

***Border Crossings* edited by Diana Glenn and Graham Tulloch (Wakefield Press, 2016)**

Border Crossings, as the name suggests, is a collection of essays that explores crossovers – between past and present, between reality and literature, between silence and expression, between genres, and between established borders of nation, life and theory. The essays traverse eras from the age of Dante to the emergence of digital libraries in the present, challenging conventional modernist binaries that mark temporal and spatial domains, interrogating the theoretical bases that mark them as closed domains of interpretation. Beginning with a quote by the Zimbabwean writer NoViolet Bulawayo, ‘Those with nothing are crossing borders,’ (1) the collection explores the contradictory elements of hope and the permanent erasure and reformulation of elements of the self that such cross-border migration entails.

Divided into eight sections, the twenty-two articles in the collection celebrate hybridity in literary musings that begins with the first essay, ironically titled ‘The Mash-up Novel: What Fresh Disrespect is This?’ In this essay, Michael X. Savvas explores the challenge posed to existing literary genres by the mash-up novel that creates a new literary genre in the twenty-first century through a juxtaposition of elements from existing ones. While examining the structure and the content of these novels, Savvas is more concerned with the border between respect and disrespect that these novels cross, especially in relation to the position of the reader. In the next essay, Ron Blaber’s exposition of the musical border crossings of the British Afrobeat band, Osibisa, delineates the band’s attempt to distinguish between affectivity and authenticity, which he equates with Africanness. Blaber argues that the failure to affect this transition lies in a number of translocations which hinder a connection to the abstract notion of an African aesthetic.

The second section in the book, titled ‘Interpretive Crossings’, explores the relationship between interpreter and interpretant, playwright and audience, text and reader. In the first essay of the section, Susan Mason delineates how meaning is given to the healing ceremony outlined in Richard Nelson’s *Sweet and Sad* through a ‘collective creative participation of actors and audience’ (42). In the next essay, Kelli Rowe talks of allegorical interpretation as translation, wherein the critical reading of a text is performed through a conscious illustration of codes. She defines interpretation of literary texts as *différance*, wherein readers are called upon to hold many contradictory positions as they deconstruct the interplay of meanings in the text. In studying an initiative by Google to partner with the libraries of several universities in the United States to make their collections available digitally, Tully Barnett’s essay traces the transition of the text from material to immaterial object and the resultant reformulation of the relationship between humans and books in the digital age.

The third section talks of crossovers between past and present. The study of the overlapping of apocalyptic themes in contemporary films and in Shakespeare’s works by Ben Kooyman is followed by Adrian Thurnwald’s comparison of the representation of the masculine heroism of medieval chivalric knights and modern superheroes in comic books. The next essay in the section by Irene Belperio and Diana Glenn explores Otherness and literary borders in an innovative study of otherworldly domains in Dante’s *Commedia*. In the same section, the subversion of Victorian normative modes to cross the naturalised border between the public and

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private worlds forms the central idea of Lauren Butterworth's study of Sarah Waters's *Affinity*. The essays in the section themselves move back and forth in time, thus transcending the limiting effects of literary temporality.

The fourth section in the collection comprises two essays that are a reimagining of the borders of nation and its representation. The first essay, by Sue Hosking, is a critical juxtaposition of true-life stories as discovered in a booklet printed in Calcutta in 1891, and fictional and cinematic representations of India which she terms 'ambiguous allure' (120). The second essay, by Fran Bryson, examines the similarities and differences that govern the authorial motive in the works of six authors who wrote travelogues about Brazil. Both these essays examine the overlapping of borders between fiction and reality in writing about a country and its people. In a revisiting of the colonial *Raj*, India is seen as a saviour to the First World in Hosking's essay, while Brazilian social life, with all its ironic undertones, supersedes the Darwinian exposition of the natural world in Bryson's study of the various facets of life that travellers to the country described.

The fifth section in the collection, titled 'Crossovers Between Real Life, Art and Fiction', brings together three essays that study the impossibility of these three spheres existing as mutually exclusive with clearly defined borders. Emily Sutherland's essay studies the emotional divide crossed by fiction and non-fiction talking of the same subject, whether metaphorically or in reality, and concludes that there is no clear emotional border that demarcates the two. Gay Lynch explores Berlin crossings by Funder and Sornig in their fiction, delineating the historical schisms that exist just underneath the surface to make the city a postmodern simulacrum of the many crossings that it represents, both physical and metaphorical. Chelsea Avard's essay concludes the section by proving the inseparability of the artist and the subject through an examination of the projection of the intersubjectivity of the dichotomous relationship of the self and other in Alex Miller's *The Sitters*.

The idea of imaginary borders is extended into the two essays in the next section, titled 'Creative Writers and Border Crossings'. This includes Dennis Wild's insightful essay on the porous borders between silence and creative forms of expression. Terming his own literary journey an exploration, he traces the role of the memory in creating a coherent narrative that finds expression in varied literary genres. Mary Lynn Mather, on the other hand, traces the transnational author's quest for identity through characters that voice her own uneasiness at displacement. Both these essays trace the creative process as intensely personal, portrayed through different narrative techniques.

The last two sections, on 'Transcultural Passages' and 'Transnational Border Crossings', deal with specific incidents of border crossing reflected in literature and films. Thus, while Laura Lori argues that there is a continuous space-time crossing between the colonial past and the postcolonial present, Chloé A. Gill-Khan explores what happens when diasporic citizens refuse to remain suspended between two conflicting borders, choosing instead to free themselves from mourning. Arianna Dagnino's essay on the novel as a literary mutant, a *créole* form, studies the emergence of the transcultural novel at the edges, countering exotic stereotypes through territorial heterogeneity. The resultant polyglossia, she argues, has made possible the destabilising of the dominant language, contributing to an 'identity mobility' (215) reflected in the geographical settings of the novel, and a deconstruction of one's cultural identity. In the same section, Stefano Bona explores

2

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the need to invent new methodologies in Italian Film Studies in its representations of China. This is followed by Daniela Cosmini-Rose and Desmond O'Connor's essay on the repercussions of the Bilateral Assisted Migration Agreement between Italy and Australia signed in 1951, and Colette Mrowa-Hopkins and Eric Bouvet's detailed study of French migration to Australia in the post-Second World War period, aided by two schemes, The General Assisted Passage Scheme (GAPS) and The Special Passage Assistance Program (SPAP).

Crossing Borders is thus a collection that explores borders, real and imagined, historical and contemporary, physical and psychological, and the impermanence that marks them. Tracing the changing contours of the nature of borders as well as that of the domains they demarcated, the collection explores the ways in which literature, history, migration, language and the arts have contributed in the transmutation of fixed and impenetrable binaries into a heterogeneity of self, geography and identity. As the editors note in the Introduction, the crossing of borders changes things irrevocably, and this collection offers a comprehensive study of the wide spectrum of areas where such crossings reorient definitions.

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