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## Volume 11, Issue 1 December 2018

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### Letter from the Editor (Alice Healy Ingram)

Welcome to the December issue of *Transnational Literature*. The opportunity to take the reins of such a wide-ranging journal from outgoing General Editor Gillian Dooley has been a great privilege. With the help of the journal's excellent editorial team, I've enjoyed the challenge of bringing together the diverse writing of 45 authors from around the world, from Australia, Chile, Germany, India, Iran, Pakistan, Republic of Yemen, Singapore, Sweden, Syria, the US and the UK. From its original premise of 'New Literatures in English' in Syd Harrex's *CRNLE Reviews Journal*, the journal has grown to consider literature from a 'transnational' framework. These days, *Transnational Literature* welcomes creative writing in translation, and the languages sit side by side, in intercultural conversation. Migrancy and diaspora, intergenerational identities, questions of belonging, border crossings, statelessness and territorialisation, the socio-political condition of people within and outside national borders: all subjects examined in the journal as it reaches far and wide.

It is also entirely appropriate that 40 years after the establishment of the Centre for Research in the New Literature in English at Flinders University, we publish an interview with one of the most prominent scholars of postcolonial criticism, Bill Ashcroft. It is a sign of the times that this interview is a dialogue between the Chinese scholar Lili Zhang and Ashcroft and focuses on how postcolonial studies is still, more than ever, a relevant framework for thinking about transculturality today, especially when 'classical imperialism continues the function of economic dominance through global capitalism' (3). Ashcroft asserts that postcolonial studies has always done the work that more recent 'transnational' and 'world literature' critical frameworks claim to be doing: 'So in this sense postcolonialism and world literature meet at the point at which they both interrogate the imperial spread of neoliberal capitalism' (7). Zhang is not only interested in China's relation to Australian literature, but also the question, 'What is a postcolonial reading of China?' (5).

While this issue of the journal does not have a specific theme, there are synergies between the articles and creative pieces and many of the authors are, whether as exiles, travellers or economic migrants, 'diasporic'. Many of the essays analyse writing about cross-cultural encounters, language preservation, migrancy and intergenerational transmission, or critique hegemonic ideas that embed institutional power. What stands out for me is the way the diasporic characters in this writing struggle to negotiate home and belonging and pass on their 'idea' of home to new generations so as not to lose a culture through territorial conflict or colonisation. For example, intergenerational identity is beautifully analysed by Jameel Alghaberi, who clearly explains the unstable contexts of Palestinian and often 'stateless' diaspora in Randa Jarrar's novel *A Map of Home*. He shows that the daughter in this story is able to negotiate home 'in multiple places', with a 'plurality of vision', and yet retain the knowledge of her parents' history for, 'the one who writes his story inherits the land of that particular story' (13).

Cultural and language survival is also a theme of many of these papers. Iakovos Menelaou's essay on Seferis's poems examines the nature and heritage of Cyprus and its importance to Greek culture. Daneshwar Sharma highlights the importance of language revival in literature, because 'If one loses this distinct, familial way of speech one loses something very personal: the culture associated with the language' (3). His subject is Subrimani's upcoming novel *Fiji MAA: Mother of a Thousand*, written in North Fijian Hindi. Both papers show the works in original language (and script), alongside their translation.

Levi Thompson shows how transnational analysis is important in the way the Iraqi (Arabic) poet 'Abd al-Wahhāb Bayātī references the Iranian (Persian) 'Umar Khayyām, and how 'transnational modernist exchanges [move] beyond interpretations restricted by national paradigms' (12).

Lekha Roy and Rano Ringo claim a 'post-black' sensibility for Rita Dove's poetry. The critique of modernist racial binaries in African American writing after the 1970s is instead offered to examine the poetry in terms of 'the fluid nature of identity construction as a journey that must deconstruct race through a transatlantic crossing-over' (abstract).

Similarly critiquing hegemonic ideas, Mike Piero's essay on J.M. Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello links the technology of measuring (quantification, counting) to the colonial project in perpetuating structures of knowledge and systems of power that mediate social existence. He skilfully shows how the novel highlights a writer's struggle against judgement and assertion of her role as 'secretary of the invisible'.

Adnan Mahmutović analyses Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* using Sheppard's concept of 'wormhole travel' to 'examine how geographical location affects political agency' in the life of the character Changez, a global citizen of Pakistani origin (abstract). The wormhole metaphor is a useful one to show 'interconnectedness', not physical proximity.

Robyn Walton's bibliomemoir is a new form of writing for the journal, which takes as its subject the author's changing interpretation of Herbert Badham's painting *Breakfast Piece* (1936) as she gains new knowledge about its frontiers and her own father's efforts in serving overseas in the 1930s. It's an interesting mix of scholarly art criticism, archival research and the 'loose threads' of memory, knowledge and family affiliation.

In our translations section (edited by Rezaul Haque), we have two very different short stories – one crossing the borders of Iran and Russia (originally written in Persian); the other about a cross-cultural affair and family obligation on the island of Vanuatu (originally written in French).

Our book reviews section, edited by Sean Haylock, contains a mix of reviews of postcolonial and transnational criticism, poetry and fiction. Our creative writing section, edited by Ruth Starke, contains four short stories of diverse content – from Lyn Jacobs’s short piece about the geographical and psychological isolation of a young woman in a remote Australian location, to Nicholas Birns’s piece about migration and identity, to Mushtaq Bilal’s story about intercultural sexuality under societal and religious restrictions, to Ron Singer’s wry reflection on the way the Internet catalyses memory and encounter. Our poetry section continues to thrive – and I’ll let our wonderful poetry editor Alison Flett tell you all about her clever curation (below).

Thanks to Gillian Dooley for entrusting me with *Transnational Literature*, a journal that has, under her leadership, built up to be a thriving centrepiece for intercultural conversation with a wide network of over 2000 readers around the world. Her work in developing *Transnational Literature* from its small beginning in Quodlibet to its current success is truly remarkable. Flinders University can no longer host this fine journal and we are hoping to hand it over to a new academic team. Many thanks also go to our editorial team who have worked tirelessly with me on the current issue: Piper Bell, Alison Flett, Melinda Graefe, Rezaul Haque, Sean Haylock, Ruth Starke and Emily Sutherland. Robert Phiddian has been instrumental in rallying for support at Flinders for this last issue and the journal’s transition. Thanks also goes to the Advisory and Editorial boards who have been a reliable source of wisdom. Finally, we sincerely thank all the authors who have contributed to this issue and submitted writing – to appropriate Mike Piero’s words in his essay on Coetzee’s Elizabeth Costello, ‘the suffering occasioned by the work of writing and summoned by a sympathetic imagination leads to an understanding’ of human lives in all their contingencies (11). The future of *Transnational Literature* is still being discussed, but we are optimistic that it will continue.

And, while the journal is published in an online space free from the physical and historical attachment to land, it’s important to acknowledge that its editorial team are present on a site of great significance and heritage. For over a decade, *Transnational Literature* has been hosted on Kauria land, Adelaide plains, on which Flinders University sits. I pay my respects to Kauria Elders past and present.

**Alice Healy Ingram, Acting General Editor**

#### **Letter from our poetry editor**

Internet developments and our ever-expanding global community mean we have the opportunity, more than ever before, to learn about different cultures and, perhaps more importantly, understand the commonality of human existence. Poetry, with its ability to capture ideas and images in brief snapshots of language, is a great medium for sharing cultural experience.

In the general poetry section of this issue of *Transnational Literature* you’ll find poems from or about Argentina, Australia, Britain, Chile, India, the Isle of Man, Korea, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore and the US. We also have a guest-edited section dedicated to poets from the Syrian diaspora and curated by Ghayath Almadhah, a Palestinian poet, born in Damascus, now living in exile in Sweden. The poets featured here speak eloquently and powerfully about their everyday lives, the bonds between women, the effects of war and the difficulties of living in exile in a country that views your culture with suspicion.

Of course, the borders between us are not just geographic or national. Our featured poet, Andy Jackson, writes about the bodily differences that separate us and attempts to break down the boundaries, creating a sense of connection rather than otherness.

While we’re all essentially trapped inside ‘the telephone box’ of our ‘own claustrophobic universe’ we each have opportunity to lift the receiver and either speak out to the wider multiverse or listen to the voices coming in. The poets in *Transnational Literature* speak out but, as Janet Lees puts it, ‘the world’s most powerful magnet ... is the listener.’ We hope that you find, amongst the wide range of poetic voices in this issue, one or two that speak particularly to you.

**Alison Flett, Poetry Editor**

[Click here for list of contributors](#)

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| Adnan Mahmutović         | To Issue a Firefly’s Glow: Wormhole Geographies and Positionality in Mohsin Hamid’s <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>    |
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##### **Interview**

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**Complete articles December 2018 in one file (for downloading or printing)**

**Poetry**  
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Andy Jackson    Andy Jackson: An Introduction  
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**Syrian Poetry Feature**

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Golan Haji    Two Poems: 'Cliffs'; 'Spring Skies'

Rasha Omran    The Woman who Dwelt in the House Before

Raed Wahesh    Absence

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Rose Hunter    Two Poems: 'Paris to Flamingo'; 'all this is blurred and much bluer than it was'

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Bella Li    Part Two: The Lady Hideko

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**Complete poetry December 2018 (for printing or downloading)**

**Fiction in Translation**  
(Editor: Md Rezaul Haque)

'Faber-Castell Classic Colour Pencils' by Aeen Norouzi, translated from Persian by Yasaman Rahmani

'Bitter Secrets' by Claudine Jacques, translated from French by Patricia Worth

**Fiction and life-writing**  
(Editor: Ruth Starke)

Mushtaq Bilal    The Girl with the Book

*This love story cum mystery is set in present day Pakistan and explores the extent to which people, especially women, have their life choices circumscribed by religious and cultural indoctrination.*

Nicholas Birns    Between the Lindens

*The story was inspired by a story I heard on a bus in China, about a boy who had left his homeland during a time of persecution and who always felt in the shadow of his remarkable father. It raises questions of national and personal identity, and whether there is a chance to treat each other, and the planet itself, differently.*

Lyn Jacobs    Last Orders

*This story considers distance, remoteness and alienation in geographic and psychological terms. I hope the protagonist surfs to a safer shore.*

Ron Singer      IBS Rides the Internet (A Fictional Memoir)

*In this fictional memoir the mistaken funeral episode really took place, and it made me think a lot about my father's family. Then, thinking about my Peace Corps days in the 1960s, I remembered how many of my co-volunteers had died. I hope this story captures the spirit of those times, which combined idealism and serious work with silliness.*

#### **Complete fiction and life writing December 2018 (for printing or downloading)**

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Melinda Graefe      *Poetry of the Earth: Mapuche Trilingual Anthology*, edited by Jaime Luis Huenún Villa, Spanish into Mapudungun translation by Víctor Cifuentes Palacios, Spanish into English Translation by Juan Garrido Salgado, Steve Brock and Sergio Holas.

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Sirsha Nandi      *Africa's Narrative Geographies: Charting the Intersections of Geocriticism and Postcolonial Studies* by Dustin Crowley

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Mandy Treagus      *Georges Baudoux's Jean M'Barai: The Trepang Fisherman*, translated and with a critical introduction by Karin Speedy

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Amelia Walker      *Faithfully, I Wait* by Jaydeep Sarangi.

#### **Complete Book reviews: history, theory and criticism (for printing or downloading)**

##### **Contributors to December 2018 Issue**