, books and information technologies. He regularly publishes articles in specialised journals and books in the field. \texttt{pchiuminatto@uc.cl}

\textbf{Ana M. Cortés} is an instructor at Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (UC). She holds a Licentiate in Letters, Literature and Linguistics, (UC). She is a writing tutor and research assistant, Faculty of Education (UC). She has investigated in the fields of comparative literature and linguistics applied to education. \texttt{amcorte1@uc.cl}

\textbf{Acknowledgements}

This work was funded by VRI–UC CCA-1419, 2013.

Live Entertainment in a Fairytale Art-Peripheral Tourist Setting

Laila EL-Mahgary

Introduction

This article focuses on the important role of live music and entertainment in art-Peripheral tourist settings. Previous studies have acknowledged that for art-Peripheral audiences, live entertainment exists as a second interest. On the other hand, the main arguments in this article will reveal that by focusing merely on the macrostructures, the larger developments and changes in the worldwide seaside resorts throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or on the more celebrative entertainment forms, one can easily dismiss the other popular forms of entertainment and their importance to tourist settings. While Howard Hughes explores the larger developments in tourism, he also looks at the microstructures, questioning the meaning of travel for different types of tourists as he defines art-Peripheral hotel settings constituting of audiences and tourists who are more popular-entertainment oriented. According to Hughes, performances in art-Peripheral settings are shaped by repetitive and tedious rituals in which the distance between the audience and the performer is greater than that of the more celebrative forms of performances. The main argument he suggests is that, unlike for the core-art tourists who attend professional and highly regulated music festivals, the art-Peripheral tourists’ experiences with live music or entertainment are rarely celebrative and never a means to an end. Like Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, he observes the western audience’s level of physical separation from the performer. He argues that this level of separation is not a direct result of any particular genre of music, but rather, a question of the audience type. This article will suggest that while previous studies have found the genre of music or the audience type important in influencing the level of separation between the audience and performer, in this case study on art-Peripheral tourist settings, the primary factor shaping the nature of relationship between the audience and performer is the ambiguous environment of the ‘sea as liminality’, and which consists of highly transitional, and marginal ‘fairytale’ spaces.

Even though extensive work has been done on the complex relationship between cultural tourism, popular music, and identity, the previous works mainly highlighted core-art tourists’ and audiences’ experiences. For example, Hans Aldskogius draws a sound picture of the summer festivals in Sweden, breaking up the categories of music festivals according to space, and this work illustrates the roots of choral singing in the Swedish identity as well as cultural tourism. Furthermore, Catherine Matheson provides an interesting account of core-art tourism and music festivals, as she convinces the reader of the contextualised Celtic music festival, and the way core-art audiences’ identities are shaped by their authentic experiences with Celtic types of performances. The work of Hughes calls out for a valuable approach that will help shed light


Live Entertainment in a Fairytale Art-Peripheral Tourist Setting. Laila EL-Mahgary.

Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
to the unique spaces of popular entertainment in the Red Sea, Hurghada’s art-peripheral hotel settings. He acknowledges a different kind of art-peripheral tourist, whose sacred journeys of travel are being shaped by the transitional and challenging features of liminality and escapism. A tourist who, regardless of recent challenges in the quality of live music performances in worldwide seaside resorts, seeks the ‘out of the ordinary’ and magical experiences the seaside has to offer. Valene Smith states that cultural tourism is a ‘quest for the other.’ Therefore, I argue that live music performances and entertainment are a necessity and a highly celebrative form of performance for art-peripheral tourists.

Unlike Hughes, this paper will not enter a comparative debate between the core-art and the art-peripheral tourists. Nor is the goal here to assess the extent to which the art-peripheral tourists are less entertainment-oriented than the core-art tourists. However, the essay will show that the identities and experiences of art-peripheral tourists and performers with live entertainment can be ‘ambiguous’ but ‘indispensable’, especially, in the Egyptian context, where the local hotel scenes interact with the western spaces of politics, popular culture, and exhibition and result in the out-of-ordinary fairytale-like, contradicting, repetitive, and extreme spaces and myths, from which the most obscure and yet fascinating cultural musical expressions and productions, interactions, and identities emerge.

Egyptians have faced severe structural changes throughout the centuries. In the nineteenth-century, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Egyptians, Ottoman, Italians, French, and Armenians occupied the same multicultural spaces of this beautiful land. These multicultural spaces led to the birth of a modern European styled city. Following the military coup in July 1952, the undemocratic reign in Egypt continued for decades. Abdel Nasser managed to eradicate a great extent of the foreign intervention in the Egyptian State that started during the reign of Muhammad Ali and his son Khedive Ismail in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Under the reign of Sadat, the economy of openness and privatisation ensured the continuity of foreign influence, but also brought corruption and poverty. The birth of privatisation to some extent freed newly established private companies, those independent from governmental regulation. Arab and foreign firms invested in building plots in the Red Sea, which resulted in the rise of tourism. Furthermore, in the 1970s, the opening of the private sector and western modes of production and economic organisation led to many western tastes in music.

It was Muhammad Ali’s opening to the West that started to attract a growing number of European visitors to Egypt. It was also in the nineteenth century when the first Egyptian scholars attended a congress of orientalists in Paris, and for the very first time they encountered the westerners’ representations of the ‘Orient’ in an exhibition. For the Europeans, the structural meaning of “exhibition” turned a mosque into a coffee house, where Egyptian males and females danced to a whirling crowd. In the nineteenth century, the western gaze was growing and the Egyptian female dancers in Egypt offered the western gaze opportunities to plunge into new spaces of sensuality. The male European gaze became obtrusive, equating the Egyptian female dancers and singers with mere prostitutes. And while western tourists continuously sought for...

---

5 Hughes 96.

experiences of fantasy and exhibitions staged by the hosts, they often remained detached and unseen themselves.

A World of Alternative Realities

The Children’s Fairytales
A fiction storyteller illustrates, through the simple codes of the fairytale, the way humans make sense of their everyday lives. As Kevin Smith suggests, the real value of the fairytale becomes clear and is organised around the different spaces and experiences that offer well defined roles and structures. In magical realism, the reader is given several alternative realities to challenge his or her scepticism and accept the supernatural as natural. Most importantly, the incorporation of the fairytale narratives allows the reader to explore the different events in such a way that the boundaries between the possible and impossible blur.

The children’s fairytales in this case study will demonstrate and differentiate between the world of fantasy and fiction, on the one hand, and the world of reality and history, on the other. The focus is on classics and popularised titles, such as the One Thousand and One Nights, Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, and the Goose Girl. Studying and interpreting these tales is an excellent anthropological medium for observing the alternative, contradicting, extreme, and repetitive realities of the human subject, and his/her distinctive experiences in a fairytale environment. The study will also work toward an understanding of the different spaces and myths in certain cultures, the consumption of signs or productions related to space, and popular music, and live entertainment in art-peripheral settings.

Smith suggests that a fairytale can operate in several ways as an intertext. The most relevant type of fairytale approach for this study is the architextual fairytale setting. Fairytale architext is a field of research which has received little attention in the past. Its fairytale texts are used as an architextual model. Like in the children’s literature, the fairytale in Hurghada’s hotels’ recreation, theme parks, and live music scenes is surrounded by the beautiful and ugly, the good and bad, emancipation and oppression, pleasure and danger, real and fantasy, life and death, nature and culture, as well as myths and spaces. According to Max Luthi, the main attraction and features of the fairytale lies in these contradictory, extreme, and repetitive alternative spaces of opposite realities. It is these unique spaces of myths, which become the most relevant to the art-peripheral hotels’ live music and entertainment scenes in Hurghada.

The Fairytale: in its Beauty and Ugliness
The fairytale folktales the Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, and Goose Girl have several features in common. The contrasting themes and myths of the beautiful and ugly, good and bad, emancipation and oppression, pleasure and danger, life and death, and nature and culture stand out in these fairytales as they are repeated. In most of these classic children’s stories, the heroine or hero becomes the centre of these opposite spaces and realities. For example, Beauty sacrifices her happiness and helps her heart-broken father from grief by moving in with the ugly

---

12 Smith 21, 10,
13 Smith 55
15 Max Eilenberg, Beauty and the Beast (USA: Candlewick Press, 2006)
beast who threatens her father’s life for stealing a beautiful rose for Beauty from the Beast’s garden. In exchange for her father’s life and freedom, the Beast keeps her oppressed, as a prisoner in his enormous palace of wealth, mirrors, light, and rose gardens captured by her beauty. Throughout the whole story, Beauty travels back and forth with her family from the beautiful, good, and emancipating spaces of life, including wealth, suitors and happiness, to the dark, ugly, bad, dangerous, and oppressive deserted countryside spaces surrounded by angry dogs and staring strangers. Beauty’s emancipation occurs when she falls in love with the Beast, and he turns into a good prince. Another similar example is the Grimm brothers’ fairytale in which the main character, the ‘Goose Girl’, is sent by her old queen mother on a long voyage to marry the prince, but her wicked waiting woman forces her to give up her identity, and she tries to deceive the king and prince into believing that she (the waiting-woman) is the princess.

 Likewise, in Hurghada’s art-peripheral hotel settings, the tourists and hosts consume a world of alternative realities and experiences: eye dazzling, beautiful, and emancipating western and eastern cultural objects and ways of life. Nicely tanned and dressed beautiful women and men (tourists and performers) are surrounded by contradicting styles of Indian, Italian, American and Andalusian palace-like hotels brightly lit in the dark dead desert. And while the inside of these extravagant five-star or four-star hotel buildings are decorated with golden objects, such as large glass mirrors, crystal lamps, and marmor pillars, their exteriors are filled with the magical life of nature: clear blue skies, flower gardens, and the red sea’s captivating mountains and colourful fish. In other words, all the themes and moving objects of the fairytale world connected to light, radiance, and beauty are present in Hurghada. Equal to the beauty in the hotels fairytale spaces, another world of contrasts exists, extremes, that of ugliness, and oppression. On the one side of the city (Dahar), one is introduced to the less extravagant Eastern side of the grotesque city (a poor fishing village, dirty streets, worn out shops, unfinished buildings, one-story flats, Bedouin tents, etc.), while, on the other edge of the city (North of Sekala and South of Sekala) one comes in direct contact with a greater collection of western high standard luxury hotels, restaurants, and bars.

 Likewise, in Hurghada’s art-peripheral hotel settings, the tourists and hosts consume a world of alternative realities and experiences: eye dazzling, beautiful, and emancipating western and eastern cultural objects and ways of life. Nicely tanned and dressed beautiful women and men (tourists and performers) are surrounded by contradicting styles of Indian, Italian, American and Andalusian palace-like hotels brightly lit in the dark dead desert. And while the inside of these extravagant five-star or four-star hotel buildings are decorated with golden objects, such as large glass mirrors, crystal lamps, and marmor pillars, their exteriors are filled with the magical life of nature: clear blue skies, flower gardens, and the red sea’s captivating mountains and colourful fish. In other words, all the themes and moving objects of the fairytale world connected to light, radiance, and beauty are present in Hurghada.

 Equal to the beauty in the hotels fairytale spaces, another world of contrasts exists, extremes, that of ugliness, and oppression. On the one side of the city (Dahar), one is introduced to the less extravagant Eastern side of the grotesque city (a poor fishing village, dirty streets, worn out shops, unfinished buildings, one-story flats, Bedouin tents, etc.), while, on the other edge of the city (North of Sekala and South of Sekala) one comes in direct contact with a greater collection of western high standard luxury hotels, restaurants, and bars.

 16 Like many of the fairytale heroines, the tourist and host find themselves at sea in liminality and in between the fairytale world’s mythical spaces. Victor Turner defines liminality as the stage of ‘transition,’ causing a lot of ambiguity and insecurity like a fairytale. As one moves along like Beauty or the Goose Girl, these highly liminal and ambiguous spaces of the sea and in Hurghada looking out from the car, one cannot miss the ugly, dangerously isolated dark desert roads in South Sekala. As in ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ angry dogs are in the streets, while the car is heading back to the livelier, brighter, pleasurable, and safer spaces, hotels in the city centre (North Sekala). The most striking set of contradictions, extremes, and repetitions in these settings is the fact that security men are needed in this pleasurable and beautiful tourist city of theme parks and peace.

 16 Luthi 16.18.
Popular Music, Fairytale Myths, and Space

First Performance in South Sekala, Hurghada

Through the ugly, bad, and dangerous spaces, one moves to the spaces of beauty, the good, pleasure, and emancipation when entering the lobby of an extravagant five-star hotel situated at the far end of South Sekala’s vast resort strip. The hosts and tourists in the hotel are dressed in elegance, consuming a western world of signs and objects. A Romanian singer in her twenties is performing by herself on stage. There is nothing boring or disorderly in the setting or her performance, unlike what Hughes suggests about art-peripheral performances. Rather, as Edward Hall mentions, there are clear markers separating the public from the intimate spaces respectively.\(^19\) Even though the singer has no platform or stage, her front stage is set at a good public distance from the audience, in a space of its own reflecting distinction.\(^20\) However, unlike the French or Arab settings, this space has a low emphasis on sensory living.\(^21\) The singer’s ravishing black evening gown, beautiful, feminine, and strong voice, and collection of relaxing western melodies suits the calm sophisticated surrounding of the Americanised, fairytale-like hotel, reflecting upon ‘distinction’, but also on the ‘One Thousand and One Night’ luxury objects’ large mirrors and crystal lamps.\(^22\) According to Chris Rojek and John Urry, it is increasingly commonplace to witness Disney’s theme parks, movies, and products becoming the role ‘models for a tourist industry.’\(^23\) In fact, in the US, especially Las Vegas, hotels have opted for alternative fiction realities with the Disney model of theme parks. Like Las Vegas, Hurghada resembles the One Thousand and One Night and Disney’s fairytale theme parks, with its grand seaside resorts and its food, music, shopping opportunities, as well as the theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, and cultural economy, where the gap between the cultural object and the audience, is smaller, and the audience more active in participation.\(^24\)

The Romanian singer was lacking a specific choreography in her performance, and she was singing a repertoire of western cover ballads in a small space, but she was clearly the master of her space. During her live music performance, she kept merging and rearranging the borders between the West and the East, masculine and feminine, or culture and nature together. For the former spaces, (West, masculine, culture) she expressed signs of professionalism, technical perfection, order, gender equality, self-control, and independence, while, in the latter spaces (East, feminine, nature) she carried her body like any respectable, refined, and reserved performer in the Arab culture, following in her art-peripheral setting a clear set of ‘behavior codes.’ Her body and self were both the object of the gaze, but also the subject, she was a free agent like men performers of ‘culture’, attributed full responsibility and blame if something in her performance went wrong, and still like a fairytale heroine, she was dressed modestly by covering her legs and breasts, limiting excessive body movement, in other words, conforming to the rules of the Egyptian society, and reflecting awareness of her ‘nature’ position.\(^25\) The

\(^{21}\) Hall 154.  
\(^{22}\) EL-Mahgary 46.  
Romanian singer is endowed with similar gifts as Beauty, Cinderella or the Goose Girl, with her beauty, grace, and musicality. Her performance fostered a magical effect for her guests’ fairytale experiences by the sea. She was expected to be passive and patient like any elegant lady or princess from a fairytale story. The western audience watched over again, as she suddenly transgressed from one identity of nature (the soft ballads’ performer) to that of culture (sound technician) in her every night performances. Simon Frith and Angela Microbbie illustrate how popular musicians, engineers, technicians, and producers consist of a culture and male-dominated field. However, the singer was getting a new song ready without long pauses and returning efficiently to her female space of performer. The audience seemed pleased with the good, beautiful, and pleasurable musical experiences that reflected the features of a McDonaldised predictable, efficient, and controlled performance.

As Ervin Goffman puts it, the appearance of her performance was in complete harmony with the western tourists’ aesthetic values and manner of performance.

The Theme of Sexuality
Until recently, studies on music and sexuality have not received much attention in the field of musicology. However, studying sexuality in music can lead to valuable perspectives about the role of culture in musical performances. The beautiful evening dresses of the women performers belong to the unpromising spaces of the hotel industry. The idea of such an inverted world appears in Cinderella where the poor beautiful good girl is forced in real life to wear a unattractive ash-coloured garment, while a moment later she is ‘transgressing’ into a fantasy world, pretending to be a sexually attractive and alluring princess at the ball, wearing the most enchanting dress and pair of shoes and tricking everyone including her evil step mother and sisters who are responsible for her oppressive circumstances. In Hurghada’s hotel scenes, these different fairytale and sexual myths of men and women in multiple worlds and identities seem to repeat themselves and are closely intertwined. The nasty monster in Beauty and the Beast and the bad step mother in Cinderella represent the oppressive hotel manager or tourist in Hurghada, who seek to control the beautiful female or male performers by invading their public or intimate spaces. As Tarek a singer from one of the hotels in Dahar revealed:

The hotel managers like to have sexual relations with their female singers. There is one hotel in Hurghada, where the owner’s son wants to have sexual relations with every singer who comes along. And if she refuses to sleep with him, she is kicked out of the hotel.

As a result, one female performer managed in real life to trick (like Cinderella tricks the prince) her hotel manager into thinking that she was a Christian, by getting a cross shaped tattoo, a marker under her forearm. In this case, the female performer was able to turn her bad reality, in other words, the functions and myths of nature, femininity, oppression, death, and danger, into representations of the good, culture, masculinity, fantasy, emancipation, life, and pleasure with her sexuality. Meanwhile, the dangerous masculine spaces eventually made her strong and

---

26 Smith 139.
27 Luthi 28.
29 Bryman 2.
31 Luthi 33.
32 EL-Mahgary 38.
resilient in character. According to Nieuwkerk the beauty and self-control of the Egyptian female performers, like that of fairytale heroines, protects them from dangers and aggressive behaviour far more often than the men performers or heroes.  

Although female performers ‘ambiguities’ of identity may serve as sources of creativity, strength, and emancipation, they often consist of transgressing ‘boundary beings’, who represent desire and disgust at the same time. As Jervis puts it, in accordance with their femininity, female performers come to stand for ‘other-than-themselves,’ just like the heroines of the famous fairytales, for if man is a master signifier for identity, then a woman is a master signifier for ‘otherness’. Especially in a liminal setting at sea, female performers’ transitory and mobile everyday lives become seen as the primary link to immoral activities such as prostitution. And because the cultural systems still emphasise the sexual seductive aspects of women, their bodies remain closer to nature than culture.  

This perception of women as closer to nature, or the sea as a metaphor for women’s sexuality, is apparent in the One Thousand and One Night stories. For example, in the story of Abdallah, the landman and Abdallah, the seaman, the latter invites his friend to his underwater land and shows him how unfaithful women are thrown out to the city of mermaids in the sea. Furthermore, in the Shahrazad stories, women in the Middle East are portrayed as bad, deceiving, manipulative, sexually deviant, and failing to conform to the rules and morals of the society. In short, while Jervis states women are signifiers for ‘otherness,’ he is really saying that women are never quite belonging anywhere in the cultural imaginaries. They possess several realities and are always moving towards the troubling, contradictory, and extreme spaces of the fairytale, like the Egyptian female performer who tricked her manager.

The Second and Third Performances in North Sekalla and Dahar

Goffman’s ideas are based on the assumptions that the everyday life performances, rituals, and encounters of individuals are shaped by their self-presentations. Usually, an individual will go through a certain self-consciousness to acclaim a desired status for him or herself, and save his or her face, and that of the others. The second performance took place in one of Hurghada’s city centre’s main streets, in the large lounge of a four-star hotel. Edouard the musician gave a good cover interpretation of Joe Cocker’s rock song ‘Unchain My Heart’. The lounge of the hotel was as lively and celebrative as the exterior part, or in other words, the city centre of North Sekala which was packed with Russian, British, German, Finnish and Swedish tourists buzzing down the main street of high sensory living. Inside, some of the tourists were seated around small coffee tables, while others on sofas were at intimate distances from one another. Furthermore, some tourists were singing cheerfully to the music and dancing on their feet. In this type of hotel scene, the relationship between space, popular music, and identity was very different. The people were more intimately clustered, and the setting was less hierarchical, formal, and distant than in Tanja’s more refined performance setting in South Sekala. There were also clear differences in the level of expectations of the tourists, the style of music, the dress, and the behaviour of the performer, in comparison to Tanja’s hotel scene. It was obvious that this space

33 Nieuwkerk 173.
34 Jervis 111, 128.
35 Nieuwkerk 106, 144.
36 Jervis 113.
38 Goffman 40.
held a more relaxed ambience, and as Dean MacCannell would say, it lacked a clear set of functional markers, intersecting points between the audience and the performer, making Edouard less of a master in his space.\textsuperscript{39} Here there was no particular genre of music or one particular type of audience separating the space between the audience and the performer. The idea that different musical worlds would be categorised seemed foreign.\textsuperscript{40} The whole setting at first glance was intimate, very Middle Eastern, full of life, emancipating, and encouraging active participation and dialogue between the different nationalities of tourists, on the one hand, and the performer on the other, while the tourists were listening, singing, or dancing to the rock and western popular hits, and Edouard’s good performances. In this intimate four-star hotel’s art-peripheral live music setting, Edouard, dressed in a casual style (a pair of white trousers and a white shirt), used his small space openly unlike the elegantly dressed Tanja in her slightly closed environment. He interacted with the audience, received louder exchanges and responses, and welcomed song requests from the guests. His self was in full harmony with that of the guests.\textsuperscript{41}

Nevertheless, it became obvious that the productions of Edouard’s performances revealed no aggressive control or expression of masculinity or sexuality in body features or the production of music and sound. His masculine identities, or the phallic symbols, were not expressed with the use of mikes, guitars, loud music or built around the mastering of equipment.\textsuperscript{42} Rather, he was representing an image of ‘fantasy’ and ‘passivity,’ one of a pitiful and sexually vulnerable female heroine of fairytales, offering the audience western cover songs, soft rock, teeny-pop, and oldies ballads instead. Virginia Danielson believes that while western audiences might interpret the crossing of gendered boundaries in musical performances as disrupting the conventional gender patterns, in the Egyptian culture, such a gendered dichotomy of space is rather normal.\textsuperscript{43}

**Power Relations in Musical Productions**

Tarek, a musician originally, was forced to give up his profession and his passion for being a singer and keyboardist to play karaoke for the guests under the orders of the oppressive hotel management. His experience, like Edouard’s, reflected upon Goffman’s illustration of a larger moral order with a particular set of rules restraining the less powerful individuals in a society, in this case the performers. Furthermore, as Pirkko Moisala and Elina Seye state, intercultural encounters in musical performances are rarely innocent, but often consist of politically, socially, and economically constructed power relationships.\textsuperscript{44} Tarek’s live performance music scene illustrated these power struggles, and as Luthi writes, quoting Theodor Adorno, ‘the beautiful originates in the ugly.’\textsuperscript{45}

One evening in EL Dahar next to the fisherman’s village, a large red oriental tent was brightly lit. Contrary to the other enchanting performance settings of Tanja and Edouard, this beautiful four-star hotel’s performance scene (an oriental tent) looked tediously empty and ugly. It was set


\textsuperscript{42} Scott 63.


\textsuperscript{45} Luthi 29.

in a large flower garden next to the court of the hotel by the sea. The tent contained only a few Russian tourists chatting around small coffee tables set haphazardly close to a small plain looking platform stage where Tarek would play the keyboard and sing every evening to a few guests. However, later in the evenings, he would shift into his double character or identity, the space of a DJ karaoke player for the tourists. His suppressed mixed feelings towards work and the hotel management unveiled the reality about the ugly, bad, oppressive, death, and nature spaces and myths of the sea and the fairytale, influencing the sexual politics of the music.

I am a musician, and I play the keyboards originally, but no management in the hotel wants art or real music anymore, they want entertainment. This is why I have been forced to leave my real passion and play karaoke for the guests, so that they too can sing.

Karaoke allows a wide range of participation, and in Tarek’s ‘karaoke’ setting, for once, the tourists liked to ‘be seen’, in a world of colonial relations ‘with the tourists seeking rather for representations of fantasy and exhibitions put up by the hosts’. Therefore, while karaoke created ‘death’ in Tarek’s opportunities to gain real cultural, and social ‘distinction’ as a singer or musician, it also led him to another emancipated space of distinction, new presentations of ‘fantasy’, and identification with the tourists. Together they were ‘transgressing’ from their traditional norms or characters, socialising and enjoying the sense of freedom and life that karaoke and the fairytale setting brought them. For a moment, karaoke music neutralised the distinctions in power relations between the host and the guest, and their distinctive rituals in the use of social space and created harmony and solidarity for Tarek and his guests.

Culture and Otherness
The three performances in the fairytale hotel scenes proved a number of things. The level of separation between the performer and the audience was less a product of the genre of music or the type of audience, than an outcome of the social space. The performers were forced to put on at times cynical performances in order to conceal their feelings of alienation, oppression, and ugliness experienced on stage and to avoid drama with the tourists or the hotel management.

Jervis’s argument of the woman being the sole signifier of nature or ‘otherness’ is reversed in Hurghada’s hotel scenes to one of ‘culture and otherness’. For if an Egyptian man was a master signifier for identity back home, all this had changed. In Hurghada’s art-peripheral fairytale setting, like a woman, Edouard and Tarek became the master signifiers for ‘otherness’ lacking control of their selves and working in oppressive cultural environments. While during their three hour singing Edouard and Tarek gave good performances, with their broad repertoires of western cover songs, and interacted with the audiences, they were not only creating new local alternative identities with popular music, but also bonds of solidarity and friendship with the tourists. Edouard’s performance and his interaction with the audience confirmed Andy Bennett’s and Richard Peterson’s ideas that a new act can be better than the original. However, it also revealed the ambiguity and oppression of the fairytale spaces, as he was moving through the

46 EL-Mahgary 53.
47 Mitchell 26, 28.
48 Goffman, 125.
49 Jervis, 111, 128.
disoriented spaces of nature, otherness, and femininity, breaking down every aesthetic code of masculinity and the western codes of different musical worlds. While Edouard performed his femininity on beat cover songs without deeper knowledge of any live instrument and excluded from his pop dance music performances any choreographic moves, his gestures, as Freya Jarman Ivens would put it, ‘were queerly gendered performances.’ There was no ‘animalism, swaying of the pelvis or uncontrollable exhibition of the vulgar’ on a big stage. 51 Rather, the beautiful and the ugly lay in the contradictory meanings of the performances. However, in the emancipated, relaxed gendered musical landscape he was crossing, he provided high sensory experiences, with his compilation of different genres of music, rock, pop, oldies, and ballads. Thus, in a transitional, liminal world, the performers’ real spaces were replaced by spaces of fantasy. 52 Unlike Tanja’s strictly regulated setting, a lack of excessive rules and markers were applied to Edouard’s and Tarek’s hotels’ music scenes, and thus places of pleasure, emancipation, culture, and life could also become at sea places of danger, oppression, nature, and death such as is reflected in the One Thousand and One Night stories when Sindbad the Sailor goes on his excursions at sea. 53 In short, as local actors male or female struggled with the experience of otherness and marginality, at the same time, they generated a multiple set of alternative realities and identities.

Conclusion
This study has discussed the way the sea as liminality and its fairytale spaces of beauty and ugliness contribute to the localisation of unique live performance practices and alternative identities in Hurghada’s tourist-hotel settings. By focusing on three local and different performances, the research aimed to show how each musical performance varied according to its location, space, and setting. The particular values of these highly transitional and ambiguous fairytale spaces revealed that in Hurghada the male and female entertainers’ live music performances, the audience and performer relationships, the musical expressions and productions depended less on the genre of music or the type of audience, than on the highly challenging, transitional, and ambiguous art-peripheral tourist settings, which transformed the rational characters’ everyday performances.

In brief, this study has attempted to fill the gap in past research on cultural tourism by shedding light on the distinctiveness of live popular entertainment performances in art-peripheral settings and their indispensability to cultural tourism. The western tourist gaze, the power relations, and their influence on the sexual politics of music in the Egyptian tourist-hotel industry have revealed the way Hurghada’s hotel and entertainment scenes are explicitly driven by the consumption of production and the disneyisation of society: the experiences of exhibition and fantasy that these Disney styled seaside theme park resorts provide. Unlike in Bali, for example, where ethnic authenticity continues to be an important part of the locals’ everyday lives through their reinventions of traditional music, in Hurghada, the integration of the local, regional, and global spaces generated the dissolution of traditional identities and gendered structures. Three performers, Tanja, Edouard, and Tarek, illustrated with their performance scenes the repetitive, contradictory, and extreme spaces of the inverted world of a fairytale. Male or female, the performers in Hurghada’s hotel scenes, were constantly moving in between the spaces and myths of the sea and liminality, those of the beautiful and the ugly, real and fantasy, good and bad, emancipation and oppression, life and death, nature and culture, and experiencing ‘otherness’.

51 Freya Jarman Ivens, Oh Boy: Masculinities and Popular Music (USA: Taylor and Francis Group, 2007) 163.
52 Luthi 38.
53 Hämeen-Anttila & Hieta 86.
Most importantly, the unique mix of the internationally known fairytale stories *Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, The Goose Girl*, and the *One Thousand and One Nights*, aimed to provide an entry into understanding the myths of ugliness and unjust oppression affecting the everyday lives of the hosts, and Goffman’s view of culture in which one group of social actors the powerless performers are controlled by the groups with the most legitimacy such as the hotel managers and tourists in Hurghada’s marvellous fairytale seaside resorts. Moreover, the research stressed other aspects of Goffman’s work, for example, the way the positive outcomes of the performances were shaped by the performers’ high interest in presenting harmonious selves and celebrative performances, putting on masks to hide their feelings of alienation, which influenced the interactions between the performers on the one hand and the tourists and hotel managers on the other. The theories of Hall and Bourdieu also shed important light on the everyday social practices of the performers and tourists and their different levels of access to economic, cultural, social and political capital.

Undoubtedly, not all of the performers experienced celebrative art-peripheral performances in Hurghada’s hotel scenes. Some of the performances were repetitive and tedious. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that the primary aim of this research was to explore the celebrative and festive types of performances in the art-peripheral settings. Therefore, further research is required to observe the more tedious types of live music performances in Hurghada’s hotel scenes.

*Laila EL-Mahgary* is a PhD student in Musicology at the University of Turku, Finland. Her ongoing research interests are children’s literature, fairytales, magical, and their intersections with popular music, cultural tourism, realism, and social science and musicology studies.
Changes in Tone, Setting, and Publisher: Indigenous Literatures of Australia and New Zealand from the 1980s to Today

Per Henningsgaard

This article examines four novels written since 1980 by two Aboriginal Australian authors and two Maori authors. Two of the four novels were written near the beginning of this period and feature settings that are contemporary with their publication; *The Day of the Dog* by Aboriginal Australian author Archie Weller was published in 1981, while *Once Were Warriors* by Maori author Alan Duff was published in 1990.¹ The other two novels (*That Deadman Dance* by Aboriginal Australian author Kim Scott and *The Trowenna Sea* by Maori author Witi Ihimaera) are works of historical fiction written in the last decade.²

*Once Were Warriors* tells the story of the Hekes, an impoverished Maori family living in Auckland, New Zealand. Abuse, neglect, and alcoholism feature prominently in this family saga. Following the rape and suicide of their teenage daughter, the Hekes are forced to confront the issues plaguing their family. Eventually, their desperate search leads them to reconnect with their Maori heritage.

In *The Day of the Dog*, Weller depicts Doug Dooligan, a young Aboriginal Australian man, beginning with his release from prison. Doug soon resumes the same destructive behaviours that landed him in prison in the first place. His gang steals cars, drinks heavily, and provokes fights. Doug briefly moves in with his sister and begins to rehabilitate by getting in touch with the land. This effort fails, however, when his toxic friends find him and suck him back into their dangerous lifestyle.

These two novels represent some of the earliest works of Indigenous writing to attain popular success in their respective countries. This achievement is significant for many reasons, not least because one of the effects of colonisation is the silencing of the voices of Indigenous people, and these novels provided a voice. This is not to say, however, that they were anywhere near the earliest examples of published Indigenous writing in these two countries.

The first Aboriginal Australian writer to have a book published was David Unaipon.³ His collection of myths, *Native Legends*, was published in 1929.⁴ Nearly 40 years passed, however, before another Aboriginal Australian writer published a book; Kath Walker’s book of poetry was published in 1964.⁵ It is not nearly so clear who was the first published Maori writer, though it is generally held that the Maori people took to writing and publishing in their own language in the

---

mid-nineteenth century, which is a development unparalleled in Australia.\(^6\) But otherwise, as Anita Heiss writes in her seminal book on the subject, *Dhuuluu-Yala – To Talk Straight: Publishing Indigenous Literature*, ‘The publishing success of Maori writers and their history of publication ... is very much comparable to that of Aboriginal Australia.’\(^7\) For example, much like Aboriginal Australian writers, ‘publications by Maori [writers] ... only gained momentum ... in the 1960s.’\(^8\)

As for novels by Indigenous writers, which are the subject of this article, the first novel by an Aboriginal Australian writer did not appear for more than another decade; Monica Clare’s *Karobran* was published in 1978.\(^9\) Similarly, Maori writer Ihimaera’s first novel, *Tangi*, was published in 1973.\(^10\)

So, while *The Day of the Dog* and *Once Were Warriors* were published approximately 20 years after Indigenous writing in this part of the world first gained some publishing momentum, they played an important role in making the field more popular than it had previously been. The Indigenous authors of these two novels were instrumental in establishing a new, provocative genre of literature. Robyn Bargh, publisher at Huia Publishers in Wellington, confirms this observation: ‘In the 1990s Maori literature came into its own.’\(^11\) Much the same observation could be made about Aboriginal Australian literature, though perhaps this date would be pushed back to the 1980s when *The Day of the Dog* was published. Weller’s and Duff’s books paved the way for future Indigenous authors. These early works perform a poignant social commentary by chronicling the fallout of colonisation and their characters’ attempts to reclaim some form of cultural pride.

The other two novels, Scott’s *That Deadman Dance* and Ihimaera’s *The Trowenna Sea*, represent a more recent (and remarkably different) type of Indigenous writing. *That Deadman Dance* tells the story of a colony in Western Australia between the years 1826 and 1844. One young Aboriginal Australian boy, Bobby, is educated simultaneously by his community and by the European colonisers. *That Deadman Dance* chronicles the dramatic evolution of Aboriginal–European relations beginning with first contact and covering an 18-year period.

Ihimaera also considers the process of colonisation in his novel *The Trowenna Sea*. Ismay and Gower McKissock are a British couple married for the sake of convenience. Ismay wishes to move to New Zealand but needs to be accompanied by a man. Gower needs a wife to bring to New Zealand, where he hopes to establish a medical practice in the new colony. Readers are treated to Ismay’s and Gower’s firsthand accounts during the colonisation of New Zealand and Australia. Ismay learns to speak the Maori language, and she and her husband befriend several Maoris. One of these individuals, Hohepa Te Umuroa, also shares his story in *The Trowenna Sea*, representing the colonised point of view.

---


\(^7\) Heiss 191.

\(^8\) Heiss 191.


\(^11\) Heiss 192.
So far, this article’s promise to examine four novels written since 1980 by two Aboriginal Australian authors and two Maori authors has been only superficially fulfilled. A brief summary of each novel has been provided along with some contextual information about the publishing of Indigenous literatures in Australia and New Zealand. This back-and-forth movement between close and distant readings (in this case, between textual summary and publishing history) is symptomatic of the article’s research methodology. Indeed, as this article proceeds to compare the four novels in question, on one hand the readings will only get closer and on the other they will get more distant. With this in mind, this article will now undertake a close (though, admittedly, brief) reading of two textual elements – tone and setting – in the four novels.

The shift in tone between the earlier novels (i.e., Weller’s *The Day of the Dog* and Duff’s *Once Were Warriors*) and the more recent novels (i.e., Scott’s *That Deadman Dance* and Ihimaera’s *The Trowenna Sea*) is particularly remarkable. The tone of the earlier novels is highly charged with emotions including, perhaps most dramatically, rage about the state of Indigenous communities. For example, Weller writes,

At the age of three she was taken from her sad, drunken wreck of a mother and placed in Sister Kate’s home where she remained with a kindly cottage mother for two years before being reclaimed by a grandmother influenced in part by vague feelings of affection but even more by a desire to claim the child endowment.

After that there was a spell back with her mother until she was returned to Sister Kate’s, this time accompanied by several of her numerous brothers and sisters. The pattern was repeated until by the time she was twelve and surviving by rolling old drunk white men and other such activities she graduated to Nyandi Correction Centre. She ran away and from then on her existence has been one of escape and recapture by the Department.

Her own mother barely remembers her now. Soon she will become a mother herself – and the whole cycle will start again.12

The tone of this passage is typical of both *The Day of the Dog* and *Once Were Warriors*; it is pessimistic, critical of its Indigenous characters (the mother is a ‘sad, drunken wreck,’ and the grandmother has only ‘vague feelings of affection’ for her granddaughter), and offers little hope of redemption.

Indeed, any hope of redemption these two novels provide seems to come from a shared vision of an idealised Indigenous cultural purity obtainable by reclaiming one’s heritage. In *Once Were Warriors*, for example, the Heke family begins to learn about Maori culture to heal the wounds of the loss of their daughter. By the end of the novel, the entire neighbourhood understands the importance of embracing their culture:

> Word going round all over Pine Block that something good was happening; you know, change. That change was happening to some of the people living there. And every Saturday, nine in the morning sharp, y’c’d see the crowd gathered at Number 27 Rimu, to

listen to this high chief fulla, Te Tupaea, tellin the people of their history. Our proud history.13

In contrast to the abrupt turn from pessimism to optimism evidenced by the above passage from the final pages of Once Were Warriors, the tone of The Day of the Dog remains more resolutely pessimistic. About two-thirds of the way through The Day of the Dog, however, Doug briefly moves in with his sister and her family and re-establishes a connection to the land. For two weeks, he camps in the outdoors, builds a fence for his brother-in-law, and savours the rewards of his hard work. This reclamation of his Indigenous identity via his connection to the land is the closest Doug comes to happiness:

This country is his Shangri-La, where all things are eternally young and bountiful and beauty is everywhere. There is no such thing as ugliness, since even ugliness is beautiful here. ...

The cool, tangy air washes the red from his eyes and the drink from his brain. He becomes sharp-eyed and alert and happy, as he was on his father’s farm.14

All of Doug’s achievements come undone, of course, once Doug’s friends find him and reintroduce him to old habits. This particular aspect of these two earlier novels’ tone could be characterised as hope of redemption moderated by the high barrier to entry of overcoming poverty, violence, alcoholism, and so forth, on the way to reconnecting with one’s Indigenous heritage. Their tone played a significant role in shaping these novels’ critical and popular reception at the time of publication.

In contrast to the tone of the earlier novels, which is highly charged with emotions, the more recent novels dispassionately depict the historical act of colonisation. For example, Scott writes,

Menak wondered again if it was wise to allow these other strangers to remain so long, these pale horizon people. True, they chose to camp where Menak or anyone else would not – beside the water in the coldest winds and yet where the sun does not reach until late morning. The water is deepest there, too, but a poor place for spearing fish. ... Perhaps when the whales and cold again return, perhaps they will leave. Or offer a little more.15

In this excerpt, the tone of which is in many ways typical of both That Deadman Dance and The Trowenna Sea, there is none of the rage that typifies the tone of the earlier novels.

Furthermore, while the earlier novels seem to idealise Indigenous cultural purity by reclaiming one’s heritage, the more recent novels suggest that compromise between the Indigenous and settler populations of Australia and New Zealand is the optimal way to achieve a prosperous future. For example, both That Deadman Dance and The Trowenna Sea contain scenes of Indigenous people embracing European culture through song. In The Trowenna Sea, Hohepa leads a group of convicts in a traditional British song following a Christian church service:

15 Scott 151-2.
The minstrel boy to the war is gone,
In the ranks of death you’ll find him –
... His father’s sword he has girded on
And his wild harp slung behind him –
... No chains shall sully thee!
Thou soul of love and bravery,
Thy songs were made for the pure and free
They shall never sound in slavery –\(^\text{16}\)

Similar scenes occur in \textit{That Deadman Dance}. For instance, Wunyeran, an Aboriginal Australian woman, breaks into song: ‘\textit{Oh where have you been all the day, Billy boy Billy boy?}\(^\text{17}\)’ In addition to song, Aboriginal Australian characters incorporate European customs into their dances. The eponymous ‘Deadman Dance’ is an Aboriginal Australian dance with some movements borrowed from a military drill performed by the British. These scenes of cross-cultural incorporation are notable because they illustrate the openness of Indigenous cultures to integrate aspects of European cultures into their own.

Significantly, these examples of cross-cultural incorporation flow in more than one direction. As was previously mentioned, the character of Ismay in \textit{The Trowenena Sea} learns to speak the Maori language. In \textit{That Deadman Dance}, the European colonisers depend on the Indigenous residents to establish their colony. The colonisers teach several Aboriginal Australian characters, most notably Bobby, how to read and write. At a time when Aboriginal Australians outnumbered Europeans, concessions by the Europeans had to be made. They respected the land and learned a little bit of the local language. Indeed, Australian literary critic Anne Brewster describes \textit{That Deadman Dance} in the following manner: ‘The novel overtly suggests that the “friendly frontier” was indeed, in some small measure, typified by courteous relations.’\(^\text{18}\) However, once more settlers came to the new colony, and the Indigenous population no longer outnumbered them, the Europeans did not need the cooperation of Aboriginal Australians to survive. In a dramatic speech before a mixed crowd, Bobby addresses this issue of failed compromise:

\begin{quote}
My old uncle knows this language I am speaking now [that is, he knows English], but he keeps his tongue away and says it is not worth the sound of it. He would not understand the spirit of words on paper, only in their sound.

We all different from when we babies, you and me too. I change, doesn’t mean I forget all about my people and their ways. But some people come to live here, and wanna stay like they never moved away from their own place. Sometimes I dress like you people, but who here I ever see naked like my people?\(^\text{19}\)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Ihimaera 319.
\textsuperscript{17} Scott 129.
\textsuperscript{19} Scott 391.
Both Scott and Ihimaera use their novels to address the issue of compromise – both the failed compromises of the past and the hope for future compromises to come. In Brewster’s analysis of *That Deadman Dance*, she describes the way in which the novel engages with this particular idea:

> The novel’s vision of Noongar sovereignty, I propose, incorporates ... the adjunct vision of the possibility of an alternative intercultural social contract (during the period of early contact depicted in the novel) which accommodated non-Indigenous people on Noongar land in relations of Indigenous hospitality and exchange. ... The question as to whether this alternative is still available in contemporary Australia, is left open by the novel.\(^{20}\)

In addition to engaging with the hope for future compromises to come in the way Brewster describes, the decisions by Scott and Ihimaera to include the voices of both coloniser and colonised in their novels appears to be some sort of structural and/or political compromise on their part. Once again, the shift in tone between the earlier novels and the more recent novels is put in sharp relief by this shift from an idealised Indigenous cultural purity to advocating compromise between the Indigenous and settler populations of Australia and New Zealand.

Coupled with the shift in tone, the settings have changed from settings that were contemporary with their publication in the 1980s and early 1990s to historical settings for the more recently published novels. Both *That Deadman Dance* and *The Trowenna Sea* focus on the European colonisation of Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century. These novels perhaps attempt to explain the unrest in Indigenous communities in the 1980s and 1990s, which the earlier novels chronicled, by discussing and analysing the very first race relations between the Maoris or Aboriginal Australians and the European colonisers.

It is tempting to ascribe the shifts in tone and setting over this 30-year period to the changing social and political realities surrounding the issue of Indigenous relations in the two nations. And these factors undoubtedly played an important role in the aforementioned shifts; Indigenous authors writing today are responding to a different social and political reality compared to Indigenous authors writing in the 1980s and early 1990s. What this explanation overlooks, however, are the concurrent changes in the publication of Indigenous literature and how these might contribute to the types of changes noted above. It is here, of course, that this article shifts again from close reading to distant reading. In this case, the distant reading techniques being employed draw liberally from methodologies developed by scholars of book history.

Before going any further, it is perhaps important to answer the question, ‘What is book history?’ Whereas most literary scholarship concentrates on what is printed in the pages of a book as the key to the book’s role in the development and transmission of culture, book history considers those other aspects of the book that inform this process. Noted book historian and former director of the Penn State Center for the History of the Book, James L.W. West, III, has observed that book history ‘... concentrate[s] on a group of related topics: authorship, bookselling, printing, publishing, distribution, and reading.’\(^{21}\) In other words, book history

---

\(^{20}\) Brewster 63-64.

\(^{21}\) Quoted in Per Henningsgaard, ‘The Teaching of “Book History” in English and Cultural Studies Units,’ *Preparing for the Graduate of 2015: Proceedings of the 17th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, 30–31 January*
studies all those aspects of the book that have historically been seen as incidental to the main purpose of the book, which is to transmit ideas, but in fact crucially inform this process. It considers the book as a material object with its own history of production and consumption.

To date, when book history methods have been applied to the study of Indigenous literatures in Australia and New Zealand, by far the most common subject of study has been the impact of non-Indigenous editors on writing by Indigenous authors. For example, there is the book-length study by Jennifer Jones, *Black Writers, White Editors: Episodes of Collaboration and Compromise in Australian Publishing History.* Furthermore, there are numerous journal articles on the subject, including (to name just a few of the more prominent examples) Graham Seal’s ‘Indigenous Australian Life Histories: A New Genre of Writing and Publishing?’; Robin Freeman’s ‘“We Must Become Gatekeepers”: Editing Indigenous Writing’; and Margaret McDonell’s ‘Protocols, Political Correctness, and Discomfort Zones: Indigenous Life Writing and Non-Indigenous Editing.’ Furthermore, in Heiss’s aforementioned book, *Dhuuluu-Yala – To Talk Straight: Publishing Indigenous Literature,* she devotes an entire chapter to the subject of ‘Editing Indigenous Literature.’

Notably, the publication dates for all of these articles and books are in the 2000s. This is reflective of an uptick of international interest in book history as both a field of study and a set of research methods. Book history is finding its way into the curricula of a growing number of Australian and international universities, and rapid technological innovation (such as the development of ebooks) is only expected to make the study of book history more useful and important. Nonetheless, the focus of these sources on the editing of Indigenous literature by non-Indigenous editors does nothing to account for the changes noted earlier in this article – specifically, the shifts in tone and setting in Indigenous writing over a 30-year period leading up to the present. After all, as recently as 2003, there were only ‘four “industry trained” Aboriginal editors in Australia.’ While this is four more than were on the scene when *The Day of the Dog* was published in 1981 and three more than when *Once Were Warriors* was published in 1990, the numbers of Aboriginal Australian editors are too small to have had much of an effect on recently published novels by Aboriginal Australian writers. This is especially so since the four Aboriginal Australian editors currently practising are all associated with Aboriginal Australian publishing houses (i.e., Aboriginal Studies Press, IAD Press, and Magabala Books), which collectively publish a very small percentage of the total output of Aboriginal Australian writing today. Moreover, these editors/publishing houses were not responsible for the publication of *That Deadman Dance,* which is the example of recent Aboriginal Australian writing being

2008 (Perth: Curtin University of Technology, 2008).
24 Heiss 66-82.
considered in this article. In New Zealand, there are only two publishing houses – Huia Publishers and Te Reo Publications – that have ‘in-house Maori editors.’\(^{25}\) Again, these two publishing houses are not responsible for anywhere near the majority of Maori writing today, nor are they responsible for the publication of *The Trowenna Sea*. In fact, *The Trowenna Sea* was published by Penguin imprint Raupo and, surprisingly, Penguin claims it ‘does not currently employ a Maori editor or language expert as the “establishment isn’t large enough.”’\(^{26}\) Clearly, the editing of Indigenous literature by non-Indigenous editors, while it certainly impacts upon individual works of Indigenous literature, does nothing to account for the specific types of changes noted earlier in this article.

If editing as a component of book history cannot account for these changes, what component can? This article turns instead to publishing. Heiss’s *Dhuuluu-Yala – To Talk Straight: Publishing Indigenous Literature* is one of a much smaller number of published works ostensibly concerned with the intersection of the subjects of publishing and Indigenous literature, yet the title of her volume is arguably misleading. Rather than focusing on ‘publishing Indigenous literature,’ her book takes a much more expansive outlook. After all, *Dhuuluu-Yala – To Talk Straight* is split into three parts: authorship, editing and publishing, and readership. And in the middle section, which is ostensibly concerned with both editing and publishing, her discussion of publishing totals only 18 pages of a 219-page book (not including appendices, endnotes, bibliography, and index). Clearly, publishing is not the focus of this book.

Furthermore, half of Heiss’s 18-page chapter on the subject of publishing Indigenous literature is devoted to Indigenous publishing houses. Of course, there remains some debate about what constitutes an ‘Indigenous publishing house’; the definition of this term has changed shape and provoked contestation over the years. It is worth noting that ‘there [are] no all-Black publishing houses in Australia,’ in the sense that ‘publishing houses that identified as Indigenous entities still tended to have disproportionate non-Indigenous inhouse [sic] influence.’\(^{27}\) Looking past this debate, Heiss devotes significant attention to Aboriginal Studies Press, which was established in Canberra in 1965 ‘as the publishing arm of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.’\(^{28}\) Furthermore, Heiss discusses how, in 1972, IAD Press was established in Alice Springs as ‘the publishing arm of the educational college, the Institute of Aboriginal Development.’\(^{29}\) In their early years, however, neither publishing house was exclusively devoted to publishing works by Indigenous creators, but rather also considered works by non-Indigenous writers on Indigenous issues. Consequently, Magabala Books, which was established in 1987, refers to itself as ‘Australia’s oldest independent Indigenous publishing house,’ since it publishes only those books where an Indigenous creator was involved.\(^{30}\) Heiss

\(^{25}\) Heiss 210.

\(^{26}\) Heiss 209.

\(^{27}\) Heiss 51.


\(^{29}\) Heiss 51.

does the same thing in her coverage of Maori literature – focusing on Maori publishing houses such as Huia Publishers, Te Reo Publications, and Aoraki Press.

Yet, the separate bibliographies of Aboriginal Australian literature and Maori literature that Heiss provides as appendices to her book do not justify her focus on Indigenous publishing houses. To take just one sub-category from each of the two appendices – the sub-category of fiction – Heiss lists roughly three times as many titles published by non-Indigenous publishing houses as she does titles published by Indigenous publishing houses. This statistic is consistent whether one is considering fiction by Aboriginal Australian writers or by Maori writers. Of course, Heiss’s bibliographies are not exhaustive, but there is no reason to believe she would systematically favour the output of non-Indigenous publishing houses over that of Indigenous publishing houses; in fact, if the body of her book is anything to go by, the opposite seems more likely.

Of course, Heiss also discusses non-Indigenous publishers of both Aboriginal Australian and Maori literatures. Yet, Heiss prefaces these discussions by noting, ‘While many Aboriginal writers have come through our own publishing houses, few have come through the mainstream.’ Not only is this observation directly contradicted by Heiss’s own bibliographies of Aboriginal Australian and Maori literatures, but her obsessive focus on Indigenous publishing houses comes at the expense of her ability to observe important trends in the publication of Indigenous writing by non-Indigenous publishing houses.

This is not meant as a criticism of Heiss’s book, which is a valuable scholarly resource, but merely as a point of clarification. Once it is clear how little attention Heiss actually gives to the subject of publishing in her book – and, moreover, how little attention she gives to the publication of Indigenous writing by non-Indigenous publishing houses – it is possible to understand how she may have overlooked significant developments that have contributed to the aforementioned shifts in tone and setting in Indigenous writing over a 30-year period leading up to the present.

The most significant development Heiss (and others who have written on this subject, though there are not many, and Heiss is the most prominent example) overlooks is the transition from Indigenous literature being published by small to medium-sized local publishing houses, to Indigenous literature being published by the local arm of a multinational conglomerate. To clarify, near the beginning of this 30-year period, most of the books by Indigenous authors that were widely read in their home countries were published by small to medium-sized local publishing houses. More recent titles by Indigenous authors that are widely read in their home countries now come out of publishing houses owned by multinational conglomerates. It is hardly surprising that the Indigenous literature produced by these two very different institutional structures should differ in significant ways.

Heiss mentions several of the small to medium-sized local, non-Indigenous publishing houses responsible for producing so many examples of early Indigenous literature. In the case of Aboriginal Australian literature, she singles out for special mention University of Queensland Press, Fremantle Arts Centre Press (renamed Fremantle Press), and University of Western Australia Press (renamed UWA Publishing). Significantly, these three are all small to medium-

31 Heiss 58.
sized local publishing houses that are protected to a certain extent against publishing failures by underwriting from either a university or the state government. When a body of literature moves from this institutional structure to a multinational conglomerate, this represents a particularly dramatic shift in priorities and governing philosophies. All three publishing houses have shown a tenacious commitment to the publication of Indigenous literature, which is not always a commercially beneficial undertaking. To this list one could add Reed Publishing in New Zealand (which Heiss also mentions though it is significantly larger than the others) and Allen & Unwin in Australia (which Heiss does not mention though it occupies a position similar to Reed Publishing). These two publishing houses have not shown quite the same commitment in terms of numbers of books published, but as home-grown publishing houses they were quick to support the surge of Indigenous writing in the 1980s. Consequently, Allen & Unwin published Weller’s *The Day of the Dog* in 1981, while small, home-grown New Zealand publisher Tandem Press published Duff’s *Once Were Warriors* in 1990.

If Heiss is regrettably unobservant of these macro-level events in the publication of Indigenous literature in the 1980s and early 1990s by non-Indigenous publishing houses, then she is blind to any events since then. Admittedly, Heiss specifies in her book that her research is ‘current up to the mid-1990s although some references to developments in the late 1990s/2000 have been included.’ Even with this caveat, her research seems to have overlooked a particularly important and influential development in the publishing industry that was well underway by the mid-1990s when Heiss’s industry coverage tapers off. Specifically, ‘the second phase of mergers and acquisitions in trade publishing ... began in the early 1980s and has continued to the present.’ As John B. Thompson notes in his authoritative book on the contemporary publishing industry, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*, ‘The outcome of this process of consolidation was that by the end of the 1990s there were four large and powerful publishing groups in the field.’ Clearly, such a significant development in the global publishing industry is likely to have an influence on the production of Indigenous literatures in Australia and New Zealand. Indeed, as was mentioned earlier, many (perhaps even most) of the recently published books by Indigenous authors that are widely read in their home countries now come out of publishing houses owned by multinational conglomerates. Consider, for example, Scott’s *That Deadman Dance*, published by Picador in 2010, and Ihimaera’s *The Trowenna Sea*, published by Raupo, which is a division of Penguin, in 2009. (Admittedly, *The Trowenna Sea* was not widely read because it was withdrawn from sale following charges of plagiarism, but Ihimaera’s track record as the author of many award-winning and bestselling books, including the international phenomenon *The Whale Rider*, almost certainly ensures it would have been widely read had such charges not been levelled against the book.) Interestingly, the publisher of *The Trowenna Sea*, Raupo, is home-grown New Zealand

---

32 Heiss vi.
34 Thompson 112.
publishing house Reed Publishing with a new name and under the ownership of Penguin since 2007.

Clearly, the shifts in tone and setting in Indigenous writing over a 30-year period leading up to the present are only the half of it. Indigenous writers are now writing for an international literary marketplace, and the implications of this are huge. This observation prompts the question, ‘At what stage in the publication process are these multinational corporations exerting an influence on books by Indigenous authors that differs from the influence previously exerted by small to medium-sized local publishing houses?’ Unfortunately, this is a difficult (if not impossible) question to answer. It should be said, however, that there is little reason to believe this influence happens at the editorial level; as was suggested earlier in this article, the characteristics of the editors in these two institutional settings do not differ dramatically. Furthermore, there is quite a bit of movement of editors between publishing houses of all stripes.

Leaving behind editorial influence, there are two much more likely sources of this influence: authorial self-censorship and multinational publishing house acquisition policies. Once again, it is difficult (if not impossible) to conclusively establish the influence of these factors.

Nonetheless, the argument for the influence of the first of these two factors would rest on the supposition that Indigenous authors are increasingly aware that they are writing for an international literary marketplace and (either consciously or unconsciously) craft their narratives to appeal to (or, at least, to not alienate) this audience segment. The shifts in tone and setting documented in this article are certainly conducive to appealing to a wider readership. For those Indigenous authors publishing with small to medium-sized local publishing houses near the beginning of the 30-year period documented in this article, the prospects of a wider readership were not as seriously considered because there were fewer precedents for it and, besides, their publishing houses did not have nearly the same capacity (in terms of marketing reach, distribution, and so forth) to reach such a readership.

The argument for the influence of multinational publishing house acquisition policies would, similarly, rest on the supposition that these publishing houses are contracting works by Indigenous authors only if these works will appeal to the broadest possible audience, including an international readership. The well-established ‘institutionalisation of Indigenous studies in the academy’ may be a contributing factor here as acquisitions editors try to anticipate which books the academic community might embrace. When a book is set as a required text in a university course, this can lead to regular sales for many years to come, which is obviously a desirable outcome for the publishing house.

Once again, it is clear that there are significant implications to the shift from Indigenous literature being published by small to medium-sized local publishing houses, to Indigenous literature being published by the local arm of a multinational conglomerate. It is important to further observe that the implications of this shift are huge for not only the Indigenous writers themselves but also (and perhaps especially) for Australian and New Zealand readers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, as they begin to think about how this new literature might fit within or challenge existing national and Indigenous literary traditions. Moreover, the

---


‘Changes in Tone, Setting, and Publisher: Indigenous Literatures of Australia and New Zealand from the 1980s to Today,’ Per Henningsgaard.

Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
methodology of this article and the considerations it raises about the production of an Indigenous literature are designed to get other scholars thinking about the various factors that contribute to shaping the meaning of an individual book and of ‘Indigenous literature’ as a concept.

Per Henningsgaard is an assistant professor of English and the director of the master’s degree in book publishing at Portland State University. He most recently published a chapter in the edited collection Tim Winton: Critical Essays (2014) on the subject of the American editions of Tim Winton’s books.
Global Citizenship in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 

Adnan Mahmutovic

‘What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?’ she asked me.
‘I live here,’ I replied.
‘That is not what I asked you, sir,’ she said.

— Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

As a response to socio-political developments in the US and its global actions since September 11, 2001, a number of new and established authors from Muslim backgrounds – such as Mohsin Hamid, Michael Muhammad Knight, Khaled Hosseini, and Mohja Kahf – have reviewed American civic life through the lens of social imaginaries of a heterogeneous minority whose very identity has been under critical scrutiny since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.¹ This scrutiny of American civic life is very much tied to a particular sense of globalisation, and an emphasis on what Amartya Sen² has called the global, rather than the merely Western, roots of democracy. Unlike Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian³ and David Harvey,⁴ these writers do not define globalisation as a break with modernity. Rather, like K.A. Appiah,⁵ their writings also harken back to what Alex MacGilivray (2006) calls ‘archaic globalisation,’⁶ which includes the history of Muslim colonialism and its economic and cultural impact on the world and the notion of Muslim *Ummah* as an early form of planetary consciousness.

Citizenship, by definition, requires a state’s legal recognition of a person as its subject, whether native or naturalised. There is no doubt that social contracts bind citizens together and to their nation, as Joseph Stiglitz argues,⁷ but these writers seem to circle around the idea that there are flexible forms of citizenship, in times of accelerated globalisation, which entail more of a planetary consciousness of rights and duties. In their works, citizenship entails that everyone can, even if only abstractly, come to participate in the rewriting of social contracts and contribute to governance itself. In this essay, I will take a closer look at citizenship in Mohsin Hamid’s global success, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.⁸ This success shows that many issues at stake in this novel resonate across a diverse number of ethnoscapes and mediascapes, to use

---

Arjun Appadurai’s terms. By casting ‘Muslims as an interruptive presence on the global stage’, Hamid’s novel adds complexity to the emerging field of post-9/11 fiction. It problematises popularised ideas about fundamentalism, globalisation, and what Mahmood Mamdani calls ‘culture talk,’ a discourse on culture in political and territorial terms. Building the narrative around the terrorist attacks on New York, Hamid’s contribution to post-9/11 fiction may be, as most critics have pointed out, an allegorical discourse on global capitalism (with America as its core). In my view, this discourse is but a basis for a deeper inquiry into the notions of civic life and citizenship. Put in the context of Ali Behdad’s critical historicism, since the novel describes 9/11 as something that takes place on both a national and a global stage, it shows how ‘the project of national identity in the US perpetually returns to the figure of the alien by way of defining itself and promoting a normalized notion of citizenship that itself is a symptom of historical amnesia’. Indeed, the treatment of Muslims after 9/11 is a continuation of anti-democratic governmental practices of curtailing citizens’ civic rights, which have stood in contrast to the ‘Jeffersonian myth of immigrant America as a haven of democratic pluralism’. What is different in the post-9/11 era is that there are, as Peter Morey shows, increasing ‘proposals to strip Muslims in western nations of their citizenship in the event of their being connected to terrorism,’ which are examples of ‘nations suspending the due operations of the laws by which they are supposed to be defined’. This call for deterritorialisation of citizens suspected of terrorism seems more and more common. These citizens are in a sense deemed worse than other types of criminals for whom even prison would be too good. To deprive them of their citizenship seems more akin the practice of banishment.

A concern with the meaning of citizenship in a changing, increasingly globalised world lies at the core of Hamid’s tale. For this reason I find it most important that besides fulfilling some demands on post-9/11 fictions in Michael Rothberg’s argument, it also seems to answer

10 Anna Hartnell, ‘Moving through America: Race, Place and Resistance in Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist’, Journal of Postcolonial Writing 46.3-4 (July-Sept 2010) 341.
12 Mahmood Mamdani, ‘Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism Author(s)’, American Anthropologist, New Series, 104(3) (September 2002) 766.
14 Behdad 288.
16 Even in my country of residence, Sweden, the neo-Nazi party called Sweden Democrats, which has 13% of seats in the parliament, have openly proposed cancelling citizenship for selected types of criminals who also belong to certain ethnicities and/or religion while in comparison no such proposals were made about the Swedish citizens who went to aid the Serbian aggression on Bosnia.
17 Rothberg wants fiction to for instance deal with the ‘centripetal’ globalisation, and to produce ‘a complementary centrifugal mapping that charts the outward movement of American power,’ that is, ‘the prosthetic reach of [the US] empire into other worlds’ (153). For Rothberg, this entails ‘mapping America’s extraterritorial expansion; exploring the epistemology, phenomenology, and impact of America’s global reach; and revealing the cracks in its necessarily incomplete hegemony’ (158).
Rothberg’s call for ‘fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship’. ¹⁸ For Hamid, as he tells Amina Yaqin, America seems to be a perfect springboard for his allegorical tale of citizenship:

In Europe, there is still a lingering sense that there are the original tribes of Europe and the Muslim immigrants to Europe – including Pakistanis – are something other than those original inhabitants. . . . It’s almost as if the American founding myth confirms that, by virtue of being born here, you are one of us, whilst the myth in Europe is one of tolerance: we will allow you to be here and we will tolerate your presence. ¹⁹

In the novel, Changez was not born in the US. He merely comes there to study and then work. He is not a citizen, but there is no doubt that he wants to be, or at least to be able to act, as one. And yet, it is not American citizenship as such that is most important or the only desirable one. Changez’s goal is to look at more global, transnational forms of being a citizen. Hamid tells Yaqin:

Part of the struggle we face now is that nations all over the world are trying to assert that they exist, but they remain basically imaginary concepts. . . . Why can’t a Somali person come and live here [Pakistan]? There is no real reason except that we have decided to believe in a fiction of a country and that fiction is used to say that some people can’t cross certain lines. So, where that takes us to is a series of global events that we have all been part of. Human beings are coming to recognise the illusion that nations are out there as empty spaces, they are beginning to work against those illusions, whether it’s migration of people across places, terrorists who strike across countries, whether it’s global capitalism, whatever it is. The US is in the same boat. ²⁰

Here, Hamid questions the ability of a nation to be a stable regulator of human affiliations and affairs. Yet, in his novel, he cannot unproblematically divorce the notion of citizenship from the nation. A nation’s gravitational pull must be dealt with. As Leerom Medovoi argues, ‘America serves as the novel’s geopolitical raison d’être and as the object of its rhetorical design rather than as its generative cultural ground’. ²¹ While Hamid’s novel may be both showing problems with modern citizenship and looking for positive modes and models of global civic engagement, one must not forget that terrorists too operate transnationally. The leaders of Al Qaida may be Saudi citizens but they have been working globally with bases in other sovereign nations. Furthermore, due to their claim on Islam as a global ideology, they also denationalise the supposed threat to America (and other nations). They attempt to make Muslim citizens of different countries imagine affiliations with a global, borderless, and imaginary Ummah. ²² The

---

²⁰ Yaqin 48.
²¹ Leerom Medovoi, “‘Terminal Crisis?’: From the Worlding of American Literature to World-System Literature”, American Literary History 23.3 (Fall 2011) 646, emphasis mine.
important contribution Hamid makes is an attempt to reclaim this notion of global affiliation and to rework it in the face of all manner of fundamentalist threats to healthy civic life. By civic life, I mean that which generally pertains to the rights, duties, and social activities of citizens of a modern nation state. I define ‘fundamentalism’ as a movement that seeks to gain political and economic power by restricting plural ways of understanding and being in the world. Such movements frequently employ selective and decontextualized readings of holy books of diverse religions as the fundaments for entire communities. Changez’s narrative rests on the fact that fundamentalism of any kind has historical provenance, which has nothing to do with premodernity and its supposed clash with modernity. As Mamdani explains, even when fundamentalism ‘harnesses one or another aspect of tradition and culture, the result is a modern ensemble at the service of a modern project’.23 Corporate fundamentalism, evoked in the novel through Changez’s complaint that Underwood Samson always wanted him to focus on the fundamentals (175), consists of a set of rules that govern the company’s global expansion, which takes no interest in anything but economic gain.

My analysis will revolve around three particular forms of citizenship because those are contrasted in the novel: economic, political, and social citizenship. They are not really different citizenships, as Bryan S. Turner and Engin F. Isin show, but rather major ways in which the field of citizenship studies has approached its subject.24 Using Hamid’s allegorical tale, I will discuss Changez’s role in his company (and its global aspirations) in terms of economic citizenship, or that which Aihwa Ong calls ‘flexible citizenship’,25 which stresses the way global capital calls for disrespect of national borders and laws. Unlike Ong and other major figures in citizenship studies (Gran, Woodiwiss, Roche, Lister, Cairns, Miller, Joppke, Sassen, Curtin, Linklater, Turner, Isin, etc.), I will look at the way a novelistic imagination takes on this subject through a rather extensive employment of what has been discussed, from Fredric Jameson on, as national allegory.26 I argue that the novel problematises the conflict between economic, political, and social citizenships and that it looks forward to the emergence of a new understanding of citizenship as something defined in terms of global rights and duties, something achieved through transnational osmosis (which is allegorised though an intimacy between Changez and Erica).

Allegories of Allegiance

The Reluctant Fundamentalist has indeed been read overwhelmingly as an allegory of Pakistani-American relations (Esterino, Elia, Hartnell, Hawley, Kiran, Lasdun, Morey, Munos, Neelam, Moore-Gilbert, Roy, Waterman). To begin with, Changez may be assumed to stand for his homeland, Erica for America (as a nation), and the company Underwood Samson for the global.

23 Mamdani 767.
to Lasdun’s, I find it
s
Transnational Literature
Global Citizenship
how allegoricity is good vehicle for problemati
’t]he nature of fiction is to make one distrustful of any character who lectures and castigates’ (1). Hamid show
detrimental to read Hamid’s allegories in terms of certain default aesthetic preferences, such as Lasdun’s idea that
conventional western habits of reading’ (69). Though my own first instinct was simil
reminded of Jameson’s point that allegory appears ‘alien to us at first approach, and consequently, resistant to our
(1). James Lasdun, ‘The Empire Strikes Back’,
33
32
31
30
29
28
27

Taking the well-known polemic with Jameson as a point of departure (from Aijaz Ahmad’s early response in Social Text and In Theory, and on),
in this paper I follow Srivastava’s argument and find that many elements of The Reluctant Fundamentalist seem to be in dialogue with
Jameson’s arguments. Rather than being the result of a deep, symptomatic reading, ‘Changez’s almost relentless allegorisation … is an explicit and conscious function of the text’.29 Indeed, ‘its allegorical elements … stubbornly refuse to conceal themselves’.30 For instance, at the very beginning Changez uses the trope of the beard to allegorise the fear of Muslim fundamentalism. Then he sees the collapse of the Twin Towers as the wound in the heart of American imperialism. Erica, for him, becomes America. Her nostalgia for Chris reflects the American post-9/11 nostalgia, and her grief for him a sense of complex national grief for what and who was lost in the 9/11 attacks. Their love affair is an allegory of the international political and social relations. Underwood Samson (US) stands for global corporate power in contrast to local enterprises. There is hardly any element in the novel that does not train ‘an allegorical gaze on America’.31 Though it may be read as a ‘story of the private individual destiny,’ which serves as ‘an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society’,32 the novel is in my view both a first-world national allegory and an allegory of global citizenship.33 The story of a Pakistani citizen works better as an allegory of the American nation and global citizenship than an allegory of Pakistan (though it does that as well). Why? Changez is the

29 Srivastava 176.
30 Srivastava 172.
31 Srivastava 174.
32 Jameson 69.
33 While hardly any critic fails to at least mention Hamid’s use of allegoricity, many find it off putting. In his review in The Guardian, James Lasdun identifies it as the core weakness, because it ‘gives the story a slightly abstracted, thin-blooded quality’ and ‘it has a stiffening effect on the narrative, shifting it from the dramatic to the essayistic’ (1). James Lasdun, ‘The Empire Strikes Back’, The Guardian, Saturday, 3 March 2007. One cannot but be reminded of Jameson’s point that allegory appears ‘alien to us at first approach, and consequently, resistant to our conventional western habits of reading’ (69). Though my own first instinct was similar to Lasdun’s, I find it detrimental to read Hamid’s allegories in terms of certain default aesthetic preferences, such as Lasdun’s idea that ‘[t]he nature of fiction is to make one distrustful of any character who lectures and castigates’ (1). Hamid shows how allegoricity is good vehicle for problematising both abstract political and social notions.

Global Citizenship in Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist. Adnan Mahmutovic.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
embodiment of the American dream, an immigrant with an H-1 visa who climbs the career ladder, but his disillusionment with this dream leads him to the position of a more transnational subject.

Despite the transnational impulses in the novel, it is important to keep in mind the notion of national allegory exactly because the notion of citizenship cannot be unproblematically divorced from the notion of the nation state even as we may enter the territory of flexible global citizenship as a new way of relating to globalisation and the development of capitalism. For Morey, Hamid engages in
destabilizing the reader’s identification through hyperbole, strategic exoticization, allegorical layering and unreliable narration, but also defamiliarizes our relation to literary projects of national identification, forcing us to be the kind of deterritorialized reader demanded by the emerging category of world literature.34

The enmeshing of allegories of the nation, state affairs, traditions, and the market is perfectly captured in Hamid’s choice of the setting for the very act of storytelling. Changez and his interlocutor meet in the district of Old Anarkali, in a marketplace named ‘after a courtesan immured for loving a prince’ (2). The allegorical story of Anarkali, within Changez’s own allegory, is only one aspect of Changez’s lecture to the American,35 whose purpose is to put ‘the present into much better perspective’ 51-2). What further puts this small market into perspective, and with it Pakistan-US relations, is also the fact that there are no alcoholic drinks there, but there are familiar ‘carbonated soft drinks’ (70), which signals, to use Ong’s words, that ‘capitalism is no longer centered in the West but distributed across a number of global arenas’.36

The soft drinks represent the capitalist economy as much as the silent American interlocutor is assumed to stand for his nation’s foreign policy. Whatever his true identity may be (businessman or agent), he is there because the American national interests are at stake due to Changez’s teachings. When Changez then suggests that the mysterious American is there to find ‘the perfect cup of tea,’ he is not only using this old expression to forge a sense of a business transaction between politically and economically unequal partners. This hyperbole is also a way of indicating that all of the values being performed by them are at play, theatrical.

The international relations between the US and its allies are too much based on interest and services, just as Changez himself was sourced and given American education in order to contribute his ‘talents’ (4) to ‘the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known’ (38). What is more, Changez constantly describes business, politics, and being-a-national-subject in terms of prostitution: ‘Prince ton raised her skirt for the corporate recruiters who came onto campus and – as you say in America – showed them some skin’ (5). The image of a sex-worker – ‘I was a perfect breast’ – seems out of place given that the corporate people are after the student’s ‘talents,’ but sex-worker entails the idea of turning a citizen into service

34 Morey 136. I also follow Medovoi in his argument that ‘Jameson’s point could be applied equally to world-system literature, which differs from the category of the ‘third world literature’ primarily in that the geopolitical relationships that it avails allegorically.’ For this reason, ‘the emergence of a world-systems literature about US power that is not itself American literature can be read as the textually complex symptom of a world-system in transition, a global hegemon’s empire writing back at the very moment of its destabilization’ (657-8).

35 Behdad 290.

36 Ong 31.
provider. If, for Jameson, ‘one of the determinants of capitalist culture’ is the ‘radical split between the private and the public … between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes … in other words, Freud versus Marx’, then Hamid’s sexualised political allegory marries Freud and Marx. I do not want to rush into arguing that this synthesis is somehow presenting an accurate picture of how global capitalism works. Rather, I argue that the novel draws attention to ‘flexible economic citizenship,’ which according to Ong ‘demands accountability not from governments but from global firms and markets or planetary organizations.’ Indeed, ‘the issue is no longer one of state ‘losing control’ but rather one of the state taking an active role in refashioning sovereignty to meet the challenges of global markets and supranational organizations’. Such a flexible notion of citizenship

refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. … These logics and practices are produced within particular structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power.

From the moment Jim tells Changez, ‘Sell yourself’ (7), this fundament of the corporate world is repeated ad nauseam throughout the novel as ‘a testament to the systematic pragmatism – call it professionalism – that underpins your country’s success in so many fields’ (41). Changez is ‘a self-consciously transnational subject’ who ‘leaves Lahore in search of the Subcontinental holy grail, an Ivy League education and a high paying job with coveted H-1B visa status,’ and, assimilating into ‘the corporate elite … even succumbs to the postpolitical language he later detests as the taint of market-led imperialism’. But upon returning to America, ‘he is challenged by an immigration agent, who quashes any hope that membership in the corporate elite trumps race or citizenship’. Changez’s sense of economic citizenship, which he adopted from his colleagues, is working in some spheres of life, but the freedoms and privileges it carries does not translate into the civic life of his adopted nation, which is exactly what, as the story unfolds, becomes an ethical issue for him. If to be a citizen entails all three elements I mentioned earlier (political, economic, social), Changez cannot but be confused by the fact that one of these works in some places and at certain times as if completely divorced from the other two.

Changez, as the modern janissary of capitalism (173), is both an agent in this the ‘ferocious struggle of capital and labor’ that gives the world its unity, and an allegory of it. All Changez’s ways of acting, which he learns from his observations of Erica and the other young Americans’ behaviour abroad – as though they were its [the world’s] ruling class (24) – are examples of a sense of global economic citizenship. Later on, he becomes suspicious of this kind of citizenship only few benefit from. But, rather than being a complete rejection of it, his narrative seems to suggest that there is a need for another type of global citizenship, one which enables each human to engage productively in the civic life of any nation by utilising resources from other cultures or

---

37 Jameson 69.
38 Ong 215.
39 Ong 6.
40 Hart and Hansen 507.
41 Hart and Hansen 508.
42 Ahmad 10.
political systems. Following Ong’s points that ‘flexibility, whether in strategies of citizenship or in regimes of sovereignty, is a product and a condition of late capitalism’, it is clear that Changez, as a senior businessman who has adopted the kind of economic citizenship from his colleagues, feels more entitled to shape American civic life than a working class citizen. After all, Changez tells the American he was ‘meant to be … entering in New York the very same social class that [his] family was falling out of in Lahore’ (97). Changez describes how on his trips: ‘I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and I wanted my share of that respect as well’ (65). Although he has only a work permit in the US, Changez behaves as if he were an American citizen.

One might suspect a change to take place already early in the book when Changez reacts to Erica’s father’s dismissal of Pakistan as a corrupt nation ridden with fundamentalism (63). The father implies that these Non-American peoples, albeit long-standing allies of the US, have no proper selfhood. Like previously mentioned sex-workers, they are incapable of transforming themselves and are in need of salvation from the outside. They are neither fit to be American citizens, nor can they be proper citizens in principle. This ‘typically American’ undercurrent of condescension angers Changez because he sees clear parallels between the class history of Europe and Pakistan, the downfall of nobility as well as inherited money and ‘the rising class of entrepreneurs’ (11). Despite this sentiment, Changez, as the product of Princeton and Underwood Samson, continues to desire an engagement with both American corporate and civic life more than with Pakistan, where he should, by virtue of being a citizen, have more rights as well as greater duties.

Despite the fact that Changez came to the US to regain the wealth his family was losing in Pakistan, he slowly changes from someone who is climbing the American class ladder to someone who more and more feels like a prostitute. The prostitute metaphor, which he uses early on to describe Princeton, also points to the move from production to services. Though Changez’s boss Jim argues this move as the evolution of American economy (109), the implication is that eventually modern nations will lose ‘to global trade in terms of its control over the affiliations and behaviors of its subjects’. In his meetings with people who are either just barely surviving or succumbing to capitalism (the deli owner, the people in Manila, Juan Bautista), Changez shows, to use Ong’s words, ‘the misleading impression that everyone can take equal advantage of mobility and modern communications and that transnationality has been liberatory, in both a spatial and a political sense, for all peoples’. The first reason Changez – as an Other with strong American imaginary – cannot transform is his loss of selfhood. Hamid does

43 Ong 240.
44 Hamid tells Yaqin how the novel ‘is written in this tone … because it resonates with many Western preconceptions about Islam, or about people from the Muslim world that they belong to something that is anachronistic, which is from the past, something overly formalised’ (46).
45 Ong 3.
46 Ong 11. Also, as Ong puts it, ‘transnationality also alludes to the transversal, the transactional, the translational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism’ (4).

not suggest Changez should know he is truly a Pakistani, but rather that he has not made a conscious decision about what sort of agency he wants to have.

Hamid constantly invites the reader to consider what constitutes a viable civic imaginary and civic engagement, especially among the people who are not deemed proper Americans despite the fact that they work for the global economic benefit of America (and this may apply to people in other countries). Given that Changez keeps his job despite his negative experiences after 9/11, and that he chooses to leave America when he is denied participation in civic life (which is seen in his allegorical relationship with Erica), it can be argued that the novel is articulating a need for transnational influences in terms of ethics and social imagination as the proper core of any national belonging. This core is the heterogeneous process of transnational crosspollination, or what Changez names osmosis towards the end of his narrative (160). Such osmosis on all levels of social life and economy is a plural form of affiliation that ought to have an impact on the global (postcolonial) indirect rule.

If a healthy economy is the prerequisite for a healthy civic life, Changez is deeply disappointed that his contributions to the US economy in a time of crisis do not open more doors for him to act within the American society. In this case, again, this desire is shown mainly through his allegorical intimacy with (Am)Erica.

Global Citizenship as Intimacy and Osmosis

In order to examine the relationship between national and global citizenship, Hamid turns the story of a monogamous romantic relationship into an allegory of transnational civic engagement. Hamid states:

I believe that the personal and the political are deeply intertwined … People and countries tend to blur in my fiction; both serve as symbols of the other. … The countries in my fiction are far from monolithic and are capable of envy, passion, and nostalgia; they are … quite like people. 47

The allegoricity of romantic love, which stands in contrast to the previously discussed economic citizenship, highlights the importance of allegiance and deep loyalty. According to Harleen Singh, ‘the novel provides a variation on [Richard] Gray’s theme of ‘emotional entanglements’ as the sole viable representation of ‘cataclysmic public events’ by recasting the love affair as a failed mediation between cultures, countries, religions, race, and politics’. 48 Changez’s desire to help Erica heal is a desire to help America heal after 9/11, despite the fact that ‘their love … was, after all, a religion that would not accept me as a convert’ (129). Although he is talking about Chris and Erica, he is really alluding to different spheres of civic life. Hamid’s conflation of sexual relationships with civic life shows how fundamentalism of any sort always demands absolute monogamy in terms of social contracts. 49 In this way, he performs and plays with what


49 Hamid’s conflation of sexual politics, capitalism, and civic life are not entirely new. We need to bear in mind at least two things: the role of sexual politics in Islamic civic life and Edward Said’s Orientalism. Edward Said,
Doris Sommer has called ‘the marriage between Eros and Polis’, in which ‘the desire keeps weaving, or simply doubling itself at personal and political levels, because the obstacles it encounters threaten both levels of happiness’. Changez’s split identity seems to necessitate multiple social and political allegiances, and global civic engagement. By splitting the representational foci of his adopted nation into Underwood Samson (US) and Erica (America), that is corporate capitalism and the American nation, Hamid reverses the act of ‘penetration’ he sees in Heart of Darkness. Hamid’s America is not mother America. It is not a matriarchal protector and caregiver, but an object of desire. It is a young traumatised woman with an unhealthy nostalgia and historical amnesia, which are aggravated but not caused by 9/11 (see Behdad). This split of America allegorises that which Carmen Sirianni and Lewis A. Friedman identify as the increased risk of citizens becoming disjoined from public life by the market:

America has been a vital civic republic only to the extent that it has always been a vital commercial republic. … But in recent years, corporations have pushed decisions upwards, to national and global headquarters, and executives have fewer incentives to build relationships with particular communities. … The market can thus rend the very fabric of civic life upon which it once depended. And as some of our public institutions go through difficult struggles to restructure themselves, the metaphors of the market become increasingly dominant and threaten to turn nearly every public good into a consumer choice. Even our attempts to reinvent government invoke the language of ‘serving the customer’ more often than ‘engaging the citizen’ as a vital coproducer of public goods in a commonwealth.

Erica and Changez both share the experience of industrial capitalism and globalisation, but not in the same way. Changez, who suffers because ‘not an insubstantial component of her [Erica’s] appeal – was out of reach’ (25), wants to show that he is ‘a fellow bearer of a conflicted postcolonial legacy’. Even though he will often feel ‘ushered into an insider’s world’ (64), whether in the sense of being let in on the secrets of the corporate world or Erica’s psyche, what remains true, albeit obscure until the very end, is that he, as the foreigner ‘observing Erica’ (66), can notice how this ‘crack inside her’ provokes in him ‘an almost familial tenderness’ (68).

_Orontialism_ (London: Penguin 2003). As Fatima Mernissi argues in _Beyond the Veil_, there is a ‘link in the Muslim mind between sexuality and shari’a_. Fatima Mernissi, _Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Societies_ (London: Al Saqi Books 1985). Said claimed that the political discourse and relations between Western countries and the Eastern Others, have always been sexualised. The Islamic countries were once considered sexually liberated and immoral compared to Christian Europe. And let us not forget Jameson’s emphasis on allegories of sex in what he calls third-world literature: ‘the classical sex manuals are at one with the texts that reveal the dynamics of political forces’ (72).


51 Sommer 48.

52 The most direct reference to Conrad is in his words, ‘I have felt rather like a Kurtz waiting for his Marlowe’ (208).


54 Hartnell 345.
(Am)Erica’s wound produces in him a desire to establish a deep intimacy with her and become her healer. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, Changez comes to have even more contradictory feelings about the country in which he has invested his talent. It is here, as Hartnell puts it, that ‘[p]aradoxically, Changez’s rejection by Erica engenders resentment not about America’s expansionist tendencies but almost the reverse: an isolationist streak that turns its gaze away from the rest of the world’. 55 Later on in Manila, when he meets the gaze of a local whose ‘dislike was so obvious, so intimate’ (76), he feels like an American. This meeting of gazes makes Changez reevaluate his sense of entitlement that comes with the assumed flexible citizenship inculcated by Underwood Samson. Slowly, as he becomes disillusioned with his role as a capitalist janissary, he comes to realize his desire for transnational forms of civic engagement. Changez’s allegorical story shows that plural affiliations, if they were ever really possible within the confines of nation states, were brought to crisis by 9/11. Seeing the planes crash into the Twin Towers, Changez smiles. He is ‘remarkably pleased’ (83), and this feeling is both genuine and perplexing for him because he ‘was the product of an American university’ and ‘infatuated with an American woman’ (84). He cannot grasp why he would find America’s pain satisfying except that he ‘was caught up in the symbolism of it, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees’ (83). Changez tries to distinguish between the symbolic violence and the real tragedy. In fact, it is only when he thinks of Erica as a New Yorker that he can start sharing ‘in the anxiety of [his] colleagues’ (85). But then, even New York, which previously ‘felt – so unexpectedly – like coming home’ (36) is now invaded by the American flag. Here we can see the dialogic relationship between (Am)Erica and the US enter a disturbing phase. What is lost is the possibility of a deeper relationship with American civic life. Changez becomes even more diffident and cautious about engaging with (Am)Erica after she succumbs to a dangerous nostalgia that prevents her from properly understanding the problems of the present: ‘I was afraid any movement on my part might dislodge our connection’ (92).

Furthermore, as Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin argue, an immigrant such as Changez poses another problem for ‘national versus international modes of identification, such as the way in which the transnational community of believers (Ummah) problematizes the very idea of the sovereign western nation-state’. 56 Indeed, ‘[t]ensions between national and transnational allegiances have been played out in different ways in western countries according to their preferred strategies for accommodating incomers.’ In the novel, a particular religious aspect might be visible in Changez’s desire for a global sense of citizenship. The national is constantly bothered by the fact that Muslim Ummah has always been conducive to some form of globalisation. Although Muslims are obliged by their religion to follow the laws of any given country they live in, their identity is always supposed to be subsumed to the Ummah and Islamic ethics. 57

55 Hartnell 344.
57 The notion of Muslim Ummah is based on Muhammad’s declaration that Islam creates a bond between believers which overshadows all other types of social bonds. In everyday civic life, a sense of allegiance to Ummah entails that although Muslims are required by their religion to obey the laws of the country they reside in they are also called to civil disobedience if the laws of the country are fundamentally against Islamic principles. It is quite uncommon that such action takes place. For this reason, the legacy of civil disobedience and Western secular

It is not only in the US that Changez feels a ‘desire’ for (Am)Erica (98), and ‘to serve as her anchor in these moments, without being so vulgar as to make known to her that this was a role [he] felt she needed someone to play’ (99). His entire narrative is a confirmation of his intimate engagement. The consummation of their love should be read beyond the allegorical relationship between two nation states. The intimate act itself is suggestive of the character of global civic engagement: caring, passionate, intense, daring. Although (Am)Erica seems to care for what Changez represents, she rejects him. Despite ‘the growing wound this inflicted on [his] pride’ (102), Changez desires to ‘console her, to accompany her into her mind and allow her to be less alone’ (103). He desires an intimate ‘commingling of identities’ (104), which is a willingness to change together. The more (Am)Erica rejects Changez, the more she loses her own self.

Knowing that she needs something he ‘was unable to give her’ (129), Changez says,

My attempts to communicate with her might have failed in part because I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither – and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her. Probably this was why I had been willing to try to take on the persona of Chris …. But in so doing – and by being unable to offer her an alternative to the chronic nostalgia inside her – I might have pushed Erica deeper into her own confusion. (168, emphasis mine)

Pointing out his complicity in her deterioration, and his inability to produce an alternative social imaginary, Changez simultaneously exposes the depth of the relationship between America and its people, and its relation to the world. The allegorical rhetoric of love and desire seems to show that global civic engagement, which should affect that flexible economic citizenship I discussed first, is an intimate sharing that contaminates all parties. The word ‘sharing’ is frequently repeated throughout the narrative and is used in the final sentence addressed to the American as a way of putting an emphasis on the relationship between two political agents: ‘you and I are now bound by a certain shared intimacy’ (209). The intimacy, established after one man has related something of a personal nature to the other, is meant to say that political and business exchanges need to be grounded in a certain sharing of civic rights and just economic interest.

The problem for Changez is that he never wanted to simply choose between America and Pakistan, and yet, after 9/11, there was no way of choosing both. He has to prove at the firm that his ‘loyalties could [not] be so divided’. In choosing only America, Changez feels a ‘coward’ and ‘a traitor’ (145), but in choosing Pakistan, he feels he is betraying America. Given that ‘in this constant striving to realize a financial future, no thought was given to the critical personal and political issues that affect one’s emotional present’(165), he moves back to Lahore, stating:

America was engaged only in posturing. As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into the myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. … Such an America had to be stopped in the interests not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own. (190, emphasis mine)

universalism, that Changez most likely learnt about at Princeton, might be synchronised with a sense of belong to the Ummah. This, however, is not clear because religion is written out of this novel and can only be read as implied.
The critique of America’s global policies and economic expansion is scathing, but in this act of ‘betrayal’ there is an immense sense of care, a desire for intimacy. The proof of this is his inability to completely divorce himself from (Am)Erica, politically and emotionally. For him, the political engagement becomes inextricable from the emotional engagement and economy. In other words, he has adopted his allegoricity to the extent of actually living by it:

I had been raised in an environment too thoroughly permeated with a tradition of shared rituals of mysticism to accept that conditions of the spirit could not be influenced by the care, affection, and desire of others. … I had failed to penetrate the membrane with which she guarded her psyche; my more direct approaches had been rejected, but with sufficient insight I might yet be welcomed through a process of osmosis. (160)

Since ‘at the level of human beings, [Changez and Erica’s] connection was nil’ (164), Changez’s rejection of capitalist fundamentalism relegates him to one of the possible spaces already established by various discourses on the progress of modernity. The way the novel portrays the corporate world seems on a par with Marshall Berman’s argument that economic and political developments have gained a momentum impervious to genuine care. And it is care that arises from these intimate moments of osmosis, of deliberate porosity of national identity that in Hamid’s novel constitutes the basis of global civic engagement (131-2). The Reluctant Fundamentalist shows that to foster global civic imagination and participation will do more to support national democracies than to endanger them. It would, as Sirianni and Friedland argue, ‘mobilize social capital in new ways, to generate new institutional forms, and to reinforce these through public policy designed for democracy’. Finance may be ‘a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power’ and ‘domination’ (177), but there are counter-movements that involve global osmosis, which are real, both politically and emotionally: ‘I had, in my own manner, issued a firefly’s glow bright enough to transcend the boundaries of continents and civilizations. If Erica was watching – which rationally I knew, she almost certainly was not – she might have seen me and been moved to correspond’ (207). Not respond, but correspond.

Changez’s moral dilemma makes him fall out with Capitalism – ‘my days of focusing on the fundamentals were done’ (175) – but it is ultimately (Am)Erica’s rejection that results in his reluctant return to Lahore, where he remains the lover of America as well as its fierce critic. It is important to try and assume that Changez is not being ironic in his declaration of love: – ‘If you have ever, sir, been through the breakup of a romantic relationship that involved great love, you will perhaps understand what I experienced’ (179). This ultimate dissent is a part of his care and sense of global civic duty. Despite the smile on his face at the sight of the destroyed Twin Towers, and the fact that one of his students attempted to assassinate an American engaged in development work, Changez assures the American interlocutor that he is ‘a believer in nonviolence’ and that he is ‘no ally of killers’ (206). Yet, seeing 9/11 in symbolic terms, he

---

58 Sirianni and Friedland 13. However, not ‘all forms of social capital lend themselves well to public problem solving, and some forms work in the opposite direction by fostering deep distrust of outsiders or fundamentalist beliefs that brook no compromise with adversaries. The world is filled with forms of social capital that promote ethnic hostility and erode capacities for democratic governance. It is also replete with social capital that lies relatively dormant as a resource for democratic politics or community problem solving. Thus, the organizational forms and strategies for mobilizing social capital matter a great deal’ (14).
concludes that the corporate America must be stopped and the ‘real’ America (represented by Erica, New York, etc.) needs to be healed and brought back out of its depression. By implication, the same is valid for Pakistan. Dissent is in this case deeply tied to his love of America and Pakistan. If Changez shows dissent, and if this dissent is conceived of as violence, it is clear that for him it arises out of a deep love.59

Conclusion

The test of democracies in multicultural societies is more and more dependent on the inclusion of minorities into governance, and allowing for global ethico-political and economic osmoses to take place. Hamid’s novel, as Mathew Hart and Jim Hansen put it, asks us to consider ‘how and why the state model of government and citizenship remains important for writers and scholars in an age of ‘super mobility,’ where the movement of populations across the globe is more hectic than ever’.60 Indeed, the state may be important ‘as a lens through which to discuss writers’ investigations of justice and authority,’ but the question is what is to be made of ‘the changing nature of political economy throughout the world? Can an apparently rooted and territorial concept like the state be reconciled with new approaches to transnational and world literature?’61 As I have argued, it is important not to do away with the nation in an analysis that seeks to expand the notion of citizenship beyond its ties to a state. Indeed, as Hart argues, ‘theories of globalization risk marginalizing those with just claims to make on national governments and citizenries’ such as ‘undocumented migrants or refugees who lack the right kind of citizenship papers in contexts “when the nation-state remains the chief mechanism for dispersing and regulating power, status, and material resources”’62 It is possible to read Changez’s statement that he is a product of Princeton to mean that it formed him as an American citizen in every sense of the word, including the will to social reform and openness to more fluctuating global affiliations. If Princeton infused him with both a sense of Capitalism and this potentially revolutionary ethos of civil rights movement (though not explicitly stated), and yet the America he fell in love with rejected his right to behave accordingly, then his split self and his consequent frustrations are all the more understandable. The hub of the novel, which remains as a strong undercurrent within all the plays with national and transnational allegories, is that the osmosis that Changez advocates is a ground of global citizenship that relies on the belief that, as Behdad puts it, ‘nation-states have become increasingly porous’ even though ‘national governments continue to exercise a great deal of power in planning and shaping the ways in which their countries are globalized’.63 Changez works within an allegory of the American nation (the nation of immigrants, settlers, of economic prosperity, and deep sense of civic engagement), as well as, through an emphasis on transnational osmosis, an allegory of global citizenship.

59 There is, after all, a long tradition, as Slavoj Žižek claims, from Christ to Che Guevara, which deals with violence as a work of love. Slavoj Žižek, ‘The Politics of Batman’, New Statesman 23 (August 2012).
61 Hart and Hansen 502.
62 Hart and Hansen 504.
63 Behdad 295.
Through an emphasis on multiple political and cultural affiliations and investments, Changez answers President Bush’s post-9/11 ultimatum – ‘Either you are with us, or against us’ – with a Yes-No. To begin with, Changez’s political allegiances seemed to shift between the US and Pakistan, and between different fundamentalisms, but a closer reading of the novel shows that plural allegiances have always already been taking place across the borders between the personal and the political, national and global, and that such crosspollinations are far more conducive to healthy civic engagement within nations as well as globally. In other words, Changez seems to ask for the freedom of the movement of capital to also apply to civic life. By using familiar allegories of the nation, Hamid puts his novel to the task of being both a responsive and a responsible form, a truly democratic form in which the extreme Other, the fundamentalist, can clash with other fundamentalists, and in the residue of this clash of fundamentalisms one may begin to discern new ways of looking at global civic life.

Adnan Mahmutovic is a Bosnian-Swedish scholar and novelist. Besides postcolonial and post-9/11 literature, he has written on comics. His work includes Authenticity and Community in Selected Works by Rushdie, Ondaatje and Okri (literary criticism, 2012), Thinner than a Hair (novel, 2010) and How to Fare Well and Stay Fair (short-story collection, 2012). He is currently running an MA in Transnational Creative Writing at Stockholm University.
Introduction

The present argument aligns itself with theoretical positions that question the celebratory interpretations of relocation narratives. The starting point of my analysis is S. Pultz Moslund’s study that questions the glorification of the migrant subject as the normative type of consciousness of our times. The author considers that the contemporary critical discourse, with its focus on metaphors of fluidity (migrancy/uprootedness, cultural flows, becoming, nomadic identities) overlooks the enduring relevance of centripetal coordinates (settlement, rootedness, being) in the fabric of contemporary identities.¹ Far from minimising the significance of migrancy and cultural flows, this approach suggests a more comprehensive perspective that would balance all these coordinates (movement and stillness, cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity, cultural being and cultural becoming). Along similar lines, Michael Peter Smith argues for the importance of analysing the emplacement of displaced individuals, foregrounding the enduring relevance of locality upon experiences of resettlement: ‘When the semantics we appropriate to represent human mobility are too fleeting, ephemeral, and unbounded, we move from a world where social structures still matter to a world of pure flexibility, deterrioralisation, and disembeddedness.’²

The present paper analyses recent narratives of women’s relocation by Romanian authors, foregrounding the ways in which the migrants’ transnational itineraries are punctuated by instances of groundedness. I have chosen the syntagm ‘narratives of relocation’ instead of ‘migration literature’ given that the primary corpus of this analysis is made up of different literary genres, a novel³ and a memoir.⁴ Both authors experienced similar histories of uprooting, as they left Romania in the early 1980s and underwent temporary settlement in Western Europe before reaching the United States of America. The reason I have chosen these works is their autobiographical core of transplantation, inherent in the memoir and fictionalised in the novel. Rădulescu confirmed the autobiographical nature of her novel, specifying that it reflects her personal itinerary of uprooting, in a manner mediated by her creative imagination.⁵ The analysis of these works is highly relevant for both a Romanian and a foreign audience, as it presents recent perspectives on women’s migration relying on novel theories about transnational migration, translocal processes and transcultural identities.

³ Domnica Rădulescu, Train to Trieste (New York, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008). Subsequent references to this book will be included in the text in parentheses as Train.
⁴ Rodica Mihalis, The Gypsy Saw Two Lives (Houston: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co., 2011). Subsequent references to this book will be included in the text in parentheses as The Gypsy.

‘Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.’ Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
Theoretical Background

As a general term, transnationalism refers to cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations straddling nation-states. Transnationalism denotes ‘processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement’. Transnationalism is facilitated by globalisation, designating manners in which developments in transportation, technology and communication have accelerated the speed, intensity and impact of various linkages. The present paper relies on a cultural studies approach to transnationalism, interpreted as a special type of consciousness generated by the individuals’ multiple identifications, de-centred attachments and simultaneous being here and there.

While transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, the migrants’ enhanced ability to travel back and forth between homes gives it a new dimension, discarding the diasporic connotations of absence, loss and alienation. The classical definition of diaspora implies a sense of irremediable rupture with one’s homeland paralleled by a wish to return to it and a sense of alienation in the host country. At the same time, diaspora formation is conditioned by coercive elements at home that enforce departure (political repression, starvation, etc). By affording a regime of multiple national belonging, the transnational condition discards the connotations of diasporic loss. This regime of intensified relocation may generate transcultural transformations that connect immigrants with specific locations along their itineraries. A transcultural approach to cultural contacts involves a transcendent cultural dimension, shaped by a layer of shared norms that enable communication across cultural differences. Claire-Karen Voss defines the transcultural space as an unbounded cultural dimension, where one experiences the condition of being human beyond cultures. This outlook supports the idea of communication across cultural identifications, along transcendent lines of self-definition: ‘In the transcultural space we … begin to see what being human really means’. Along similar lines, Hannerz considers that the transnational ties of contemporary culture create a sense of global interconnectedness, conceptualised as ‘global ecumene’. These transnational connections configure the contemporary global setting as an open landscape of social relationships, cultural flows and transnational commons. Considering cultural diversity as one of the transnational commons, Hannerz argues that individuals are free to operate creative confrontations, selecting and inserting different cultural practices into their profiles. This argument shares the transgressive implications of transculturality, connecting it with a transnational context of intense circulation.

Notwithstanding the fluid connotations of transnational affiliations and transcultural outlooks, there are critical voices who argue for the enduring relevance of stability and settlement in

12 Hannerz 56.
13 Hannerz 61-2.

'Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.’ Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
contemporary experiences of resettlement. A unilateral understanding of contemporary migration solely as displacement and deterritorialisation may overlook ways in which these patterns of mobility are grounded in ‘spatial registers of affiliation’. Researchers associate translocality with an emphasis on ‘local-to-local links’ that shape the immigrants’ experiences in specific locations. In order to highlight the need for further conceptualisations of locality within transnational studies, Guarnizo and Smith have advanced the notion of grounded transnationalism. Their approach aims to filter transnational processes through a multifaceted grid that considers the specific contexts of the migrants’ resettlement along with the fluid, free-floating dimension of their relocation. Guarnizo and Smith promote the dialectic of embedding and disembedding as a lens that enables the interpretation of transnational identities as simultaneously shaped by centripetal elements of situatedness and centrifugal impulses of relocation. Relying on these theoretical considerations, the next section investigates the immigrants’ ambivalent relation to the Western European spaces they traverse. More specifically, the analysis foregrounds the protagonists’ ability to bond with these sites of transit despite their nostalgic moods and uncertain itineraries.

**Germany and Italy: sites of transit**

Rodica Mihalis and Domnica Rădulescu belong to the category of Romanian migrants who left Romania before 1989, fleeing communist restrictions. Rodica Mihalis’s memoir presents her childhood and adulthood in communist Romania, followed by her relocation to the United States via Germany.

This section focuses on Rodica’s temporary stay in Frankfurt where she applies for political asylum at the American consulate. By investigating her translocal experience, the discussion establishes the interplay of emplacement and displacement that configures her brief encounter with Western Europe. As she gets off the train in Frankfurt, Rodica is struck by a feeling of interpersonal alienation and lack of human empathy. As she buys herself coffee and pastry, Rodica notices how the shop owner attempts to chase away an old woman, who is carrying an empty plate. Moved by the old lady’s situation, Rodica buys her some pastry, thus arousing the man’s disapproval (The Gypsy 119). The fact that he shrugs his shoulders and leaves emphasises the impression of human disconnection that dominates Rodica’s first impression of the German setting.

Rodica’s transit through Germany is largely characterised by a sensation of uncertainty, fuelled by her expected transition to the status of a political refugee: ‘No one knew how it felt to be suspended between two countries. I could not return to Romania without facing prison, and yet I did not know if America would accept me. Even if it did, I had no idea how long the process would be. The uncertainty overwhelmed me’ (The Gypsy 133). As an illegal immigrant, Rodica feels out of place while waiting for the approval of her legal departure to America. Rodica perceives this state of intermission as an unsettling experience that generates her reluctance to connect with the German setting: ‘For me, Germany was just a stop on my way to...

---


'Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.' Adriana Elena Stoican.

Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
freedom. I was an observer, not a participant (The Gypsy 144). The temporary nature of Rodica’s stay in Germany is correlated with her inability to become attached to a specific point in her transnational itinerary. Rodica’s reactions to Frankfurt suggest that she feels predominantly displaced in this foreign setting. However, certain aspects of her recollections illustrate how Rodica’s states of detachment and alienation intersect with unexpected instances of groundedness, resulting from her transcultural perceptions. The author declares that a major direction of her writing is concerned with the dissemination of a transcendent message that foregrounds the human dimension of individuals: ‘I hope to take the readers to a deeper level of understanding, not only of a different culture, but also of the universal human emotions that are similar for all’. 17

After receiving a favourable response from the American authorities, Rodica decides to travel to several German cities (Bonn and Koln). On her way to Koln, a German traveller (Johannes) offers to be her guide and invites her to rest at his parents’ place. Although Rodica is initially reluctant to accept a stranger’s kindness, she eventually becomes his guest: ‘However, as surreal as the story is, it happened. I went with Johannes, a perfect stranger, to his parents’ house’ (The Gypsy 147). The compassion of strangers experienced by Rodica along her transition through Germany suggests that people’s emotions have the potential to transcend physical and cultural borders. Johannes’s openness and generosity contribute to Rodica’s transcultural understanding that connects her with certain German realities. The most important moment of her transcultural awareness takes place in a German cathedral, when she accompanies Johannes’s family. During the sermon, surrounded by people who speak a different language, Rodica experiences profound human attachment. Her transcultural perception involves an overall feeling of harmony and understanding that cancels any possibility of separation:

At the end we held hands and prayed in German. The words didn’t matter, but the unknown hands holding mine felt strong and reassuring. For a moment my heart spoke the language of compassion and friendship. I didn’t feel the presence of God necessarily, but I felt cared for and accepted. (The Gypsy 147; (emphasis mine)

Rodica’s experience of translocality illustrates that the migrant’s residence in an intermediate space can be discussed in terms of simultaneous displacement and emplacement. Her stay in Germany is an example of grounded transnationalism shaped by transcultural values like compassion, care and acceptance. The following section discusses Mona Manoliu’s experience of transit through Italy, foregrounding the intersecting axes of belonging and (up)rootedness that configure the migrant’s relocation.

Train to Trieste is a work of fiction inspired by Domnica Rădulescu’s background of migration. It presents the life trajectory of Mona Manoliu, a girl raised in communist Romania, who escapes Ceaușescu’s dictatorship in the early 1980s. As well as in Rodica’s case, Mona’s migration to the West entails a chain of relocations via different European cities: Belgrade, Trieste and Rome. After her short transit through Belgrade, Mona crosses the Italian border illegally, pretending to be the wife of an Italian man, Mario. She spends her first two weeks in Italy as a guest of Mario’s family in the city of Trieste. Mona is surprised by the beauty of this place, which she has imagined as impersonal space of refugee transition:

I had thought Trieste was going to be an improvised city, small buildings built in a rush at

---


'Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.’ Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
the frontier with Yugoslavia to welcome refugees who had crossed the border. Somehow I saw the city in my mind as a transitional space where the train to Trieste stopped, then passed through to real cities like Venice and Rome. But it isn’t like this at all. It hurt me to discover it was a beautiful city, because I knew my journey couldn’t end here. I had to get to Rome, at least. (Train 159)

Mona’s reflections suggest that her transnational trajectory cannot be defined only in terms of groundlessness, given her impulse to connect with people and places. Trieste’s beautiful architecture and joyous ambience function as possible triggers of attachment that Mona tries to avoid. Mona’s relocation trajectory is shaped by the Italian policy of immigration, unfriendly to refugees. Her experience illustrates the division between Eastern and Western Europe caused by the high numbers of Eastern European refugees that triggered hostile reactions in the West. As a result, Mona cannot envisage her stay in Italy as permanent, although she feels connected with the Italian surroundings. Mona is full of regret for not being allowed to remain in Trieste, ‘this border city that painfully surprises me with its melancholy beauty and languorous canals’ (Train 160). Her feelings suggest how the axis of emplacement triggers the migrant’s strong desire to settle in Trieste. However, Mona overcomes her impulse to settle in Trieste and she accepts her destiny of deracination by activating mechanisms of detachment. At some point, she imagines herself on a ship that carries her away from this city that she has envisaged as a possible home:

I have a foreboding of sadness to come. Trieste could have been my final destination, not just a point of passage. I am in the heart of Trieste, and I can’t feel it, I can’t hear it: a heart pumping with a silent beat, for I am already far away on the sea. E la nave va, and the ship goes on. I am my own ship of estrangement and uprooting. (Train 160; emphasis in the original)

The scenario conceived by Mona captures the paradoxical configuration of her migration across multiple borders. On the one hand, her embarkation illustrates the dynamics of displacement that dictates Mona’s separation from this site. Similarly, her inability to feel and hear the city’s heart strengthens the migrant’s disconnection from the space she traverses. At the same time, her being positioned in the very heart of the city illustrates the effects of emplacement that makes Mona feel close to Trieste and its people.

The following episode of Mona’s translocal experience unfolds in Rome, the city where she is hosted by Mario and Luciana’s friends (Marina, Vittorio and their daughter Roxana). Initially, Mona feels confused and lonely, but she gradually develops a strong affection for her new life: ‘I become attached to my daily routine with Roxana, Vittorio and Marina, as if I were one of their family’ (Train 170). Her gradual adjustment illustrates the dynamics of emplacement as a relevant coordinate of her transnational itinerary: ‘I feel at home, as if I’ve lived in Italy forever’ (Train 171; emphasis mine). The character’s ability to form connections with yet another novel city illustrates the migrant’s need to ground her fragmented experience in a particular setting. Before starting the formalities for obtaining refugee status, Mona expresses her desire to visit the Colosseum. Her intention to visit this architectural emblem illustrates an overlapping of emplacement and displacement forces in her transnational profile:

I want to see the Colosseum, which the Romans had built in their ferocious hunger for

---


'Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.' Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
glory. The Romans who then invaded and colonized the Dacians, stole their words and left them with only fourteen, and thus gave birth to my people! My tormented, violent, messed-up, poetic people, from whom I have run away forever! I find it comforting that my origins are here, in this dizzying city. I am not so far away after all. (Train, 166; emphasis mine)

On the one hand, Mona’s desire to visit the Colosseum reveals her willingness to connect with the Roman cityscape, which marks her need for groundedness. This ancient monument reminds Mona of the historical intersections between the Roman Empire and the province of Dacia, placed in the territory of today’s Romania and conquered by the Romans in the second century BC. This historical overlap marks a moment of continuity along Mona’s segmented trajectory, foregrounding an instance of embeddedness. The migrant’s awareness of a commonality between the Romanian and the Italian backgrounds helps her feel more familiar with Rome. However, Mona’s invocation of her ancestors awakens recent memories of uprooting, pointing to her diasporic rupture.

On the day of her departure to America, Mona regrets that she has to resume her border crossing journey: ‘I panic and I want to run after them [Marina, Vittorio and Roxana], to hug them one more time, to beg them to help me settle in Rome, Roma, amore mio (Train 175; original emphasis).’ Mona’s reactions reveal the profound nature of the bonds she has forged with the people and sites in Rome. Her desire to choose this city as permanent residence illustrates her impulse to embrace the axis of emplacement. Her former unwillingness to explore Trieste is replaced by a strong desire to absorb Rome’s vitality. As Vittorio accompanies Mona on a tour of Rome, she is fascinated by the lively atmosphere of the city, the crowded piazzas and the beautiful monuments: ‘The world is suddenly wide open to me, and I’m greedy to have it, all of it. I can do anything I set my mind to. I want to do everything’ (Train 167). Mona’s access to a country situated beyond the Iron Curtain reveals the possibility a life permeated by energy and freedom to travel. At this point, Mona understands that the axis of displacement contains the promise of a fluid identity, shaped by her ability to move beyond the confines of a single nation state. This awareness makes her decide to uphold her deracination as a marker of freedom that has been denied to her before. As she officially becomes a political refugee, Mona decides to cut her hair, marking a new stage of her migration experience. Mona’s gesture represents her determination to discard nostalgic attitudes and willingly adhere to the axis of displacement: ‘I see my Romanian past in my mind, all its passions and fears, all the people and sounds and smells and tastes, being wrapped in cellophane like a package for me to carry as I move toward my future’ (Train 170). Mona knows that she has to sever the connections with her past in order to turn her uprooting from a traumatic episode into a borderless perception of space. Her decision to freeze her memories is meant to facilitate Mona’s easy adjustment to new cultural spaces.

Rodica’s and Mona’s transits via Western Europe prepare their change of status from illegal immigrants to political refugees and eventually American citizens. The next section analyses their evolution in America foregrounding specific strategies of emplacement and particular recordings of displacement. A part of the discussion focuses on their decision to perform temporary return to Romania that illustrates their different degrees of homeland attachment.

---

19Florin Constantiniu, O istorie sinceră a poporului român (Bucureşti: Univers Enciclopedic, 1997) 33.

‘Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.’ Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
America: the last destination?

Rodica is determined build a good life in America and she focuses on her integration, rather than the maintenance of connections with Romania. After her divorce from her American husband, Rodica has to cope with his suicide and raise her two daughters. Her personal story of adaptation becomes more relevant to Rodica than the overthrow of Romania’s communist regime. Her moderate enthusiasm while watching the CNN broadcast of the Romanian Revolution reveals Rodica’s stronger attachment to her American routines: ‘Completely aside from overseas politics, 1989 was a year of great personal challenges. I was an Eastern European mother trying her hardest to assimilate into the suburban America stay-at-home mom style’ (The Gypsy 263). Her dispassionate stance while witnessing the downfall of the political regime that motivated her uprooting suggests that she has shaped a transcendent sense of identity that does not bind her with the realities of the Romanian nation. Rodica’s conception of ‘home’ entails a non-spatial definition, and it represents a self-preserving strategy dating back from her adolescence. Rodica remembers that she learned to protect herself from her father’s violence, by seeking refuge into a home above territorial constraints: ‘I did make a home; I was not homeless. My new home was secure and wonderful because no one could hit me while I was inside it. No one could take it away from me. This new home was in my heart’ (The Gypsy 55). Rodica’s nomadic conception of home provides the necessary psychological balance that helps her deal with the challenges of immigration and motherhood: ‘Secretly, I already had a home, inside of me, which I carried everywhere’ (The Gypsy 229). Rodica’s recurrent thoughts about the home within herself illustrate her fluid national belonging that is correlated with a strong willingness to adjust to different cultures. As a transnational migrant, Rodica is able to fight homeland attachment in order to facilitate her children’s integration in America. For example, Rodica does not teach her daughters Romanian, fearing that this process might prevent them from becoming true Americans:

I wanted my children to be one hundred percent part of their American culture. I was trying so hard to fit in, harder than I had ever tried at anything before, because this time it wasn’t about me. It was about my children being accepted. ... I wanted to be fully assimilated into my new culture, not maintain the two cultures in parallel. (The Gypsy 264)

Rodica’s tendency to transcend national loyalties is paralleled by an obsessive focus on Americanisation, which suggests that affiliation with a national model of culture can become a strategic choice for immigrant adjustment. At the same time, Rodica regrets that her quest for assimilation has made her fail to pass her native culture to her children: ‘Not teaching my girls Romanian is one my greatest regrets as a parent’ (The Gypsy 264). Her disappointment illustrates Rodica’s incapacity to completely shun her attachment to her native background notwithstanding her efforts to transgress it. In other words, her desire to become rooted in America is paralleled by her awareness of her displaced condition that imposes the fluidisation of her allegiance to Romanian cultural values.

Despite her thirty-year absence from Romania, Rodica considers this space an important marker of affiliation, referring to it as her ‘mother country’ (The Gypsy 360). On her first journey to Romania, Rodica experiences perfect continuity with her past, realising that the landscape has preserved its familiar core: ‘Strangely, some things don’t change’ (The Gypsy 362). A feeling of permanent connection despite separation is triggered by Rodica’s encounter with her old friends: ‘When I left Romania, I said good-bye to all my childhood friends, thinking I would never see

‘Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.’ Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
them again. *Time and distance were irrelevant* because these friendships were true and deep, like the roots of a wise tree (The Gypsy 356; my emphasis). Rodica’s effortless reconnection with post-communist Romania is facilitated by the enduring human bonds that remained strong despite the physical and temporal borders that separated them. This feeling of continuity across distance helps Rodica create a positive impression during her first visit in Romania. She is happy to rediscover her native country as a space of freedom, different from the oppressive context of the past: ‘What I rediscovered in 2007 was a country of hope and revival’ (The Gypsy 362). Gradually, Rodica’s regime of transnational mobility intensifies, as she develops the habit of engaging in frequent physical travel between America and Romania: ‘Every time I speak with my friends, every time I go back, I have the feeling I am a free bird, allowed to fly everywhere, on any branch of any tree in the world. The freedom to fly free was why I defected in 1981 and that dream came true’ (The Gypsy 365; my emphasis). Rodica’s accelerated relocation weaves a pattern of transnational identification that offers a profound sense of freedom. The metaphor of flight renders the transcendent connotation of transnational mobility that provides the possibility of loose affiliations and intense border crossing. Rodica’s identification with a free bird indicates her conception of space as a borderless dimension that she can explore by choice. As a twenty-first century American citizen of Romanian origin, Rodica enjoys her transnational condition that provides the comfort of multiple homes:

> I am allowed to go back deep to my roots in Romania and then fly back to my branch in my home, America. Many times people ask me, ‘Do you like it here in America?’ I chose to live in America. I married, and I raised two children in America. Do I like it here? My answer is yes, because this is home, but I may fly anywhere. It’s a home, not a cage. (The Gypsy 365; my emphasis)

Rodica’s hypermobility does not entail the abolition of her need for grounded, stable references. Instead of dissolving the idea of home allegiances, her freedom to relocate shapes a multidimensional conception of home. Her reflections configure ‘home’ as a tree that simultaneously grows in different soils, with the roots in Romania and the branches in America. I suggest that the wholeness of this tree is provided by Rodica’s transnationality that establishes continuity between her native country and the land of resettlement. Rodica associates Romania with a site of origins, although she does not call it home. However, the idea of roots points to an enduring connection between Rodica and the space of her birth. At the same time, America is specifically referred to as home, the place where Rodica has performed the vital roles of wife and mother. Her overlapping loyalties suggest that the intersection between roots and routes makes up the fabric of Rodica’s transnational identity, illustrating how the axis of emplacement meets with the fluid patterns of repeated resettlement. Rodica’s experience of transnational migration illustrates the transition from a bounded cultural universe, delineated by impenetrable frontiers, to a world of free travel. Her passage from a static communist setting to a world of unhindered mobility illustrates the shift from home as a cage to home as a point of multiple departures. The next section analyses Mona’s evolution in America, underscoring the merging of her diasporic outlook with a regime of transnational belonging.

Mona’s life in America represents a chain of events that mark her gradual emplacement along the lines of successful integration: marriage, divorce, the birth of two sons and her becoming an academic. As well as Rodica, Mona gains a transcultural outlook that facilitates her free exploration of cultures. The enduring relationship between her and a Mexican immigrant (Marta) illustrates the possibility of forming meaningful connections across cultural differences.
Kindness and solidarity, transcultural human values, connect Mona with the Mexican woman, who guides Mona through her tough beginnings. This strong bond is also born out of perceived cultural commonalities, as Marta’s Spanish background is related with Mona’s Latin inheritance: ‘Tonight we are a big, happy family speaking Romanian and Spanish and English. … I feel like Marta is my blood relative, one of the no-nonsense, feisty women in my family’ (Train 265; emphasis added). The time she spends in Marta’s home makes Mona feel comfortable, offering her a context of warmth and harmony. The fact that Mona considers Marta the equivalent of her family reveals the depth of their relationship that defies cultural differences. At some point, Mona becomes aware of her transcultural transformation that facilitates her navigation through various cultural backgrounds: ‘I move in and out of words with ease, in and out of languages: Romance languages, Germanic languages, Slavic languages. They slip off my tongue lightly and create iridescent and incandescent patterns like little fireworks’ (Train 266). The ease with which Mona handles cultural multiplicity is paralleled by her joyous discovery of different cultural worlds. The association of foreign languages with colourful decorative designs foregrounds the perceived beauty of discovering alterity. Mona’s fascination with otherness illustrates her acquired transculturality that facilitates her adjustment, partially dissolving her traumatic uprooting.

At the same time, Mona is haunted by the image of Mihai and by her yearning for Romania, the space that witnessed their love. Mona struggles with her diasporic nostalgia and she almost succeeds in blocking her memories. However, she never attempts to subdue her source culture in order to forge a sense of American identity. Rodica Mihalis and Domnica Rădulescu present different strategies of survival adopted by Romanian female refugees to America. Mihalis is more focused on fashioning an American identity for herself and her daughters. By contrast, Rădulescu associates the condition of motherhood with the initiation of the second generation into the values of Romanian culture. Mona teaches her sons Romanian and they tell them bedtime stories about the Romanian mountains (Train 260). Her unfinished love story and the enigma of Mihai’s death in the Romanian Revolution can be considered diasporic parameters that cause Mona’s temporary return home. As soon as she crosses the Romanian border, Mona’s senses are welcome by familiar fragrances, sounds and memories. The untamed beauty of the landscape transposes Mona in her youth, when she and Mihai felt protected by the mountains’ presence:

The morning our train crossed into Romania, dawn was sneaking through the humid pine forests of the Carpathians and jolted my body awake with the shock of recognition. Although there were no signs along the tracks, no announcements of stops with Romanian names, I knew I was on my native soil, I felt it in the way dawn filtered through the tall, symmetrical fir trees. ... I knew it because all my limbs felt the right size, and because I could hear the echoes of my name, my laughter and moans stuck forever in the valleys. (Train 276; my emphasis)

Domnica Rădulescu illustrates a stronger diasporic perspective, emphasising the enduring bond between Mona and her native land. Mona’s reconnection with Romania seems more emotionally charged than Rodica’s. Her immediate identification with the natural canvas reveals the strong dimension of her exilic longing. The rich variety of perceptions that bond Mona with the Romanian setting foregrounds the deep link between Mona and her homeland despite the long interval of separation. As she performs her physical travel to Romania, Mona also experiences temporal travel to her youth, given her vivid memories of Mihai. However, her past orientation
is paralleled by the integration of Mona’s American present into her identity frame: ‘I am different and the same’ (Train 284). The idea of difference points to Mona’s transformation imposed by her contact with multiple cultures. At the same time, her perceived sameness indicates the long lasting connection she has maintained with her source culture. The author presents Mona’s gradual transition from her identification with her (Romanian) past and the acknowledgement of her transnational self:

My body is fuller from having carried my children, there is a powder of lines around the corner of my eyes, there is a fierce glitter in my look from my uprootings and the ambitions I have tried to fulfil; my limbs feel stronger and my muscles tighter, my hair is as unleashed as ever, only there are some fine strands of gray in it now. ... Now I have a whole life in the American Midwest. (Train 279; emphasis mine)

Mona’s physical travel to Romania helps her accommodate her Romanian and American experiences. Her reintegration into a familiar space triggers her revaluation from a comparative angle that reveals her differences from the young Mona. The adult Mona realises that dislocation and motherhood have made her tougher and more determined. Her American existence contains a series of transformations that mark her transition from a girl to a responsible woman. Her investigation of Mihai’s death foregrounds her need to understand her youth and connect it with her present. Mona finds out that Mihai is alive and that he was not a collaborator of the Secret Police, as she sometimes suspected. These truths entail the possibility of new beginnings, enabling the integration of Mona’s Romanian life into a transnational perspective. Mona’s temporary return entails the transformation of her diasporic longing into transnational self-definition that accommodates plural allegiance:

Now that at least some of the fog surrounding Mihai has dissipated, my heart can rest from all the tumult of the last twenty years. ... And maybe I will get used to having two countries, to having no country, to be my own country, and stretching across the Atlantic Ocean, one foot in the Indiana cornfields, the other in a berry-field meadow in the Carpathians, like a huge baobab tree. (Train 301; my emphasis).

Botswana Baobab Sunrise


'Displacement and Emplacement in Narratives of Relocation by Romanian Women Authors.' Adriana Elena Stoican.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
Mona’s desired equivalence between the self and country and her ideal of having no country underscore her transnational perspective, which does not privilege the nation as a primary criterion of identification. The symbol of the baobab tree is meant to emphasise Mona’s subsequent transnational itineraries, enabled by Romania’s new political regime. In African folklore, the baobab tree is represented upside down, with twisted branches that resemble its hanging roots. It is also associated with strength, long life and adaptability to harsh circumstances.\(^{21}\) If Romania stands for Mona’s roots and America for her branches, their overlap suggests Mona’s transnational regime of identification that promotes neither country as an identity reference. Moreover, the idea of suspended roots implies the difficulty to maintain groundedness in the context of transnational migration. The symbol of the baobab tree also implies the immigrants’ increased ability to adjust as a prerequisite for the negotiation of cultural identities. On her way to Mihai’s house, situated in a remote area of the Carpathians, Mona fashions her plans of transnational travel between America and Romania. As she is about to face Mihai, Mona dreams of having a house like his, surrounded by the wild beauty of the Romanian scenery: ‘I should buy a house like this one with clematis and grapevines all around it and a wooden porch, here in the middle of the Romanian nowhere. For me and my children when we come back next summer. Mihai lets out a swirl of blue smoke and looks up. He looks at me’ (\textit{Train} 305; emphasis mine). In order to retrieve her lost love, Mona is willing to build a future that will blend her Romanian and American lives. Her planning to return the following year signals the maintenance of her transnational condition through a pattern of repeated relocations. These episodes of physical travel will enable Mona to transgress the fixity of national borders by having homes in two countries. The novel ends abruptly, with no further details of the lovers’ encounters. The last sentence of the passage suggests the continuation of their relationship in the new conditions of transnationality projected by Mona.

\textbf{Conclusions}

The analysis has considered two narratives of relocation that illustrate the fragmented nature of Romanian migration before and after 1989. Rodica’s and Mona’s temporary settlement in Germany and Italy demonstrate that their translocal uprooting is paralleled by elements of emplacement that ground their journeys in specific locations. Their transcultural outlooks, developed in such instances, mark the emergence of enlarged cultural perspectives that facilitate the migrants’ ability to connect with foreign spaces.

The protagonists’ American experiences illustrate their different approaches to immigrant integration ranging from diasporic to transnational configurations. Mona Manoliu displays a stronger diasporic perspective, illustrated by her longing for Romania, which parallels her efforts to build an American future. Rodica Mihalis presents a less melancholic outlook, since she focuses on her displaced condition, struggling to assimilate. In other words, her emphasis on Americanisation reveals her need to ground her experience of uprootedness in the American setting.

The fall of communism marks Mona’s and Rodica’s transition to a regime of transnationality, manifested through their ability to reconcile their Romanian and American affiliations. Rodica compares her Romanian and American coordinates with parts of a single tree that stretches...

across space. With its roots in Romania and its branches in America, this vegetal metaphor implies Rodica’s transnational identity that facilitates her simultaneous belonging to both countries. Along similar lines, the adult Mona compares herself with a baobab tree that grows in the Romanian and American soil. This image foregrounds the character’s achieved transnationality that cancels the physical distance between these two countries, undoing the separation imposed by national borders.

Although the protagonists’ contacts with different cultural spaces engender patterns of transnational identification, their fluid allegiances do not exclude their need to form attachments to the specific settings they cross along their journeys. Considering the immigrants’ need for groundedness that parallels their transnational conception of home, the analysis demonstrates that contemporary experience of uprooting cannot be discussed exclusively in terms of fluidity, becoming and disembeddedness.

The Performance of Identity in Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows*

Daniela Vitolo

Relevant events that have shaped or influenced Pakistan’s history or its contemporary social and political life are among the recurring elements that characterise the Pakistani literature written in English. Frequently, Pakistani fiction in English focuses on the effects of events like the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent or the 9/11 terroristic attack and how they have changed lives. When the writers discuss the influence of recent or past political occurrences, they usually reflect on the effects that such events have on the process of identity formation. This article discusses the processes of identity construction enacted by the main character in the novel *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie focusing on the performative relationship existing between agency and identity. The aim is to explore the ways the author portrays the relationship between relevant political events and the dynamics of identity formation as they take place in a transnational dimension. The analysis shows how in the novel such events can become a driving force to enact a process of identity construction that questions certain social conventions concerning, for example, race, gender or religion, while developing critical attitudes towards nationalistic ideas of national belonging.

Kamila Shamsie is a Pakistani writer with a cosmopolitan background. Shamsie lives in Karachi but spent part of her life in the West, mainly in the United States and in Great Britain. Consequently, she has established knowledge of different cultures. All of Shamsie’s narratives, including *Burnt Shadows*, her fifth novel, are written in English. This is the language she chooses for her literary works and that allows her to address a global Anglophone audience for whom she also realises a sort of cultural translation usually explaining the culture-specific references that appear in her novels. These choices help her to create a narrative easily accessible to readers outside Pakistan and allow her books to enter the circuits of the market that characterises a globalised world where a book written in one country can be published in another to be marketed to readers all over the world. *Burnt Shadows* narrates a story that develops over the course of more than sixty years and whose main character is a Japanese woman. The tale evolves from the last moments of World War II to the immediate post-9/11, and the story moves about from place to place across the globe, each place seeing the beginning of a new chapter of the book and a new phase in the history of the characters. After the prologue, which refers to what happens in the last pages of the book and connects the beginning and the end of the novel, the story begins in Nagasaki on the 9 of August 1945 and follows the life experiences of Hiroko Tanaka, a survivor of the atomic attack. The story of Hiroko’s life journey moves first to India in 1947, where the girl receives the hospitality of the Anglo-German stepsister of her German fiancé killed in the atomic attack. There she meets Sajjad, the man that she later marries. After that, Hiroko and her husband unexpectedly find themselves in Pakistan after spending time in Istanbul during the most violent months that followed the Partition. Later, the story moves to Karachi in the 1980s, during the years of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The last part of the story is set in the United States, the country that the woman reaches to escape the risks of an atomic conflict in the Subcontinent and where she witnesses the September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Following the trajectory of Hiroko’s life, *Burnt Shadows* narrates the story of two families, the Asian Ashraf–Tanaka family – marked by the Nagasaki bombing and by the British colonisation of India and its subsequent Partition – and the western, colonial
Burton-Weiss family. The personal story of Hiroko, narrated in the third person, therefore intersects those of the other characters who, as a consequence of the political events, more or less intentionally, move through places, languages, and cultures. All of them face experiences such as the loss of their homeland, foreignness, and hybridity, and these shape their identities.

If, on the one hand, the author has a cosmopolitan attitude and her novel can have a global reach, on the other hand, the plot of the novel is structured by many border-crossings that have a significant role in the processes of identity formation experienced by the characters. Given these elements, it seems that the work can be read through the lens of the transnational literary studies. It can be regarded, indeed, as a text that ‘transform[s] the scope of the national literatures to which they belong and pushing beyond national boundaries to imagine the global character of modern experience, contemporary culture, and the identities they produce.’ The text shows a transnational perspective while developing a story where major international events, such as the bombing of Nagasaki or the war following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, set into motion a mechanism that affects the process through which the characters build their identities reacting to the events in which they are involved. The following analysis focuses on the main character, who can be understood as being an archetype of the migrant as well as of the common person whose life is directly affected by relevant events. Each of the major historical occurrences that directly touch her life are connected to a physical movement from one place to another, which also implies a movement through linguistic and cultural barriers. Placing the question of the character’s identity formation into a transnational dimension and at the same time paying attention to the relationship established between major political events and individual subjectivity allows the author to question the relationship between the ways non-state actors perform their identity and the ideas of national belonging in the globalised world. Indeed, the characters do not passively readapt their lives to the changes caused by events like the Partition of India or the 2001 World Trade Center attack, accepting the role that politics and society have given them. On the contrary, in Shamsie’s novel, such events become a drive to agency and thus to the performative construction of the self. The author conceptualises identity as a performative act, as a dynamic and productive process that determines the creation of hybrid and potentially subversive spaces of identity where during the construction of the self, one inhabits. In such liminal spaces, the discursive processes of self-construction take place because of and in opposition to social, cultural, and political limitations. In *Burnt Shadows*, such processes occur in a context where also the borders separating nation-states are frequently crossed, leading to the production of a liminal space developed through the transgression of the limits separating nations and forming a border zone where identities grounded in difference are shaped. In the novel, international events act upon the individual and local lives of the characters producing a reaction that makes them perform their identity into a transnational dimension. As the characters enact their identities in a hybrid and shifting space, the text invites readers to consider how individual identity is also formed in relation to the role played by nationalistic policies and nationalism in the era of globalisation.

In a global context in which national boundaries are porous, fiction can become a place where and the medium through which national and individual identities can be discussed and imagined. In such cases, in fact, fiction becomes a place where writers investigate the ‘Who am I?’ question in the mirror of a multicultural and hybrid society shaped by and shaping the equally multicultural, hybrid, and fluid identities that inhabit it. Thus, a key concept becomes that of

---

'performativity'. In its original meaning to perform implies to play a role. The concept of performance, originally only used to refer to the performing arts, is to Schechner ‘an action’, as he states: ‘any action that is framed, enacted, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance.’ The concept is also used to denote the different ways a person or a community plays out identity, whether gender, ethnicity, or identity otherwise. In the case of social performances, the self is constructed through performance and this can happen in two different ways. One possibility is for a person to build the self through performing a social role that is defined by the compulsive repetition of a number of conventions which put certain features such as gender, race, and class into a given social frame. Otherwise, the self can be defined through a conscious dynamic process, through an act that can affect other people, producing a reaction. It is agency, then, or ‘the ability to transform external reality – by creating new referential realities or new interpretations of the same reality and causing events to happen,’ that makes it possible to transgress the reiteration of the social norms and rules and so to perform what Victor Turner calls ‘liminal acts.’ Performance as ‘acting against’ is the enactment of a liminal practice that produces a hybrid space where multiple subjectivities are questioned, discussed, and interpreted. To Michel Foucault “the exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome.” Agency allows the construction of selves that, refusing to reiterate certain practices, norms and conventions, try to resist to a kind of power that, acting on people’s actions, would frame their identities into a given structure. Agency allows the construction of the self to take place through discursive practices where norms and conventions are questioned and resisted. It is inside the hybrid space generated by agency that identity is shaped through a never completed process in which cultural and social rules are negotiated. This in-between is not simply located between two hegemonic spaces but becomes the interstices where differences are mediated. Negotiating the social and cultural differences in a marginal dimension, which corresponds to what scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Emma Pérez have conceptualized as ‘third space’, allows to question the dominant narratives. In Burnt Shadows, the third space produced by the protagonist’s agency, where she negotiates her identity in opposition to certain social rules, can be read as coincidental with the transnational space. It is Hiroko’s agency that makes her cross the limits of the nation-states taking her into an in-between where she negotiates her identity in relation to different languages and diverse cultural and social positions. Performance as a practice and as an event that takes place implies the existence of a body acting inside a space. A subject experiences the world from within the body and through it while producing actions that affect the world that surrounds it. As Amaya Fernandez-Menicucci puts it, ‘In order to be a subject endowed with an individual and independent identity, one must

7 Homi Bhabha, I luoghi della cultura (Roma: Moltemi, 2001).
‘actively’ engage in a process of self-definition that will ‘create’ a multidimensional self capable of being ‘embodied’ within a specific set of chronospatial coordinates. On the morning of the 9th of August 1945, Hiroko Tanaka, a young teacher and translator, is obliged to work in the local weapons factory. She awaits the end of the war when she dreams she will marry her German fiancé and will travel around the world motivated by pure love for knowledge. At the end of that day, she is a survivor of the American attack. She has lost the people she knew and loved and she has lost her homeland forever. The bomb that has erased her world has not only transformed the space around her generating a sort of terrifying, dystopic environment, but has also scarred her body leaving three bird-shaped burns on her back. History has written on her body as though it were a book. The political event has left a visible burn on her, marking her body with an indelible sign. The relationship between body and self is fundamental through the whole novel because she performs her identity through it. Her scarred body, instead of being a narrow cage, becomes, in some way, what moves her to action. Throughout her life she cannot free herself from the burden of the nuclear explosion that has marked her body. She is a curious medical case for the Americans who, once in Japan, try to study the consequences of the atomic bomb on the survivors. While her miscarriage is believed to be the consequence of the exposure to nuclear radiation, people think that the only son born to her could also be deformed in some way. Nevertheless, she uses her body to free herself from the scheme in which her body has been framed. In the novel, with her somatic traits, her short hair cut and trousers, she is an East Asian with a modern westernised look in India, a barelegged woman in Pakistan at the time of the Islamisation policy, and a Japanese with a Pakistani passport in the United States. This makes it impossible to place her within a geographical, cultural, and social frame. ‘James was oddly perturbed by this woman who he couldn’t place. Indians, Germans, the English, even Americans […] he knew how to look at people and understand the context from which they sprang. But this Japanese woman in trousers. What on earth was she all about?’ Therefore, the Nagasaki event has irremediably affected her body, but doing so it has also given her a reason to start a process of self-definition.

‘Hibakusha’ is the word that the Japanese use to refer to survivors like Hiroko. ‘It was a fear of reduction rather than any kind of quest that had forced her away from Japan. Already she had started to feel that word ‘hibakusha’ start to consume her life. To the Japanese she was nothing beyond an explosion-affected person; that was her defining feature’ (46). Austin claims that words can be tools through which a person or a whole society can actually do something. ‘Hibakusha’ is a performative word because it does something; it defines a new and very peculiar social group: the well-identified category of those who have witnessed and have been directly touched by that very specific event. Classifying them into such a narrow definition means to reduce them, with all their unique and complex identities, to one event that had tragically acted on their lives without leaving them any chance to react. Defining them as a separate category means to marginalise them into a particular social group. Nevertheless, Hiroko’s journey starts exactly when her body is marked with burns, and she understands that when people identify her as a ‘hibakusha’ they are exercising a power on her that reduces her subjectivity to a specific set of social conventions. Refusing to be a ‘hibakusha’ for all her life, she transgresses the borders delimiting the position that Japanese society has given her, and at

---

9 Fernandez-Menicucci 75.
10 Kamila Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009) 46. Subsequent references to this work will be included in parentheses in the text.
the same time she rebels against the American policy that has treated her, a Japanese and a citizen of Nagasaki, as nothing more than a life worth destroying to save American lives. Her resistance means that through her behaviour she questions both the Japanese and the American hegemonic powers. Other transgressions follow and, as the first transgression, they are connected to movements between different places. In India, she refuses the invitation of the Burton-Weiss to move to England while she marries Sajjad who embodies the colonised Indian who is treated with paternalistic benevolence by the British James Burton. In Pakistan, Hiroko refuses the Islamisation policies: ‘It made no sense to her. “Islamisation” was a word everyone recognised as a political tool of a dictator and yet they still allowed their lives to be changed by it’ (182). In the United States, she helps an undocumented immigrant find a way to cross the border into Canada and start his journey back to Afghanistan as a clandestine. Shamsie’s character moves from an original condition of loss and marginalisation to state of being where she turns the margin into a productive space. It is through her body that she gives the evidence of an identity in constant formation because as her body develops, it acquires new elements at each frontier crossing. Embodying signs and practices from cultures distant from each other and representing all of them working together, she takes a stand against any attempt at inserting her identity into a specific cultural, social, or ethnic sphere that would make her correspond to a specific set of norms.

During the evolution of Hiroko’s character, her body is not the only recurring element: the languages she speaks also have a significant role in the process she enacts. In the beginning of *Burnt Shadows*, Hiroko speaks Japanese, English, and German and works as a translator. Later on, she learns Urdu and teaches all the languages she knows to her son Raza while working as a language teacher in Pakistan. Given the recurrent references to various kinds of language translation, the relationship existing between this kind of translation and the physical translation across borders appears evident – ‘to translate’ means to transfer something across a line. It could be said, to quote Salman Rushdie, that Hiroko is a ‘translated woman.’ Linguistic translation is a productive process where a negotiation between the languages involved, and the result is that ‘something always gets lost in translation’ but ‘something can also be gained’ producing new meanings and thus contributing to the enactment of identity. Bhabha, acquiring through Derrida a notion conceptualised by Benjamin, suggests the idea of translation as survival, in the sense of living at margins. Bhabha also reminds us that the notion of translation as survival is for Salman Rushdie the migrant’s dream of survival. To the Indian scholar the migrant is someone who has physically crossed the borders separating different countries and who, in order to start a new life, needs to adapt to the new environment in which he finds himself. For Hiroko, translation is survival in the sense that it allows her to survive her loss by living on the borders of several distant worlds. Using translation in her process of identity construction, Hiroko herself becomes a cultural hybrid and shows her cosmopolitan attitude by performing translation as she uses the languages she speaks to cross the cultural borders she comes across. Linguistic translation is thus one of the mediums the character uses to actively build her subjectivity. Just as for Hiroko the drive to enact her identity comes from an original loss, her ability to master many languages is also related to the awareness that a person is never completely at home in a language, even when that language is the mother tongue. To her, the Derridean consciousness of the fact that a dimension of inexpressibility exists and is faced by speakers in any language is

related to her experience of the atomic bombing: ‘nothing in the world could ever be more unfamiliar than my home that day. That unspeakable day. Literally unspeakable’ (99). Hiroko is unable to find words that could accurately describe what she has faced in Nagasaki. Even if she feels comfortable in many languages and is continuously engaged in processes of linguistic translation, she knows that there are circumstances when a person can feel a stranger even in her/his own mother tongue. She enacts her translation processes moving from the awareness of a ‘linguistic loss’ that she has known after the atomic attack.

Reading the novel in the mirror of transnational studies allows readers to see that through the processes that lead Hiroko to develop her subjectivity, Shamsie creates a character who expresses a position that is strongly critical towards nationalistic policies while promoting an idea of transnational solidarities: ‘It didn’t bother her in the least to know she would always be a foreigner in Pakistan – she had no interest in belonging to anything as contradictorily unsubstantial and damaging as a nation’ (204). Through the critical attitude of the character in a story that centres around events shaping the history of the second half of the twentieth century, the author shares a vision, supported by critics like Peter Hitchcock15 and Paul Jay among others, of globalisation as a non-recent phenomenon which can be traced back to the colonial period. Shamsie not only highlights how the colonial period determined the subsequent history of the Indian subcontinent, but she also seems to suggest that this area is still under the influence of the West as the Americans fought their Cold War there and are conducting part of their War on Terror in that area. The novel also invites the reader to make a comparison between the reasons which, from the American perspective, yesterday justified the Nagasaki bombing and today justify the US policies in the name of the so-called War on Terror. With the comparisons that Hiroko makes, correlating distant events that have affected her life, what makes both actions understandable in the eyes of the nationalists is the fact that both are presented as acts necessary for national security:

In the big picture of the Second World War, what was seventy-five thousand more Japanese dead? Acceptable, that’s what it was. In the big picture of threats to America, what is one Afghan? Expendable. Maybe he’s guilty, maybe not. Why risk it? […] I understand for the first time how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb. (326)

Because of her direct experiences, Hiroko knows that in our contemporary world nationalistic policies are as relevant as they were in the last century. Yet, the character promotes a position that overcomes nationalistic perspectives. Hence, at the core of the novel are the political events and the cultural and social relationships that have shaped the relations between nations across the globe from the late colonial period to our days. Maintaining the focus on the effects that the events have on the protagonist’s personal path, Burnt Shadows reflects on issues such as the British colonial rule in India, the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised, the end of the British Empire in South Asia, and the consequences it has brought to that region. At the same time, the novel highlights the possible risks connected to a policy that takes nationalistic feelings to the extreme in post-9/11 America, and the literature focuses on the policies applied in the East by the United States. ‘One day’ says Hiroko talking about the American soldiers who

---

were helping the Japanese survivors to recover, ‘the American with gentle face said the bomb was a terrible thing, but it had to be done to save American lives’ (62). The protagonist’s perspective is both transnational and highly critical of the policies and feelings generated by nationalisms. Her identity is shaped also in relation to actions that allow her to define her position towards this issue. For example, she chooses to move away from the risk of a new atomic attack, and she decides to help Abdullah, an undocumented Afghan migrant, find his way to reach home. Hiroko recognises the limits of a vision that prefers nationalistic ideas of belonging to cosmopolitan solidarities – ‘she had no interest in belonging in anything as contradictorily insubstantial and damaging as a nation’ (62). To Hiroko, nationalistic feelings are potentially dangerous because they can lead people to support blind political choices in the name of national security. This is the case of other characters in the novel who act in the name of national security. For example, Kim, one of the characters belonging to the Burton-Weiss family, does not hesitate to notify the Canadian police of the clandestine Abdullah because he is a Muslim, an Afghan, and he has been a mujahideen. Nevertheless, for Hiroko, to stand against the risks implicit in nationalism does not mean criticising or opposing ideas of cultural belonging as she herself experiences the feeling of losing the social and cultural environment she is part of:

Until you see what you have known your whole life reduced to ash you don’t realise how much you crave for familiarity. Do you see those flowers on the hillside, Ilse? I want to know their names in Japanese. I want to hear Japanese. […] I want to look like the people around me. I want people to disapprove when I break the rules and not simply to think that I don’t know better. (99)

In *Burnt Shadows*, the performative relationship existing between identity and agency takes shape through the actions of one character, actions against and resisting different kinds of limits that are supposed to frame the protagonist’s identity. Hiroko does not passively accept the various kinds of limitations that have been imposed on her by events that are part of a nationalistic view, events that might have caged her into a specific set of social as well as cultural, linguistic, and maybe geographical limitations. On the contrary, she reacts to the occurrences that profoundly affect her life, challenging the roles that social and political powers seem to have chosen for her. She enacts a process of autonomous identity construction by crossing social and cultural boundaries as well as frontiers among nation-states. As a consequence, she inhabits a hybrid space where the never-completed process of identity construction develops through the negotiation of several differences. Through such a discursive practice, the protagonist questions both social norms and nationalistic ideas. Through the development of the story, questioning nationalisms appears to be the *trait d’union* connecting the parts of the novel. Nationalistic feelings and policies are indeed the reason that justify each of Hiroko’s movements from one place to another, not only making her develop a transnational identity, but also prompting her to sustain ideas of transnational solidarities.

**Daniela Vitolo** is a PhD student from the Department of Literary, Linguistic, and Comparative Studies of the University of Naples ‘L’Orientale.’ Her research project analyses the way contemporary Pakistani English literature deals with the question of national identity.
A Cosmopolitan Conceptualisation of Place and New Topographies of Identity in Hari Kunzru’s *Gods Without Men*¹

Carmen Zamorano Llena

In an interview coinciding with the publication of his novel *Gods Without Men*, British author Hari Kunzru explained how this fictional text originated during his 2008 fellowship at the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center in the New York Public Library when researching on the subject of sixteenth-century India for his planned book. This initial project, which had been the motivation for Kunzru’s temporary relocation to the United States where he is still resident, was soon overridden by his American experience and his consequent need to process it intellectually and artistically. As Kunzru declares, ‘I’d underestimated what it would mean to be in America, surrounded by Americans, having to deal with and understand America in a way that I hadn’t before. It seemed the only sensible thing I could write about was America’.² Although Kunzru does not explicitly claim to have written an American novel in the traditional sense of the term, with its associations to a specific national ethos, *Gods Without Men* is a notable contribution to the reconceptualisation of the American novel and of American literary history in the current context of globalisation and transnational exchanges.

In his earlier work, Kunzru has also engaged critically with the consequences of globalisation processes on individual and collective identities. Significantly, Peter Childs and James Green selected Kunzru’s work as representative of a twenty-first century British fiction which ‘assumes a common backdrop, which can be described in terms of the forces of globalization [which took] precedence over national contexts’.³ Kunzru’s second novel *Transmission* (2005) epitomises this fictional focus, by analysing the consequences of transnational interconnectedness facilitated by modern technologies in a global age. Far from being a paean of contemporary global mobility, Kunzru’s work shares a concern with the type of ‘totalising mode’ that, as David Lyon observes, discussing an age as ‘global’ can produce.⁴ Kunzru’s fiction is marked by global mobility in different epochs and denounces the disruptive consequences of totalising narratives of the global on individual and collective identities.⁵ This is what unites such apparently disparate novels as *The Impressionist* (2002), *Transmission* (2005) and *Gods Without Men* (2009). Whereas *The Impressionist*, as Shane Graham contends, shows how ‘the cracks in structures of colonial domination […] give[e] characters space to recreate their identities and their collective

¹ I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) for the completion of this essay (project reference number: 2010-1820).
⁴ Childs and Green 8.
⁵ This critical view of global mobility is also a key component in Berthold Schoene’s analysis of contemporary fiction in his seminal study *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009). As Schoene contends, global, transnational mobility ‘as a commodity is by no means unproblematic; it remains a fraught and divisive manifestation of the unequal distribution of both socio-economic and cultural capital’ (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 3).


Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
memories’, his second novel *Transmission* (2005) continues this critique of the damage caused by totalising narratives by focusing on the contemporary discourse of global interdependence. Set in present time, the novel maintains the theme of transnational mobility and exposes the deficiencies of a positivistic discourse of the ‘global’ that emphasises the advantages of transnational flows of information, people, and goods. By centring on the figure of the slightly dysfunctional computer geek Arjun Mehta, the novel problematises, as Phillip Leonard argues, ‘neoliberal narratives of global inclusion and points instead to an alternative politics of social intervention.’ Kunzru’s latest novel further elaborates on this thread of critiquing totalising narratives, also traceable in *My Revolutions* (2007). However, whereas in Kunzru’s earlier work the global took precedence over national contexts, as Childs and Green claim, *Gods Without Men* focuses on the American national context in order to contest narratives of the nation that exclude the role of global interconnectedness from their definition. Kunzru’s novel is a significant contribution to this change of the national narrative that has already been noted by contemporary analyses of the transformation of the American national novel.

As Richard Gray observes in his analysis of the contemporary American novel in what he terms ‘a time of crisis’, since the late 1980s American fictional writing has become increasingly defined by the work of authors of migrant background produced in the conditions of cultural mixture fostered by globalisation. As often observed by the numerous analyses of the current globalising process, improved transport systems and communication technologies have played a crucial role in the increase and intensified pace of transnational flows of people, goods, and information. According to Gray, in the American context, this has implied not only the augmented presence of American culture internationally, but also the internationalisation of national culture, and, consequently, a deepening awareness of the profound transformation in traditional definitions of national identity and its literary expressions. As Caren Irr contends, ‘accelerated migration and increased interpenetration of global markets [have changed] the face of US literature;’ the national novel has changed shape in the process of ‘incorporat[ing] politically charged elements of the global scene.

The profound transformations in the national outlook following globalisation which, in the literary sphere, have effected these redefinitions of the national novel have been most notably analysed by German sociologist Ulrich Beck. In his seminal piece *The Cosmopolitan Vision*, Beck argues that, in the present era of reflexive modernity, there has been a shift from a national to a ‘cosmopolitan outlook’, which is characterised by a ‘conceptual reconfiguration of our

---


8 Richard Gray, ‘Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis,’ *American Literary History* 21.1 (2009): 128-48. Gray’s ‘time of crises’ includes the death of America’s ‘sinister other, the USSR’, as well as ‘the birth of a world characterized by transnational drift, the triumph of global capitalism, and the re-emergence of religious fundamentalism’ (128). Interestingly, Gray’s term suggests the anxiety that derives from phenomena related to the contemporary process of globalisation.


10 Irr 661.
modes of perception’.\(^{11}\) This reconfiguration results in an epistemological shift in which the either/or logic characteristic of the former national methodological paradigm is replaced with a logic of ‘inclusive differentiation’.\(^{12}\) In this new cosmopolitan logic, or ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’, the purportedly clear-cut boundaries of the units of research of various disciplines are radically transformed; binary opposites such as local vs. global, national vs. international, internal vs. external enter a both/and relationship which emphasises interconnectivity and expresses the overlapping coexistence of possible worlds that characterises a cosmopolitan view of present reality.

Beck’s cosmopolitan vision informs what Emily Johansen terms ‘territorialized cosmopolitanism’, namely ‘a consideration of the everyday experience of global connections in local places’ that characterises contemporary transnational fiction.\(^{13}\) As Johansen contends, this fiction, in which she includes Kunzru’s *Transmission*, emphasises how modern citizenship is shaped by mobility between the global and the local. However, against more traditional understandings of rootless cosmopolitanism, this mobility does not imply a detachment from local culture, but is rather ‘situated in and influenced by material place’.\(^{14}\) The relational outlook promoted by Beck’s ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ and which informs Johansen’s ‘territorialized cosmopolitanism’ has fostered a reconfiguration of key terms in definitions of national identity, a theme which is specifically relevant to Kunzru’s *Gods Without Men*. It is my contention that Kunzru’s novel thematically and in terms of narrative structure contests the national outlook and suggests the need for a redefinition of individual and collective identities from a cosmopolitan perspective. Whereas Johansen’s analysis of Kunzru’s *Transmission* highlights the relevance of mobility in and between various localities in shaping modern citizenship, *Gods Without Men* emphasises how the local, metonymically identified with national identity, is intrinsically informed by global interconnectedness, a view that is made obvious when the local is considered from a diachronic perspective. By historicising and re-examining from a current global viewpoint traditional understandings of the sense of place characteristic of constructs of national identity,\(^{15}\) with special attention to the inextricably

---


12 Beck 5.


14 Johansen 4.

15 In this sense, Kunzru’s use of history is in line with Douglas Coupland’s interpretation of this feature as characteristic of what he terms ‘translit novels’, namely narratives that ‘span geography without changing psychic place’ and which place ‘the contemporary reader into other locations and times, while leaving no doubt that its viewpoint is relentlessly modern and speaks entirely of our extreme present’ (Douglas Coupland, ‘Convergences’ [Review of Gods Without Men], New York Times 8 March 2012.). In what he terms this ‘new literary genre’, Coupland includes Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* and David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*. To this, it must be added Mitchell’s *Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2012), which, by revisiting the conventions of the historical novel subgenre, suggests that this use of history with a view on the present is not as new as Coupland seems to imply. As Kunzru claims, this use of history as ‘a sort of distancing device to heighten some set of situations or ideas’ is in line with conventional historical novels. However, the second view of history is its interpretation as ‘a way of interrogating the present’ (Max Haiven, ‘An Interview with Hari Kunzru: Networks, Finance Capital, and the Fate...
interrelated concept of spirituality, Kunzru provides a cosmopolitanised narrative of America, which underscores the complexity and relationality of experience.

The narrative in *Gods Without Men* pivots on the specific locale of the Pinnacles in the Mojave Desert, a quasi-metaphysical location in which the various storylines, set at various points in time since the eighteenth century, crisscross to weave a multi-threaded pattern, whose final product refracts a bounded notion of place, or what Marc Augé calls ‘anthropological place’. In Augé’s terms, this symbolic construction of space is defined as ‘the indigenous fantasy of a society anchored since time immemorial in the permanence of an intact soil outside which nothing is really understandable,’ and with spiritual traces that inhabit it, ‘traces of chthonian or celestial powers, ancestors or spirits which populate and animate its private geography’ and which inform foundation narratives. The short story that opens the narrative of *Gods Without Men* partially evokes this construct, and the opening line alone meets the distinctive features of the above definition of anthropological place: ‘In the time when the animals were men, Coyote was living in a certain place.’ The absence of specifically named temporal and spatial referents, together with the presence of the anthropomorphised Coyote, a familiar figure in Native American Indian traditional legends, vests the story with the legendary quality that is associated with foundation narratives. However, in this story Coyote is not a creator god, but rather a figure of destruction that concentrates his creative energies in the production of methamphetamine by reducing tablets of pseudoephedrine. In this manner, the nature of the old symbols of foundation narratives is perverted, suggesting that the certain place and society to which they are related are infused with a veneer of modern decay and anxiety. Although this short narrative concludes with the announcement of Coyote’s departure and the end of events, this sense of finality is subverted by Kunzru, who, in a quasi-tongue-in-cheek mode, implicitly impersonates Coyote as a trickster narrative creator. Thus, after tricking the reader into believing that the story and Coyote see their end after three pages, closing the story with the lines: ‘And Coyote left that place. That is all,’ Coyote emerges repeatedly throughout the novel in the form of various secondary characters in the different storylines, which suggests their inescapable interconnectivity and the relational creation of meaning. Thus, the location of the story in the apparent marginal paratext of the novel, together with the recurrent presence of Coyote, underscore the necessary interpretation of the story as a preface to the novel; this prefatory narration suggests that the traditional definition of anthropological place has been transformed by what Beck identifies as contemporary global threats, symbolised in this story by the use of drugs, a transnationally spread ‘bad’.

of the Novel,’ *Wasafiri* 28.3 (2013) 18). This more inquisitive use of history is the one underscored in this article as a tool to re-examine traditional constructs of place.


17 Augé 42.


19 According to Beck, the cosmopolitanisation of reality is a consequence of ‘global trade and global threats, such as climate change, terrorism or financial crises’ (19), to which, as argued in this article, the commerce of illegal drugs can be added as an example that simultaneously embodies forms of global trade and a global threat. These threats have evinced the limitations of the institutions of the nation-state to regulate the spread of these ‘bads’ across national borders, and have in turn caused the formation of transnational interdependencies, based on the shared
interpretative line for the remainder of the novel, namely an analysis of the transformation of the bounded, self-contained sense of place, characteristic of unified constructs of collective identity, into a ‘global sense of place’.20

In the 1990s the influence of globalisation on the field of geography caused a resurgence of the interest in definitions of place and space, and the articulation of various theories of place, characterised by their emphasis on ‘openness, connectivity, mobility and exchange’.21 These theories promoted the understanding that place as unbounded and translocal is the dominant paradigm.22 In this sense, Doreen Massey analyses the effects on a local sense of place and society of what global studies have termed the ‘time-space compression’ characteristic of the present era, resulting from the accelerated and mass transnational flows of information, people and goods. Various theories of globalisation have emphasised the dissolution of borders and disruption of horizons, which generate a sense of postmodern anxiety at the loss of reference points, which, in turn, echoes Marx’s ‘annihilation of space by time’.23 In her analysis, however, Massey counters the argument of the dissolution of place and the local as an aftermath of globalisation. She contends that the local does not dissolve and that ‘social meaning’ does not evaporate, in opposition to what Manuel Castells argues in his theory of place articulated in The Informal City.24 Rather, place is transformed into ‘a meeting-place, the location of the intersections of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and interrelations, of influences and movements.’25 This relational global sense of place informs Beck’s conceptualisation from a cosmopolitan perspective, in which the social meaning of place is reconsidered. According to Beck, national societies are transformed by a process of ‘internal cosmopolitanisation’26 in which place becomes ‘the locus of encounters and interminglings or, alternatively, of anonymous coexistence and the overlapping of possible worlds and dangers.’27 It is this type of ‘internal cosmopolitanisation’ that the rock formation of the Pinnacles in the

experience of crisis, which are translated into the configuration of what Beck terms a ‘world risk society’ (22). In Kunzru’s novel, though, the sense of community characterised by transcultural, transhistorical interdependencies is based on an understanding of the transformation of spirituality under the influence of globalisation, and the transnational human need for spiritual meaning that is the basis of all religious denominations and cults. As Kunzru observes, ‘Gods Without Men is a book about God, the way that to be human is to find some liveable way of orienting yourself towards the unknown or the unknowable, whether you decide there is some sense of transcendental meaning or some sort of stable or theoretical story you want to tell, or whether you feel there is some sort of void you’re in relation to’ (Haiven 19).


Massey, Conceptualization 59.

Beck 9.

Beck 10.


Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.

Mojave Desert symbolises. However, whereas current reconceptualisations of place mostly focus on the transformation of the sense of time and space as a result of present socio-historical events, Kunzru’s *Gods Without Men* foregrounds the need to historicise the sense of place and, thereby, decompress the global concept of time-space compression so as to contest arguments for the flattening effect of globalisation on time and space, and a postmodern sense of an ‘end of history.’

The specific locale of the Pinnacles in *Gods Without Men* acts as a symbolic anthropological place which is redefined when considered from the perspective of contemporary globalisation and transnational interconnectedness. Kunzru’s choice of the Pinnacles to articulate his views on present America is arguably justified by the classification of this rock formation as a National Natural Landmark, under the protection of the American National Park system. The synechdochic interpretation of this location in Kunzru’s novel as a symbol for the whole nation is supported by the understanding that the main aim of the National Park System is to underscore the ‘ability of […] national historical sites, cultural symbols, and natural environments to contribute to the public sense of a shared national identity.’ If sites like the Pinnacles are understood as carriers of national meaning, a relevant question when analysing the Pinnacles in *Gods Without Men* is, therefore, what meaning about the nation Kunzru is constructing in his novel. Whereas this unusual geological formation is popularly known for its natural value and association with Native American tradition, Kunzru constructs an additional range of ‘possible worlds and dangers’ through the stories that crisscross the caverns of the Pinnacles.

The two main plot lines are, on the one hand, that of Jaz and Lisa, a New York couple of Punjabi and Jewish origins respectively, and their autistic son Raj, and, on the other, the story of the development of the cult founded by a troubled aircraft engineer named Schmidt in post-Second World War America. These two narrative lines, though initially separate, meet in the Mojave Desert in unexpected and apparently fortuitous circumstances. These plot lines are also counterpointed by the stories of the Spanish Franciscan friar Fray Francisco Garcés, a missionary and explorer in the colonial Viceroyalty of New Spain in 1770s; a Mormon miner in 1871, who is murderously racist against the Chinese mine workers; the post-First World War shell-shocked amateur ethnologist Deighton and his neglected wife Eliza, who will eventually abandon him for the Indian Mockingbird Runner/Willie Prince; the Iraqi teenager Laila, who is living in California with her uncle Hafiz, ‘the proudest American she knew’ (278); and the English rock star Nicki Capaldi, who has moved with his band to the United States with the aim of conquering the American market. This deceptively arbitrary narrative structure echoes other

28 In his review of *Gods Without Men*, Douglas Coupland argues that, as a translit novel, Kunzru’s text suggests a type of ‘post-era era’, ‘an aura-free universe in which all eras coexist at once – a state of possibly permanent atemporality given to us courtesy of the Internet.’ However, one of the main strengths of the novel is its emphasis on the need to maintain awareness of the existence of a past, with its own particularities, which significantly relates to the present in various ways. Kunzru himself does not share Coupland’s views on this purported flattening of time. As Kunzru remarks, ‘I think we live in a highly historically specific moment that has its own texture, its own quality and that will in turn be historicised in the future’ (Haiven 18). As suggested in the present analysis, Kunzru’s text revolves on re-examinations of American cultural history from a contemporary global perspective.


30 Beck 10.
contemporary fictional texts that have been identified as ‘fictions of the global’. Following this narrative model, episodes from the various plot lines are randomly arranged in a manner that, although each story independently maintains a chronological organisation of events, the narrative as a whole subverts the linear narrative of the traditional novel form. Although this structure is initially perceived as arbitrary, the numerous echoes that are scattered in all stories – such as ‘the Itinerary of the Spanish friar Garcés’ (221) which Deighton reads; or the Ashtar record made by the UFO cult in 1971, found in 2008 by Nicky Capaldi in a record store in a Mojave town, and eventually bought by Laila (276) – reverberate, creating the cumulative effect of inevitable interconnectivity of these various culturally diverse moments in time. Kunzru the trickster initially deludes the reader only to reveal, as the narrative progresses, that there is actually method in this apparent madness. This method and its aim are indirectly revealed by Cy Bachman, the mind behind the creation of Walter, a Kabbalist computer financial model that is based on finding apparently random connections in the occurrence of events around the world. As Bachman informs Jaz in their discussion about this model,

[t]here’s a tradition that says the world has shattered, that what once was whole and beautiful is now just scattered fragments. Much is irreparable, but a few of these fragments contain faint traces of the former state of things, and if you find them and uncover the sparks hidden inside, perhaps at last you’ll piece together the fallen world. (138)

As Bachman further clarifies, in order to find the link between the different pieces of ‘the fallen world,’

you can’t just rummage about like you’re at a yard sale. You have to listen. You have to pay attention. There are certain things you can’t look at directly. You need to trick them into revealing themselves. That’s what we’re doing with Walter, Jaz. We’re juxtaposing things, listening for echoes. (138).

Thus, through the highly stylised narrative structure, mirrored by the financial model’s functioning, Kunzru makes the readers ‘listen for echoes’ and, thereby, heightens the readers’ awareness of the most prominent meaning in the narrative, namely, the fact that the conditions of cultural mixture that are often regarded as characteristic of the present era are not new. As Beck notes in his definition of the cosmopolitan outlook, ‘what is new is not forced mixing but awareness of it, its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition before a global public. As many of the stories suggest, one of the most characteristic results of cultural mixture has historically been the experience of culture clash, often tainted with the opposition between different understandings of religion and spirituality. In his debut novel The Impressionist,

31 Rita Barnard, ‘Fictions of the Global,’ Novel: A Forum on Fiction 42.2 (2009) 207-15. Like the other texts characteristic of these ‘fictions of the global’, Kunzru’s Gods Without Men implicitly re-evaluates the borders of traditional definitions of national literature, so as to counter conservative views of the type that inspire Theo Tait’s criticism of Kunzru’s text: ‘it seems odd for a British writer to take on the Mojave desert. Don’t big horizons, peach-coloured hills, Joshua trees, hallucinations and enigmatic Indians properly belong to road movies and embarrassing rockers such as Jim Morrison?’

32 Beck 21.
Kunzru already displayed his interest in analysing the tragic effects on the individual of the racist attitudes that derived from cultural encounters in colonial contexts, specifically in India at the turn of the twentieth century. Both *The Impressionist* and *Gods Without Men* are concerned, to a large extent, with the instability of identity and its causes. However, whereas in the former the analysis of the causes is heavily influenced by postcolonial discourses, *Gods Without Men* centres on a re-examination from a global, cosmopolitan perspective of the culture war discourse that has been dominant in the United States, especially in the media and political spheres, since the early 1990s, and which was further fuelled by the events of 9/11.

This culture war is associated with divergent understandings of the national ethos, and expresses political polarisation between traditionalist, Christian and progressive, secularist views on a number of socio-political issues, including policies of multiculturalism. The term was revived with the publication of sociologist James Davison Hunter’s *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991). In later analyses on the state of American culture, Hunter confirms his partial and ominous view of America by arguing that ‘every day presents us with disheartening signs that America is fragmenting’ and that ‘tensions over social issues […] are undermining the cohesion of our union’. Against the background of this religiously ignited socio-political debate, Kunzru maps in his narrative the spiritual topography of the United States over the last two centuries in order to foreground the points in which the different worldviews that conform the cultural geography of America overlap. This analytical viewpoint provides the framework which contributes to finding what the character Cy Bachman calls ‘echoes’ to remodel ‘the fallen world’ (138) and discover ‘the face of God (139), that is, the logic behind an apparently random selection of timeframes for the various story lines in Kunzru’s narrative, and which roughly corresponds with the maps of American religious history outlined by Martin E. Marty in *A Nation of Behavers* (1976), and the changes in spirituality since the 1990s as identified by Wade Clark Roof in *Spiritual Marketplace* (1999).

Following the chronological classification of the mapping of American religious history, the story line of the Franciscan friar Francisco Garcés corresponds, in terms of its temporal setting, with the territorial mapping of established churches of the colonial period (1600-1775). However, Kunzru significantly focuses on Garcés as an individual representing one of the Christian branches that were in the minority at that time in the thirteen English colonies. Similarly, in the denominational mapping of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kunzru singles out one of the minority denominations in the figure of the Mormon miner Nephi Parr, with the action set in 1871, as well as outlining Native American religious beliefs in the story of Deighton’s encounter with an indigenous community in the story that spans from the

---


34 For a detailed analysis of the persecution of the Catholic Church in the pre-Revolution colonial period, see Terrence Hagen’s *Grandpa’s US Colonial History to 1800* (Bloomington, IN: Abbott Press, 2013). In this historical study of the thirteen English colonies, Hagen provides a number of examples of the intolerance against Catholics that was ironically shown by the Puritans, who had escaped from the continent due to the persecution they suffered because of their religious beliefs. As Hagen notes, ‘for example, a 1700 Massachusetts law mandated that all Roman Catholic priests were to leave the colony within 3 months under threat of life imprisonment or execution. Maryland, in 1704, passed “An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery within this Province” which basically closed down all Roman Catholic Churches and schools’ (Hagen xiv).
1920s to 1940s. Regarding the political mapping of the 1950s to late 1960s, against the dominant generalised Protestant-Catholic-Jewish American worldview of that time, Kunzru chooses to select the story of the formation of a new cult developing from the late 1940s, founded by Schmidt in the Pinnacles. This cult, representative of the fourth map of American religion propounded by Marty and characterised by its attention to group identities and social belonging, displays in Kunzru’s fictional representation the perverse consequences of abusing individuals’ yearning for social belonging. This is performed through the focus on the character development of Dawn, one of the cult’s adepts until the late 1980s, who, at a point of heightened self-awareness, decides to abandon the life of drugs and prostitution to which she had been drawn by the cult in order to become the owner of the motel in the Mojave Desert where most of the action in 2008 unfolds.

In this moment of transition in her life, Dawn reflects: ‘Was the life she’d led just another bardo, another intermediate state? Waking consciousness was a bardo, between past and future existences’ (274). From a narrative viewpoint, Dawn’s thoughts echo the necessary ‘juxtaposing [of] things’ (138) propounded by Cy Bachman in the creation of de-ontologised meaning, and which accounts for the narrative structure of the novel. In thematic terms, this display of her capacity for self-reflection and her articulation of these thoughts through the use of Buddhist vocabulary is evidence, not only of transcultural influences, but also of the transition towards a spirituality that enables a greater focus on the individual, which is characteristic of the present age. As Roof observes, ‘the energizing forces [of identity] arise out of quests not so much for group identity and social location as for an authentic inner life and personhood.’35 In contemporary society, as set in 2008-2009, this spiritual quest is represented by Jaz and Lisa, on the one hand, and the English rock star Nicky Capaldi, on the other, all three separately embodying different forms of contemporary secularisation. Despite their national and socio-cultural differences, these characters share a need to fill with ‘personal meaning’36 an inner void which their particular life circumstances have created; in the case of Nicki Capaldi these difficulties derive from a lack of direction in his life, which culminates with the failure of his band’s American adventure. For Jaz and Lisa these difficulties derive from the individual vs. the collective conflict of an intercultural marriage and the loss and later recovery of their son Raj, who after being found in the desert is inexplicably overcoming his autism.

It is precisely the quest for spiritual depth and a need to fill an ‘inner void’ which is shared by all the protagonists in the different stories. As Kunzru observes in relation to this novel, ‘I’m very interested in the way the structure of religious yearning and mystical experience is very constant, but the contents change.’37 This conceptual overlap between stories and their protagonists’ concerns is symbolised by the crisscrossing of the stories in the rock formation of the Pinnacles. Noticeably, this specific location remains seemingly invariable throughout the times in its quasi-metaphysical force, but its definition alters depending on the spiritual viewpoint from which it is described. For Jaz and Lisa, for example, ‘the three-fingered hand of

36 Roof 7.
37 Haiven 19.

Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
the Pinnacle Rocks’ is a ‘vast emptiness, an absence’ (381), whereas for Fray Garcés the ‘three-spired shape [is] considered auspicious as a representation of the Trinity’ (383). Thus, as suggested by the contrapuntal analysis of the mapping of American religion in Gods Without Men, Kunzru’s focus lies on undermining given constructs of identity, in this case of religious identities, with their close associations to the characterisation of a sense of place in national feeling. This subversion is mainly performed by revealing the constructed nature of this mapping through focusing on the minority religious or spiritual beliefs that have been marginalised in these topographical enterprises. Concomitantly, though, the juxtaposition of these individual stories reveals not only a different ‘face of God’ (139), or map of American spirituality, and by extension, of collective identity, metaphorically expressed through a sense of place as embodied by the Pinnacles, but it also serves to question the conservative worldview of a divided American society between traditionalist and progressive positions propounded by the advocates of a ‘culture-war’ paradigm since the 1990s.

As argued in this article, the juxtaposition of the different narratives in Kunzru’s novel enables the historicisation of traditional understandings of a sense of place, with special emphasis on the role of spirituality in constructions of individual and collective identity. The narrative structure plays a double role in, on the one hand, recognising difference by preserving the individuality and historical conditioning of each of these separate stories, and, on the other, emphasising the spiritual void as the common fear that runs through cultural and historical differences, thus foregrounding transcultural connections within the nation. Interconnectivity at a narrative level echoes the re-examinations of place and its societal meaning that emphasise relationality, unboundedness and openness as a way to counter what Beck regards as the essentialism of the national outlook which ‘separates historically interwoven cultural and political realities.’ From this cosmopolitan perspective, the conceptual mappings of place, identity and spiritual beliefs are revealed as fluid and contextually defined or influenced, according to Johansen’s ‘territorialised cosmopolitanism’, by material place. As suggested from a cosmopolitan viewpoint, signifiers such as place, borders, locality, and nation do not dilute in the mesh of globalising influences; the signifiers are maintained, though, repeatedly throughout the times, they have new layers of interpretation added, which are shaped by their socio-historical context. Thus, the Pinnacle Rocks and their attraction for their capacity to inspire sublime awe remain unchanged throughout history. However, this awe is differently interpreted in relation to the spiritual belief that dominates the individual worldview. Similarly, the intermittent appearance of Coyote throughout the novel in animal form (14) or anthropomorphised and his mystical attachment to the Mojave Desert have the cumulative effect of suggesting the lack of finality in the creation of meaning and its multiperspectival character.

Thus, Kunzru’s Gods Without Men, with its juxtaposition of story lines and their numerous echoes, suggests the need for a new interpretative model which uncovers ‘the same national

---

38 This description of the desert is suggestive, as Kunzru reveals, of negative mysticism, ‘the idea that the divine is an eternal mystery, forever invisible and unfathomable, and can only be divined by what it is not. God is an absence, a void: the empty desert, the alien that never responds.’ (Rollo Romig, ‘Staring into the Void with Hari Kunzru,’ The New Yorker 13 March 2012.).

39 Beck 30.

40 Johansen 4.
reality differently, and different, additional, realities in new ways’, thus also contributing to contemporary redefinitions of the American novel as characterised by transcultural and transnational concerns. This theme is structurally translated in the new meaning that the ending of Kunzru’s prefatory short story acquires on completion of the novel. It is in hindsight, through the knowledge gained in the reading experience of this text, that the short story’s ending ‘and Coyote left that place. That is all, thus it ends’ (3) acquires new significance. In Kunzru’s narrative, when Coyote, symbol of historicised interconnectivity, makes his way out of a place and a story this is merely to signal that ends are only new beginnings; doors that open to a myriad of interdependent stories and ‘possible worlds’ of interpretation, and that, by extension, apparent finality of history or traditional collective constructs of identity are constantly re-evaluated through a historicised view of present concerns.

---

Carmen Zamorano Llena is Associate Professor of English at Dalarna University, Sweden. She is President of the Nordic Irish Studies Network and edits the literature section of the peer-reviewed journal Nordic Irish Studies. Her current research interests include representations of ageing in Irish and British literature, literature and globalisation, and the migrant experience in contemporary Irish and British literature.

---

41 Beck 31.

I’m delighted to speak at this launch of *Sicily and Scotland: Where Extremes Meet*, published this year by Troubador Publishing of the UK in its Italian Series.

The contributors to this volume all have strong professional and/or personal ties to Scotland or Sicily, and they offer here a variety of information linking these two geographically distant places – places which have given our country many new residents across the years.

In their introduction the editors draw attention to a basic similarity between Sicily and Scotland which relates to the separate identity that each carries within its present political union. These strongly-held individual identities come from long, often turbulent histories prior to unification, and are at times in contrast with the situation within the wider union – or, in Scotland’s case the contrast can be between the two Scottish partners themselves. The editors say that they have chosen ‘to traverse only part’ of an ‘enormous’ topic; even so, we have here a most interesting range of discussions, for which the introduction offers a helpful background.

The contributions focus on three main areas, viz.,

- Various ways in which Sicily and Scotland have been represented in literature and film;
- Records of the tours made by Scottish travellers in Southern Italy from the seventeenth century onwards;
- Aspects of emigration from both regions to the US and Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

And there is an afterword entitled ‘Sicily and Scotland Compared: Some Economic and Demographic Limits’.

In the first chapter, ‘Sicilian Waistcoats and Scottish Kilts: Filmic Representations from Opposite Extremes’, Luciana d’Arcangeli gives an account of the development of local film production in each place, looking at the way it embodies past stereotypes and contemporary reactions to them. One of the first film studios in Sicily, Morgana Film in Catania, dates from 1913, whereas the Films of Scotland Committee was formed in the 1930s ‘to promote the country nationally and internationally’.

Two of the three categories of film recognised as representative of Scotland are shared by Sicilian film-makers: one dealing with basic human situations, and described as ‘strongly parochial’, the other, referred to as ‘Tartanry’ in Scotland, represents historical events such as the 1745 uprising of Scottish Highlanders, and the landing in 1860 at Marsala in Sicily of ‘the thousand’ wearing their red shirts or ‘waistcoats’. The category associated with the industrial area of Clydesdale, which ‘celebrated the male working-class hero’, has no parallel in Sicilian films. The emergence in the 1990s of a ‘New Scottish Cinema’ in response to contemporary issues is seen as corresponding to the depiction of ‘anti-mafia cinema’ in Sicily, involving the ordinary person heroically doing what is right, regardless of the consequences. An example given is Marco Tullio Giordana’s film *I cento passi/One hundred steps* (2000) about Peppino Impastato whose statements on radio proved to be heroic, in that they cost him his life.
Liz Campbell’s ‘Double Lives: Luigi Pirandello and Robert Louis Stevenson’ looks at the life experiences of these two nineteenth-century writers as possible explanations for their themes of escape and dual lives. The writers’ personal situations would seem to have reinforced the representation of a duality present in the socio-political life of their regions. Such feelings of otherness are seen to have been exacerbated by the writers’ personal difficulties: in Stevenson’s case by his constant illnesses – we are told that ‘he was highly strung, and prone to depression’. Evidence of a nervous disposition in Pirandello appears in a letter to his then fiancée Antonietta when he writes: ‘It’s almost as if there are two people in me.’ Antonietta’s own later illness was to take an even greater toll on Pirandello and the family: the flooding in 1903 of the family’s sulphur mine (bought with Antonietta’s dowry) led to her ‘schizophrenic paranoia’. The works discussed – Stevenson’s Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Pirandello’s Henry IV – are seen to share ‘a common concern with the concept of identity and its destruction’, in that ‘Jekyll obliterates his identity and that of Hyde through suicide’, and Pirandello’s nobleman ‘kills his own identity by imprisoning himself in the role of Henry IV’.

In the following chapter, Liam McIlvanney and Graham Tulloch compare two works of detective fiction: Leonardo Sciascia’s Il giorno della civetta (The Day of the Owl) (1961), and Ian Rankin’s Mortal Causes (1994), noting that the works share a strong identification of place along with the defining characteristics of each society. The action, in a contemporary setting, has roots in past issues left unresolved: i.e. the Mafia in Sicily in Sectarianism in Scotland.

Sciascia’s story opens with a murder one morning in the piazza of a Sicilian township, seen by a busload of people waiting for their journey to begin. Rankin’s story also begins with a murder, this one committed in Old Edinburgh, but not in full view. The detectives are also opposites – Sciascia’s Captain Bellodi, from Parma in ‘the North’, is an ‘outsider’ in the eyes of the locals; Detective John Rebus, though not from Edinburgh, is of close enough birth-place to be considered within the Pale. Their investigations reflect the ongoing issues the writers are underlining: although in each case the detective grows to understand what forces have been at play, the outcomes are less than ideal. In Rankin’s story there is seen to be ‘rough justice’; in Sciascia’s account, the nature and extent of the power of the Mafia preclude the carriage of Justice.

In Chapter 4 Stefano Bona discusses Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel Il Gattopardo (The Leopard) (1958) in relation to the view it gives of the Unification of Italy. He refers to the political situation in the Italian Peninsula following the Congress of Vienna (1815) when ideas began circulating that eventually led to the unification proclaimed in March 1861. He notes the fact that this new political reality, based on that in Piedmont, was at odds with the different types of governance in other Italian regions; the different perspective in Sicily is shown through his brief summary of the power-structure operating in Sicilian communities, outside the official governing bodies. In the novel, Don Fabrizio’s ‘distrust’ of any foreign ruler is evident during his meeting with the Piedmontese official Chevalley who, while attempting to enlist him as a senator in the new government, displays how inadequate is his own knowledge, and that of Northern politicians in general, about Sicily. Chevalley’s failure to understand what he sees and what he hears about Sicily from Don Fabrizio, and the latter’s overwhelming ‘dissillusionment and discomfort’ is seen here as ‘chronic incapability of reciprocal comprehension’.

In ‘Turning Points and Change: Scotland and Sicily, Scott and Lampedusa’, Graham Tulloch looks at the question of how change in Scotland and Sicily has been represented in the novels Waverley and The Leopard. In each case unification is described as a turning point, in many ways, and the question here is: how much did things change at these crucial turning points?
We are reminded that critical appraisal has questioned the extent to which the novels can be called historical. Sciascia’s opinion of *The Leopard*, that it was ‘without an understanding of history’, is countered here by the view that Lampedusa presented history ‘from an aristocratic perspective based on his personal background’; the conclusion is that ‘neither of these texts is solely (or even perhaps, in the case of *The Leopard*, principally) a historical novel’. The autobiographical and regional aspects that figure importantly in the novels are discussed. The first is perhaps strongest in *The Leopard*, since Lampedusa linked the character of Don Fabrizio to himself and to his great-grandfather Don Giulio. The links between Scott and his characters Edward Waverley and the Baron of Bradwardine are also seen to show autobiographical elements in that Waverley ‘represents Scott’s idea of his younger self’. In recognising that ‘there is a certain tension in combining a regional, and autobiographical novel with a historical novel’, the author adds that the answer needs to take account of the fact that each novel offers more than one perspective. It is in this area of different, even changing, perspectives that the chapter continues its interesting discussion.

The question ‘How much did things change?’ is examined in relation to the later perspective of the time when the novels were written. Scott was writing *Waverley* at a time (between 1805 and 1814) when ‘it was possible to feel that the traditional ruling class had retained their power despite the change of dynasty’. Lampedusa was writing in the middle of the twentieth century when Italy was no longer a Kingdom but a Republic, and in his view ‘things had not remained the same’.

Chapters 6 and 7 are linked through their attention to early Scottish travellers to the South of Italy: Jonathan Esposito’s title is ‘Distant Caledonians: Scottish Travellers in Sicily and Southern Italy (1600-1900)’, and Joseph Farrell’s ‘A Reverend Pilgrim: Patrick Brydone in Sicily’. Brydone’s book was published in 1773.

William Lithgow of Lanark, the earliest of the ‘distant Caledonians’ discussed by Jonathan Esposito, *walked* down the Tyrrhenian coast on his way through Southern Italy to other countries. He visited Naples and Sicily in 1616, encountering bandits on his way, and he climbed Mt Etna; his account of this was published in 1632. In the next century Robert Mylne from Edinburgh (another great walker) left drawings of the Greek temples at Agrigento which served the archaeologist Johann Winckelmann.

Joseph Farrell discusses the importance of the eighteenth-century Scottish travel-writer Patrick Brydone, who continues to arouse interest – witness the five volumes concerning him (cited in the Notes) published in France and Italy between 1955 and 2011. Discussion follows of Brydone’s writing and intellectual interests, and the degree to which his *Tour Through Sicily and Malta* has continued to provide ‘valuable source material for subsequent Sicilian writers and commentators’. The folklorist Giuseppe Pitrè of the following century is cited as one ‘who was highly critical of Goethe’s depiction of Sicilian life, but [who] used Brydone as a reliable and trustworthy source for information’. The author notes the range and degree of Brydone’s interest in the Sicily he saw, which extended to comments on the ‘poverty of the island, its backwardness and the failed emergence of “industrious hands”’, which he laid squarely at the feet of the Bourbon rulers of the time.

In the first of the chapters in the next group, Karen Agutter writes of Sicilians in Australia, with particular emphasis on the period before and after the First World War, when over fourteen million Italians left their homeland as migrants. In the years to 1915, Sicilians numbered about one-eighth of this total and their destination was largely the Americas. Some of the patterns relating to this settlement are compared with information available in Australian records, and an

analysis of the material is preceded by data relating to the years of peak migration from Sicily: their settlement in each Australian State, their occupation soon after arrival and later, and also an overview of Australian attitudes towards migrants from Sicily or Southern Italy.

In seeking to understand the situation of these migrants and their choices, the question is asked: could the possibility of military service have encouraged this high number of young males to emigrate? Another similarity between Australia and the US is seen in the negative way Sicilian migrants were viewed in the new country. The author links this to the 'potential Italian origins of this negativity'.

On the other hand, in the following chapter Eric Richards looks at Scottish immigration to Australia as being welcomed with strong enthusiasm. He throws light on the internal situation in Scotland as background to early emigration, reminding us that ‘Scotland is by no means a homogeneous country’. Thus his title ‘Scotland, the Highlands and “the Elephant Question”’ is to be understood in terms of the disadvantage the Highlanders suffered because of their close proximity to the Lowlands. It is noted that the divergencies between them were more stark in centuries past (including differences in language and culture – plus poverty in the Highlands). There were changes in the nineteenth century following the industrial success in the Lowlands, which provided the Highlands with opportunities to supply goods (wool being one of them) for the southern manufacturing, but the Highlands were dependent in this, and not the initiators.

These differences are then shown as replicated to some extent in the settlement of Scots abroad. Throughout the British Empire, Scottish migration was seen as a success story, and ‘in terms of the esteem accorded to Scots in the colonial context there seems to be little dispute that they received preference at practically every level’. But the situation for the Highlanders contrasted with this, especially in the mid-nineteenth century when their poverty affected their chances of migrating. Even with assistance to migrate, they brought with them the effects of their home circumstances, and initially met with the same prejudices here. However, the passage of time seems to have brought equal status for all migrants from culturally or politically divided countries, in that the distinctions within the groups mostly faded once here. It is ironic, in the author’s view, that ‘outward trappings of Scottishness were manufactured out of specifically Highland symbols – dances, Highland Games, haggis, bagpipes …’ and that ‘emigrant Scots across the world have re-created this amalgam of identity for Scotland, which drew disproportionately on a Highland model.’

In ‘Off Centre in the New World: Assimilation Experiences of a Bicultural Family’ Thomas MacPherson rounds out this section’s discussions by looking at the experiences of his ancestors who came from the Highlands of Scotland as well as from Sicily; they arrived in the United States, between the early and late years of the nineteenth century. Both families settled in the small town of LeRoy in western New York State, and the author follows his interest as an historian and a visual artist in giving an account of their assimilation into American society.

Their initial experiences reflect the stories of migrant groups elsewhere. The Scottish group succeeded more quickly in being accepted into the dominant culture, whereas the Sicilians experienced discrimination. The ease with which the former Highlander Alex MacPherson settled in New York State had much to do with his financial security; we’re told he ‘immigrated with sufficient funds and with the necessary managerial background to start his “American Dream” on his own terms’. The Barone family arrived in very different financial circumstances, and lived a life of poverty and hard work for most of the first generation.

To illustrate these two different experiences of settlement and eventual assimilation, the author describes a woman from each line of his ancestors: in the Scottish line, his Great Aunt...
Catherine MacPherson became a nurse and in 1914 served overseas with the British Expeditionary Forces in Belgium, later receiving a distinguished service cross. His grandmother Carrie (Calogera) Baron, was illiterate, having had to leave school at 8 years old to take care of her seven siblings. She spent a life of hard work, in a degree of poverty. After her (arranged) marriage, she and her husband were lent the money by family members to buy a farm — and were once again supported by them financially during the Depression.

The afterword to the volume, by Eric Richards, entitled ‘Sicily and Scotland Compared: Some Economic and Demographic Limits’, reaffirms the comparisons made in earlier chapters while considering also ‘how far the comparison of Sicily and Scotland holds, in relation to their economic and demographic trajectories over the last three hundred years’. The discussion shows that these are areas in which striking differences have existed between them, one being the fact, for example, that ‘the population of Scotland reached its plateau by the end of the 19th century and that of the Highlands fell continuously for 150 years. In Italy the population grew through to the 21st century and that of Sicily has continued to expand without reversal.’ It is then noted that both Sicily and the Highlands ‘were saddled with ostensibly antiquated systems of landholding, dominated by very large landholders’; in the Highlands there were ‘radical programmes of modernisation’, but in Sicily ‘there seems to have been little concerted effort to reorganize the agricultural systems, in the context of increasing congestion on the land’. This led, in both places, to the re-entrenchment of poverty, and thus ‘the differential with the rest of the country widened’. These matters are then related to the social consequences: the disadvantages for the inhabitants in their homeland, which they carried with them as they emigrated.

From here it is worth looking back to the editors’ words at the close of the introduction: that ‘much could be achieved by examining all the fascinating parallels and contrasts discussed in this introduction, as well as those suggested in Eric Richards’ afterword: this book is a first beginning of that much larger project.’ I expect that readers of this volume will agree.

Margaret Baker lived for some years in Italy before attending the University of Melbourne where she completed an MA on the work of the twentieth-century writer Carlo Emilio Gadda. Later, as a member of the Italian Department at The Flinders University of South Australia, her research and publications included the work of other Italian writers from various periods. Further affinities with Sicily and Scotland: Where Extremes Meet date back to her childhood in Queensland, in a small community whose culture was enriched by the presence of families that had migrated from those regions.